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Beyond the Crossroads: The Devil and the Blues Tradition

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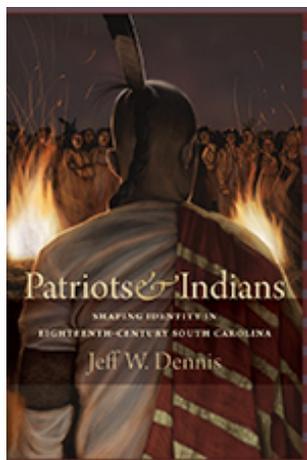
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Patriots and Indians: Shaping Identity in Eighteenth-Century South Carolina. Jeff W. Dennis. Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-61117-756-5 (hardcover), 978-1-61117-757-2 (ebook), \$29.99. 240 p.

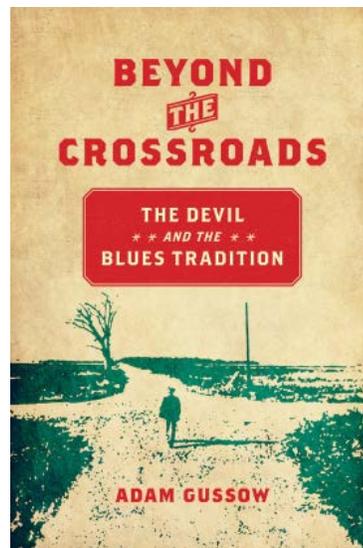


In his new book, Jeff Dennis closely examines the relationships between Native American and colonial leaders in the time period before, during, and immediately following the American Revolution in South Carolina. While other books have also looked at the history of Native Americans in South Carolina during the 18th century (M. Thomas Hatley's *The Dividing Paths*, Daniel J. Tortora's *Carolina in Crisis*), this book focuses specifically on how the interactions between the Native American and colonial leaders influenced the course of events and the beginnings of the formation of an American identity. In the introduction, the author points out that the "full story of American Revolutionaries and Native Americans is too rich and multifarious to examine comprehensively in one text" and that instead the book focuses primarily on South Carolina. South Carolina was the colony which was geographically closest to the greatest number of Native Americans in the pre-revolution time period covered by the book, making it an important location for examining the interrelationships and interactions between these cultures.

The book is arranged chronologically, beginning near the start of the Cherokee War of 1759-61 and ending in the time period immediately following the American Revolution. South Carolina colonial leaders discussed in the book include Thomas Sumter, Francis Marion, Andrew Pickens, William Henry Drayton, Henry Laurens, Christopher Gadsden, and William Moultrie. A small selection of primary source illustrations, maps, and paintings are also included in the text, as well as an extensive reference section and bibliography. For libraries where there is interest in Revolutionary War or Native American history, this book will fill a gap in collections and is highly recommended.

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Beyond the Crossroads: The Devil and the Blues Tradition Adam Gussow. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017. ISBN 978-1-4696-3366-4 (pbk: \$29.95); 978-1-4696-3365-7 (Hard: \$90); 978-1-4696-3367-1 (Ebook: \$19.99). 416 p.



In the little southern town where I was born and lived in the 40s and 50s there was a small white lone clapboard house on a hill overlooking the town center. The town consisted of a gas station, a bank, a post office, a few retail shops, a library and two churches.

The little house seemed to be closed to the public and no one appeared in the yard or on the porch. One day I asked Daddy, "who lives there?". He hesitated and then said, "That house is a place where people "drink, play cards, smoke and cut each other with knives so never go there".

At home, one day, I asked Mom if I could learn to play cards with the kids in the neighborhood and she said it was a sin to play cards. Later I asked if I might go to the Friday night dances at the music hall or go to the new movie theatre that recently opened. She said it was a sin to play cards, to dance and to go to movies (unless the movie was about Jesus or cowboys).

Neither parent took the leap to tell me that sin and the devil were linked but I took that leap and believed that the places I wanted to go and the things I wanted to do were "the devil's workshop".

