

*The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library*

“”

**KEEP UP**  
*the*  
**GOOD WORK(S)**

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*Readers Comment  
on Documenting the  
American South*



<http://docsouth.unc.edu/>

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KEEP UP  
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*Readers Comment  
on Documenting  
the American South*

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*Selected and with a preface by Joe A. Hewitt*

*Edited by Judith M. Panitch*

*The University of North Carolina*

*at Chapel Hill Library*

*Chapel Hill, North Carolina*

2002

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/>



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*Documenting the American South* has been created with the generous support of The National Endowment for the Humanities, The Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Library of Congress/Ameritech National Digital Library Competition, and private endowments established by our donors.

In the interest of allowing our users to speak for themselves, we have introduced only minimal editorial changes (e.g., correcting typographical errors, standardizing punctuation) intended to facilitate reading. Some comments have been abridged when doing so does not alter meaning. All identifying facts have been removed.

*Design by Alison Duncan.*

## PREFACE

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In 1994, we at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library undertook the experimental digitization of a small number of highly circulating slave narratives. When making that handful of encoded texts public, we had little idea how the project would grow and flourish, or how deeply it would affect our readers and shape our own vision of the digital library. Now, eight years later, we add the thousandth full-text title to the collection that has since taken shape as *Documenting the American South (DAS)*, marking the occasion with a celebration and symposium here at Chapel Hill on March 1, 2002. This booklet has been prepared as background for that event, its contents culled from more than 1,500 email messages sent to the *DAS* website between January 1999 and June 2001.

As of this writing, *DAS* comprises six sections designed to shed light upon the history, literature, and culture of the American South. They are: "First Person Narratives of the American South, 1860 to 1920"; "A Library of Southern Literature, Beginnings to 1920"; "North American Slave Narratives, Beginnings to 1920"; "The Southern Homefront, 1861-1865"; "The Church in the Southern Black Community, Beginnings to 1920"; and "The North Carolina Experience, Beginnings to 1940." Content, which now includes not only the encoded searchable text of print publications, but also images of illustrations, manuscript items, maps, letters, currency, and other artifacts, is selected to emphasize social history and the stories and viewpoints of ordinary people. While prominent issues of political and military history are not ignored, *DAS* brings to light and makes accessible primary sources which have been neglected by students and scholars, or which have not been widely available to the public. *DAS* brings the South's past vividly to life by presenting works which both accurately capture that past and resonate in today's society.

As University Librarian at UNC-Chapel Hill, I began perusing email messages sent to *DAS* staff for several reasons: to find quotes for use in grant proposals and fundraising; to seek evidence confirming that endowment funds directed to *DAS* were in fact being used to support a worthwhile program; and to seek insight into the behavior of users of online texts as such collections become an increasingly prominent aspect of research library services. After years of administrative work and relative isolation from direct contact with library users, reading *DAS* messages became for me more than just an exercise. It was a compelling, revealing, and gratifying experience. Often deeply personal and touching, the messages describe how valuable *DAS* has been to our readers. Scores of individuals have discovered their family histories; many others have begun to relate to the nation's past in ways that inform and reorient their perspectives on important issues in the

present. One reader, expressing a common sentiment, reported that *DAS* has led him to "a fluent empathy for the everyday lives of the past." It is obvious from the large number of such messages that *DAS* has connected Carolina's libraries and scholars with a dynamic and engaged audience of new readers. Through *DAS*, the University is greatly extending the benefits of its cultural resources to the general public and enhancing their value as a public good.

*DAS* was conceived primarily as a service to the large Southern Studies community at UNC-Chapel Hill and to students and scholars of the South in colleges and universities across the country. Reader comments emphatically attest to our success in meeting those objectives. Faculty in institutions of all sizes and types are referring students to *DAS* to support coursework. Many students, particularly in small institutions without extensive library collections, depend on *DAS* as their main source of materials for research papers, theses, and dissertations. Even in universities with strong print and microform collections, *DAS* electronic texts make researchers' work more productive and efficient.

In addition to the higher education community, *DAS* is reaching a substantial audience of K-12 readers. Teachers in classrooms across the country report using *DAS* in courses on southern literature and history and especially in curricula on African American heritage. Students use *DAS* for class papers and projects and many parents consult *DAS* to help their children with classroom assignments. By making these valuable and engaging primary texts available to readers in their homes, *DAS* enables a shared, multi-generational educational experience in the family setting. It is clear from readers' comments that the availability of these high-quality, carefully chosen primary sources represents a powerful educational opportunity for a large number of innovative teachers and motivated learners.

The most unexpected finding of our review of *DAS* messages is the high level of response from the general public. Although we expected that *DAS* would be of some interest to non-academic audiences, the scope and intensity of public engagement with *DAS* came as a surprise. In fact, some 60% of the messages received over the past two years were from the general public. Of those, 30% asked reference questions and 6% enquired about permissions of various types, indicating *DAS*'s utility for further disseminating these texts and stimulating new uses for them. The remainder of messages commented on the site itself.

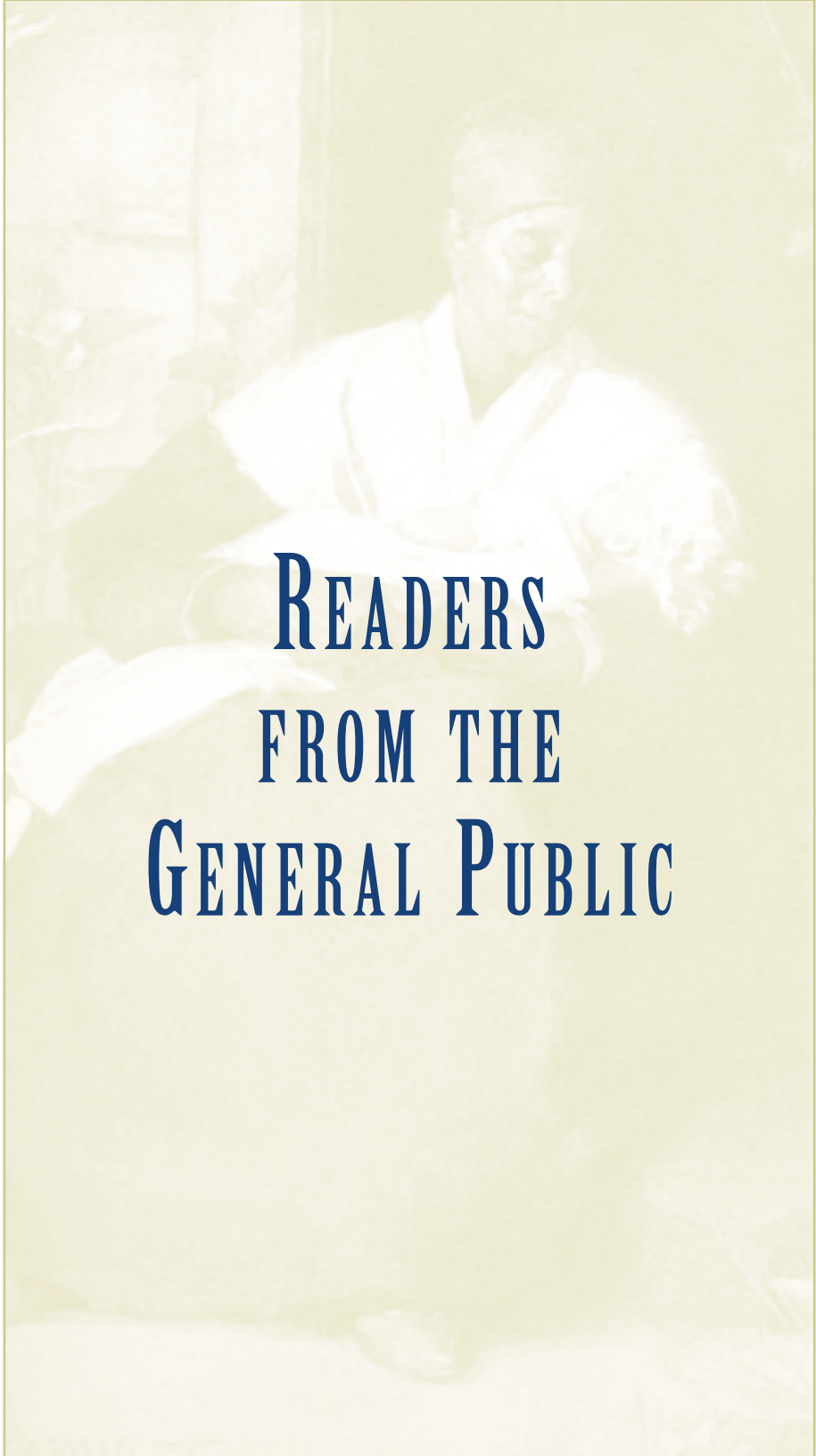
One point that stands out in these messages is the sheer diversity of non-academic users, including genealogists and local historians, Civil War buffs, African American heritage researchers, interpretive rangers at national historic sites, docents in museums and historic homes, serious and apparently highly qualified independent scholars, and a truly

astounding array of readers working on creative projects of various types — novels, genre literature, poetry, short stories, screen plays, documentary films, and musicals, and performers looking for stories to read aloud. Many readers report that they came to *DAS* with a specific goal in mind but wound up reading widely, an obvious parallel to the traditional experience of readers browsing the stacks of a well stocked library of print volumes.

