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"THE DUPLIN STORY" (Editorial Corres)

In News and Observer Saturday, Sept. 9, 1950

In the last few years there have been plenty of pageants, symphonic dramas and community beard-growings in North Carolina as e part of the costumery of local history and anniversaries. History has been made sonorous and dramatic from Cherokee to Manteo. Fublicity agents have however, been increasingly hard put to find anything new to say about the dramas out of our own story as a people. Down in Duplin, however, Sam Byrd and some hundreds of other Duplin people have turned out something new. Less solemn than all the others but as essentially serious as any of them, the people of Duplin in their story have turned out a show as entertaining as a first circus and as honestly native as a barbecue.

Anybody who wants to go to get instruction in the history of Duplin County or North Carolina can do so. As a matter of fact, "The Duplin Story" is the North Carolina story limited by no county lines. But any North Carolinian who goes for any reason can count on a full evening of lively and sentimental, often hilarious but steadily appealing entertainment. The production is not as finished as the precise dramaturgists of the Carolina Playmakers have made "The Lost Colony." The amphitheater is not set in any such high and beautiful hills as the theater of "Unto These Hills" at Cherokee. Sam Byrd himself is the only professional actor in the cast in Kenansville. But in Kenansville the people themselves, have with both local lustiness and local grace turned a big sloping hillside into a variety show of North Carolina history which is as real as the people who participate in it.

No gentlemen step out of the daguerreotypes on the Kenansville stage. A gentle comedy even appears in the characters of the honored personages of Duplin history. The truth is that the whole cosonce of "The Duplin Story" is that it is shaped in terms of a people's own memory of themselves which contains not only pride out the memory of simple things, sometimes heroic but also humorous, too. Essentially Sam Byrd has made the play a sort of dramatintion of his own homesickness as an American (and Duplin County) serviceman abroad. Maybe such a remembering of Duplin is as romantic as remembered barbecue long after any signs of dyspepsis.

It is, however, never a stuffed-shirt romantization. It contains not only Revolutionary and Civil War heroes in real battle accompanied by satisfying explosions on the stage, noble ladies and gentlemen, loyal slaves, but also bombastic Democratic politicians, priscy lady school-teachers, an old-time preacher with a comic mustache, a many drum beater and some of the best Negro singing from spiritual to hi-dee-ho. One of the most interesting aspects of the whole show is the mighty fine time in their scenes the colored people and white people of Duplin County have acting their history together Also it may be in the spirit of the show that there sems nothing strange about the conjunction of the brave planters facing the dark future after the War Between the States and the megnificent singing behind them by a Negro chorus of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" which Sherman's soldiers loved so well. The ladies may seem out of place at a 1908 political rally; their dancing under the political banners adds liveliness to the scene, nevertheless. There is no flaw nor and anachronism, however, in the railroad station scene in which Duplin boys go off to World War I. It seems good that one who is to die and give his name to a Legion post goes off joking with his girl that she'll'forget him "before the Shoo Fly gets to Mount Olive." Not in any greater theaters were there ever any better off stage noises of the old-time trains with the sad whistles which the Coast Line used to send through Duplin.

DUPLIN STORY WELL RECEIVED **OPENING NIGHT**

Friday, Sept. 8, 1950) (Kinston Free Press By M. S. VAN HECKE

"The Duplin Story," the histor ic panorama of our neighboring county to the south, opened before a disappointing crowd of about 1,500 at Kenansville Thursday night. The show, now in its second season will be produced through next Tuesday, with the exception of Sunday. Taken as a whole, the three-

hour drama was a moving spectacle which brought to life the highlights of Duplin's 200 years of existence. A few of the scenes, notably that of a southern colonel bidding farewell to his family and slaves in the Civil War, could best have been forgotten but the major portion of The Duplin Story rose to heights unexpected in an amateur production.

- Two relatively modern scenes, graduation exercises at James Sprunt Institute in 1910 and a political rally in 1908, demonstrated a subtle humor that was in many ways remarkable and the battle of Rockfish Creek in 1781 was done in a convincingly realistic manner. Sam Byrd, author, producer and narrator is one of the few professionals in the bunch and his fine performance tied together the rambling story into a swift moving effectively staged production. The lighting and backdrops were unusually effective.

Byrd takes the part of a navy chief in London, lonly and homesick for his home in Duplin, who life and history of his native homestead. The first Duplin scene shows a tobacco field near Faison. Then the story flashes back to 1775 with a visit of a high colonial official to Sarecta, the battle of Rockfish Creek, the unfortunate mand. farewell scene and the return of the Confederate troops from the war.

