



# The NEW BERN MIRROR

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Since writing last week's editorial about the "glowing" license tags that a number of North Carolina's legislators decided to display on their own automobiles, (apparently to impress us ordinary people) we have added to our knowledge.

According to the best information available, thirteen states and the District of Columbia have "safety" plates for all automobile owners, that reflect as far away as 1,500 feet. Studies, it is said, in Iowa, Maine, and South Dakota indicate the plates reduce accidents at night. Mishaps involving parked cars are showing a sharp decline.

In other words, by feeding their vanity--or so it seems to us--legislators who decided in Raleigh that they wanted to attract special attention may have accidentally stumbled on something good for peasants and nobility alike.

It could develop that North Carolina's tags of the future will be coated with a reflective substance. With deaths on our highways exceeding a thousand a year, here in the Old North State, and the 1963 toll exceeding the 1962 slaughter, almost anything is worth trying.

New Bernians probably haven't thought much about it, but ever since 1956 every state in the Union has been using plates of the same size, 6-by-12 inches. Half of the states issue new tags annually, while the others use the same tags from two to five years.

Tar Heel legislators who want an extra special tag for themselves--and a lot of them, including Craven's Sam Whitehurst don't--aren't by themselves in seeking self glorification.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans ask for tags with numbers that are the same as anniversary dates, street addresses, telephone numbers, or what have you. In Illinois alone, approximately a half million owners of vehicles make requests of this sort in a single year.

Registration figures reveal that there are more than 76 million cars, trucks and buses traveling on the nation's streets and highways. And we've also learned that Oklahoma has the most expensive licenses, with Minnesota next.

Just in case you think it's rather unusual to have inmates of prisons and reformatories making license tags, you'll be surprised to learn that this is the usual practice. Only seven states buy their plates from a manufacturer.

Although automobiles were made in America in the early years of the Gay Nineties, the first license plates weren't issued until 1901. They were fashioned from aluminum, and round. In size they resembled a half dollar.

Motorists themselves were responsible, or largely so, for the type of tags we have today. They weren't pleased with the inconspicuous metal discs that came out in 1901, and painted their license numbers on their horseless carriages in large numerals.

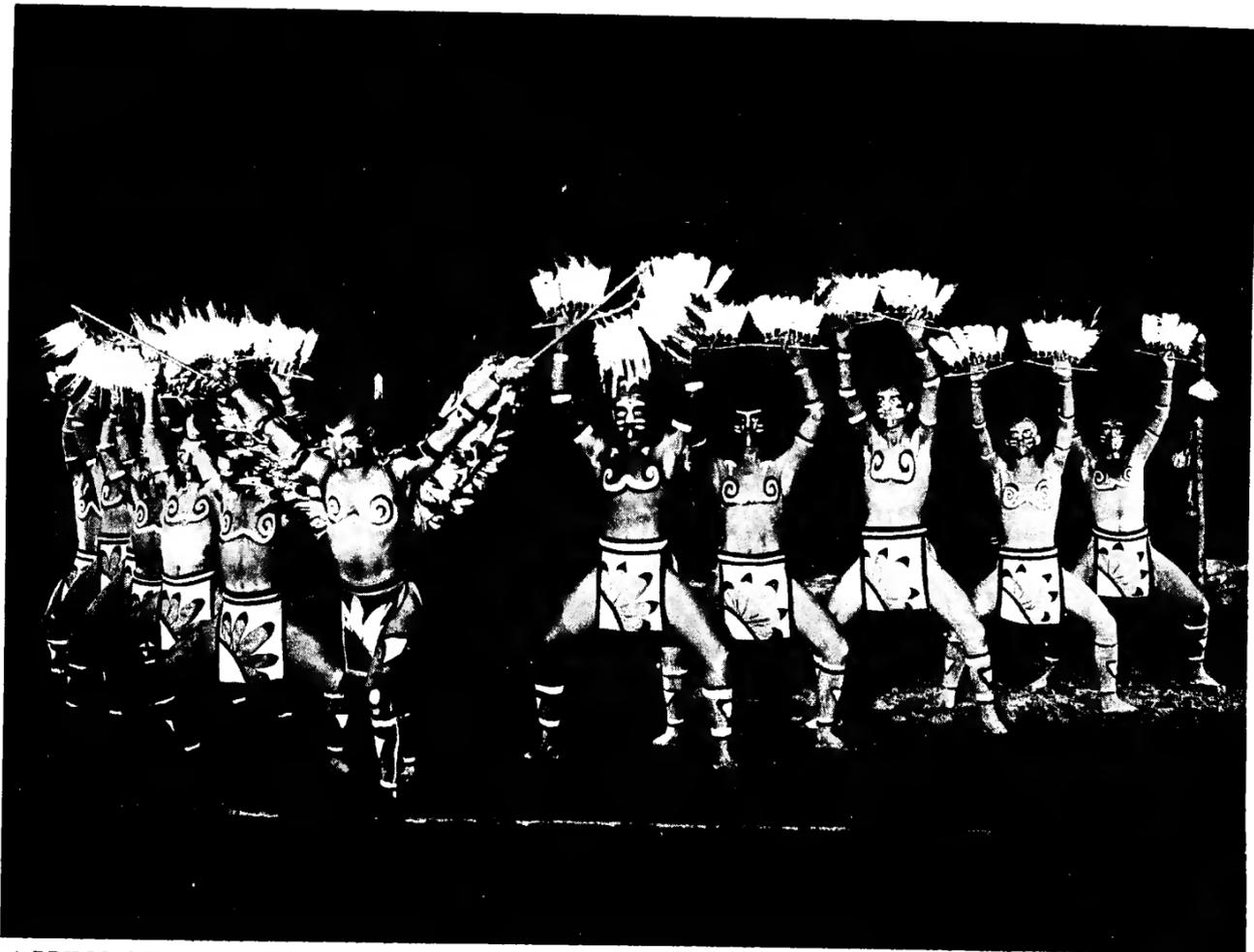
As most New Bernians know, Gilbert S. (Gib) Waters built the first automobile we had in this fair city by the Neuse and Trent. He continued to drive it too, occasionally, until his

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**WITH HEAVEN'S BLESSING**—The christening of Virginia Dare, first child born in America of English parentage, is depicted in this scene from "The Lost Colony" on Roanoke Island. New Bernians can see Paul Green's stirring outdoor drama, in Waterside Theatre,

any night except Sunday until September 1. Green, who is enthusiastic about the Tryon Palace restoration and has visited here, is not only an able playwright, but a distinguished historian.



**A BRILLIANT PORTRAYAL**—The traditional Cherokee Eagle Dance is one of the exciting scenes that New Bern vacationists will see in "Unto These Hills," playing nightly except Mondays until Labor Day weekend at Cherokee in the Great Smoky Mountains. John Whitty,

Jr., a local actor who has also appeared in "The Lost Colony," is a member of the "Unto These Hills" cast. The production is staged in Mountainside Theatre on the Qualla Boundary.