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## REVIEW: Peachtree Creek: A Natural and Unnatural History of Atlanta's Watershed

Kim Tomblin

*Forsyth County Public Library*

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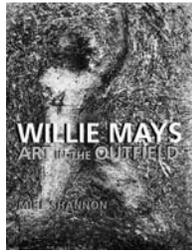
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**Willie Mays: Art in the Outfield** by Mike Shannon (University of Alabama Press, 2007; ISBN 978-0-8173-1540-5, \$29.95).



In *Willie Mays: Art in the Outfield*, Mike Shannon gives a detailed account of the career of one of baseball's greatest players. According to Shannon, Willie Mays not only dominated centerfield, he was also one of the original five-tool players, excelling in nearly every aspect of the game. Shannon describes Mays' most remarkable plays in vivid detail, not only relying on his own words, but on accounts from witnesses of the actual events. The narrative text is heavily laden with baseball jargon but is readable by non-baseball enthusiasts as well. Fans of Willie Mays, the Giants, and baseball historians will enjoy Shannon's summarized version of Mays' career, complete with statistics and firsthand accounts. Baseball enthusiasts are taken for a tour down memory lane with quotes from many famous players, coaches, scouts and executives and reminders of the great ballparks of Mays' day, like the famous Polo Grounds of New York. As an added bonus, *Willie Mays: Art in the Outfield* includes a 20-plus full color inset of artist renderings of Willie Mays at his best. The artwork includes everything from photographs to splatter painting and cartoons. A brief biography of each artist is also included. This book makes for a fun and interesting read for baseball fans and is appropriate for middle and high school readers. However, it must be noted that the book only contains a Works Consulted page with no bibliographical citations and that the author has an obvious bias for Willie Mays. Recommended for school and public libraries with a large sports biography section. ▶▶

— Reviewed by **Sandy Hester**  
Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County Library

### **Foodways: The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture Volume 7**

edited by John T. Edge; Charles Reagan Wilson, general editor (University of North Carolina Press, 2007; ISBN 978-0-8078-3146-5, \$39.95).

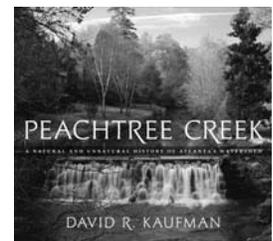


*Foodways* is a delicious repast, encompassing the regional specialties of Southern cooking from biscuits to benne, from Coca-Cola cake to stack cakes, and from collard greens to red beans and rice. The simple word "food" could not suffice to title a volume with African American, Appalachian, Cajun, Caribbean, Gulf Coast, Hispanic American, Jewish,

Lowcountry, and New Orleans cuisine. Furthermore, cookery is merely the appetizer, because "foodways," according to the introduction, is "the study of what we eat, as well as how and why and under what circumstances we eat." Ritual cemetery cleanings, with their accompanying picnics; King Cakes, emblematic of New Orleans Mardi Gras; and lunch counters' symbolic significance in the modern sit-in movement all get their due in this volume that weaves food with society. One learns that Duncan Hines was a true person and newspaper food critic before boxes wore his name, that charity cookbooks designed to raise funds are repositories of community history, and that raw okra pieces will adhere to the face "for a speedy Halloween mask." Entries on Southern commercial specialties such as Goo Goo Clusters and Moon Pies share these pages with brief biographies of chefs and cookbook authors. The volume opens with a general introduction to the 24-volume encyclopedia, an introduction to *Foodways*, and an overview article, "Southern Foodways." The bulk of the volume is twofold: There is a section of articles followed by a section of brief descriptions, with each section arranged alphabetically. All entries identify their authors and include source notes. There are no headings to distinguish the two types of entries, a fact that may confuse some readers. The volume is indexed, but it does not include cross-references to other volumes in the encyclopedia. This review refers to the hardcover edition; *Foodways* is also available in paperback (ISBN 978-0-8078-5840-0; \$19.95). Recommended for academic and public libraries. ▶▶

— Reviewed by **Vanessa Cowie**  
Forsyth County Public Library

**Peachtree Creek: A Natural and Unnatural History of Atlanta's Watershed** by David R. Kaufman (University of Georgia Press, 2007; ISBN 978-0-8203-2929-1, \$34.95).



