
New North Carolina Films

Art Weeks, Judy Beck, and Don White

North Carolina is neither blessed with many film production facilities nor is it the home for many filmmakers. Lack of quantity, however, does not signify a lack of quality in the films that are produced. Further, when the camera lens is trained on the Tar Heel State, some wondrous images can be found on film.

Recently two films by North Carolina filmmakers have been produced about the home state. One is *North Carolina: A Special Kind of Splendor*, which was commissioned by the North Carolina Division of Travel and Tourism to serve as a promotional piece. The other film is *Are You From Dixie?*, a personal reminiscence of filmmaker Sumner Burgwyn's native Roanoke-Chowan region of North Carolina. The following text includes a critical review of each film.

North Carolina: A Special Kind of Splendor.

Director: Jere Snyder. Producer: Grady Jeffreys — Take One Productions. Distributor: Grady Jeffreys — Take One Productions. 28 min. 1982. Color. Sale: 16mm — \$240. Videocassette (all formats) — \$56.95. Free Rentals available.

North Carolina: A Special Kind of Splendor is a promotional film made for the North Carolina Division of Travel and Tourism. Appropriately, it was written and produced by a Raleigh company, Take One Productions, Limited, in association with Grady Jeffreys Associates, Inc. Two famous Tar Heel natives, Andy Griffith and TV journalist Charles Kuralt, make appearances in the film, and background music is performed by the North Carolina Symphony. The film is definitely a North Carolina product.

North Carolina: A Special Kind of Splendor takes the viewer across the state, from the coast, through the Piedmont region and to the mountains. The photography, the film's best feature, captures North Carolina's beautiful scenery, as

well as its historic towns and sites, festivals, pageants, and recreational areas.

The film is well-made and of professional quality, and it does what it was intended to do, namely, it promotes North Carolina as a variety vacationland to prospective tourists and conventioners. As you would expect, you will not find anything negative about the state in this film, and there is certainly nothing to offend you unless, of course, footage of your hometown or favorite North Carolina festival was left on the cutting room floor.

The film could have been made more interesting by including more interviews with "ordinary" North Carolinians and by giving more of a feel for the quality of everyday life. However, as an overview of the attractions of the state, it does cover quite a lot of ground, especially considering that thirty-five thousand feet of film were shot and were edited to only one thousand feet.

It is estimated that *North Carolina: A Special Kind of Splendor* will be seen by fifty million people during its first five years of distribution. Certainly the film is appropriate for a wide audience, from children in intermediate grades to senior citizens.

For in-state use, 16 mm prints of the film can be borrowed free of charge from the Media and Instructional Support Center of UNC-Chapel Hill. For use outside the state but within the eastern United States, prints can be borrowed from the Modern Talking Picture Service, also at no charge.

The Division of Travel and Tourism has a ten-minute version of the 16 mm film available for free loan, as well as video-tape and videocassette versions available for media usage.

Are You From Dixie? Director: Sumner Burgwyn. Executive producer: H.K. Burgwyn. Distributor: Sumner Burgwyn. 25 min. Color. Sale: \$400 (16 mm only).

From time to time, a film you are viewing for the first time will capture your complete attention with the opening credits, and you know that a winner is on the screen. Such a film is *Are You From Dixie?*, by North Carolina filmmaker

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Sumner Burgwyn. This loving tribute to Burgwyn's birthplace, the Roanoke-Chowan area of northeastern North Carolina, is introduced aurally by an Edison Amberol cylinder playing "Are You From Dixie?" while scenes of life in the three-county area of Hertford, Northampton, and Bertie are viewed. The simple, relaxed lifestyle of this still rural area harks back to the pre-World War II days before every small town in the South had its Sky City-Revco-Bilo shopping complex standing conspicuously on the outskirts, making one community seem like the next.

Agriculture is the basis of the economy in the Roanoke-Chowan areas, as it has always been. A farmer interviewed notes that he has tilled the same soil for almost fifty years and has seen the changes from "mule power" to "tractor power." With this transition from a labor intensive operation, of course, much has changed for the workers who remain on the farm. The lifestyle, however, has remained stable despite inroads of modernization. There is still time taken to enjoy the lazy pleasures of swimming and fishing the Roanoke-Chowan's many waterways when the warm spring arrives. At the end of a day of labor or recreation, one of the many rural country stores which endure welcomes you to enjoy a cold Orange Crush and a johnny cake. The closeness of the community and the openness to strangers is felt in the well-selected interviews conducted by the filmmaker.

The historic preservation movement is noted in scenes of several 18th century homes which are maintained in top condition by their owners. Of particular interest is Hope Plantation in Windsor, which the community is restoring to its original state. In addition, Clarence Parker's Country Store Museum has on display notions and hardware once available in the typical one-pump filling station.

Filmmaker Burgwyn states in the accompanying study guide that the film gives his personal remembrances and is not meant to be representative of the area population as a whole. Despite this, his vivid photography and appealing soundtrack, which includes authentic North Carolina rural blues sung by Arthur Lyons of Durham, make it an excellent record of a disappearing lifestyle. The film is a valuable addition for library programming and would make an interesting complement to a school or college unit on North Carolina. More importantly, after viewing the film, you will probably want to visit the Roanoke-Chowan area.

North Carolina: A Special Kind of Splendor

Purchase: Grady Jefferys Associates—Take One Productions
6400 Battlebridge Road
Raleigh, North Carolina 27610
(919) 772-2090

Rental: Free loans are available from the following resources.

(North Carolina only)
The Media and Instructional Support Center
University of North Carolina
R.B. House Undergraduate Library 063A
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514
(919) 962-2559

(Outside North Carolina)
Modern Talking Picture Service, Inc.
5000 Park Street, North
St. Petersburg, Florida 33709
(813) 541-5763

Are You From Dixie?

Purchase: Sumner Burgwyn
401 East Boulevard #1
Charlotte, North Carolina 28203

Rental: No rentals available.