*DAS* readers of all types frequently express their appreciation for the quality of the *DAS* collections, especially recognizing the work of the scholarly editors and the bibliographers who selected the texts and wrote the introductory essays to each segment. Readers are also aware of the amount of work that goes into careful scanning, coding, and proofreading of digitized texts. They express deep gratitude that the UNC-Chapel Hill Library has chosen to make its collections available to the public in this way and they strongly commend the University for supporting this service. Some readers go on to say that *DAS* and projects like it exemplify “what the Internet is all about” and a few articulate the proposition that research universities and other cultural institutions must lead the way in making appropriate and educationally productive use of the Web. Especially important to many readers is the fact that *DAS* collections are available to them for free, unlike many other high quality full-text digital resources. The goodwill expressed for the University, the Library, and the funding agencies and donors that make public access to these valuable collections possible is immense.

For me, as a library administrator, perhaps the most gratifying theme in the messages is a perception from some *DAS* readers that they have been privileged and empowered by the availability of these collections. This is especially the case for readers who have not had access to first-class library collections or to archives of primary sources. The cumulative effect of reading the messages is the realization that by making these collections available, the Library is doing something far more than simply extending access and improving convenience to our traditional population of students and faculty, but is reaching a new community of readers with important needs that have not been well met in the past. The transformative potential of *DAS* and similar programs for the Library’s educational services to the public at large is enormous. Today, with one thousand volumes behind us, we work to expand the scope of digitized collections, add value to our electronic collections through improved indexing and supporting materials, and collaborate with other libraries publishing southern materials on the Web. Our readers’ comments on *DAS* are a rich source of inspiration and direction as we continue this effort.

*Joe A. Hewitt*  
*Chapel Hill*



# READERS FROM THE GENERAL PUBLIC

## GENERAL INTEREST READERS

You people are the personification of learning and sharing. It's an absolutely wonderful site that I will visit often. I am not in the habit of sending such emails, but this one I couldn't resist. An absolutely terrific job. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I know how I will spend a lot of winter evenings.

I love your site and I discovered it while doing some personal research on slave narratives. The compilation of texts you have here is incredible! I was initially just interested in slave narratives but the other texts are equally intriguing. I have used this to help create presentations for my niece's history class as well as a learning tool to enhance a "pride in our Afro-American Heritage" that I have initiated with the younger set at family gatherings. Your willingness to share your collections with the public is a truly philanthropic venture.

I think the site is wonderful. It is a treasure trove of otherwise elusive and difficult to find primary sources. Keep up the good work.

I have long had a fascination with the American South and with the period of the Civil War in particular. I enjoy your site immensely and admire the wonderful job you have done of making these terrific narratives available. I treat myself to reading one a day, and am working my way through the alphabetical list of authors. Many of them I have downloaded to keep to enjoy again. Thank you for a wonderful entrée into southern history!

I have had many many hours of enjoyment from your site. It is the first and only Web documentation I have found which gives me a glimpse back toward my ancestors and the things they endured during the Civil War. Until now, I had no way to properly convey to my son the things that were verbally passed to me as a child by my grandparents and great grandparents. Thank you so much for providing documentation which allows me to enlighten the next generation about all sides of a time in our southern history where so much seems to be misunderstood. When our history is lost, so too is our ability to learn from it and not repeat the actions which brought about much hardship.

I just wanted to send a quick note to thank you for making this material available. I am a long-time student of the 19th century, especially in my home state of Virginia, and I can't get enough of your site. Every time I come to it I believe I'll find that I've read all that is of particular interest to me, and every time I find something new, something overlooked, or something that I hadn't realized would be so interesting. All I can say is keep up the great work, and give me more, more, more.

I am an avid reader, reading mostly history and philosophy. Since finding the Library, I am glued to the screen. I have read several books from here and am delighted to find such a great place on the Web, makes owning my computer worth every penny I paid. Thanks for a user-friendly place to visit. You make my day!! Great Job!!!

I love your site! I could spend the rest of my life right here reading all of this material.

I use your site for leisure reading and to learn more about the South. It is my favorite site of all is what I think of it. Outstanding work, great compilation, site always works well. Somebody should be very proud of the great thing they have done creating this wonderful site. Thank you so very much.

I use this site all of the time — at least five times a week for hours at a time. The most useful thing about it is that I find things here I didn't even know existed. Although I find that I can buy some of the books at second-hand bookstores why do that when I can read them here for free. I am reading the John S. Wise book right now and as with so many other books, diaries and documents here I have found where it has been used as a primary source for another more recently written book. Although I find these new books interesting the older ones have a lot of other information and insights that I find fascinating and never would have known about but for your site. I hope you are adding publications, etc., but truthfully there are so many items here I think it will be a long time before I get through the ones that are here right now.

Just recently found your website. I have just begun to explore and read the passages however I can say I am thrilled to find it and look forward to exploring all the links. I am hungry for detailed information on the life of slaves and what they endured during their confinement. It disturbs me immensely that our younger generation knows so little of our history and takes our priceless freedom for granted. The cruelty that was imposed on our ancestors cannot be forgotten. Thanks for ensuring that this information be available for all who are searching.



## Documenting the American South

I am an African American woman whose families have always lived in the South. I discovered your site in the fall of 1996 while simply browsing the Net (back then there was less traffic and fewer sites). Since that time I have returned numerous times to read the narratives of slaves and southern women to satisfy my own interest in history. I consider myself an amateur historian with a strong interest in cultural anthropology. Your site—by far—is the greatest resource on the Net. Thank you and please continue building the collection.

Thank you so much for making such literature available. I am not a historian, teacher, or a published writer. I have been searching for information on women's history before, after, and during the War between the States and you have provided me with hours of reading. It is appreciated!!



Thank you so much for providing the digitalized library to people who want to know what life was really like in years past. It seems that so much of the material provided to us has been shaped by others' opinions and preconditioned expectations that one cannot be sure of the authenticity of thought. You are offering an opportunity to look into the past and gain insight into how we came to have the country that we now enjoy. Thanks, again!

I have read nearly every story you have listed and I think it is a great presentation. I have learned more about the periods before, during, and after the Civil War than I learned in school and college. I have used this for my own information, but have shown it to several friends.

How can I express my approval for this type of project? I'm struggling for adequate words. As a student of history generally, early America and especially North Carolina, and especially as it relates to my genealogical "trails," I am overjoyed to find this resource. I just found this site and now I suspect I'll spend the next few hours (if I can spare it) just enjoying this. The introductory words about it being a true and real side of history that we rarely see are so true. Sometimes I think about the wealth of information that is lost every day/month/year as our "elder treasures" leave us without their stories recorded, and clues to the past are lost as their "junk" is thrown away. And with this project, prior efforts to preserve the past, done on a smaller scale than mass printing, etc., can be accessible to many. Thank you so much for this wonderful project.

