

New North Carolina Books

by William C. Burris

Professor of Political Science
Guilford College

WALTER WHITAKER. *Centennial History of Alamance County 1849-1949*. (Burlington: Alamance County Historical Association, 1975.) 270 pp. Maps, photographs, index. Order from the publisher.

This county history, subtitled "A Birthday in Progress", was written by a young amateur historian in collaboration with Staley A. Cook and A. Howard White, editors of the *Burlington Times-News*. Published in 1949, it is being reprinted under the auspices of the Alamance County Historical Association by the Seeman Printery of Durham. It will be available early in 1975.

It is a general, descriptive account of the growth and development of Alamance County over a hundred-year period. Though it captures rather well the flavor of the early days in Alamance, its principal value is the identification and brief discussion of the people and groups that played significant roles in the educational, political, and industrial growth of the county. It is unfortunate that this history has not been revised and updated. County histories, however, are difficult to prepare and few professional historians take any interest in such local projects. More importantly, the declining status of counties as administrative units of government sug-

gests that local history perhaps should be written around some other focus.

ROBERT W. REISING. *Jim Thorpe: Tar Heel*. (Rocky Mount: Communique, Inc., 1974.) 34 pp. photographs, statistics. Order from the publisher.

How many North Carolinians have ever heard of a baseball player named "Wa-Tho-Hook"? He played in the old Coastal Plain League with teams in Rocky Mount and Fayetteville. I had not until I read this slim little volume about the great American athlete Jim Thorpe. Written by Professor Robert Reising of Pembroke State University, this study links Thorpe's Olympic victories, and the subsequent retraction of his medals and honors, to the sandy playing fields of Eastern North Carolina. Reising knows the game of baseball and he tells an interesting tale. Thorpe comes through these pages as a talented, rough-and-tumble, highly likable young Indian who drew baseball fans to the games by the hundreds. The tragedy of the story is the action of Olympic officials in ruling that the "Big Chief" was a professional athlete because of his summer pastimes in the sand lots of Rocky Mount and Fayetteville. This brief study is part of a full-length biography of Thorpe presently being prepared by the author.

DAVID REID HODGIN. *The Lower Animal*. (Boone: The Minor Press, 1974.) 24 pp. Order from the author, Route No. 1, Box 120, Boone, N. C. 28607 Add .25 for postage.

Now and again small, privately printed works come to our attention and say things that need to be said. Unfortunately, they are not widely read. For me at least, this little volume, containing two poems and a parable, fits this description. It is not really a work about North Carolina, but the author views mankind from the mountains of the state and what he says about human beings in general certainly applies to North Carolinians.

The first piece, "The Lower Animal: A Parable in Doggeral For Our Day," strikes my fancy because I have long suspected that the hierarchy of man and beast might properly be reversed. "To see ourselves as others see us" is good advice. Hodgin tells us how our animal friends see us. An example:

No beast on earth save money-
loving Man
Will take a beautiful thing to profit by
And warp and degrade it every
way he can
Until the clean thing turns to a
filthy lie.

It goes on like that, and there is a lot of truth here.

The two poems, "Homo Insapiens" and "Who Dared to Walk Erect," speak also to the cruel and rapacious nature of man, but they contain seeds of hope and optimism and reveal the author's belief that "Reverence for life is the one true, ultimate gospel."

NELL WISE WECHTER. *Teach's Light*. (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, Publisher, 1974.) \$4.95. Illustrations by Bruce Tucker.

Young readers who are interested in ghost stories or swashbuckling tales of the sea will enjoy this novel. It is a fictionalized account of Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard, a bloodthirsty pirate who plied

his trade along the outer banks of North Carolina. The story is cast as a fantasy of two youngsters who set out to find the source of "Teach's Light" in the Little Dis-mal Swamp. They are caught up by a ghostly illumination and carried back through time to Blackbeard's youth. They follow his career from a tavern in Bristol, through his apprenticeship in a British privateer, to his final glory and death in the shallow coves around Ocracoke Island.

Mrs. Wechter has won numerous awards for children's books. As an experienced novelist she spins a good yarn, and as a successful public school teacher she knows about the things that young people enjoy. This volume maintains both the quality and style of her earlier works. An entertaining story, *Teach's Light* also gives the young reader an accurate account of one of North Carolina's most notorious citizens — Blackbeard the pirate.

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