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REVIEW: The Death of a Confederate Colonel: Civil War Stories and a Novella

Crystal Renfro
Georgia Institute of Technology, crenfro1@kennesaw.edu

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Sarah McGhee, Off the Shelf Co-editor, Chestatee Regional Library System, smcghee@chestateelibrary.org

Teresa Pacheco, Off the Shelf Co-editor, Northeast Georgia Health System, tere711@comcast.net

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FICTION


They say there’s something in the water of Mossy Creek, Ga., especially when it’s Valentine’s Day weekend, the Cirque d’Europa’s bus breaks down, and town residents open their homes and hearts to the stranded travelers. This collective novel by multiple authors shows that circus performers and Creekites alike have much to learn from each other about love. Mossy Creek, whose town motto is “ain’t goin’ nowhere, and don’t want to,” is home to lively residents like Mayor Ida Hamilton Walker, police Chief Amos Royden, chef Bubba Rice and librarian Hannah Longstreet, all of whom must react to the romance in the air this weekend. Add knife-throwers, acrobats, mimes and a dancing bear to the mix, and this cozy read offers light-hearted entertainment. Sixth in the Mossy Creek Hometown series, At Home in Mossy Creek can stand on its own, although readers who are new to the quaint north Georgia town would find helpful an updated “Who’s Who of Mossy Creek” that includes more major characters from this book. Still, this novel provides an enjoyable escape to the kind of Southern community familiar from TV shows like Evening Shade and Mayberry — perhaps it doesn’t exist, but we might wish it did, at least for a romantic weekend visiting a mountain cabin or a magical circus performance. Suitable for popular or regional fiction collections. — Reviewed by Emily Rogers

Valdosta State University


Carr’s latest publication is a collection of works, each told from a Civil War era woman’s point of view, giving a gritty and fascinating glimpse into the life of women in the South during the War Between the States. The reader is transported from place to place by means of a series of short vignettes that paint the South and its struggles during this difficult and tragic time. The collection opens with “Diary of a Union Soldier,” in which a married woman learns the inner workings of a Union man’s thoughts as she reads the diary she finds in his torn and bloodied clothing. “Slave Quarters” gives a stark look at the life of Southern slaves during a malaria outbreak. The title story, “Death of a Confederate Colonel,” shows the brutal results of the Civil War through the heart-wrenching decisions required at a makeshift medical base where the limitations of medical supplies and expertise prevented adequate treatment. “The Mistress” provides a change of pace as the reader views a short scene between house slaves and the Lady of the plantation. “The Return” is a Southern girl’s diary as she waits for her betrothed to return from the war. “The Confederate

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Wife” describes the hardships and sacrifices of a thrifty woman left to manage the farm while her menfolk fight, and we follow a young lady behind Union lines in “Bringing Travis Home” as she searches for her injured brother. The final novella, “Leaving Gilead,” presents the collapsing world of the South through the eyes of innocent, 8-year-old Sarnell Birdsong. Sarnell, her mother and their slave, Renny, desert their home as Union soldiers approach. This work seemed to end too abruptly, however, the vibrant characterizations of Renny and Sarnell make the journey worthwhile. Pat Carr has published 12 other books of fiction and more than 100 short stories. Recommended for public and academic libraries.

— Reviewed by Crystal Renfro
Georgia Institute of Technology

**NONFICTION**


Coulter provides a holistic approach to gardening in her beautiful heirloom gardening guide in this survey of all types of plants — flowers, fruits and vegetables — and in her holistic overview of the gardening season, including ways to promote a healthy garden by enlisting nature's help instead of by employing harmful measures like pesticides and insecticides. The beauty of gardening with heirloom seeds is that they have proven resistant to diseases, as evidenced by their survival through multiple generations. Gardening begins with an explanatory introduction about utilizing heirloom seeds in the garden. Her anecdotal tales provide fond reminiscences of a simpler time and convey the sense that heirloom gardening allows gardeners to honor the past while enjoying a superior plant. This book is divided into sections dedicated to the different seasons, and each chapter begins with a summation of the gardening tasks specific to the season. Coulter describes favorite flowers, fruits and vegetables best suited to planting in the season highlighted. Fifty descriptions give historical placement of the plant, Coulter's favorite varieties and growing tips specific to the plant. The chapter on winter recounts the mixed emotions the gardener experiences: the feeling of relief that the bounty of summer and fall is over, coupled with the anxiousness to begin the new season's garden. Coulter provides a historical context for the planning process by recounting the history of the seed catalog and emphasizing its importance even for today's gardener. The text is complemented with beautiful pictures of plants, seeds and old-fashioned seed packet illustrations. Botanically themed quotations grace the margins, with space reserved for note-taking. Complete with a bibliography, a guide for finding heirloom seeds in the garden. Her anecdotal tales provide fond reminiscences of a simpler time and convey the sense that heirloom gardening allows gardeners to honor the past while enjoying a superior plant. Recommended for public and academic libraries.

— Reviewed by Diana Hartle
Science Library, University of Georgia