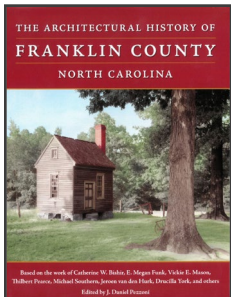


North Carolina Books

Compiled by Laura Mangum



Architectural History of Franklin County

J. Daniel Pezzoni, ed.
Louisburg, NC: Franklin County Historical Association, 2023.
448 pp. \$60.00
ISBN 979-8-218-26316-4

Based on the work of Catherine W. Bishir, E. Megan Funk, Vickie E. Mason, Thilbert Pearce, Michael Southern, Jeroen van den Hurk, Drucilla York, and others.

Copies of the book can be purchased from the Franklin County Library system and the Franklin County Planning & Inspections Department.

E edited by preservation architect J. Daniel Pezzoni and grounded in decades of fieldwork by many of North Carolina's leading architectural historians and surveyors, *Architectural History of Franklin County* offers a welcoming and highly readable overview of the county's built landscape. With its strong visual presentation, clear introductory essay, and practical reference tools, the book makes a solid contribution to local architectural documentation, even if some limitations reduce its value for more specialized scholarly use.

The introductory essay stands out as the book's strongest component. It draws on the expertise of Catherine W. Bishir and Michael T. Southern, two widely-respected figures in North Carolina architectural history whose earlier works include *North Carolina Architecture* and *The Guide to the Historic Architecture of North Carolina* series. Their contributions are complemented by those of E. Megan Funk, Vickie E. Mason, Thilbert H. Pearce, Jeroen van den Hurk, and Drucilla Haley York, all of whom bring years of field survey experience and research to the project. Together, these authors trace Franklin County's architectural development with care, placing local buildings within broader regional and national patterns.

Most of the volume is devoted to an extensive architectural inventory, made up of hundreds of short entries accompanied by photographs and brief descriptions of structures found throughout the county. This section is visually engaging and will be especially useful to local readers. However, the absence of citations for individual entries limits its usefulness for researchers and preservation professionals who may want to verify sources or pursue deeper study. Given the scholarly credentials of the contributors and the strong documentation in the opening essay, this omission is particularly noticeable.

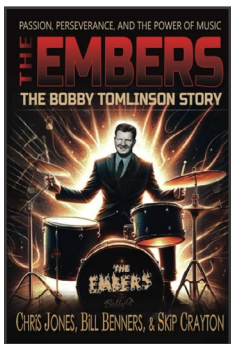
Pezzoni's editorial guidance and the contributors' subject knowledge are evident throughout the book, and the writing remains clear and approachable. While the volume does not delve deeply into preservation theory or offer sustained analysis of the social, economic, or racial forces shaping the built environment, it does succeed in capturing the layered and varied architectural character of Franklin County.

The book is further strengthened by its reference tools. A well-crafted glossary helps orient readers unfamiliar with architectural terminology, and a clear, functional index makes it easy to navigate. The bibliography following the introductory essay reflects a wide range of archival and scholarly sources and provides a useful starting point for readers interested in further research.

Architectural History of Franklin County will likely resonate most strongly with local audiences, historical societies, and public libraries across eastern North Carolina, for whom it offers an accessible, image-rich celebration of place and community history. Academic or research libraries may find it less compelling due to its limited documentation and analytical depth when compared with more scholarly architectural surveys; however, institutions with a collecting emphasis on North Carolina history or vernacular architecture may still find value in the volume as a representative example of a locally-produced historical association survey.

Although it does not aim to be a comprehensive or critical study, the book makes a meaningful contribution to the preservation and appreciation of local heritage. It is best suited to public and regional collections that value community memory and architectural documentation.

Patrick Cash
East Carolina University



The Embers: The Bobby Tomlinson Story

Chris Jones, Bill Benners, and Skip Crayton.
New Bern: McBryde Publishing, 2024.
288 pp. \$29.95.
ISBN: 978-1-73398-245-0

Performing continuously for nearly 68 years, The Embers are arguably one of the East Coast's biggest party bands. Playing a mixture of classic R&B, rock, and their own material, they've not only helped establish the genre of beach music in the southeastern U.S. but are the band that first coined the term. This book takes the reader on the band's journey through the eyes of its longest tenured member, drummer and bandleader, Bobby Tomlinson.

