



Dorothy Hodder, Compiler

Southern charm comes alive in Lucia Peel Powe's latest novel, *Roanoke Rock Muddle*. Regionally set in Williamston, North Carolina, Powe recreates for her readers a slice of southern life as it was during the 1920s and 1930s, the taste from which still lingers today. Imbedded in the storyline are delicacies such as Mary Cavett, a well-educated housewife in a loveless

marriage who never reveals that her 9-year-old son is the result of an affair with a Ken-doll look-alike, though townspeople eventually piece the puzzle together; Miz' Beulah, sister of the local chef, who possesses the gift of detecting if a woman is "expecting" just by looking into her eyes, while at the same time honing the uncanny ability to expose the hypocrisy of her beloved Weeping Mary Baptist Church; and the uncompromising Doc Hardison, who travels the area dispensing wisdom as his drug of choice. However conflicted some of these personalities may be, their endearing nature, illustrated in their authentic, down-home interaction with one another, is sure to attract the reader's attention.

Lucia Peel Powe.

Roanoke Rock Muddle.

Raleigh: Ivy House Publishing Group, 2003.
271 pp. Paper, \$14.95. ISBN 1-57197-359-1.

The personal narratives of these and other characters are carefully woven together by two elements that stand out above everything else: regional landscape and southern cuisine. Powe crafts memorable impressions of both of these through one of her primary characters, Ben-Olive. It is through his perceptions that the beauty and intricacies of nature in the Carolinas

shines through. From his "floating kitchen," the Swamp Monkey, Ben-Olive reflects on his life using markers from the Roanoke River, each one bringing us further into the psyche of a black man in a white southern society at a time when race was just one of the cards the local men played with. From the spiders and "glorious dragonflies" to the rushing river and "tea-colored swamps," Ben-Olive travels back in time to recall the important lessons learned from his Meemaw in order to negotiate his way through the implications of speeches given by such influential town leaders as Mayor Griffin. As he and his sister Beulah come to realize, the principles they learned growing up can help them rise above the gossip they are constantly exposed to. To top it all off, Powe concludes her narrative with a section titled "Fifteen Favorites of North Carolina Sound Country Cooking." It becomes clear that the author intended for the wildlife and Rockfish to become characters themselves!

Despite the meaningful internal musings of Ben-Olive and Beulah, a dichotomy appears in the character of Tiny Monroe. Dialogue between Mary Cavett and her mother Serena (Doc's daughter and wife, respectively) reveals that southern aristocracy is not always something to admire.

Though Tiny is a prominent figure from the town, having been around to watch most of its youth grow, her influence is critical in nature; in her case, money speaks. She is expected to be at every function, only to be intentionally disregarded as the one to gossip, misjudge, and just plain stir up trouble. Her reputation precedes her, and actually serves as what is potentially a flaw in Powe's narrative. Considering the effect that Tiny Monroe has on Williamston and its inhabitants, it is surprising that she only makes one abbreviated appearance at the end of the novel for a brief and unnecessary verbal exchange with Mary Cavett. While it would have been perhaps more effective for Tiny Monroe to be able to defend her ways personally to the characters and the reader, Powe's attempt to satirize the pervasive social hierarchy at the time becomes clear.

As a native of the South, Powe was exposed to local politics through her first marriage to Judge Elbert "Junie" Peel, and currently from her marriage to attorney E.K. Powe of Durham. Having also received an education from such institutions as the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke, Powe has been immersed in southern culture her whole life. As a result, she offers us highly entertaining foray into the world of Carolina's relationships, rivers, and rockfish that one is sure to remember. Appropriate for public and academic libraries, as well as round-table discussion groups, reading *Roanoke Rock Muddle* is also a good way to spend a rainy day. You will not be disappointed.

