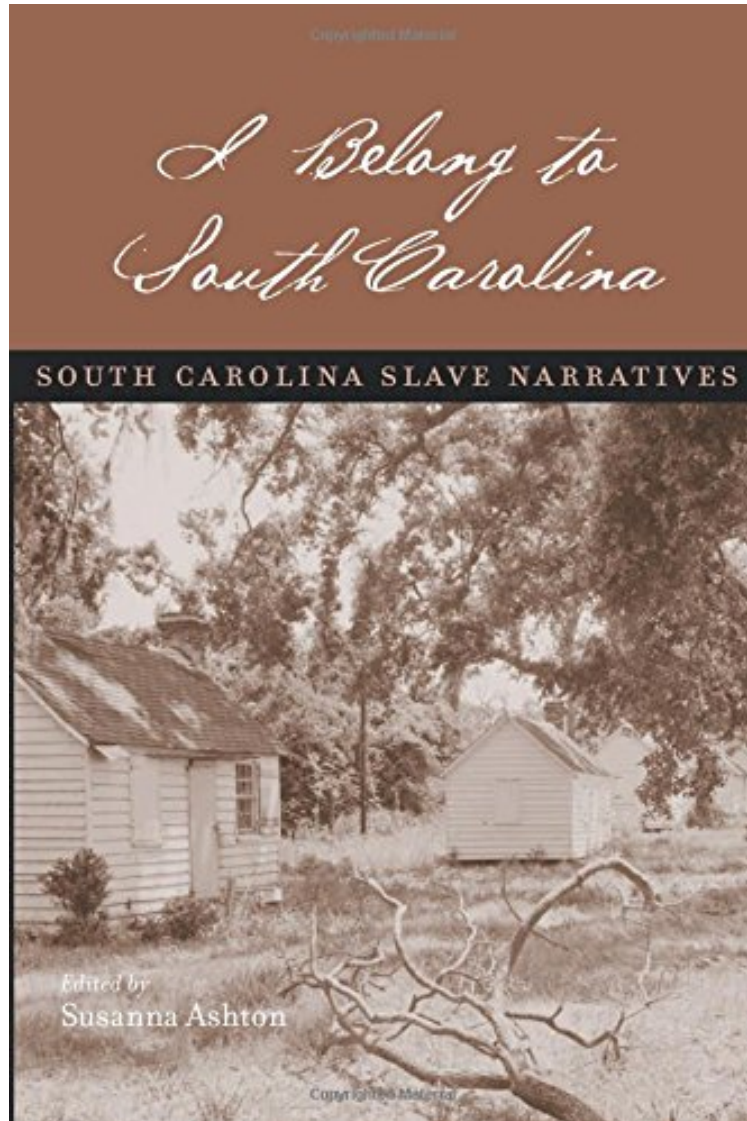


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I Belong to South Carolina: South Carolina Slave Narratives

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slave accounts in this book are devastating. There is some doubt about their origins in some cases, but they sound credible. One was dictated anonymously to an abolitionist in London. Jacob Stroyer's account describes his service for the Confederate Army at Fort Sumter. South Carolina enacted a strict bondservant code in 1664, but only white indentured servants were there at the time. The first three blacks arrived from Bermuda in 1670. Subsequent laws forced slaveowners to mutilate their slaves for repeated offenses, especially running away. Not surprisingly, it became an extremely violent place.

Out of the hundreds of published slave narratives, only a handful exist specific to South Carolina, and most of these are not readily available to modern readers. This collection restores to print seven slave narratives documenting the lived realities of slavery as it existed across the Palmetto State's upcountry, midlands, and lowcountry, from plantation culture to urban servitude. First published between the late eighteenth century and the dawn of the twentieth, these richly detailed firsthand accounts present a representative cross section of slave experiences, from religious awakenings and artisan apprenticeships to sexual exploitations and harrowing escapes. In their distinctive individual voices, narrators celebrate and mourn the lives of fellow slaves, contemplate the meaning of freedom, and share insights into the social patterns and cultural controls exercised during a turbulent period in American history. Each narrative is preceded by an introduction to place its content and publication history in historical context. The volume also features an afterword surveying other significant slave narratives and related historical documents on South Carolina. *I Belong to South Carolina* reinserts a chorus of powerful voices of the dispossessed into South Carolina's public history, reminding us of the cruelties of the past and the need for vigilant guardianship of liberty in the present and future. *I Belong to South Carolina* is edited and introduced by Susanna Ashton with the assistance of Robyn E. Adams, Maximilien Blanton, Laura V. Bridges, E. Langston Culler, Cooper Leigh Hill, Deanna L. Panetta, and Kelly E. Riddle.