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## The Civil War Letters of Alexander McNeill, 2nd South Carolina Infantry Regiment

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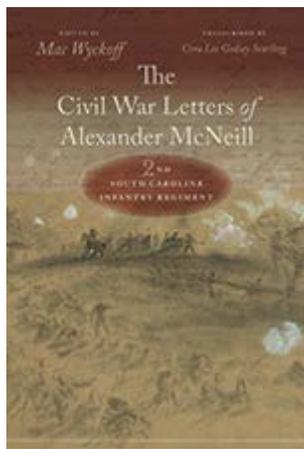
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**The Civil War Letters of Alexander McNeill, 2<sup>nd</sup> South Carolina Infantry Regiment.** Mac Wyckoff, editor. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-61117-536-3. 704 p. \$39.99.



This book is an edited collection of letters written by Alexander “Sandy” McNeill, a member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> South Carolina infantry (also known as Kershaw’s Brigade) during the Civil War. The letters were written to his good friend Almirah Hazeltine “Tinie” Simmons, the woman he would eventually marry. McNeill’s great-grandaughter, Cora Lee Godsey Starling, later transcribed the letters in the hopes that they might eventually be published.

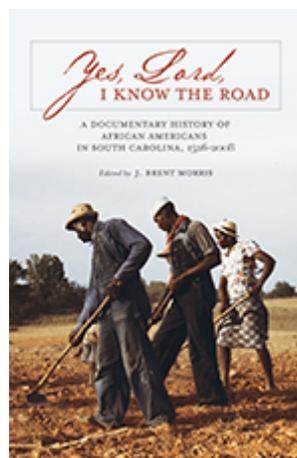
Mac Wyckoff, a retired historian who worked for the National Park Service at several Civil War battlefield sites including Shiloh, Chickamauga, and Fredericksburg, edited the collection. Having previously written a book on the regiment in which McNeill served (*A History of the 2<sup>nd</sup> South Carolina infantry: 1861-1865*), he is able to provide context, background, and analysis in the book’s introduction and in the extensive notes section for each chapter. He arranges the book chronologically, sectioning off each chapter roughly by the campaign which the letters within that chapter mainly discuss.

While many other volumes of Civil War letters written by soldiers already exist, editor Mac Wyckoff describes this collection as one of the “largest and best” of its kind in terms of both quantity (McNeill wrote an average of 4 or 5 letters per week) and quality (McNeill’s prose is considered more literary than average letter writer). The letters cover expected topics for this genre of writing including details of soldier life, reports about the weather and camp morale, and information about specific battles. Perhaps because he came from a rural area where news was harder to get, McNeill also made a special effort to relate information about other men in the regiment for his wife to share with their neighbors and other local families. This makes the letters especially useful to those doing genealogical or historical research on any of the soldiers in his regiment, or to those researching the local history of the area of South Carolina he was from.

The collection is also fairly unique in that it includes letters written during the last six months of the war, which rarely survived. In fact, there are only a few breaks in McNeill’s war narrative where none of his letters exist: most notably early on in the war after Tinie breaks off their engagement and again much later on when McNeill is wounded in the battle of Spotsylvania and returns home to South Carolina to recover from his injuries. Even if libraries already have a large collection of primary sources for this time period, they may be interested in adding this one because of the large span of time it covers. Libraries with collections covering Civil War history or South Carolina history would also want to consider adding this book.

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**Yes, Lord, I Know the Road: A Documentary History of African Americans in South Carolina, 1526-2008.** J. Brent Morris, ed. Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-61117-730-5 (hardcover: alk. paper), ISBN: 978-1-61117-731-2 (paperback: alk. paper), 978-1-61117-732-9 (ebook). 232 p. \$49.99 (hardcover), \$24.99 (paperback), \$24.99 - \$58.23 (ebook).



One of the most common requests made of reference librarians in the academic world is for primary sources needed by a student for a history research paper. *Yes, Lord, I Know the Road* is the perfect resource for such a need, especially if the student’s research pertains to African American history and/or South Carolina. Arranged mostly in chronological order in seven themed chapters, this book provides the text or excerpted text from 68 documents concerning African Americans in South Carolina ranging from “The Rebellion of San Miguel de Guadalupe” (1526), a translated excerpt from the *Historia General y Natural de las Indias, Islas y Terra Firme del Mar Oceano* by Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdez first published in 1535, to “We Stood There” (2009), a poem by Tracy Swinton Bailey, celebrating the shared history of First Lady Michelle Obama’s slave ancestors near Georgetown, S.C.