North Carolina has a gracious plenty of gifted writers and their talents are on display in the 27 Views Series from Eno Press. Each volume features writers who live in a particular place; the first centered on Hillsborough. Subsequent volumes focused on Asheville, Chapel Hill and Durham; the latest highlights Raleigh. The literary forms represented include articles, essays, poems, short stories, and excerpts from novels.

Many contributors to 27 View of Raleigh are natives of the Tar Heel State, including novelist Wilton Barnhardt, who wrote the very funny introduction to the volume. Some are transplants, such as Elaine Orr, who hails from Georgia, and Juliana M. Nfah-Abbenyi, who moved to Raleigh from Cameroon. Other contributors include fiction writers Peggy Payne, June Spence and Bridgette Lacey; poets Lenard D. Moore, Betty Adcock, Dorianne Laux, David Rigsbee, and Tom Hawkins; journalists Grayson Currin and Amanda Lamb; and children’s book authors Eleanora Tate and Kelly Starling Lyons.

Personal reminiscences of Raleigh are among the most compelling pieces. Jimmy Creech recounts his participation, as a local pastor, in Raleigh’s 1988 Gay Pride Parade. Tina Haver Currin recalls her first visit to Raleigh as a child to spend a fraught Christmas with her father and stepmother. Tracie Fellers pays homage to her Aunt Bunny, who sewed the dress she wore to the Alpha Kappa Alpha Debutante Ball. Rob Christensen’s history of the Sir Walter Hotel provides insight into how politics were conducted once upon a time in Raleigh.

The culinary, music and art scenes are represented, in Scott Huler’s reminiscences about the local musical group The Backsliders, Andrea Weigl’s portrait of local chef Ashley Christensen, and Liza Robert’s piece on artist Thomas Sayre. Other locales and time periods portrayed include today’s Oakwood neighborhood; the flourishing black community of 1920s Hargett Street; the North Carolina State Fair as experienced over a lifetime; the natural beauty of Umstead Park; and the gritty world experienced by those who walk into the Wake County Courthouse for a variety of reasons.

Short stories and excerpts from novels are in the final section, which showcases Raleigh in fiction. Contributors to this section are Margaret Maron, John Kessel, Angela Davis-Gardner, G. D. Gearino, Hillary Hebert and Sheila Smith McKoy.

All the pieces are grouped into themes in a detailed table of contents. A short biography of the contributing author follows each entry. There is a list of the other titles available in the series appended, but no other bibliography or index.

This is a hugely entertaining, highly readable combination of history, memoir, fiction, and essays. The result is a detailed and fascinating portrait of a specific place, as seen through the eyes of gifted writers. 27 Views of Raleigh is highly recommended for medium and larger North Carolina libraries and for smaller library systems located near Raleigh.

Janet Lockhart
Wake County Public Libraries