1908 Political Rally The narrative leaps to 1908 with the political rally and graduation exercises, followed by the leaving in 1917 of the Duplin youths going to war. The closing scene was Victory Day in 1945, which topped the night's entertainment on a religious and patriotic note.

Duplin Story took a lot of work | and the producers did not stint in the use of players to add realism to the scenes. The costumes were beyond reproach.

Edith Hinnant Dickerson, negro soprano, and Corwin Rife, as a drummer who entertained the visitbest left unmentioned.

hould miss.

out of their efforts came what we "The Story" is unchanged fro its first showing. Hundreds in the county have laobred for man;

weeks to prepare all details for the second presentation at public demand. O. P. Johnson, president of the

Duplin Historical Association nsors of "The Story" thanked all who had helped in any way to assure success of the effort. Sam Byrd plays the lead in his own production. Portrayed as a homesick U. S. Naval officer talking with English children about his

home county, the former New York actor got plenty of applause. His ward, Pat Bolam, English girl, and Albert Outlaw, Jr., carry the con-versation with Byrd. From their talk develops the back drops which show Duplin from Colonial days to the Korean situation. . Corwin Rife's lighting effects count much in the production. Most moving is the singing by the Negro choir.

Prior to the presentation Mr. and Mrs. Vance Gavin were hosts to Governor Scott and a number of state officials at a barbecue at their home. Mr. and Mrs. Bob Grady entertained Rep. and Mrs. Graham Barden and editors at dinner.

Duplin Story Opens For Second Season

(Wilson Daily Times Friday, Sept. 8, 1950)

Eastern Carolina's own saga drama, "The Duplin Story", opened last night in the amphitheatre, in Kenansville. And it will be give en tonight and Saturday, "The Dutells two English children of the plin Story" was written by Sam Byrd - he takes the leading part - last year to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the founding of the county. It is a tremendous historical drama, and is being given again this year by popular de-

> The Duplin Story could be developed to mean as much to East-

ern Carolina as the Lost Colony has to the coast country and Unto These Hills, to the scenic mountain section. For Eastern Carolina is rich in history and tradition, as this drama brings out. Its freedom loving people have added many pages to bistory as was shown last night in the scenes of the battle of Rockfish creek, Aug-

We are told that a total of 750 ust 2, 1781 through the end of Duplinites had a part in the show, World War II. And they are adand it is easily believable. The ding daily to the sum total. For the cast of approximately 1000 is made up mostly of the people of that section. Yes, it is as typical of Eastern Carolina and the good will and fellowship that exists among its people as the smell of tobacco.

The production opens with ing official at Sarecta, were stand-Johnny Lambert (Sam Byrd), a outs from the entertainment point homesick GI in World War II sitof view. The music on a whole was good, although a few efforts ting in a park in London telling about his own Duplin County to on the part of the two choirs are Jennifer Carrington (Pat Bolam) and Tony Carrington ("Timmy' The Duplin Story had its faults, but they are overwhelmed by its Outlaw), two English children. The first scene is rightly a typical many good points. It's a show which no North Carolinian, and tobacco farm where the tying and curing is going on, all to the rhyparticularly no Eastern Carolinian. thm of the familiar Negro spirituals' And Johnny (Sam) demonstrates the chant of the auctioneer 1.500 SEE "DUPLIN to the children. The auctioneer is STORY" AS IT BEGINS none other than Wilson's own Colonel Hart Shewmaker. Then there NEW SEASON are battle scenes from the Revolution and Civil War, of Liberty (Goldsboro News-Argus Hall, the home of the Kenans, Ke-Friday, Sept. 9, 1950) nansville school for "young ladies", Kenansville - Fifteen hundred the James Sprunt Institute, a polipeople saw "The Duplin Story" tical rally and the coming of the in Hamp Williams' cornfield on railroad through this section. In all it is the history of the every-Thursday night. State leaders joined with native day living of these people that sons in paying tribute to Sam contributed so much to put this Byrd's musical dramatization of section of the state on the firm 200 years of Duplin history. "The foundation it enjoys today. It is Duplin Story" will be given nightly the story of bravery, laughter and on these dates: September 8, 9, heartbreaks told in a variety of 11. and 12 scenes with thrilling music, And Governor Scott was present to it should be seen by everyone in theer Dupliners at the reshowing. North Carolina, What our citizens do today to add There were many prominent people present for the opening production last night. Heading the to our state, what sacrifices they give for her," he said "determine the progress of the future." list were the Governor of North "It is fitting," said Governor Carolina, W. Kerr Scott and Con-Scott, "that we look back at what gressman and Mrs. Graham A. our forefathers worked for. For Barden.

