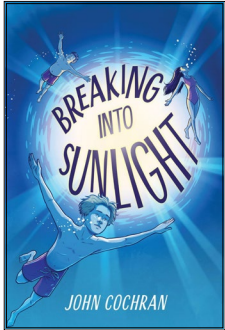


North Carolina Books

Compiled by Laura Mangum



Breaking Into Sunlight

John Cochran
New York: Algonquin Young Readers
Workman Publishing, 2024.
300 pp. \$17.99.
ISBN 978-1-5235-2729-8

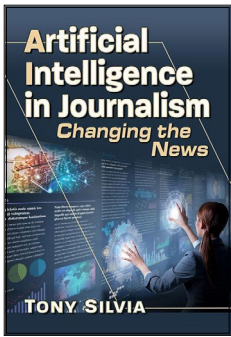
Reese is angry - angry at his mom, angry at his constant moves, angry at his mom's church friend, angry that he must hide his situation from his friends, angry that his birthday was ruined. Mostly, though, Reese knows that the only person he should be angry with is his dad.

Reese just finished seventh grade and lives in a small fictional town in rural eastern North Carolina, not too far from the Albemarle Sound. After Reese comes home to find his dad barely breathing from yet another opioid overdose, his mom takes drastic measures and moves the two of them out of the small city where he can walk to his friends' houses and to school, and into a small trailer on the remote farm and river property of a family from church. Summer break has just begun, and Reese is stuck in a run-down trailer on a farm away from all that is familiar. Meg, who is Reese's age, and her brother Charlie, who has Down syndrome, live with their grandparents, the owners of the farm and trailer where Reese and his mom are staying. Meg and Charlie lost both of their parents in a tragic car accident and were relocated to live with their grandparents. It is through their growing friendship and the rural North Carolina landscape of the farm and river that Reese starts to heal. Like anyone who has a family member struggling with addiction, Reese experiences episodes of ups and downs with his dad, but he grows to understand that his dad may never be okay. He finally lets go of his anger and has hope: hope in his mom and

her love for him and his dad, hope in a new move, hope in a family that graciously provided, hope in new friends and old, and hope because his dad is accepting treatment for the first time.

Breaking Into Sunlight is a debut novel for John Cochran. While not from North Carolina, Cochran lived in the state for a number of years as a journalist, reporting and traveling through many small rural counties. He has experienced life with a family member struggling with addiction. And he learned that one in eight children in the United States are experiencing it, too. It is through this insight that he tells Reese's story. *Breaking Into Sunlight* is a great middle school novel or could even be for early high school readers. Reese's challenges are easily believable and begin early in the story when his dad overdoses. The struggles continue when he is moved away from all that is familiar and must make new friends. They culminate when his dad starts to re-enter his life, but has a horrible drug-influenced car accident that leaves him hospitalized. This is the breaking point for both Reese and his father. In his hurt, Reese lashes out at everyone, including sweet Charlie, who is hurt and runs away. Reese is devastated that his actions have harmed someone else and comes to the realization that he cannot be like his dad, letting his actions, regardless of what they are, hurt others. His character matures emotionally throughout the book. His new friendships with Meg and Charlie and the strength of his relationship with his mother both contribute to his growth. This relatable story would be an excellent addition to a school library or the young adult section of the public library. It is a story for those who have not experienced Reese's situation to gain an empathetic glimpse into that life. Ultimately, though, it's a story for those who have walked in Reese's shoes to know they are not alone.

Tracey Patterson, MLIS
Perma-Bound Books



Artificial Intelligence in Journalism: Changing the News

Tony Silvia
Jefferson, NC: McFarland &
Company Inc., 2025.
204 pp. \$39.95.
ISBN: 978-1-4766-9408-5

Artificial intelligence is a hot topic at present, and publications are exploring it in many ways. This book focuses on AI as it pertains to journalism, incorporating current and possible future uses of AI in the field as well as ethical issues surrounding it. It would have benefited from some additional editing to reduce typos and grammatical inconsistencies, but the content is well-researched and sound. The author spent his career in broadcast journalism, has taught at the university level, and has written several previous books on journalism-related topics (*Dyslexia and the Journalist* and *Journalism and the Pandemic*, among others), so he is well-qualified.

The book begins with a useful overview of what artificial intelligence is and how it has grown in recent years, including an explanation of new Large Language Model technologies such as ChatGPT. It also discusses the history of computers, specifically AI use in journalism (it's older than you think), and how it has been used in ways unrelated to the current LLM craze. The author then suggests general ways AI could be used in the newsroom, such as refining ideas and facilitating collaboration. There is a very interesting chapter about how recent developments, such as the free Internet and social media, along with the dawn of AI, have affected journalism's business model and how journalism can and must adapt.

