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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Revolution in America: Considerations and Comparisons. By Don Higginbotham. (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2005). Acknowledgments, index. Pp xi, 230. \$49.50 cloth, \$19.50 paper.)

Readers of early American history will most likely be quite familiar with the work of Don Higginbotham. In a career spanning more than forty years, Higginbotham has written important books on George Washington, Daniel Morgan, the American military tradition, the American Revolution, and comparative revolution. He has also edited the papers of North Carolina Supreme Court Justice James Iredell. Now comes *Revolution in America: Considerations and Comparisons*, a collection of essays—most of which have been previously published—that demonstrates, once again, Higginbotham's formidable, albeit sometimes problematic, interpretive skills.

The book contains eight essays, which are subdivided into three sections, "Statesman in War and Peace," "War and National Institutions," and "Martial Spirit and Revolution: North and South." The third essay of the book, "George Washington and Three Women," provides a good example of Higginbotham's interest in biography. Although the extant evidence is rather scant, the author nonetheless provides a compelling portrait of Washington's relationships with his mother (Mary Ball Washington), wife (Martha Dandridge Custis Washington), and a friend and neighbor (Sally Cary Fairfax). According to Higginbotham, Mary Ball Washington was not the selfish, overbearing figure that some historians have made her out to be. Instead, she was a capable woman who provided a sufficiently nurturing environment for the future leader of the

United States. Martha Washington, likewise, was far more than a "Plain Jane" spouse (57, 67). Using skills she acquired during her childhood on a Virginia planter's estate and during her first marriage to Daniel Parke Custis, Martha Washington enhanced her second husband's reputation by lending support to the establishment of the Ladies Association, by assuaging the fears of disgruntled Quaker women, and by co-hosting presidential receptions. Higginbotham convincingly refutes, finally, the notion that George Washington engaged in illicit relations with Sally Fairfax. Yes, the epistolary language between these two individuals was at times improperly flirtatious, but there is still no reason to believe that Washington and Fairfax were romantically involved. Rather, "Washington's love affair was with the entire Fairfax family," which patronized him at critical moments in his career (67).

Overall, the strength of this essay is the detailed detective work of the author. Refusing to take at face value commonly accepted opinions about Washington's circle, Higginbotham points readers to specific primary sources, and the resulting biographical sketches are remarkably suggestive. Martha Washington, in particular, emerges as an astute political operator along the lines of the women described in Catherine Allgor's *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (2000). Whether or not Higginbotham would agree with that type of extrapolative conclusion, his analysis makes clear that the females he discusses were "complex individuals whose ties to Washington were multidimensional" (57).

Higginbotham's biographical emphasis is less effective when it is placed in the service of an unnecessarily jaundiced view of recent historiography. In the first essay, "Washington's Remarkable Generation," the author asserts that among academics today the "pursuit of great white men is at best irrelevant," despite the fact that a diverse and rather large cohort of respected scholars continues to pour forth articles and books about the Founding Fathers (26). To be sure, new studies of Washington and associated figures often reflect current interest in race, language, culture, gender, and class, but "political and constitutional approaches" to these mythic individuals have never "been shunted to the rear" (26). Indeed, while Higginbotham believes that some proponents of the "new histories . . . are quite combative," his casual assessment—if not

outright dismissal—of a large body of recent scholarship is itself rather argumentative (26).

Unreflective praise of the Founding Fathers also undercuts the force of Higginbotham's biographical work. In the third essay, "Virginia's Trinity of Immortals," the author observes that, "It tells us worlds about the American Revolution to recall that our famous Revolutionaries did not die at the end of a rope or on a guillotine" (49). Coming at the end of a judicious treatment of the interaction between George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Patrick Henry, this seemingly innocuous statement raises troublesome, unexplored implications. For one thing, it diminishes the degree of political and personal violence that nearly ripped apart the early American republic. More importantly, it begs the question *why exactly* the political strife of the new United States did not descend into the same type of anarchy so integral to the French Revolution. Does Higginbotham want to suggest that American political leaders stood apart from their French counterparts because they were genuinely nice guys who agreed to disagree? If so, he needs to explore that theme in depth. If not, he needs to explain those factors beyond (or in addition to) individual personalities that account for the differences between revolutionary developments in the United States and France.

That Higginbotham is capable of sweeping analyses that move beyond investigation of individual personalities is abundantly clear in the fourth and seventh essays of the book, "War and State Formation in Revolutionary America" and "The Martial Spirit in the Antebellum South." Combining a review of Anglo-American military conflict with knowledge of the historical literature on European state expansion, the fourth essay shrewdly demonstrates that even though the "War of Independence did not bring a European-style absolutist state," it nevertheless played a seminal role in the formation of an American national state (91). In the seventh essay, Higginbotham disrupts conventional portraits of a martial South by comparing it to military thought and behavior in New England. According to the author, the venerable martial ethos of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine compels us to revisit "the elusive question of whether there existed separate northern and southern civilizations" (180).

