

BOOK REVIEW

ONE LAND, THREE PEOPLES: A GEOGRAPHY OF ROBESON COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

Thomas E. Ross; Southern Pines, NC: Karo Hollow Press, 1993. vi and 126 pp., maps, tables, diags., index. \$13.95 paper (ISBN 0-9641628-0-6).

Reviewed by Frank Ainsley

As the title suggests, its unusual demography is perhaps what makes Robeson County distinctive. With its high percentage of Native American population, the county holds a rather unique position among American counties. It is truly a tri-racial society, with an ethnic composition that is 36.1 per cent European-American, 24.9 per cent African-American, and 38.5 per cent Native-American (mostly Lumbee), who are still lobbying for official recognition by the federal government.

One Land, Three Peoples is organized by the author into 21 chapters of facts about the physical and cultural geography of Robeson County in an encyclopedic yet prosaic and well organized style. In Chapter 1, the author introduces this geographic survey by providing a general background and overview. Using an 1880 map and an 1884 descriptive pamphlet of the county, he sets the stage for the century of change which was to follow. Included also are brief historical vignettes describing several of past Robeson County communities, including some with such colorful names as Lumber Bridge, Black Ankle, Shoeheel, and Orrum.

The next six chapters devote considerable detailed attention to geology, groundwater hydrology, vegetation, and climate. One of the most interesting physical geography entries is the discussion of the 'Carolina Bays', a series of hundreds of shallow, elliptical, parallel oriented depressions which cover this region of southeastern North Carolina. The author suggests an explanation for the origin of these somewhat baffling geomorphological features. In addition, the bays and their resulting topography played a significant role in the development of the settlement landscape.

Chapters Eight through Twenty provide a myriad of maps and tables with annotated descriptions, covering such themes as recent trends in agriculture, transportation and trade, education, social services, historical sites, and politics and government. One of the more fascinating is Chapter Ten which relates the interesting demography of the county. Detailed maps of the townships, and tables showing

Thomas E. Ross
Professor of
Geography and
Chair of the
Department of
Earth Science at
Spartanburg State
University;
Frank Ainsley
Professor
of Geography at
the University
of North
Carolina at
Wilmington

population characteristics, give the reader an understanding of the complex population dynamics and distributions involved in the Indian-Black-White mixture.

The author defers to experts from the Pembroke State University faculty and the local communities for descriptive chapters on the county's geology, the Lumbee River, libraries, social services, historical sites, and the arts.

For a county-by-county geography, *One Land, Three Peoples* can serve as a model for providing a rather complete overview of the facts and figures pertinent to a small geographic region. The numerous maps help the reader to focus on a geographic and spatial understanding of various collections of census and other data. *One Land, Three Peoples* is well written, user friendly, and can serve as a planning tool for county officials and other local decision makers.