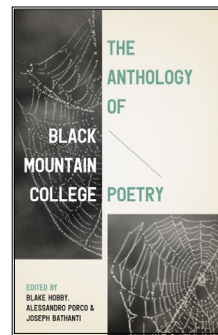
The book has several short chapters on AI's impact in particular areas of journalism, including political reporting, investigative journalism, and the newer field of social media-based journalism. One of the longest chapters in the book is about ethics. The many ethical issues related to AI use are woven throughout the book, but are concentrated on in this chapter. Job loss, misinformation, and basic journalistic ethics are the primary focus, and the information includes measures already being taken by journalism organizations and individual news outlets.

There is little to no mention of the ethical issues of copyright or the environmental cost of AI, but the discussions of other ethical issues are sound and quite useful. The final chapter of the book considers the future of journalism in the AI era, and includes thoughtful interviews with several people with expertise in journalism and/or technology.

The book has several appendices. One is a template for a newsroom AI policy. Next is an analysis of such policies from news organizations. The analysis is solid, but the appendix title, "Examples of AI Policies in 52 Newsrooms," is misleading—there are no actual policies there. The appendices also include suggested principles for AI adoption, and—possibly the most useful part of the entire book—a 10-step guide to adopting AI in newsrooms. There is also a list of further reading and a brief, not very useful index.

Overall, this book is a good introduction to the topic and useful to anyone in the field of journalism. Those outside of the field will likely find this book of little interest unless they are passionate about AI. Recommended for academic libraries that support journalism programs.

Lara B. Little
Pfeiffer University



The Anthology of Black Mountain College Poetry

Blake Hobby, Alessandro Porco, and Joseph Bathanti, eds.
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press in association with the Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center, 2025.
476 pp. \$39.95.
ISBN 978-1-4696-8344-7(paperback)

In 1960, Donald Allen published his influential anthology *The New American Poets: 1945-1960*, which identified Black Mountain College (BMC), in rural western North Carolina, as a locus of cutting-edge poetry, contemporaneous with The Beats and other writers in more established literary cities like New York and San Francisco. Ten of the fifty poets chosen were faculty or students at Black Mountain College, or appeared in the *Black Mountain Review*. Although the college had closed three years earlier,

Allen considered those writers (including Charles Olson, who led BMC in the 1950's) important enough to group them into one of five sections, helping to establish the legacy of the school. That legacy has continued to grow in subsequent years, with Black Mountain College remaining influential to writers, visual artists, artisans, and those interested in experimental, interdisciplinary education.

Sixty-five years later *The Anthology of Black Mountain Poetry* expands on the original ten highlighted by Allen in *New American Poets*, increasing the number of BMC writers represented through a more diverse selection process, with more contributions from women, students, and visiting instructors, as well as authors cut from Allen's book and previously unpublished work. This new anthology extends the timeline to include pieces from throughout the college's history, 1933-1957, and others written after its closure, providing a more complete view of the poetry produced, educational experience, and influence of Black Mountain College.

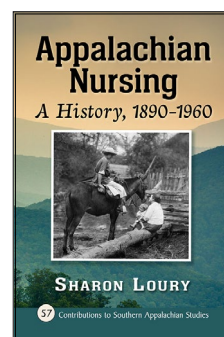
The Anthology of Black Mountain Poetry is divided into sections: faculty, visiting faculty, students, and affiliates (who visited the campus or published in the *Black Mountain Review*). The introduction provides historical background and brief biographies for each author to accompany the selected poems for additional context. The appendix and notes will help interested readers find more BMC poetry and history, some from obscure sources that would be difficult to find on the internet, and include selected works of several poets for which they were unable to obtain publishing rights. The book highlights both the interdisciplinary ethos and prominence placed on poetry, with selections from Josef Albers, the Bauhaus-trained visual artist and first Rector of BMC, the architect and inventor Buckminster Fuller, and avant-garde composer John Cage. Also represented is Mary Caroline "M.C." Richards, who may best personify the multi-hyphenate scholar and artist. She was hired as a literature professor, helped found the campus printshop and pottery, and later published *Centering*, a reflection on creativity and education, which combined essays and poetry.

The editors Blake Hobby, Alessandro Porco, and Joseph Bathanti each bring unique expertise to the book. Blake Hobby, a longtime BMC scholar, is the

former executive editor of the *Journal of Black Mountain College Studies*, which he co-founded in 2009. Alessandro Porco, Associate Professor of English at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, brings extensive knowledge of BMC poets and contemporary poetics to the project. Lastly, Joseph Bathanti, Professor of Interdisciplinary Education at Appalachian State University, is a former North Carolina Poet Laureate (2012-2014), whose encounter with a copy of Allen's *New American Poets* early in his academic life began his longstanding interest in BMC. In addition to their expertise in poetry, the history of the college, and educational philosophy, the editors had access to archival materials at the Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center and the State Archives of North Carolina in Asheville.

