

New North Carolina Books

Maurice C. York
Compiler

Robert Emil Botsch. *We Shall Not Overcome: Populism and Southern Blue-Collar Workers*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981. 237 pp. \$19.50.

The possibilities for a new populism in an interracial alliance of the South's working class is the subject of this study by Robert Emil Botsch, assistant professor of political science at the University of South Carolina at Aiken. Shortly after the presidential election in 1976 Botsch conducted a series of interviews with fifteen furniture mill workers, black and white, in one North Carolina piedmont community, which he calls Furntex. He questioned the participants about such matters as their perception of the role of the federal government in their lives, participation in politics and public affairs, social values and relationships, connection with organized religion, job satisfaction, and racial attitudes. He found the group as a whole to be little influenced by traditional racial divisions, and generally favorably disposed toward integration and its effects. However, some of the other conclusions he drew about these men — that they are independent, individualistic, highly moral, and largely present oriented — led Botsch to hold little hope for the political coalition he believes would improve their economic prospects.

While the topic warrants investigation, Botsch's treatment leaves the reader with more questions than it answers. His questionnaire, which is reproduced in an appendix to the book, is an extensive one which appears to avoid "leading on" the subject. His explanations of the ways in which he sought to foster his acceptance by the interviewees lead one to believe that he was successful in his efforts. Yet his analysis of his findings has serious problems. Botsch draws broad conclusions about the possibilities for a regional political movement of blue collar workers on the basis of brief interviews with a handful of furniture workers living and laboring in one small piedmont community. The "leap of faith" that this extrapolation demands is not easily made. Botsch fails to demonstrate the universal nature of the experiences and attitudes of this small group of workers, not selected by random sampling but with the assistance of internal contacts in local firms. More importantly, Botsch sometimes draws conclusions about the political awareness and potential of these workers that his particulars do not seem to support. In one instance he maintains that the placing of a five-dollar bet on the outcome of the Carter-Ford election by one of his interviewees is "an indication of widespread casual interest in politics."

It is easy to say that Botsch should have written a different book, one that included a number of scientific samplings of blue-collar workers employed in various industries across the South, and perhaps one that gave some consideration to the possible involvement of the region's mass of agricultural workers in a new populist movement. The author set out to do a preliminary study that would lead others to explore similar ground; yet there are problems with his pursuit of even this narrower goal. Some academic libraries, particularly those at institutions with programs in regional studies, and larger public libraries where patrons have strong interests in politics and sociology might wish to consider buying this book. Most of them would find their funds better spent elsewhere.

Katherine F. Martin
Cedar Falls, Iowa

Kim Chapin. ***Fast as White Lightning: The Story of Stock Car Racing.*** New York: The Dial Press, 1981. 277 pp. \$12.95.

Long before travelling to the South, most Yankees will have heard of the Charlotte, Rockingham, and Darlington raceways, even if they have not learned that in the South, the Civil War becomes (properly speaking) the "War of Northern Aggression" or simply "The Late Unpleasantness." Since many would sooner watch or read about an automobile race than pick up regional speech variations, this title would find a ready audience.

Although a number of books on automobile racing are currently available, most are limited to one facet of racing. Chapin covers stock car racing, a relatively new sport, from its inception in the 1930s to 1980. In addition to providing biographical information, he discusses the beginnings and types of racetracks and the various kinds of cars used for racing over the years. Chapin also notes how racecars developed from the cars used for running moonshine. Attendant financial problems come under scrutiny as well, since racers must earn a great deal of money just to pay mechanics and to keep their cars in shape.

Chapin avoids the dry narration of facts often associated with histories in favor of a more loosely structured, informal, and personal account of racing as experienced firsthand by many of its most important participants. The author fleshes out his chronological outline with the biographical reminiscences and anecdotes of major figures associated with the development of the sport, such as drivers and promoters, and of lesser-known figures, such as drivers' wives and mechanics. Lengthy quotes from interviews provide a compelling, if subjective, immediacy. The author often interweaves two or more conversations to offer opposing viewpoints without too much authorial intrusion. Frequently these interviews focus on a single racing event; the austerity of simple history thus gives way to a personalized reenactment.

Since the roots of stock car racing run deepest in the South, this book should interest North Carolinians. Public and school libraries will find it most useful. Curtis "Pops" Turner, who later lived in Charlotte, began racing in Mt. Airy in 1946; the Charlotte Motor Speedway, yearly in the news, opened in 1949; Richard Petty and Dale Earnhardt placed Level Cross and Kannapolis in many minds; and the North Carolina Motor Speedway familiarized many persons with Rockingham. South Carolina and South Carolinians, too, share largely in popularization of the sport, although the author attributes the origin of stock car racing to Georgia bootlegging.

