
Dr. Pierce, who chairs the history department at The University of North Carolina Asheville, has accomplished something in writing this book that most historians aim for but few accomplish. He has written a carefully researched scholarly work about a colorful and revealing aspect of American social history without ruining the dozens of great stories he passes on of the drivers, mechanics, car owners, and promoters who made stock car racing the South’s most characteristic pastime. This means *Real NASCAR* can be read by racing fans who will share stories about Bill France and Curtis Turner at lunch tables and bars all over America at the same time it becomes a key text in the reading lists of university courses on Southern culture.

The narrative flows as easily as a great popular sports biography so that the casual reader will have no idea that 26 pages of notes and a seven-page bibliography discretely follow the text (as does a helpful index), though he or she will realize that some of the best anecdotes come from first-person interviews conducted by the author or from relatively obscure popular books. From the driver whose pet monkey rode shotgun to the sometimes-bizarre rule interpretations that changed the outcomes of races, every reader will find bits that make the book memorable. The great stories are not, however, carelessly arranged. Pierce maintains control of the chronology so that he can relate the sequel to one of France’s many multi-year feuds with drivers, owners, or promoters without losing the book’s flow through the years from the rag-tag races of the mid-thirties to the corporate NASCAR of the 1970s.

To the more academic reader, Pierce’s meticulous scholarship will be welcome and provide leads to primary material that will allow serious students to explore the subject of stock car racing from the ground up, just as Pierce has. Beside the entertainment value of the stories of the characters who made up the world of racing, Pierce does much to reveal the character of Southern society in the twentieth century. His discussion of the lives of working class people is at the heart of the book, and is what makes the volume worth so much more than a memoir by a well-known driver or owner. Pierce’s explanation of the place of moonshiners, transporters, and bootleggers in the South during and after prohibition is an impressive piece of social history that adds to the book’s value as a text for history students.

*Real NASCAR*’s particular value derives from Pierce’s accomplishments as a historian, and to a certain extent its few annoying qualities are because of the same historian’s habits. It is easy enough to forgive the surest stylistic mark of academic history, the presence of at least one sentence beginning with “Indeed, ...” in every chapter, and the academic’s tendency to make awkward use of the glib catchphrases—the book could have done with fewer sentences trying to accommodate “hell of a fellow”—of popular dialog is also relatively easy to ignore.

It is the historian’s insistence on piling up and pointing out evidence that creates the only significant problem with the presentation. General readers and academic historians alike are apt to tire of the constant emphasis on the role of the money and men associated with illegal alcohol production, transportation, and sale in the founding and development of NASCAR and all stock car racing in the Southern states. I realize that this is one of the main points of the book, but the constant reminders that Junior Johnson or Curtis Turner or Clay Earles had ties to the illegal whiskey economy go far beyond the point of making a point. The index lists only seven instances of “Bootlegging: connections to NASCAR,” but there are literally dozens of passages where the reader is unnecessarily reminded that some NASCAR figure or other was connected with the business of white liquor. At a certain point in the book many readers will find themselves wishing that they could simply grant Pierce his point and read the rest of the book without
having the obvious links between bootlegging and NASCAR pointed out again and again.

That said, *Real NASCAR* is a book I would recommend for every student or participant in Southern culture. Since I fall in the second category, be assured that my lunch conversations will be improved for weeks by the memorable stories Pierce has to tell.

—Cy Dillon, Ferrum College


Historians traditionally view the Deep South of the antebellum era as an isolated backwater. The cotton moguls who controlled the plantation-based economy were reactionary and defensive, seeking to protect their dwindling influence in an age of westward expansion and European industrialization. Mr. Schoen offers fresh insight into the Cotton South, offering arguments that southerners were very proactive in embracing free trade theory, forging international relationships with Great Britain (and later other foreign powers), and, initially at least, working within a federal framework despite their own conscious obvious misgivings.

Focusing on the “Cotton States” (South Carolina and Georgia, and later Alabama and Mississippi) of the Deep South, the book moves primarily in chronological order. Within each chapter, Schoen moves back and forth somewhat within his proposed time frames (for example, 1789–1820, 1796–1818), but does manage very well to preserve the narrative thread. In each chapter/time period, he discusses the economic gains received and sought by the South.

