

**The Travelers' Charleston: Accounts of Charleston and Lowcountry, South Carolina, 1666-1861 [Review]**

By: [Kathelene McCarty Smith](#)

The Travelers' Charleston: Accounts of Charleston and Lowcountry, South Carolina, 1666-1861. Edited by Jennie Holton Fant. Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 2016. ISBN 978-1-61117-584-4 (Hardback). \$49.95. 392 p.

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**Abstract:**

The lowcountry of South Carolina has long held sway over all who have lived there, but surprisingly, those from outside of the South often offer the most interesting perspectives on the region. *The Travelers' Charleston: Accounts of Charleston and Lowcountry, South Carolina, 1666-1861*, edited by Jennie Holton Fant, chronicles the discovery of the Carolinas in the mid seventeenth century until the beginning of the American Civil War, primarily focusing on Charleston. The city was an increasingly popular destination for American and European travelers who came to observe, to write, and to experience the lowcountry culture.

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**Article:**

**\*\*\*Note: Full text of article below**

home. They are here to enjoy a reading of a passage or two, expectant that the sound of his voice and the emphasis he places on his own words will resonate beyond the small space they share.

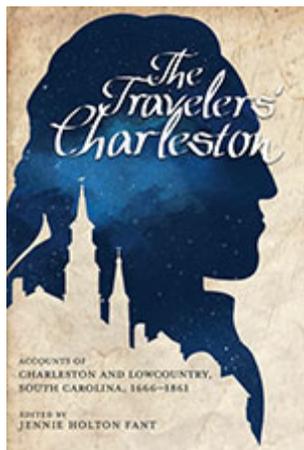
Many in the room probably believe that when life ends one rises to the heavens and all pain and sorrow from life's days are washed away. "The Risen" presents family and friends whose lives were troubled, tormented, afflicted by deep sorrows, earned regrets and woes of the world. With subtle introductions, the scenes are set to draw us into characters we recognize in ourselves and in our loved ones. Who was Bill, who was Eugene, who was Ligeia, who was Nebo? If Eugene is the main character, is he always "in trouble"? Is one of those characters to be the one who is "The Risen", what does Rash want us to know about pain and sorrow being washed away?

Leaving the "book signing" that evening, those filing out of the shop into the warm night, carry their signed books with quiet dignity. Knowing respect for the departed is expected in this southern town not far from the Appalachian mountains of Ron's life.

Through a compelling and fast moving journey, the author takes his readers forward and backward through events that hook us to the two hundred and fifty three pages. Reading it in one night just as I did with "One Foot in Eden" is another night I will always remember. It is my hope you will follow this author and his beautiful deep love of his Appalachian mountain home.

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The lowcountry of South Carolina has long held sway over all who have lived there, but surprisingly, those from outside of the South often offer the most interesting

perspectives on the region. *The Travelers' Charleston: Accounts of Charleston and Lowcountry, South Carolina, 1666-1861*, edited by Jennie Holton Fant, chronicles the discovery of the Carolinas in the mid-seventeenth century until the beginning of the American Civil War, primarily focusing on Charleston. The city was an increasingly popular destination for American and European travelers who came to observe, to write, and to experience the lowcountry culture. These visitors often recounted their impressions of this exotic locale, as well as their struggle to understand how a region of such charm and beauty could also perpetuate the injustices of slavery. Fant has chosen sixteen firsthand accounts written by a variety of travelers over a two-hundred-year period, and she provides rich historical context for each narrative. Through her well-researched selections of writings, she offers the reader a broad social and historical lens for the often contradictory opinions of lowcountry visitors.

The first accounts of the area describe a lush wilderness with unique geography (rivers, islands, and inlets), which early English explorers considered extremely desirable for colonization. Teaming with fish and animal life, as well as rich pastureland and forests, it was an "earthly paradise." Yet when surveyor and naturalist John Lawson came to the region in the early 1700s, he noted that natural resources were already being depleted and the Native American population was suffering from European encroachment and disease. The growing resentment and distrust felt by the Native Americans would later result in the murder of Lawson by members of the Tuscarora tribe.

By the 1770s, Charleston had become a center of American society and a strong economic force. Josiah Quincy, Jr., an attorney who had assisted John Adams in the defense of the British soldiers involved in the Boston Massacre, made his way to the city in 1773. Sent to the Carolinas on the eve of the American Revolution to recover his health, Quincy partook of the city's glittering social season, dining in grand homes and talking politics with Charlestonians. Sadly, while he enjoyed the dances, horse races, and theatre, the journey did not improve his health and he died of tuberculosis while returning to Massachusetts.