— Cheryl M. Saba
Cape Fear Community College

Other Publications of Interest

Wrightsville Beach is an attractive collection of color photographs taken by Joann Bristol, concentrating on views of the beach, marshes, birds, piers, docks, gardens, and typical older buildings of the town, in a variety of lights and moods. The full-page photographs are accompanied by brief quotations from sources ranging from explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano to native son David Brinkley to present-day residents and local journalists, selected by Susan Sharp, the photographer's sister. The book is a memorial to the authors' mother, and as such omits the busy traffic and modern development that is also typical of Wrightsville Beach today. It is suitable for large public libraries. (2004; Bristol Books Publishing, 1908 Eastwood Road, Suite 116, Wilmington, NC 28403; 40 pp.; paper, \$29.95; no ISBN.)

In *Phantom Pain: North Carolina's Artificial-Limbs Program for Confederate Veterans*, Ansley Herring Wegner concludes that North Carolina was among the most progressive of the southern states in supporting its maimed and disabled Confederate veterans, allocating funds for artificial limbs for veterans as early as 1866. The author was formerly an archivist and is currently a research historian in the North Carolina Office of Archives and History. Her brief study is illustrated with photographs of Civil War-era surgical instruments and artificial limbs and of veterans with their prostheses, and includes an extensive index to records in the North Carolina State Archives related to Civil War amputees. It concludes with a bibliography and index. (2004; Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 4622 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-4622; 261 pp.; paper, \$21.05 includes shipping and handling; ISBN 0-86526-314-0.)

Searching for the Roanoke Colonies, edited by E. Thompson Shields and Charles R. Ewen, contains 16 essays presented at two conferences on Roanoke Island in 1993 and 1998. Written from a mix of historical, archaeological, literary, and folkloric viewpoints, they provide fresh insights into the English colo-

nies established on Roanoke Island in the 1580s. The volume is illustrated with maps and reproductions of paintings, and contains a bibliography and index, while notes follow each essay. (2003; Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 4622 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-4622; 214 pp.; paper, \$15.70; ISBN 0-86526-309-4.)

Libraries with an interest in Thomas Wolfe or North Carolina writers will wish to acquire *The Sons of Maxwell Perkins: The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Thomas Wolfe, and Their Editor*, edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli with Judith S. Baughman. The letters are arranged chronologically from July 1919 to June 1947, with notes following individual letters. Wolfe's portrait of Perkins in *You Can't Go Home Again* is included as Appendix I, and a posthumous essay on Wolfe by Perkins for The Literary Guild is included in Appendix II. The book includes also photographs, a chronology, and an index. (2004; University of South Carolina Press, 937 Assembly Street, Carolina Plaza, 8th Floor, Columbia, SC 29208; 361 pp.; cloth, \$29.95; ISBN 1-57003-548-2.)

Are We There Yet? The Wright Brothers National Memorial Park, by Sandra Taylor-Miller, is an educational, activity-based book for elementary and middle school students. It may be of interest to school libraries. (2004; Parkway Publishers, Inc., PO Box 3678, Boone, NC 28607; 56 pp.; paper, \$9.95; ISBN 1-887905-87-1.)

Bending the Twigs in Jamestown: A History of Education in Jamestown, North Carolina, 1755–1945, by Mary A. Browning, is a careful, comprehensive work. It contains black-and-white photographs and other illustrations, notes, bibliography, and an index. Appendices list students, teachers, and board members where records are available, as well as the locally prominent Mendenhall family. (2004; The Historic Jamestown Society, P.O. Box 512, Jamestown, NC 27282; 138 pp.; paper, \$15.00 plus \$2.50 postage and handling; no ISBN.)

Of the 400 some species of sharks that prowl the world's oceans, around 60 have been seen in North Carolina's waters. John Hairr describes a dozen of them in *Big Sharks of the Carolina Coast*. The final chapter details the short history of shark attacks on humans off North Carolina. The book includes black and white photographs and a bibliography. (2003; Averagesboro Press, P.O. Box 482, Erwin, NC 28339; 76 pp.; paper, \$7.95; ISBN 1-888879-48-3.)