The Anthology of Black Mountain Poetry is an important follow-up to Allen's *New American Poets*. The product of years of scholarship, the book is thoughtfully selected and well-researched, with informative, insightful commentary; it is inspirational, illuminating the vital importance of poetry to so many who attended or taught at Black Mountain College. Highly recommended for academic libraries and public libraries focused on the arts in North Carolina or patrons with a significant interest in poetry.

Chip Larkin
North Carolina Wesleyan University



Appalachian Nursing: A History, 1890-1960

Sharon Loury.
Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company,
2025 193 pp. \$39.95
ISBN 978-1-4766-7541-1

Sharon Loury's first book, *Appalachian Nursing: A History, 1890-1960*, documents the history and evolution of the nursing profession in an important, but frequently overlooked, geographic region of the United States. The author, an associate professor of nursing at East Tennessee State University, has served as the university's College of Nursing historian and

taught nursing for 29 years. This well-researched book is enriched by content from archival collections, personal conversations, oral interviews, letters, and other primary sources.

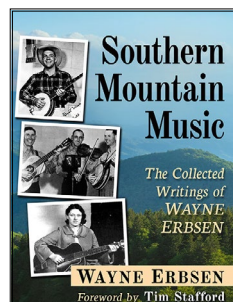
Appalachian Nursing focuses on a subregion of Central and Southern Appalachia consisting of 165 counties located in Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Georgia. Loury has divided her book into three major sections: Geographic Setting and Early Healthcare; The Evolution of Nursing Education and Professional Nursing; and Early Nursing Practice. The first section describes the region's settlement and discusses early healthcare, herbal remedies, and the healing arts practiced by traditional healers, granny midwives, and self-taught family members prior to the establishment of medical schools and nursing education in the 1800s.

The second section of the book focuses on the history of nurses' training, which began in the early 1870s in the U.S. and was typically based on Florence Nightingale's training programs established in England a decade earlier. These nurse training programs began in large Eastern cities and did not make their way to the Appalachian region until the late 1890s. This section also focuses on the professionalization of nursing in the region through the establishment of educational standards, nursing curricula, and the licensing of nurses by the National League for Nursing and the American Nurses Association. Of special interest in this section are the brief histories of nurses' training schools located in the core of Appalachia in the 1920s and 1930s.

The last section of the book, focused on early nursing practice, is the richest for readers interested in the evolution of nursing roles and firsthand experiences of individual nurses. Loury discusses employment in the region with a special focus on rural and visiting nurses who traveled to homes and clinics, treated the sick and injured and provided delivery, obstetrical, and public health services. Visiting nurses included those working with the Frontier Nurses Service and nurses who came to the region through the mission and settlement movement in Appalachia. Lastly, Loury provides brief anecdotes of Appalachian nurses who worked closely with the railroad and coal mining industries and those who served in the military from the Spanish-American War to the Korean War.

Libraries collecting materials in the history of medicine or the Appalachian region as well as public and academic libraries in these states should consider purchasing this book. Its extensive bibliography and anecdotal vignettes would also be useful for history students exploring U.S. women's employment during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Teresa W. LePors
Elon University



Southern Mountain Music: The Collected Writings of Wayne Erbsen

Wayne Erbsen
Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2025.
210 pp. \$39.95.
ISBN 978-1476696461

Wayne Erbsen's *Southern Mountain Music* is a personal and historically rich journey into the heart of Appalachian and early bluegrass music. A longtime musician, educator, and scholar, Erbsen has spent decades documenting the lives and legacies of foundational figures in traditional Southern music. In this book, he brings together many of his previously published essays, several of which date back to the 1970s and '80s, to paint a vivid picture of the people, places, and sounds that shaped this musical heritage.

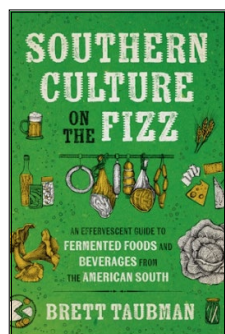
The book is organized into six chapters and two appendices, covering topics such as old-time pioneers, early brother duets, fiddlers, banjo players, influential bluegrass musicians, and the origins of beloved songs. Erbsen doesn't simply recount history; he transports readers to the homes, festivals, and recording studios where that history was made. Drawing from firsthand interviews, he preserves the voices of musicians who might otherwise have been lost to time. He highlights pioneers like Ernest "Pop" Stoneman, the Carter Family, and Lesley Riddle, alongside fiddlers, banjo pickers, and songwriters such as Eck Robertson, Jim Shumate, Earl Scruggs, William Shakespeare Hays, and Jimmy Bond. Notably, Erbsen also includes contemporary voices like Canadian fiddler Aynsley Porchak, bridging the gap between past and present.

