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## Book Review: The Palmetto State: The Making of Modern South Carolina

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Bass, Jack & Poole, W. Scott. 2009. *The Palmetto State: The Making of Modern South Carolina*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-1-57003-814-3. \$24.95

When one hears the term “South Carolina,” several things probably come to mind: Historic Charleston, the Civil War, the struggle for racial equality and Strom Thurmond. As with any state, the story is more complicated than that. In Louisiana, New Orleans became a cultural melting pot by way of its port, becoming the unofficial capital of the state. *The Palmetto State* by Jack Bass and W. Scott Poole explains how a similar process has driven the history and the politics of the state of South Carolina by way of Charleston.

Originally a land grant stretching from Virginia to Florida and one of the original 13 colonies, South Carolina’s history is just as relevant as its more popular English colony counterparts, like Virginia or Massachusetts. Religion was a driving force in colonial Carolina, and the complexities of the religious diversity would surprise the casual reader. Most of this religious diversity centers around Charleston, and when you take that and mix it with the population and the money generated by the Port of Charleston, it’s easy to see how Charleston became the engine that makes the state move.

Bass and Poole do a good job of making the history of South Carolina digestible. The French and the Spanish have an early influence on the state, but there is also influence from Barbados and the rest of the Caribbean. South Carolina is the only state where slavery was legal from the outset, setting up the inevitable clash over racial equality two centuries later. The Civil War started in South Carolina when secessionists opened fire on Fort Sumter, but how the state handled itself during the Reconstruction Era is arguably more important in analyzing how inequality and oppression can be controlled through a state legislature. Another problem that arose during Reconstruction was the internal divide between the upcountry and the lowcountry. The divide further complicated things because each section of the state had their own interests and needs that sometimes competed against each other as the South Carolina struggled to find its balance between rural/agricultural and its textile economy.

As the Civil Rights era started, a number of South Carolinians rejected the state’s policies and worked towards racial equality, many becoming prominent players in state and national politics in the decades to come. South Carolina was also where the Republican Party began its political renaissance starting with the grassroots movement that got Ronald Reagan elected in 1980. Bass & Poole go into detail on how the state economy changed during the early 1990’s, and how their elected leaders worked with private sector colleagues to create a higher education system and a technical college system that would help recruit new businesses to the state by providing a ready workforce once they arrived.

There are some sections of the book that could use some additional explanation. Some events of importance would benefit from some clarification and detail. *The Palmetto State* can primarily serve as a basic introduction to the history of South Carolina for undergraduate students. Students of history and southern politics could use *The Palmetto State* as a guide to information but also as a springboard to other applicable topics, such as race relations as well as personalities that helped shape the state and also the region, like Ben Tillman and South Carolina’s most popular son, John C. Calhoun. Recommended for academic libraries and public libraries that offer South Carolina history.

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