All in all, this book should be useful to students of early American history because it brings together eight essays by a dis-

tinguished historian. Readers will probably not agree with all of the interpretations put forth by Higginbotham. But they will agree that studying his work is a profitable endeavor.

Matthew R. Hale

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Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South.

By Marie Jenkins Schwartz. (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006. Acknowledgments, editorial note, notes, index. Pp. ix, 401. \$29.95 cloth.)

With her important *Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South*, Marie Jenkins Schwartz joins a small but distinguished groups of historians, including Richard H. Shryock, William Dosite Postell, Todd L. Savitt, and Steven M. Stowe, of African American slave medicine. Unlike earlier scholars, however, Schwartz focuses closely and carefully on the subject of enslaved women's reproductive health. Historians will find Schwartz's book a treasure trove of original information on slavery, bondswomen and freedwomen, the history of traditional and folk medicine, the history of gynecology, the history of nineteenth century science, and antebellum and Reconstruction-era social history. Regrettably she virtually ignores the Civil War years in her analysis.

Schwartz begins her tightly-argued but occasionally repetitive book with chapters on procreation in the slave quarters and then on the healers, white physicians and black folk doctors, who attended female slaves. Schwartz next examines the topics of slave fertility, pregnancy, childbirth, postnatal complications, gynecological surgery, cancer and other tumors, and freedwomen's health. For sources Schwartz draws principally on nineteenth century southern medical journals, private correspondence and plantation records, the records of the Freedmen's Bureau, and oral history interviews conducted among former slaves by representatives of the Works Progress Administration.

Two main constructs inform both the structure and arguments of *Birthing a Slave*. First, influenced by the early work of historian Deborah Gray White, Schwartz identifies and analyzes "a community of enslaved women based on their shared experiences" (321 n. 1). Second, Schwartz expands upon Savitt's paradigm of "dual" systems of health care under slavery, whereby "both black women

and white men sought to enhance women's reproductive health in different ways and for different reasons" (3).

Schwartz explains how during the late antebellum decades southern white physicians increasingly intervened in slave birthing and healing. As a result "enslaved women were forced to keep secret certain of their own customs for ensuring women's health. The situation," she adds, "helped create a shared intimacy among women—a sense of community that at times extended to male slaves" (3). Refusing their masters' demands that they bear as many children as possible, African American women "attempted to regulate childbearing to accord with their own notions of the proper timing and frequency of motherhood" (31).

Not surprisingly, slave women generally distrusted the white male doctors slave masters employed to protect and expand their investment in chattel property. "Subjected to invasive procedures, inexperienced doctors, and experimental intervention . . . black women were wary of a white doctor's services" (312). These physicians reflected the racial and class biases of their day and "strove to fit observations about bodily functions into preconceived ideas about black and white sexuality and morality" (115). Southern white doctors tended to reject the slaves' indigenous medicine, preferring their diagnoses of physiological problems and their therapeutic cures. "Only rarely," Schwartz writes, "did doctors examine critically the social circumstances in which the women lived and in which they practiced medicine. Instead, they operated within the context of slave society to ensure that a black woman's reproductive behavior satisfied her owner—in other words, that she gave birth to children. When doctors joined with slaveholders to exercise control over enslaved women's health, medical practice became entwined with the cause of slavery's continuance. Simultaneously, slavery helped to further the medicalization of childbirth and the professionalization of medicine" (34).

Schwartz, like Savitt before her, notes that white physicians, at the behest of slave masters, used black women as subjects for gynecological experimentation and research. "This approach . . . fostered a certain recklessness that did not make for responsible medicine. The common assumption was that black enslaved women existed for the benefit of a white ruling class. Doctors were concerned for their patients, but their concern was constrained by their support for slavery and their belief that a black woman's destiny was to serve her owner" (228).

Having said this, Schwartz nevertheless credits southern white medical practitioners with “attempting to alleviate misery” and with developing corrective procedures for vesico- and recto-vaginal fistula. Schwartz insists, however, that most slave women “proved an unruly force and had ideas of their own about whether to cooperate [with white doctors] and under what conditions” (256). Left to their own devices, slave grannies and midwives prescribed home cures inspired by African and Amerindian influences. Folk remedies for “female trouble” included herbal and root teas derived from sassafras, mullein, birthroot, squaw weed, horsemint, and cotton. “Even today,” Schwartz reminds readers, “such herbal remedies remain popular and are sometimes incorporated into nurse-midwifery practice” (317). Slave and freedwomen also relied upon informal conjure medicine—such magical cures as nutmeg worn on a string around the head to relieve headaches and a dime strung around an ankle to prevent leg cramps.

As these and other examples suggest, African American women, despite their status as slaves, sought to retain as much control over their familial, sexual, and reproductive lives as possible under the “peculiar institution.” Schwartz maintains, for instance, that rumors to the contrary notwithstanding, few masters tried to breed slaves by forced couplings. “Given the predisposition of slaves to become parents,” she explains, “they were needless” (25). “Enslaved couples had their own ideas of whom they wished to marry, and they generally did not yield readily to the dictates of owners in this facet of life” (26). Schwartz also disputes assertions that “numerous enslaved women carried out infanticide” (368 n. 47). She argues that slave women, like women across time and place, “valued motherhood. They cherished children for reasons of their own” (11).

