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Fall or Fly: The Strangely Hopeful Story of Foster Care and Adoption in Appalachia

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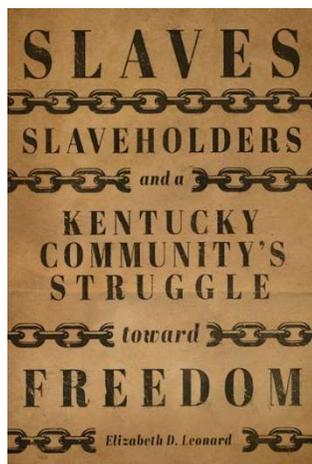
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Slaves, Slaveholders and a Kentucky Community's Struggle Toward Freedom. Elizabeth D. Leonard. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2019. ISBN 978-0-8131-7666-6. \$50. 196 p.



Elizabeth D. Leonard lays before us two primary goals for this book, *Slaves, Slaveholders and a Kentucky Community's Struggle Toward Freedom*

Goal One, Leonard explains her hopes to offer a close-up look at a group of slaves from Breckinridge County, Kentucky, who served in Company A of the 118th United States Colored Troops. Her research follows them “from slavery through the Civil War and on into a post war world” (p.x)

Goal Two, Leonard depicts in “specific detail the complicated tensions that characterized the intersecting communities—state, local, and interpersonal—from which Kentuckians came and to which they returned after the war.” (p.x)

The book is divided into helpful sections: Part One: Once a Slaveholder...Part Two: Once a Slave...Part Three; War's End and returning to Kentucky.

Leonard presents two lives that come from different but similar backgrounds. Joseph Holt was a wealthy, highly educated land and slave owner, and Sandy Holt was a slave who was born into slavery, lived his life as a laborer and never learned to read and write.

Both men lived in Holt Bottom, Kentucky, until circumstances took them away. Joseph Holt went to Washington where he became a strong force against slavery. Sandy Holt found the opportunity to escape slavery by joining the United States Colored Troops where he fought with the Union hoping to earn his freedom by his service.

In the 1860s both men left Kentucky. Joseph Holt was appointed by President Lincoln as his Judge Advocate General shortly after the Emancipation Proclamation.

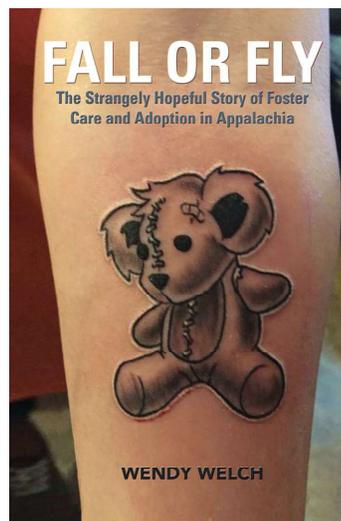
Sandy Holt ran away to join the 118th United States Colored Infantry regiment.

Leonard's research is fascinating and her determination to help the reader understand how Kentucky and other slave state owners dealt with the Civil War, the loss of the war to the Union and the aftermath of Lincoln's proclamation of freedom from slavery for slaves in the “slave states”. There is a Notes Section, a Bibliography, and an Index that provides great resources for searching primary documents. There are no illustrations except for one small map.

Recommended for public and academic libraries.

Carol Walker Jordan
Librarian and Consultant

Fall or Fly: The Strangely Hopeful Story of Foster Care and Adoption in Appalachia. Wendy Welch. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-0821423011. \$49.95. 198 p.



How do you serve the best interest of a child, when the parents can't? What resources exist for children suffering wholesale family disintegration in the midst of a national drug epidemic that has hit Appalachia the hardest? In *Fall or Fly: The Strangely Hopeful Story of Foster Care and Adoption in Appalachia*, Wendy Welch documents the social service crisis unfolding in the region. By relating the personal stories of service providers, foster and adoptive parents and the children themselves, she reveals bleak truths about the system, while at the same time highlighting the compassion and hope inspiring care providers to make a difference.

An Appalachian native with a background in public health and author of the memoir *The Little Bookstore of Big Stone Gap*, Welch uses storytelling journalism to narrate the personal accounts of these social service workers, adopting and foster parents and older adoptee and foster youth.

