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Book Review: Ghost Stories of Old New Orleans

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woods could be heard outside the window. I still remember those tales and that evening as if it were yesterday. I especially remember the ones in which family were involved even though several of them were family members I had not met or who were long gone.

One of my great disappointments at the time was that my mother, who had also had that experience, could not remember a single tale her great uncle told them when she was a small girl. Apparently they were so scary she blocked them out completely! This is one of the reasons *Kentucky Hauntings* is a special book. It has recorded tales and traditions that are local to Kentuckians, (one story was from my own hometown), and helps to insure they will not be lost when the great story tellers are no longer with us and the details begin to fade.

Kentucky Hauntings is divided into sections of stories including “*Stories from History*,” “*Stories from Headlines*,” and “*Stories from Homefolks*.” The last section, “*Stories from Homefolks*,” is easily the longest section of the book and probably my favorite as it does the very things discussed above. The tales reveal customs and traditions that many from outside the area are not familiar with or are too young to remember. They are tales told by people who have experienced the tale themselves or are in some way connected to the story.

Each section and each story has an introduction about the times or traditions in which the action is set. A nice addition at the end of the book is a section where the authors have included their website and contact information in case readers want to share a tale of their own. They have also listed some places to visit and contacts for information and ghost tours of several of the locations in which the tales were set.

This is a fun read whether you are into ghost stories or just enjoy learning about things in the past. Not all of the tales are scary. Some are about loving, caring acts by those who have crossed over but who are still looking out for friends, family, and loved ones. However, there are definitely enough hair-raisers here to satisfy anyone who wants to be scared out of his wits or wants to scare someone else out of theirs on some dark and stormy night. I’ll say no more...spoilers, you know.

*Paris E. Webb, Librarian
Marshall University Libraries*

Ghost Stories of Old New Orleans. deLavigne, Jean. Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 2013. 374 pages. ISBN 978-0807152911 \$17.50 paperback.



Ghost Stories of Old New Orleans is a collection of stories based on eye witness accounts, old newspaper articles and local lore of the apparitions that appeared in houses, buildings or locations around New Orleans. Each chapter presents a different account of ghostly encounters throughout New Orleans, which occurred over several centuries. New Orleans evidently has a long history of ghostly hauntings, partly due to its richly diverse culture and some of its unsavory activities and the people who flocked to populate the area.

A reprint of her original work, deLavigne has intertwined the oral accounts and articles with her own story telling. She tries to keep the language of the time and the teller, taking you back into southern slave speak or a foreign language from someone not long off the boat. Her style helps you feel more connected to the story and its people; however, it can be difficult to understand in parts where there are several phrases in a foreign language. It is also hard to tell where eye witness accounts and deLavigne’s embellishments occur. The stories are so interesting, though, that it does not alter the thrills and chills of the narrative. She has a gift of drawing the reader in and creating an interest in the paranormal and in the haunted history of New Orleans.

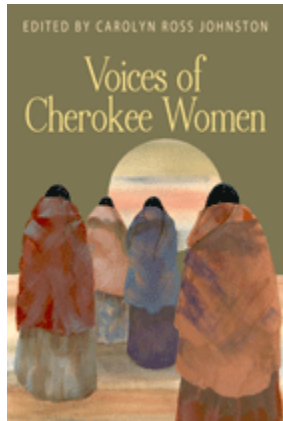
Each story describes incidents of ghost sightings and gives details about who they were when they were alive, what their life was like and what events led up to their death. Each seemed to have an unnatural death, which left them drawn to that area to haunt. Whether they died from a tragic illness, or were an executed prisoner, murdered, or were a scorned lover, each ghost has a story to tell. Most would tell or show anyone who came across their haunts, sometimes violently.

While it may not be easy to tell if a story is mostly true or mostly fiction, each account is very interesting and entertaining, creating an interest in exploring New Orleans’ dark and haunted past. This book would be of interest to

those interested in New Orleans folklore and the supernatural, primarily public libraries.

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Voices of Cherokee Women. Edited by Carolyn Ross Johnston. Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, Publisher, 2013. ISBN 978-0-89587-599-0. 256 p. \$12.95 paperback.



Many who might wish to read and review Carolyn Ross Johnston's new book, "Voices of Cherokee Women" are those like me who were introduced on summer family weekend vacations to Cherokee women, children, men and the Cherokee Indian Reservation in Western North Carolina. Frequent trips to see "real Indians" in our North Carolina mountains were summer adventures we happily joined our parents and friends, gleefully expecting we might come home with a tom-tom, an Indian head dress, a Pocahontas doll or if we were lucky bows and arrows! Little did we focus upon the real people—the Indians—, or the food they ate, the rituals they valued, their health and wellness, their strange language we ignored, or their customs of hunting and gathering food.

From a child's view, the Cherokee Indians we saw were like make-believe characters—super human warriors with spears, women who made baskets and pots and carried babies and small children on their chests or backs in woven cloth sacks. Colorful painted faces for the men and scant clothes for children made us think they may have arrived by some type of space ship to the mountains of North Carolina.

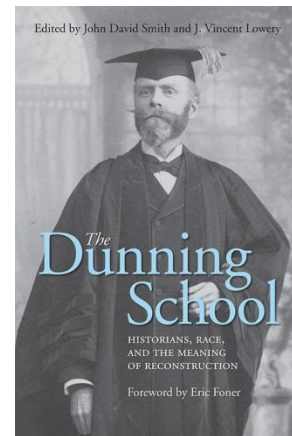
From those long ago days to today, many Indian tribes in the United States living on reservations in various states in the northern, southern and western regions of our country may provide these same impressions to children whose parents take them on summer weekend visits to "see the Indians". However, Carolyn Ross Johnston provides a documented and beautifully researched collection of stories, letters, diaries, newspaper accounts, oral histories to

paint a deeply moving panorama of the lives of the Cherokee culture and society.

Upon first read, I was overly impressed with the quality of research and sensitivity of Dr. Johnston's determination to give the reader truth and justice in her selection and variety of documents. Reading Dr. Johnston's research documents on the lives of Cherokee women revealed to me the misguided early American beliefs --social, political, religious, and folk lore--of the lives of our first American women. Additionally my childhood impressions were enlightened and my adult prejudices were shattered about the role of women in Cherokee life and culture. For anyone who explores and seeks to understand the role of women in the United States, Dr. Johnston's "Voices of Cherokee Women" is a critical research text.

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The Dunning School: Historians, Race, and the Meaning of Reconstruction. Edited by John David Smith and J. Vincent Lowery. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2013. ISBN 978-0-8131-4225-8. 338 p. \$40.



Who said, "history is written by the winners" ?

This phrase continued to flow through my thoughts as I grappled with the introduction and ten essays written by the doctoral students who surrounded Professor William Archibald Dunning (1857-1922) at Columbia University's graduate studies program on the reconstruction period following the American Civil War. Brilliant Professor Dunning was of such great charisma and intellectual rigor that he immediately attracted the brightest and most passionate of graduate students. Their desire to record, analyze and interpret the evolving American historical landscape following reconstruction of the southern states was passionate.

In those early days after the Civil War, Professor Dunning seemed to believe and promote opinions and passions of American citizens who said, "black people did not belong in American political society and had no business wielding