## Readers from the General Public

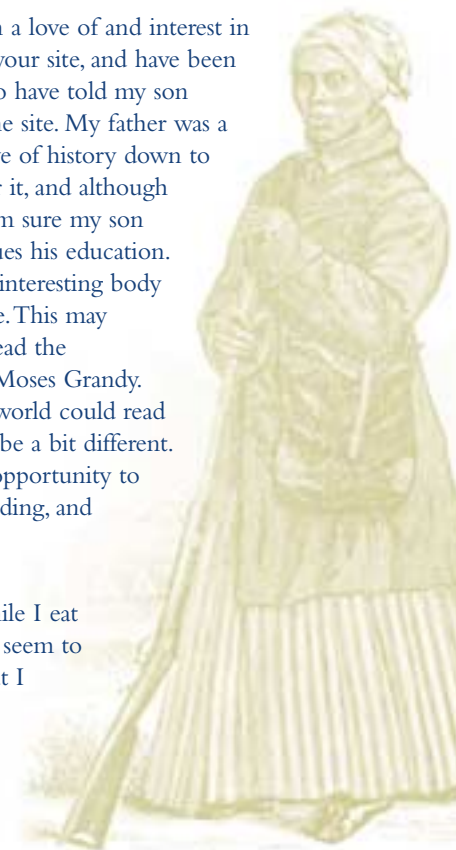
I'm a medical transcriptionist with a love of and interest in the history of the South. I found your site, and have been reading through the narratives, also have told my son (almost a history teacher) about the site. My father was a history teacher, and passed this love of history down to us. I have been thrilled to discover it, and although I use it for personal satisfaction, I'm sure my son will be able to use it as he continues his education. Thank you for providing such an interesting body of information, available to anyone. This may sound goofy, but I cried when I read the biographical account of the slave Moses Grandy. I always think, if everyone in the world could read about everyone else, things might be a bit different. Anyway, thank you again for the opportunity to increase my knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the South.

This site is great! I read stories while I eat lunch at my desk at work. I never seem to have time to read actual books, but I can work in the e-texts at lunch and my co-workers think I'm working. (a little pathetic, I know, but still nice.)

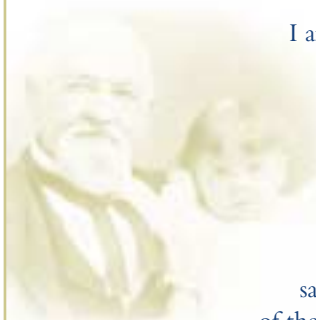
I HAVE FOUND MY SUMMER  
READING (LEISURE)  
PROJECT!!! THANK YOU.

I am a fifty-three-year-old African American female. I have a bachelor's degree in Black studies/social sciences and a J.D. in jurisprudence. I view myself as a social scientist and as such my evolution can only be truly seen and understood by an exceptional knowledge of the environment within which this evolution took place. Your site allows me to read and see what the creators of my history were really thinking and really believed when they looked within. Thank you.

I have been a student of the American South and the Civil War since I was 8 years old and I'm now 40. I haven't read much in recent years because I didn't have access to "fresh material." The bookstores seem to all carry the same books by the same authors. The available biographies are dominated by the military figures. Your collection of first-person narratives is incredible! It's ironic that 100-year-old documents are new. Thank you for re-igniting my interest in this area. Thank you.



## *Documenting the American South*



I am a genealogy hobbyist. The people and places I am interested in simply do not appear in academic history books. I am interested in history-in-the-small. Letters, diaries and first-person narratives are in many cases the only remaining record of life in rural southern places. It is a good thing to see these works on the Internet. The writers felt they had things to say and stories to tell. Collection and preservation of the works is important of course, but the writers' original purpose isn't completely fulfilled until the works are actually read. I hope the responsible funding agencies see fit not only to continue the project, but to expand its scope as well.

I think that this site is fabulous! It is also wonderful that it is accessible to the general public for free. There is so much that we need to learn, and this is helping. Thanks.

I am using your site for research material that may help me inject realism and period sensitivity into my design work for a client. It's an excellent site, obviously a labor of love in which great effort has been invested. I look forward to visiting it often and will be sure the Foundation's board members and volunteers know about it, too. On behalf of Civil War researchers everywhere, thank you!

I thank God that a friend of mine turned me on to your site. I was facilitating a workshop on journaling to our bishops, pastors and leaders of our national church and I was seeking the Net for memoirs, etc., to give impact to the purpose. It was perfect. Thank you so much for preserving our history for all to read.

As Research Historian for the City of ..., Virginia, I applaud your wonderful research site. You have rescued from oblivion many rare letters, biographies, personal stories and accounts which chronicle the fascinating history of the Old South. I have discovered several tracts in your collection which dramatically add to my knowledge. Congratulations upon creating such a superb website. Bravo!

Thank you for this site! This is a dream come true for me. I borrow from the site in my story telling adventures. I borrow music and poems for use in some of the entertaining we do for schools, senior homes and other centers. I also love to read about this period in American history – so I use the site for my own enjoyment, too. Thank you again for this great and wonderful site!

## *Readers from the General Public*

I have found your website to be absolutely invaluable to my research on many little known aspects of the South and War-related materials. Thank God for your dedication, hard work and kindness in putting this on the Web. I cannot travel as easy as others and though Chapel Hill is not that far from ..., nevertheless, it is much easier researching from the comfort of my study. Thank you so much.

I'm a 59-year-old white male, educated in the NYS public education system of the 40's and 50's. Perusal of these narratives has helped complete my education by remedying the half-truths of my early education regarding this period of our history. I recall even now, the NYS public schools' position that "people generally did not mistreat their property," etc. We were provided no primary source material of the period other than general abolitionist writings bemoaning the moral evil of the institution. Thank you.

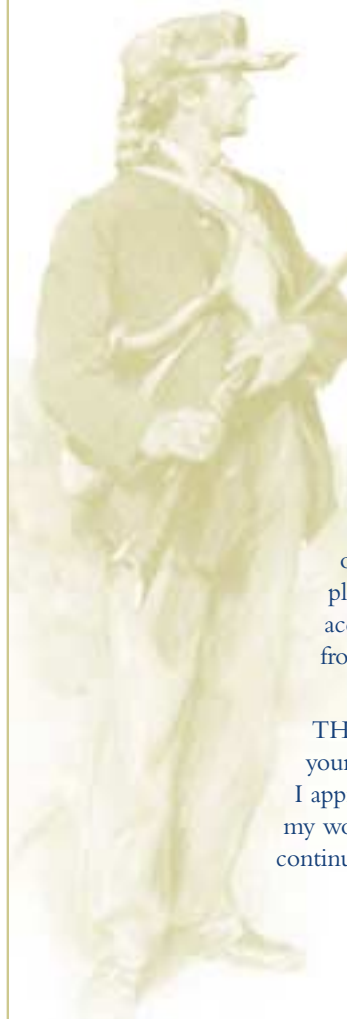


### **READERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

I don't know how to express my gratitude for this site. It's a godsend. I am a freelance writer in the Civil War/nineteenth-century history. I am unable to get around as I'd like and access to libraries, etc., is very limited. Without your assistance I could never have these works. You probably have no idea what this site has done for me. I can now print out the works otherwise unavailable and refer to them when I need to for research. Please don't close this site. Any and all additions will be greatly appreciated by many people, particularly the disabled. Thank you very much.

I am a blind person researching the similarities of the Blacks and the Blind. Thank you for providing me with such a rich resource. I have been often moved to tears reading this data.





thank you! as a disabled homebound researcher in the american civil war era i can't begin to tell you how much i appreciate this site. i wish you could understand the excitement and thrill i get when i find i can see and download and print these otherwise inaccessible documents for my research. if my business takes hold and becomes profitable, i'd like to contribute to this service. thank you again.

I am a blind person who has just recently gained access to the Internet. Reading is once again a passion with voice-output in place of a monitor. How wonderful it is to have access to resources such as yours. I thank you from the bottom of my soul.

THANK YOU! As a housebound researcher I use your site instead of a library. With bad eyesight, I appreciate being able to transfer documents to my word processor and magnify the print. Please continue the good work.

### READERS DOING CREATIVE WORK

I am using this website, among others, to research background detail for a Civil War novel which I am currently writing. This site has many texts which are simply not available here in Los Angeles at local libraries or through book dealers at any price. Being able to read and print documents of the period for later reference is very helpful to me in creating a correct sense of time and place. Please keep expanding this collection.

Just a quick note to thank you for the work you've done putting together this site. I'm an actor/playwright researching my next theatre piece. I'm also a mother and teaching artist and have no time to spend in libraries. Your site enables me to do my research in the late evening or early morning from my home. Thanks again for all your efforts!

I am a writer of historical fiction currently working on a mystery novel set in the opening days of the Civil War. Your site is a researcher's gold mine of information on how people lived in the 1860s and how they coped with the horrors of the war that surrounded them. I am very glad I ran across it although I can see that it will cost me many sleepless nights to read everything here.

