

Reviews of *Journey to the Wilderness: War, Memory, and a Southern Family's Civil War Letters*, by Frye Gaillard

[Southern Literary Review](#)

[Goodreads](#)

[Charlotte Observer](#)

Comments by Selected Reviewers (Reprinted from Amazon.com)

"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*

"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 Review*