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Yesterday was when New Bern's Little Theater, under the demanding and dedicated guidance of Helen Jones, presented Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* in the High School's woefully inadequate Moses Griffin auditorium.

It was most fortunate that the play, winner of a Pulitzer prize on Broadway in 1938, requires no scenery. Aside from the performers, the only objects on stage are two step ladders, several chairs, and a board.

Precisely, that's the way it was done during its long New York run, and ever since by college and community thespians. So beautifully written are the tender lines that props aren't necessary.

Those of us who had roles, a third of a century ago, in *Our Town* were deeply moved by the experience. More than any other amateur production ever tackled here, it left a lasting impression on cast and audience alike.

Several of the actors and actresses are no longer among the living, including Jane Holland, Eva Jarvis, and Albert Willis, Sr. Still around are Gerald Colvin, Theresa Shipp, Bob Pugh, and the former Page Daniel.

Our Town, then and now, is still beckoning to us. Even when first presented in 1938, the play was blamed for being a theatrical stunt, too sentimental, too romantic, an over-idealized rendition of small-town Americana.

But Wilder's dramatic masterwork never pretended to be journalism, never meant to offer up sociology. Its gentle lyrical compilation of daily life, love and marriage, and death was mythic and not literal, dealing less with facts than with truth.

Our Town, in fact, was a poem about essentials and essences, not so much concerned with the way we happened to be living in America around the turn of the century as about what it means to be human.

In 1973, in spite of all the changes, underneath our facades, beneath the debris of our shaken institutions and shaking values, we remain our same vulnerable selves, subject to the vicissitudes of birth and love and wonder and age and ultimate extinction.

And playwright Wilder's "message" to us all, whatever our sex or race or political persuasion, to cherish the texture of life itself, to grab on to and find warmth and joy in the very pain of the living of life, is not only as valid as it was way back then but perhaps even more needed in an age of steel and plastic and endless concrete.

Somewhere, deep inside, we are still "the family of man." We are all related by birth, and death, sons and daughters and parents of each other. As we realize always only when it is too late.

In a time of growing fragmentation and uncertainty, it is good to find an American play—the American play—that

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I CAN'T BELIEVE IT—Jennifer Hope Williams, nine month old daughter of the John Williams of 805 Howell Road, is obviously astounded, and she reacts in typical feminine fashion. We don't have the slightest idea

what turned her on. Maybe some choice nursery gossip, or an exciting episode on her favorite TV program. —Photo by Wray Studio.