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Masters of Violence: The Plantation Overseers of Eighteenth-Century Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia

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Presidential rhetoric is a fascinating study when applied to the administration of our seventh president, Andrew Jackson (1829-1937). Amos Kiewe shows us that Andrew Jackson was a successful and respected leader and a believer in the wisdom of the people when it came to leading a nation. He shows us how Andrew Jackson crafted a new presidency and gave us the opportunity for a democracy.

Amos Kiewe traces the years before and during Jackson's presidency to show how rhetoric in speaking and in letters was Jackson's mainstay. Ignoring the political elite who historically secured and sustained elections, Jackson took his campaign for election and future governance to "the people". Letters and publications circulating among people of the country carried in them Jackson's messages of a new day where the Constitution and "the Union" coupled with the wishes of the people should lead the nation.

To move the American republic to a democracy was Jackson's hope. Rallies and road trips from place to place put Jackson in front of "the people". Speaking directly through letters or speeches Jackson shared his ideas and needs for change or support of governmental policies to benefit the people. Through Jackson the people became a new voice in politics.

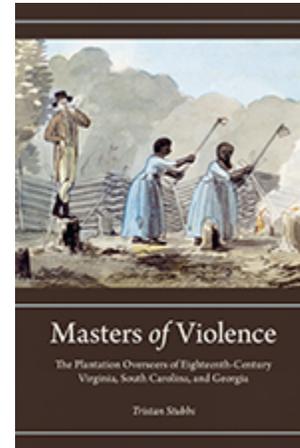
Kiewe says Jackson was an activist president, a strong president, a skilled politician, a skilled administrator, "he understood the games of politics quite well". (p. 247) Through examples of his leadership, tales of his interactions with his colleagues and perspectives on the issues of the day, Jackson came alive before us as readers.

As one explores this fascinating study, it is easy to see parallels between Andrew Jackson and Donald Trump's presidential leaderships. I encourage you to read and look for the parallels that can be drawn.

This book is recommended for academic libraries, public libraries, archival collections, faculty adoption for texts. Of the 300 pages, the text is 263, Notes 265-289, Bibliography 291-294, Index 294-300. Illustrations in black and white follow page 143.

Carol Walker Jordan
Librarian and Consultant

Masters of Violence: The Plantation Overseers of Eighteenth-Century Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia. Tristan Stubbs. Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2018. ISBN 978-1-61117-884-5 (Hard). ISBN 978-1-61117-885-2 (Ebook). \$44.99. 248 p.



It is possible your first reaction to the title of Tristan Stubbs' book, "Masters of Violence: The Plantation Overseers of Eighteenth-Century Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia", is a reflection. You may recall Harriet Beecher Stowe's characterization of overseers, "great, tall, slapsided, (a) two-fisted renegade son of Vermont...who had gone through a regular apprenticeship in hardness and brutality and taken his degree to be admitted to practice...(he was) the absolute despot of the estate" (p.142).

From films, classroom discussions, and authors, like Frederick Douglas' "My Bondage and My Freedom" (p.142), most of us saw plantation overseers as malevolent characters who "presses everything at the end of the lash; pays no attention to the sick ...and drives them out again at the first moment. He has no other interest than to make a big ...crop" (p.143).

Stubbs' research highlights practices of overseers on plantations and farm lands where enslaved peoples (bondpeople) were oftentimes brutally treated through forced work to make crops profitable. "When whippings came they were often prolonged, sometimes fatal, and always brutal". (p.2)

In those early days of plantation life, plantation owners knew and might be described as complicit in the violence meted out by the overseer. Plantation owners sought overseers they believed capable of managing the workforce, knowing farming methods and delivering crops to the markets. Reasoning was that a highly productive enslaved labor force, a successful crop and competitive sales were the overseer's obligations.