Schwartz’s *Birthing a Slave* provides a vital gendered analysis of slavery as a social system and its intersection with the development of nineteenth century American and regional gynecology. “In resisting the dominion of white men” in family planning and in childbearing, “black women cast themselves as central actors in the unfolding drama that constituted slave life and culture in the antebellum South” (31). Her book is an especially significant contribution to southern historiography.

John David Smith

University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Slavery and American Economic Development. By Gavin Wright. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006. Pp. x, 162 pp. Preface, appendices, bibliography, index. \$25.00 cloth.)

Placing slavery within the context of nineteenth-century American history can be tricky. On the one hand, the significance of the “peculiar institution” in the colonial and antebellum periods is obvious, as is its role in triggering the American Civil War. But on the other hand, historians often depict slavery as an abnormality outside of the mainstream political, economic, and social development of the United States. Do we emphasize the “peculiar” or the “institution” in assessing slavery? Eminent economist Gavin Wright tackles this thorny problem in his new book, *Slavery and American Economic Development* by breaking the more general idea of “slavery” down into three distinct components. The first looks at the institution as a labor relations system, the second approach considers property rights, and the final one analyzes the political impact of slavery. The first and last of these approaches receive the lion’s share of attention among American historians; the view of slavery as a set of property rights less so. In order to rectify this imbalance, Wright analyzes slave economies as “systems of property rights” (12) and tracks the impact of these systems upon economic development from the colonial period through the rise of the Old South. The end result is a broad-ranging, well-evidenced, and insightful recasting of slavery’s role in the early American economy.

Wright’s book draws from a series of lectures he delivered at Louisiana State University in 1997, thus making the prose accessible to a wider audience than economic historians usually afford. It is a compact (162 pp.) volume that nonetheless takes on some of the biggest questions for historians of slavery. One of these, for example, is the Williams thesis, which links Britain’s industrialization to profits drawn from its participation in the eighteenth-century international slave trade and views the antislavery movement as a backlash made possible by slavery’s contribution to the wealth of the British Empire. Wright does not resuscitate this argument in full, as few historians find it completely persuasive these days, but emphasizes that antislavery sentiments did rise at the same time that a new “mode of economic progress” shifted capital into the “high-technology production of manufactured goods” and made the slave-based sugar islands “seem remote and irrelevant to the

important things in economic life.” (39) Economic forces thus made slavery seem less essential to the welfare of the Empire and empowered antislavery forces to dismantle the institution.

Wright’s model for exploring the American relationship with chattel slavery employs one great struggle as a metaphor for an earlier one. “I propose that we view the antebellum era as a kind of cold war on the North American continent,” he writes, “in which two different economic systems set out to generate wealth through territorial expansion” (49). Because slaveowners held property rights in labor, they could bring new land into cultivation for cash crops rapidly and expand their labor force via the internal slave trade. The ability to allocate labor became a key advantage in this system. Female slaves, for example, could be used as “swing” labor on large plantations during a time of need. Free labor systems, in contrast, depended upon voluntary migration and land improvements as a growth strategy. Slaveholding ultimately made the South into a wealthy region, but investments in industrial ventures, internal improvements, and urban growth all suffered from a myopic approach to property rights. But in the short term, at least, being a “laborlord” enjoyed economic advantages to being a landlord. Wright argues that “the antebellum slave South was not a ‘cheap labor’ economy; it was a society whose economy and polity revolved around the scarcity and high price of slave labor” (71). The institutional intransigence of slavery, not necessarily its economic efficiencies or comparative advantages, played a key role in antebellum regional divergence. Although the set of property rights available to slaveholders enriched them in the short run, Wright finds that the top-heavy ownership structure of slavery hampered long-range prospects for the South. For example, he argues that “the persistence of a bifurcated society in which economic elites did not identify with or internalize the well-being of the majority of the population” (126) was the most durable legacy of slavery.

Slavery and American Economic Development offers insights for historians at many levels and serves as a welcome reflection from one of the economic history’s leading scholars. Wright expertly weaves recent scholarship on slavery into clear and concise prose and is able to speak to a variety of audiences. As with many lectures-turned-books, it provides several broad lines of inquiry that should provoke future studies, and yet remains well grounded in the existing historiography.

Sean Patrick Adams

University of Florida

Florida Plantation Records From the Papers of George Noble Jones. By Ulrich B. Phillips and James David Glunt, eds. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. Introduction, map, glossary, index. Pp. xl, 596. \$55.00 cloth.)

African American Life in South Carolina's Upper Piedmont, 1780-1900. By. W. J. Megginson. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006. Acknowledgements, charts, illustrations, notes, index. Pp. xvii, 547. \$59.95 cloth.)

