

Mrs. Rondthaler Writes Moravian Book; "Tell Me A Story" For Young Children

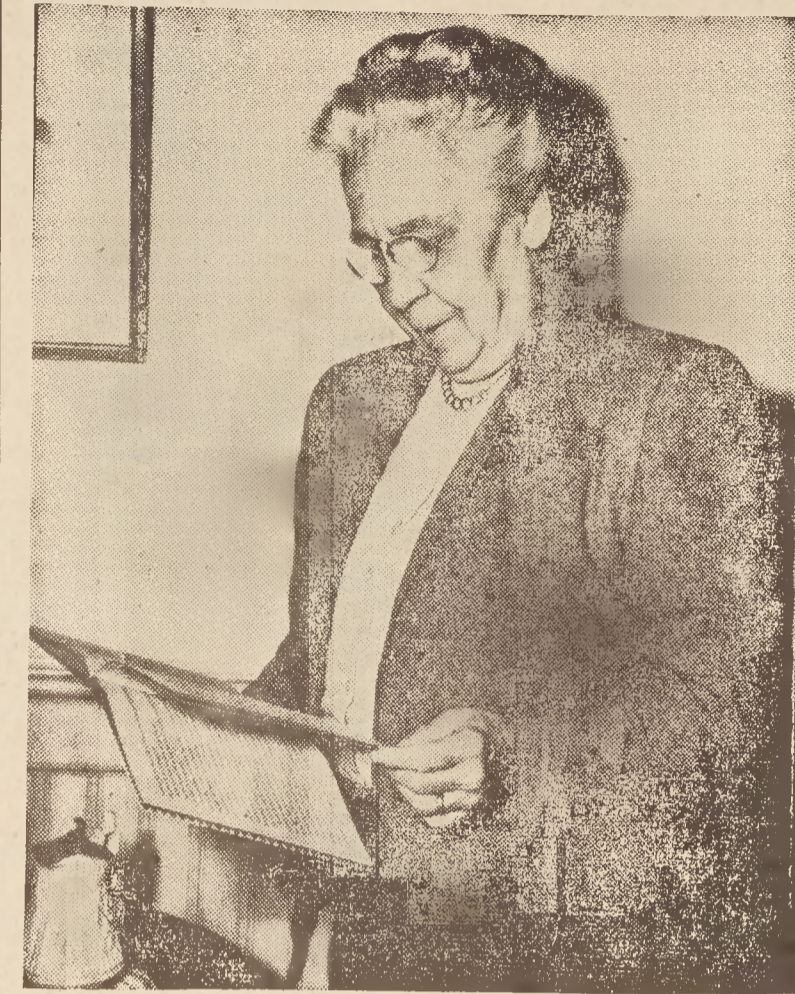
by Peirano Aiken

A book lies on my desk. It isn't a textbook—the type's too large; it isn't a dictionary—it doesn't weigh enough; it isn't a handbook—I can understand it. What else would a Salemite have just now but a copy of *Tell Me A Story* by Katharine Boring (though she's very entertaining) Rondthaler, Mrs. R., to us.

This little square book, that made its debut on the shelves this week, is a collection of seventeen short tales for Moravian children. Yet, elderly twenty-year-olds will find themselves exclaiming "Oh!" when they open the cover. There between the fly leaves is a burning Moravian candle with a real red tissue paper frill, like the Valentines that you used to give only to your "best" friends. And, although I should let you discover it for yourself, at the back there's the candle again, this time burned down to a nub. The format of the book was designed by the author's son, Mr. Edward Rondthaler. The cover is deep blue trimmed with the story titles zigzagged across the front in yellow; and the pages are light blue with black illustrations drawn by Mrs. Elizabeth Jerome Holden of Greensboro.

Mrs. Rondthaler teaches the primary department in Sunday School and she has dedicated *Tell Me a Story*: "To the boys and girls of the Home Moravian Church whose budding Christianity has been to me strength and joy." The contents are not fictitious in the true sense of the word. Seven are simplified accounts of famous persons and events in the history of the Moravian Church, and ten are little skits that would appeal to children and still illustrate Moravian customs.

To mention but a few, we have Anna and Peter, who lived a thousand years ago in the country of Moravia and were among the first to read from the new Bible that Cyril and Methodius translated from the Latin. Then came John Hus, who was not afraid even of being burned to death, and old Comenius, who led the Moravians to Lissa



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where the children had to hold secret Sunday School. Count Zinzendorf we meet as Little Lutz, who "was a count, but he didn't mind." And Leonard Dober, the first Moravian missionary, knew that God was with him because he drew a "Yes" slip at The Lot. The Lot was a white silk bag filled with "Yes", "No" and blank slips of paper, by which the early Moravians determined what was God's will. Other stories are about the colored ribbons worn by the women; band-playing on Easter morning; Christmas Cake Baking Day; and the Children's Love Feast on Christmas Eve, when every boy and girl puts a

lighted candle in his window to light the Christ Child's way.

Undoubtedly children will love the book for these heroes and adventures. However, for us it has a different appeal. Along with our May Day programs, beeswax candle, blue plate of Home Church and miniature coffee pot, we will take away from school *Tell Me a Story*. Perhaps we'll read it to our children someday, but we'll cherish it mostly as one more tangible reminder of those intangible ideals and events we associate with Salem—a heritage for which, appropriately enough, the author is largely responsible.

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