Southern Pines, NC – North Carolina is called “the writingest state” for a number of reasons.

Forty-two of those reasons can be found in the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame. Three more will be added this fall, when the NCLHOF inducts poet James Applewhite, historian William S. Powell, and novelist Lee Smith.

The induction ceremony will be held Sunday, October 19, at the Weymouth Center for the Arts and Humanities in Southern Pines, where the NCLHOF is housed. The ceremony is free and open to the public.

“The three inductees represent North Carolina’s best literary traditions and achievements in fiction, poetry, and nonfiction,” said North Carolina State University professor emeritus Jim Clark, who chaired the selection committee.

Applewhite was born in Stantonsburg, NC, in 1935. He is the recipient of the 1995 North Carolina Award in Literature, as well as the 1992 American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Jean Stein Award in Poetry. He is a Guggenheim Fellow and professor of English at Duke University. His books of poetry include Quartet for Three Voices, Daytime and Starlight and A Diary of Altered Light.

Powell, professor emeritus of history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is the author or editor of dozens of books, including the Encyclopedia of North Carolina and The North Carolina Gazetteer. He received the North Carolina Award for Literature in 2000.

Smith was born in Grundy, VA, in 1944, and moved to North Carolina in 1974. She is the author of 11 novels, including the New York Times bestseller The Last Girls and her most recent, On Agate Hill. A retired professor of English at NCSU, Smith received an Academy Award in Fiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1999.

“The nine-member selection committee cast only one ballot in reaching its decision,” Clark said.

The NCLHOF was founded in 1996, under the leadership of poet laureate Sam Ragan, and is a program of the North Carolina Writers' Network. The 2008 induction will be the first in which the Network and the Weymouth Center collaborate with the North Carolina State Library's Center for the Book, the North Carolina Humanities Council, and the North Carolina Collection of the Wilson Library at UNC-Chapel Hill to produce the induction ceremony and to promote the NCLHOF and North Carolina's literary heritage.

"These organization share many of the same goals as the Network and the Literary Hall of Fame," said Network executive director Ed Southern. "They're very excited to help honor this year's inductees, and to make sure more North Carolinians know about this state's contributions to literature."

"As living authors, these inductees can join forces in free public programming that promotes reading and writing statewide," Clark said.