Lured by adventure and the tales of the exotic coastal South, many European tourists and travel writers found their way to Charleston. John Davis, son of a wool draper, sailed to America in 1798 and found rich subject matter for his books and travelogues. Davis had modest success with his aptly titled *Travels*, a romanticized account of his time in America, which included "odes" to crickets and mockingbirds, as well as descriptions of the population of Charleston. While he described the beauty of the country and the affability of the wealthy family whose child he tutored, he also freely expressed his feelings on slavery, condemning the treatment of the black populace as cruel and encouraging the support of emancipation.

As the book moves into the nineteenth century, the accounts reflect the city's growth and political undercurrents. Ravaged by fires, storms, and disease, Charleston had survived to become a beautiful and vibrant

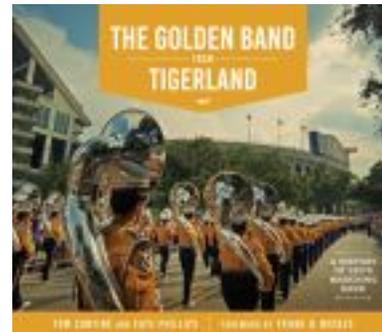
city, yet it was separated by huge social and economic gulfs. Feminist, abolitionist, and social reformer, Harriet Martineau was unimpressed during her 1835 stay in the city. Astutely sensing the increasing political unrest, she marveled at discussions in which words such as “justice” and “oppression” were used in talking of tariffs, but not of slavery. While in Charleston, Martineau visited both a slave market and a slavemasters’s home and she considered the experiences horrific. She believed that “if the moral gloom which oppresses the spirit of the stranger were felt by the resident, of course this condition of society would not endure another day.” Yet this stranger could see the inevitable consequences of slavery, even if many Charlestonians could not.

The final narrative comes from Boston native, Anna Brackett, who arrived in Charleston in 1860. Brackett was one of many Northern educators who were recruited to train young Southern women in pedagogical methods. A fervent feminist and suffragist, Brackett often felt at odds with her Massachusetts upbringing and her newfound home of Charleston. Even though she was a witness to the secession of the state of South Carolina and the Confederate firing on Fort Sumter in 1861, Brackett was fascinated by the traditions and beauty of the city. She understood that the South’s way of life was passing away just as the region was trying so strongly to hold on to it. In this nostalgic account, Brackett looked back kindly on her former students, who she was confident would share her teachings with generations of children of the postwar South.

Interestingly, Fant chooses to end the book just as the Civil War begins, yet the reader knows what is to come. An important Confederate port, Charleston was a prime military target of the Northern Army, and was under relentless siege. The constant bombardment, as well as fire and disease, led the city to finally fall into the hands of Union troops on February 18, 1865, only a little over a month before the South surrendered. However, it is the earlier years that are captured by the narratives included in *The Travelers’ Charleston: Accounts of Charleston and Lowcountry, South Carolina, 1666-1861*, reflecting the transformation of the region from a swampy “paradise,” to a city poised for war.

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**The Golden Band from Tigerland: A History of LSU’s Marching Band.** Tom Continé and Faye Phillips. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2016. ISBN 978-0-8071-6350-4 (Hardback). \$39.95. 148 p.



No one who has heard the thrilling first four notes of “Four Corners,” the pregame salute at each of Louisiana State University’s (LSU) home football games, could forget the “Golden Band from Tigerland.” Authors Tom Continé, alumnus of the LSU marching band, and Faye Phillips, retired Associate Dean of Libraries for Special Collections at LSU, have crafted a thoughtful tribute to the storied band. Their book, *The Golden Band from Tigerland: A History of LSU’s Marching Band*, weaves a fascinating narrative that traces the group’s history from its modest beginnings in 1893 as an eleven-member cadet band, to its current place as one of the most preeminent college marching bands in the country. Organized in three separate “epochs” and including 150 beautiful photographs, the book chronologically follows LSU’s marching band through its multiple directors, its periods of transition, and its connection with the university.

Interestingly, the history of the LSU marching band reflects the history of Louisiana itself, as well as the colorful personalities who have inhabited it. Organized by future governor Ruffin G. Pleasant in 1893 when he was a cadet at Louisiana State University (then an all-male military institute), the Cadet Band initially provided accompaniment for military drills. Just a few decades later they were incorporating jazz numbers into their repertoire, marching in Mardi Gras parades, and participating in halftime shows during the college’s football games. Yet, it was another Louisiana governor, Huey P. Long, who would understand the importance of the band to both the university and the state. Not surprisingly, the most intriguing sections of the book deal with the unusual connection between the LSU marching band and Governor Long. From his election in 1928 until his assassination in 1935, Long was in large part responsible for moving the band into what the authors describe as its first “Golden Age.” The governor often accompanied the band on trips, composed songs for their performances, and periodically led them in parades as the unofficial drum major. He recognized the significance of his “Show Band of the South,” not only as a calling card for the state, but also for his own political interests.

Additionally, Long hired one of the most charismatic band directors in the school’s history, Castro Carazo. Carazo, a