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Book Review: Upheaval in Charleston: Earthquake & Murder on the Eve of Jim Crow

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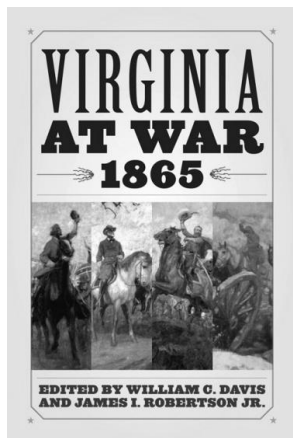
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BOOK REVIEWS

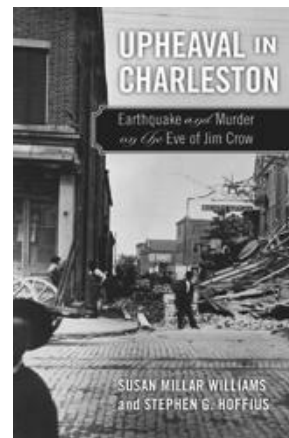


Davis, William C. and James I. Robertson, Jr., eds. *Virginia at War: 1865*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0813134680. \$40.00, hardcover.

This book is the fifth and final volume of the well-received series published by the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies. Each volume in the Virginia at War series focuses on exactly one year in the state of Virginia during the American Civil War. Essays by contributors to each volume cover a wide range of social and military topics. A reprinted selection from the diary of Judith Brockenbrough McGuire, who was a resident of Virginia during this time period, is also included as the final chapter of each book in the series. The primary source diary selections provide an eyewitness perspective on everyday life during the featured year and are edited with helpful notes to illuminate the text for modern readers by James I. Robertson, Jr.

Edited by William C. Davis, director of programs at the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies and James I. Robertson Jr., Alumni Distinguished Professor of History at Virginia Tech, the final volume in this series includes essays on: land operations in Virginia by Chris Calkins, women and families on the home front by Ginette Aley, Virginia's wartime economy by Jamie Amanda Martinez, wartime music and entertainment by E. Lawrence Abel, the city of Danville by F. Lawrence McFall, Jr., the demobilization of Lee's army by Kevin Levin, Afro-Virginians and the emancipation by Elvin L. Jordan, Jr., and the aftermath of the war by John M. McClure. Together, these essays provide a broad overview of the many different aspects of daily life in Virginia at the war's end. Libraries which already own previous volumes in this series will want this final volume to complete their collection, and although the work can easily stand on its own, libraries with larger collections in Civil War history or the history of Virginia may want to consider purchasing the entire series as well.

Allison Faix,
Coastal Carolina University, SC.



Williams, Susan & Stephen Hoffius. *Upheaval in Charleston: Earthquake & Murder on the Eve of Jim Crow*. University of Georgia Press, 2011. 392 p. ISBN 978-0820337159. \$29.95 hardcover.

In August 1886, a huge earthquake centered in Charleston, South Carolina hit the east coast of the United States. Charleston's buildings and historic architecture took a severe battering from the earthquake, but things became even more difficult for the residents of Charleston. The earthquake couldn't have come at a worse time. Charleston was experiencing the dismal economic effects of Reconstruction, and whites and blacks were still trying to figure out how to live without war and slave labor. Now they had to figure out how to rebuild their city.

Upheaval in Charleston tells the fascinating story of how the people of Charleston went about rebuilding their city, but it covers several other important aspects of late 19th Century America. Two of the biggest issues of the day were race relations and labor. White laborers resented increased competition while black Americans resented the constant political ploys to strip them of their civil rights, especially the right to vote. The events of 1886 would go a long way in forecasting the political battles faster than anyone thought possible.

