

Sorrowful Journey: Sherman's Forced Deportation Of Georgia Civilians

Sue DeVille

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Review

SORROWFUL JOURNEY

Sherman's forced deportation of Georgia civilians

DeVille, Sue

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Cook, Ruth Beaumont *North Across the River: A Civil War Trail of Tears.*
Crane Hill Publishers, ISBN 1575870703

Drawing from scant historical documentation and oral histories passed down by survivors, **North Across the River** examines how the working class fared in the Civil War by providing an account of a mass civilian deportation.

Ruth Beaumont Cook begins the work with detailed histories of Roswell and Sweetwater, two small Georgia towns whose common denominator was their water-driven cotton mills. With the approach of General William T. Sherman's forces, mill owners fled, leaving behind "mill bosses" to operate the mills with only a home guard for defense, thus setting the stage for the tragedy that followed.

As Sherman's army ravaged the Georgia countryside, millworkers -- mostly women and children -- continued to work. After Union soldiers marched swiftly into the area and arrested the workers, Sherman ordered their deportation because their labor would benefit the Confederacy if they remained. Workers were told to pack what they could carry and vacate their homes.

The book follows the plight of two millworker families -- Walter and Lizzie Russell Stewart and their four children in Sweetwater and four of the Kendley siblings in nearby Roswell. Walter Stewart joined the Confederate Army in 1863, was captured at Vicksburg, and was paroled two days later. On furlough, he promised Lizzie he would return if "the Yankees get to Atlanta." He narrowly missed them but was reunited with his family in Louisville. The Kendley siblings watched as the Union army commandeered the town, burned the mills, and overran their apartment building.

Over 400 people, mostly women and children, were shipped to a women's prison in Louisville. Cook gives a stark picture of the pitiful conditions that the families endured. Local women helped to relieve the squalor through donations, but overall the workers suffered greatly. Though some women found work, many continued their sorrowful journey by taking advantage of the Union's offer of further deportation to Indiana.

Cook demonstrates how a local incident can offer a chilling face to human cruelty. Utilizing a masterful blend of solid fact and reasonable supposition to weave a credible story that gives the reader a vivid picture of the millworkers' ordeal, the author portrays ordinary citizens who handled the sorrows of war.

Well-written and meticulously researched, this is a book for people who enjoy stepping off the beaten path of Civil War history and discovering the more unusual happenings of that era.

Sue DeVille, a published author and student of Civil War history, serves as director of the Opelousas Museum & Interpretive Center in Opelousas, Louisiana.