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A Rich Diversity of South Carolina Women

The first of a three-volume anthology, *South Carolina Women* tells the history of approximately two dozen women with connections to South Carolina—some deeply rooted, others less so. Fifteen contributors have crafted fourteen essays that focus on the colonial and antebellum eras, although some of the women lived long after the Civil War and a few into the early twentieth century. Editors Marjorie Julian Spruill, Valinda W. Littlefield, and Joan Marie Johnson have compiled essays that portray a rich religious, racial, ethnic, and class diversity of women. In addition to fine essays on familiar women, such as Eliza Lucas Pinckney, Angelina Grimké, Elizabeth Allston Pringle, Mary Boykin Chesnut, and Lucy Holcombe Pickens, the volume introduces readers to less prosperous and lesser-known women, such as early Huguenot and Quaker immigrants, overseers' wives, and enslaved and free black women.

The essays are arranged chronologically and begin in the sixteenth century with the Lady of Cofitachequi. Christina Snyder combs the limited historical evidence for the Cofitachequi chiefdom when Hernando De Soto traveled through the Southeast (today Georgia and the Carolinas) in 1540. Before the rise of confederations of the Catawba, Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole, Mississippian chiefdoms dominated the Southeast. Knowledge of the Lady's rise to power and the nature of her rule are minimal, and the historical record is limited to European chroniclers' reflections on her brief encounter with the Spanish as De Soto explored the re-

gion in search of resources to exploit. Snyder details the narrative in which the Lady initially met De Soto at the principal city of Cofitachequi (present day Camden, South Carolina), welcomed him as a cultural ambassador, accommodated his initial request for resources, and then resisted him as his motives and insatiable appetite for resources became clear. Captured by De Soto after she fled, the Lady then escaped when he transported her northwest to the upper Catawba (today North Carolina) and outer limits of her chiefdom.

The volume concludes more than three centuries later with Vernon and Georganne Burton's essay on Lucy Holcombe Pickens, a South Carolinian by marriage to Francis W. Pickens, South Carolina's Civil War-era governor. Born and educated in Tennessee, Lucy moved with her family to Texas as a young woman. There she developed passions for the new frontier state; the filibuster movement to acquire Cuba from the Spanish; and Lieutenant William Crittenden of Kentucky, who was executed by the Spanish after participating in the failed attempt to "liberate" Cuba. The Burtons also tell of Lucy's life as Pickens's third wife, which took her in 1858 to the Russian court, where she mixed with royalty while Pickens was the U.S. ambassador. The couple returned to South Carolina during the tumultuous 1860 election and secession fervor; Francis Pickens was elected governor in December of that year. Within three years "Lady Lucy's" image appeared on Confederate currency. Known for her beauty and extravagance, Lucy also had a keen interest

in politics and foreign affairs and used her social skills as a diplomatic tool for assisting her rather unpopular husband with his political enemies. The Pickenses had one daughter, Eugenia Frances (nicknamed Douschka), who was born in Russia and died in her thirties before Lucy, who lived to see the Spanish-American War in 1898.

Between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries lies the heart of *South Carolina Women*. At least three essays depict women from religious minorities. Bertrand Van Ruymbeke explores the immigration of Judith Giton, a Huguenot who fled France in the 1680s at age nineteen with remnants of her family, bound for the South Carolina lowcountry. Using a personal letter that Judith wrote to her brother, who remained in Europe, and available probate records, Van Ruymbeke tells Giton's story of hardship and tragedy during her early years, which were succeeded eventually by good fortune—especially for her descendants who benefited from Judith's second marriage to Pierre Manigault. Giton and her family are but one story, but Van Ruymbeke effectively situates this family in the context of Huguenot migration and the broader struggles of French Calvinists to find their way in the burgeoning British colony.

Randy Sparks tells a parallel, but very different, story of Quaker immigration to Charleston through the lenses of Mary Fisher and her granddaughter Sophia Hume. These two women's Quaker proselytizing bookended the South Carolina colonial era—Fisher arrived in the early years of Carolina's founding and Hume lived into the Revolutionary era. Fisher began her zealous efforts to share the Quaker message across England and then moved on to the New World, where she went to Barbados, New England, and finally Carolina in its first decade of English settlement. She found the latter far more welcoming than the Puritans of New England, who jailed her for spreading radical beliefs. Sparks details Fisher's ministry, as well as the emerging Quaker community's early presence in Charleston and the challenges it faced as a religious minority. In the small Carolina Quaker community, the second generation found the pool of marriage partners so small that many married outside their faith, including Fisher's daughter, Susannah, who married an Anglican. Susannah maintained her Quaker faith, but her daughter, Sophia, initially rejected Quaker beliefs for her father's Anglican faith. After her husband's public humiliation and early death, however, Sophia revisited the faith of her mother and grandmother. Hume became devout and, like her grandmother Fisher, became a minister who traveled between London and South Carolina sharing her faith, writing religious tracts, and cri-

tiquing the less-than-devout community in Charleston. She remained an active minister for twenty-five years and preached her beliefs until her death in 1774.

