



Murder and Mayhem in the Holy City

Pat Hendrix, Toni Hendrix, Heather Spires

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Perhaps Charlestonian James Louis Petigru said it best when he declared in 1861 that "South Carolina is too small for a republic, but too large for an insane asylum."

South Carolina has consistently been one of the most violent places in American history; Charleston as much a hotbed of criminal mayhem as a "holy" city. While hundreds of books explore the illustrious past of this national treasure, few delve into the darker, and equally fascinating, side of its past.

With this new book, historian and archaeologist Pat Hendrix takes a tongue-in-cheek look at the history of crime in the Holy City.

"It was not an easy transition. Charleston was a colorful, multi-ethnic celebration of cruelty and misrule, a Charles Dickens novel come to life. Charlestonians drank harder, fought more seriously, and escalated minor quarrels into murderous frays without a hint of restraint. Vivid descriptions of feuds, brawls, knife fights, and murders feature prominently in visitors' accounts, newspaper articles and journals from the eighteenth century onward. While the hooligans brawled in the streets and taverns, gentlemen preferred to duel. To comprehend this practice, one must first understand the culture of Charleston, a culture where "honor" gave shape and purpose to every facet of life. Like their poorer counterparts, the elites were caught in the same cross currents of honor and retribution; loyalty and vengeance; and courtesy and violence that underlay Charleston's social order."

Murder and Mayhem in the Holy City is an eye-opening foray into Charleston's underworld.



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Henry Jones:

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