The authors Chris Jones, Bill Benners, and Skip Crayton display their extensive knowledge of southeastern beach music history and are undoubtedly devoted fans of The Embers. First-time novelist Jones is a journalistic author of 1960's R&B, northern soul, and beach music. Benners, a former radio producer, playwright, and novelist, is the author of *My Sister's Keeper*, which has won several awards. Crayton is a newspaper columnist and author of multiple books, including the popular *Remember When*. Benners and Crayton previously collaborated on the PBS documentary film *The Embers, The Heart and Soul of Beach Music* released in 2014.

The book's early chapters lead the reader through Tomlinson's childhood, from the moment when drums caught his ear, through grade school and early musical endeavors, to meeting friends who would

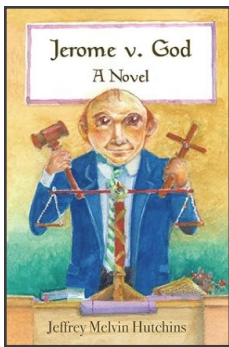
eventually make up the original Embers lineup. The authors chronicle the band's early shows from 1958 to 1964, after which they decided to commit to being full-time professional musicians and explore new endeavors such as recording and even establishing several nightclubs.

The next set of chapters explore the band's adaptation to the changes of the 1970s, through fluctuating band membership, the development of Las Vegas-style floor shows, partnerships with resort hotels, and the advent of beach music as a specific musical genre. In the 1980s, the growing popularity of their original song, and beach music anthem, *I Love Beach Music*, led to new opportunities such as being used in national radio and television commercials.

The band's 1990s exploits show the first signs of dissension between the clashing egos of the two lead singers, which culminated in an onstage physical altercation and the exit of a founding member. The remaining chapters follow the aging band through new opportunities, such as resort and casino residencies, Christmas shows, and entertaining U.S. troops overseas. This era is also defined by constant lineup changes, including the departure of Bobby Tomlinson as drummer. At age 77, Tomlinson was the last remaining founding member of The Embers.

Averaging about five pages each, the forty-two chapters of this book are easy to read, little entries of the band's exploits, but seem to be written separately from the context of the book as a whole. While presented roughly chronologically, the timeline between chapters is jumpy and can be a bit disorienting at times. In addition to an index, this book contains full lists of the band's members and crew, as well as sponsors and investors who have helped them along the way. This book would be well accepted by fans of beach music and is recommended for academic and public libraries that have a focus on local music and dance histories or the coastal culture of the southeastern U.S.

James Brinkley
East Carolina University



Jerome v. God: A Novel

Jeffrey Melvin Hutchins
Asheville: Pisgah Press, 2025.
317 pp. \$22.95.
ISBN 978-1-942016-98-4

What is an avowed atheist to do when his house disappears into a sinkhole, the insurance company deems it an Act of God and refuses to pay, and the land is not sellable? Why, sue the famous preacher Gideon Calhoun, of course, the self-proclaimed agent of God.

Jerome Light does not believe in God, but he must believe in the power of the judicial system to help him recover from the setback of a demolished house that still has a mortgage, which means paying rent for his family to live in an apartment, and the legal fees to plead his case. Suing God is not possible, so Jerome decides to sue the Reverend Gideon Calhoun, a very successful evangelist with a large flock, who claims many times over that he speaks to God and God speaks to him.

The events of this novel by author Jeffrey Melvin Hutchins create an intriguing storyline about faith, belief, and morality. Hutchins took twenty years to write this story about Jerome and his wife Lacy, the former an atheist and the latter Jewish, and their attempt to right a personal wrong.

Although the premise of suing a televangelist for an Act of God because he is a self-proclaimed agent of God is a bit far-fetched, the result is an interesting thought experiment regarding the existence of God, the idea of punishment by a higher power, and who has the right to enrich themselves by spreading the Good Word.

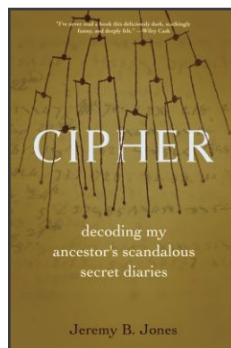
The story's point of view switches among characters, including the Lights' children, helping the reader feel invested in all the characters and understand their motivations. This format lends itself to being an interesting story that does not paint any of the characters as right or wrong, which allows the reader to understand and contemplate both sides of the judicial argument. Although the lack of animos-

ity between the plaintiffs and defendant is a little unrealistic, the civility keeps the focus on the argument and not on the characters battling one another across a courtroom.

