

# North Carolina Books

Robert Anthony, Compiler

Federal Writers' Project (N.C.), compiler. Introduction by William S. Powell. **North Carolina: The WPA Guide to the Old North State.** Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988. 601 pp. \$29.95. ISBN 0-87249-604-X (cloth); \$14.95. 0-87249-605-8 (paper).

What was North Carolina like fifty years ago? Chapel Hill had one hotel, bus fare was 6¢ in Asheville, the Left-handed Golf Championship of the Carolinas was held at Sedgfield, and Raleigh's suburbs consisted of Cameron Park, Mordecai, and Boylan Heights. These are just a few of the facts those interested in North Carolina history can discover by reading the University of South Carolina Press reprint of **North Carolina: The WPA Guide to the Old North State**, first published in 1939 by the University of North Carolina Press. Sponsored by the North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development and compiled and written by talented local researchers and writers under the direction of the Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration, the guidebook was part of the American Guide Series, which consisted of guides to all of the old forty-eight states. The Project was established during the Great Depression in order to provide worthwhile work for the unemployed.

The reprint begins with a new introduction by William S. Powell, professor of history emeritus at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in which he provides an interesting and detailed background on how and why the guide was compiled. The guide's first section is composed of fifteen essays on the general background of the state including its agriculture, transportation, industry and labor, public education, religion, sports and recreation, folkways and folklore, arts, eating and drinking, Indians and Negroes. These essays are factual and candid accounts written by experienced writers and authorities in their fields, such as newspaper editor Jonathan Daniels, UNC professor and noted historian Hugh T. Lefler, and Duke University professor Louise Hall.

The second section presents statistics, descriptions, facts, and points of interest for each of the "13 cities and towns worth knowing." The

third and largest portion of the guide is devoted to descriptions of thirty-three tours emanating from various highway junctions, giving mileage, altitude, and 1930 population figures for and descriptions of towns along the way.

Scattered throughout the volume are numerous illustrations. Although of poorer quality than those in the original edition, the photographs depict the landscape, architecture, people, sports, and various other characteristics of the time period. Maps of various locations are included; however, a state map which was listed as being in a back pocket in the original edition was not included in the reprint. A brief chronology of the history of the state, a selected bibliography, and an index conclude the survey.

Why reprint a guidebook that is nearly fifty years old? In the words of Professor Powell, "Because it gives us a very close look at North Carolina on the eve of extensive changes which forever altered the state." While designed to be of practical use to the generation which produced it, today it is of greater value to the layperson or historian who seeks to recapture and reconstruct the past. By noting comparisons and contrasts with contemporary life, he or she may measure the velocity and direction of this change.

All in all, the guide is a well-researched account of what life in North Carolina was like in the 1930s and will be of value to anyone interested in the history of North Carolina. Recommended for public, academic, and school libraries.

Patricia A. Rogers, Wake County Public Libraries



John Bivins, Jr. *The Furniture of Coastal North Carolina, 1700-1820*. Winston-Salem: Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts; Chapel Hill: Distributed by University of North Carolina Press, 1988. 562 pp. \$95.00. ISBN 0-945578-00-8.

In a modern museum gallery, perched alone on a platform, an eighteenth-century chair sits beneath a spotlight. A small, silk-screened label nearby reads, "SIDE CHAIR, Chippendale, mahogany, ca. 1753." For too many years, in too many museums, and, for that matter, in too many books, antique furniture and other pieces of our material culture have been presented as isolated, self-contained artifacts described in sentence fragments and reverently viewed and appreciated for their skilled construction, composition, or form. A handcrafted chair may certainly be admired for any of these qualities. But its true historical value lies in its representation of our social history—as evidence in comparative studies of cultural styles, emerging industrial bases, and evolving patterns of craftsmanship. Researching and placing such artifacts into a social context and broadening one's interpretations are much more difficult tasks than merely identifying a piece of furniture and appreciating or showcasing its "artfulness."

In his *The Furniture of Coastal North Carolina, 1700-1820*, John Bivins, Jr., not only illustrates and describes in detail the types of furniture made in eastern North Carolina from the mid-Colonial through the late Federal Period, he also places these handicrafts firmly into a social context by thoroughly documenting the region's cabinet trade. Furthermore, Bivins examines the effects that the region's geographical barriers, social structure, and settlement patterns had on that trade.

