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A Punkhouse in the Deep South: The Oral History of 309

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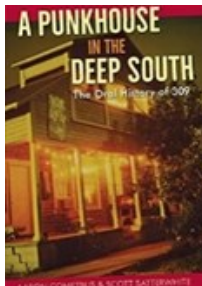
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tion to help readers understand the historical basis for some of this racial tension. This book is unique in its scope, as it spans more than a century and covers statue controversies across the southeastern United States. Libraries across the country, but particularly in the southeast, should add this essential book to their collection.

Ariana Baker, Coastal Carolina University

A Punkhouse in the Deep South: The Oral History of 309



Aaron Cometbus &
Scott Satterwhite
Gainesville: University
Press of Florida, 2021
ISBN: 9780813068527
154 p. \$19.95 (Pbk)

Defining a punkhouse as simply a house in which punks reside raises several questions, such as, what is meant by “punk”? and what happens when a bunch of punks live together? *A Punkhouse in the Deep South: The Oral History of 309* presents a collection of interviews which was not initially meant for publication in book form. Authors Aaron Cometbus and Scott Satterwhite address these questions and others by letting past residents of 309 6th Avenue (or simply, “309”) discuss how they ended up living in the ramshackle house near downtown Pensacola, Florida and how that particular time in their lives affected them.

The interviews were conducted by the students in Dr. Jamin Wells’ Public History class at the University of West Florida and were originally solely intended to be part the 309 Punk Archive—a collection of fliers, posters, zines, photographs, and other ephemera collected from the Pensacola and nearby punk communities. After reading the transcripts, however, Cometbus, well-known for his own long-running zine, and Satterwhite, a writing & literature professor at University of West Florida, determined that there would be sufficient public interest in reading each subject’s own take on the house, the city, and the punk scene, and published the book through University Press of Florida.

A brief introduction provides context for

the subsequent chapters by providing an overview of punk, not as a style of music or dress, but as a philosophy that encourages self-sufficiency while revering a strong community support infrastructure. Context is also given to Pensacola, part of the “other Florida” that has more in common with the cultural Deep South of its neighboring states than most other well-known cities in Florida. The authors note that Pensacola is an unlikely place to have a notable punk community for several reasons including its size, location, and its role as home to a large U.S. Naval Air Station. Looking further into Pensacola’s history, however, they find parallels to the modern punk scene in the city’s “culture of resistance” (p. 4), found in slave rebellions and blues venues long before bands like Maggot Sandwich and This Bike is a Pipe Bomb made their own expressions of anti-authoritarian dissent.

The interviews with thirteen former residents of 309 generally start the same, with each subject asked about their background and childhood. Subsequently, each interview veers off into a direction determined by the interviewee, but the interviewers are mostly successful in their efforts to steer the conversation back to the central questions of how the person came to reside at 309 and what that time meant to them. The stories paint 309 in different shades of memory, with some residents crediting the community the house helped foster with deeply influencing the directions of their lives and others viewing it as more of a pit stop amidst a broader and more personal journey. Readers familiar with the punk scene of the past 30 years will recognize names of people and bands scattered throughout, but the book does an admirable job of illustrating some of the most meaningful characteristics of the punk scene without relying on some of the more conspicuous elements other books have concerned themselves with. *Punkhouse* deals more with the benefits and challenges of living communally and the encouragement these people found in one another in their attempts to better themselves in pursuit of their political, artistic, and personal goals.

One of the common threads that holds these stories together, some from people whose only connection to another is that they lived in the same house 20 years apart, is that there was an expectation of the residents to contribute something for the greater good. With that expectation

came an informal support network that was so impassioned that it sometimes led to friendly competition between residents. Activist and self-improvement practices common at 309 include protests, reading groups, sports and other physical fitness activities, food sharing, foreign language lessons, and boatbuilding. Another through line found in these narratives revolves around the efforts of 309 residents to connect with other progressive or marginalized institutions in the larger community. Unsatisfied with existing in their own bubble, the residents were continually searching for ways to make broader positive change in the world.

What is especially interesting in reading the subjects' takes on 309, punk, and the Pensacola scene is the difference in how they view these things, which they all seem to hold as important influences. For example, several of the residents interviewed are either directly involved with the purchase and preservation of the house or active proponents of efforts to archive and preserve the artifacts and stories surrounding it. Others are of the opinion that the energy and resources put toward these 309 projects would be better spent looking toward the future instead of the past. With so many voices stretching across so many years, there was bound to be some divergence of opinion on what the whole thing meant and what to do with its legacy.

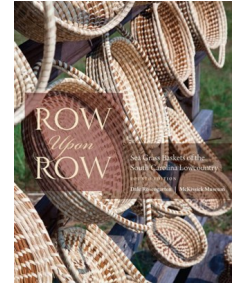
To readers unfamiliar with the culture of punk and DIY, *Punkhouse* serves as a compelling ethnology of one of its more unique and unlikely hubs, nestled in the Florida panhandle. While much has been written about the bands and cultural icons of the music side of things, this book succeeds in relating the everyday stories of a scrappy, unpretentious collection of artists, writers, musicians, activists, do-gooders, and dreamers who passed through the same rickety doorways of a former railroad flophouse in Pensacola. To those already familiar with the Pensacola punk scene and 309, the book, unearthing stories from 25 years of continuous activity, provides a deeper view into the house's history than had previously been recorded. While there are parallels with recent books on the rise of the Athens, Georgia music scene in the 1980s, *Punkhouse* does not delve into tales of booming popularity and flirtations with mainstream success; instead, it looks inward and asks the members of a particular scene to tell

a story, their story. *A Punkhouse in the Deep South* would complement regional history, pop culture, and southern cultural studies collections in public and academic libraries.

Stephen Michaels, University of North Georgia

Row Upon Row: Sea Grass Baskets of the South Carolina Lowcountry, 4th Edition

Dale Rosengarten
Columbia: University of South
Carolina Press, 2022
ISBN:9781643362731
96 p. \$18.99 (Pbk)



South Carolina's Lowcountry basketry is a uniquely beautiful example of African American folk art, and in this historical nonfiction fourth edition of *Row Upon Row: Sea Grass Baskets of the South Carolina Lowcountry*, Dale Rosengarten describes the history of Lowcountry basketry, the connection to thriving rice production and the difficulties confronted by South Carolina Lowcountry sewers. In this edition, the author added the modern-day challenges the tradition and the sewers face. "Basketry was introduced in Carolina in the late seventeenth century with origins in ancient African folk art" (p.1). African American basketry grew out of a utilitarian need for rice cultivation, but is now being created as conceptual art and respected and coveted by museums, collectors, and consumers.

This book includes an in-depth, well-researched examination of Lowcountry basket making that has a significant influence on the readers' understanding of the issues encountered by sewers both past and present. The book reveals the contributions the baskets and sewers had to the success of rice cultivation in the Lowcountry plantations. The importance of the sewers, their endurance, and the significance of basket-making are unmistakable. "By the mid-eighteenth century, rice would become the principal crop and attributed to the wealthiest group of planters in America" (p.1). Rice cultivation could not have been possible without the fanner, a coiled basket crafted by enslaved Africans used to fan the rice to blow away the chaff. While rice production was the