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Refugitta of Richmond The Wartime Recollections, Grave and Gay, of Constance Cary Harrison

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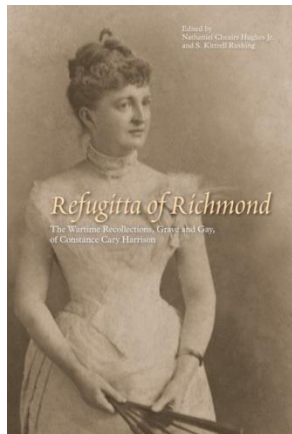
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Library Association for “a significant contribution to the world of books and librarianship through the encouragement of the love of books and reading”. She has been active in SELA as part of the Membership and Mentoring Committee.

BOOK REVIEWS

Refugitta of Richmond The Wartime Recollections, Grave and Gay, of Constance Cary Harrison. Edited by Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, Jr. and S. Kittrell Rushing. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2011. ISBN 1-57233-747-8. \$46.00



Opening the first pages of this edited memoir by authors Hughes and Rushing, my initial question was “Refugitta? What does that mean? Was it a nickname for Constance Cary Harrison? Was it an area near Richmond? Was it a family name?” Searching the Index, a reference to page 68 led me to learn Refugitta was the name of a horse loved by Constance whom she described as “a beautiful high spirited little creature I had ridden several times”. Like many of Constance’s detailed writings of her life and adventures in this book, we observed Constance displaying a beautiful high spirit as the famed Refugitta.

Constance Cary Harrison (1840-1920) recorded, in diaries, on pieces of discarded paper, in the stories she wrote, and in her newspaper articles, a significant literary contribution in the female voice of the years before and through the Civil War. Living in Richmond and being a part of the literary circle and social life of the times, Constance gives insights to us of the early administration of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Compared to Mary Boykin Chestnut and Eliza Frances Andrews, Constance is recognized as one of the outstanding memoir writers of the period (Front flyleaf of book, Hughes and Rushing).

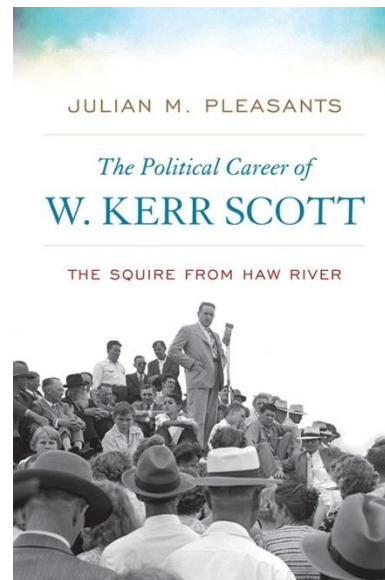
Constance’s intricate stories are easy to read, entertaining and filled with social gossip fit for a serialized movie. Her remembrances are infectious and can be imagined as one might imagine those in English novels. While her memories might not appear to be truth-telling, they open the reader to want to know more about the time from her

perspective. Civil War history is often filled with death, dying, devastation and misery for all involved; but Constance’s remembrances counter those tragedies in this memoir by her writings of light, caring, detailed and mysterious happenings behind the scenes of the battles and the conflicts.

This memoir is Constance’s window on the times and her experiences in and around Richmond and those close to the offices of President Jefferson Davis. It is an entertaining look at the context of the times in the early days of the Civil War. I recommend it for high school and college students who study American History and the Civil War. Also it is a great choice for a book club or for members of associations like the United Daughters of the Confederacy, www.hqudc.org. The historical photographs, the Epilogue, the well-developed section, Chapter by Chapter Notes, the Bibliography and the Index provide good primary resources for the researcher.

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The Political Career of W. Kerr Scott: The Squire from Haw River. Julian M. Pleasants. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2014. ISBN: 978-0-8131-4677-5. 414p. \$50.00.



Historian Julian M. Pleasants’ engaging biography, *The Political Career of W. Kerr Scott: The Squire from Haw River*, documents the transformative leadership of a populist politician in mid-twentieth century North Carolina. Framing his study around the years that Scott held office as the state’s Governor and US Senator (1949-1958), Pleasants argues that Scott played a pivotal role in modernizing the state’s economy, improved the quality of life of its most vulnerable citizens, and inspired a new generation of liberal democrats to seek public office. His political career drew upon and helped energize the brief