Hutchins has written other books such as children's stories about Denton the Dragon, which was made into an eponymous musical, and he published *Perpetuonics*, a dystopian novel, in 2024. Hutchins is also a pioneer of closed captioning technology for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

There are discussion points at the end of the novel, which lend themselves to a book club. This novel would be an interesting addition to a college or university library with a religion program or a public library. The topic will appeal to a broad audience. Although the premise is thought-provoking, the language and content are appropriate for young adults and adults alike.

Dana Glauner
South Piedmont Community College



Cipher: Decoding My Ancestor's Scandalous Secret Diaries

Jeremy B. Jones
Durham: Blair, 2025.
280pp. \$28.95.
ISBN 978-1-95-888853-7

Also available in NC LIVE HomeGrown
E-books Collection

Jeremy B. Jones is an author and essayist native to the mountains of North Carolina, where he currently resides and teaches creative writing at Western Carolina University. *Cipher: Decoding My Ancestor's Scandalous Secret Diaries* is Jones's second book, following *Bearwallow: A Personal History of a Mountain Homeland*. His essays have appeared in publications such as *Garden & Gun* and *The Bitter Southerner*, as well as in the anthologies *Letters to a Stranger* and *Appalachian Reckoning*.

Jeremy B. Jones's *Cipher: Decoding My Ancestor's Scandalous Secret Diaries* explores connections: the bonds that tie individuals to their ancestors and to the places they inhabit across time. At its center are

the encoded diaries of William Thomas Prestwood, a white Southern schoolteacher, farmer, and surveyor, who chronicled his daily life from 1808 until his death in 1859 in his own personal cipher. Discovered in 1975 in a house slated for demolition in Wadesboro, North Carolina, the hand-stitched notebooks were eventually deciphered by a retired National Security Agency cryptanalyst, revealing a rare and intimate record of nineteenth-century life. Jones, Prestwood's four-times great-grandson, takes on the complex task of interpreting these documents, grappling with their personal and historical implications, and making connections to his own journey in life. Jones states the cryptanalyst "came to these diaries with historical interest, at an arm's length. I came with something more complicated, more personal. I wanted to find the flesh and blood of a man who'd made me spread out across these pages. I was looking for resurrection" (p. 35).

The diaries themselves are remarkable artifacts. Written in a self-created cipher, Prestwood's entries are typically brief and emotionally restrained, yet somehow still rich in detail. He records what he feels is important, everything from agricultural labor, astronomical observations, teaching, travel, and sexual encounters alongside births, deaths, and notable local and national events. The fragmented nature of the diaries invites interpretation, though it resists the creation of a seamless narrative. Jones responds by supplementing the diaries with careful historical research and genealogical inquiry, situating Prestwood within broader social, political, and geographic contexts.

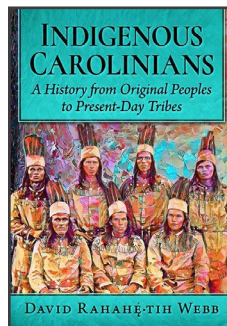
One of the book's greatest strengths—and its most ethically challenging aspect—is its engagement with difficult histories. Jones does not attempt to excuse or rehabilitate his ancestor. Instead, he confronts Prestwood's participation in slavery, including his ownership of enslaved people, his sexual exploitation of an enslaved woman, and his relationship with the resulting enslaved children. He also addresses Prestwood's involvement in events connected to settler colonial expansion and the violence of the Trail of Tears era. These sections are among the most impactful, demonstrating how personal documents can expose the everyday mechanisms of historical injustice.

To find connection with his ancestor, Jones in-

terweaves the historical narrative with reflections on his own life, particularly his experiences as a father. This structural choice creates a dialogue between past and present, underscoring how questions of legacy, responsibility, and identity reverberate across generations. While this approach occasionally slows the forward motion of the historical account, it ultimately reinforces the book's central concern: the emotional and ethical stakes of encountering one's own family history in the archive. One noticeable absence in the book is the lack of a bibliography, index, or appendices. Including these materials could have helped readers feel more immersed in Jones's research journey and better understand how he traced and interpreted his family history.

Cipher will be of interest to readers in history, archival studies, and public humanities, particularly those concerned with family papers, encoded texts, and the interpretive challenges of intimate primary sources. Its blend of memoir and historical analysis makes it suitable for both public and academic library collections, especially those emphasizing North Carolina history or instruction in the use of primary sources.

