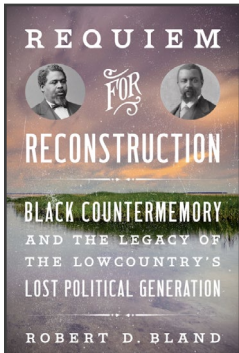


North Carolina Books

Compiled by Laura Mangum



Requiem for Reconstruction

Robert D. Bland.
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina
Press. 2026. 260 pp. \$34.95.
ISBN 9781469691879

Robert D. Bland, Assistant Professor of History and Africana Studies at the University of Tennessee, is the latest academic to put a fresh set of eyes on a vital aspect of Reconstruction history that had become a niche subject because of apathy and the passage of time. Perhaps needless to say, most every foray into this history feels necessary and relevant in our region and in our time, and this work is no exception. *Requiem for Reconstruction* is Dr. Bland's first book publication, but he has written extensively on Reconstruction, the Civil War Era, and Black history and culture more broadly for over a decade. These writings range from academic works like "A Grim Memorial of Its Thorough Work of Devastation and Desolation: Race, Class, and Memory, in the Aftermath of the 1893 Sea Island Hurricane," which appeared in the *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, to book reviews like that of Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s *Stony the Road* in the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, to essays appearing in online publications such as *Muster: The Blog of the Journal of the Civil War Era*.

Focusing on the South Carolina Lowcountry with an emphasis on Beaufort and the surrounding Sea Islands, Bland divides his narrative into three parts: Part I, The Making of the Lowcountry's Rival Political World; Part II, The Postbellum Public Sphere and the Production of Black Countermemory; and Part III, The Afterlife of the Reconstruction Generation. Benefiting from the rich context added by extensive primary source research, including but not limited to archival manuscripts, contemporary (often Black)

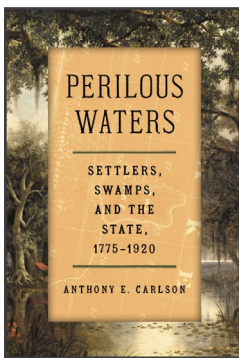
newspaper accounts, and government documents, as well as a thorough assimilation of existing secondary research, Bland's telling is fresh, clear, and calls to mind connections to present-day sociopolitical phenomena. For instance, Chapter 3 concludes Part I with an examination of how reactionary white supremacist "Redeemers" used gerrymandering tactics to mute Black political power and the "rival geography" that had been built by what Bland terms the Reconstruction Generation. Additionally, discussions of reactionary hostility toward federal government relief going to Black citizens following an 1893 Sea Islands hurricane and an overarching insistence in the early 20th century on agricultural and trade education at the expense of a broader curriculum do ring a bell.

The text does not shy away from tackling some of the more complicated aspects of this history, such as the internecine political conflicts within the era's Republican Party among groups such as northern white former abolitionists, free Black northerners who had relocated to the Lowcountry following the war, and the local people who had recently been freed from slavery (after all, the central focus of this historical account). Much of Part II is devoted to a study of Robert Smalls's life and legacy. Smalls, the son of enslaved Gullah people from Beaufort, first gained notoriety by commandeering a Confederate gunboat he was piloting and sailing it safely across Union lines. Later, he became a prominent politician, eventually rising to become a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, and became emblematic of vastly different things for progressives and Black Southerners on one hand, and reactionaries and revanchists on the other. The text concludes with a look at how Black researchers and historians used primary source data to fight for an accurate representation of this time and place in the face of the Lost Cause myth and post-war Reunification.

This book is suitable for academic libraries, especially those serving colleges or universities that are engaging in work around history and memory. The

chapter notes, bibliography, and index are all extensive, and the bibliography is subdivided into sections for each type of source cited (primary source manuscripts, secondary source academic texts, and so on). Useful maps and interesting contemporary images are interspersed throughout. The book is also suitable for public libraries, as it is accessible enough to provide an educational resource for a wide variety of readers who may be interested in learning about the history of their family, community, and country.

Ben Spanier
Elon University



***Perilous Waters: Settlers,
Swamps, and the State,
1775-1920***

Anthony E. Carlson.
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina
Press, 2026. 282 pp. \$29.95.
ISBN 9781469694801

Throughout history, swamps and other wetlands have inspired fear, distrust, frustration, and respect. In *Perilous Waters: Settlers, Swamps and the State, 1775-1920*, Anthony E. Carlson explores the relationships between swamps, racial groups, economic ventures, and power in the United States. Carlson is professor of history at the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS). SAMS is part of a US Army Command and General Staff College. Previously published titles authored by Carlson, including *The Other Face of Battle: America's Forgotten Wars and the Experience of Combat*, *Vanguard of Valor: Small Unit Actions in Afghanistan*, and *Vanguard of Valor Volume II: Small Unit Actions in Afghanistan*, have focused on military aspects of American history.

