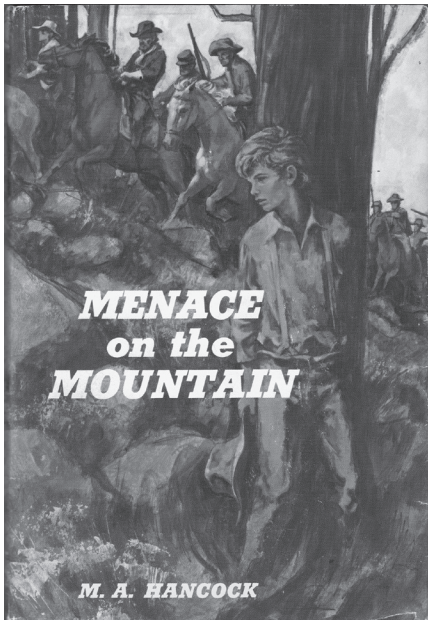


Rediscovering Mary Hancock,

“WARRIOR for WHIMSEY”

by Liz McGuffey



MACRAE SMITH PUBLISHING; COURTESY OF LIZ MCGUFFEY

Mary Hancock set out to write her first novel fueled by a keen intellect and natural curiosity tempered with an everyday practicality that characterized all of her endeavors. In nine months, she wrote the novel *Menace on the Mountain* and sold the movie rights to Walt Disney even before its publication in 1968. Under the pen name of M.A. Hancock, she spent her most productive writing years, from 1956 to 1968, living in the foothills community of Moravian Falls, North Carolina, the setting of most of her historical fiction. In spite of roots running deep in Midwestern soil, Mary adopted North Carolina's red clay earth and its people, fitting into the local culture as easily as her hand slipping into her favorite garden glove.

Moravian Falls is where I grew up, and in January of 1963, my senior year in high school, I spent every Saturday morning with Mary writing a Civil War paper for a history class. My mother had recruited Mary's help in encouraging me to love history the way she and Mary did. At forty, her brown hair was already peppered with gray, and her dark-rimmed eyeglasses, pointed at the temples, gave her an elfin look. Shunning style, but always freshly scrubbed and neat, Mary's signature uniform was long pants, a pressed button-up shirt, and sensible shoes – either slip-on loafers or lace-ups. With prescience, long before Ralph Lauren



FROM THE GREEN AND GOLD; COURTESY OF LIZ MCGUFFEY

ABOVE RIGHT Liz McGuffey's senior year Wilkes Central High School yearbook photograph, Wilkesboro, NC, 1963

Durham resident LIZ MCGUFFEY is a native of the North Carolina foothills. She earned a BS in Pharmacy from UNC Chapel Hill, a BA in Psychology from UNC Charlotte, and a PhD in Experimental Psychology from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. She published her research findings in scientific journals and was a contributing editor of the *Journal of the American Pharmaceutical (now Pharmacists) Association*. Most of her career was spent in the practice of pharmacy, but she now spends her time writing, taking classes, playing bridge, and traveling.