I came across your site two weeks ago and can't stay away. I'm doing research for a book and a screenplay based on two "real" persons from the Civil War era. I've found wonderful stories and information I had no idea existed. They are immensely important to me to get the flavor of the time, i.e. a Confederate officer's wife, a Union general's wife, a chaplain at the front, a young minister on the home front in the South as the war comes to them, etc. Please continue this wonderful and valuable work. Thank you again to the University of North Carolina, the other sponsors of this project and the good people who have, obviously, worked so hard to make these "treasures" available and accessible.

All I can say is, Bless Your Heart! I'm writing a novel, and I'm using your site for research. With three children, three dogs, two cats, a husband and two businesses, I don't always have time to hit the library. The amount of time and energy it must have taken to transcribe all this material is mind-boggling. I commend you, and thank you for your efforts! Keep up the good work.

This is a tremendous thing you have done! Thank you for the valuable research material. I design costumes for films, and reading these pieces has really brought me back to 1860. Thank you for the great website—I SO enjoy the scanned text. It is really fabulous.



What a wonderful site! I'm writing about my great-great-grandmother (1871–1898) and when I found how heavily slavery influenced her life on a plantation in Kentucky I found my book would also be about slavery. The reference material on this site is just what I was seeking which is the negative aspects that slave holding had on the owner's character.



I am trying to get a feel for the women, children, and homes in the South before, during, and after the War between the States so that I can write stories of this time and place for children. I think your site is great. It is easy to maneuver in and the content is outstanding. My library has reached its limits on my collection of books on this war, as has my husband's willingness to continue to add to it. Having this great collection available on-line is a blessing to me. Thank you for sharing it electronically. I will be retiring soon and the amount of time I will have available for on-line research will be increased. I really appreciate your university and the other universities who have these resources available sharing them on the Web. It would be impossible for me to visit all the sites to gather the material that is available. Thanks again for a great site.

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### HELPING THE YOUNGER GENERATION

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I came across your site while trying to locate a story for my daughter titled "The Slave Catcher." Although I haven't located the story, I am at a loss for words when I try to describe how valuable your Web-based information is in regards to African American history and American history! I've never been so excited, moved & informed at the same time.

I am thoroughly enjoying this site. I have a young (7-year-old) grand-nephew of mixed race and we are using the site this month particularly since February is Black Heritage Month. My congratulations to all who have worked so hard to make this so very helpful and meaningful. What an undertaking! Keep up the good work!

I have been working on the Black History Committee at our church for over 4 years and your site is one of the best sites I have visited to get information. Ours is a small church of about 100 people of which about 25 are children of all ages and they especially need the information that you and others provide. Also I'm the only person in our congregation that has a computer. That's the other reason I try and provide as much information as I can to others. It's really quite sad in our day and age how informationally deprived most people are. Especially African Americans and all other poverty stricken peoples of our country. It's also virtually impossible to visit all the libraries throughout the U.S. Without the efforts of sites like yours a lot of us would still be in the dark about our rich African American history, as well as the untold history of America in general. I say all this to say this KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK AND CONTINUED SUCCESS! God continue to bless your efforts.

I am expanding my understanding of the race issue facing America. I download and read your electronic books while on the train during my daily commute. I then store the books on my children's computer at home for them to read as they grow older. Please continue this project to include all the titles that are out of copyright. This is the greatest gift that our nation can make to the world.

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### REENACTORS

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Hi there! I just wanted to let you know that I am thoroughly enjoying your site. As a Civil War reenactor who is very interested in developing a first-person impression, I find your site an excellent resource for really getting to know what life was like in the South before, during and after the War.

I have shared it with many of my fellow reenactors and anticipate that they will visit it as often as I have. I haven't gotten out of the A and B listings as I find myself wanting to read most everything listed.

So, now I will continue to enjoy your offerings as I eat my lunch at my desk and read! I applaud your efforts to preserve this wonderful information and to make it so easily accessible to those who have an interest. Thanks again for helping to save a bygone era.



When I found your site I e-mailed a friend that “I have died and gone to Heaven.” I am a Civil War reenactor and have special interests in the government and religious (especially Episcopalian) documents. Not all of my visits to your site are related to my living history activities. I spend not a small amount of time reading either pursuing a specific topic or just browsing.

Hi there. I think this site is incredible. I am a Civil War reenactor, and am thrilled with the information I am finding, esp. the medical and herbal related documents, and women’s histories. It is easy to find U.S. info, but not C.S. This site is the answer to my prayers! Keep up the good work.

As a Civil War reenactor and writer, I find the information on this website to be valuable beyond any price. I was so delighted when I discovered it. The information about everyday life is now at my fingertips. I enjoy so much just reading about how these incredible people managed to carry on through a most trying and extraordinary time in our nation’s history. I admire their courage and tenacity; they refused to give in or give up. The many sacrifices they endured for love of family and love of country are valuable life lessons. Thank you so much for providing such a valuable educational website.



# COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY READERS

## STUDENTS

I am a student of American slavery. The scope and depth of the resources you have compiled is truly stunning. Thank you.

Thanks so much!!! This is a beautiful, well-organized site you have. I am doing research for my thesis (children and the Civil War) and stumbled upon this site through a search engine. Needless to say, it has become a main source for primary documents for me and for future research for my job. Because I hold down a full-time job and have a busy life otherwise, having this site available saves a trip out of town!!! Again, this is a great resource and I thank you very much for it. (*From an Interpretive Ranger at a National Battlefield park.*)

I just wanted to let you know that this site is amazing. I've been searching for primary sources for a research paper, and for a child of the Internet era this is easier than searching numerous bibliographies and footnotes. It's a great starting point and a great resource (especially the materials that aren't available at other universities).



I'm just writing to tell you how valuable your website is. I am a graduate student working on a master's degree in history. I am writing a thesis about the meaning of Jesus in the slave community. By far, *Documenting the American South* has been my most valuable resource and has saved me untold hours in research time. Some of the material in your collection is extremely difficult to come by. I appreciate your taking the time to make it available to budding historians.

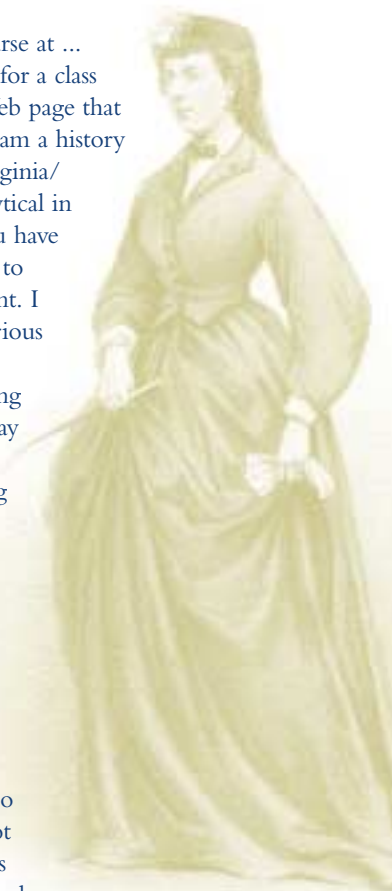
*Documenting the American South* is a rare gem on the Web. I'm doing a research paper on the collapse of Reconstruction, but have had difficulty finding primary sources at my local library. When I stumbled upon your site, however, I was relieved to find a wealth of firsthand accounts of life in the South during the period that I am writing about. Digitized collections like yours make the research process for students like myself much easier. Thank you!

I am enrolled in a technical writing course at ... University. I am analyzing your website for a class paper. Our assignment is to analyze a Web page that is relevant to our intended major, and I am a history major, and my specific interest local/Virginia/Southern U.S. history. I have to be analytical in my paper, but off the record, I think you have a great site!! It is easy to navigate, quick to download, and very specific in its content. I believe it is an invaluable resource to serious students of southern history, but not so technically complex as to not be inspiring to a person in high school, or to those lay aficionados at home. Thanks for a great site and good luck with your continuing digitization efforts!!

We are a graduate class of special educators exploring your site to see how we might use it with our students. The possibilities are endless. Thank you.

I just wanted to say that this site is unbelievable! It has given me access to so many sources that I would otherwise not have been able to access. I have used this site as an undergraduate history major and will be sure to continue to use it as a graduate student. It is a wonderful resource! Thank you for your efforts.

