

**PEN NOTES: REVIEWS**  
**Blackbeard**

*Blackbeard* by Lemuel Sawyer is not an outstanding play by present day standards but it has achieved a permanent niche in the literary hall-of-history of the State of North Carolina, for it was the first play with a native locale, written by a native North Carolinian. Original publication was in 1824 and a facsimile edition came from the press last spring, under the auspices of the State Department of Archives and History. Richard Walser wrote the Introduction which contains much detail concerning Sawyer's public and private life, and a full treatment of his writings. Sawyer may not be considered a particularly noteworthy author but no one can deny that he was a versatile one. In addition to plays, he wrote a novel, a history, a book on travel, a biography, an essay with a scientific subject, and an autobiography, besides numerous speeches prepared while serving in Congress for a total of sixteen years as a Representative of the First District. The title *Blackbeard* suggests the famous pirate, and the author has constructed a plot around the projected recovery of some pirate's gold which, to this day, is believed to be hidden in the area about Albemarle Sound and the Outer Banks. Political intrigue and corruption are injected into the story and succeed in stifling what might otherwise have been a rather fascinating play from beginning to end. There are however, several scenes which excite the imagination and some which can be classed as good comedy.

—GEORGE F. BENTLEY,

**Graveyard of the Atlantic**

The stretch of North Carolina coast, from Currituck Beach north of Hatteras to Frying Pan Shoals at Cape Fear, has been known and dreaded by mariners from the days of the earliest New World explorations. In his *Graveyard of the Atlantic* (University of North Carolina Press), David Stick has written an engrossing account of shipwrecks on the Outer Banks, from the sinking of a Spanish brigantine in 1526 to the torpedoing of a freighter by Nazi raiders in 1945.

It was in these waters that the schooner Patriot disappeared under mysterious circumstances, with her famous passenger, Theodosia Burr. Here in 1837, *The Home*, considered at the time "the finest packet afloat," went down with ninety passengers, forty crewmen, and only two life preservers, so that Congress soon afterward passed a law requiring seagoing vessels to carry a life belt for every passenger on board. The sinking of two ships with appalling loss of life resulted in the establishment in 1879 of a chain of life saving stations, and during the next twenty years "some of the most daring rescues in the history of life saving were accomplished on the North Carolina coast."

Roughly six hundred stories of disaster at sea are listed here, the details gathered from old newspapers, letters, diaries and reports, as well as from the descendants of shipwrecked seamen and of the "bankers" of earlier and more dangerous days. Mr. Stick, who lives the year round at Nag's Head, has made a valuable contribution to North Carolina historical literature. His book is the result of long and careful research, but he writes in a clear narrative style that attracts and holds the casual reader.

—MARY CUTLER HOPKINS