

New North Carolina Books

by WILLIAM S. POWELL

MYRA CHAMPION. *The Lost World of Thomas Wolfe*. Asheville: Thomas Wolfe Memorial, 1970. Illus. (79)p. \$3.00 paper.

Pictures of Asheville, of Thomas Wolfe, and people associated with Wolfe are the main attraction of this attractive little book. There are no captions as such; instead there are appropriate quotations from *Look Homeward, Angel*. Myra Champion is to be commended for the careful blending of picture and text into a work that will explain the writings of Thomas Wolfe to new readers as well as old.

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CHALMERS GASTON DAVIDSON. *The Plantation World Around Davidson*. (Davidson: Author, 1969.) Illus. Map. 86pp. \$3.75.

This is an interesting and informative little book. Professor Davidson has dug into the records to present interesting accounts of a number of elegant plantations in the Piedmont region of Mecklenburg County around Davidson. Pictures of those which remain are included as well as a few old pictures of buildings which have completely perished or been altered in appearance. Some have been lovingly restored, and he tells us that there is hope for a better future for some which have been neglected in recent years. Cleverly concealed at various spots throughout the book are good examples of Prof. Davidson's humor. They will produce little chuckles of amusement. We look forward to an early visit to "Ingleside" to examine the porch which is supported "on cement covered pillows." Females of the "Woman's Lib Movement" might also find some satisfaction in a pilgrimage to this handsome house. The author relates that the builder of this mansion "had hard luck with his wives. He was married three times but produced only one offspring . . . who died while a young man."

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JOHN EHLE. *Time of Drums*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. 328 pp. \$6.95.

One in a series of novels about a mountain family, *Time of Drums* deals with two North Carolina mountain brothers during the Civil War. The setting is wartime in Virginia, in the mountains of southwestern North Carolina, and at Gettysburg. The time is 1862 and 1863. The older brother is a colonel, later a brigadier general; the younger one a private. Both love a young widow; young Woofers is the father of her child, but Owen Wright marries her. The setting and mountain traits are accurate, the scenes of Gettysburg and elsewhere during the war are believable, but adjacent "plantations" and farms of small red clay and rocky acreage are difficult to believe. A character sometimes speaks flawless English while in similar circumstances he sounds only semi-literate. My personal impression is that some of the dialogue was composed to fit the 1970 image of what Southern speech was in 1860. *Time of Drums* does not ring as true as John Ehle's *The Land Breakers*; it's a simpler story, but the author's skill as a novelist is clearly evident. The characters do live.

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(Note: Limited copies of this "Guide" are available on request at \$5.00 for 50 copies from Order Department, American Library Association, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.)

NEW NORTH CAROLINA BOOKS

(Continued)

PAUL GREEN. *Home To My Valley*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1970. 140pp. Illus. \$5.95.

There are nearly two dozen delightful little stories of Paul Green's childhood in Hartnett County here in his *fortieth* published work. The common little events which he relates are not unlike the things which happened to most North Carolinians forty or fifty years ago, more or less, or stories which they heard with great delight. But Paul Green has the happy knack of recalling and recording them in a homespun style that is very appealing. Preaching that seemed endless, personal feuds over a worthless strip of land, cornbread and molasses, corn shucking, and delightful stories about people that might have been true: they are among the simple themes. They are folklore-like and will bring back happy recollections to some readers and create a longing for a return of "the good old days" in others.

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RICHARD O'CONNOR. *O. Henry, The Legendary Life of William S. Porter*. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970. 252pp. Illus. \$6.95.

Many, perhaps all, of O. Henry's works are now in the public domain and new editions of the stories of Greensboro-born William Sydney Porter are beginning to appear. A renewed interest in his writings seems to be accompanied by a new interest in the man himself. This book is not a full biography of O. Henry, in spite of the subtitle. After a brief review of the first years of his life, author O'Connor devotes most of his work to the final eight years when most of O. Henry's writing was done. It is an interesting and a readable book which bears evidence of careful research on most points. However, we would question his description of Greensboro as a mountain town.

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BRUCE and NANCY ROBERTS. *A Portrait of Appalachia, Where Time Stood Still*. New York: Crowell-Collier Press, 1970. Illus. 115pp. \$5.95.

Very realistic, typical pictures which suggest the beauty as well as the hardships of Appalachia occur on almost every page of this book. This frontier country which still retains many frontier features is described with sympathy and understanding. The friendship, devotion to duty, and respect for the past which the residents of this region have are discussed with something akin to nostalgia; the poor diet, lack of medical care, rare opportunities for personal

improvement, and other disadvantages are related with straightforward candor. It will be a callus reader indeed who is not moved by the plight of these magnificent people. Bruce Roberts' sharp pictures have a three-dimensional character about them and without exception they are masterpieces of photographic art.

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THAD STEM, JR. *Journey Proud*. Charlotte: McNally and Loftin, Publishers, 1970. 81pp. \$4.00.

I have never known how to review poetry; I haven't tried to write any since I was a 'teen-ager; much of what is published today just doesn't mean anything to me. Thad Stem's poems in *Journey Proud*, however, have hit a responsive note in my mind. They call up mental pictures which are clear, they say things in a way which I envy. They bring forth a sigh of satisfaction that I feel the same way about something as he does. There are spots of humor, references to childhood games that I recall, and homely images that arouse a sense of pride that they should rate being recorded. This is a pleasant little volume which will please a great many people. Every library should have it, and every librarian should see that it isn't stuck back with the ordinary 811's; it's something special to be recommended to another patron as soon as one returns it.

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RICHARD WALSER. *Literary North Carolina, A Brief Historical Survey*. Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1970. 137pp. Illus. \$3.00.

Prof. Walser's thorough familiarity with the literary attainments of North Carolinians in a variety of fields is distilled here into an entertaining and informative volume. It is not a catalogue of writers and their works. Instead, in seventeen chapters, he discusses periods, types of literature, and other related matters. Novelists, poets, historians, humorists, dramatists, and others are appraised, their works cited, and in some cases illustrated. *Literary North Carolina* will appeal to a wide range of readers, but librarians will be grateful for such a convenient reference work. The careful index will be especially valued by those seeking a short cut to the mass of facts in the book.

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THOMAS WOLFE. *The Mountains, A Play in One Act; The Mountains, A Drama in Three Acts and a Prologue*. Edited with an Introduction by Pat M. Ryan. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1970. 170pp. \$8.50.

Wolfe's first intention was to be a playwright. It was only after he had been unsuccessful in getting his plays produced in New York that he turned to the novel. At the Carolina Playmakers while a student at the University of North Carolina and at Harvard he worked with the drama; *The Mountains* was begun as a one-act play in Chapel Hill and performed in Cambridge. It was later reshaped into the three-act version. Prof. Ryan's introduction is a very good concise review of this aspect of Wolfe's life. His carefully documented essay will be of interest to Wolfe's admirers. The full text of the play (or plays) as Wolfe left them makes up the bulk of the book. Wolfe's list of characters, directions for the setting, and other features would make possible the production of this work by anyone interested in doing so.