This is an amazing on-line resource for students, scholars, and researchers. I am a 3rd year graduate student who focuses on 19th c. African American literature and intellectual history, and your website is a virtual "gold mine" for me. This morning, I read Elizabeth Keckley's "Behind the Scenes," which my university library does not have a copy of – shameful on their part! (The library catalog does, however, list your website as a way to "electronically access" the book.) I am currently studying for my preliminary exams, and it is very helpful for me to be able to read some of my texts on-line. I appreciate the easy access to early African American writing that your website provides, and I wish you well as you continue with this important project.



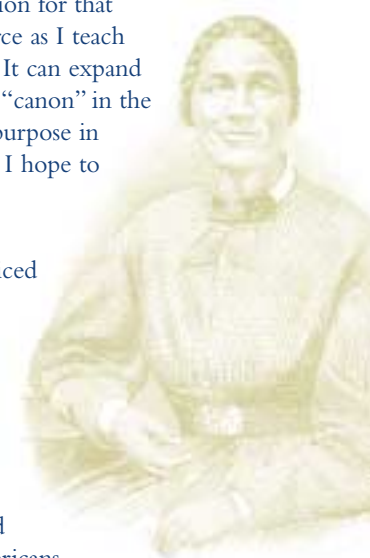




What a fabulous site! I am thrilled to find such a treasure trove of information for scholars and novices researching the South. A great starting point for research and a wealth of information. I found the site easy to navigate and useful. I appreciate the manner in which the topics are divided, it makes for faster resource discovery. I also like having the option of searching the entire site. Keep up the good work.

I can't tell you how much your website is of value to me. I am enrolled as a history major through an independent study program concentrating on plantation life in the antebellum South. This website will help me tremendously. A friend of mine suggested it and I had no idea it would be this good. It is very easy to search and I really am excited that I can search and read the information from my desk at home! Please know that your efforts here are appreciated and please continue to make this type of information available for those like myself who are trying to learn about and preserve southern history today and for those to come. Thank you.

I am currently a Ph.D. student working on a degree in English. I also am an Assistant Professor of English. I came across your website as I was doing research for an American literature class paper on plantation fiction, looking particularly for information on Caroline Lee Hentz and Caroline Gilman. The first place my search took me was to your site. I think it will be a valuable tool for me in my further research for this project. [My university] has many of Hentz's novels in their special collection, but they are all on microfilm. Having an electronic text from your site makes it easier, being able to spend less time at a microfilm reader. The site will also be very useful to me in the future as I do more research in my interest area of southern literature, and with its vast array of previously inaccessible works, will open up a much larger collection for that research. I will also use this site as a resource as I teach undergraduate American literature classes. It can expand the reading materials beyond the standard "canon" in the anthologies. THANKS for the drive and purpose in building and maintaining this project, and I hope to see it expand even more.



I think your site is "the best thing since sliced bread" to happen to the American canon. I am a Ph.D. student/candidate and am working on the dissertation, which I have titled: "To Bear the Slave's Heavy Cross: Religion and the Jeremiadic Tradition as Literary and Social Construction in the Nineteenth Century African-American's Literature." Since most of the writings and narratives from 19th-century African Americans are "out-of-print," your site, and the work of William L. Andrews in general, has been a tremendous asset to me. However, your site brings these works well into the 20th century and makes them available to aspiring scholars like myself. Thank you.

Your site is a fantastic find! I found it looking for information on Kate Chopin. I did not expect to find complete on-line texts of the three of her works that I was most interested in. For the purposes of a graduate class and subsequent conference paper, your site provides me with all of my primary texts. As well, my dissertation project concerns the ex-slave narrative; imagine my thrill at finding online texts of many of those that I am concerned with, an extremely important and extra added bonus. Of course, your project will get full bibliographical credit and strong mention in my dissertation acknowledgements and preface! Keep up the good work(s)!



## FACULTY

This is a wonderful collection. I am using it in two ways: first as a source for the students in my African American history class, whom I have asked to access the site to read slave narratives; and secondly for my own research in St. Louis, Missouri, searching specifically for documents that reflect on antebellum life in black and white. Many thanks from us out here on the frontier for this great work.

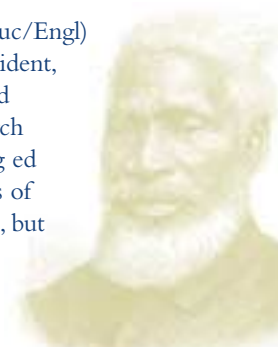
I think your site is wonderful! I'm using it to put together a syllabus for a survey course of early American literature in which I hope to represent all American voices. I believe that the southern view has been overlooked and overshadowed by the early literature of the North. My suggestion would be to include some earlier southern voices. Thank you for your helpful website.



Let me begin by saying what a generous gesture it is to share this with the rest of us. I am only beginning to plumb the depths of this collection. I teach an American Studies course on the South in a northern university without much depth to its collection. I'm setting my students loose in this collection of primary sources, hopefully teaching them some researching skills in the process. I'll become more skilled as I get to know the collection more thoroughly. Thanks again.

This website is wonderful. I am presently doing research in the area of southern culture from the period of Reconstruction to the early 1900's and you have supplied me with a gold mine of resources. Once I have completed my research, I plan to develop a course in southern culture using your website to compile reading materials for my students. Thanks so much for this. I love it!

Hello, Tar Heels! I am an alumna of UNC (BA Educ/Engl) living in TX. I stumbled across your website by accident, but haven't been able to leave—it is fascinating and incredibly complete! I am using your site for research purposes; I am teaching a not-for-credit continuing ed class at ... Community College. I have seen dozens of university websites in the course of my preparation, but this one is head and shoulders above all others. Just as I would expect from my alma mater!



This is a fabulous collection of materials otherwise impossible to see/get hold of in my part of the world. Though my research focus is not on the South, the slave narratives collected will prove to be very useful in teaching American culture and especially its racialized history.

I think the site is wonderful! I wish I'd known about it last year, when I was teaching a course on women writers. However, at the moment I am probably not using the material in a typical way. I also teach History of English, and every year I have to search for literary representations of various American dialects so that my students can practice identifying those dialects. The wealth of material on the site has made my job much easier this semester—thank you.

Congratulations with your excellent and informative website—you offer a really interesting and well-documented view of less known, but vital social-political aspects of the Civil War. We will add a link to your site soon—and of course, in view of our own users' interests, will specifically highlight your source materials regarding educational initiatives in the Confederation.

Your site is an extraordinarily useful resource. I have used it for scholarly purposes and also just to find something to read. This kind of availability of important material is what the Internet was supposed to be about in the first place!

What a treasure trove your site is! Thank you for your efforts in bringing this information to availability. I am currently working on travel writing of southern women during the Civil War era. For this particular project, I found many useful texts, but I found much more, as well, for other research that I am interested in. I plan to pass your site along to other scholars and students, especially those working in African American studies, and I am sure they will find the material equally exciting and informative. Good luck as you continue with this excellent project.

I found some narratives on the site that I didn't know existed and others that are out of print. I've used the site for my research on 19th-century racial discourse. In the fall term, I will direct students in my American slavery course to the site. I've told several people about this collection and the other *Documenting the American South* sites. I'm grateful that they are available.

I am using your site in a U.S. survey course. I have found these Internet sites a great way to provide primary reading for students at a low cost. I also enjoy sending them to a site that offers a variety of choices, because even though I may only assign one reading, they often browse several (just like I used to browse in the physical stacks at the library!). I have found that assigning good Internet sites is the best way to get my students to realize that there are good sites out there.

Kudos! My husband & I are historians, and while on the road we can read primary documents at our leisure, not wasting our evenings watching TV back in the hotel. Even if we pick up these books, it helps to browse through them online. Thanks for all this work.

As a retired zoology professor I am taking the opportunity to catch up on all the literature I never had time to read while working. I have found the electronic texts on your site to be fascinating reading and they provide me with hours of enjoyment, in addition to providing insight into "the southern viewpoint"—during the 19th and early 20th century—especially interesting for a Yankee from Boston.



## STUDENTS

I like your GROOVY site it totally rocks. Thanks for the useful info. I suggest putting a spot in just for us kids, stuck with a history fair project left to the last minute! I hope this site rocks on forever. I'll write you guys back again (just so you know I'm in good health!). Well, got to split, catch you on the flip side!

Thank you so much for creating this website! My English teacher assigned the hardest project ever and this is the only site I could find information on what she wanted. Without this site I probably would have failed. Also, this page is set up so neat and easy to understand. Thanks so much.

