

Extremists want the medieval past to seem simple, but anyone who says that history is simple is selling something. They are carnival barkers and it is the work of historians to puncture their spell, to complicate the simple story the barkers tell, and to instead engage with the crowd by showing them the realities—in all its complexity—of the human experience. The authors have here taken important steps in that direction.

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Denmark Vesey's Garden: Slavery and Memory in the Cradle of the Confederacy by

Ethan J. Kytte and Blaine Roberts. New York: The New Press, 2018. 349 pp.;

illustrations, notes, index; clothbound, \$28.99, paperback, \$19.99.

Since the book's original publication in 2018, *Denmark Vesey's Garden* has been highly praised by historians and lay audiences alike, garnering mentions in the nation's top newspapers and being praised by the *Civil War Times* as "a stunning contribution to the historiography of Civil War memory studies."¹ This praise is well-deserved. The book will undoubtedly serve as a remarkable case study for scholars studying the role of memory in shaping popular understandings of the past. Analyzing the city of Charleston, South Carolina, and its complex legacy of slavery, secession, and civil rights resistance, Ethan J. Kytte and Blaine Roberts take readers on a centuries-long journey of public memory from the city's founding in 1670 up to the tragic massacre of nine African American parishioners at Emmanuel AME Church by a white supremacist in 2015. While the book is full of useful insights for public historians, three are worth mentioning here.

Perhaps the most significant takeaway of *Denmark Vesey's Garden* is the creative use of source materials to examine public memory in Charleston. Readers will see sources used in previous Civil War memory studies such as public speeches, newspaper articles, dedication ceremonies for public statutes, and popular literature. However, one will also come across a rich analysis of guidebooks promoting historically themed tourism to the city, musical performances of African American music by the all-white Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, the use of Confederate flags at sporting events, and tour companies working to interpret Charleston's history to contemporary audiences. Kytte and Roberts successfully use these sources to paint a portrait with many messages. On the one hand, they demonstrate how white Charlestonians used their city's status as the "Cradle of the Confederacy" to celebrate a Lost Cause interpretation of the Civil War and to downplay the harmful effects of slavery on Black Charlestonians, both then and now. Historically, white political and cultural leaders in Charleston

¹ Quoted in promotion page for *Denmark Vesey's Garden: Slavery and Memory in the Cradle of the Confederacy*, The New Press website, <https://thenewpress.com/books/denmark-veseys-garden>.

often acknowledged slavery's legacy by selling replica "slave badges," preserving historic buildings connected to slavery such as "Ryan's Mart," and celebrating Gullah culture and African American music more broadly. However, the authors' show how these efforts were done *not* to celebrate African American heritage and promote civil rights, but to promote the idea that slavery was a "civilizing" influence for the city's enslaved population. On the other hand, they also demonstrate how Black Charlestonians always maintained their own memories of slavery's legacy to celebrate resilience, justice, and rights in the face of slavery, segregation, and Jim Crow laws.

Readers will also find Kytte and Roberts's discussion in chapter 8 of *The Old Slave Mart Museum* enlightening. Established in 1938, this museum was the only one "in the United States focused on the history and culture of enslaved Americans" for many years (246). The authors show how this museum interpreted slavery through artifacts, written pamphlets, and guided tours by the museum's founder, Miriam B. Wilson. Although some white Charlestonians expressed concerns about the museum's potential threat to the idealized image of slavery portrayed elsewhere, the authors demonstrate how Wilson reinforced this image through the creation of exhibits that emphasized the civilizing aspects of slavery. Readers learn how Wilson highlighted the struggles of enslavers to manage their plantation households, celebrated the "faithful slaves" who stayed home during the Civil War, and diminished the role of the slave trade to Charleston's economy at *The Old Slave Mart Museum*. Likewise, the authors show how African Americans choose to avoid the museum altogether—"We don't go in for slave horrors"—or were sharply critical of the ways it celebrated the "kindness and courage" of white enslavers (254). Public historians working at sites that interpret slavery will greatly benefit from reading this chapter while considering the interpretive pitfalls of discussing slavery solely from the perspective of enslavers.

Finally, Kytte and Roberts challenge readers to consider how Dylann Roof's actions in the summer of 2015 were shaped by the public history landscape around him. Before murdering the parishioners at Emmanuel AME, Roof visited public history sites throughout Charleston. While "the history lessons Roof internalized about black history . . . were not the ones that black and like-minded white Charlestonians have worked so hard to impart," Kytte and Roberts argue, he ultimately "did not see evidence of slavery's inhumanity" but "evidence of white dominance" within Charleston's public history landscape (337–38). Seen in this light, the authors present difficult moral questions about the role of history in contemporary society. Have Americans accepted the results of the American Civil War? Can history be used as a tool for improving society, or does it create division, hatred, and excessive racial pride? Can public historians present an honest reckoning with United States history at museums, historic sites, and National Parks? Do we live in a society that truly values equality and liberty for all? After reading this remarkable study, one might conclude that Kytte and Roberts make a convincing case that the Charleston Massacre was the most

tragic and significant event of the nation's commemoration of the Civil War Sesquicentennial from 2010 to 2015.

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The views shared in this review are solely those of the author and do not reflect the views of the National Park Service.

Historic Real Estate: Market Morality and the Politics of Preservation in the Early United States by Whitney Martinko. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020. x + 291 pp.; illustrations, notes, bibliography, index; clothbound \$39.95.

Historic Real Estate: Market Morality and the Politics of Preservation in the Early United States is a key addition to the growing historiography of historic preservation. Although the book has a decidedly scholarly approach and appeals to the academic community, it has a fundamentally practical application in shifting the way in which the public understands the political and economic creation of US cities. Whereas many preservationists point to the 1853 founding of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association (MVLA) and the resultant conversion of George Washington's home into a house museum as the discipline's origin point, Martinko demonstrates that concern for the historic built environment predates the MVLA and asserts that preservation was a driving force in shaping American cities immediately after independence. Using an impressive variety of visual, textual, and linguistic sources, she reframes common understandings of early American preservation around concepts of virtue and economic morality in the public and private sectors, contending that preservation is a central part of the history of urbanism and capitalism in the United States. In doing so, Martinko joins a small but growing number of preservation scholars whose research challenges long-held beliefs about preservation's early predilection for aestheticism and nation-building. Specifically, Martinko maintains that the field's origins also lay in a desire to shape civic and economic morality across present and future generations. This "moralizing historical consciousness" (6) was expressed in the permanence of the historic built environment.

Accepting that architecture was a medium for citizens to demonstrate civic virtue and a commitment to the public good, the decisions that the populace made about what to keep and what to toss were demonstrative of efforts to create a newly republican economy that included a deeper historic consciousness than one that started with the revolution. By integrating Native American earthen mounds into their city plans, the Ohio Company was civilizing wilderness, creating a national image based on civility and social progress because they built upon old buildings from previous civilizations. Within this new society, eighteenth and nineteenth century preservationists saw capitalists and their markets as part of an uncivil, backward culture driven by demolition and a consequent lack of concern for permanence or the future of society. In