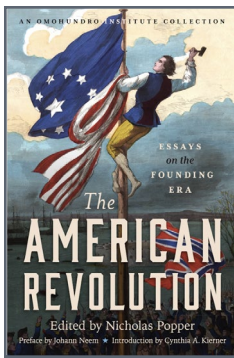
Perilous Waters is thoroughly researched and features an introduction by the author, notes, a bibliography, and an index. The introduction helps the reader to understand the context of the work and emphasizes the role of drainage in relation to swamps. The notes, bibliography, and index are help-

ful for readers who want to locate topics in the text or determine what evidence the author uses to arrive at conclusions. In this work, Carlson objectively draws from primary sources, including government documents, scholarly books, articles, and unpublished works. Relevant illustrations meaningfully add to the text and include photographs, diagrams, and maps. The book is information-rich, and a helpful feature of the monograph is its clear conclusions recapitulating the main ideas for each chapter.

Over the course of the text, Carlson emphasizes how the drainage of wetlands, often for agricultural purposes, has often relied upon government resources and authority. The text presents the drainage of swamps as much more than an engineering project. From the Revolutionary era to the beginning of the 20th century, large, governmentally-supported drainage projects have affected the relationships of people to the land, influenced politics, and involved social processes. Topics addressed in the monograph include racism, colonialism, environmentalism, and federalism, all in relation to swampland. Carlson treats the historical experiences of various groups with sensitivity. He discusses how swamps were used as safe havens by resilient, formerly enslaved African Americans. He also explores how Indigenous Americans' relationships with swamps transformed, along with the land, as settlers favored cultivation over harvesting native species of flora and fauna.

This title will appeal to readers interested in American history, environmental history, agriculture, and public policy, and would be a valuable addition to academic and public library collections. *Perilous Waters* will be particularly appreciated by historians and history students interested in the intersection of America's people, policies, and land. Readers interested in North Carolina will find the state's wetlands, particularly the Dismal Swamp and coastal region, represented throughout the book's text and illustrations. Overall, *Perilous Waters* provides readers with a geographically broader historical context of swamps in the United States beyond the South.

Laura Bright
East Carolina University



The American Revolution: Essays on the Founding Era

Nicholas Popper, ed.
Williamsburg, VA: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2026. 296 pp. \$29.95.
ISBN 9781469695129.

The American Revolution: Essays on the Founding Era is a timely collection of essays published to coincide with the 250th anniversary of the Revolution. Drawing on more than fifty years of scholarship, the volume brings together works by eighteen leading historians, adapted from previously published books and from articles in the *William and Mary Quarterly*. The collection aims to make decades of historical research accessible to a twenty-first-century audience while also demonstrating how much more complicated this era becomes when viewed through the experiences of a diverse range of people. Rather than repeating a familiar narrative centered on elite founders and military victory, it presents the Revolution as a contested, disruptive, and far-reaching event shaped by class, gender, race, slavery, religion, empire, Native diplomacy, and other factors.

One of the collection's greatest strengths is its inclusion of essays that demonstrate that political elites alone did not make the Revolution. Alfred F. Young's essay on George Robert Twelves Hewes shows how ordinary working people became politicized through direct encounters with British authority and participated in events such as the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party. Linda K. Kerber similarly demonstrates that women, despite having no formal political power, actively participated in the patriot cause through petitions, domestic labor, boycotts, and other forms of wartime support. She highlights examples such as the Edenton Tea Party of 1774 in North Carolina. These essays recover the political significance of people often omitted from traditional narratives and show that the Revolution reached deeply into everyday life.

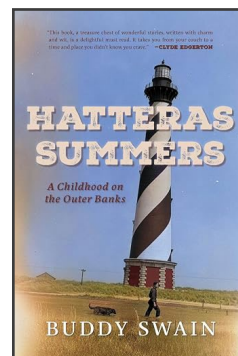
Other essays expand the scope even further by revealing the Revolution's imperial and global dimensions. Woody Holton argues that support for inde-

pendence in Virginia was shaped by struggles over western land, British efforts to limit expansion, and Native diplomacy, making the Revolution as much a conflict over territory as over political rights. Katherine Carté shows how patriot leaders drew on networks of imperial Protestantism and long-standing traditions of public religion to build unity, legitimize rebellion, and support the new government. Maya Jasanoff's essay on Loyalists reminds readers that independence also produced migration throughout the British Empire and reshaped imperial identities, while Manisha Sinha highlights the ways African Americans exposed the contradiction between liberty and slavery and helped lay the groundwork for the abolition movement.

