

2-8-2017

Family of Earth: A Southern Mountain Childhood

Melanie J. Dunn

University of Tennessee, Chattanooga

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/seln>



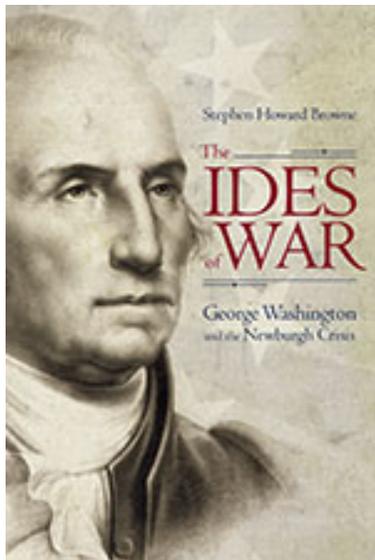
Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Dunn, Melanie J. (2017) "Family of Earth: A Southern Mountain Childhood," *The Southeastern Librarian*: Vol. 64 : Iss. 4 , Article 9.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/seln/vol64/iss4/9>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Southeastern Librarian by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu.

The Ides of War : George Washington and the Newburgh Crisis by Stephen Howard Brown Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2016. ISBN 978-1-61117-659-9 (hard); 978-1-61117-660-5 (ebook). \$44.99. 168 p.



In this dramatically small and powerfully written book by Stephen Howard Browne, we are treated to behind the scenes actions and activities of a few historic days in March 1783 in Newburgh, New York.

Browne reminds us that George Washington was the Commander in Chief of the Army of the United States in the Spring of 1783. Browne says that encamped along the banks of the Hudson River in Newburgh, the soldiers under Washington's command were suffering from disease and hunger and ill-equipped with clothing, weapons and supplies, had no opportunity to go on home visits and were not receiving their pay as was promised. Browne says the men were at the point of a coup d'etat under Washington's command. To Browne the possibility of a coup d'etat of American troops under Washington in those days in Newburgh, New York, would have been a singular situation in all of America's military history.

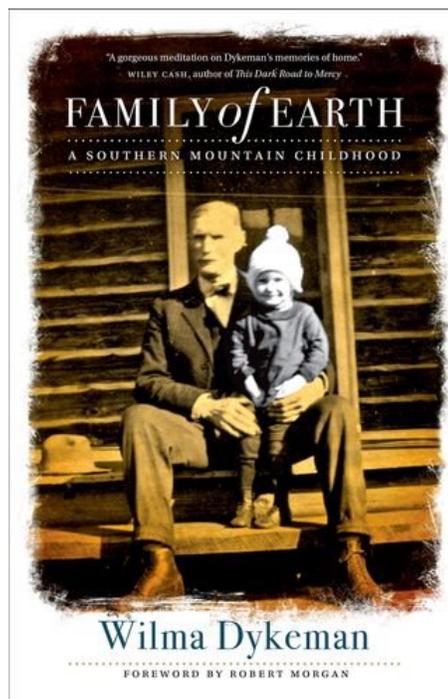
As the men and their frustrations gained obvious momentum, we learn Commander in Chief George Washington utilized the one act that we consider a diplomacy initiative: rhetoric and the spoken word. Washington appealed to the soldiers' belief in the principles of the government for which they fought to preserve and to the vision they dream to achieve by their dedication and sacrifice in past days and forward.

As you know, Washington's appeal was successful and a coup d'etat was avoided. In Appendix C, page 115, we find the speech that was written and delivered by Commander in Chief George Washington to his troops. This is the highlight of Browne's book.

See Appendix A: Memorial from the Officers of the Army, Appendix B: The Newburgh Circulars, Appendix C: George Washington's Speech at Newburgh, Notes 119, Bibliography, 127 and Index, 137. A recommended resource for Archives and History Centers, College and University Libraries.

Carol Walker Jordan, Ph.D
University of North Carolina, Greensboro.

Family of Earth: A Southern Mountain Childhood by Wilma Dykeman. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-46962-914-8. \$75.00 (hard), \$18.00 (pbk.). 177p.



In her memoir, *Family of Earth: A Southern Mountain Childhood*, the late Wilma Dykeman (1920-2006) wrote with tender affection of her early years, describing her immersion in the natural world around her, encouraged and supported by her parents. The manuscript, written after her graduation from Northwestern University and discovered by her son after her death, is an account of a bucolic childhood spent in the North Carolina mountains, the sole offspring of a local Appalachian woman and her husband from New York. Later celebrated as an author, lecturer, historian and social activist, Dykeman's explorations of the natural world and her interactions and relationships with the unique individuals around her, provide a glimpse of recurring themes in her later works: protection of natural resources, loss of cultural heritage, race and class disparities, and women's roles in society.