A sports reporter and writer, Kim Chapin has contributed numerous articles to such magazines and newspapers as *Sports Illustrated*, *Car & Driver*, *The Atlanta Journal*, and *World Tennis*. He has coauthored books on tennis and running. Chapin's straightforward and easy-to-read writing style in *Fast as White Lightning* mirrors his journalistic background, and a section of black-and-white photographs adds variety. Since he takes his material directly from the people involved and from his own experience as a reporter, he uses no footnotes and appends no bibliography. An index, however, makes his information accessible to any racing fan. This should prove to be a good overall source for general information on stock car racers and racing.

Rex Klett

Anson County Library

Herald-Sun Newspaper Library, comp. **Ind-ex. An Index to: Durham Morning Herald (and) The Durham Sun.** Durham, N.C.: **Herald-Sun** Newspapers, June 1981. 88 pp. \$150.00/yr monthly subscription. \$150.00/annual cumulation. \$250.00/monthly subscription plus cumulation.

The *Herald-Sun* Newspapers have begun an index to *Durham Morning Herald* and *The Durham Sun*. This is a computerized index, published monthly with an annual cumulation. The scope and indexing depth are explained on page i of the publication:

... All the items concerning events, people and places in North Carolina, as well as selected items of regional interest are included. . . . National or international news is included only when it specifically features North Carolina or a person from the state.

Editorials, letters to the editor, obituaries and any local *Herald-Sun* by-lined materials are included regardless of subject. . . . Generally not included are syndicated columns, wire service features, marriage and birth announcements, legal notices and routine sports scores. . . .

Names of individuals are indexed when quoted heavily, the subject of a news story or feature, or noteworthy for some reason. Multiple subject headings are assigned to each item based on important names, words or concepts that appear in the article or are implied by it. Whenever possible, subject headings are specific rather than general. . . .

Ind-ex is professionally done and easy to use. Some spot-checking indicated that multiple entries can be found for stories. See-references lead one quickly to the correct subject heading. Specific subject headings are very useful when the user knows the specific subject that he is looking for, but for users who are not definite about their needs, additional cross-references would be helpful. For instance, cross-references from "Assaults" to "Durham County Jail, Assaults," "Egg Throwing," and "Pie Throwing," or from "Interest Rates" to "Loan Companies" and "Credit Bureaus" are needed to lead the user to related materials or, possibly, to the story he had in mind in the beginning.

A more consistent use of see-references is recommended. A see-reference from "Drugs, Marijuana" to "Marijuana" without a see-reference to "Heroin" may lead an individual to suppose that there are no stories on heroin. See-references and cross-references are needed to lead the user to all materials on drugs.

After studying *Ind-ex* I felt that our own *News and Observer Index* is amateurish. When I read the accompanying letter and saw the price, I thought, "Thank goodness for amateurs." Unfortunately, the price tag will put this publication out of reach of all but a few libraries. That is indeed a shame.

Martha Lapas

East Carolina University

F. Roy Johnson. ***North Carolina Indian Legends and Myths***. Illustrations by Eugenia Johnson. Murfreesboro, N.C.: Johnson Publishing Company, 1981. 112 pp. \$7.50.

What Barbara Cartland is to Gothic romances and Louis L'Amour is to Westerns, F. Roy Johnson is to books of North Carolina folklore — the most prolific author around. Johnson's books have ranged from *The Fabled Dr. Jim Jordan: A Story of Conjure* (1963) to *The Nat Turner Story* (1970). Everything in between has been covered by one or another of his twenty-odd volumes, several of which include stories somewhat similar to those in this newest book.

Persons who have read Johnson before will not be disappointed; in fact, they will be pleased with the first section of the book (pp. 8-75), "Legends Told by the English." This section gives the legendary "explanations" for the names of such natural features as Lake Waccamaw, Blowing Rock, and the Toe and Roanoke rivers. Many stories involve love and romance between Indians and whites or between Indians of tribes hostile to one another. Some tales feature truly legendary figures such as Wachita, the peacemaker of the Occaneechees, and Cherokee Princess Starlight, whose beauty made her the most sought-after of all Indian women.

The second and third parts of the book, "Mythology" and "Legends Told by the Indians," are not as good, the stories generally being shorter and more obscure.

Readers never exposed to Johnson's books may be disturbed by the physical deficiencies of this volume. Like some others in the series, it is printed in a hard-to-read brown ink, and with many typographical errors that suggest poor proofreading. The binding is not strong enough to withstand the use it will receive from children and adolescents.