Thanks a lot for making this website. I am working on a research project for school (high school) and I needed this poem, "Summer Bower" by Henry Timrod. It must have taken a long time to document all this information. This is really what the Internet is about, though. The availability of quality information. Well, thanks.

Do u have Cliff's Notes for these books?

## TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

I am putting together a unit on literature of soldiers and slaves during the Civil War for an 8th grade humanities English class. The resources of slave narratives is the best source I've come across for primary sources. Thanks!

I am teaching a senior English class. Another teacher of this particular class and I have begun to revise the curriculum. We have included a large section on autobiography as it provides an inductive approach to history and to learning. So far, the students have responded well, with interest. Although we have many works, ranging from Richard Wright and Carolina DeJesus to Jane Addams, we are always looking for new resources. (Yes, we are as usual operating without much of a budget.) I look forward to scrolling through your on-line texts and using what I may. Again, thank you.

Thank you for your hard work. It is so hard to find southern writer information and text. I am the librarian for a small, rural high school in Alabama and when we taught Southern Writers we were so limited in the info. Your site will be of great value this coming school year if we have the teacher unit to teach this course as an elective.

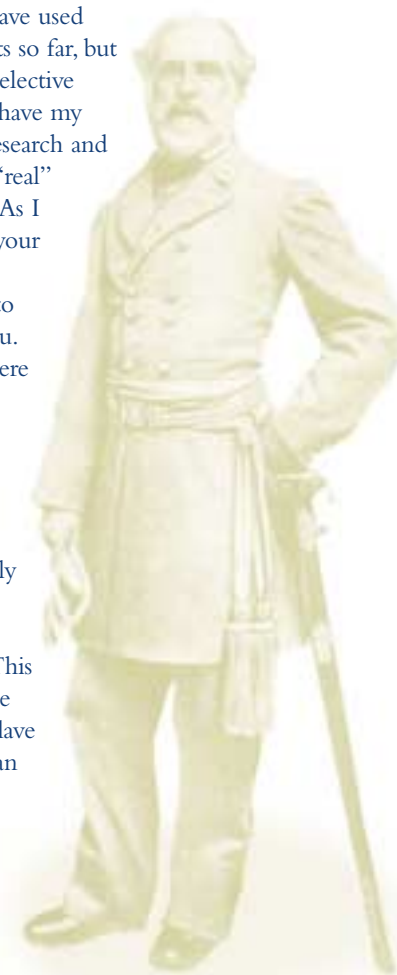
I am a high school English teacher. I have used your site primarily for my own interests so far, but this coming year I will be teaching an elective course on southern literature and will have my students use your site extensively for research and to supplement the limited amount of "real" books we can purchase for the course. As I have accessed different documents on your site, I have been awed by the daunting task so many people have undertaken to provide the texts for the site. Thank you. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. There is absolutely no other way we could reasonably have access to many of the documents, even if money wasn't an issue. Thanks again.

I am a social studies teacher who greatly enjoys your site. I find it invaluable for my reading of 19th-century African American writers and other notables. This site has greatly increased my knowledge and understanding of the era and the slave narrative. For example, a little more than five years ago, I read an excerpt of *The Narrative of William Wells Brown, A Fugitive Slave*. Several months ago, I read the entire narrative. I was aware of some of his accomplishments, but through your site I have read more of his works and now understand his true genius.

I live and teach in Indiana, and these on-line works are not readily available in this area. For me to have the opportunity to read these works, I would have to travel great distances, if it were not for your site. Thanks again and keep up the good work.

I am printing out a copy of this website to pass around to all the teachers where I teach 2nd grade. This site is fabulous! I found the website address in an article in today's newspaper.

I am a middle school/high school English and history teacher. I found your site through TeachersFirst.com content matrix, by clicking Web Sites for English and Literature. Amazing! I continually search for sites students can use to learn about the richness of primary/first person sources such as interviews and narratives. Your links to literature are excellent. Keep it up!

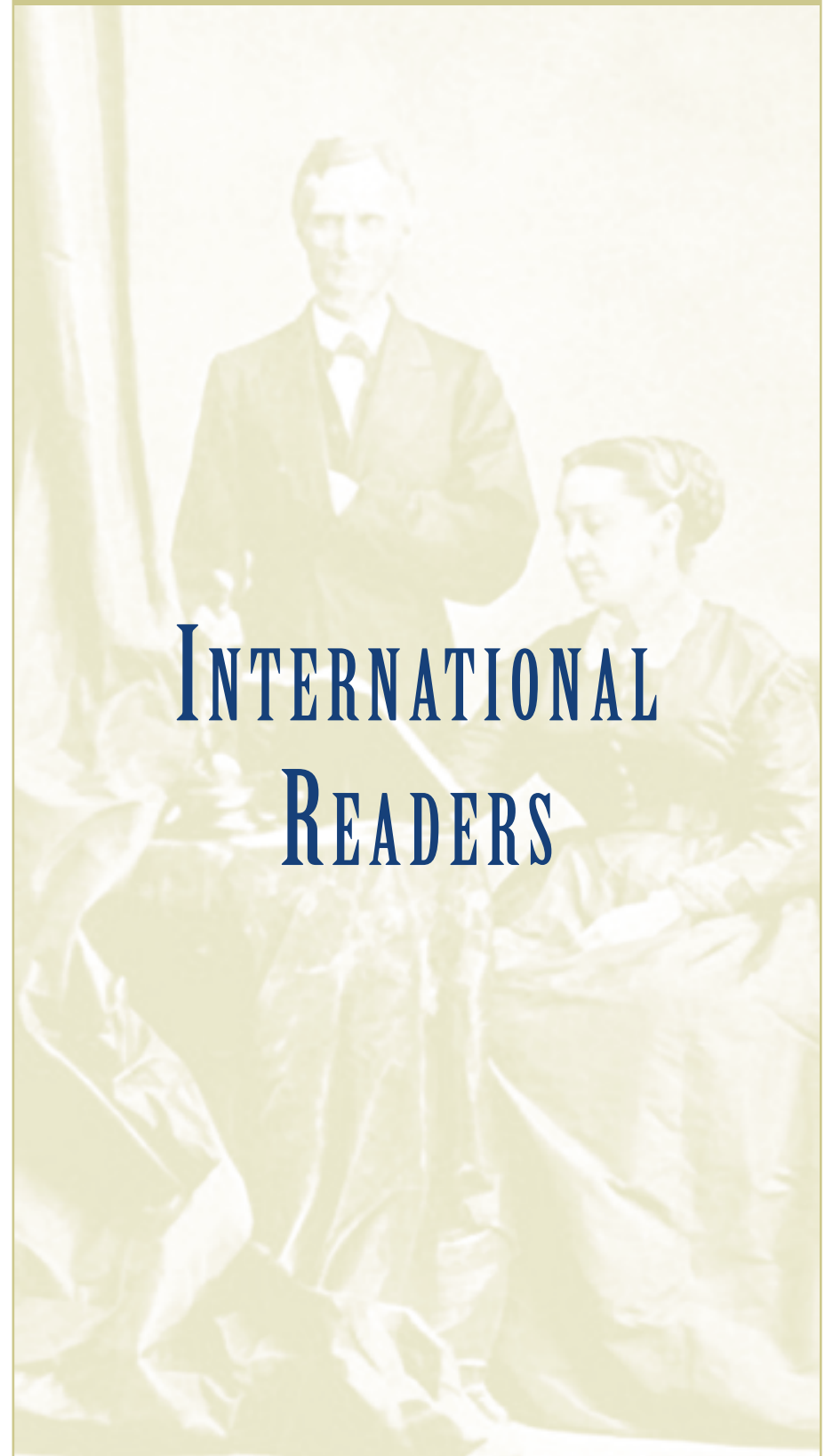


Thanks for the great site. I'm using the slave narratives in my language arts classes to introduce *Nightjohn*. They'll skim/scan the narratives and select passage/s to practice and share orally with the class. (They'll need to learn the technology skills necessary to copy and paste text.) We'll see how it works! Awesome!

I am a high school English teacher and have been assigned to teach a southern literature mini course next year. The trick to teaching the course is that I have to design the curriculum myself. I am so excited to have found your site. The essays here cover some of the topics that I want to address in my class. I will be visiting over and over as I decide the particular texts that I want to teach.

I have been researching Richard Allen for inclusion in a series of lessons I am creating for Pennsylvania history. Pennsylvania history is a required subject for Pennsylvania homeschoolers. I am a homeschool mother of 8 children. Obviously the best way to research a person is to start with their autobiography, but I have had trouble finding Mr. Allen's. I was very pleased to find your website, and thank you for all the work you've done in making these historical documents available for research.