One of the book's greatest strengths is its blend of scholarship and storytelling. Readers can expect historical insights alongside colorful anecdotes, everything from tales of a haunted fiddler to reflections on cowboy imagery in bluegrass. The tone is approachable and often humorous, making this book appealing to both scholars and casual fans. Over 100 archival photographs enhance the narrative and bring these lesser-known figures to life.

Southern Mountain Music is particularly well-suited for academic libraries, public library local history collections, and high school media centers with strong regional studies or music programs. Its accessibility also makes it valuable for general readers, musicians, and music educators. Erbsen, based in Asheville, North Carolina, brings special attention to the musicians and musical traditions rooted in the state. His writing captures the texture of North Carolina's cultural landscape, offering important contributions to both Appalachian and American music history.

The book's value lies not only in its content but in the perspective it offers—personal, deeply informed, and passionate. Readers interested in folk traditions, Southern culture, and American roots music will find this an engaging and enlightening read. For libraries seeking to enrich their collections with regionally significant, entertaining, and educational nonfiction, *Southern Mountain Music* is highly recommended.

Erin Gray
East Carolina University



Southern Culture on the Fizz: An Effervescent Guide to Fermented Foods and Beverages from the American South

Brett Taubman.
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2025.
298 pp. \$35.00.
ISBN 978-1-4696-8541-0

Fermentation is derived from the Latin word *fervere*, which means “to be hot, boil.” Thus begins a rather fun journey into the history of fermentation by first-time author Brett Taubman.

Taubman is a professor at Appalachian State University in the Department of Chemistry and Fermentation Sciences, as well as the director of the Fermentation Sciences program, which he helped to develop. In his debut book, *Southern Culture on the Fizz: An Effervescent Guide to Fermented Foods and Beverages from the American South*, Taubman combines history, recipes, and chemistry to create an interesting read for those who aspire to do their own home fermentation and for those who enjoy reading about the history of food and food culture.

This book is separated into four parts covering fruits and vegetables, meats, dairy, and fermented beverages and alcohol. These parts are further separated into chapters covering the past, present, and future of fermentation, including recipes for each topic.

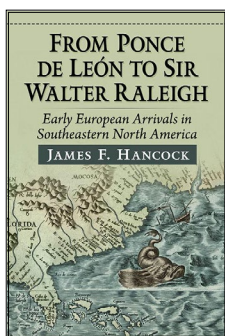
Taubman ensures that the southern United States' fermentation history, especially North Carolina's place in it, is represented in his book. He makes his readers aware that Boone, North Carolina, was the sauerkraut capital of the South for a few decades starting in the early 1920s. The American Miso Company in Rutherfordton was founded in 1979 and is now the largest producer of organic miso worldwide. Not to forget that Wilkes County, North Carolina, is the historic moonshine capital of the United States.

Taubman sprinkles his sense of humor throughout this book, while he focuses on the history of fermentation, recipes, and his prognostications regarding the direction of different types of fermentations. His anecdotes help tell his story and allow non-STEM oriented people to understand and enjoy his writing. Tidbits such as “It’s what you might expect if yogurt and cream cheese fell in love and had delicious, creamy children” (p. 160), when referring to Skyr, an Icelandic yogurt (but technically cheese), make reading the book fun and unforgettable.

Along with a smattering of photographs taken at his lab of his students happily stuffing sausages in their casings and squishing grapes to make wine, this book has recipes that are both historically southern and non-southern, and a section on unit conversion (along with his argument as to why the metric system is superior to the one used in America). The bibliography is extensive, and the index makes finding references easy.

This book would be a nice addition to public libraries, and colleges and universities with culinary and beer brewing programs. Taubman's writing style makes the history of fermented foods appealing to a general audience, but is informative and instructive enough to use in an educational setting. Although some of the explanations regarding chemical reactions may be a little beyond someone whose last chemistry class was in high school, the book is easy to follow, and the recipes are written simply with few ingredients.

Dana Glauner
South Piedmont Community College



From Ponce de León to Sir Walter Raleigh: Early European Arrivals in Southeastern North America

James F. Hancock.
Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc.
Publishers, 2025.
191 pp. \$39.95.
ISBN 9781476695785.

The early history of European exploration and settlement in eastern North America is often reduced to familiar English colonies such as Jamestown (1607) and Plymouth (1620), overshadowing earlier Spanish and French endeavors. In *From Ponce de León to Sir Walter Raleigh: Early European Arrivals in Southeastern North America*, James F. Hancock brings this lesser-known era to life, in a compelling and accessible account of the European presence in the southeastern region of what would become the United States, long before the English colonies took root.