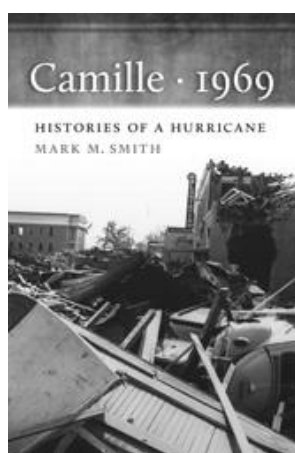
This is also the story of Frank Dawson, the editor of Charleston's *News & Courier*, the influential local newspaper. Dawson plays a big part of this story since he helped coordinate relief efforts and used his position as editor of a popular newspaper to drum up support for the city. But he was an interesting contradiction. A native of England, he was inspired by the Confederate's struggle, and he moved to the United States to take up arms for The South. After the war, he ended up purchasing the *News & Courier*, but still struggled with acceptance within some circles in Charleston. Dawson realized he had a certain degree of power in shaping politics and the message that went out about the disaster. He maneuvered through his contacts intelligently with the sole purpose of getting

Charleston rebuilt, while at the same time keeping an eye on the future. This meant trying to change some deeply-held beliefs on race and equal justice for non-whites. Some of these ideas eventually worked against Dawson as he slowly lost his influence once the rebuilding effort became a thing of the past. His tenure as editor of the *News & Courier* also coincided with the rise of Ben Tillman, the populist farmer advocate for South Carolina's upcountry, who started using class warfare to advance his own political agenda.

The book concludes with the murder of Dawson and the trial of his accused killer. Dawson would always be seen as a hero in many circles due to his captaincy for the Confederate cause, but many others saw him as a problem, especially when he used his position as a newspaper editor to blatantly control the parameters of discussion in post-earthquake Charleston. Dawson had picked up a few enemies as he worked his way up the ladder of Charleston's aristocracy, and it ultimately came back to haunt him. As the news of his murder started circulating, the case and subsequent trial captured the attention of the entire city. The tragic and surprising end to Dawson's murder trial illustrates the array of challenges that would plague Charleston and the South as it inched closer to implementing the policies of Jim Crow. *Upheaval in Charleston* is well-researched, and illustrates the complexities of many issues in a very transitional phase not only for the state of South Carolina, but for the South.

Recommended for academic libraries that offer materials in U.S. history, black history & Southern studies as well as Communications and Media Studies.

Charles Sicignano
University of West Georgia



Smith, Mark M. *Camille, 1969: Histories of a Hurricane*. University of Georgia Press, 2011. 71 p. ISBN 978-08203-37227. \$24.95 hardcover

Long before Hurricane Katrina became the standard upon which all natural disasters (or government relief failures) are measured, Hurricane Camille was the disaster that people remembered as the one that affected the coast of Mississippi and Louisiana. *Camille, 1969* is an analysis of this destructive hurricane, but it dives into new territory as it looks at the documentation of sensory history and the inevitable politics of recovery and rebuilding.

Smith, professor of History at the University of South Carolina, presents three different perspectives associated with the recovery and the rebuilding. Building off of a presentation that was created for Mercer University's Lamar Memorial Lecture series, Smith focuses not on what happened but what happened after the storm had flattened everything in its path. The first perspective covers the "sensory history" of the storm's aftermath. Specifically, did the residents affected by the storm smell and hear things differently once the recovery started? How did the intense darkness of the clouds affect the residents during the storm or what were their interpretation of images once they came out of the storm and had to live for weeks (or even months) without power? How did this change their habits once they were able to put their lives back in place? Smith discusses these experiences as a way to interpret the storm.

Smith's second perspective covers the obvious issue of race and inequality in the context of hurricane recovery. Integration was still something that had not been properly implemented; technically it was the law of the land, but the southern states had found creative ways to drag their feet on integrating their public school systems. Now with disaster relief funding as a bargaining chip, there were deals to be made and policies to discuss. The ability to move society forward, however, had mixed results, and Smith does a nice job of framing the issue as it was in 1969.

The aftermath of Camille was the blueprint for disaster recovery up until Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and this kind of "political economy" is the topic of Smith's third perspective. Coordinating services for relief and recovery is difficult in any circumstance, but the magnitude of Camille only made it that much harder. Also at play, however, was President Nixon's southern strategy, and he had to compromise in order to have political capital from Southern Democrats for use at a later time. Some businesses were able to get up and running rather quickly, others had problems getting started. Smith illustrates how this particular topic cuts across lines of class, as well as race, and how this all makes any recovery involving public funds quite difficult.

Recommended for academic libraries that offer materials in Southern studies, Political Science and Public Policy.

Charles Sicignano
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