The essays in this collection make a compelling case for understanding the American Revolution as more than the founding of a new nation. The volume is suited to academic libraries and, to a lesser extent, public libraries. Its accessibility is enhanced by the abridgment of the essays and the inclusion of limited citations at the end of each one. Additional features such as suggestions for further reading, brief author biographies, illustrations, and an index further support its use. Even so, these remain scholarly essays, and readers will benefit from some prior knowledge of the Revolution.

Linda Jacobson

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



Hatteras Summers: A Childhood on the Outer Banks

Buddy Swain.
Durham: Blair, 2026.
146 pp. \$17.95.
ISBN 978-1-971807-03-4

When Hatteras Island is mentioned most people think of the numerous tall houses that line both sides of the island, the two-lane road that winds through the towns, or the fishermen who visit the island's point each fall. In *Hatteras Summers*, read-

ers are transported back in time to a Hatteras Island before it became a destination vacation spot. In this delightful book about the island in the 1940s and 1950s, author Buddy Swain shares his childhood memories and experiences during the summers he spent with his grandparents, who were inhabitants of the village.

Swain's memoir is comprised of vignettes of many fond memories from the summers he spent with his maternal grandparents. The chapters share the theme of exploring different elements and experiences the island offered, with titles such as "Going Clamming," "Going to the Landing," and "Going to Dinner." Each chapter includes intricate details about the island's landscape, island life, and locals, so that readers can vicariously experience the island during this period of history. Swain provides balance in his storytelling by including fun, entertaining anecdotes, as well as earnest portrayals of the islanders and the realities of life. He handles each depiction, whether humorous or solemn, with compassion and respect. Readers will appreciate the honesty of his approach. The memoir is also relatable, providing both coming-of-age experiences, like his first time holding hands in the chapter "Going to the Picture Show," and universal experience of bereavement following the loss of dear family members in the chapter "Going to Heaven."

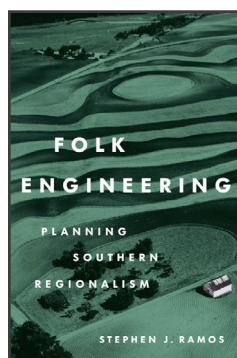
Hatteras Summers is accompanied by black-and-white photos and illustrations to help readers visualize how vastly different the island was in the mid-20th century. These photos and illustrations support the author's stories and expand readers' understanding of Swain's vignettes. The photos and illustrations are supplied by the author's personal collection, other local families' collections, and contributions from entities such as the Outer Banks History Center.

Swain is a retired educator and North Carolina native who currently resides on Hatteras Island, beside the house that was his grandparents'. He holds a B.A. in Science Education from UNC-Chapel Hill and a Master's in Botany from Duke University. Swain has taught in several North Carolina educational settings, including Craven Community College and East Carolina University. This is his second book. His first book, *Summers by the Sea: Echoes of a Hatteras Childhood*, was initially self-published, with only a

small distribution at the local bookstore on Hatteras Island. Due to the book's local success, Swain was approached about writing an updated, expanded edition, which evolved into *Hatteras Summers*.

This book is well suited for public libraries, as it offers both leisure reading and a historical account based on personal experience. Patrons will enjoy this visit back in time to a Hatteras Island that most cannot imagine existed before the boom of tourism and vacationing. Academic libraries with a focus on North Carolina history will find this book a valuable addition as it provides researchers with anecdotal evidence about the history of a notable North Carolina location, along with photos and illustrations for further insight and support.

Laura Mangum
East Carolina University



Folk Engineering: Planning Southern Regionalism

Stephen J. Ramos.
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2025. 279 pp. \$29.95.
ISBN 978-1-4696-9011-7.

At the turn of the twentieth century, intellectuals and policymakers in the southeastern United States continued a conflict between traditional agrarianism and industrialism that had begun during post-war reconstruction. In his book *Folk Engineering: Planning Southern Regionalism*, author Stephen J. Ramos looks at social engineering attempts to improve conditions for the Jim Crow-era South, which would bring large New Deal projects to the region. As the recent vice president-elect of the International Planning History Society, Ramos has proven to be an authority in the history of regional planning. After earning his Doctor of Design from Harvard University, Ramos served on the faculty of the College of Environment and Design at the University of Georgia from 2011 until his passing in January of 2026. Ramos authored a previous book, *Dubai*

Amplified: The Engineering of a Port Geography, which was adapted from his dissertation. He also co-edited *Infrastructure Sustainability and Design* and was the editor-in-chief for the *Regions & Cities* book series.