Conducting interviews in a multistate region she refers to as “Coalton”, the stories she compiles are true, but the identifying details are obscured to provide anonymity for her sources.

Welch praises the social workers who tirelessly advocate for the children caught up in the child welfare system. It is an ongoing struggle finding the right foster family who will accept a child in need, many of whom come from dire circumstances. As a consequence of the substance abuse epidemic, social workers have larger workloads than ever before, with fewer acceptable foster homes available. Foster children themselves recognize they’re on trial with each placement in a home, knowing that the older they get the less chance they have of being adopted. It is telling that some of these youth, after being aged out of the system, later choose to become involved as foster parents themselves to give other children the opportunities they never had.

Adoptive parents often begin as foster parents, hoping to bring one or more children into their permanent family. Regrettably, a child’s age plays a large part in their ease of adoption, with those three and under - still developmentally impressionable - in great demand. Appalachian family relationships sometimes feature into the equation, with birth mothers often choosing kin to raise their children due to a variety of reasons, some enumerated by Welch: drug abuse, debilitating illness, educational pressures, and the refusal of a current boyfriend to rear another man’s offspring. The undeniable truth is that every child in the system wants to be adopted whether they admit or not. The other painful truth is that no matter how badly treated they were by their birth parents, there’s often a strong need to reconnect and seek out a relationship.

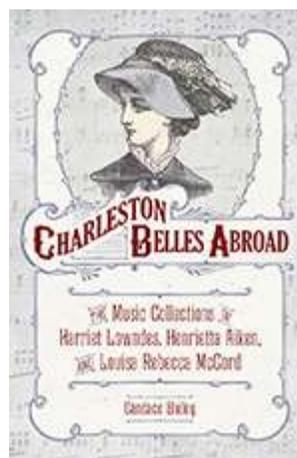
Foster parents experience special challenges repeated throughout the stories. The children, frequently having been bounced from family to family, are defensive and sometimes manipulative in order to protect themselves. They often haven’t had the opportunity to learn many basics of family life - such as hygiene and chores - that parents take for granted. The foster families who sign up do it for a variety of reasons; the majority for altruistic motives. Others, unfortunately, do it for the most venal of incentives: state money provided for the upkeep of the children. To critically judge any of the foster families, except the most egregious of those taking advantage of the system is to respond to the challenge: why not you?

The author concludes by referencing the inherent tensions between the social workers, foster parents and the courts - all of which try to support the children, but often end up at odds, especially when the biological parents are in the mix. Based on interviews and research, she supports coordinated efforts between child welfare entities through better communication, cooperation and information sharing to ensure the best outcome for the children. This subject is not an easy read, but for potential families hoping to foster or adopt and anyone involved in child welfare, public health, or the justice system, Welch provides a much-

needed personal perspective. With chapter notes and a list of additional resources included, *Fall or Fly: The Strangely Hopeful Story of Foster Care and Adoption in Appalachia* is recommended for public and academic libraries.

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Charleston Belles Abroad: The Music Collections of Harriet Lowndes, Henrietta Aiken, and Louisa Rebecca McCord. Candace Bailey. Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2019. ISBN 978-1-61117-956-9 (Hard). \$59.99. 280 p.



As a graduate student at the University of South Carolina, I spent many hours walking the stacks, reading titles, sitting on the floor beneath shelving and pulling down books for browsing. Those days discovering a particular gem brought emotional highs. Actually those leads cemented my dissertation topic and led me to focus on women and women’s colleges and presidential leadership.

Candace Bailey, a well-known university professor, tells us “...I planned to spend a few days in the South Carolina Historical Society in Charleston as I began studying women and music in the antebellum South” (p.ix). Bailey says the idea arose of checking out the Charleston Museum and much to her surprise her curiosity helped her to uncover a wealth of letters and sheet music among the historical papers of Harriet Lowndes, Henrietta Aiken, and Louisa Rebecca McCord—all women dedicated to the passion of finding and collecting musical archival materials.

From research and writing, it seems those found materials focused Bailey’s research on the lives of the three women and their families who lived in Charleston during the years before and during the Civil War. All three women had great privilege and social opportunities affording them excellent educations, language and cultural sophistication, along with a passion for world travel. Harriet, Henrietta and Louisa Rebecca were focused on music (opera and classical works) and by traveling abroad to France, Germany and Italy, they searched, found and purchased