

Hayes, Hubert Harrison ^[1]

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by Mattie U. Russell, 1988

3 Aug. 1901–30 July 1964

Hubert Harrison Hayes, actor, author, producer, promoter, and folklorist, was born in [Asheville](#) ^[2], the son of Ernest L. Hayes, a master mechanic, and Elizabeth Ingle Hayes. In 1922–23 he attended [Trinity College](#) ^[3] (now Duke University), Durham, but due to a serious injury he lost his athletic scholarship and had to end his college career. Soon afterwards he was employed by the Augustin Stock Company and toured with the company for three years. Returning to Asheville, Hayes joined the Fire Department but his interest in the theater continued. He wrote a number of plays and became a producer of his own plays and those of others. The first of his plays, written in collaboration with John Tainter Foote, was *Tight Britches* ^[4], which portrays life among the mountain people; it was first produced in Asheville in 1933 and appeared on Broadway the following year. Hayes's outdoor drama, *Thunderland*, about the [Daniel Boone](#) ^[5] era, was produced during the summers of 1952 and 1953 in the amphitheater at Skyland. He also wrote numerous radio scripts.

During World War II, Hayes taught meteorology and navigation to soldiers stationed in Asheville. He was a licensed pilot and a member of the Civil Air Patrol.

From 1945 to 1954, Hayes was manager of the Asheville City Auditorium and in that capacity promoted entertainment and talent, bringing to the auditorium top names in show business. In 1948 he founded the Mountain Youth Jamboree, a program to promote and perpetuate folk culture and train children to perform on stage. In cooperation with his wife, Leona Trantham Hayes, whom he married on 9 June 1934, he produced the jamboree annually until his death. Mrs. Hayes continued it through its twenty-sixth anniversary performance in 1973. From the start of the jamboree, Hayes had the support of the Asheville Chamber of Commerce in assembling youths from the Appalachian Mountains each spring to participate in folk dancing, music making, and folk and ballad singing in the Asheville auditorium. Every year he auditioned hundreds of children for the jamboree; during the twenty-six years of its existence, 52,000 children performed. It was in aiding, encouraging, and fostering the development and talent of young people that Hayes made his most lasting contributions.

Hayes was first a Baptist and then an Episcopalian. He died at age sixty-three and was buried in Calvary Episcopal Church cemetery in Fletcher, N.C. In addition to his widow, he was survived by his daughter, Yvonne, and two sisters. As a tribute to his endeavors, Mrs. Hayes gave the Hubert Hayes Memorial Cabin, along with his portrait and bust, to [Western Carolina University](#) ^[6].

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