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2021 Literary Award to be presented to *Even As We Breathe: A Novel* by Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle on December 9 via Zoom

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (December 3, 2021) - The Western North Carolina Historical Association (WNCHA) is pleased to announce *Even As We Breathe: A Novel* by Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle as the 66th winner of the Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Award. The Award has been presented annually by the Western North Carolina Historical Association since 1955 for printed works that focus special attention on Western North Carolina.

Of the novel, Catherine Frank, Chair of the selection committee, says, “*Even As We Breathe* immerses us in a specific place and time, Asheville’s Grove Park Inn when it was being used to house Axis diplomats and their families in 1942, and in the Qualla Boundary where Cherokee traditions are deeply embedded but in conflict with an ever encroaching outside world. But the story of Cowney Sequoyah and Essie Stamper is also timeless and universal, exploring what it means to lose innocence and to find ‘who we are supposed to be.’ Most importantly, the book is beautifully written, with convincing, well-drawn characters and compelling imagery that tie the various stories together. This first novel by an enrolled member of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians exemplifies the quality of the most compelling regional writing.”

A prize of \$2,500 accompanies the Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Award and will be presented to the author at the annual Award event. The Award event will be held this year via Zoom on Thursday, December 9 at 6:30pm. Registration is available at www.wnchistory.org/events

The other finalists, who will read selections from their publications at the event, chosen from 40 nominations, are:

Mary Othella Burnette, *Lige of the Black Walnut Tree: Growing Up Black in Southern Appalachia*

Wayne Caldwell, *Woodsmoke*

Vicki Lane, *And the Crows Took Their Eyes*

Matthew Wimberley, *All the Great Territories*

The first award in 1955 was given to Wilma Dykeman for her landmark *The French Broad*. Last year’s winner was Dr. Sandra Muse Isaacs for *Eastern Cherokee Stories: A Living Oral Tradition and Its Cultural Continuance*. Others who have received the award over the years include such notables as Robert Morgan, Charles Frazier, John Parris, Gail Godwin, John Ehle, Robert Brunk, Michael McFee, Lee Smith, Ron Rash, Wiley Cash, Wayne Caldwell, Fiona Ritchie, and Doug Orr.

The 2021 Award Panel this year consisted of: Catherine Frank, Chair, Director, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UNC Asheville; Daniel Clare, English Department, A.C. Reynolds High School; Dee James, professor emeritus, UNC-Asheville; Leslee Johnson, English Department, UNC-Asheville; Tom Muir, Historic Site Manager, Thomas Wolfe Memorial; Gordon McKinney, professor emeritus, Berea College; Terry Roberts, Director, National Paideia Center; and Jim Stokely, President, Wilma Dykeman Legacy.

The WNC Historical Association is a nonprofit organization with a mission to preserve and promote the history and legacy of Western North Carolina through interpretation, education, collection, and collaboration. For more information, call WNCHA at 828-253-9231 or visit www.wnchistory.org.