Each of the fourteen chapters corresponds to a single year in her life and illuminates the natural beauty of her surroundings and her desire to investigate and understand

its wonders. If access to nature and encouragement to explore are precursors to genius, Wilma Dykeman was blessed by her parents, who actively supported her examination of the world around her. Dykeman's lyrical prose depicting the changes wrought on the landscape by the seasons as well as everyday scenic views show her early promise as a writer.

Dykeman creates a captivating picture of the family's cosy log cabin situated in the pines by Beaverdam creek. Here was where her mother built the fires and cooked with the wood range that cast a soft glow in the evenings, filling the air with savory aromas from the dishes on the warmer. Here was where her parents sat in the evenings, reading and discussing what they'd read. The cabin was Dykeman's sanctuary, where she could find stillness and comfort to reflect on the day.

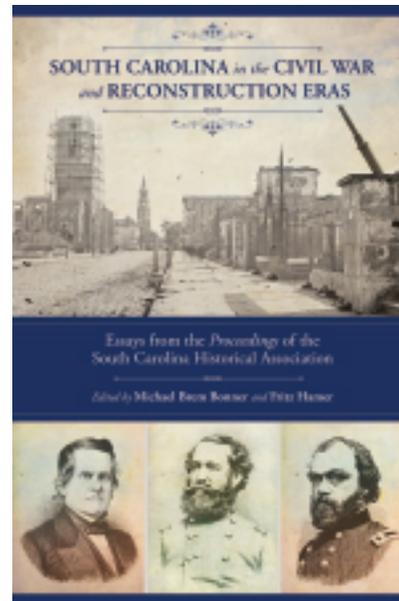
Her father endowed her with a love of the outdoors through nature walks and gardening and taught her the importance of treating everyone equally with kindness and respect. Though aloof in his relations with the community, he modeled a code of gentlemanly civility, courteous to all. The author's mother, born in the mountains, encouraged her to learn from others and respect their uniqueness and idiosyncrasies. Both parents were avid readers and fostered the love for reading in Wilma. While individuals from Wilma's family and community are rendered with empathy – her aunt Maude, both romantic and superstitious and her grandmother, lacking security, but strong in inner faith – Wilma noted that people played but a small part in her childhood memories; it was the concrete world around her that sparked her imagination.

Tapping into Dykeman's regional roots, this memoir explores Appalachian issues through the eyes of a young girl. Financial poverty, as portrayed through a tentative friendship with a young mountain girl, thin and wiry, grabbing meat from their table with her hands. Educational poverty, through recognition that her family was different with their emphasis on reading and appreciation of nature. Wilma's childhood both exposed and insulated her from the Appalachian culture of her community, but ultimately inspired her to write novels and nonfiction highlighting Appalachia's struggles - changing attitudes and fostering empathy for its people.

Highly recommended for all collections.

Melanie Dunn
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

South Carolina in the Civil War and Reconstruction Eras: Essays from the Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association by Michael Brem Bonner and Fritz Hamer, editors. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2016. ISBN: 978-61117-664-3 (cloth); 978-61117-665-0 (paperback); and 978-61117-666-7 (ebook). \$49.99 (hard); \$29.99 (pbk); \$29.99 (ebook). 177p.



This volume of collected essays provides an excellent sampler of historical scholarship concerning South Carolina in the Civil War and Reconstruction eras published between 1942 and 2010. The two dozen essays are fairly brief (most are around 10 pages or so) and represent evolving historical scholarship as presented at annual meetings of the South Carolina Historical Association. Eminent scholars including Dan T. Carter, Orville V. Burton, and Frank Vandiver are represented; there is only one essay by a female scholar, Patricia D. Bonnin. The book is divided into five thematic sections in chronological order ranging from “The Politics of Secession and Civil War” to “The Politics of Reconstruction.” Those readers most interested in military history will be disappointed to find there are only two essays found under the section “On the Battlefield.” Those readers seeking an analysis of the politics of the era and scholarly interpretations of race relations and African American history will not be disappointed.

Although this is a collection of essays rather than a comprehensive history of South Carolina during the Civil War and Reconstruction era, certain basic themes and personalities emerge and appear in more than one essay. African American political empowerment is one of the major themes and it appears in several essays. Perhaps the most engaging is “Edgefield Reconstruction: Political Black Leaders” by Orville V. Burton (1988). South Carolina had a significant black population mostly located in the Low Country and coastal areas whereas Edgefield was located in the northwestern rural “Upcountry” area. Burton's analysis of the successful (if temporary) rise of African American political leaders there is inspiring. Layton W. Jordan investigates “an extraordinary, if incomplete, expansion of this new freedom” (174) in “The New Regime: Race, Politics, and Police in Reconstruction Charleston, 1865 – 1875” (1994).