The third essay exemplifying a religious minority in South Carolina focuses on Mother Mary Baptista Aloysius, a Catholic nun and native South Carolinian whose parents had emigrated from Ireland. Baptista served as mother superior of the Ursuline Convent and Academy in Columbia for thirty years in the mid-nineteenth century. Baptista had an unpleasant, but legendary, confrontation with General William T. Sherman in 1865 during his march through Columbia when he included the convent in his destructive burning of the city after allegedly promising to protect it. Baptista had made a personal plea to Sherman on the grounds that she taught briefly at his daughter's school in Ohio. Nancy Stockton's narrative of Baptista emphasizes that although she was Catholic in a heavily Protestant region that exhibited fierce anti-Catholic attitudes, Baptista identified with the Protestant elite because of her own family's prosperity. Conversely, she found little common ground with the Irish working class with whom she shared an ethnic and religious identity. Born Ellen Lynch into a prosperous slave-owning family in Cheraw, Baptista readily embraced her southern identity, accepted patriarchy and slaveholding, strongly criticized Reconstruction, and found no conflict or isolation as a Catholic Carolinian.

Two essays in volume 1 recount the lives of women during the Revolutionary era. Constance Schulz provides a thorough and detailed narrative of Eliza Lucas Pinckney and her daughter Harriett Pinckney Horry, exploring their lives as daughters, wives, mothers, and grandmothers, and the subsequent responsibilities that befell them to manage plantations and family because of war and early widowhood. Pinckney, well-known for her experimentation with indigo cultivation, was also widely recognized because her two sons, Charles Cotesworth and Thomas, rose to national political prominence in the early Republic. Less well-known than her mother, Horry had much in common with her mother, but her husband, Daniel Horry, took the opposite stance of her brothers and instead chose to receive protection from the British after the seizure of Charleston, in hopes of sparing his family and property. This, of course, eventually put him on the losing side. Harriett nonetheless remained a patriot and allegedly facilitated General Francis "Swamp Fox" Marion's escape from the ruthless British General Banastre Tarleton. After the war and her husband's subsequent death, her only son, Daniel, who received his formal education in England during the war,

chose never to return to the United States. Both Pinckney and Horry corresponded extensively with family and friends, and both women were widowed in their mid-thirties after their husbands died from disease; neither remarried. Horry, somewhat analogous to her mother's early experimentation with indigo cultivation, was fascinated with technology and experimented with agricultural and mechanical innovation. Schulz effectively positions Pinckney and Horry within the rich historiography of elite women and uses them to flesh out the complexity and ambiguity of such concepts as "republican motherhood," "plantation mistress," "deputy husband," and "kin specialist."

Alexia Jones Helsley provides a familiar but well-told narrative of Rebecca Motte's Revolutionary War experiences. As background, Helsley weaves together the interconnected family histories of elite rice plantation families, such as the Pinckney, Brewton, Alston, and Motte families. Motte, widowed soon after the British occupation of Charleston, involuntarily "hosted" the British commanders at her prominent Charleston home and the family's country plantation estate in Orangeburg District, known as Fort Motte. The British occupation of Fort Motte drew patriot resistance under the leadership of General Marion and Colonel Henry Lee. On May 12, 1781, convinced that the British would not surrender, Marion and Lee ordered Fort Motte burned. Helsley argues that Motte's voluntary and enthusiastic embrace of her home's destruction for the war effort made her a heroine of the patriot cause.

Specific women of color receive attention in two essays—one devoted to enslaved women and the other to a prosperous family of free blacks in Charleston. Emily West creatively analyzes available evidence about four enslaved women known only by their first names to provide limited but valuable hints about their complicated lives. Drawn from evidence that includes a runaway advertisement, a rare letter penned by a slave, slave owners' correspondence, and Works Progress Administration interviews, West explores such issues as cross-plantation marriages, domestic abuse, punishment, running away, and slave women's relationships with their mistresses. West erodes the anonymity of Dolly, Lavinia, Maria, and Susan and thereby reveals much about slave women generally.

