

7-16-2017

Yes, Lord, I Know the Road: A Documentary History of African Americans in South Carolina, 1526-2008

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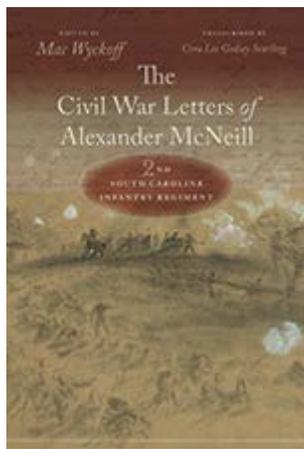
Recommended Citation

Dodge, Tim (2017) "Yes, Lord, I Know the Road: A Documentary History of African Americans in South Carolina, 1526-2008," *The Southeastern Librarian*: Vol. 65 : Iss. 2 , Article 16.

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The Civil War Letters of Alexander McNeill, 2nd 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 2nd 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.

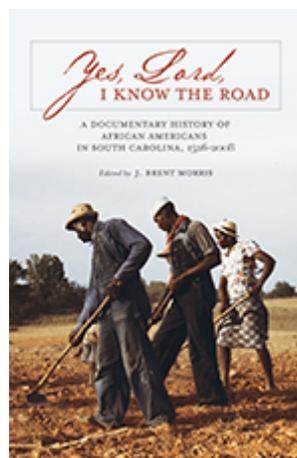
Mac Wyckoff, a retired historian who worked for the National Park Service at several Civil War battlefield sites including Shiloh, Chickamauga, and Fredericksburg, edited the collection. Having previously written a book on the regiment in which McNeill served (*A History of the 2nd South Carolina infantry: 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.

Allison Faix
Coastal Carolina University

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.

with those of Bailey's slave ancestors in nearly the same geographical area. Historical researchers at the graduate level and beyond will want to track down the complete documents cited here but for the typical undergraduate and, perhaps, the advanced high school student, *Yes, Lord, I Know the Road* is a wonderful resource. It is also a fascinating collection of primary sources for the more casual or general reader interested in African American, South Carolinian, and Southern history.

J. Brent Morris (associate professor of history and Chair of the Humanities Department at the University of South Carolina at Beaufort) provides a fairly long and helpful introduction that both sets the context and provides some explanation of the sweep of African American history in South Carolina. He also provides very helpful explanatory notes at the start of each of the 68 documents honing in on the most essential points.

While this is a documentary history rather than a more standard narrative history, the reader can follow the history of African Americans in this Deep South state with a sense of the horror and tragedy of slavery and segregation but also a sense of the resilience and humanity of those who lived it and for the better days that have, provisionally, come. Obviously, the fact that the primary source documents have been selected means that other primary source documents are not included, however, the selection of documents used is judicious. Thanks to Morris's in depth knowledge, the reader is sometimes treated to some fascinating sociological insights likely not found in most history books concerning slavery in the South. One example concerns the fear of the possibility of somehow having a white person become black by engaging in interracial sex as suggested in a 1732 poem titled "The Chameleon Lover" published originally in the *South Carolina Gazette*:

"No Wonder then, that the Amours of such
Whose Taste betrays them to a close Embrace
With the dark Beauties of the Sable Race,
(Stain'd with the Tincture of the Sooty Sin,)
Imbibe the Blackness of their Charmer's Skin"
(66).

Far less benign are the documents concerning racial violence which include both more obscure events such as the lynching of African American postmaster Frazier Baker in the town of Lake City in 1898 (154-155) who, mistakenly, thought that his position as a federal employee would provide protection against the increasingly violent threats of racists who could not stand to see an African American in a position of authority, to the hideous (and aptly titled by Morris as "Southern Schrecklichkeit") 1946 beating and blinding of recently discharged World War II veteran Isaac Woodard by racist police in response to his altercation with a Greyhound bus driver concerning the need for a rest stop, an event that made national news and proved to be a factor in the establishment of a Civil Rights Commission in 1947 and President Truman's submission of a major civil rights bill to Congress in 1948 (172-174).

Several minor but puzzling errors concerning chronology slightly mar what is otherwise an outstanding publication: that the date range of documents as listed in the book's title covers 1526 to 2008 while including a publication date of 2009 for Tracy Swinton Bailey's poem, "We Stood There" (201); the listing of the year 1942 as the date of the 1946 beating and blinding of Isaac Woodard even on the same page where the correct date of 1946 is listed (172); and listing a death date of 1922 for Modjeska Monteith Simkins when, in fact, she died in 1992 in regard to a 1944 letter she wrote to Governor Olin D. Johnson challenging his support of white supremacy (171).

Yes, Lord, I Know the Road is recommended for addition to collections in academic libraries and most public libraries. It will be of most interest to those seeking information on African American history, Southern history, and the history of South Carolina. College history students seeking primary sources and other researchers will find both the excerpted documents and the citations to the full documents for further research to be a wonderful and convenient resource.

Tim Dodge
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Corn: A Savor the South Cookbook. Tema Flanagan. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-4696-3162-2 (cloth: alk.paper); 978-1-4696-3163-9 (ebook) 131 p. \$13.44.

a SAVOR THE SOUTH cookbook

Corn

TEMA FLANAGAN



Corn: A Savor the South Cookbook reveals the origins and history of corn and sharing mouthwatering recipes and corn cookery processes. The chapters based on the various ways corn can be eaten including on and off the cob, dried and ground, nixtamalized and popped, and mashed and fermented start with a few facts about these serving techniques followed by marvelous recipes. Before each