This book opens with Christopher Columbus's brutal occupation and colonization of the Caribbean Island of Hispaniola, but its central narrative begins in 1513 with the arrival of Ponce de León in the region he named "La Florida." Over the following decades, other Spanish conquistadors ventured into the Southeast as far as North Carolina and Arkansas, as Spain sought to expand its empire into North America. Though the Spanish were unsuccessful in their efforts to find precious metals and gems in this

region, they nevertheless established the settlement of St. Augustine, the oldest continuously occupied settlement of European origin in the U.S., and made inroads in their efforts to Christianize Indigenous peoples.

Hancock also explores the efforts of French Huguenots—Protestants who attempted to settle in territories claimed by Catholic Spain—highlighting the vulnerability of these early colonies and the often-violent rivalries among European powers. The book concludes with an account of English statesman Sir Walter Raleigh's unsuccessful attempts to establish a colony in what is now the Outer Banks of North Carolina.

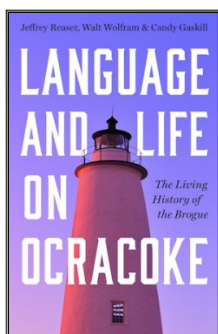
The book is rich in detail, naming Indigenous communities encountered by European explorers, such as the Taíno in the Caribbean, the Apalachee in Florida, and the Coosa in Georgia. One of its strengths is the use of firsthand accounts from the explorers themselves, which reveal the sophistication of Indigenous societies through descriptions of their lifeways and the complex relationships that developed between them and the Europeans. Hancock does not shy away from the darker aspects of this history, addressing the violence, disease, forced labor, and displacement brought on by European incursions. He also highlights the dangers faced by the explorers, such as shipwrecks, starvation, and hostile encounters with Indigenous peoples and other Europeans.

Books published by McFarland & Company often omit footnotes to emphasize accessibility for a broader audience. This book uses in-text citations instead. The author's extensive bibliography reflects the wide range of sources consulted. A brief index is included at the end. The book contains several engravings depicting explorers, but the inclusion of maps detailing European movements among Native American settlements would be more useful to the reader.

Hancock is a University Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Michigan State University. In addition to this work, he also published *From John Cabot to Henry Hudson: Early European Arrivals in Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic North America*. He has published works on plant evolution and the Columbian Exchange and the widespread transfer of plants, animals, people, agriculture, and diseases after 1492.

This book will appeal to anyone interested in deepening their understanding of the Age of Exploration and settlement, particularly through its focus on Spanish, French, and Indigenous experiences in the southeastern United States. It is suitable for college and public libraries.

Linda Jacobson
UNC Chapel Hill



***Language and Life on Ocracoke:
The Living History of the Brogue***

Jeffrey Reaser, Walt Wolfram, &
Candy Gaskill.
Chapel Hill: The University of North
Carolina Press, 2025.
296 p. \$25.00.
ISBN: 9781469685298

It is a rare treat to read a book with ties to my childhood. Growing up on the coast of North Carolina was unique in many ways. One such way was the distinctive accent or brogue that many adults in my orbit spoke. This brogue was said to be a remnant of the early explorations and settlement of the Outer Banks of North Carolina by the English. I never put much stock in it. I was more intrigued by the fact that my neighbor sounded like something out of a Renaissance play.

In their new book *Language and Life on Ocracoke: The Living History of the Brogue*, Jeffrey Reaser and Walt Wolfram of N.C. State's English department, and Candy Gaskill, a lifelong resident of Ocracoke, have set out to dispel myths and legends of "The Brogue." Concurrently, the authors make the case that this brogue is not only legitimate, but is sadly in danger of erasure by the ebb and flow of residents leaving the island and non-locals establishing their own roots (p. 18).

This book is the continuation of research by the authors over several decades. Starting with an organic interest in the island and recommendations from colleagues in the early 1990s, Wolfram began to meet and study the locals who preserved and cherished their local brogue. From that original research trip with five students and one resident willing to meet

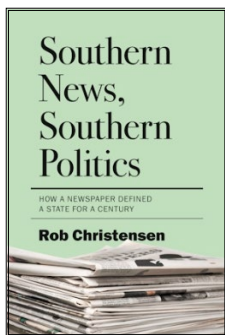
with the group, the N.C. State initiative has grown tremendously over three decades.

This is one of the more comprehensive studies of this topic. Ocracoke is a microcosm in linguistic terms and the authors have gone to great lengths to showcase not only the academic interest in the island, but more importantly, the islanders' drive to share their story with the world. Although it suffers from a lack of suggested readings or works cited, this omission does not detract from the message and accessibility of the book.

