



When the South Was Southern

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Michael Andrew Grissom has gathered what may be for many Americans the first glimpse into the South's former way of life. His new book, *When the South Was Southern*, the culmination of his trilogy on Southern culture that began with *Southern by the Grace of God*, is a collection of photographs, postcards, and tintypes that serves as tangible proof that the grand Old South did indeed exist.

Since Southern history, culture, and architecture have often been downplayed in modern textbooks, many Americans have little concept of the Southern life in the days past. Here we see the families, the towns, the charm and elegance of the early South. The faces in these pictures show this region's real spirit, and in many ways, this book does for the South what Walker Evans and James Agee's book did for the Great Depression—reveal its haunting beauty undeniably.

With each photograph, Grissom provides an explanatory note or a bit of history. Some of them will break your heart, like pictures of young men soon to be killed in battle followed by accounts of the brutality suffered by the loved ones they left behind.

Many of the photos depict church and social traditions nearly extinct (see "All-Day Preachin' and Dinner on the Ground"). Others tell amazing stories of courageous Southern citizens like Emma Sansom, who risked her life to show Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest a hidden crossing on the Black Creek in Alabama.

A valuable addition to any library, north or south, *When the South Was Southern* is sure to bring fresh insights into the old South as well as a revived and well-deserved interest in carrying on its memory.

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