As director of publications for The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) in Winston-Salem, Bivins is exposed to a wide range of historical topics, and previous works authored or co-authored by him demonstrate his many interests, including early North Carolina-made firearms and Moravian pottery, as well as furniture. It is apparent from Bivins's descriptions of furniture that he has a fine and exacting eye for detail, an eye no doubt strengthened by his additional experiences as an architectural historian and as a carver.

*The Furniture of Coastal North Carolina, 1700-1820* is divided into two main parts: the first entitled "The Setting," the second "The Furniture."

In the latter part Bivins scrutinizes the work of cabinetmakers in the Albemarle, Pamlico, and Cape Fear regions, assesses their indigenous characteristics, and also draws attention to stylistic influences imported largely through trade with New England and Middle Atlantic towns and cities and by immigrants from Virginia. This section of the book is generously illustrated with black-and-white photographs. Underside views and photographs of construction details of tables, desks, chests, and other pieces of furniture are especially well done and educational.

While the latter part of Bivins's book is highly informative, it is the first, "The Setting," that is more interesting and far more important in accomplishing the author's expressed goal: "to present an exhaustive study of one aspect of the early culture of North Carolina, placed within a framework of social history." It is in this section that Bivins records the overall effects that geography, population distribution, maritime commercial routes, and other factors had on the rise, development, and decline of the cabinetmaker's trade in North Carolina's coastal plain.

*The Furniture of Coastal North Carolina, 1700-1820* is an exhaustive study, one neither directed toward the casual reader nor one that should be relegated to display on some dilettant's coffee table. The extensive amount of information contained in Bivins's book has applications not only for the serious study of furniture and the cabinet trade as a whole; it is also an excellent source for anyone studying North Carolina's early economy, transportation, labor practices (particularly the apprentice system), or architectural history. Reference value is enhanced even more by a well-organized index, bibliographical notes, and appendixes that include an alphabetical listing of hundreds of woodworkers, details of their businesses, and their specific locations.

Mr. Bivins's book is the first in MESDA's Frank L. Horton Series, a series that seeks to identify and examine in depth the works of southern artisans. This first publication has set a very high standard for subsequent volumes. Suffice it to say, at risk of stretching for metaphors, that John Bivins is clearly not content working with veneers in reconstructing our past. *The Furniture of Coastal North Carolina, 1700-1820* is a book that is solid through and through and would be an important addition to any library's shelves.

R. Neil Fulghum, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Howard E. Covington, Jr. *Belk: A Century of Retail Leadership*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988. 308 pp. \$12.95. ISBN 0-8078-1822-4.

Henry Belk established a small dry goods store in Monroe, North Carolina, in 1888. As the store succeeded, he planned to expand his business to nearby locations. Since 1888, the operation of the company he founded has become an increasingly sophisticated enterprise. Belk stores now operate in 325 cities and towns in 19 states and Puerto Rico. Howard Covington traces the development of the business and contrasts the types of management Belk employed over the years to maintain its competitiveness in the marketplace.

Although the Belk family has controlled the course of the Belk business over the past century, many changes have taken place. Henry Belk instituted a practice of partnerships with local businessmen in areas in which he wanted to do business; thus, Raleigh has Hudson-Belk stores, Wilmington has Belk-Beery, and the stores in Virginia bear the Leggett name. John Belk, president of Belk Stores Services since the 1950s, focused on moving stores into newly developing shopping malls rather than traditional downtown locations, upgraded the quality of merchandise lines to include designer labels, and approved the issuance of Belk system credit cards.

The author effectively correlates innovations made by Belk with national trends in sales and merchandising. He describes the economic impact the Belks have made in the South through philanthropy, as well as the growth and expansion of their business. The author credits the assistance of members of the Belk family and employees of Belk in producing a work that is a celebration of a century of accomplishment in retail trade. The book includes many photographs from both the early years of the business and recent events, and it is well indexed.

Covington, a former journalist with the *Charlotte Observer* and the *Greensboro News and Record*, utilizes a straightforward, readable style. He offers insight into the character of various Belk family members and provides a sense of the business climate in which the company has developed and flourished. This book holds great appeal for those who are interested in North Carolina business, the history of retailing, or entrepreneurship in general. It is recommended for both public and academic libraries.

Margaret Jackson, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

William R. Trotter. *Silk Flags and Cold Steel: The Civil War in North Carolina, Volume I: The Piedmont*. Greensboro: Piedmont Impressions, Inc., 1988. 385 pp. \$19.95. ISBN 0-929307-01-1.