I just wanted to let you know that your website is great! I am using it for research to help me develop educational programs for kids. We run 4 historic house museums that were built in the early and mid 1800's. Interpreting life at that time to our visitors is challenging. Your website has given me a wealth of primary information!







I'm a student and live in Poland. I write my M.A. thesis on American literature and my paper is mainly about Alice Walker's short stories. Thanks to your collection I finally was able to go through several texts which gave me sort of overall view on the American South, the life of Black community and so on. And I am really grateful because my university library lacks American sources, and generally it's really hard to find anything concerning Black Americans. It's hard for me to get a visa to your country and pay a visit to any university library personally, so your Web is really a wonderful thing. Thank you very, very much.

I am preparing a university degree on English language and American & British Civilisation in Paris. I was to write an extract of one of Fitzhugh's texts and thanks to your site I have been able to expand my knowledge on this person and the American South history as a whole. It has been very useful and instructive. I was very impressed to see that full original text was available electronically. Thank you very much, very good work and helpful for the rest of the world!

I'm using the DAS project Web pages from Germany, and they are of tremendous help to me. I am preparing my M.A. exam on the Lit of the American South and I could not wish for a richer compilation of easily accessible material. Thanks!

I must express my gratitude for the rich materials your website provided me. I am a Nigerian pursuing a master's degree in Architecture in Zaria, Nigeria. I am currently proposing a Black Heritage Memorial in the ancient slave town of Badagry, Lagos, Nigeria as my thesis topic. The sub-topic of this thesis is The Black Heritage Memorial: Propagating Nigeria Through Architecture. I have had to hound for background information on the Internet on black and diasporic history and your website offered some invaluable data. Please keep up the good work. I commend your efforts!

I am an Italian student at the last year of university. I decided to write my final paper, what we call a *tesi*, on slave narratives (from 1760 to 1865), an argument that I find very interesting and challenging! Unfortunately a few things made my "literary" efforts even harder: 1) the Italian library system (national and academic) is very limited; 2) working 7 hrs per day from Monday to Friday drastically sized my time to search texts/articles on this topic (which are very hard to find in Italy/Europe). The e-texts I've found in the Net, in your site too! I so THANK YOU for being at my reach and for being so helpful!!

I am currently working for a Ph.D. on the novels of Cormac McCarthy in England. I have found your collection of digitized texts very helpful as I am supplementing my somewhat meager background by reading as much southern literature as possible and nineteenth-century texts are not easy to obtain. I might add that I am enjoying this reading greatly and have found much that informs my understanding of McCarthy.



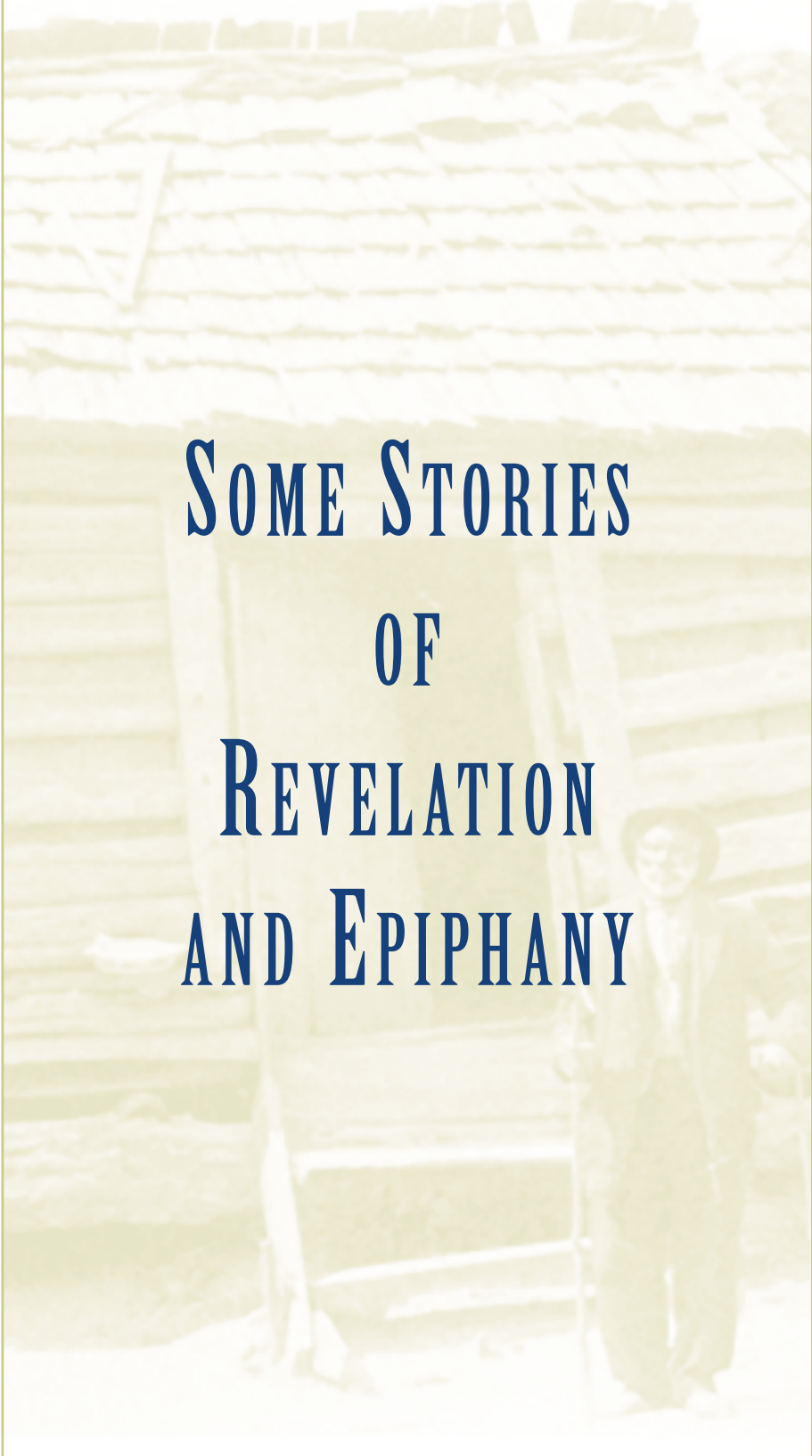
I am a college professor in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. I teach translation (from English) and am personally very interested in southern history and culture. In fact, I think that we Brazilian northeasterners have a lot in common with your region. So, I'm using your site to get materials for my classes. This has a double purpose: to train translation and allow the students to have some knowledge of the U.S. South.



I write this letter to say thank you very much for all the people there who works in placing books at the Internet. I am Argentine and live in Rosario. Some years ago I spent about one year in Fairfax, Va., and hence I took interest in the American Civil War subject. I had downloaded a beautiful and amazing book of T. A. Ashby (*The Valley Campaigns...*) and I learned so much about the American Civil War. I am very pleased with your unselfish and wonderful work. Thank you again and go on making of the Internet a way of better knowledge and culture. Sorry for my English, I do my best.

I found this extremely interesting—thank you so much for providing this service. I'm teaching in China and find it difficult to get hold of literature—so am immensely grateful for this resource. Bless you.

it is a great pleasure to read so much wonderful literature. my reading is much better than my writing. i'm from Israel.



SOME STORIES  
OF  
REVELATION  
AND EPIPHANY

I am a reporter in Washington, D.C. I have your slave narrative website bookmarked at work and at home. I try to read excerpts at least once a day. This should be required reading for all Americans and taught in schools. Unfortunately it is not.

Reading about the severe racism and hardships of the past I now understand what my forefathers endured and I am filled with a mixture of awe but also disappointment. The emotions are so conflicting. I'm proud we endured this as a people but at the same time I wish there had been more resistance, although the daily violence, starvation, and general ill treatment probably made this almost impossible.

I've also discovered some of my own family history here. My mother hails from Sumter Co., S.C., the same place the slave Jackson hailed from. In fact, I have many cousins there named Jackson. The place names are familiar — Lynches River and Sumperville (Sumter). It brings the area alive, the history that lies just below the surface that you wonder about. My great-great-great-grandparents were slaves there and some of their hardships were passed down to us. Tales of how one of my female forebears was whipped constantly because the white child she was nursing would not stop crying. Jackson mentions such an incident happening in his narrative. Was that my great-great-great-grandmother, who my older aunts and uncles said was so embittered by slavery she hated white people to the end? Thanks and keep up the good work.

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I quite accidentally found your website in a "Google" search, which I had done to play a "joke" on a friend who lives with rolling black-outs in California. (He used to live in Durham!) I had sent him information last night about battery back-up power for computers, and he replied that the computers were all laptop with their own batteries, but that the heat was oppressive as they tried to conserve energy.

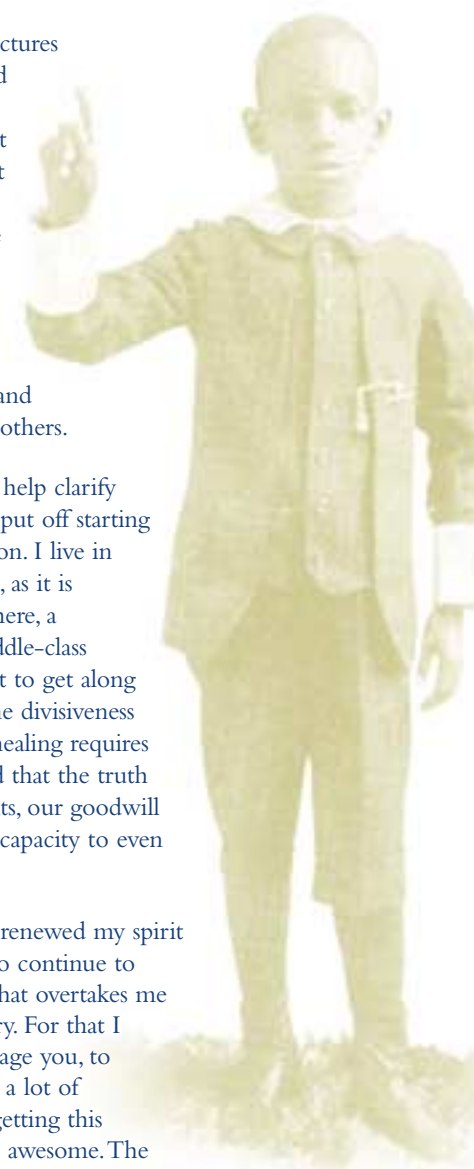
A memory of an artful rendition of Nubian slaves fanning their masters lolling about, with feathers or banana leaves, flashed in my head. How fun, I thought, to respond by email with one of these types of images — witty, artful, educated and sophisticated.

I went to Google and typed in: "slaves fanning masters." The majority of the hits were from on-line stories too fantastical to be other than role-playing mythology with damsels in distress themes — and no great paintings like I was looking for at that! The last entry on page 1 was *The Narrative of Henry Watson, A Fugitive Slave: Electronic Edition*, from: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/watson/watson.html>

I went there and, shoot — no pictures to entertain my friend. But I did begin to read the narrative. As I read I began to cry and then felt ashamed that I could ever forget for one cavalier jokey moment the true nature of slavery. At the bottom of the text, I clicked on the link to the home page of *Documenting the American South* and have bookmarked it in my History folder. I plan to return and look forward to sharing it with others.

Perhaps a personal detail would help clarify why this has so struck me as to put off starting my day in a more bustling fashion. I live in South Carolina, but I was raised, as it is frequently pointed out around here, a "Yankee." I'm a middle-age, middle-class white woman. Of course, I want to get along and let the healing begin and the divisiveness end. But I know better — that healing requires the hard work be done first, and that the truth can hurt but lies kill — our spirits, our goodwill for each other, and our joy, our capacity to even know what we are feeling.

Finding your website today has renewed my spirit and I feel refreshed, to be able to continue to challenge the somnambulism that overtakes me when I forget our human history. For that I would like to thank and encourage you, to continue your efforts — I know a lot of practical, hard work went into getting this all on-line. The scanning itself is awesome. The next time some revisionist says to me that slave owners didn't do such bad things, I have the information and a tool to challenge that ignorance, with specific details about what a realistic portrayal of slavery looks like. I can go back to taking it one day at a time, one argument at a time and that one person at a time — myself, whom I can change. No more callous jokes about slaves.





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My family cannot thank you enough for your inclusion of the Rev. S. A. Agnew's diary among your digitized documents. We found the document doing a search on the name of the good Reverend Mr. Agnew, who we had just learned performed the wedding ceremonies of my wife's great-grandfather in 1870 and of his younger brother in 1886. Agnew's diary is a spellbinding read for those of us with an interest in his time and place, particularly the Associate Reformed Presbyterian ("ARP") families named in that portion of the diary you have already made available. Our dear Lila is devouring the Agnew diary, savoring every morsel of detail and description, helping her gain insight into the thoughts and feelings of her ancestors, contemporaries and coreligionists of Samuel Agnew. Lila's daughter and I join her in thanking you at UNC and the Agnew family for making this experience possible.

I wish I could tell you our use is for some scholarly research adding to the store of human knowledge, but that would be false. Our use of your material in this instance is, in my opinion, of a more profoundly human use: to feel connected with our past, to seek to understand the lives of our ancestors and the context in which they lived, and to find and treasure for the next generations the small but, to us, significant roles played by those loved ones in the broader human story. Again, our thanks—and please hurry up with the rest of Agnew's diary. You have an audience waiting.

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I am a Caucasian native Texan of 39 years of age. I am of a conservative nature only because of my Christian beliefs such as right to life, school vouchers, etc. I strongly believe that parents of minority children who find their children mired in a failing school system should be allowed to use their school taxes to enroll them into a school of their choice. All of our children no matter what ethnicity or race deserve the very best education that is available.

I have just begun to read your article and I find it very interesting and enlightening. I love our country but the older I get the more cynical I become of our entire system. Our nation's leaders and politicians always speak of breaking down the barriers between our Black and White countrymen. I believe that some things have become better for our Black brothers while so very many other things never seem to change. In my life some of my greatest friendships have been with men and women of color. However these relationships always seem to be in the workplace and I never seem to be successful in getting these friendships to extend outside of the workplace. I find this to be very disheartening and I really do not understand the dynamics of this.

Due to many hardships that I endured in my life I just have never been able to extend my education past the high school level. Which is probably evident to you by now due to my many literary mistakes in this message. Although it is my fervent hope and prayer that I may be able to attend an institution of higher learning in the next year or so! I love to study history and political science, thus I would love to be able to major in one and minor in the other! I would really love the opportunity and the challenge to teach young minds and to challenge them to learn to respect all people regardless of color or ethnicity. I strongly believe that the only way to overcome our differences is to understand our past. A greater understanding and a fuller knowledge of our history will lead us to a better understanding of what is right about America and what is wrong! With this knowledge we can build upon the things that have been good and right and set a course to change the things that are divisive and wrong! I appreciate your time to read my comments and I look forward to continue to learn from your writings!



• • • • •

As I sit here and mindlessly surf the Net looking for something interesting I came about this site. I must say that it is by far the most needed site for all Americans to have access to. As a country we have transformed slavery into nothing more than a faceless story. This site applies faces and real emotions to real people and creates an honest perception of who we are as Americans. My God, I am ashamed to admit even as an African American born after the civil rights struggle I don't have a clue past the Sally Hemmings movie or fanatic cousin or two who at holiday festivities share their obsessed opinion on Black man world oppression, or even the quiet references you might hear from an older relative about how bad slavery was, so they heard. I do have sense enough to know that to be forced into a lifestyle not of your own choosing and to be treated like an animal was the most soul stripping experience one could have, but the popular culture focuses on the sex and possible love, friendships, old plantation happy times and relationships that grew from this institution.

This collection is a testament to the fact that slavery WAS real, the effect IS real. The strength of the human spirit and the testament to the theory of the survival of the fittest makes me proud of my African American lineage. I have always loved me, but this information somehow makes me feel extra special. Like through all of the atrocities, degrading and emotionally suppressing experiences, they rose above it all and we are still here. I believe that the depiction from real people and their real experiences paints an objective view of this period and most importantly helps me and hopefully others understand themselves (all Americans), their families, community structure and subculture values and who we are as a country. These stories need to be told. Thank you for the contribution to adding the stitching to an American quilt. Information, access and delivery thereof is the thread to holding the foundation of who we are as a country together! TRUTH, not Hollywood's truth, not someone's opinion. Nothing but the facts, of those who lived the experience! WOW!!!



*Documenting the American South*  
*The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library*