Starting with the Constitutional Convention, he depicts the South as a group reluctantly willing to compromise on key issues as long as avenues of economic prosperity were left open. The South, still reeling from post-Revolutionary War debts, seemed most concerned with tariff laws. Indeed, Schoen focuses primarily on Congressional tariffs throughout the War of 1812 and the Jackson presidency. His strongest point is perhaps the South’s ironic embrace of Jefferson’s embargo, and its feelings of betrayal upon the repeal and subsequent war.

After 1815, Southern lawmakers became bent on protecting exports to Britain and increasing revenues as much as possible. Cotton became the ascendant export (as much as 80% of national exports), and the South knew it. Consumed by greed, “King Cotton” began to narrow its political and constitutional interpretations to keep tariffs low and protect its free labor source, slaves.

Schoen focuses much more on the issue of slavery in the years between the Van Buren and Buchanan administrations. He recounts familiar slavery apologist arguments within the new light of the South’s economic progression. He points out that while Great Britain had largely abolished slavery and abolitionism had found ground in the Republican Party, the South faced no definite immediate threat. He instead shows how Southern lawmakers fractured their own hopes of free trade by pursuing slave ownership rights within the states created by westward expansion.

The South had become so convinced of its own international privilege with Great Britain that it saw confederacy as a lucrative proactive attempt at expanding economic prosperity just as much as the traditional view, the final reaction of a desperate people. He closes the book with discussion of the South’s presumptuous suppositions of the value of an alliance with Great Britain juxtaposed against the backdrop of Fort Sumter and formation of the provisional Confederacy in Montgomery, Alabama.

By his own admission, Schoen bases his work largely on research within public records. The choice does not diminish his work in any way, but leaves the reader with lingering questions about the personal appetites of the general and local populace. The book itself is a very invested read. The focus on international and interstate trade and economics might seem confusing and dry to the casual reader. Beyond that, the scholar and academic will find the work most fascinating.

—Joseph Yamine, Ferrum College


It is difficult to imagine the Chesapeake region where families, including children, drank alcohol with every meal, including breakfast, funerals, barbecues, weddings, political affairs, church, court, and
bathing, polishing, and for many other purposes. Servants and slaves drank alcohol provided by the masters and made by themselves. In her work *Every Home a Distillery*, author Sarah Hand Meacham describes a lesser-known history of the Colonial Chesapeake, its culture of alcohol.

In late seventeenth-century England the annual consumption of ale was 999 U.S. pints per person. Those living in the Colonial Chesapeake came from a culture of drinking alcohol, for water in England was contaminated with blood, excrement, and other pollutants, as was the water of the Chesapeake. On either side of the Atlantic, only those who could afford a milking cow had milk, and the milk was usually made into butter and cheese. Without refrigeration, fruit juice and milk would spoil quickly. Coffee and tea were and would remain very expensive throughout most of the eighteenth century. There were very few, if any, non-alcoholic beverage options.

Meacham researched travel journals, English housewifery literature, early cookbooks, planters’ journals, newspapers, almanacs, court records, letterbooks, import records, account books, husbandry literature, alcohol production literature, and family and individual papers discovering that women in the Chesapeake made alcohol and kept taverns during the Colonial period. She includes an essay on these sources used in the book as well as recipes for persimmon beer, cider, and quince wine among others, providing readers with a taste of the variety of flavors.

Once women were able to purchase alcohol, they produced less of it. Meacham argues that the influence of the Royal Society of London in the United States assisted in the regendering of the production of alcohol through scientific production and states that women likely welcomed this change. She illustrates the regendering through the change in cookbooks, records, and wills. For example, prior to the mid-eighteenth century, women’s cookbooks contained a significant number of beverage recipes. For some of them up to a third of the cookbook was devoted to alcohol production. She explains through an examination of public records such as wills and inventories that in the earlier period women often owned the implements for produc-

As the availability of non-alcoholic beverages, especially coffee and tea, increased, they become fashionable and drinking alcohol came to be seen as a choice rather than a necessity. Drunkenness became more prevalent as a social problem in records during the latter part of the eighteenth century. Planters began to fear that their slaves and servants would revolt against them. Drunkenness is then perceived as detrimental to work and society. Desiring a sober workforce, Americans’ attitudes began to change toward the drinking of alcohol, leading the way for the nineteenth-century temperance movement.

