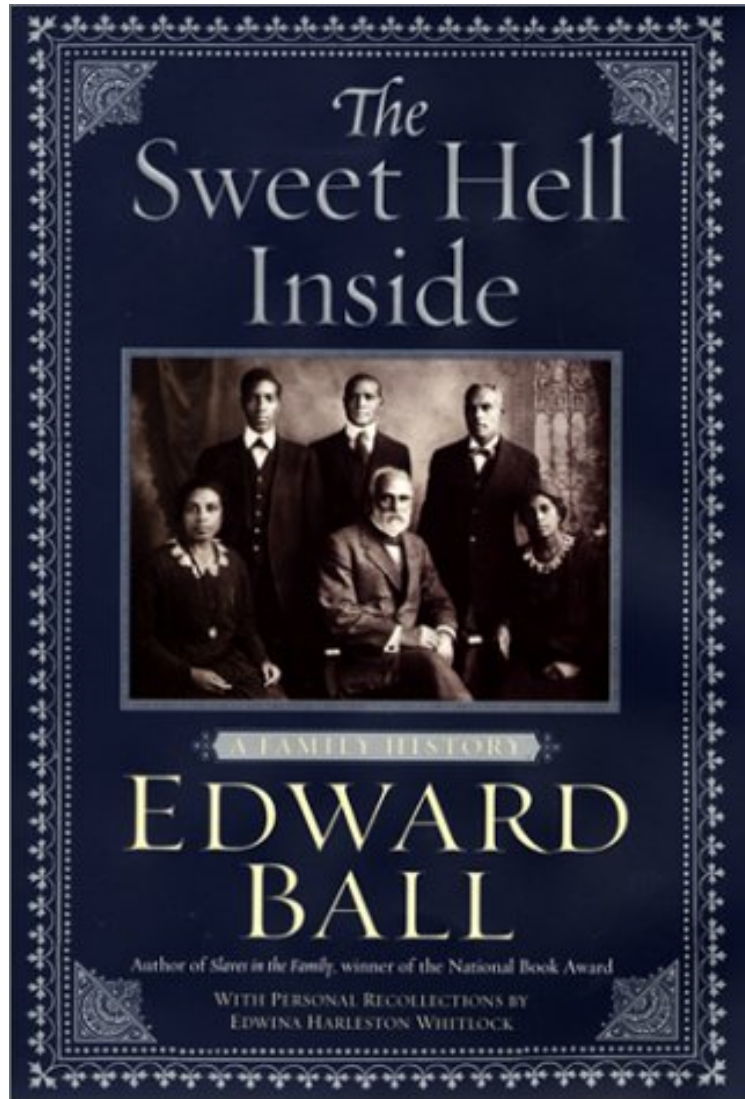


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The Sweet Hell Inside: A Family History

Edward Ball

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Edward Ball : The Sweet Hell Inside: A Family History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Sweet Hell Inside: A Family History:

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With the panoramic story of one "colored elite" family who rises from the ashes of the Civil War to create an American cultural dynasty Edward Ball offers the historical and, literary successor to his highly acclaimed *Slaves in the Family*, a New York Times bestseller and winner of the 1998 National Book Award. *The Sweet Hell Inside* recounts the lives of the Harleston family of South Carolina, the progeny of a Southern gentleman and his slave who cast off their blemished roots and achieved affluence in part through a surprisingly successful funeral parlor business. Their wealth afforded the Harlestons the comfort of chauffeurs, tailored clothes, and servants whose skin was darker than theirs. It also launched the family into a generation of glory as painters, performers, and photographers in the "high yellow" society of America's colored upper class. The Harlestons' remarkable one-hundred-year journey spans the waning days of Reconstruction, the precious art world of the early 1900s, the back alleys of the Jazz Age, and the dawn of the civil rights movement. Enhanced by the recollections of the family's archivist, eighty-four-year-old Edwina Harleston Whitlock -- whose bloodline the author shares *The Sweet Hell Inside* features a portrait artist whose subjects included industrialist Pierre Du Pont; a black classical composer in the Lost Generation of 1920s Paris; an orphanage founder who created a famous brass band from the ranks of his abandoned waifs, a number of whom went on to burgeoning careers in jazz; and a Harleston mistress who doubled as an abortionist. With evocative and engrossing storytelling, Edward Ball introduces a cast of historical characters rarely seen before: cultured, vain, imperfect, rich, and black, a family made up of eccentrics who defied social convention yet whose advantages could not protect them from segregation's locked doors, a plague of early death, and the stigma of children born outside marriage. *The Sweet Hell Inside* raises the curtain on a unique family drama in the pageant of American life and uncovers a fascinating lost world.