Studies of slavery in the American South tend to focus on certain areas: tidewater Virginia, coastal South Carolina and Georgia, and the delta region along the Mississippi River. Rarely do they pay much attention, at least in the antebellum period, to regions untouched by "King Cotton," uninfluenced by the intensive labor practices required on sugar plantations, or unaffected by a racial imbalance in favor of African Americans. Examining areas outside of the customary historical interest, however, helps bring perspective to the study of antebellum slavery and provides added depth to the understanding of the institution.

Florida is one such region at which historians have begun to take another look. Larry Eugene Rivers provided a survey of slavery throughout the state in his book, *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation* (2000), while Edward E. Baptist presented a more focused study in his *Middle Florida's Plantation Frontier before the Civil War* (2002). One source upon which these and other historians of antebellum Florida have relied is the papers of George Noble Jones, a Florida planter who died in 1876. The new edition by the University Press of Florida includes an introduction by John David Smith, an appropriate choice given Smith's expertise in analyzing the Lost Cause sentiments of historians such as Ulrich B. Phillips, the original editor of the Jones papers.

The process by which the Jones papers came to be published makes for an interesting story, which Smith explains in detail. The papers, which record life on Jones' El Destino and Chemonie plantations located near Tallahassee, were discovered in 1924 at the former location. By the time a local historian, James O. Knauss, ascertained their historical value, the majority of the papers had been sold, eventually coming into the possession of the Missouri Historical Society, which asked noted southern historian Ulrich B. Phillips to edit them for publication. After some wrangling over the papers' ownership with Jones' grandson, Phillips and his grad-

uate student, James David Glunt, a University of Florida history professor, began editing the papers. The Missouri Historical Society published them in 1927.

The Jones papers reveal much about his plantations, slaves, and overseers but, surprisingly, not much about Jones himself. Both plantations grew primarily cotton, on El Destino's 6,683 acres and Chemonie's 1,880 acres. At their peaks, the two plantations employed 143 and eighty-five slaves, respectively. Jones was an absentee owner, spending his time primarily in Georgia, Rhode Island, and various places in Europe. Overseers performed the everyday supervisory tasks on his Florida plantations and, as other historians have shown about this class of plantation managers, their duties were varied and challenging.

Despite their obvious and contemporary racist views, Phillips and Glunt made an important contribution to Florida history by preserving these records for use by scholars interested not only in Jones' life, but also in southern slavery in a state usually ignored. One can understand why past historians found this collection informative and why current scholars would welcome the introduction by Smith that explains the papers' provenance and the original editors' biases.

Another overlooked region in studies of antebellum slavery is northwestern South Carolina. In his prodigiously researched look at African Americans between 1780 and 1900, W. J. Megginson treats three counties in the Pendleton District: Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens. Megginson sees value in studying this tri-county region, which he believes was more representative of the majority of the antebellum South, "where slaveholdings were small, no major cash crop was produced, and, presumably, white and black lived and worked in close proximity" (6). He examines virtually every aspect of African American life, both slave and free, including work environments, religious lives, legal proceedings, family relationships, wartime experiences, political activism, educational backgrounds, and many others.

Despite the depth of Megginson's research, his findings are insightful, but not new. He contends that African Americans experienced racism and oppression, often foisted upon them by circumstances over which they had little control. In response to this mistreatment, they formed a strong subculture and community, centered on the family. He concludes that African Americans in northwestern South Carolina encountered more continuities than

discontinuities in their historical experiences before and after the Civil War.

Students of South Carolina's history owe a debt to Megginson. He has seemingly combed through every available resource to unearth the records of African Americans in the Pendleton District. There is little that he does not cover. His quantitative tables, footnotes, and bibliography are a treasure trove for those interested in using these three counties in northwestern South Carolina to supplement or enhance their own examination of African Americans in the antebellum, Civil War, and Jim Crow periods.

Those historians interested in examining geographic areas not usually addressed in studies of the antebellum South would do well to acquaint themselves with both of these books. *Florida Plantation Records* offers the opportunity to contrast the plantation experience in the Sunshine State with those more commonly addressed in the historical literature. It also illuminates the practices of overseers, an often-forgotten link the slaveholding hierarchy. Through its depth of research and length of chronological coverage, *African American Life in South Carolina's Upper Piedmont* allows scholars to expand their understanding of the African American experience and enhance their appreciation of the struggle that slaves and their descendants faced.

Mark R. Cheatham

Southern New Hampshire University

A Well-Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America. By Saul Cornell. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. Preface, notes, index. Pp. xvi, 270. \$30 cloth.)

The Second Amendment has confounded its interpreters from the founding generation to our own. Congressional framers who drafted the right inscribed a preamble that asserts the need for a well-regulated militia, followed with a declaration that citizens hold a right to keep and bear arms. The inclusion of a preamble made the Second Amendment unique among the Bill of Rights adopted in 1791 and has prompted lively debates over its meaning ever since.

Does the Amendment require an application that emphasizes the pairing of private firearms ownership with militia service? Or,

does it stipulate a personal right? Given that the United States Supreme Court has never rendered a definitive formulation of the Amendment, the quest for a reliable interpretation has been left to attorneys, scholars and citizens at large. Extremists have enjoyed much attention in public deliberations over these issues, without enriching either general or scholarly understanding.