Reading the amazingly intense research Adam Gussow provides in "Beyond the Crossroads--The Devil and the Blues Tradition", I am reminded of that little town of my birth. I am reminded of my parents who saw sin and the Devil in places that fill the lyrics of blues music.

Most fascinating was my learning of Robert Johnson, 1911-1938, and his spiritual experiences at the "Crossroads in Clarksdale, Mississippi". Venturing beyond Gussow's writing to scanning various blues websites and listening to

recordings of blues music was great fun for me. This book is a treasure for anyone who loves blues music. Gussow led me to appreciate blues music beyond my expectations. He encouraged me to see blues music as a means of expression for life's struggles.

Gussow's research has a double focus which he says is: "a thematic study that pays attention to the lyrics of recorded blues songs and ...a cultural study that seeks to tell a story about blues-invested southern lives, black and white, by mining an extensive array of sources, including government documents, church archives, telephone directories and personal interviews" (p.1). I recommend this 404 page book as a must for academic, public and music libraries.

See www.youtube.com/blues

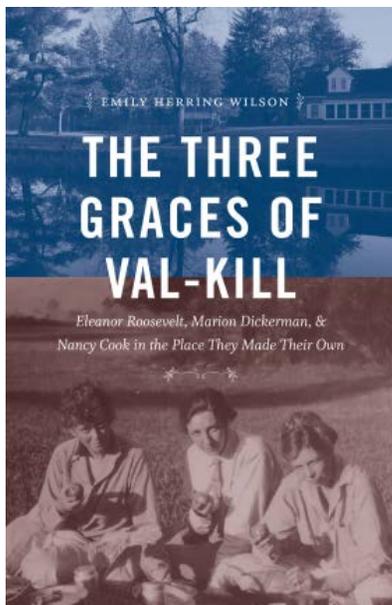
*"The blues is like the devil...it comes on you like a spell
The blues is like the devil...it comes on you like a spell
Blues will leave your heart full of trouble...and your poor
mind full of hell"*

Lonnie Johnson, "Devil's Got The Blues" (1938) (p.1)

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The Three Graces of Val-Kill: Eleanor Roosevelt, Marion Dickerman, and Nancy Cook in the Place They Made Their Own. Emily Herring Wilson Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017. ISBN 978-1-4696-3583-5 (Hard: \$25); 978-1-4696-3584-2 (Ebook: \$19.99). 232 p.



Women in the United States who were born and grew up in the 40s through the 80s might have come to form strong opinions of Eleanor Roosevelt. I know I did. I developed great respect for her devotion and advocacy of social issues of the lives of poor and underprivileged citizens.

From Eleanor's life, I came to believe that families deserved opportunities to live in safe and dependable housing, work at jobs that provided a livable wage, have access to medical care and medicines, and have equal educational opportunities. To me, Eleanor Roosevelt was a heroine who sacrificed her privileged life as a wealthy patron of society and the arts to become a social advocate to better the lives of men and women who were suffering in our country.

Through Eleanor, I learned and believed that the wealthy of society need to form a government and government programs that secure opportunities for the poor citizens of our country and guarantee the rights laid out in our Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Little did I know of her personal life of friends, family and acquaintances. Emily Herring's research into those avenues of Eleanor's life opened doors to an Eleanor I did not know. A simple suggestion by Franklin Roosevelt, "Why shouldn't you three have a cottage here of your own?" (p.33) "Here" to Franklin and Eleanor was a piece of property Franklin gave to Eleanor on the Roosevelt estate in Hyde Park in New York. The suggestion that Eleanor have a cottage in which she and two friends might live and develop a private life of away from him, his Mother, her children, and others seemed a completely new "Eleanor" I did not know existed.

Emily Herring Wilson will take you as she took me to discover the Eleanor I did not know. I leave the discovery to you as you will find an Eleanor who learns her interpersonal relational strengths and weaknesses beyond the socialite patron. You will see a political savvy that is tested against personal desires and political American and international responsibilities.

Recommended for university, public and historical society libraries.

Carol Walker Jordan, PhD.

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