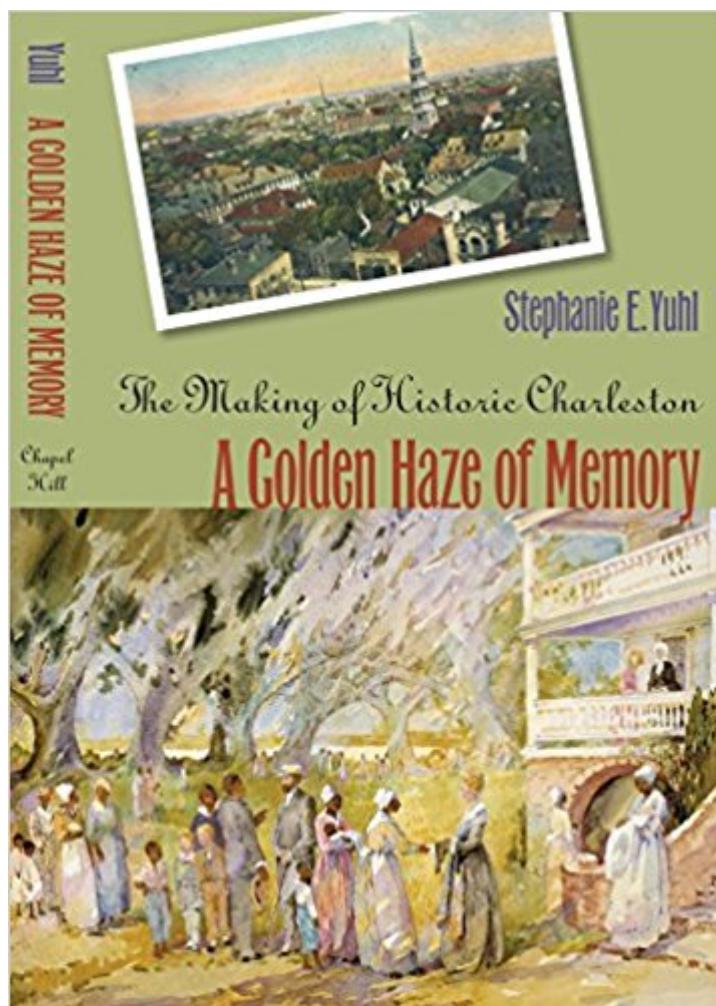


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A Golden Haze Of Memory: The Making Of Historic Charleston



Synopsis

Charleston, South Carolina, today enjoys a reputation as a destination city for cultural and heritage tourism. In *A Golden Haze of Memory*, Stephanie E. Yuhl looks back to the crucial period between 1920 and 1940, when local leaders developed Charleston's trademark image as "America's Most Historic City." Eager to assert the national value of their regional cultural traditions and to situate Charleston as a bulwark against the chaos of modern America, these descendants of old-line families downplayed Confederate associations and emphasized the city's colonial and early national prominence. They created a vibrant network of individual artists, literary figures, and organizations--such as the all-white Society for the Preservation of Negro Spirituals--that nurtured architectural preservation, art, literature, and tourism while appropriating African American folk culture. In the process, they translated their selective and idiosyncratic personal, familial, and class memories into a collective identity for the city. The Charleston this group built, Yuhl argues, presented a sanitized yet highly marketable version of the American past. Their efforts invited attention and praise from outsiders while protecting social hierarchies and preserving the political and economic power of whites. Through the example of this colorful southern city, Yuhl posits a larger critique about the use of heritage and demonstrates how something as intangible as the recalled past can be transformed into real political, economic, and social power.

Book Information

File Size: 8513 KB

Print Length: 303 pages

Publisher: The University of North Carolina Press; New edition edition (January 1, 2014)

Publication Date: January 1, 2014

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00OJHSQM4

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #401,636 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #22

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Customer Reviews

The great thing about this book is that it gives a side of the story that is seldom heard - or read. It is the story of how the business of 'selling Charleston' came about through the efforts of a great many people - artists and preservationists - in the early 20th century who carefully crafted the image of Charleston in order to sell it to Northerners who were charmed into seeing a somewhat skewed view of reality. A must-read for anyone who really wants to know how the city came to be a mecca for visitors as early as the 1920s.

A must read!

It's pretty dank

Stephanie Yuhl's book is a great read for historians and layman alike. I loved it. As a native Carolinian(North), adopted Charlestonian, historian, and community college instructor, I found the book fascinating. The research and conclusions are thorough and thoughtful. I have used it as a reference for my own research on memory and cultural association. The sources and notes are extensive. Yuhl's book, as any good history, creates new questions for debate. Those people who consider themselves versed in the history of the city should read it and have an opinion. This book is "about Charleston" and "FOR Charleston". But it is also for the rest of us who visit and study the city, and care about its special place in the history of the South.

Stephanie Yuhl's study of Charleston is a great read, organized brilliantly with metaphors from theatre, and wonderfully well written. As a newcomer to Charleston but a long time South Carolinian, I was fascinated by her account of how Charleston has marketed itself. Her analysis of the literature of the Charleston Renaissance is extremely insightful as is her critique of Charleston's most well known painters. But perhaps most astute is her analysis of class and race relations. This book is definitely a prize winner!Carolyn MataleneDistinguished Professor EmeritaUniversity of South Carolina

When you visit Charleston for the first time you are impressed and at times overcome by the sheer beauty of the place. The charismatic churches, cobblestone streets, and preserved homes seem almost movie set like in their ability to transport you to another time. Stephanie Yuhl's book very adeptly explores the phenomenon that is Charleston. This capitol of the south has been able to preserve itself like many European cities have done for centuries. An effort that is largely ignored in most other American urban areas. I wish I had "Golden Haze of Memory" when I first went to Charleston, as it explores how and why this Southern Belle of a city has sought urban renewal through preservation of a romanticized past.

Stephanie Yuhl's book on the "making" of historic Charleston, South Carolina during the 1920s and 1930s -- the era of "Porgy and Bess" -- is fascinating. Yuhl deconstructs the mythmaking that artfully ignored some of the city's less heroic features and transmuted them into a placid, controversy-free image of a way of life at once locked in the past but also looking forward.

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