Saul Cornell argues that the citizen's right to bear arms, as stipulated by the Amendment, originated from the 18th Century notion of civic duty. Able-bodied freemen were obligated to train and serve in a militia so that British North American colonies and later, states, would possess a volunteer military force capable of collective defense when necessary. This duty was understood as a citizen's responsibility to the larger community. Militia service also enabled elite members of the community to exercise their influence through military discipline, a process that reinforced deference to social superiors.

Cornell emphasizes that the language of the Second Amendment reflects a usage that the founding generation could readily identify as a common practice. Civic duty was closely associated with the much-cherished concept of the virtuous freeman, upon whose shoulders the destiny of the new nation depended. This "dominant model" of firearms ownership emerged by the 1770's during the first experiments at state Constitution writing and retained its preeminence throughout the following decade.

A proper interpretation of the Second Amendment, he argues, should distinguish between a Constitutional right to bear arms and a common law right to carry arms for self-defense. Fundamental law never empowered the citizen to become equipped with firearms for personal protection. He finds that most judges and legal commentators in the young nation accepted this premise.

The adoption of the Constitution of 1787 raised an unanticipated issue associated with militia service: federalism. Cornell points out that the militia remained largely an institution of the states and, in some instances, of the local community. Despite the republican notion that freemen possess a right to rebel against oppressive government, in practice most militia units recoiled from leading uprisings of local citizens against policies adopted by federal officials. Deference to elites as well as patriotism restrained militia opposition to elected national authority in the early national period. Moreover, even groups such as the Whiskey Rebels employed the language of civic obligation when proclaiming their

right to armed opposition against the central government, not individual rights.

What Cornell considers to be a profound social transformation reshuffled the poles of the debate over the Amendment in the early 19th Century. During this period ordinary citizens increasingly began arming themselves for personal self-defense. Meanwhile, the social restraints of the founding era withered in the midst of a rising tide of individualism. Appalling incidents of interpersonal violence led to the first gun control movement in the nation and, in turn, sparked an opposing claim on behalf of a Constitutional right of self-defense. By the 1840's the two theories of interpretation—civic duty and individual right—routinely competed for public endorsement as various states revised their respective Constitutions.

The Civil War eliminated the possibility that a state militia could act under the auspices of the Second Amendment to oppose the national government by arms. But subsequent events would prove that disputes over whether the right empowered an individual liberty or a collective duty remained as heated as ever. In the midst of these controversies, Cornell concludes, the notion of bearing arms for civic responsibility was lost as a common assumption by 1900. Congress acknowledged this reality by adopting legislation that formed the National Guard, thereby placing volunteer military forces under the control of the federal government.

According to Cornell, the individual-versus-collective-right claims employed in contemporary debates have been inherited from the 19th Century. Both emphasize only part of the Amendment's text. He calls for a reading that includes all of it. The resultant "civic rights interpretation," he proposes, can be a guide for a new paradigm, providing a meaning that endorses the citizen's obligation to the government and the need for regulation. In other words, the individualist interpretation rests upon a faulty historical analysis.

Some readers will doubtless focus on the brief attention Cornell gives to major issues of contention associated with the subject. He quickly passes through the founding era to chronicle debates over the meaning of the Second Amendment from the 1790's to the early 21st Century, leaving little detailed consideration of primary evidence—especially contradictory material. This feature of the book may be the product of editorial advisors, for the author surely knows far more than he is able to display here.

Cornell deserves much praise for attempting to present a non-polemical mode of discourse. That is, he has sought a language designed to engage his readers in a comprehensive, rational discussion, free of emotionally charged distortions of responsible arguments, regardless of their viewpoints. In doing so he has accomplished the scholar's first duty and should earn an acknowledgment for it from his harshest critics. Cornell's old-fashioned, narrative style is a welcome relief from ordinary academic prose, as is his willingness to tackle an unwieldy topic. One can only hope that he will apply his good talents to the Second Amendment in the future.

George B. Crawford

University of Florida

Democracy Rising: South Carolina and the Fight for Black Equality Since 1865. By Peter F. Lau. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006. Acknowledgments, notes, illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. Pp. ix, 334. \$ 40 cloth.)

South Carolina at the Brink: Robert McNair and the Politics of Civil Rights. By Philip G. Grose. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006. Illustrations, preface, chronology, notes, bibliography, index. Pp. xiii, 360. \$39.95 cloth.)

Combing through a mixture of primary and secondary sources, including a plethora of interviews and oral histories, Peter F. Lau effectively makes the case that in South Carolina the fight for racial equality and civil rights grew from the ground up and not the top down. Lau's exploration of the history of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) regionally and nationally informs his contention that South Carolina's local NAACP branches linked their own local struggles for racial equity and social justice with larger and broader national concerns and international currents. More than an adumbration of the NAACP's history, Lau's *Democracy Rising* develops a wealth of biographical, social, and political information that challenges conventional wisdom concerning the origins and evolution of the civil rights movement. Dissenting from V. O. Key's widely endorsed assertion that black southerners served as mere puppets on the stage of southern political history, Lau insists that African Americans in South Carolina successfully "pursued ways to make their voices and concerns" heard and known (13).