Erin Gray
East Carolina University



Indigenous Carolinians: A History from Original Peoples to Present-Day Tribes

David Rahahé-tih Webb
Jefferson, NC: MacFarland Press, 2025.
412 pp. \$49.95.
ISBN 978-1-4766-9727-7

David Rahahé-tih Webb's *Indigenous Carolinians* is both a story of resiliency and sorrow as it traces the history of the indigenous natives of the Carolinas from the time when they had a strong government and culture to today, when tribes are reestablishing their language and culture and, for some, seeking recognition. Webb's book is divided into five parts: Roots, Resistance, Resilience, Reawakening, and Relatives. It is also part of his history, as Webb

is a citizen of the Tuscarora Indians of Kahtenuaka Territories (roughly the Coastal Plains of North and South Carolina).

Webb weaves together “Indigenous research methodologies and Western qualitative approaches” (p. 4) for the content of his book. The Indigenous approach gleans oral histories passed down through generations, while the Western approach uses records and documents housed in archives and museums, books, and articles written about the indigenous peoples and tribes of the Coastal Carolinas.

Indigenous Carolinians documents three groupings of indigenous people, the Tuscarora, Catawba, and the Coalesced Band (Webb’s term for the amalgamated and splintered Indigenous communities). The Coalesced Band were indigenous people who originated from smaller tribes, were forced on to early reservations, and intermarried or married non-indigenous persons. The Tuscarora and Catawba maintained tribal and cultural identities, while the members of the Coalesced Band were generally only identified as Indians in various records without any tribal affiliation. Tribal affiliations, government, language, and culture were lost over time as the indigenous people were forced on to colonial reservations. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries some of the Coalesced Band reformed into tribes and communities that sought and received state or federal recognition. The Cherokee are not included in Webb’s analysis and history.

The “Roots” section traces the history of the tribes in the Coastal Carolinas. This includes an examination of the language, government, and mythology of the tribes. One interesting fact Webb mentions is that the indigenous peoples of the Carolinas belonged to three distinct language families—Iroquoians, Algonquians, and Siouans.

“Resistance” covers the encounters with Europeans and details how the indigenous people tried to maintain their lands. “Resilience” describes how Indigenous tribes sought to retain their own distinctive tribal identities and cultures against European efforts to either eradicate or assimilate them.

“Reawakening” describes the twentieth-century efforts of indigenous people to rediscover the tribal languages and cultures that had been stripped from them in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

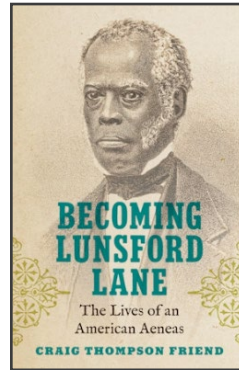
Webb mostly details the endeavors of the Tuscarora Tribe in North Carolina since he is a member. Other North Carolina efforts are also described, but not in as great detail. “Relatives” provides details about the “Core” families of the Catawba, Tuscarora, and Coalesced Band. It mentions when the names were listed in records and the tribal designation given at that time.

Webb employs an extensive bibliography of sources from books and dissertations to historical documents in state, federal, and international archives. He also makes use of material from tribal websites and museums. He includes a list of terminology for terms, tribes, and communities. Historical images, maps, and pictures are used throughout the work.

Webb’s *Indigenous Carolinians: A History from Original Peoples to Present Day Tribes* is recommended for all libraries seeking to broaden their Native American history collection, especially in the coastal areas.

Robert Arndt

University of North Carolina at Pembroke



Becoming Lunsford Lane: The Lives of an American Aeneas

Craig Thompson Friend
Chapel Hill, NC: The University of
North Carolina Press, 2025.
420 pp. \$37.50
978-1-4696-8534-2

How can a once-enslaved man overcome political and economic obstacles to have a major impact on the course of the abolition movement? Throughout the book *Becoming Lunsford Lane: The Lives of an American Aeneas*, author Craig Thompson Friend details the life and influence of Lunsford Lane (1803-1879). After being raised as an enslaved individual in Raleigh, North Carolina, Lane fought to gain his freedom in 1835. Eventually, he relocated to New England to pursue more professional and economic opportunities. At various times, Lane was able to tell the story about his early years as a

slave and gained notoriety as a speaker. Through the publication of *The Narrative of Lunsford Lane* (1842), he used storytelling as one method to help spread the need for the abolishment of slavery. Ultimately, Lunsford Lane sought to gain freedom for both his wife and children.