In a fairly robust introduction, Ramos focuses on regionalism in the historical context of addressing socioeconomic issues that came out of the Postbellum South. Here, he introduces Howard W. Odum, a social scientist who formed the Institute for Research in Social Science (IRSS) at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Ramos dedicates the first chapter to a roundtable event that took place on July 6, 1931, at the University of Virginia's Institute for Public Affairs. At this event, leaders of various social science fields, including members of the New York based Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) and the IRSS, came together to discuss how to tackle large interstate regional issues. One speaker of note was the then-governor of NY, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR). This meeting became the foundation of a network of thinkers instrumental in advancing FDR's New Deal policies.

In the second chapter, the author rewinds and takes the reader through the early education and career of Odum, and the circumstances that led to the founding of the IRSS at UNC. Ramos uses this chapter to outline the institute's rise as a leader in quantitative social research, through the work of Odum's faculty peers and graduate students. Subsequent chapters reveal the theoretical context in which social science existed in the first half of the twentieth century. The difficulties between social science and natural science theory and practice are explained through the views and critiques of Odum's work by his contemporaries, much of which addresses his studies in race relations. These chapters succeed in reminding current researchers that early, turn-of-the-century social science was still rooted in Eurocentric theory, within the context of maintaining the status quo of white supremacy.

While most of this book is dedicated to the important task of creating the context in which regionalism was developed, Ramos finally gets to the heart of the matter in the last two chapters, with a more in-depth account of the evolution of regionalism within planning. This starts with Odum's classification of the regions of the United States and continues with critiques of various regional studies. The author expands on the implementation of so-

cial planning endeavors on the national level, while contrasting various modes of planning, revealing the incompatibility that can often occur between regionalism and planning at the state level.

Even though *Folk Engineering* is a historical account of southern regional studies, the author is not overtly critical of much of the ideology presented, especially the lack of a push for desegregation. Instead, he leaves this to the critiques of Odum's contemporaries, which may be a more powerful statement. Dense with often unexplained sociological concepts, this work is intended for a more scholarly audience. Aside from an index and a robust bibliography, this book includes forty pages of notes, which due to the interdisciplinary nature of the subject, will be an invaluable resource for researchers who may lack either a sociological or planning foundation. This book is recommended for any academic library with sociology, planning, or Southern U.S. history collections.

James Brinkley
East Carolina University



The Curious Case of the Midnight Specter

Moriah Chavis.
Twenty Hills Publishing, 2025.
303 pp. \$16.99.
ISBN 9781956499391

Mystery entangles with a little fantasy and magic in the historic setting of Moriah Chavis' *The Curious Case of the Midnight Specter*. Set in late 19th century England, the novel opens with a conversation between Life and Death as they hover around the young adult heroine, Leighanna Pauley. She is battling consumption and is being tugged by both Life and Death, but in an instant, Death must depart because a murder has taken place nearby. Life knits Leighanna back together, but her brush with death leaves Leighanna with a purpose. She wakes with more determination and a bit of supernatural power that increases her sleuthing drive. She is determined to solve the horrific murder of a fellow socialite that took place while her own life hung in the balance be-

cause she feels the authorities aren't taking the investigation seriously enough. After much pleading, she enlists the help of her best friend as well as the daughter of the police commissioner. With her friends' help and while attending society events, Leighanna surreptitiously pursues leads to uncover the true murderer. Throughout the story, Leighanna is also accompanied by Life and Death, the two supernatural characters in the book that have not lost their connection to her since her illness. They each step into the story from time to time in harrowing situations and their presence makes the reader wonder which outcome will take place, life or death. Through Leighanna's alliances with each of these characters and her spunk and determination, she works to find the killer walking their streets. Is the infamous Jack the Ripper of the time responsible? Or is it someone closer to them all? Leighanna's investigation and tactics take the reader on a journey through the late 19th century English social life of a young lady mixed with the excitement and dangerous situations of bringing a murderer to light. Leighanna thinks and sometimes acts outside of the social mores for young women of her time, and it is this bit of feminism, toughness, and sense of justice that makes her a very likable character for today's young adult reader.

