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Book Review: John Hoary Dent, South Carolina Aristocrat on the Alabama Frontier, by Ray Mathis

Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society

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This is one of the best books on Alabama published in the last decade. It is an excellent, in-depth case study of a young man who moved to Alabama in 1837 and became a planter with myriad interests, then moved to northwest Georgia following the Civil War. Mathis, professor of history at Troy University, Alabama, has utilized lengthy journals compiled by Dent in developing this study. Categorizing Dent as apparently typical of large planters who comprised less than one percent of the population, Mathis is very objective in his treatment of Dent. Dent is portrayed above all as a businessman who places his economic interests above all else; for example, "His dominant concern was economic stability. He was at best a doubting Confederate." Primarily for graduate and advanced undergraduate students, this work should become a standard point of reference in Southern history. A must for all libraries with extensive holdings in Southern history, highly recommended for all four-year libraries.

Editor