Author David Kaufman uses tales of his urban adventure canoeing down parts of Peachtree Creek as a framework for a narrative history of Atlanta's endangered watershed. Kaufman points out at the beginning of the book that attempting to navigate Peachtree Creek and its tributaries is a dangerous and not advisable undertaking because most of the waterway is not safely navigable due to fallen trees, trash, sewer pipe crossings and possibilities of flash flooding, not to mention extremely poor water quality. Kaufman undertook his canoe trips in the early 1990s and broke his journey into four parts: the South Fork and North Fork tributaries, Nancy Creek and finally an eight-

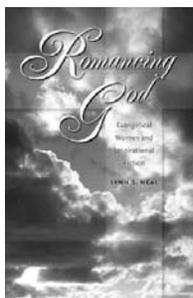
mile stretch of the main branch of Peachtree Creek starting at Piedmont Road and arriving eventually where the creek flows into the Chattahoochee River, once the site of the Creek Indian village Standing Peachtree. As he journeys down the creek, we learn about the history of the watershed, the development and overdevelopment of the land around it, and how this overdevelopment has led to problems of flooding and contamination of the creek by sewage and ground water runoff. The reader also learns about the history of many of the people who came and settled near the creek and helped to establish the city of Atlanta. The troubled history of Atlanta's sewer system is covered as it is intimately intertwined with the history of the watershed. *Peachtree Creek* is a cautionary tale of a beautiful natural resource barely surviving within an urban jungle. The author offers hope that while the watershed will never be returned to its original pristine state before man intervened, it may, with work and dedication, be brought up to a healthier quality for future generations. The text is interspersed with archival photographs and photographs taken by the author. Also included is a chronology of the watershed and a selected bibliography. Enthusiastically recommended for all libraries. ►►

— Reviewed by **Kim Tomblin**  
Forsyth County Public Library

### **Romancing God: Evangelical Women and Inspirational Fiction**

by Lynn S. Neal (University of North Carolina Press, 2006; ISBN 978-0-8078-5670-3, \$18.95).

Religious romance fiction follows the familiar formulaic pattern of secular romance novels but is differentiated by the addition of a third central character to the love relationship — God. In her work *Romancing God*, Lynn Neal notes that the formula in successful evangelical romance is “boy plus girl plus conservative Protestant Christianity equals a happy marriage.” In her examination of the role that evangelical romance fiction plays in the devotional life of Christian women, the author interviewed a number of avid readers and romance authors to explore the draw of inspirational fiction. Highlighting the devotional aspect of leisure reading in the lives of the readers, the interviews also bring to light the many ways in which these novels both underscore and undermine the readers' religious faith. The author discusses the issues of race, sexuality and paternalism and the ways in which female readers use the novels to create a definition of appropriate femininity within the context of their faith. Filling a gap in scholarship on the topic, Neal provides an unbiased and well-researched look at a literary genre that holds a



significant market share in book sales. Her interpretation places the genre in the context of both the romance and evangelical Christian aesthetics. The book contains a clear historiography of romance and religious fiction, several examples of illustrated book covers and a comprehensive bibliography. Recommended for academic libraries or libraries with a collections focus on religious studies or literary criticism. ►►

— Reviewed by **Kate Farley**  
Armstrong Atlantic State University

### **Ralph Ellison: Emergence of Genius** by Lawrence Jackson

(University of Georgia Press, 2007; ISBN 0-8203-2993-2, \$22.99).

In 2001, Lawrence Jackson published a book that would be the first to examine the early life of the writer, critic and former musician Ralph Waldo Ellison. In 2007, Jackson went one step further and created an exhaustively researched book that provides readers with a well-rounded view of the author's early life. Tracing his life from poverty to the publishing of his famed novel, *Invisible Man*, Jackson weaves together a comprehensive list of resources including paper collections, interviews with Ellison's family, friends and associates, as well as numerous articles and monographs to lyrically paint a re-creation of the life that Ellison lived. Born in Oklahoma, Ellison was given his name by his father, who named his son after the American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson. The book chronicles Ellison's childhood from birth in Oklahoma to his years studying music in the music school at Tuskegee where, after reading T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," he experienced the life-altering moment that led to a life of writing. Weeks later, Ellison authored his first creative work. Although music remained dear to his heart, writing was the vehicle through which Ellison would become a notable figure in American history. The book is neatly divided into chapters covering distinctive time periods in the author's life, including his involvement in the Socialist Left. In *Ralph Ellison*, the author has produced an engaging history of America starring a literary icon. Readers learn about the history of Ellison's family, institutions where he studied, organizations of which he was a member and about influential individuals among Black America's literary elite, such as Langston Hughes and Richard Wright. Scholars and researchers interested in learning more about Ralph Ellison will not find a more intimate look into Ellison's life. Highly recommended for medium to large public libraries and all academic libraries. ►►

— Reviewed by **Tamika Maddox Strong**  
DeKalb County Public Library

