

Worth, Kathryn ^[1]

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By Richard Walser, 1996

23 Aug. 1898–20 Jan. 1969

Kathryn Worth, writer, was born at the family summer cottage at Wrightsville Beach, the youngest of three children of James Spencer (1869–1900) and Josephine McBryde Worth. Her brother was David Gaston Worth II, her sister Frances McBryde Worth. The Worths were English Quakers ^[2] who went to North Carolina in 1771 from Nantucket, Mass. The McBrydes moved into the Laurinburg area about 1788 from Argyllshire, Scotland. Kathryn Worth's maternal grandfather was Duncan D. McBryde, a prominent Presbyterian preacher; her great-grandfather on her father's side was Governor Jonathan Worth ^[3]. In 1905 the James Worths moved from Wilmington ^[4] to Davidson ^[5], and during 1910–12 they were in Europe, where the three children attended private schools in Geneva and Neuchâtel.

Kathryn Worth was graduated from Converse College ^[6] in 1920 and, after a period of teaching and writing, did graduate work at Radcliffe College ^[7] in 1922; she received a bachelor of letters from the Pulitzer School of Journalism, Columbia University ^[8], in 1923. Soon she began publishing in national periodicals. On 27 July 1927 she married Walter Clyde Curry, professor of English at Vanderbilt University ^[9], and made her home in Nashville, Tenn. After the birth of her only child, Josephine (Mrs. Harold McNatt), her writing activity increased, with hundreds of poems appearing in a wide variety of publications. *Sign of Capricornus* (1937) ^[10] is a book of poetry in which, she said, she "attempted to interpret metaphysically and intellectually the half world of very young childhood, as I have observed it in my daughter," who, at age eight, "memorized the poems as they were written; and though she does not wholly understand their meaning, she is very proud of them."

When Josephine asked her mother for a book she could "understand" as well as "memorize," Kathryn Worth wrote *The Middle Button* (1941) ^[11], a juvenile novel using as its setting the Cumberland County ^[12] home (Linden) of her mother's people and narrating the story of a Scottish girl in 1883 who wants to become a doctor. *They Loved to Laugh* (1942) ^[13] recalls the Guilford County ^[14] boyhood of Governor Worth in 1831–33, its central character a shy girl among five boys in a household of thrifty, fun-loving Quakers. After *Poems for Josephine* (1943) ^[15], a collection of verses for children, came *New Worlds for Josie* (1944) ^[16], a juvenile novel of two American sisters in a Geneva boarding school. *Sea Change* (1948) ^[17], a love story for teenagers, comes to grips with religious prejudice on the Carolina seacoast in 1893; in it a southern girl decides to accept the attentions of an attractive Irish Catholic boy who had come to an unfriendly region to help in the building of a bridge.

Kathryn Worth was a Democrat ^[18] and a Presbyterian. She was buried in the churchyard of Dials Church, near Fountain Inn, S.C.

References:

North Carolina Authors (1952)

William S. Powell, ed., *North Carolina Lives* (1962)

Richard Walser, *Young Readers' Picturebook of Tar Heel Authors* (1966)

Who's Who in the South and Southwest (1950)

Frances McBryde Worth (Greensboro) to Richard Walser, 20 Apr. 1974 (Richard Walser Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)

Additional Resources:

"Worth, Kathryn 1898-1969" WorldCat.org: The World's Largest Library Catalog. <https://www.worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n96-112099> ^[19] (accessed March 8, 2013).

Subjects:

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Women ^[21]

Writers, journalists, and editors ^[22]

Authors:

Walser, Richard ^[23]

Origin - location:

New Hanover County ^[24]

Mecklenburg County [25]

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Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press.[26]

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