The accessibility of this book is what makes it an ideal title for high school and public libraries as well as academic institutions. Curious readers might approach an academic book about a very niche linguistic anomaly with caution. If one gets past their initial trepidation, they will find a book that is engaging from the start. Far from being a staid academic title geared toward a few select researchers, this book will appeal to a wide audience. English students and instructors at the high school and university level would benefit from the authors' methods of introducing a concept and guiding the reader through their experience on Ocracoke while conducting research. A strong example of this is where the authors explain the concept of "backward talk" or semantic inversion (p. 137). Semantic inversion is an academic concept that may be difficult for the average college student to grasp. The authors do a wonderful job of breaking down the idea and providing easily recognizable examples to bring the point home.

Public library patrons will also find much to explore in this book, from the chapter on the authored, decades-long dialect education program with the island school (pps. 204-214) to the continuous thread throughout the book that Ocracoke is a special place. The island is special, not only for a certain linguistic anomaly, but for its abundant natural resources and its residents who strive to keep "The Brogue" alive and thriving. *Language and Life on Ocracoke* is a concise and entertaining exploration of a unique slice of North Carolina culture.

Lucas Berrini
North Pitt High School



***Southern News, Southern Politics:
How a Newspaper Defined a State
for a Century***

Rob Christensen
Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina
Press, 2025.
336 pp. \$35.00.
ISBN 978-1-4696-8524-3

Rob Christensen, a former reporter for *The News and Observer* for forty-five years, brings his experience and expertise in newspapers, politics, and North Carolina to his newest publication, *Southern News, Southern Politics: How A Newspaper Defined a State for a Century*. Christensen has authored several other books, including *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics*, *The Rise and Fall of the Branchhead Boys*, and *The Era of Progressive Politics*.

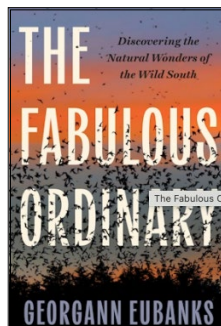
Southern News, Southern Politics centers on one of North Carolina's major newspapers, *The News and Observer*, and the family dynasty that ran the paper for four generations. The book focuses on the Daniels family and their impact on newspapers and politics, not only within North Carolina but also in the United States. In particular, the book focuses on Josephus Daniels, the owner and editor of *The News and Observer*, and follows family members who also served as editors or managers of the paper, like Jonathan Daniels, Frank Daniels, Sr., Frank Daniels, Jr., and Frank Daniels III. Christensen details the early years of the paper when Josephus Daniels often used the paper to promote racist ideas. As the author's narrative of the paper and the Daniels' family progresses through the 1930s, the paper begins to embrace the idea of a "more racially inclusive society" under Jonathan Daniel's leadership. The book continues to focus on the modernization and expansion of *The News and Observer* through the 20th century and up to the more recent Covid-19 pandemic.

Christensen also provides a detailed look at the political impact of the Daniels family, focusing on Josephus's service as the U.S. ambassador to Mexico and Jonathan's position as the White House Press Secretary for President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The author clearly illustrates the particular impact of Josephus and Jonathan on progressive politics in North Carolina and the United States.

Christensen did extensive research for this book, and he incorporates notes by chapter and a bibliography which includes articles, books, interviews, archives, newspaper articles, and more. A handful of images are peppered throughout the book, and they primarily focus on the Daniels family. The book is also filled with timely descriptions of society, politics, and life in North Carolina.

Overall, this book provides a comprehensive overview of both the Daniels family and *The News and Observer*. This book is suitable for public and academic libraries, especially those with a focus on journalism, politics, and/or North Carolina. This book will appeal to historians, college students, and general readers interested in history, journalism, and politics in North Carolina.

Jeanne Hoover
East Carolina University



***The Fabulous Ordinary: Discovering
the Natural Wonders of the
Wild South***

Georgann Eubanks
Chapel Hill: University of North
Carolina Press, 2025.
244 pp. \$35.00.
Paperback ISBN 978-1-4696-8592-2. E-book
ISBN: 978-1-4696-8382-9

Georgann Eubanks traveled to seven southern states on excursions to observe and investigate nature. Everyone she met during her travels had experience, skills, and knowledge that they applied in their work and research, as volunteers, guides, and educators. In the fifteen essays of *The Fabulous Ordinary: Discovering the Natural Wonders of the Wild South*, Eubanks shares what she learned about the animals, birds, insects, and plants that she observed, and she introduces readers to the place, the topography, the history, and the people who lived on the land over time. The tone of the writing is conversational, and it is easy to visualize what Eubanks describes.