Beginning with 1865, Lau deftly chronicles the formidable difficulties African Americans encountered during the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction eras. The Hamburg Massacre of 1876, the "Eight Box Law" of 1882, the rewriting of the South Carolina Constitution in 1895, and the Phoenix Riot of 1898—all combined to strip black Carolinians of Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment protection, reducing them to second-class citizenship. But South Carolina's resilient blacks vigorously fought white supremacy from any purchase they could secure.

The NAACP, established in 1909-1910 in the wake of a Springfield, Illinois, race riot, advanced as a northern-born and white-dominated organization. In the early 1920s, however, as the institution grew into a black-dominated entity, it spread across the South, even into the Palmetto State. As early as 1915, blacks in South Carolina such as Columbia attorney, Butler W. Nance, expressed interest in "attaching" themselves to the NAACP (26). More significantly, Nance and other African Americans in South Carolina, after establishing the civil rights organization in their state, worked quickly to align it with the national entity.

Evolving national and international events connected blacks in South Carolina with the rest of the world. World War I and the first Great Migration drew blacks beyond the South and put them in contact with their black brethren in the North. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, 175,000 African Americans exited South Carolina seeking better opportunities and better treatment in the North. Their departure helped transform the Palmetto State's population from a black majority to a white one. "But what was new about the 1920s," Lau asserts, "was that a critical mass of black southerners had established themselves in the urban North by the close of World War I, connecting black people to the world outside of the South in a way they had not been connected before" (61).

The Great Depression's economic distress led to a decline in the NAACP's membership rolls, and also forced black leaders to alter the organization's focus from solely racial and social concerns to economic issues. In the 1930s, W. E. B. Du Bois, Abram L. Harris, and Ralph J. Bunche urged fellow African Americans to work toward establishing black-white labor alliances. But Lau insists that such substantial shifts emanated not "from the national office, but rather from its branches" (85).

In the 1940s, the membership of the NAACP in South Carolina grew enormously. The establishment of the State Conference of the NAACP Branches in South Carolina, coupled with the aftermath of World War II to mark a major turning point as the organization transitioned from emphasizing racial uplift to stressing racial protest, shifting from local and individual participation to national and collective involvement. This adjustment manifested itself variously as black South Carolinians began pushing to end white primaries, to secure equal pay for teachers, to promote civic needs, adequate playgrounds and housing, to end police brutality, and to emphasize health issues. The *Briggs v. Elliott* (1950) case, one of five cases included in the *Brown* decision which struck down “separate but equal” in public education, vividly illustrates that the NAACP branches in South Carolina linked their fight for equality to broader national and international struggles. In short, the *Brown* ruling was a “culmination” of a long quest for racial and social equity that gained its initial impulses from blacks in South Carolina (212).

Democracy Rising highlights a long list of black men and women often over-shadowed by the towering civil rights giants such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, and Mary McCleod Bethune. Most scholars of southern politics and the African-American past exhibit little or no knowledge of the contributions of I. S. Leevy (mortician), N. J. Frederick (educator, lawyer, and newspaper editor), John McFall (pharmacist), Richard and Edward Mickey (morticians), Edwin A. Harleston (funeral home director), Levi G. Byrd (plumber and social activist), James M. Hinton (preacher and president of the NAACP in Columbia, South Carolina), Susan Dart Butler (a founder of SCFCWC: South Carolina Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs), Jeannette Cox (an organizer of the Phyllis Wheatley Literary Club), and many others. All “ordinary” people, they made extraordinary sacrifices to improve life for African Americans in South Carolina and beyond. Professor Lau appropriately rescues these unsung heroes and heroines from undeserved obscurity. Well-researched, well-written, and well-argued, *Democracy Rising* must stand as an essential element in the historiography of both South Carolina and the Civil Rights era.

In *South Carolina at the Brink*, seasoned journalist Philip G. Grose explores South Carolina in the post-*Brown* era to understand the state’s relative calm in an era troubled by racial strife and social upheaval. Grose explains who and what shaped Carolina singular

experience, by proffering a social and political history of South Carolina through the life of Robert McNair. Born in Berkeley County, South Carolina, in 1923, McNair grew up in a complex environment, a world that clung tenaciously to the social mores of the Old South while desperately reaching for the promises of industrialization and modernization energized by the New Deal and World War II.

Inspired by his politically-active father Daniel McNair, schooled by adept political leaders such as Solomon Blatt and Edgar Brown, and endowed with a "friendly and easy disposition" (10), young Bob McNair rose gradually, albeit somewhat controversially, to political prominence in the Palmetto State. After soldiering nearly two years in World War II, McNair served in South Carolina's House of Representatives in the early 1950s before being elected lieutenant governor and then "surprise" governor in the 1960s.

