

Virginia Reviews



Thompson, Charles D., Jr. *Spirits of Just Men: Mountaineers, Liquor Bosses, and Lawmen in the Moonshine Capital of the World*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2011. 269 pp. ISBN 9780252035128 (hardback) 9780252078088 (paper)

Charles Thompson, a professor at Duke University, has written a book about moonshining in Franklin County that is a rich combination of both serious history and personal reflection. His is a unique viewpoint, having roots in Franklin County and a moonshining heritage himself. In fact, his preface proclaims that his teaching position and a comfortable office at Duke can be directly attributed to the fact that his grandfather, by all accounts a fine and decent man, was able to feed his family by being involved in the moonshine trade. As he says, turning corn into liquor was just another farm chore, and about the only one that yielded cash in that time and place. Without moonshine, his grandfather could never have purchased the land that gave his family stability and the hope of a better future.

Thompson summarizes the work of Keister Greer in *The Great Moonshine Conspiracy Trial of 1935*, which clearly showed how moonshine progressed from a way for farm families to survive in the mountains to become a racket for those in power. An interesting sidelight is the role of the novelist Sherwood Anderson, who lived in nearby Troutdale and who reported on the conspiracy trial for *Liberty Magazine*, which Thompson calls the *Life* magazine of the time. Thompson adds his own spin to

the story, since his ancestors were so involved in the moonshine economy.

There are many characters richly drawn in the narrative. One of them is a Primitive Baptist preacher named Goode Hash. Thompson connects the individualism of the Primitive Baptist faith, and its strong reliance on God alone to change the hearts of humans, to the distrust its adherents had of Prohibition. Self-righteousness was

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anathema to Primitive Baptists, and poor people doing something to ensure their survival was, to their way of thinking, understandable. Primitive Baptists disliked the mingling of church and state, and since Prohibition was a government-enforced edict, it was viewed with suspicion. Elder Hash did not see government as having a role in determining what was moral.

Thompson contrasts him with Ora Harrison, an Episcopalian educator who comes to Franklin County to teach and who builds a school under the auspices of the Episcopal Church. Though their theology is different, the two work together to try to change the underlying economic circumstances

that make moonshining nearly inevitable. Though Harrison is sometimes tempted to tie whiskey making to a “mountain depravity of mind,” and to a basic lawlessness of mountain people, she does much good for the children of the area. A doctor who comes to the area and stays with Miss Ora, Dr. Franc Morrill, believes the key to the entire situation is ignorance—but it is the ignorance of “the people of this nation” who have not provided paved roads, adequate school facilities, and industries that would give an opportunity for local people to stay and thrive.

Far from a leering look at moonshiners, of which there are many examples in literature and on television, or a characterization of the people of this region of Virginia as hillbillies and backwoods ignorant folks, this book recognizes with admiration the resourcefulness of the those who found a way to survive in difficult circumstances. Meticulously researched, it is a fascinating look at times and places not too far removed from our own.

—Diane Adkins, Director of the Pittsylvania County Public Library System, which recently opened a History Resource Center and Library in the renovated Chatham Train Depot. She can be contacted at diane.adkins@pcplib.org.



Heller, James S., Hellyer, Paul., and Keele, Benjamin J. *The Librarian's Copyright Companion*, 2nd Edition. Buffalo, NY: William S. Hein, 2012. 324 pp. ISBN 978-0-8377-3872-7

Given that this updated guide to copyright is written by a trio of authors with law degrees, I was

admittedly surprised to find such a complex and confusing topic explained in plain, easy-to-understand language. This compact “companion” for librarians begins with a broad overview of copyright principles, reminding readers that “copyright does not place an author’s work in a lockbox” and that “The U.S. Supreme Court has stated, many times, that copyright is a means to a greater societal end: the dissemination and promotion of knowledge.” Such words are, of course, music to a librarians’ ear, which makes sense given that the authors with JD’s also have graduate degrees in library science and dozens of collective years making information accessible to library patrons.

While the authors *do* provide a simplified “cheat sheet” to the basic terms of copyright (a single-pager on page 18 and a more in-depth version in Appendix P), the book itself contains numerous examples of lawsuits that demonstrate how subtle distinctions and shades of gray often affect legal outcomes. Fair Use (Section 107), The Library Exemption (Section 108), the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, and the Copyright Act of 1976 can converge in fascinating ways, and the authors do a fine job making the mundane topic of copyright sound pretty interesting. They add a layer of legal commentary and expertise that illuminates the thought process behind the legal decision-making process. As a reference librarian, I found myself especially interested in learning how license

agreements restrict patron access, within the limits of fair use and copyright law, and what my role is (or might inadvertently be) in this process. The authors do caution that librarians can unwittingly sign away their legal rights, and that they should be comfortable asking a publisher to revise a clause in an agreement that runs counter to their comfort level as the gatekeepers of information.

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lates to all types of media, whether print, digital, music, video, or computer software. It makes clear distinctions between educational and commercial uses, and points out the factors that typically come into play in library settings. Some of this might seem like common sense—for example, the importance of including a Notice of Copyright on a copy of a journal article provided to a patron for her own research purposes—although it’s good to be reminded. If your library can’t locate the formal copyright notice, the authors suggest that you stamp the article, “This material is subject to the U.S. Copyright Law. Further

Reproduction in violation of that law is prohibited.”

Although it’s unlikely that you’ll want to curl up in bed with this 320-page volume, the writing is clear, with barely a hint of legalese, and the topic of copyright is explained in terms that librarians will appreciate. And despite the heft of the volume, the nine chapters actually end on page 185, with the rest of the book devoted to 16 appendices (A through P), which serve as a great reference.

Where the book falls short has little to do with the quality of the coverage and more to do with the need for a fine-tuning of the current copyright law so that it provides clearer guidelines for 21st-century librarians. Recently the U.S. Copyright Office held a symposium in conjunction with the Columbia Law School’s Kernochan Center for Law, Media and the Arts to examine copyright exceptions for libraries in the digital age and the need for copyright reform. In her opening remarks, Copyright Registrar Maria Pallante expressed the Copyright Office’s view that reform of Section 108 is crucial for both libraries and rights holders. Until such reform takes place, however, librarians have little choice but to navigate their way, as best possible, through the existing copyright law. *The Librarian’s Copyright Companion*, second edition, will help guide the way—until that time when new copyright legislation necessitates a third edition.

—Beth DeFrancis Sun, MCH Library, Georgetown University 