



James Larkin Pearson: A Biography of North Carolina's Longest Serving Poet Laureate

Gregory S. Taylor

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This work is the first academic biography of North Carolina poet laureate James Larkin Pearson (1879-1981). Using material from Pearson's personal archive in Wilkes County, from the North Carolina Collection and the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and from contemporary examinations of his life and work, this study offers deeply personal insights into his life and provides extensive examinations of his hopes, joys, fears, pains, and sorrows. The work also includes lengthy studies of his poetry and his journalistic efforts and examines their place within the larger cultural milieu. In the process, the book addresses two themes that become apparent in Pearson's life and work: his Tar Heel spirit and his individualism. He was a fighter who overcame poverty, a poor education, personal tragedies, and professional neglect to achieve great success. He also abided by his own set of religious, artistic, and political values regardless of the consequences. This work thus offers the first personal and professional examination of James Larkin Pearson, provides insights on North Carolina and its people, and examines the benefits and drawbacks of following one's own path.

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