

## North Carolina Film Board <sup>[1]</sup>

### North Carolina Film Board

by Jay Mazzocchi, 2006

The North Carolina Film Board (NCFB), the first state-sponsored documentary [film unit](#) <sup>[2]</sup> in the United States, existed from 1962 to 1965 under Governor [Terry Sanford](#) <sup>[3]</sup>. According to Sanford, the purpose of the board was to "produce films for use in North Carolina." The idea for the agency was brought to Sanford's attention by [John Ehle](#) <sup>[4]</sup>, an [associate](#) <sup>[5]</sup> professor in the Radio, Television, and Motion Pictures Department at the [University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill](#) <sup>[6]</sup>. James Beveridge, head of the National Film Board of Canada, was chosen as director of the board. Members of the original NCFB advisory committee included playwright Paul Green, North Carolina A&T University chancellor Lewis Dowdy, and *Raleigh News and Observer* <sup>[7]</sup> executive editor Sam Ragan.

The NCFB received ideas and requests for films from members of Sanford's staff, departments of state government, and historical organizations in North Carolina. Sanford himself asked that a film be made documenting the workings of the state legislature. In all, the board produced 19 films, each running an average of 30 minutes and costing approximately \$30,000. Films were produced by a variety of filmmakers on a contract basis, although the board's staff often scripted the works.

Among films credited to the NCFB are *Land of Beginnings*, an exploration of the state's historic sites through the eyes of one North Carolina family; *Mirror of the Past*, a cinematic tour of [Tryon Palace](#) <sup>[8]</sup> in New Bern; *Road to Carolina*, a historical journey through the state's first century; and *North Carolina's Tribute to President John F. Kennedy*, which covers the ceremony held on 17 May 1964 at Kenan Stadium in Chapel Hill honoring the late president and acknowledging the state's donation of \$230,000 to the [Kennedy Memorial Library Fund](#) <sup>[9]</sup>. Films about economy and labor-including *The Goodliest Land*, *Big Fish*, *Little Fish*, and *Food and the Future*-were also produced by the board, as was *The Search for Excellence*, a film about school consolidation.

The NCFB's most controversial project was a series of films requested by Sanford under the title *Minority Report*. These films, produced in conjunction with [WUNC Television](#) <sup>[10]</sup>, were close examinations of the civil rights movement through personal interviews with young blacks-many of whom were taking part in the demonstrations that then defined college life on black college campuses throughout the state. The progressive nature of the films did not suit the political agenda of many state legislators, including Senator Tom White, chairman of both the Advisory Budget Commission and the Senate Appropriations Committee. When Sanford was defeated in the 1964 gubernatorial race by [Dan Moore](#) <sup>[11]</sup>, support for the film board-considered by White and other legislators to be primarily the outgoing governor's "pet project"-all but died. In June 1965 the NCFB was terminated after only three years in existence.

Below: film, *North Carolina's Tribute to President John F. Kennedy*, May 17, 1964, published by the North Carolina Film Board. Digitized by and available online at Digital NC, along with other films published by the North Carolina Film Board <sup>[12]</sup>.

#### References:

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Elmer Oettinger, "[The North Carolina Film Board: A Unique Program in Documentary and Educational Film Making](#)" <sup>[14]</sup>," *Journal of the Society of Cinematologists*5 (June 1965).

#### Additional Resources:

[Moving images published by the North Carolina Film Board](#) <sup>[15]</sup>, from the North Carolina Sights and Sounds Collection, DigitalNC. <http://library.digitalnc.org/cdm/search/searchterm/Film%20Board!North%20...> <sup>[15]</sup> (accessed May 20, 2016).

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<sup>[20]</sup> (accessed July 5, 2012).

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"State Historical Movie Receives Warm Reception." *The News & Observer*. November 8, 1921.

North Carolina Film Board "North Carolina Film Board Papers 1962-1965" Call number: PC.1965. North Carolina State Archives.

#### Subjects:

[Culture](#) <sup>[21]</sup>

[Government agencies](#) <sup>[22]</sup>

[Media](#) <sup>[23]</sup>

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#### From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) <sup>[25]</sup>

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