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Book Review: Deliver Us From Evil: A Southern Belle in Europe at the Outbreak of World War I

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BOOK REVIEWS



Schaller, Mary W. *Deliver Us From Evil: A Southern Belle in Europe at the Outbreak of World War I*. Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina Press, 2011. ISBN 978-1-57003-950-8 cloth, \$29.95

Mary Schaller uses her grandmother's large collection of papers, the book *The Sailing of a Refuge Ship* by Arno Behnke, and numerous other sources to relate the story of her grandmother, Nancy Johnson Crawford's journey to Europe and her escape at the beginning of World War I. Intertwined with the description of Nancy Johnson's Grand Tour is an overview of the historical events leading up to World War I. Nancy, the daughter of Ben Johnson, a senator from Kentucky, seems blissfully unaware of all the political and military maneuverings going on in Europe as she enjoys her first trip abroad. Although it is not emphasized, we get a peek at the personality and strong character of this Southern belle. It is also an interesting picture of the societal limits and the rules of etiquette placed on young ladies during the early nineteen hundreds. Nancy traveled

with a companion, twenty-six pieces of luggage, as well as an older couple as chaperones.

When the war officially started on August 1, 1914, Nancy and thousands of other Americans were stranded with little money, making travel extremely difficult. If some wealthy and influential American travelers, including Frederick Vanderbilt, had not stepped up, many Americans would not have been able to find ships to take them home. Nancy and her companions were lucky to be among the four hundred passengers on the *Principe di Udine*, the first of the ships to leave Genoa. Although the voyage was tense, they returned home safely. Although Nancy's story was interesting, the descriptions of the people who had a role in the events leading up to the war make the book worth reading. Since many of us have studied only the very basic elements of World War I in school, it is very interesting to get a more in-depth look at what led to the war.

Mrs. Schaller, an award-winning author/editor of numerous books and plays, includes several letters and photographs from her grandmother's collection to give a personal touch to the story. There are also copious notes and an extensive bibliography for this relatively short work.

This book gives the reader a very concise and insightful look at the time period and is highly recommended for all public, academic, and high school libraries.

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