Craig Thompson Friend is a Professor of History at North Carolina State University and President-elect of the Historical Society of North Carolina. Prior to *Lunsford Lane*, his other publications include *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South* (2004), *Southern Masculinity: Manhood in the South Since Reconstruction* (2009), *Kentucke's Frontiers* (2010), *Along the Maysville Road: The Early American Republic in the Trans-Appalachian West* (2017), *A New History of Kentucky* (co-author with James C. Klotter, 2018), *Reinterpreting Southern Histories: Essays in Historiography* (co-author with Lorri Glover and others, 2020), *The Buzzel About Kentuck: Settling the Promised Land* (2021), and *Camp Henry: The History of a Summer Camp in the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina* (2022).

In this book, numerous illustrations are provided, including a genealogical chart of Lunsford Lane's family, which was contained in the cover page from Lane's biography, *The Narrative of Lunsford Lane* (published 1842). Also included are photographs of both Lane and his family. For added reader benefit, the author includes a detailed map showing different locations in New England where Lane had speaking engagements to share his story and where his family settled once fully emancipated.

Based primarily on excerpts from Lane's personal memoirs (which became part of his story), the author sticks successfully to this theme throughout the book. At the end, there is an extensive notes section and index for the reader. Although no bibliography is present, the extensive index with cross-references makes up for this absent feature.

This book is intended to showcase the efforts of Lane to gain emancipation for himself and his family despite racial prejudice not only in North Carolina, but also in New England as well. Lunsford Lane was like Aeneas from Greco-Roman mythology, in feeling a duty to speak out about slavery in order to bring attention to the evil nature of the institution. Ultimately, as Lunsford Lane shared his biographical

story with audiences, he became well known in the abolitionist movement.

Because of its specific scope, *Becoming Lunsford Lane: The Lives of an American Aeneas* would be suitable for faculty, students, or researchers with an interest in significant historical episodes in both North Carolina and the United States historical periods as a whole.

David W. Young

University of North Carolina at Pembroke



Jim Crow in the Asylum: Psychiatry and Civil Rights in the American South

Kylie M. Smith

Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2026.

342 pp. \$99 cloth, \$34.95 paper.

ISBN 9781469689203

Also available Open Access:

<https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/109498>

This critical compilation of the tangible, devastating effects of segregation in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi focuses on the treatment and lack thereof of their most vulnerable populations: Black patients requiring psychiatric care. The author explains that they deliberately chose to solely share Black patients' stories to "excavate what it was like for the most marginalized of the marginal" (p.12).

Kylie M. Smith has written other award-winning books, such as *Talking Therapy: Knowledge and Power in American Psychiatric Nursing*, and served as an editor of the recent publication *Do Less Harm: Ethical Questions for Health Historians*. She has also written a multitude of journal articles, covering topics that span healthcare, gender, and racial disparities. As a tenured Associate Professor and the Andrew W. Mellon Faculty Fellow for Nursing and Humanities at Emory University, Smith is clearly knowledgeable in these subject matters. This book does not shy away from exposing uncomfortable truths and includes mention of eugenics, sterilization laws, medical experimentation, and miscegenation. The book chap-

ters are classified in three parts: Creating Jim Crow in the Asylum, Performing Jim Crow in the Asylum, and Ending Jim Crow in the Asylum.

From the very first page, which starts with a 1965 petition to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in Washington, D.C., the subject matter is horrifically engrossing. It covers deeply upsetting and problematic material, but an accurate portrayal of the history of psychiatric care in the American South gives those victims a voice and also demands improved conditions, policies, and practices in the future.

Smith provides further detail as to how foundational segregation was to psychiatry by specifying that well-known pioneers such as Thomas Kirkbride and Dorothea Dix, who both made incredible strides towards psychiatric reform in the nineteenth century and advocated for the mentally ill, also showed no concern or interest in the welfare of Black patients.

In the context of psychiatry, this needs to be understood not so much as benign oversight, but the active repudiation of the idea of Black psychology itself—the belief that there was no illness to be cured because Black patients were not capable of complex emotional or affective lives, and if they were institutionalized, it was because their behavior was seen as a threat to white society in some way....the Black patient was never fully human, and this belief laid the foundation for not just institutional segregation, but the way the Black person would be treated as a patient (p. 42).