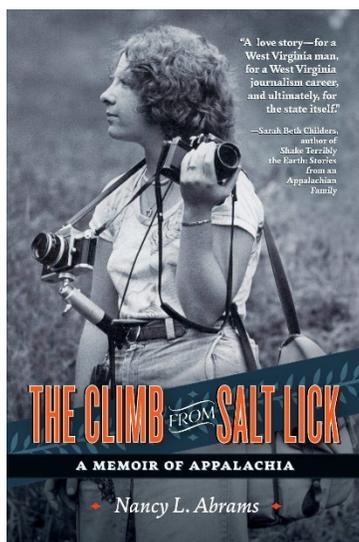
Stubbs points out as time moved forward mechanization of farming, and the American Revolution, coupled with voices of anti-slavery advocates, there came a gradual shift in

attitudes of plantation owners. Stubbs proposes through his research and theories that in time they began to recognize the importance of paternalism toward their slaves (bondpeople). Stubbs shows that this paternalism eventually led plantation owners and farmers to seek different types of overseers or managers for their land.

I recommend this book for academic libraries, public libraries and faculty who conduct research or teach the history of slavery. The contents 1-163, Notes 165-212, Bibliography 213-226, Primary Sources 213-215, Index 227-234. Few illustrations, black and white, buried in text.

Carol Walker Jordan
Librarian and Consultant

The Climb from Salt Lick: A Memoir of Appalachia. Nancy Abrams. Morgantown: Vandalia Press, 2018. ISBN 978-1-946684-18-9 (Pbk.). ISBN 978-1-946684-19-6 (ePub). ISBN 978-1-946684-20-2 (PDF). \$26.99. 276 p.



In her memoir *The Climb from Salt Lick: a Memoir of Appalachia*, Nancy Abrams affectionately recounts her years in West Virginia, where entranced by the beauty of West Virginia and its people, she comes into her own both personally and professionally. Relating the beauty of the stark mountains and genuine friendliness she encountered as an outsider, she pays homage to the Appalachian culture that influenced and inspired her.

Abrams candidly chronicles her personal journey, from a young woman fresh out of college in her first professional position as managing editor of the Preston News in Terra Alta, WV. After a junior year internship at the paper, she's lured back to the mountains following graduation from the University of Missouri School of Journalism. Independent, and a bit of a self-described hippie raised by liberal Jewish parents in rural Missouri, she enthusiastically embraces her new life, settling quickly into the area. After renting a cabin in Salt Lick and adapting to a simpler lifestyle, she learns to

make her own fun - hiking, kayaking down the Cheat River and taking advantage of the endless snow to toboggan.

Responsible for all aspects of publication of The Preston News, one of Abram's greatest pleasures comes from interacting with the community, photographing regional events and developing stories. From snapping the Buckwheat Festival queen and junior deputies for the Good Neighbors Day parade, to covering contentious school consolidation politics and profiling the impact of coal on the region, she involves herself in all aspects of the town.

Cementing her ties to the place, she falls in love with and marries a mountain boy. Love of place, though, does not always ensure contentment and despite the satisfying job, disappointments begin to accumulate. Her small salary for a growing family of two boys, a husband who is functionally illiterate and often inebriated, and a new boss at the Preston News who relentlessly applies pressure, all combine to convince her to make changes.

When the Dominion Post in Morgantown WV, advertises for a photographer, Abrams jumps at the opportunity and later graduates to editing the newspaper's Sunday magazine Panorama. Estrangement from her husband and a realization that she can no longer depend on him for support, leads her to leave him and settle in Morgantown.

While the memoir poignantly recounts Abram's personal history, it is the stories she covers that especially resonate with the reader. Her reporting on the fiftieth anniversary celebration of Arthurdale - a utopian experiment by Eleanor Roosevelt that created a new community for the poorest of Americans who lived in Scott's Run - makes the reader grasp the lasting impact of Roosevelt's New Deal policies in Appalachia. Her coverage of the Great Flood of 1985 that washed away roads, bridges, houses, schools and churches captures the historic damage that devastated close to thirty counties in West Virginia.

Selected photographs from Abram's years in West Virginia are included and provide visual context for the people, places and events she describes. An exhibit of her photographs is currently on display at the Rare Nest gallery in Chicago.

Recommended for public and academic libraries.

Melanie Dunn
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga