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Book Review - Slavery and Freedom in Savannah

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Off the SHELF

Slavery and Freedom in Savannah edited by Leslie M. Harris & Diana Ramey Berry (University of Georgia Press, 2014, ISBN 978-0-8203-4410-2, \$34.95)

Slavery and Freedom in Savannah is a compilation of essays written by historians from Savannah, Georgia, and other areas in the South. In this collection Harris and Berry not only serve as editors but contributors as well. They remind readers of the significant role urban parts of Georgia played during the period that slavery was legal in the United States: “But a reexamination of slavery in North American cities reveals the importance of urban communities—especially port cities—to the slave economy, and the adaptability of slave labor and slave mastery to metropolitan regions.”

According to James A. McMillin, author of the chapter titled “The Transatlantic Slave Trade Comes to Georgia,” Georgia’s trustees intended the colony to be anti-slavery, but the ban was frequently challenged due to the wealth experienced in South Carolina—a wealth of possibility for Georgia. Savannah served as a port for transporting slaves from Africa, the West Indies, and South Carolina. This book tells the story of how Savannah settlers obtained wealth from the slave trade.

Slavery and Freedom in Savannah attempts to tell the story of individuals, families, the local

community, and greater city. Readers follow the prominent Telfair family through many chapters that offer perspectives of the South from the slave owners as well as the romanticized mindset of slavery they possessed during that era. Glances into the lives of freed blacks show the restrictions and laws purposed to hinder them in areas such as business and legal matters.

Concluding chapters provide an overview of the Reconstruction Period. The final chapter in *Slavery & Freedom in Savannah*, written by Bobby J. Donaldson, tells of the rise of hope in Savannah for African Americans who now spoke without retaliation. These final chapters invoke messages of inspiration for building community and

obtaining education from notable figures such as Dr. J.J. Durham who spoke of “goodness and progress.”

Slavery & Freedom in Savannah would be beneficial as a reference tool. This book provides an unbiased, complete recount of events; mid-chapter sidebars are informative and provide further information on topics and people covered in every chapter. Readers gain insight into the struggles and successes of enslaved Africans, freed blacks, and slave owners as well as the birth and progression of Savannah’s economy.

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