Letters Io **The Editor**

HOTEL GOLDSBORD Goldsbon N. C. tember 9, 1950

Goldsboro, N. C. To the Editor: Last Thursday night, I had the leasure of going to the historical

ageant of the Duplin County Hisorical Association, "The Duplin Story. It is a wonderful production

considered from every angle, I think it has a little edge on any I have ever seen. It reminds me of the old Hippodrome in New York City years ago. I saw it in 1910. The setting, scenery and costumes were most gorgeous and spectac ular. The music and acting were appropriate and well prepared. The period about which the story was written has always fascinated me, especially the Civil War period

Although the weather was threatone respect, the audience was not as large as the play deserved. I want to thank and commend

the management for omitting the Sunday performance. Other orga-nizations will do well to follow their noteworthy example. Today many people use the Sabbath for desecration and revelry rather than consecration and worship.

I hope in the years to come that the play will have patronage in keeping with its merits. Sincerely,

J. Herman Canady Kinston and Goldsbo



This is a statement from Miss Macy Cox, of Magnolia, concerning Home for Aged men and women as referred to by Mrs. Grace Vann in the Times recently:

"Many questions are being asked about the Home in which we are deeply interested. We are giving just a partial description of the proposed home, which we hope will create interest and investment. We would prepare for 20 to begin with and enlarge later if necessary, and possible. The build-

ing, equipment and management would in every way meet the approval and requirements of the State Board of Public Welfare. Only one person in a room, unless two sisters or a man and wife. Three meals a day would be served. Infirmary, practical nurse and rolling chair provided.

A chapel for worship, prayer meetings, Sunday School and preaching service, plano, radio, and everything be done for the pleasure and comfort of the aged people not just a place to stay. How it is to be built, controlled and supported are questions frequently asked. It will be built with gifts from our Duplin County people and their friends. Anyone who gives \$1,000 will be giving a room to some loved one. If \$100 is given,

is reported to be the man who tip-ped off newsmen about the J. B. Moore case.

light for the

misfeasance of office, and prison labor, while he was prisons director, to build a garage

in front of Moore's house. Two days before the grand jury was scheduled to hear the case, Tolar reportedly visited Moore's house and tried to get the exisons director to involve others ening, I was disappointed only in | in his difficulties and see how much he (Moore) could smear the

> ober term of court -- because the nished a room and may give it as a memorial. It will be controlled by a Board of Directors of 25 or

tained. The men and women receiving old age assistance will pay \$40 into the home and keep \$10 for clothes, drugs and other personal expenses. If there are those in our county or other counties who want to live in the home and can pay their own expenses, they will be allowed to enter as boarders and have all the privileges and comforts of the home. Rich and poor will fare alike. Nobody would feel embarassed to make it their home. We would hope to have an endowment fund. There are 41,116 people in Duplin, as shown by the recent census. Surely there must

be at least 1000 adults who would gladly give as much as one dollar a year through the Duplin County Benevolent Association to help support the home and as many young people who would rejoice to give 50 cents a year.

Who would object to such a Who would not approve home? such a home in Duplin County? Who could not give \$1.00 to help build it? Who could not give \$10.00 - \$100 - \$1000? There are many ways to help, and "where there is

a will there is a way" and we just ome wide-awake people in every town and community to help stir up real enthusiasm. The ones who help will feel the blessing themyou. How many and who, wants this home established? Write a little note of approval to our papers right away, or write to me. Let's not sit down on the job but



football. Some observers i Moore is slated to be the si cial goat in an attempt to use his trial to strike at the administration Incidentally, Tolar, who has cussed the administration since be

lost his patrol job, was the first man to apply for Moore's job. the Moore story he morning after reported at the Governor's man-sion asking for sion asking for the post. ' Tony already had tried to get

batt burnmere

the Civilian Defense Job given to Easy Jones of Burlington; he had tried for an inspector's job with the Utilities Commission; and, he had tried to get a couple of joha created just for Tolar.

If you think your grocery bill is up, your right, But you have com-pany, all over the nation. A check of the national averages show from June 15 to August 15 re steak went up from 98c to \$1 a pound, bacon went from 63 to 71c, eggs jumped from 53 to 65c a doz-en, coffee hopped from 74 to 82c, and sugar went from 46 to 50c for

five pounds. And Congress is thumbing its nose at rationing until after the November election

**** Paroles Commissioner T. C. John

son is getting quite a few requests from prisoners and their families asking that prisoners be paroled so they can join the armed ser

Johnson says this isn't feasibl unless draft and service rules change.

