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## REVIEW: The Death of a Confederate Colonel: Civil War Stories and a Novella

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## Off the SHELF

The Georgia Library Quarterly reviews books on aspects of life in Georgia and the South, including history, literature, politics, education and genealogy. Materials written by Southern authors or published by regional publishers may also be considered, as well as those on libraries and librarianship.

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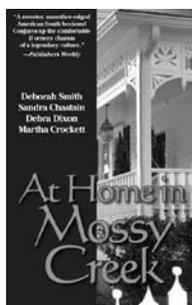
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### FICTION

**At Home in Mossy Creek** by Debra Leigh Smith, Sandra Chastain, Debra Dixon, and Martha Crockett, with others (Belle Books, 2007; ISBN 978-0-9768760-8-3, \$14.95).

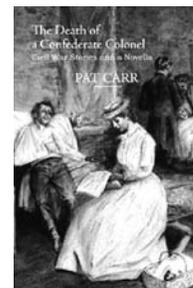
They say there's something in the water of Mossy Creek, Ga., especially when it's Valentine's Day weekend, the Cirque d'Europa's bus breaks down, and town residents open their homes and hearts to the stranded travelers. This collective novel by multiple authors shows that circus performers and Creekites alike have much to learn from each other about love. Mossy Creek, whose town motto is "ain't goin' nowhere, and don't want to," is home to lively residents like Mayor Ida Hamilton Walker, police Chief Amos Royden, chef Bubba Rice and librarian Hannah Longstreet, all of whom must react to the romance in the air this weekend. Add knife-throwers, acrobats, mimes and a dancing bear to the mix, and this cozy read offers light-hearted entertainment. Sixth in the Mossy Creek Hometown series, *At Home in Mossy Creek* can stand on its own, although readers who are new to the quaint north Georgia town would find helpful an updated "Who's Who of Mossy Creek" that includes more major characters from this book. Still, this novel provides an enjoyable escape to the kind of Southern community familiar from TV shows like *Evening Shade* and *Mayberry* — perhaps it doesn't exist, but we might wish it did, at least for a romantic weekend visiting a mountain cabin or



a magical circus performance. Suitable for popular or regional fiction collections. ►►

— Reviewed by **Emily Rogers**  
Valdosta State University

**The Death of a Confederate Colonel: Civil War Stories and a Novella** by Pat Carr (University of Arkansas Press, 2007; ISBN: 978-1-5572-8835-6, \$14.95).



Carr's latest publication is a collection of works, each told from a Civil War era woman's point of view, giving a gritty and fascinating glimpse into the life of women in the South during the War Between the States. The reader is transported from place to place by means of a series of short vignettes that paint the South and its struggles during this difficult and tragic time. The collection opens with "Diary of a Union Soldier," in which a married woman learns the inner workings of a Union man's thoughts as she reads the diary she finds in his torn and bloodied clothing. "Slave Quarters" gives a stark look at the life of Southern slaves during a malaria outbreak. The title story, "Death of a Confederate Colonel," shows the brutal results of the Civil War through the heart-wrenching decisions required at a makeshift medical base where the limitations of medical supplies and expertise prevented adequate treatment. "The Mistress" provides a change of pace as the reader views a short scene between house slaves and the Lady of the plantation. "The Return" is a Southern girl's diary as she waits for her betrothed to return from the war. "The Confederate

Wife" describes the hardships and sacrifices of a thrifty woman left to manage the farm while her menfolk fight, and we follow a young lady behind Union lines in "Bringing Travis Home" as she searches for her injured brother. The final novella, "Leaving Gilead," presents the collapsing world of the South through the eyes of innocent, 8-year-old Sarnell Birdsong. Sarnell, her mother and their slave, Renny, desert their home as Union soldiers approach. This work seemed to end too abruptly, however, the vibrant characterizations of Renny and Sarnell make the journey worthwhile. Pat Carr has published 12 other books of fiction and more than 100 short stories. Recommended for public and academic libraries. ▶▶

— Reviewed by **Crystal Renfro**  
*Georgia Institute of Technology*

**Spirit Willing: A Savannah Haunting** by Susan B. Johnson  
(Bonaventure Books, 2006; ISBN 978-0-9724224-6-8, \$19.95).



Charlotte Horner wants to capitalize on the booming Savannah, Ga., tourist trade by turning her family's historic home, known as Hibiscus House, into an upscale inn. Unfortunately, the home still belongs to her elderly aunt Olivia, and unbeknownst to Charlotte, Olivia has a secret ally — Cyrus Thornheart, ancestral owner of Hibiscus House and very determined ghost. Though its title and cover may suggest a spooky midnight tale of terror, Savannah-based author Susan Johnson's novel is by turns slapstick comedy, light romance and touching family drama. The novel's most frightful character, the turbulent and manipulative Charlotte, tries everything from legal maneuverings to poisonous mistletoe to get her way, but she is continually thwarted by the antics of ghostly Cyrus, who wishes to ensure that an ages-old promise is kept and that Hibiscus House remains a family home. The linchpin for a happy ending resides with Charlotte's younger brother, Alexander, who is pursuing an artistic career in Ireland. Though Olivia is distrustful of her niece Charlotte, she fears Alexander's continued bachelorhood and apparent lack of interest in returning to Savannah could spell the end of Cyrus' hopes. Little does she know, but fate has intervened, and Alexander has fallen for an Irish lass who may help to bring him home, after all. Readers seeking the familiar stock of oddball Southern characters will get a laugh, and the story's quick pace will appeal to those looking for a good beach or weekend read with a regional setting. ▶▶

— Reviewed by **Christina Hodgens**  
*Conyers-Rockdale Library*

## NONFICTION

**Gardening With Heirloom Seeds: Tried-and-True Flowers, Fruits, and Vegetables for a New Generation** by Lynn Coulter  
(The University of North Carolina Press, 2006; ISBN 0-8078-5680-0, ISBN 978-0-8078-5680-2, \$22.50).



Coulter provides a holistic approach to gardening in her beautiful heirloom gardening guide in this survey of all types of plants — flowers, fruits and vegetables — and in her holistic overview of the gardening season, including ways to promote a healthy garden by enlisting nature's help instead of by employing harmful measures like pesticides and insecticides. The beauty of gardening with heirloom seeds is that they have proven resistant to diseases, as evidenced by their survival through multiple generations. *Gardening* begins with an explanatory introduction about utilizing heirloom seeds in the garden. Her anecdotal tales provide fond reminiscences of a simpler time and convey the sense that heirloom gardening allows gardeners to honor the past while enjoying a superior plant. This book is divided into sections dedicated to the different seasons, and each chapter begins with a summation of the gardening tasks specific to the season. Coulter describes favorite flowers, fruits and vegetables best suited to planting in the season highlighted. Fifty descriptions give historical placement of the plant, Coulter's favorite varieties and growing tips specific to the plant. The chapter on winter recounts the mixed emotions the gardener experiences: the feeling of relief that the bounty of summer and fall is over, coupled with the anxiousness to begin the new season's garden. Coulter provides a historical context for the planning process by recounting the history of the seed catalog and emphasizing its importance even for today's gardener. The text is complemented with beautiful pictures of plants, seeds and old-fashioned seed packet illustrations. Botanically themed quotations grace the margins, with space reserved for note-taking. Complete with a bibliography, a guide for finding heirloom seeds and gardens, and an index. Suitable for gardeners in any area, but emphasis is on plants that do best in Southern climates. Recommended for public and academic libraries. ▶▶

— Reviewed by **Diana Hartle**  
*Science Library, University of Georgia*