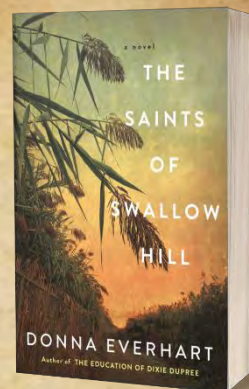


Dear Librarian,

Not unlike your passion for discovering a special book and sharing it with others, one of the most thrilling parts of my work is uncovering a hidden historical gem during research.

Coming from the “Tar Heel State,” I’d heard comments here and there about the origins of this nickname, but I’d never known the true story. When I finally did begin to investigate, I landed upon another unique aspect of the South’s past with its own unusual name: naval stores. Simply a term for goods derived from the resin of pine trees, naval stores were used to waterproof wooden ships and sailing tackle. The pine forests of the American South were a world renowned source of this tar, pitch, and turpentine, and North Carolina was the top producing state. Because the sticky pine sap clung to everything as it was being harvested – including the soles of workers’ bare feet – people doing this brutally hard work were often referred to as “tar heels.”



Working in a Depression-era turpentine camp was a combination of positives and negatives. Harvesting turpentine was a brutal, hot, dirty process, but the rhythmic work could offer a kind of peace. The flat, grassy savannas of pine forest and the tall longleaf pines were uniquely beautiful, yet the landscape was filled with danger in many forms.

Of course, a job of any kind was a godsend, especially one offering a place to live and access to food. Labor camps were like self-contained small towns with a commissary, schools, churches, even sometimes a “juke joint” where workers could go after a long day for a drink, music, and perhaps other “entertainment.” But because the camps were set in such isolated locations, the owners could charge exorbitant prices for rent and supplies. Workers had no choice but to rack up huge debts they were forced to work off in a form of indentured servitude that was nearly impossible to escape.

My characters in *The Saints of Swallow Hill* meet at one such turpentine camp in Georgia. There they face extreme physical and mental challenges, but there’s also serenity and meaningful friendships to be found in the vast pine woods.

I hope you will come to love the history behind Rae Lyn, Del, and Cornelia’s stories as much as I have. You can learn more about the novels I write or get in touch with me at www.DonnaEverhart.com. I am also available for virtual and in-person events! Should that interest you, please contact Vida Engstrand, VEngstrand@Kensingtonbooks.com.

With deep gratitude for your support,

Donna Everhart