Because it is by Johnson and is part of a long-standing series, many public and academic librarians will want *North Carolina Indian Legends and Myths* to add to their existing collections of his work. In the case of public libraries buying his work for the first time, it most likely belongs in the juvenile section, where it will have very high readership. School librarians should proceed with greater caution, not only because of the cited deficiencies, but also because the book is aimed toward persons already familiar with North Carolina geography.

Michael Fawcett
Charlotte, N.C.

Patricia Matthews. *Tides of Love*. New York: Bantam Books, 1981. 326 pp. \$5.95 paper.

According to her publishers, Patricia Matthews was, until a few years ago, "Just another housewife and working mother." But, with her ten best-selling novels (such as *Love's Daring Dream* and *Love's Pagan Heart*), she has managed to stir "the hearts of millions of women around the world with enthralling stories of passion set in the romantic past."

The first fifty pages of Matthew's new novel, *Tides of Love*, center on a band of wreckers operating on the Outer Banks in 1840. They are "half-savages" who make their living by causing ships to wreck and then collecting the loot that floats ashore. Marianna Harper, a fifteen-year-old wrecker with "gypsy" eyes, saves the life of a beautiful young man who has washed up on the beach from one of the ships. The two fall in love and are forced to flee the island, having killed the son of the band's leader in self-defense. The novel then follows Marianna for six years — to Charleston, to Boston (where she is taught how to be a lady), to Sag Harbor, on a Pacific whaling voyage with her new husband, and finally to her murder trial (for her second murder) in New York.

Mrs. Matthews writes that what her readers look for in her historical romances are "romance, adventure, and intriguing plot, and characters that they can identify with, and care for." In *Tides of Love*, readers certainly do get the romance (with a capital "R") and the adventure. The many flashbacks, changes in point of view from Marianna to the men of the novel, plus the bedroom scenes, Hawaiian luaus, and tips on whaling, do fill up the pages.

But at the end of the novel, evidently having run out of space, the author disposes of the main story line and several important characters very quickly and with little regard for the build-up that she has been giving them throughout the novel — not that the main story line or the characters have been all that convincing or interesting. Readers may wish to identify with the beautiful

heroine and dream about her passionate men, but there is little in the characters' make-ups to interest, and there are no surprises from them or from the plot.

Public librarians may want to purchase *Tides of Love* because of patron demand. Other librarians may want the novel for their collections on the basis of the Outer Banks material, but it cannot be recommended on the basis of its literary merits.

Judy A. Beck

New Hanover County Public Library

Pitt County Oral History Project, comp. ***A Team of Mules and A One-room School: Memories of Pitt County***. Ayden, N.C.: Clay Stroud Printing, 1981. (67) pp. \$3.00 paper (Order from Sheppard Memorial Library, 530 Evans Street, Greenville, N.C. 27834)

Librarians may want to copy this oral history project that brought together Sheppard Memorial Library, Greenville, and the Pitt County Schools in an effort funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The book is presented not as an end in itself, but as a beginning and a sampling for continuing efforts to collect oral history. The authors do not claim to be writers. They are the older people of the county who gave interviews by tape to about seventy-five children in the seventh and eighth grades. Excerpts from these tapes have been selected, organized into book form, and illustrated with photographs, making a nostalgic scrapbook.

The stated goal of the book is "to include personal memories, uniquely expressed, which contribute to the better understanding of life in Pitt County during the early decades of the century." School authorities stated that their goal of giving young people an experience in actively learning about the past by talking with those who lived and witnessed it, was accomplished.

Many expressions in the book have literary value because of their apt interpretation. "Time jumps up too fast now — time is faster than it used to be." "Families seemed to be closer then. Everybody lived closer together." "We didn't have much money, but we didn't worry about it because everybody knew everybody else and everybody was friendly."

Interviews are woven into like subjects such as "What We Wore," "What We Did for Fun," and "What We Used for Medicine." There is no attempt to give a complete description of each activity or event. Instead, the compilers gather some statements that will whet the appetite to learn more in a continuing effort to preserve the past. There are brief descriptions of lamplighters, steamboats and early trains, general stores and one-room schools, molasses making, and backpacking peddlers. The format allows rapid reading and stimulation of the imagination. The full tapes of the interviews are stored in Sheppard Memorial Library, awaiting the next project or a writer who

will blend them into one continuous account of a period of history.

Public and school libraries, particularly those interested in local history or in conducting oral history projects of their own, will find this book useful.

Jane Carroll McRae

Northwestern Regional Library

Peter Saab. *The Sweetwater Point Motel*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981. 299 pp. \$12.95.