*Silk Flags and Cold Steel*, the work of Greensboro freelance historian William Trotter, is the initial entry in a projected trilogy on the Civil War in North Carolina. Subjects covered in the first volume, which is devoted to the Piedmont, include the outbreak of war, state mobilization, Governor Zebulon Baird Vance's administration, life on the home front, conscription, desertion, the peace movement, Salisbury prison, the battles of Averasboro and Bentonville, and the Confederate surrender at Durham. There are six maps and a section of contemporary photographs and illustrations, a bibliography, and a detailed index. The second and third volumes, yet to be published, will describe the war in the mountain and coastal regions respectively.

The general audience for which this book is intended will find it a useful descriptive compendium of political, social, and military events. It incorporates many of the secondary materials that have appeared on these subjects in recent years and is engagingly, if somewhat breezily, written. Yet as a comprehensive history it also has numerous weaknesses. Trotter's unconventional organization, which subdivides topics geographically, promises to be both awkward and redundant. Many of his conclusions are highly partisan. Governor Vance, for example, is described heroically and uncritically throughout: "If North Carolina did not, then, produce a battlefield commander comparable in fame to Lee, Jackson, or Forrest, it did at least produce a civilian wartime leader of similar stripe" (p. 89). Confederate President Jefferson Davis's correspondence with the contentious chief executive reveals "a hint of personal resentment at the vigor of Vance's thought, the loyalty Vance commanded, the efficiency of

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his administration, and the virility of his youthful good health" (p. 119). By far the worst problem, however, is a lack of adequate documentation. Many chapters have no footnotes whatever, and others only a single reference or two. Trotter does not appear to have consulted primary sources, and his bibliography of secondary works is hardly complete. In conducting his research he apparently did not visit any libraries, museums, or archives outside the city of Greensboro.

Some of these deficiencies may be corrected in the two forthcoming volumes. Meanwhile, readers should continue to rely on John G. Barrett's old but thorough study, *The Civil War in North Carolina*, and on the many more recent specialized works that supplement it.

Everard H. Smith, Triangle Universities Security Seminar

### Other Publications of Interest

With publication of *The Architectural Heritage of Greenville, North Carolina*, the Greenville Area Preservation Association presents an attractive and informative study of the built environment of a leading city of the North Carolina coastal plain. Architectural descriptions of over two hundred buildings, accompanied by black-and-white photographs, demonstrate the varied character of the city. Most structures analyzed are located in the city's older neighborhoods and were constructed before 1935. They include the celebrated and the ordinary—elaborate mansion and modest bungalow, courthouse and tobacco warehouse, college dormitory and soft drink bottling plant. The significant loss of much of the city's architectural heritage—apparently a continuing problem—is revealed through photographs and descriptions of now demolished structures. Also included is a brief history of Greenville, a glossary of architectural terms, and an index. Edited by East Carolina University librarian Michael Cotter, the book may be ordered from Greenville Area Preservation Association, P.O. Box 673, Greenville, N.C. 27835; \$24.95; cloth; 201 pp.

Examples of Nature's breathtaking touch on Western North Carolina are dramatically captured in *The Land of Waterfalls: Transylvania County, North Carolina*, by author/photographer Jim Bob Tinsley. Full page black-and-white photographs of sixty-one representative waterfalls—there are hundreds in what has been called the "paradise of Cascadia"—illustrate the scenic wonders created as rivers, creeks, and streams

convey the drainage of one of Eastern America's highest rainfalls across an area of abrupt shifts in land elevation. Tinsley, trained as an aerial photographer for the U.S. Navy in World War II, accompanies his photographs with discussions of the discovery and name origins of the waterfalls featured. Also included are brief histories of the locally crafted Gillespie long rifle, early Caucasian hunters in the region, and a celebrated area outlaw and moonshiner. The book is available from the author at 125 Miner Street, Brevard, N.C. 28712 (May-Oct.) or P.O. Box 311, Ocala, Fla. 32678 (Nov.-Apr.); ISBN 09620119-0-8; \$25.00; hardcover; 173 pp.