Col. Tom Upton, State Selective Service chief, says no parolee is eligible to enter the service until he has been out from under super

ment, Johnson said, until he had a pardon, restoring his citizens During the las war a good man parolees were accepted upon the condition their sentence was com muted and parole waived. Until now, though, the services have not relaxed the six months rule.

the farmers Cooperative Exchange reported business as better that ever before in FCX history at the cooperative's annual meeting here

Total FCX business sale and retail marketing a chasing -- reached a record \$28, 507,439 for the year ending June need a good "shaking up, waking 30, This was more than a mill up" interest in our old people, and | dollars above the previous h

Mann reported there are now 125,000 members of FCX, which started business 16 years ago with \$28,000 in the kitty. During these 16 years, Mann said, total volu of purchase and mark ting reached a neat \$182,088,243. Net savings for FCX last y reached \$517,742. All but \$16, has been returned to FCX patry and stockholders.

there to really have a home, and selves and others be blest through

and many, give it as a memorial vestment in Heaven's bank." the giver will have completely fur-

Raleigh, N. C., Sept. 10.-Tony trial is being turned into a political Tolar, the ex-Highway Patrol boss, football. Some observers report

Mooret as you know, was indicted by a Wake county grand jury last week, along with A. W. Livengood of Winston-Salem, on charges of element and conspiracy plus Moore is charged with using state materials

partment Tolar was seen in deep conference with a newsman twice on the day the Moore story broke, and on the day the story came to light was seen riding with this same reporter

administration. One of Moore's lawyers has withdrawn from the case -- which won't come to trial before the Oct-

more, men and women. How main-

vices.

vision for at least six months

A man convicted of a felony would not be eligible for enlist

M. G. Mann, general manager of

Tuesday (Sept. 12).

reported last year.

In his report at the anual R meeting, Mann charged that crit Continued on Pink Hill Page

Sam Byrd has written himself something which is not a pageant and certainly is not a symphonic drama. In many ways it is a sort of pative's extravaganza about a home history which does not idate him or turn him to either pompousness or pretension. It contains the memory of good eating, as well as good fighting, of song and dance as well as politics and preaching. Wisely in such d remembering he has recreated the congregations of people in war and politics, education, welcomes and farewells. His actors are best in mass groupings and mass choruses. One of the best scenes in this or any other play is the slow mass movement of Negroes and white men across the stage in the scene of the ending of the War of the Sixtles.

Yet recurrently throughout the play there are passages of dialogue full of wit, sontiment and beauty. Byrd's own apostrophe to the American Fiag at the end of the play might come perilously alone to a flag waving George M. Cohan closing of a musical comedy if there were not real passion and good poetry in the lines which Byrd wrote far his own speaking. Sadly, however, the play's poetry some a little dated now by events since its first writing. In it nd has put together the homesickness of a service man in the t war for both Duplin and peace. The prayer for peace with hich "The Duplin Story" ends now seem, against the grim enterprise in Kores, both saddened and sharpened.

Byrd deserves great credit for the whole show. Second only to in among its actors is his adopted English daughter, to whom as chief poity officer he tells the story of Duplin. The basis of the great appeal of the whole show, however, is the good, lively, native usuess of the people themselves in its playing. Sometimes it is that half the population of Duplin County must be in the are plenty of them from children to old ladies and old mes of all ,many of them ha

self to the audiences. This is their story. They are it. White and colored together, they play their own lively procession from history and into the history before them. Some professional actors might add a little more finish to some of the parts. In most cases I doubt that. But the very enthusiastic nativeness of the actors conveys itself to the excellence of the whole show.

The acres of seats before the stage on the little hill ought to he filled this next week with North Carolinians who like good entertainment and can appreciate it best when it is entertainment out of their own lives. It is hard to see how one county can hold so many good voices. There is one Negro singer with a voice at once metallic and melodious who will not be in Duplin long if her voice is heard outside it. But no one voice or one person, not even Sam Byrd, is so important as the fact that the people are the play. More than any other of the big crop of such plays and pageants which have been produced in recent years this is true of "The Duplin Story." That is important in an understanding of the Kenansville production. The only important fact for North Carolinians outside of Kenansville is, however, that that adds up to a good show. The story is importna but the show is fun. North Carolinian who like good entertainment will not miss a change to see it.

"You can't scare me. Besides-all my Tobacco Money is in the Waccamaw Bank where it is

Your Financial Thies

BLAR AND TRUST COMP

MEMBER FRORDAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CONFORTION

Kenansville