Grose points out World War II's impact on South Carolina. Just six years after that conflict, the South Carolina House counted fifty-five out of 123 legislators as veterans. These freshmen legislators, quickly dubbed "infighters," "social crusaders," and "economy builders" (3), brought fresh perspectives to their state along with a desire to address three key issues: public education, economic diversification, and the racial environment. The aftermath of World War II saw the abolition of all-white primaries across the South in *Smith v. Allwright* (1944), even as President Harry Truman's "To Secure These Rights" chiseled away at southern statutes upon which white supremacy stood.

Most white leaders, however, refused to embrace the social and political changes engendered by the New Deal, World War II, and the policies of the national Democratic Party. Strom Thurmond led the Dixiecrat revolt in 1948 before transitioning into the Republican Party sixteen years later. Governor Robert McNair, insists Grose, occupied ambivalent ground. While standing in a long line of prominent race-baiting South Carolina politicians, such as John C. Calhoun, James F. Byrnes, and Thurmond, McNair played a critical role in preventing the Palmetto State from erupting into violence and bloodshed during the civil rights era.

Like many of his political contemporaries, McNair worked diligently to stave off "court-ordered desegregation" (69), but in contrast to most of his gubernatorial forerunners, McNair recognized that economic growth and educational improvement must march shoulder-to-shoulder with racial equity and social justice. Extending civil rights to African Americans, he argued, "would

raise the economy of the whole state" (80). Guided by this insight, McNair pushed for both a diverse economy and improved race relations, frequently couching his social and educational recommendations in terms of economic enhancement. Because of his willingness to compromise, his cordial disposition, and his ability to work effectively with African Americans, McNair helped diffuse a potentially explosive environment in South Carolina.

But McNair did not accomplish this alone. He singled out such men as Isaiah DeQuincey Newman, a black preacher and leader of the NAACP, for being able "to represent the position and represent the movement but at the same time to be able to sit down and talk rationally and reasonably about the problems that we were all confronted with...The thing that brought us through that period [civil rights] was the communication...and the leadership from the black community" (183). Beyond this, white college administrations, alarmed by the chaos and violence erupting on southern campuses such as Ole Miss in Oxford, Mississippi, determined "to do the right thing" by admitting the first black student to Clemson College, Harvey Gantt.

Within its wealth of information and fascinating narrative, Grose's book contains but a few minor errors. But for those wishing to comprehend the complexity of southern political history, for students seeking to learn how the Republican Party captured South Carolina and its southern neighbors, and for scholars interested in understanding how an adroit politician successfully thwarted a racial and social volcano from exploding in violence across South Carolina, this study of Robert McNair provides indispensable and engaging reading.

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Voices of the Apalachicola. Compiled and edited by Faith Eidse. (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006. List of maps, list of figures, series forward, preface, acknowledgments, introduction, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. Pp. xvii, 328. (\$29.95 cloth.)

The Apalachicola River basin, in the Florida panhandle, is one of the most diverse ecosystems on earth. Home to approximately 300 species of birds, one thousand vascular plants, hundreds of

fish, and dozens of mammals, the area has seen tremendous changes over the last several centuries. Native American settlements gradually gave way to white residents who have altered the landscape over the last 150 years. The interviewees in Eidse's fine collection respond to these developments in accessible and heart-felt narratives.

A clear theme of the book is the fragility of the area's natural assets. What emerges in this work is a sense of loss of human resources as well. Many of the people interviewed for the book are the last of their generation. Tom Corley, for example, is the last river pilot of the Apalachicola River. Like Mark Twain, Corley knows every bend and obstacle between Columbus, Georgia, and the mouth of the river in the port town of Apalachicola. "That's 256 miles, isn't it?" Corley asks of the return trip. "I've been on every foot of it" (56). The route used to be thick with commercial barges, fishing vessels, and carriers of passengers or mail. Corley and his son know that river piloting is a lost art but they have great stories to tell.

The river traffic, as well as the flora and fauna of the region, is threatened by human engineering decisions over the last century. The construction of dams and the recent implementation of the fishing net ban weigh heavily throughout these narratives. Dredging is another concern to river residents. The unnatural buildup of sand along the river banks narrows the river and produces a much lower fish count. At the northern end of the Apalachicola / Chattahoochee River are millions of Atlanta area residents who need fresh water, while commercial fishermen fill hotels and restaurants in the Apalachicola area. Between these ends flows the "spinal cord" of the area (32), named by one long-time resident, which now runs lower and slower as a result of human intervention.

Eidse provides brief, informative introductions to the eight sections in the book. In just a few pages decades of development are explained, with narratives linked by topics such as "wood," "fishing," or the commercial development of the town of Apalachicola. The book provides a few maps but more would be welcomed, and the precious few photographs herein deserved a separate color spread. In her introductory remarks, Eidse might have provided more specific details to supplement the interviews. The dates of construction of each of the four dams on the river south of Columbus, Georgia would provide greater context for

these events. A fuller explanation of the Net ban or the Bob Sikes Cut into Apalachicola Bay – two events which have galvanized many rural residents against outside development – also would help to ground the reader in the facts before plunging into the interviews.