The regendering of alcohol production may not have been misogynistic as Meacham argues; however, the evidence of misogyny during the evolving masculinization of it is implicit: “The new science authors emphasized that men should ‘master’ women’s ‘mystery’; ... In answer to those who pointed out that ‘every old woman can brew,’ Morrice argued that women, ‘not knowing the proper heats that are necessary,’ are giving goods instead of grains to the pigs.’ Women, the new experts asserted, could no longer differentiate between barley and beer” (p. 97–98). Interestingly, she makes no mention of the scientific developments that may have coincided with the regendering of alcohol, such as medicine (e.g. the transition from midwives to doctors) which has been argued to have been a misogynistic transition.1 Discussion of this parallel movement may be out of the scope of her book, but it would have been interesting for the purpose of understanding the social context in Chesapeake society.

Meacham’s work is an original one, based upon the research of primary sources, showing that the Chesapeake Bay region had to rely upon its own resources and
people within its communities rather than imports. Every Home a Distillery is an important contribution to the study of women’s history and the colonial history of the United States. It is recommended for researchers and general readers alike.


—Leah Thomas, Cataloging Coordinator, Library of Virginia


This handy field guide is a long-awaited revision of the first edition published in 1980 by Martof, et al. Much has changed in the field of herpetology in this region in the past thirty years including the addition of thirty new species and a number of new discoveries regarding the natural history of amphibian and reptile species.

The new edition has a layout and table of contents similar to its predecessor, although the text in each section has been updated and restyled by the new group of authors. Two of the authors of the first edition were deceased before the writing of the new version began. An introductory section points out the amazing diversity of form and function of the herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles) in our region. It also points out that this group of animals is part of a “hidden biodiversity” with many species poorly known to the public. Unlike many mammals and birds, most of these species are secretive and rarely seen. In addition, there is also a large segment of the public with a negative bias against some types of herpetofauna, particularly snakes, which can lead to ignorance and misinformation regarding these species. This field guide provides a wealth of information regarding reptiles and amphibians which may help generate more interest in these species.

Following the introduction, a description of the region encompassed by the guide is included that describes the physiography, vegetation, and climate. This section is followed by a brief history of herpetology in the Carolinas and Virginia. After a listing of species by class, order, family, and genus, species accounts are provided including a description of the natural history of the species along with a map and color photo.

A glossary and list of useful references in the area of herpetology is included at the end of the book.

In 2008, The Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles revised many of the scientific names of herpetofauna species. The authors of the new edition prefer to use the older more established names, although they also provide the equivalent newer scientific name in the species accounts. For many users of this field guide, the change in scientific names is irrelevant since common names are often preferred.

This is the only book that includes a comprehensive guide to all amphibians and reptiles specific to the Carolinas and Virginia. It provides the most updated information available on these species and will be a useful resource for the general public, natural historians, and herpetologists for years to come.

—Todd Fredericksen, PhD, Ferrum College


Most every American knows about the Civil Rights movement, including bus boycotts and sit-ins, of the 1950s. But what most don’t know is that neither the movement nor the boycotts were the first of their kind. Another that picked up a groundswell of support in its day is the one that Blair L. M. Kelley unfolds in Right to Ride: the push for black rights and desegregation—of streetcars rather than buses—in the South following the infamous Plessy v. Ferguson “Separate but Equal” ruling of 1896.

Put simply, Homer Plessy was one-eighth black and seventh-
eights white when he tried boarding a whites only car in Louisiana in 1892. According to a law passed in the state two years before, Plessy was considered black. He was arrested and jailed, and later sued the railroad companies under the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments. “Separate but Equal” was the result, and the ruling emboldened the next few years’ worth of Jim Crow segregation laws and mindsets.

But the fight against segregation did not end there. Virginia readers of Right to Ride will take note that much of the book is devoted to the resistance in Richmond: the one-time capital of the Confederacy, a city where tradition was (and often still is) all-important, and apropos to the subject matter as Kelley points out, the first city in America to have an electric streetcar system. Streetcar segregation was nothing new; in 1883 the Supreme Court nullified the Civil Rights Act of 1875, allowing businesses to set fast their own regulations, and the resulting few-and-far-between lawsuits were ineffective overall. Though while color lines might be drawn, much discretion was left to the conductors themselves, and a black man or woman bearing a train’s first class ticket—if they were considered “well dressed” and “well behaved” by the conductor—could actually find a first class seat. It was not unknown for pre-Plessy Richmond streetcars to mix black and white passengers, and in fact many prominent whites in the city were proud that the streetcars allowed blacks to travel farther over its historic seven hills to find work, education, and “moral uplift.” Many among the rising black middle class felt the same way and expressed civic pride in both their streetcars and city.

