
27 Views of Asheville is the third in a series of “27 Views” by Eno Publishers, following works on Chapel Hill and Hillsborough. It provides the reader with vignettes on Asheville’s past and present in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Asheville is a multifaceted town, and the authors touch on many aspects of the city’s personality.

The historical sketches contain stories that will be nostalgic for Asheville residents and entertaining for readers who aren’t familiar with the city’s lore. Gail Godwin recounts an experience shared by many Asheville children of a certain age: “My grandmother bends down and murmurs, ‘That’s old _______. Tom Wolfe wrote about him in his book, and not too nicely.” Dale Neal discusses Thomas Wolfe, the Asheville of Wolfe’s era, and the influence he still exerts on North Carolina authors. In “City of the Dead,” Nan Chase, another author influenced by Wolfe, describes his final resting place, Riverside Cemetery.

Charles Frazier recalls a childhood roaming around downtown Asheville in the middle of the twentieth century, and Johnnie Grant describes that experience from the perspective of a black child wandering into the segregated downtown. Bruce Johnson details the city’s architectural history, and Wayne Caldwell and Daniel Pierce cover the wars over urban development in the 1980s and ’90s, with their effect on both architecture and communities. Pierce’s “Hallowed Ground” describes the controversy over the closing of the Asheville Motor Speedway in 1999 to make way for riverside development. His account illuminates the culture wars that began, or rather renewed themselves, at the end of the twentieth century and continue into the twenty-first. Food and sustainable living are the topics in Rick McDaniel’s “Farm to Asheville Table” and Thomas Raine Crowe’s “A Mountain Garden.”

There is a generous selection of fiction and poetry set in Asheville, excerpted from works by area authors. In his long poem “McCormick Field,” Michael McFee recalls for readers the time that Babe Ruth came to town (and was reported to have died from an overdose of hotdogs). This is not a scholarly book with bibliographies or footnotes. It is, however, entertaining and richly anecdotal, and it is suitable for any library with holdings in North Carolina history or literature. Libraries that hold pictorial histories of Asheville will find this a good companion piece for those works.

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