In the chapter on frogs and toads, Eubanks recalls a conference session she attended on identifying frogs from photos and sound recordings, presented by a

wildlife biologist who volunteers with a group that monitors frog populations. To learn about moths and butterflies, Eubanks met with a biologist who talked about his interest in fishing and birdwatching as a boy, his work experience in conservation, and the enjoyment he has with his daughter identifying and photographing moths in their yard – 1,300 species! A trip to see elk in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park brought her to Cherokee, NC, and the Qualla Boundary, the home of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Eubanks describes the bull elk call as “a sound that begins as a conch shell being blown and then rises to a pleading whistle” (p. 206). Additional chapters include discussions on bioluminescent larvae called dismalites, Eastern screech-owls, and the wellness practice of forest bathing.

A thread that runs throughout the book is how the natural life of the region responds to climate change and human impacts on the environment. Rising coastal water levels can disrupt migration routes and feeding and nesting grounds of birds. At Audubon’s Silver Bluff Sanctuary in South Carolina, a migration site hundreds of miles north of traditional sites, Eubanks observed wood storks at ponds where they feed in shallows. Habitat is lost through land development, intensive agriculture, mining projects, and light pollution. For fireflies, leaf blowing interrupts decomposition of organic matter by removing “leaf litter” that is essential at all stages of their life cycle.

Eubanks received her undergraduate degree from Duke University in public policy studies. She teaches writing workshops, presents on writing, and offers book talks. (“Georgann Eubanks, Bio”). Eubanks is best known as an author, Emmy Award–winning documentary filmmaker, and founder of the annual Table Rock Writers Workshop in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Her body of work includes *Saving the Wild South: The Fight for Native Plants on the Brink of Extinction*, *A Month of Their Ripening: North Carolina Heritage Foods Throughout the Year*, the three-part *Literary Trails of North Carolina* series produced for the North Carolina Arts Council, and, most recently, her poetry collection *Rural Astronomy* (UNC Press).

Photos by photographer and fellow traveler, Donna Campbell, enhance the text. A list of illustrations with page numbers appears after the contents page, making it easy to flip to a specific photograph.

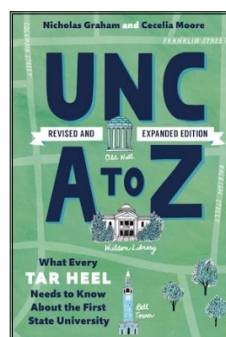
The book includes a bibliography of sources that can be referred to for further exploration of the topics.

In sharing her experiences, Eubanks shows how an appreciation of nature can enrich lives through listening and intentionality, in solitude as well as in shared experiences, and in being open to joy and wonder. Readers may be inspired to become citizen scientists who support research projects and make discoveries of their own. This book is recommended for public and academic libraries.

References

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UNC A to Z: What Every Tar Heel Needs to Know about the First State University

Nicholas Graham and Cecelia Moore,
Revised and Expanded Edition. Chapel Hill:
University of North Carolina Press, 2025.
286 pp. \$28.00.
ISBN: 978-1-4696-8448-2

U*NC A to Z: What Every Tar Heel Needs to Know about the First State University* is a succinct and enlightening introduction to the history of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (commonly known simply as UNC or Carolina), the flagship university of the UNC System and the first state university in the country. This version is an update of the first edition published in 2020, covering events that have occurred since the initial release, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Graham and Moore, with their combined expertise as University Archivist and former University Historian respectively, are the best people to put together a text on the history of UNC.

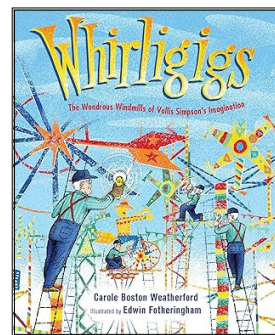
This book is a reference resource about the university that is accessible to a general audience. Organized alphabetically by topic with brief entries about the people, places, events, and other cultural points

that have impacted UNC over the years, this work can serve as an entry point into learning more about UNC's history. Accompanying various entries are images and photos, the majority of them sourced from UNC's Wilson Library. The authors make their purpose and intent for the book clear as an inspiration for readers to delve into their own research. As the authors write in the introduction, "[...] we envision this book as a launching pad for new projects, inspiring other researchers, writers, and especially students to explore and interpret Carolina history on their own" (Graham and Moore 2025, ix).