After Plessy, however, the color line quickly became more strictly delineated and rigid. “Richmond’s streetcars were symbols of the city’s modernity and urbanity,” Kelley writes, and an increasing number of Richmond’s whites were alarmed by the rise of the presence of the city’s blacks in its affairs—both politically and as a physical presence on the streetcars. For blacks, their decreasing rights grew increasingly intolerable. A large portion, as much as half, were denied the right to vote, for instance, through intimidation, fraud, and poll taxes; likewise, blacks were denied first the right to sit in certain sections of the cars, and even for a time refused a seat at all. But these were the “New Negroes,” the first post-slavery generation of adults, and they were willing to fight for what they called their citizenship.

What followed was one of America’s first mass-organized civil rights movements, with the streetcars becoming a symbol for their shrinking freedoms. As their descendants would do with buses in the middle of the 20th century, those at the century’s beginning fought the Jim Crow laws either by staging sit-ins on the cars themselves—always in the white sections—or by boycotting the cars entirely. Kelley’s book doesn’t simply contain reports of black meetings or activism, but also has numerous harsh and sublime contemporary examples of laundresses walking across the city with loads of dirty clothes on their heads, cooks carrying their food to its location, and laborers worn out by the time they reached work and struggling to get home on their feet.

There was much solidarity among Richmond’s black residents for the “Walk,” and even some white residents, including a few prominent ones, took their side. On the segregationist side, the streetcar companies went so far as deputizing their conductors or nearly so, including giving them the right to carry guns to threaten or shoot anyone causing their individual definition of trouble. (As Kelley wrote, “The only safe plan was to stay off the cars and stay out of trouble” represented not just political conservatism but practical advice.)

Kelley also is not shy about explaining that the tragedy was not just the suffering that Richmond’s blacks endured, but for another reason: the title of Chapter 5, “Who’s To Blame?,” refers not only to the racist laws and rules but also the schisms in the black communities themselves, which at best impeded progress and at worst undermined the desegregationists’ goals.

There were different approaches to resistance—or the lack thereof. Two examples were leaders among Richmond’s working class, Maggie Lena Walker and John Mitchell, Jr. Both had attended school together, both were editors of weekly newspapers, and the latter served on the city council. Walker took a more liberal, fighting stance, and realized that the way to win was also to involve the city’s black women in the fight—that black women were the most downtrodden of all, with the most to gain and lose.

Mitchell could be equally liberal when it came to resisting white incursions on African Americans’ liberty and economy. Yet he also separated “Genteel Negroes” from “common” ones, that the former were the ones who should be
“uplifted,” and likewise believed that it wasn’t the upper-class whites who had an “aversion” to blacks, but the lower-class elements. He also believed that white men cohabitating with black women should be punished, and urged blacks to try to cultivate as much “true gentility” with whites as possible to befriend them.

But in the end, particularly in an era when it was even more widely acceptable to meet desegregation with physical violence than the 1950s, the movement ultimately fractured and fell apart, and Jim Crow laws of the 1920s and ’30s were ever harsher than those of Walker’s and Mitchell’s time. Unsuccessful, this early effort has remained mostly forgotten until this detailed and panoramic resurrection by Kelley. The final chapter, subtitled “On the Meaning of Failure,” concludes this failure was the result of numerous reasons from inner dissension to the economic realities of poor blacks who could no longer afford the boycott. The finale isn’t simply a chronicle, though, but a between-the-lines “What if?,” implying that the long-term tragedy was that the Civil Rights movement didn’t truly get underway a half-century earlier. These people planted the roots of the more famous bus boycotts, and Kelley’s must-read telling of their stories finally does them more indelible justice than the old, fading newspaper accounts from either side that were the only authoritative source of the story until now.

—Danny Adams, evening services library assistant, Ferrum College