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Rags and Bones: An Exploration of The Band

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tem of rights-of-the-woods, which prevailed during this time period (p. 34), enabled these residents of Appalachia to endure the changes, good and bad, wrought by the Civil War and other world events.

During and after the Civil War, the botanical drug trade boomed, and the Southern Appalachians experienced its greatest boom, exporting 1.4 million pounds of ginseng over the course of three years (as compared to 30,000 in the 1790s). However, by the early 1900s, ginseng, as well as other herbs like lady's slipper, pinkroot and Virginia snakeroot, became scarce. How did this happen? The answer was complex. Although some blamed it on overharvesting by sang diggers, which may have been a contributing factor – the greatest impact was due to deforestation to make way for the timber industry's railroads. The expansion of livestock and coal extraction also exacerbated this situation.

With the turn of the twentieth century, there was renewed interest in growing ginseng due in part to the back-to-the-land movement. Ginseng fever took hold, with some successes in the artificial cultivation of ginseng. World War I also temporarily revived the botanical drug trade and some families relied on these roots and herbs during the Great Depression. By the 1950s however, there was a major shift away from botanical drugs to antibiotics and synthetic drugs; and the creation of various state and federal laws, and international treaties restricted commons rights to many medical plants including ginseng.

Thus ended the heyday of ginseng – but it has not been forgotten and in West Virginia for example, certain places carry that history in their names: Seng Run, Seng Camp Creek, and Three-Prong Holler. Likewise, the author found a trove of history in his research. Previously the Assistant Professor of History at Dalton State College in Georgia, Manget recently joined the North Carolina School for Science and Mathematics as a founding faculty member of the Morganton Campus. For this book, he culled through old newspapers, store ledgers, county court records, library archives and special collections, historical society papers and other resources; and his back pages of footnotes were just as interesting as the story of the botanical trade itself. The details were impressive, but in a few places the anecdotal stories led the reader somewhat away from the main theme

of the section before returning to a neat summary of the chapter.

This book would fit well on both the academic and public library shelves, especially in any collections of Appalachian Studies. For those interested in the history of the Appalachian region, Manget provides a link on his website to various archives and special collections (see *The Southern Highlander*).

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Rags and Bones: An Exploration of The Band

Jeff Sellars and
Kevin C. Neece, eds.
Jackson: University Press of
Mississippi, 2022
ISBN: 9781496842978
186 p. \$99.99 (Hbk)



South Carolina's Lowcountry basketry is a uniquely beautiful example of African American folk art, and in this historical nonfiction fourth edition of *Row Upon Row: Sea Grass Baskets of the South Carolina Lowcountry*, Dale Rosengarten describes the history of Lowcountry basketry, the connection to thriving rice production and the difficulties confronted by South Carolina Lowcountry sewers. In this edition, the author added the modern-day challenges the tradition and the sewers face. "Basketry was introduced in Carolina in the late seventeenth century with origins in ancient African folk art" (p.1). African American basketry grew out of a utilitarian need for rice cultivation, but is now being created as conceptual art and respected and coveted by museums, collectors, and consumers.

This book includes an in-depth, well-researched examination of Lowcountry basket making that has a significant influence on the readers' understanding of the issues encountered by sewers both past and present. The book reveals the contributions the baskets and sewers had to the success of rice cultivation in the Lowcountry plantations. The importance of the sewers, their endurance, and the significance of basket-making are unmistakable. "By the mid-eighteenth century, rice would become the principal crop and attribut-

ed to the wealthiest group of planters in America” (p.1). Rice cultivation could not have been possible without the fanner, a coiled basket crafted by enslaved Africans used to fan the rice to blow away the chaff. While rice production was the leading motive behind the manufacture of baskets, other functions would emerge, such as using them for “African American babies sunning in blanket-padded ‘fanner baskets’, supervised by ‘mauma or nurse’ or used as a head tote basket to carry heavy loads or used as sewing, vegetable, and bread baskets, and work baskets” (pp.13-14). “The crafting of baskets also contributed to the economic opportunities and independence of enslaved men, as well as helping women’s mental health through avenues of expression with one sewer stating it’s enjoyed because it’s a relaxing kind of therapy” (p.33).

Explanations of the techniques such as coiling, materials used called the foundation, and stitching elements called the binder or weaver are described in detail. The book provides several illustrations of the tools handled, the labor involved, and the completed creations. In this latest edition, Rosengarten’s expertise in African American basketry is evident from years of fieldwork and investigation, which continues to this day revealing the challenges that are being confronted. “Challenges such as imported knock-offs, scarce sweetgrass, highway development, and the opposition met with trying to convince the newer generations to carry on the tradition threaten the future of the trade” (p.51). The author’s ability to continue the research to include up-to-date information is notable and an indicator of the commitment to South Carolina Lowcountry basketry promotion and education.

The book is clear, concise, and easy to understand, and for readers with no previous knowledge about Lowcountry basket making, African American folk art, or Gullah/Geechee culture, it is exceedingly informative. Rosengarten includes numerous sewers’ experiences that enhance interest, adds authenticity, and gives the reader a glimpse into this traditional craft’s past and present. The limited documentation on Lowcountry basket making, the methods used, the artists’ stories, and the impact these elements had on rice cultivation make this book even more special and valued. It is apparent that the author’s purpose in writing the book is to highlight the tradition and

to ensure that history is preserved.

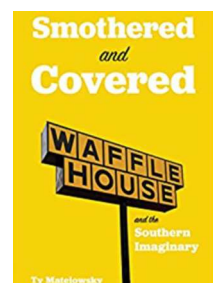
Row Upon Row: Sea Grass Baskets of the South Carolina Lowcountry’s greatest worth is the contribution it has to the safeguarding of Lowcountry African American culture. The content reveals a crucial part of southern history. If readers are drawn to learning about the historical significance of Lowcountry basketry, the specific creation process, and African American art, this book is recommended. It is also a pertinent addition to any public or academic library collection.

Rosengarten is a historian and curator at the College of Charleston whose research of coiled basketry spans three decades. In the early 1980s, McKissick Museum employed Rosengarten to interview basket makers in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, purchase baskets, and curate an exhibition showcasing the artistry of basketry. Rosengarten has authored a number of publications centered on the African American tradition of coiled basketry and continues to conduct work in this area of study establishing her as an authoritative expert in the field. Additional Rosengarten titles include *Grass Roots: African Origins of an American Art* and *Lowcountry Basketry: Folk Arts in the Marketplace*.

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Smothered and Covered: Waffle House and the Southern Imaginary

Ty Matejowsky
Tuscaloosa: The University of
Alabama Press, 2023
ISBN: 97808173 94301
210 p. \$39.95 (Hbk)



Whether the distinctive yellow and black Waffle House sign elicits a sense of comfort or dread, it resonates with many as a familiar friend in the southern landscape. Even the bright yellow book jacket of *Smothered and Covered: Waffle House and the Southern Imaginary*, invokes feelings of nostalgia for a restaurant open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to provide your breakfast-all-day needs. Yet, author Ty Matejowsky’s book is not a sentimental retrospective of Waffle House. His background as an anthropologist compels him