

Our State ^[1]

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by Speed Hallman, 2006



The State, cover photo, June 13, 1959. From NC Digital Collections, used by permission.

^[2]*Our State* magazine's name and subtitle, *Down Home in North Carolina*, capture its mission of describing the state's people, places, history, and [folklore](#) ^[3]. Newspaperman and [radio](#) ^[4] broadcaster [Carl Goerch](#) ^[5] set out in 1933 to publish "a weekly survey of North Carolina, dedicated to cause people to be more appreciative of their state by becoming better acquainted with it." Goerch was supremely confident in launching a magazine during the [Depression](#) ^[6], and his good name and salesmanship drew the backing of business leaders. Early advertisers included [R. J. Reynolds](#) ^[7], Liggett & Myers, the [American Tobacco Company](#) ^[8], [Jefferson Standard Life Insurance](#) ^[9], [Wachovia Bank](#) ^[10], and [Carolina Power & Light](#) ^[11].

Goerch first published his magazine on 3 June 1933 under the banner *The State*, a title that was used for 63 years. He called his job "a picnic and a vacation," as he crisscrossed the state promoting his magazine, gathering material, and selling subscriptions. He also filled the publication with his own humorous observations on life in North Carolina. A native New Yorker, Goerch noted the difference between North Carolinians and his Empire State brethren: "We folks down here get more pleasure out of five years of living than those damn Yankees get in a lifetime." Longtime contributor Billy Arthur compared *The State* to a small-town newspaper, given its chatty bits of statewide news, editorials, quizzes, and humorous columns.

In 1951 Goerch sold the magazine to Bill Sharpe, also a former newspaperman and a former state [advertising](#) ^[12] director. Sharpe added features but switched from weekly to monthly publication. In strident editorials he took on communists, integrationists, and others on the national and international scene, making for a curious editorial mix, but he also knew his beat. Sharpe won the Mayflower Cup, at the time the state's top [literary award](#) ^[13], for *A New Geography of North Carolina*, a four-volume collection of his feature stories on North Carolina counties.

W. B. Wright, publisher from 1965 to 1987, brought to the job [newspaper](#) ^[14] experience, a degree in creative writing, and a 16-year apprenticeship at the magazine. Wright gave additional play to historical and business stories and published the work of leading North Carolina [writers](#) ^[15].

For many years *The State* was a fixture in homes from Cherokee to Chicamacomico. It was dependable, informative, and entertaining. It was also quaint. Its appearance changed little over a half century, remaining resolutely black and white through the technicolor and psychedelic eras.

In 1987 Shaw Publishing in [Charlotte](#) ^[16] bought the magazine, adding color and updating its graphic design. In 1996 Shaw

sold it to Bernard Mann, a publisher and former radio executive who moved *The State* to Greensboro^[17]. With the August 1996 issue, Mann changed the name to *Our State*, explaining that the new name was warmer, more inclusive, and more suited to the publication. Mann also increased the use of color photographs and improved the magazine's design but retained its editorial focus.

Our State readers are fiercely loyal. Mann's initial marketing research revealed a subscription renewal rate of 87 percent, measured against the industry standard of 35 to 37 percent. By 2004 circulation had grown to 120,000, which included paid subscriptions, newsstand sales, and complimentary copies. Approximately 85 percent of the paying subscribers lived in North Carolina.

Reference:

Steve Huffman, "Magazine Gets New Look, Keeps Distinctive Content," *Raleigh News and Observer*, 16 Feb. 1997.

Additional Resources:

Our State Digital Collection 1933-2011, North Carolina Digital Collections: <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/spotlights/our-state>^[18] (accessed August 3, 2015).

Our State official website: <https://www.ourstate.com/>^[19] (accessed August 20, 2012).

Our State: The On-Air Magazine official website: <http://www.unctv.org/ourstate/>^[20] (accessed August 20, 2012).

Bechtel, Andy. "Q&A with Elizabeth Hudson, editor of *Our State* magazine." The Editor's Desk (blog). June 18, 2012. <http://editdesk.wordpress.com/2012/06/18/elizabeth-hudson-editor-our-state-magazine/>^[21] (accessed August 20, 2012).

Royal, T. J. "Our State magazine a success story 'Every word in the magazine is positive' about N.C." *The Daily Southerner*. April 3, 2009. # (accessed August 20, 2012).

Image Credits:

The State. Volume XXVII: June 13, 1959. Raleigh, N.C.: Bill Sharpe and W. B. Wright, Publishers. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/state/988048>^[2] (accessed August 3, 2015).

Subjects:

[100 North Carolina Icons](#)^[22]

[Great Depression \(1929-1941\)](#)^[23]

[World War II \(1941-1945\)](#)^[24]

[Post War 20th Century \(1946-2000\)](#)^[25]

[21st Century \(2001-present\)](#)^[26]

[Literature](#)^[27]

Authors:

[Hallman, Speed](#)^[28]

Origin - location:

[Greensboro](#)^[29]

[Charlotte](#)^[30]

From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#)^[31]

1 January 2006 | Hallman, Speed

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