Overall, *UNC A to Z* is an informative, digestible, and thorough work about the university. The coverage of topics spans the entire history of UNC, from the past to the present. Historical coverage dates back to the founding of UNC in the late 1700s, beginning with the charter in 1789, the construction in 1793, and the opening in 1795. The work also chronicles recent historical events on UNC's campus, such as the renaming of Saunders Hall to Carolina Hall in 2015, the removal of Silent Sam by protestors in 2018, and the impact of the pandemic during 2020 and beyond. With such a long and rich history, the authors do an excellent job of curating the topics covered in the book and explain their approach to subject selection within the introduction. In the introduction the authors state that their goal was to make the work "comprehensive but did not attempt to be exhaustive" (Graham and Moore 2025, vii). While there are entries focusing on popular topics, like athletic venues or specific sports at UNC, the authors give equal attention to every subject covered. Even for entries where the subjects are related or adjacent, such as the history of a specific professional school and the building where the program resides, the authors take care to offer new information with each entry to illuminate a different aspect of the history. For example, the entry for UNC's School of Government focuses solely on the history of the program. The entry for the building where the school is located, the Knapp-Saunders Building, touches on the academic program as well as the history of the building itself. The inclusion of additional information about the building's namesake plus the historical 1930s WPA-styled murals inside makes this entry richer and distinct.

UNC A to Z fulfills the purpose set out by the authors as a gateway to learning more about UNC Chapel Hill as a place and institution. The reviewer recommends this book for any library collection focusing on North Carolina state history or college and university histories. Due to the approachability of this style of work, *UNC A to Z* is good for a general adult audience. This title would be appropriate for multiple types of libraries—academic, public, or special—depending on collecting areas or community interests. This work is also an enjoyable read for anyone who has a personal connection to UNC, such as alumni or current students.

Tiffany Henry
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Whirligigs: The Wondrous Windmills of Vollis Simpson's Imagination

Carol B. Weatherford. Illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham. New York: City Calkins Creek, an imprint of Astra Books for Young Readers, 2024. 32 pp. \$18.99. ISBN 978-1-6626-8041-0

What is a "whirligig?" Where can one find a whirligig? These and other questions can be answered in the nonfiction picture book *Whirligigs: The Wondrous Windmills of Vollis Simpson's Imagination* (winner of three book awards, including Best STEM Books, 2025). Written by Carole Boston Weatherford, an acclaimed author and Professor at Fayetteville State University, and illustrated by award-winning Edwin Fotheringham, the book captures the reader's attention while providing a biographical account of Vollis Simpson, creator of whimsical windmills and other creations located in Wilson, NC. The words of Weatherford, combined with Fotheringham's vibrant illustrations, attract readers of all ages. At the conclusion of the book, Weatherford provides more information about Vollis Simpson, whirligigs, and the contributions they have made to our society. The author also provides the reader with pictures of Simpson and his whirli-

gigs, along with the bibliography the author uses to write this literary work. These additions to the book demonstrate the accuracy of the information provided without being overly complicated for children to understand.

This book shares with readers how Vollis Simpson, one of twelve children, uses his curiosity and mechanical aptitude to create machines that help his family on the farms in Lucama, North Carolina. While serving as a U.S. soldier during World War II, Simpson used parts of downed aircraft to improve life while in the military. For example, Simpson invented a wind-powered washing machine from the parts of a downed B-29 bomber.

After returning home to Lucama, Vollis opens a machine-repair shop and uses his gifts and skills to build windmills that reduce heating costs. After closing his shop due to an injury, Vollis has a dream. This dream inspires him to use his time, spare parts, and imagination to create windmills. These windmills are not ordinary windmills, but whimsical constructions made from scrap metals of diverse colors and shapes. Vollis not only created windmills, but he also designed animals, objects, and people from items most people would consider junk.

The vibrant hues of the book's illustrations immediately capture the reader's attention. The whimsical illustrations mirror the topic and tone of the book. The use of bold colors and various sizes of the onomatopoeia (words that imitate sound) is a wonderful

way to engage the reader by imitating sounds. The visual images throughout the book are appealing and emphasize the words of the author.

This book is highly recommended for K-12 school and public libraries. This book will help teachers incorporate a slice of eastern NC life into their social studies curriculum, or STEM teachers looking to inspire students to think outside the box to help the environment with creative remedies. Because whirlingigs have been named North Carolina's official folk art, art teachers can utilize this book as a teaching tool. This book also lends itself well to integrating English/Language Arts with STEM, Social Studies, and Art. Public libraries will appreciate this book's rich connection to North Carolina local history and its appeal across age groups, making it a meaningful addition to the collection.

Vatoyia Gardner
East Carolina University

More North Carolina Literature

Looking for more works by North Carolinians or set in our state? You can always search [goodreads](#), [LibraryThing](#), or the catalog of your local library. Don't forget to browse your favorite bookstore! UNCG Libraries has also created a [Literary Map of North Carolina](#) to help identify authors from your county.

If your interest in North Carolina is more general, the North Carolina Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill frequently updates their blog with new acquisitions to the collection and other posts related to the history, literature, and culture of our state. Connect to the [NC Miscellany](#) here.