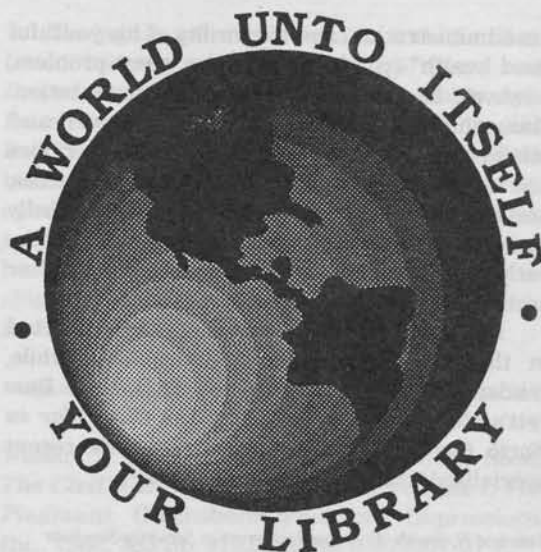
The basic facts concerning most of the North Carolina individuals, events, and legends featured in *A Treasury of Carolina Tales*, by Webb Garrison, have been so often included in books and pamphlets that they are probably familiar to most Tar Heels. Notables such as Blackbeard, Wilbur and Orville Wright, Dorothea Dix, and the Bunker Siamese twins, are usually covered in state history textbooks; and teachers and librarians undoubtedly can cite a number of other sources for further information on such figures. Garrison, a freelance writer, includes sketches of several lesser known people and events, such as nineteenth-century physician Elizabeth Blackwell, businessman/philanthropist J. B. Fuqua, and gun designer Richard Gatling. But the information provided is limited, leaving the reader wishing for a little more detail. Although a welcome effort at making some of the more interesting historical figures and legends of the Carolinas more accessible to the general reader, *A Treasury of Carolina Tales* offers nothing new on the better known and only sketchy treatment of the more obscure. The book may be ordered from Rutledge Hill Press, 513 Third Avenue South, Nashville, Tenn. 37210; ISBN 0-934395-75-6; \$8.95; hardcover; 158 pp.

Memories of the Carolina seashore during the "pre-condominium era of the late 1950s" are the focus of E. T. Malone, Jr.'s, recent poetry booklet *The View from Wrightsville Beach*. Malone spent the summers of his fifteenth and sixteenth years at Wrightsville Beach, where his parents operated an apartment building. His twelve poems, illustrated with black-and-white photographs of family and friends, recall the youthful quest for friendship and experience, for life and love. Orders should be directed to Literary Lantern Press, 103 Carl Drive, Rt. 4, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27516; ISBN 0-9621668-0-4; \$8.95, plus \$1.50 tax and postage; paper; 45 pp.

The North Carolina Writers' Network is dis-

tributing copies of Isabel Zuber's *Oriflamb*, the winner of the Network-sponsored 1987 Poetry Chapbook Award. This collection of nineteen terse, serious poems by Winston-Salem resident Zuber was judged best of competition by nationally noted writer Fred Chappell. *Oriflamb* is available from the Network at P.O. Box 954, Carrboro, N.C. 27510; \$4.95; paper; 36 pp.

The April 1989 issue (vol. 66, no. 2) of the *North Carolina Historical Review* includes "North Carolina Bibliography, 1987-1988." This bibliography of approximately 550 entries is the latest in an annual series that lists books about North Carolina subjects or by or about North Carolinians, natives or current residents. The *Review* is a quarterly publication of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History.



### Library Administration and Management Section Formed

A new section of NCLA named "Library Administration and Management Section" (LAMS) has been approved by the Executive Board of NCLA. LAMS will hold its first program and organization meeting at the NCLA conference in October in Charlotte. Patterned (to some degree) after LAMA, a division of ALA, the mission of LAMS of NCLA will be to provide an organizational framework for improving the practice of administration in libraries and for identifying and fostering administrative skills. The section will meet its responsibility by aiding the professional development of personnel interested in administration and management and by planning and developing programs, study, and research in library administration and management problems.

NCLA members who are interested in administration and management are encouraged to designate a preference for this section (LAMS) at the time of payment of biennial associational dues. NCLA members may join LAMS any time during the year, however, by notifying the treasurer and paying section dues.

All attending the NCLA conference are cordially invited to attend the program and organizational meeting of LAMS on Thursday, October 12, from 9 to 10:30 AM.

For additional information, one may contact LAMS Steering Committee Chair, Miss Nancy Ray, Director, Southern Pines Public Library, 180 S.W. Broad St., Southern Pines 28387, Phone: 919-692-8235.



INTERNATIONAL LITERACY YEAR

1990

Barry Moser has created a poster on 1990 International Literacy Year for the Children's Book Council. The poster, measuring 24" x 32½", is in six colors. It costs \$15.00 and is shipped rolled in a mailing tube. Send a 25¢ stamped, self-addressed envelope to CBC (P.O. Box 706, New York, NY 10276-0706) for *Current Materials Brochure* for details.