



Honorable Heritage: A Book of Family Folklore

Billy Boyd Lavender

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This intimate, revealing, well-written book illustrates the need for all families to compile and record the lore that makes their heritage unique.

Honorable Heritage: A Book of Family Folklore, by Billy Boyd Lavender, is the kind of book that every person interested in family history wishes someone would compile for them.

The author, a native of Oconee County in Georgia, has traced the history of his ancestors in the Lavender and Hardigree families through many generations of farmers, storekeepers, soldiers, and colonists. Like all families, his has diverse origins that stretch well before the advent of definite historical records. At the misty edge of genealogical certainty, Lavender finds evidence of varied origins including French Huguenots who fled religious persecution in the sixteenth century, Revolutionary War soldiers, and a possible Native American ancestor.

As Lavender proceeds through the centuries, the historical record becomes stronger and his accounts become more detailed. The most gripping and memorable part of the book for general readers is the author's detailed and thoughtful discussion of a notorious double murder that claimed the lives of two of his ancestors in 1905, and of the vigilante mob that slew the accused perpetrators before they could be brought to trial.

The most intimate and revealing parts of the book, however, are the latter chapters in which Lavender lovingly and respectfully describes the lives, struggles, and triumphs of ancestors with whom he is personally acquainted. These chapters include many personal anecdotes that convey a far more human story than any genealogical account based on government documents, property records, and other archival material. This part of the book is likely to be of very strong interest to the families described and to their immediate relatives and acquaintances, but it also has value to a broader readership as a detailed and sympathetic view of a rural, family-centered lifestyle that was once commonplace but is now rare.

Honorable Heritage is an admirable and interesting book, but it may have difficulty finding an audience outside of the genealogy and local history market. Some portions of the book might have reached a wider audience if published as articles in regional history or genealogy magazines; however, the author's desire to present this collection of "family folklore" as a unified whole is understandable.

Lavender's writing style is easygoing and conversational, and the production values of the book are excellent, featuring an attractive and evocative cover as well as detailed documentation of Lavender's historical sources.

Honorable Heritage presents not just a greater knowledge of one family in rural Georgia, but also inspires a deeper understanding of the role that such "folklore" plays in all families. The book illustrates the need for all families to compile and record the lore that makes their heritage unique before their most intimate and human details are lost to time.

BRADLEY A. SCOTT (June 24, 2015)

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