From Publishers Weekly In researching the bestseller *Slaves in the Family* (1998), Ball encountered William Harleston (1804-1874), a white man whose family considered him a bachelor though he lived for 25 years with Kate Wilson, his former slave, on and around the South Carolina rice plantation where he was born. They had eight children (born between 1843 and 1867) whose family history is recounted here largely via the memories of Edwina Harleston Whitlock (b. 1916), Ball's previously unknown relation, who referenced the "little red book" and "snippets of letters, handwritten copies of wills and genealogical charts" passed on to her by an uncle. Covering nearly 200 years, Ball's book tells "a tale of black and white sex in America, and its latter-day harvest," distinguished by remarkable family accomplishments and sprinkled with diverting scandal. By 19th-century standards, William and Kate's sons were educated professionals (butler, housepainter, tailor); their daughters married well. Their son Edwin's undertaking business brought wealth and status, affording the next generation a good education and the means to pursue the arts, teaching and social work. More fame arrived when Edwin's daughter married Daniel Joseph Jenkins, "a dark minister who was born a slave," who became founder of the orphanage in Charleston that spawned the Jenkins Orphanage Band, a force in the development of jazz. Ball's somewhat uneven work often digresses into such subjects as the history of jazz, the Harlem Renaissance and even embalming. A genealogical chart would have benefited readers, and scholars will find the notes a thorny grab bag. But Ball's mosaic illuminates the Harlestons' "little-known but fascinating role in the American national saga." More than 60 photos not seen by PW. (Oct.) Forecast: Given the attention paid Ball's previous book and the currency of his subject, especially following the Jefferson-Hemings story, this one should attract strong attention and approach the sales of its predecessor. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Ball, who won the National Book Award for *Slaves in the Family*, returns to his Southern roots to find the Harlestons, part of the small "colored elite" of Charleston, and tell their story from the 1840s through 2000. It is a remarkable journey, with Ball tracking the family and their connections from the racially and culturally cloistered South Carolina to London, Paris, New York, Chicago, and many other stops. Family members won fame and modest if sometimes fleeting fortunes as undertakers, ministers, musicians, artists, and more. Especially significant was the Jenkins Orphanage Band, which escaped Charleston in high-stepping style and became an early forebear of ragtime and jazz. Ball sometimes overplays his sources in speculating on motives and relationships. But his background excursions into black urban life and economy and his accounts of musicians, intellectuals, and artists struggling to find their way among black and white make real the hidden world(s) of an "in-between class" too long in the shadows of history and memory. - Randall M. Miller, Saint Joseph's Univ., Philadelphia Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist The Harlestons of South Carolina were descended from a slave woman and her master, the start of a line of fair-skinned blacks whose rise to prominence in the state through commerce, social service, and the arts. Their wealth protected the Harlestons from the privations suffered by other blacks, but their racial heritage subjected them to the same stifling discrimination. Ball, author of award-winning *Slaves in the Family* (1998), was approached by Edwina Harleston Whitlock, a distant black relative (a sixth cousin, twice removed), to take a storehouse of genealogical material she had about her family and to write its history. The result is a stunning look at a fascinating family and the history of blacks in the U.S. from the 1800s to the 1960s. Through the Harlestons, Ball explores the privileged though restricted lives of mixed-race blacks in a family that produced a portrait artist who

painted industrialist PierreDuPont and a musician who found fame in Paris in the 1920s forcomposing classical and jazz music. Ball also explores the broadercontext of changes in racial politics and culture in the U.S. from therise of black consciousness in music and art to the advent of thecivil rights movement. Sure to be as popular as his earlierbook. Vanessa BushCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved