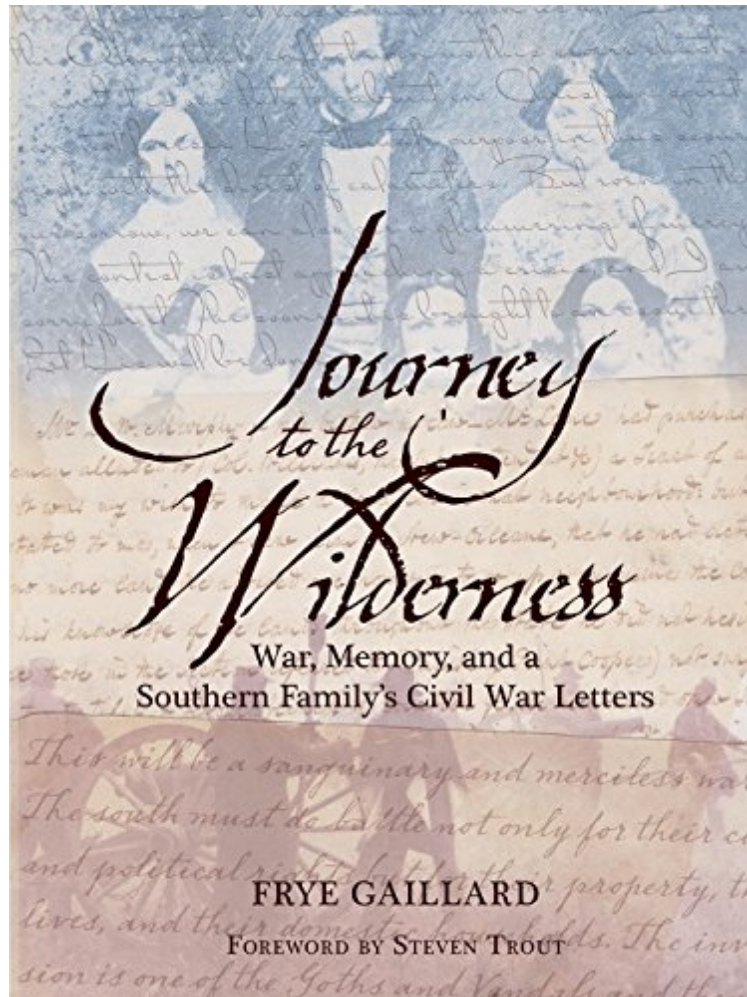


(Read now) Journey to the Wilderness: War, Memory, and a Southern Family's Civil War Letters

Journey to the Wilderness: War, Memory, and a Southern Family's Civil War Letters

Frye Gaillard

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Frye Gaillard : Journey to the Wilderness: War, Memory, and a Southern Family's Civil War Letters before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Journey to the Wilderness: War, Memory, and a Southern Family's Civil War Letters:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Zachg76Very nice historical book0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Richard HarrisonGreat Book3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A gem for anyone drawn to Civil War history and to the war's continuing fallout after 150 yearsBy Si DunnThe Civil War ended 150 years ago. Yet, it remains alive in many aspects of American culture and politics.For those of us who grew up in the South in the 1940s and 1950s, it was not uncommon to have elderly relatives who had

been small children during the war and who still remembered some of the conflict and how it affected their families. It also was not uncommon to hear the war described as if the South had not been defeated. (Indeed, my elementary school was named after Confederate General Robert E. Lee, and I attended infamous Little Rock Central High at the time when it was forced to re-open and admit black students under the protection of paratroopers sent by President Eisenhower). Journey to the Wilderness is structured around an intimate, engrossing collection of Civil War-era letters. They were written by some of Frye Gaillard's ancestors, including his great-great-grandfather, Thomas Gaillard, and Thomas's sons, Franklin Gaillard and Richebourg Gaillard, both of whom were officers in the Confederate army. The letters eloquently capture the high hopes of Southerners as the long fight begins. Then the grim realities of mid-19th-century warfare begin to hit home. As the war stretches out, some of the Gaillards' letters from the front lines continue to praise the gallantries of Southern infantry and artillery batteries, even in defeat, while condemning the apparent ineffectiveness of Southern cavalry units in certain battles. At the same time, the two Confederate officers spare few details when describing deaths and injuries witnessed during combat, in such notable battles as Shiloh, Gettysburg and Sharpsburg. The family letters in his book, Frye Gaillard writes, "help paint a portrait of a horrifying time in American history, a time when 622,000 soldiers died on American soil, and when the southern half of the nation—so righteous and defiant when the conflict began—experienced a loss that was measured not only in blood but also in what one of my ancestors called the 'cruelty and humiliation' of defeat." Frye Gaillard also devotes part of his important book to his own "reflections on war and memory—on how the past lives on in the present, and how it draws us, slowly if we let it, in the painful direction of a more honest truth." For anyone drawn to Civil War history and to the conflict's continuing ramifications, this book is a gem to seek out and read. (Special thanks to NewSouth Books for providing a review copy.)

On the one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the Civil War, award-winning author Frye Gaillard reflects on the war and the way we remember it through letters written by his family, including his great-great grandfather and his two sons, both of whom were Confederate officers. As Gaillard explains in his introductory essay, he came of age in a Southern generation that viewed the war as a glorious lost cause. But as he read through letters collected by members of his family, he confronted a far more sobering truth. "Oh, this terrible war," wrote his great-great-grandfather, Thomas Gaillard. "Who can measure the troubles? the affliction? it has brought upon us all?" To this real-time anguish in voices from the past, Gaillard offers a personal remembrance of the shadow of war and its place in the haunted identity of the South. "My own generation," he writes, "was, perhaps, the last that was raised on stories of gallantry and courage . . . Oddly, mine was also the one of the first generations to view the Civil War through the lens of civil rights? to see . . . connections and flaws in Southern history that earlier generations couldn't bear to face."

