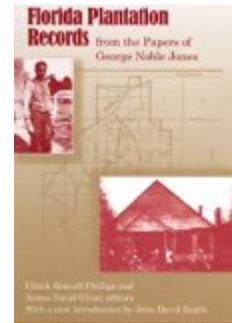


H-Net Reviews

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Ulrich B. Phillips, James David Glunt, eds. *Florida Plantation Records, from the Papers of George Noble Jones*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. xl + 596 pp. \$55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8130-2976-4.

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A Glimpse in Florida's Antebellum Life

Antebellum Florida was a period of profound change. Over the first half of the nineteenth century, the region was transformed from a sparsely populated Spanish Colony, serving as an outpost, refuge, and safe haven for runaway slaves and their Native American allies, to an ardent fire-eating ally of South Carolina by 1860. By the end of the antebellum era slaves made up close to 50 percent of the state's population, highlighting the importance of the peculiar institution in Florida. Often records of slavery, such as plantation diaries, journals, and other documents are scarce and leave historians with the unenviable task of filling in gaps when trying to reconstruct antebellum life. Luckily for Florida historians, George Noble Jones's papers, including his plantation records, were analyzed, edited, and published by famous Dunning School historian U.B. Phillips and one of his graduate students, James David Glunt, in 1927. While Phillips's and Glunt's work has been available for close to eighty years, University of North Carolina at Charlotte professor John David Smith's new edition of *Florida Plantation Records, from the Papers of George Noble Jones*, affords historians and scholars alike a better opportunity to access the work by adding an introduction which contains a closer analysis of the documents along with a look into the lives and professional careers of both Phillips and Glunt.

U.B. Phillips is remembered in history as much for his scholarship in the field of Southern history as he is for his slanted apologetic views of the institution of slavery. Phillips, a member of the Dunning School, known for its pro-Southern views, has been credited by some

with eclipsing Dunning and creating his own "school," the Phillips School. Despite his belief and adherence to the "Lost Cause," Phillips's contributions to Southern history cannot be ignored and his in-depth analysis of George Noble Jones' papers and plantation records helped to open up and stimulate the study of Florida's antebellum history.

Phillips and Glunt began their daunting task of making the papers accessible to the public by alerting their perspective readers to the fact that the overseers, who kept the majority of the plantation records, were for the most part uneducated and barely literate, and the editors felt compelled to simply make the text "readable." The introduction was broken into several components in which the editors analyzed a wide range of topics from the actual composition of the documents themselves to brief histories of the plantations, the plantation owners, overseers, slaves as well as a history of Middle Florida, the region where Jones's plantations, El Destino and Chemonie, were located. The editors even included information on a trip made to the plantations in 1925 to better give the reader an understanding of the subject of the work. While Phillips's views on slavery in general are seen in his introduction, this work does not reflect the tendency characteristic of his other books, which was to inject racist terms, phrases, and undertones into his prose.

John David Smith's new introduction to the book goes into greater detail on many of the items which

Phillips and Glunt explored in their introduction, while providing the reader with a unique perspective on both of the original editors. Smith provides a more in-depth look at the contents of the George Noble Jones's papers while highlighting the importance of the records to scholars and historians. At times, Smith spends too much time describing minute and irrelevant details of the lives of both original editors.

Smith's principal success in his new introduction comes in the way in which he highlights the actual importance of the papers themselves. Smith asserts that the greatest significance of the records may lie in the documentation of slave marriages and slave relationships while also noting the aid the work affords medical historians of the antebellum period. All of these aspects of the papers and similar document collections are often over-

looked in favor of more "popular" or "romanticized" aspects of antebellum life.

The records themselves provide a valuable look into antebellum but, also, postbellum life on Florida plantations for not just the slaves but overseers, owners, and anyone else involved in the inner workings of the "peculiar institution." *Florida Plantation Records, from the Papers of George Noble Jones* has held a unique place in Florida historiography for over eighty years, affording historians and scholars the opportunity to study not only two specific plantations but also antebellum Florida life. The introduction by Phillips and Glunt and the additions made by John David Smith nearly eighty years later are valuable assets in providing aid to researchers and scholars interested in slavery in Florida and, more importantly, antebellum life in general.

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