

REGIONAL LIBRARY PROGRAM OF THE CHEROKEE INDIAN

By MARGARET JOHNSTON*

The librarians in 12 Western North Carolina Counties joined together in April, 1950, to discuss and to plan how the libraries might cooperate in promoting local interest in the Cherokee Indian Drama, "Unto These Hills," which was to be presented for the first time last summer.

The method of approach was different in each library unit with certain basic regulations agreed on by the librarians. Different types of libraries were involved—city, county, regional, small town libraries and Bookmobile service. Probably the most unique member of the group was the library at the Cherokee Indian Reservation with Indian children as members.

In our two meetings together—one at the Cherokee Indian Reservation and the other in Waynesville—the group decided on points on which we as a region agreed:

- (1) to prepare for distribution a list of readable adult material on the Cherokees from the holdings of the libraries in the area.
- (2) to be as authentic as possible. (It would have been easier if we hadn't.)
- (3) to use the stories, legends, history of the Cherokee with particular emphasis on some outstanding Cherokee such as Yonagaska, Sequoya, Isali, Junaluska, John Ross and Col. Will Thomas.
- (4) to sponsor in each county an Essay Contest on the Cherokees

with tickets to the drama as prizes for the five best essays.

- (5) in cases where **Reading Clubs** were planned all should require 10 books—one of which must be on **Indians**.

Name tags, Book Marks, Reading Certificates and the **Reading list** were worked out and printed jointly.

Beyond this point each library was on its own as to what activities were used and with most of us, like Topsy, they "just grew." **Story hours, radio programs, book talks and exhibits** were popular in most all of the libraries. Cherokee Indian Reading clubs were sponsored in one regional library, a county library and a town library. The valuable material of rare old books, maps, arrowheads, etc., from the Sondley Reference Library was exhibited at the Pack Memorial Public Library, Asheville. Six Asheville artists copied portraits of Cherokee Chiefs and in Waynesville a mural was painted for the library by a local artist. Mr. David Corkran, former professor of American Literature at Black Mountain College, lectured in Asheville on "Cherokee Civilization." Colonel Kermit Hunter, author of the drama, "Unto These Hills," and John Parrish, author of the **Cherokee Story** spoke to adults in Waynesville in one of its sponsored **Book Talks**.

Cherokee Indian Reading Clubs were sponsored in a regional, a county, and town library and at the Indian Reservation. The Indian Children visited in Asheville,

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toskey, famous Cherokee Woodcarver, were exhibited in Waynesville.

It is difficult to measure the results over such a wide area, but we do know the Cherokee Drama was quite a success. All the forces pulling together helped to create interest because 107,140 people attended the 54 performances. In each library the demands for materials for exceeded our dreams. The interest of the librarians also made the government officials and others aware of the needs for good materials on the Cherokee Indian. Our decision to be authentic caused many heartaches, but we hope it has helped to preserve some of our Cherokee traditions.

The libraries taking part were as follows:

Pack Memorial Public Library, Asheville; Haywood County Public Library, Waynesville; Fontana Regional Library, Bryson City; Transylvania County Library, Brevard; Hendersonville Public Library, Hendersonville; Library, Cherokee Indian School, Cherokee; Mitchell, Avery, Yancey County Libraries; Murphy Public Library.

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Waynesville, Burnsville, Celo, Bakersville, Banner Elk and Murphy and in each place they presented a program of stories, legends, crafts and Indian dances. Crafts materials from the Reservation for displays were available for use in any of our libraries. In Waynesville Chief Carl Standing Deer put on an Archery Exhibition and presented the Reading Certificates. There, too, an Indian Operetta was put on by Negro children as a climax for their summer's activities.

The wood carvings of G. B. Chil-