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Northern Money, Southern Land: the Lowcountry Plantation Sketches of Chlotilde R. Martin.

Edited by Robert B. Cuthbert and Stephen G. Hoffius. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009. ISBN 978-1-57003-822-8. \$34.95.

In the 1930, William Watts Ball, editor of the *Charleston News and Courier* hired Chlotilde R. Martin of Allendale, South Carolina asking if she would be interested in “temporary work provided you have an automobile and can take pictures.” Upon giving a positive reply, he asked if she could write a series of “illustrated stories on coastal estates purchased and improved by wealthy men, from the Savannah River to Georgetown.”

The subject of her assignment—northerners buying South Carolina coastal plantations—was a phenomenon of which many South Carolinians were aware as it had been going on for decades. Of the eighty estates she described in over fifty articles, seven properties had been bought before 1900, and they were almost all extensive. Tens of thousands of acres were bought for clubs to serve northern hunters. Wealthy men from Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Baltimore bought over 13,000 acres of land that previously had been part of the Cotton Hill plantation.

There was only one businesswoman among these people from Boston, Cleveland and Cincinnati, the remarkable Kate Gleason, who became one of the largest property owners in Beaufort County. Almost all of them said they were coming for sport, especially, bird hunting.

The African-American farmhands hired by the northerners who longed to travel to New York City to see their “bosses’ homes, which they had been assured were piled high with gold and silver.”

When Mrs. Chlotilde wrote about Hilton Head Island, she estimated that there were only fifty white residents there and on nearby Jenkins Island. She described beaches so wide and empty that private planes landed between the waves and the dunes.

Her sketches included stories of wealthy young playboys who brought showgirls down to decadent parties. The affairs of Harry Cram at Foot Point are familiar lowcountry legends. In some cases such activities are forgotten as there were no paparazzi in 1930s Bluffton or Ridgeland. As the editors state, “what happened in Yemassee stayed in Yemassee.”

There were tales of the first nudist colony in America on Cat Island. Residents there were a bit disingenuous that they were part of an “alleged love cult, band of nudists, health fanatics and whatnot.” Mrs. Martin said in an interview that nudism was commonplace at Cat Island: “A secluded area of the island is especially set apart for sun bathing, where those seek health through the sun’s rays, or the perfect tan, may stroll freely in their birthday suits without fear of prying eyes and peeping Toms.”

Cuthbert and Hoffius continue Mrs. Chlotilde’s articles bringing the reader up to date on the disposition or current status of the plantation and providing more information on the owners, and change of owners and the vexing tensions between development and conservation that continue to this day. Some of the plantations were developed while some remained undeveloped and in private hands. The book contains many photographs and maps of the counties that contain the plantations described.

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