Told in third person, Chavis's intriguing tale appeals to mystery lovers as well as those who enjoy historical fiction and a bit of fantasy. The plot takes some twists and turns and includes some narrow escapes. Leighanna is a very believable character who, like many young women both then and today, find themselves in situations and roles defined by society's perceptions of what women should be. Leighanna gracefully puts a dent in some of those perceptions. The main characters in the novel are in their late teens to early twenties. *The Curious Case of the Midnight Specter* is Chavis' second published novel. Her first was the young adult fantasy *Heart of the Sea*. Additionally, she has published short stories.

Chavis is a North Carolina school library media coordinator and is passionate about engaging young adult readers in suitable and captivating stories. This book is recommended for high school libraries and public libraries with young adult sections. Even though the characters are a little older, the content is appropriate for middle schools as well. It's a refresh-

ing read that will pique the interests of patrons and keep them turning the pages.

Tracey Patterson, MLIS
Perma-Bound Consultant



Within Our Power: The Story of the Edenton Ladies' Tea Party

Sally M. Walker. Illustrated by Jonathan D. Voss.
Raleigh: North Carolina Office of Archives and History. 2024. 32 pp. \$18.00.
ISBN 9780865265066

You know about the Boston Tea Party of 1773, where barrels of British tea were famously dumped overboard into Boston Harbor, but how much do you know about the revolutionary women of Edenton and their act of protest known today as the Edenton Tea Party?

Set in Edenton, North Carolina, in 1774, this narrative nonfiction picture book for young readers fills a gap in quality juvenile literature on the topic and offers a timely text for instructional units centered on the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. With multiple freely available online educational resources and opportunities for field experiences in Edenton, NC, *Within Our Power* presents an engaging story to launch learning about the declaration that became known as the Edenton Tea Party, an often-overlooked event in North Carolina history. For older readers, the story offers a springboard for deeper exploration of such contemporary themes as political protest, civic engagement, and who gets to participate. For all readers, *Within Our Power* is a fine book packed with historical facts and a roll call of who's who in colonial Edenton.

The narrative begins by introducing a group of women living in "Edenton, Chowan County, the Colony of North Carolina," in the summer of 1774. The women often gathered at the home of Penelope Barker, whose husband was away serving as North Carolina's colonial agent to London. While sipping British tea and talking about popular topics of the

day, the women's conversation became more fervently focused on the unfair treatment of the American colonies by Great Britain's Parliament. Specifically, unrest was afoot regarding the colonists' lack of representation caused by how their tax money was spent, widely criticized as "taxation without representation." As the group of Edenton women learned more through newspapers and word of mouth, they became determined to act and make their voices heard. They drafted a statement announcing their participation in the widespread colonial boycott of British imports such as tea and cloth. Rather than remain anonymous, fifty-one women signed their names to the declaration. The document was printed in the *Virginia Gazette* newspaper on November 3, 1774, and in January 1775, it appeared in London's *Morning Chronicle*. The resolution with the signatures of women protesters sparked controversy at the time and is now regarded as one of the earliest examples of political activism by women in the American colonies.

Within Our Power is the most recent addition to Sally M. Walker's impressive catalog of more than sixty nonfiction books for children and young adults. Her *Secrets of a Civil War Submarine* won the 2006 Robert F. Sibert Award for best informational book, and a dozen of her titles have been award finalists or have appeared on booklists such as the Orbis Pictus Commended list. Clearly well-researched and providing a succinct overview of the political climate in 1774, this book offers insight into the Edenton women's daily lives to paint a striking backdrop for their act of political protest. Walker provides instructive background information and chronicles such teachable topics as the East India Company, the

Boston Tea Party, and North Carolina's First Provincial Assembly in New Bern. Jonathan D. Voss' illustrations reflect the colonial period with textured, sketch-like scenes in subdued hues and provide ample historical and cultural details to extend learning and discussion. The Author's Note addresses important questions left out of the narrative such as the status of African and Native American people in colonial America. A timeline of events completes the volume's usefulness for both the classroom and the casual reader.

This title is highly recommended for all public and school libraries, and it offers an important perspective for North Carolina collections and curriculum materials collections in academic libraries. With a recommended age range of Grades 3-5, *Within Our Power* is also suitable for use in middle grades. The following open educational resources make great companions to the volume for classroom instruction or for reading at home:

- [Edenton Tea Party Resolves of 1774](#), NC Department of Archives and History
- [Within Our Power: The Story of the Edenton Ladies' Tea Party: Learning Activities and Lesson Ideas](#), NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- [K-12 Primary Source Instruction: America 250 Resources](#), East Carolina University
- [Visit Historic Edenton](#), North Carolina Historic Sites

Charlene Loope
East Carolina 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.