I was anxious to review this book because it takes place on Hatteras Island. The locale is one I am familiar with and enjoy reading about. However, I could find little redeeming quality in this book.

Peter Saab is the pseudonym of a best-selling author in both England and America, and it seems best to me that he try to conceal his identity. In this tale of terror and suspense, he tells the story of Edith Burrows and her two young daughters who leave England to visit cousins in Charleston in the cold, dreary month of January. They arrive in New York City and begin the trip south, taking a side trip to Manteo to see the Lost Colony and then down Hatteras Island to catch the ferry back to the mainland. They run into a storm on Hatteras and have car trouble, from which they are "rescued" by three very troubled young people. When the travelers apparently disappear en route, Dr. Philip Burrows, Edith's brother-in-law, begins to retrace their steps.

To anyone familiar with the Outer Banks, it is obvious that Mr. Saab either has never visited them or chooses to take liberties with the locale. His sketchy descriptions of the area contain many inaccuracies. Aside from the use of place names, the Outer Banks as he describes them are barely recognizable.

The plot, though plausible, is weakly developed and obviously manipulated by the author. The overriding purpose of the story is to tell a tale of violence and terror. The characters are shallow and undeveloped. The author places too much emphasis on sadistic sex and sexual harassments of the captives and too little emphasis on the intricacies of the chase to find them. Even Dr. Burrows takes time out from his singleminded search to have a sexual encounter. *Sweetwater Point Motel* would make a great "B" movie, definitely rated "R" or "X."

I would recommend the purchase of this book for public libraries only if they have extra money.

Amy Frazer

Dare County Library

Joseph F. Steelman, ed. *Of Tar Heel Towns, Shipbuilders, Reconstructionists and Alliancemen: Papers in North Carolina History*. Greenville, N.C.: East Carolina University Department of History, 1981. 126 pp. \$4.95 paper (Order from the department, East Carolina University, Greenville, N.C. 27834)

No one interested in Tar Heel history will fail to find fascinating reading in the fifth volume of the East Carolina University Publications in History. Though three of its predecessors have included essays related to North Carolina, the present volume is the first in the series to be devoted entirely to Tar Heel history. Its four essays, each written by a member of the university's history faculty, deal with a broad range of topics, as the title suggests.

In the first essay Donald R. Lennon focuses on coastal municipalities during the colonial period — especially Edenton, New Bern, and Wilmington — and explores the forms and functions of their governments. Relying primarily on the published colonial and state records and on *The Wilmington Town Book, 1743-1778*, which he and Ida Brooks Kellam edited for publication in 1973, Lennon describes such activities as the construction of public buildings and streets, the regulation of the marketplace, the collection of revenues, fire control, and the oversight of blacks, both slave and free.

A major industry of another coastal town, Washington, North Carolina, is the subject of the essay contributed by William N. Still, whose previous works include *Confederate Shipbuilding* (1969) and *Iron Afloat* (1971). Drawing upon public records, newspapers, and manuscript collections, Still traces the development of the town's shipbuilding industry from its beginnings in the late eighteenth century through World War II. His essay, like Lennon's, illuminates a previously neglected topic.

John C. Barnett, the subject of the third essay, was an agent of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands in Charlotte from July 1865 until April 1866. Charles L. Price draws upon Barnett's correspondence and reports in the records of the Freedmen's Bureau in the National Archives to describe Barnett's policies and plans with regard to such matters as education and medical care for freedmen, suffrage, redistribution of land, and wage disputes. Though the breadth of perspective needed for a full reassessment of the Bureau's work is lacking, especially the perspective of the freedmen themselves, the essay provides many insights into the actual operations of the agency in North Carolina.

In the final essay, Lala Carr Steelman examines the relationships between Leonidas LaFayette Polk, president of the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union from 1889 until his death in 1892, and several leaders of the Alliance in North Carolina — Sydenham B. Alexander, Elias Carr, and Marion Butler. Using especially the Carr Papers at East Carolina and the Polk Papers at Chapel Hill, she documents the conflicts that developed between Polk and

his fellow North Carolinians. Her analysis provides much information unavailable in Stuart Noblin's biography of Polk and contributes to an understanding of the role of the Alliance in North Carolina politics.

Of Tar Heel Towns, Shipbuilders, Reconstructionists and Alliancemen would be a useful acquisition for public, academic, and secondary school libraries throughout the state. The volume is bound in paper with an attractive cover designed by Roger E. Kammerer, Jr. It includes ten illustrations and a ten-page index.

Robert L. Byrd
Duke University

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