

This Wilkes County resident made a living editing and printing several small newspapers. He also produced his own monthly newspaper, *The Fool Killer*, for twenty years. OK, here's your hint...James L._____. Still drawing a blank? All right...here's your last clue...Wilkes Community College raised money to pay to have a building erected on our campus to commemorate his entire collection of poems, books, and writings. Included was the equipment used to print them. Well, I guess I have pretty much given you the answer by now! Let's see if you guessed right...

(Answer: The building on our campus is the JLP building; it was erected to contain the works donated by Mr. Pearson just before his death.)

Following is a little more information about this man who was recognized for his contributions to the literary world.

James Larkin Pearson

In 1953, Governor William B. Umstead appointed James Larkin Pearson to the post of poet laureate. Though Pearson had little opportunity for formal schooling during his boyhood, he did become an avid reader and poet throughout his youth. He worked on his family farm until he was twenty-one, (composing poems in his head while plowing), then moved to Jefferson in Ashe County to learn the printing trade. (Many years earlier he tried his hand at printing when he mixed berries to form ink and carved out his name into backward letters. He used those letters to print his own name on the inside cover of a book he owned.) After learning the printing trade he made his living editing and printing small newspapers. Pearson used his printing press (housed in his work building behind his home), to print five volumes of his poetry. Mr. Pearson wrote in rural dialect, using everyday occurrences such as milking the cow and plowing the fields for his inspirations.

He also used his poetry as a means to convey his deep feelings for his wife and his deep religious feelings. Mr. Pearson was a very unique individual and his poetry and writings make for a wonderful, relaxing afternoon of reading. I recommend that all who desire to know him better to frequent the library and check out some of his writings. His portrait is hanging at the entrance of the library located upstairs, inside the Student/Learning Resource Center (building # 1). If you'd like to have a tour of the JLP Library which houses his press and other memorabilia, just ask Janet Atwood (in the upstairs library). She'll be glad to schedule a time for a tour. Get a group and tour together! Then pass the word around about James Larkin Pearson so others will go.

Mr. Pearson loved Wilkes Community College enough to donate his life's work to us...the least we can do is to let others know what he and his library are all about. So many of the students on campus (as well as their families, I'm sure) have no idea of the hard work and dedication that went into raising enough money to build the JLP library. Those who wanted to preserve Mr. Pearson's memory and his works raised the money to erect the library in his honor. Mr. Pearson agreed to put in his will that he would only dedicate his works to WCC if the college agreed to have a building constructed. With hard work and perseverance, enough money was raised for the dream to come true. Mr. Pearson was brought by ambulance to see the ribbon cutting for the JLP Library, just days before he died. He was just shy of his one-hundred and second birthday! On April 5th 1971, then governor of North Carolina, Robert W. Scott, declared April "James Larkin Pearson Month." Please help keep his memory alive and our promise to him to care for his legacy! Spread the word! James Larkin Pearson entrusted our college with his life's work. Let's be proud to acknowledge his importance to Wilkes Community College!