

A WORLD FAMOUS ART PROJECT IN NORTH CAROLINA

By HOYT R. GALVIN, *Director,*
Charlotte Public Library

A series of etchings on North Carolina are now in the process of execution by Louis Orr. This project will consist of ten albums, comprising five etchings each or a total of fifty etchings on the State. Only three of the eventual ten albums are now terminated; the fourth of the series will probably be ready for distribution in the early spring of 1945.

In the execution of this work, the artist has endeavored to interpret every phase of North Carolina life — its religious, cultural and social interests. The architecture of the State, in all its various moods and richness of detail, is represented not only by the official buildings of the State, counties and cities but by plantation homes and domestic dwellings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Embraced in the collection are also gardens of the State and scenes in Western North Carolina and the coastal region. It was in June, 1939, that the artist began the execution of this commission. He spent approximately a year in making pencil drawings of the fifty subjects selected to compose the work, traveling in every county of North Carolina and covering more than six thousand miles. He had already examined several thousand photographs of North Carolina subjects deposited in the North Carolina State Department of Conservation and Development at Raleigh, and had conferred with prominent men and women conversant with North Carolina history.

The etcher-artist, Louis Orr, was born in Connecticut, descending from forebears who were, themselves, artists. His grandfather produced the first illustrated guide on the United States. Mr. Orr studied at the Beaux Arts in Paris and lived there about thirty-five

years while practicing his profession. During this period he won signal recognition as an etcher of rare endowment and capacity for interpretation of beauty in old edifices and monuments of picturesque charm. His works on Rheims Cathedral, the Pont Neuf, and the Porte de St. Denis are gems. Only two Americans have examples of their work in the Louvre: Whistler represented by the Portrait of His Mother and Louis Orr represented by eleven etchings. He belongs to the classical school. Mr. Orr has a remarkable feel for texture, whether wood, brick, or stone, and endows it with subtle intimacy and personal friendliness. His etchings are not pictures but portraits of buildings, imparting to each a personality of its own.

In view of the exceptional value that Mr. Orr's etchings on North Carolina will have in the years to come, special emphasis is being placed on their acquisition by the libraries, schools, colleges and universities of the State, where they will not be subject to bargaining and sale for profit to collectors in the open market. Once possessed by these institutions they will remain permanently in this State for the instruction and inspiration of generations to come.

In the determination of the price at which these etchings are being released, the desirability of their being purchased by institutions with limited funds at their disposal was particularly respected. Louis Orr received the commission from Robert Lee Humber of Greenville. Mr. Humber has guided the project carefully in order that public agencies may acquire the etchings at a fifth of the normal selling price. The cost of the ten albums will be \$500.00, at the rate of \$50.00 per album of five etchings to be paid on receipt of the albums as they appear. The cost of the large size etching of the North Carolina State Capitol is \$20.00. Orders may be placed with Robert Lee Humber, Greenville, N. C.