Eidse has assembled a lively, opinionated group that will entertain as well as inform. Occasionally an interview detracts from the flow of the book. A bizarre series of legal trials involving the removal of logs on federal property yielded an intense, emotional and unnecessarily long interview by Don Ingram. These cases paled in significance to some of the other events in the collection. Although Eidse does not attempt balance on sensitive issues, the book is not all negative. Several interviewees praised the successful restoration of the Tate's Hell Swamp, which offers hope for the rest of the region. The rebirth of the Gibson Inn and the town of Apalachicola are a boon for the area although the town, of course, is utilized by tourists and sport fishermen who use the Sikes cut so loathed by longtime locals. This section, placed at the end of the book — perhaps symbolically as the port town resides at the end of the river — feels incomplete and oddly out of place. The contrast of the town to river basin surely would generate enough interesting voices to fill another book.

With all questions of format or topic choice aside, Eidse served as a masterful interviewer. The interviewees never seem as if they are simply answering questions. Each one tells a story, sometimes with other characters joining in and voicing distinct opinions. Eidse asked interesting, relevant questions and then stepped back to let her subjects talk. The book is a celebration, an environmental and human history, a cause for concern and a pause for reflection. It is an engaging and valuable collection.

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Sunshine in the Dark: Florida in the Movies. By Susan J. Fernández and Robert P. Ingalls. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. Pp.320. Notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.)

History professors Susan J. Fernández and Robert P. Ingalls set themselves the daunting task of examining over a century's worth of filmed portrayals of Florida. Neither is a film scholar, and they

are not attempting to write about film theory, audience reception, or structural analysis. Instead, they set out to show how filmmakers have portrayed Florida and its people. The book is divided into three major sections they designate, appropriately enough, settings, plots and characters. The first examines presentation of the Florida's landscape, both natural and manmade. The second suggests that films about or set in Florida can be grouped into three broad categories. They include stories of re-creation, in which characters come to the sunshine state to remake themselves; other stories focus on tourism in its many varieties; and, finally, many Florida-based films tell crime stories. The third category analyzes how films have portrayed the people one finds in the state. Separate chapters look at Native Americans, ethnic groups (particularly African-Americans and Latinos), gender-defined roles (i.e., women and homosexuals), working class people and retirees, and the military. The book wraps up with a list of over three hundred "Florida" films dating back to the silent era.

For scholars of Florida, the book provides a broad introduction to the wide variety of ways the state has been represented on screen. Although the authors stayed away from made-for-TV and X-rated films, the scope of titles is impressive. Most of these will be familiar, but some will likely be brand new. For example, the authors give significant attention to the 1914 production, *A Florida Enchantment*, filmed in St. Augustine that tells the story of men and women who transform into the opposite sex by eating magic beans. It is but one of dozens of films identified here that readers may easily greet with, "Who knew they made a film about that?" Not all Florida historians may know of *Cabeza de Vaca's* tale of a conquistador rescued and briefly enslaved by native Floridians. Others may look forward to watching three separate films set in the sponge fishing community of Tarpon Springs (*Down Under the Sea*, *Sixteen Fathoms Deep* and *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef*).

The authors are careful in treating "Florida" films. *Creature from the Black Lagoon* may have been filmed in Silver Springs, but only its sequel, *Revenge of the Creature*, was set in Florida. By the same token, readers may recall that Florida figures into films in ways one might easily overlook. *Midnight Cowboy*, for instance, has always registered in my mind as "about" New York, but the authors point out that it is one of the many films in which the vision of Florida's sun-drenched opportunity drives much of the plot. Florida is so identifiable that producers evoke it without bothering

to film here. Although the state appears overtly in films, such as in features shot at Cypress Garden or in Miami, viewers watching films such as *Some Like It Hot* will see California hills in the background of their "Miami Beach."

The authors are at their best when they place films into historical contexts, especially when they explain how film representations misstate historical facts. A section dealing with a spate of 1950s films centering on the Seminole wars begins with a brief but worthy description of the events the movies ostensibly dramatized. Likewise, the authors remind readers that Cuban immigration, and Cuban-Floridians, are not as they are portrayed in Brian De Palma's *Scarface*.

Ironically, the book's strength may also be its weakness. Because the authors strive to be comprehensive, the sheer amount of material threatens to overwhelm the analysis. The decision to work within themes rather than individual films makes sense, but makes for some rough spots. On the one hand, the book deals with notable films such as *Sunshine State* in several separate places, and the arguments become simultaneously diluted and repetitive. It would have been nice to see sustained analysis of a few remarkable films after a more succinct discussion of the authors' conceptual frameworks. By the same token, the vast undifferentiated array of films treated here leads to some often strange bedfellows. In order to make points about, say, alligators, the analysis threatens to conflate films as diverse as *Adaptation* and *Police Academy 5*. The book's point is not to make claims of either taste or popularity (and the writers explicitly eschew reception theory), more explicit awareness of the differences between blockbusters or critically-acclaimed films and little-noted sequels and straight-to-video releases would make the analysis even more persuasive. For students of Florida history, *Sunshine in the Dark* presents a comprehensive treatment of films about the state that should stand the test of time.

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