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Book Review - A Tough Little Patch of History: Gone with the Wind and Politics of Memory

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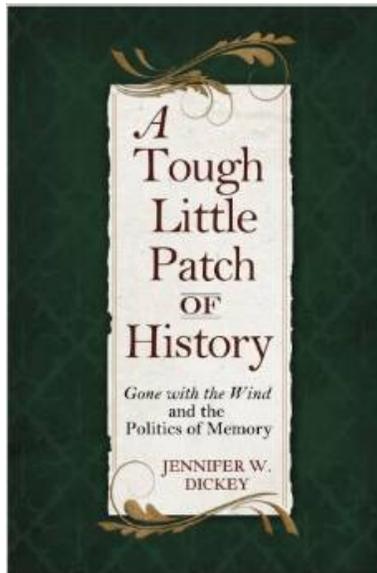
Off the SHELF

A Tough Little Patch of History: Gone with the Wind and the Politics of Memory by Jennifer W. Dickey. (Arkansas University Press, Fayetteville, AR, 2014: ISBN 9781557286574, \$34.95)

A Tough Little Patch of History offers a thoroughly researched and well-documented description of Atlanta's historical response to *Gone with the Wind* (GWTW) since the book's publication in 1936 and the movie's premier in Atlanta in 1939. Jennifer W. Dickey is an assistant professor and coordinator of the public history program at Kennesaw State University. Dickey details the city's intense love/hate relationship with both the book and movie, and describes GWTW's indelible imprint on Atlanta's identity that extends far beyond Mitchell devotees. This beloved or reviled Civil War story is shown to be both inspirational and offensive depending on the reader/viewer's perspective, with the work so convincingly written that many embrace the story as historically accurate. Illustrating this phenomenon, world-wide visitors to Atlanta perennially have to be told that Tara is a fictional place that only exists in the imagination.

Other tensions presented in Dickey's book include efforts that involve the Atlanta History Center, the Tara Museum in Clayton County, and the Margaret Mitchell House in offering GWTW exhibits and establishing permanent tourist destinations. Margaret Mitchell's estate

has frequently blocked many requests for theme parks or memorials by refusing to grant licenses to use names from the book. Their motivation originates from Margaret Mitchell's own wishes to discourage memorials or landmarks dedicated to either the author or the book perceived as being "in poor taste."



Efforts attempting to dispel GWTW's romanticized notions about the antebellum period are described and include exhibits that displayed artifacts documenting the harsh reality of institutionalized slavery alongside authentic GWTW movie memorabilia. The chapter on the preservation of "The Dump," Margaret Mitchell's basement apartment where the novel was written, depicts the almost insurmountable obstacles faced when creating a permanent historical site related to the GWTW legacy.

I highly recommend this book as an essential addition to public or academic libraries. With its focus on the controversy related to the legacy of the best-selling novel of all time and the related movie, the book is a fascinating read for both devotees and detractors of the book and/or movie, as well as for researchers interested in Atlanta or Georgia history, southern literature, cinema, and heritage tourism.

Rebecca Rose is Associate Professor and Head Librarian—Cumming campus, University of North Georgia.