Henry J. Pankey is the controversial principal who raised performance measures and lowered violence through stressing Tough Love and Dress for Success in high schools in New York City, Laurinburg, and Durham. Raised in a poverty-stricken farming community near Laurinburg, he majored in drama at the North Carolina School of the Arts and earned an M.A. in drama at the University of Maryland. He began supporting himself as a drug counselor and teacher in New York City while trying to break into the theater world, and found his true vocation in returning a sense of discipline and dignity to children others would call hopeless delinquents. He is currently a school improvement consultant and motivational speaker. *Standing in the Shadows of Greatness* is his autobiography. It is illustrated with black-and-white photographs and reproductions of newspaper articles. (2004; Parkway Publishers, Inc., PO Box 3678, Boone, NC 28607; 142 pp.; paper, \$14.95; ISBN 1-887905-94-4.)

Tom Fowler says that well-known tourist destinations are so well interpreted and packaged that visitors lose all sense of sovereignty over the experience of visiting them and are reduced to the status of mere sightseers. His aim in *Carolina Journeys: Exploring the Trails of the Carolinas—Both Real and Imagined*,

is to tell stories that may send readers off in search of poorly known sites of interest. For the readers' own good (and not because he is lazy, he says), he does not provide much in the way of directions or other logistical information. The areas and topics he selects for his brief, quirky essays are generally obscure (although he does rehash the stories of Tom Dooley and Flora McDonald) and related to hiking, running, swimming, or otherwise poking around in the great outdoors. Some of the essays include black-and-white photographs. (2004; Parkway Publishers, Inc., PO Box 3678, Boone, NC 28607; 152 pp.; paper, \$14.95; ISBN 1-887905-86-3.)

After Anais: A Second-Hand Memoir, is the rather offhand autobiography of a North Carolina woman who made her way in New York City and Europe as a model and actress during the 1940s and 1950s, and later as a self-taught painter. Clearly a misfit in her traditional Southern family, she found the love of her life in Gonzalo More, the Peruvian communist activist immortalized by Anais Nin in her diaries. Although the memoir is illustrated with fashion photographs from her career, she is as coy about concealing her name and hometown as she is the details of her love affairs. Mildred Harris is her property manager, who reconstructed the story from hours of taped conversations and piles of memorabilia at the insistence of her "charming, maddening, and delightful subject." The resulting narrative leaves a great many open questions, and it is printed in a distracting typeface. (2004; Author House, 1663 Liberty Drive, Suite 200, Bloomington, IN 47403; 484 pp.; paper, \$17.50; ISBN 1-4184-2269-X.)

Locally Initiated Inclusionary Zoning Programs: A Guide for Local Governments in North Carolina and Beyond is a new publication from the UNC School of Government. Edited by Anita R. Brown-Graham, it is designed to help local governments balance legal and policy concerns related to creating affordable low and moderate cost housing through inclusionary zoning. (2004; School of Government, CB# 3330 Knapp-Sanders Building, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3330; 78 pp.; paper, \$21.00; ISBN 1-56011-470-3.)

North Carolina Capital Case Law Handbook, 2nd edition, by Robert L. Farb, updates the 1996 original. The primary focus is the sentencing process, but it also addresses common pretrial and trial issues. The book contains an index of cases cited as well as a descriptive word index. (2004; UNC School of Government, CB# 3330 Knapp-Sanders Building, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3330; 282 pp.; paper, \$34.50; ISBN 1-56011-471-1.)

A Legal Guide to Purchasing and Contracting for North Carolina Local Governments, 2nd edition, by Frayda S. Bluestein. First published in 1998, this book answers questions local officials may ask about contracts, bidding, purchasing, and conflicts of interest. It is indexed. (2004; School of Government, CB# 3330 Knapp-Sanders Building, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3330; 161 pp.; looseleaf, \$38.00; ISBN 1-56011-464-9.)

Public Records Law for North Carolina Local Governments, 1997-2003 Supplement, by David M. Lawrence, updates the first edition chapter by chapter. Two additional chapters are added, on personal information from motor vehicle records, and on records involving public security. (2004; School of Government, CB# 3330 Knapp-Sanders Building, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3330; 69 pp.; paper, \$18.50; ISBN 1-56011-473-8.)

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