The author discusses general public disdain for social welfare programs, mental health stigma, racial hierarchies, gendered ideas about patient behavior and vulnerability, and how segregation was maintained in death as well as in life. Black patients had substandard care and facilities, separate cemeteries, and chronic underfunding and overcrowding in institutions, contributing to a high employee turnover rate, which led to unskilled, untrained hires. Black employees at asylums were paid considerably less than white employees and also had lesser, separate accommodations.

The inclusion of an extensive bibliography and in-text citations with references to archival materials, books, and numerous journal articles and dissertations creates a heavily researched historical account.

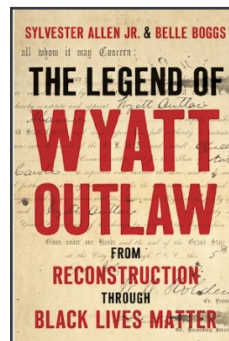
Research for the work was supported by a grant from the National Library of Medicine.

The author shares raw, heartbreaking stories and specific instances of policies beyond generalizations, forcing the reader to consider the enormity of the challenge of even addressing systemic racism within psychiatry. With segregation so integral to the overwhelming practices and prevailing mindset of the Jim Crow era, racially motivated abuse and neglect were par for the course.

Individual stories and details illustrate the helplessness and severe lack of adequate assistance, accommodations, treatments, and facilities that vulnerable patients were subject to. The people who were and continue to be affected by this system matter and deserve much better. “There are numerous letters in the archives from family members begging for their relatives to be moved or released or admitted in the first place, all of which indicate that legal due process was not in play” (p. 63).

This book is essential for anyone in healthcare, psychiatry in particular, and those interested in expanding their knowledge of the historic context of racial inequities in America. It would be an important addition to academic libraries and special libraries.

Amy Cooley
East Carolina University



***The Legend of Wyatt Outlaw:
From Reconstruction Through
Black Lives Matter***

Sylvester Allen Jr. and Belle Boggs
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina
Press, 2025
278 pp. \$30.00
ISBN 978-1-4696-8999-9

Wyatt Outlaw was a successful Black businessman, town constable, Union League leader, and advocate for education and voting rights in Graham, North Carolina, during Reconstruction. In February 1870, he was kidnapped from his home and lynched by the Ku Klux Klan in Graham's courthouse square. As a long-time, non-native resident of Alamance County, the reviewer was familiar with

Wyatt Outlaw's historical importance to the county, but eagerly anticipated learning more about his life and legacy. The thoroughness of this book's research and its engaging storytelling will not disappoint the reader.

In their book, Allen and Boggs seek to document not only the life of Wyatt Outlaw, but also to tell the story of a North Carolina county and its county seat, which have struggled to recognize and acknowledge its racial past. Sylvester Allen, author of the play, *The Spirit of Wyatt Outlaw: Final Peace*, is a native of Graham and attended local public schools in Alamance County, but never learned about Wyatt Outlaw in the classroom. Belle Boggs is a professor of English at North Carolina State University, the author of *The Gulf: A Novel* and *The Art of Waiting: On Fertility, Medicine, and Motherhood*, and previously taught in private schools in Alamance County.

Wyatt Outlaw's documented historical record is scant; there are no known pictures of him, few written records, and his burial location remains unknown. There is no commemorative plaque in the county. Much of what we know about his murder exists because his mother and other county residents testified at the 1871 impeachment trial of North Carolina Governor William Holden, who had declared a state of insurrection in Alamance and Caswell counties in 1870 in response to rampant Klan violence in the area. The authors searched through state archives and special collections to uncover evidence of Outlaw's life and work.

In addition to highlighting Outlaw's historical significance, this book is a case study of one Southern town struggling to acknowledge its troubled racial past. The authors have included not only Black history relevant to the county but have placed this local historical record within the broader context of Reconstruction, Black Lives Matter, and contemporary race relations in the United States. The book is strengthened by the disparate voices, perspectives, interviews, photographs, and historical records included in it. Its twenty-one chapters are organized into four themes: Home; Family; Outrages, Outlaws, and Accountability; and Reckoning and Responsibility. The authors move smoothly between past and present to tell a more complete history of race relations in Alamance County. A notes section of sources consulted allows the reader to follow the authors' research process.

This book is recommended for academic and public libraries throughout North Carolina and the South, as well as for libraries collecting in Southern and Black history. It is eminently readable and would be appropriate for high school students, undergraduates, and armchair historians.

Teresa LePors
Elon 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.