"The Gaillard family letters from the Civil War era and Frye Gaillard's contemporary introductory remarks provide a lens through which we can better see the inner lives of those who made a terrible choice in going to war to preserve the institution of slavery. This book serves as a cautionary tale that directs us to embrace the sacredness of all human life, not custom or community fervor or personal pride, as the ultimate value." ?Sena Jeter Naslund, author of *Four Spirits*, *Ahab's Wife*, and *Adam Eve* "Frye Gaillard's excavation of what the American Civil War was actually like for his ancestors, his nimble parsing of myth and memory, creates an . . . unsettling effect. Little that he discovers fits the Lost Cause version of history that he once inherited, like family china, from his Southern elders -- a version that for better or worse lives with us still. Thus, as we read his remarkable book, we stand, in a sense, on the battlefield . . . looking out again on a landscape of war . . . Frye peels away layers of cultural myth and family legend to expose long-hidden pain, ambivalence, and horror." ?Steven Trout, director of the Center for War and Memory at the University of South Alabama "For anyone drawn to Civil War history and to the conflict's continuing ramifications, this book is a gem to seek out and read." ?Si Dunn, Books, Books More (New) Books "Frye Gaillard has done a great service by publishing these heartbreaking letters from three men who recorded their thoughts on the battlefield and the many relatives who waited at home, sometimes in vain. He has helped us accept the fact that pain -- both physical and mental -- far exceeded the so-called glory of that horrible war." ?The Charlotte Observer "Gaillard is a thoughtful writer. It is very hard to stop reading this book. His insightful commentary and the letters he includes let readers see the emotional conflicts the war brought and left in its wake. In *Journey to the Wilderness*, Gaillard [finds] no magic wand to resolve the war's legacy, but he does enable the reader to understand it better." ?Michael Thomason, *Montgomery Advertiser* "Frye Gaillard features a carefully-selected and edited batch of correspondence that, combined with his own commentary, offers a sweeping look at how the Civil War was anticipated, endured, and remembered by the people who lived through and helped shape our collective memory of the conflict. *Journey to the Wilderness* is a provocative book." ?Mike Bunn, *The Historian's Manifesto* "In *Journey to the Wilderness*, Frye Gaillard, one of Alabama's most prolific and most important non-fiction writers, structures his own meditation on the past in a candid, informed, beautifully written commentary on a series of excerpts from a collection of Gaillard family Civil War letters." ?Don Noble, *Tuscaloosa News* "Gaillard draws upon a cache of family letters to peel back layers of cultural myth, memory and legend. In doing so he exposes the Civil War's underlying ambivalence, horror and pain.

The author offers a sober reminder of 'how the past lives on in the present, and how it draws us, slowly if we let it, in the painful direction of a more honest truth.'" ?The News Observer "This little book will appeal especially to readers who are native Southerners who came of age during the Civil Rights era. An introspective reflection on the Civil War and the way Southerners of Gaillard's generation remember it." ?Civil War News "A beautifully written personal and moral quest in search of insufferable truths, Frye Gaillard's *Journey to the Wilderness* brings as much clarity to the lingering darkness in the Southern soul in a few emotionally honest pages as I have seen in volumes of hagiography, professional Southernism and clichéd penses that plague analysis of the Civil War." ?Rod Davis, *Southern Literary From the Inside Flap* On the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, award-winning author Frye Gaillard reflects on the war--and the way we remember it--through the lens of letters written by his family, including great-great grandfather, Thomas Gaillard, and Thomas's sons, Franklin and Richebourg, both of whom were Confederate officers. As Frye Gaillard explains in his deeply felt introductory essay, he came of age in a Southern generation that viewed the war as a glorious lost cause. But as he read through letters collected and handed down by members his family, he confronted a far more sobering truth. "Oh, this terrible war," wrote Thomas Gaillard. "Who can measure the troubles -- the affliction -- it has brought upon us all?" To this real-time anguish in voices from the past, Gaillard offers a personal remembrance of the shadow of war and its place in the haunted identity of the South. "My own generation," he writes, "was, perhaps, the last that was raised on stories of gallantry and courage, an admiration of the dashing generals who led our fighting men into battle, and whose heroism was undiminished by defeat. Oddly, mine was also the one of the first generations to view the Civil War through the lens of civil rights--to see, often quite reluctantly, connections and flaws in southern history that earlier generations couldn't bear to face." About the Author Frye Gaillard is a writer in residence at the University of South Alabama and award-winning author of more than 20 books, including *Watermelon Wine: The Spirit of Country Music*, *The Quilt: And the Poetry of Alabama Music*, *Journey to the Wilderness: War, Memory, and a Southern Family's Civil War Letters*, *The Books That Mattered: A Reader's Memoir*, and *Go South to Freedom*, all published by NewSouth Books. His book *A Hard Rain: America in the 1960s, Our Decade of Hope and Innocence Lost* is forthcoming from NewSouth. He is the winner of the Lillian Smith Award, the Clarence Cason Award for Non-Fiction, the Alabama Library Association Book of the Year Award, and the 2016 Eugene Current-Garcia Award For Distinction in Literary Scholarship. Steven Trout is chair of the English Department and director of the Center for the Study of War and Memory at the University of South Alabama.