Amrita Chakrabarti Myers offers one of the most interesting essays in her treatment of three free black women—a mother and two daughters—who navigated a complicated world as successful property owners and

slaveholders who could never escape their precarious free status. Margaret Bettingall and her two daughters, Hagar Cole and Barbara Tunno Barquet, fought continually to maintain their independence and secure the welfare of their children. Ironically, Myers contends, these women cultivated intimate and economic relationships with men, often white men, to facilitate that independence. For forty years, Bettingall lived with Adam Tunno, a prosperous white man who fathered one of her daughters and cared for both of them. The economic prosperity of Bettingall and her daughters, which logically should have made them more secure in their freedom and independence, also kept them intertwined in the lives of whites, which made them dependent and subject to a potential reversal of fortunes. Exemplifying her exceptionalism, Barquet amassed enough money to invest in a mortgage held by the Hamiltons, an affluent white planter family. This investment, however, drew her into a legal struggle between Elizabeth Heyward Hamilton and husband James that left Barquet vulnerable to an unsympathetic court and in need of a white lawyer. (Read the essay to appreciate fully the ironic outcome.)

Whereas Myers features exceptional free black Charlestonian women, Charles Wilbanks looks at another exceptional Charlestonian—Angelina Grimké. One of the most prominent women included in the anthology, Grimké conformed the least to her culture's patriarchal and slaveholding ethos. Charles Wilbanks recounts the activism and writings of the unlikely abolitionist who left the state and region never to return. Wilbanks acknowledges Grimké's passion for emancipation, especially as an unlikely participant in the antislavery crusade. Moreover, among her abolitionist peers, she stood among the most radical because she also advocated for women's rights. Yet, Wilbanks argues, Grimké's greatest passion, which other historians have overlooked, stemmed from her desire to redeem slave owners from the sin of slavery.

Two other well-known South Carolinians featured in this volume are Elizabeth Allston Pringle and Mary Boykin Chesnut, through the inclusion of edited versions of previously published essays by Charles Joyner and Elisabeth Showalter Muhlenfeld, respectively. Joyner provides a richly textured context for Pringle's life that straddled the Civil War and a thorough analysis of Pringle's book *A Woman Rice Planter* (1922), a work that grappled with the collapse of her privileged world. Muhlenfeld offers a fascinating analysis of Chesnut as a literary figure, a status contemporaries were reluctant to bestow on her, and a critical comparative analysis of Chesnut's published work, *A Diary from Dixie* (1905), with the

unpublished diaries she wrote during the war.

One of this volume's valuable contributions comes with the essays that bring new women to light. Among the least visible southerners in the historical record are lower-class white women. Laura Sandy examines two such women—Mary-Anne Schad and a Mrs. Brown—who were overseers' wives in colonial South Carolina. With the use of limited evidence, Sandy tells of planters who intentionally sought married overseers because of the hoped-for domestic effect on their husbands and the extra work these women would perform on the plantation. This labor included managing the dairy, raising poultry, spinning, weaving, dyeing, caring for sick slaves, and performing midwife services. Sandy highlights the stories of Schad and Brown to argue that immigrants pursued overseeing as a means of upward mobility through apprenticing on a plantation, and married men had an advantage in securing these positions because of the contributions their wives made.

Sara Marie Eye uses public records and family correspondence during the Civil War to illuminate the lives of a nineteenth-century Mush Creek yeoman family from the hills of South Carolina. Frances Neves, sixteen when the state seceded, along with other female relatives, wrote to her three brothers who served in the Confederacy. Eye teases from this correspondence a picture of the economic life, religious practices, and kinship networks

of this small upcountry community. Moreover, the correspondence gives some insight into the educational opportunities available, attitudes of non-slaveholders toward the war and conscription, and the gender expectations of men and women of this class and region. Eye argues that, unlike some non-slaveholding white women from small and relatively remote regions, the women of Mush Creek supported the Confederacy and never advocated desertion. She also concludes that their concerns were primarily for the safe return of their men rather than any ideological commitment to the Confederate cause.

While the experiences of the women featured in *South Carolina Women* range widely in time and circumstance, the essays collectively testify to the power of patriarchy and slaveholding to construct social and gender norms and the pervasiveness of tragedy and hardship in the lives of South Carolina women. Neither the most atypical nor the most privileged escaped these realities. All of the women understood the need to cultivate relationships with men of means and influence. Less the history of South Carolina women than the history of particular South Carolinians, this first volume in the trilogy nonetheless provides a much-needed focus on women's participation in, and contributions to, South Carolina's history. Anyone interested in further contextualizing southern and women's history will find valuable insights and analysis in each essay.

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