

Shadows of Incarceration: The Cowee 19 Story exhibit Mountain Heritage Center, WCU 2024

Convict Leasing Book List

Mancini, Matthew J. *One Dies Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866-1928*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996.

A regional investigation into the convict leasing system that compares the implementation of the system from state to state. Mancini argues that there were nuanced differences within the former Confederate states but that the formation of the new carceral system was a uniquely Southern creation based in racism. He includes a discussion about the abolition of the convict leasing system driven by economic forces rather than humanitarian convictions. One of the first full length non-fiction books dealing with the convict leasing system and often cited in future historical interpretations of the topic.

Ayers, Edward L. *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19th-Century American South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Complex social history that analyzes the economic factors of the convict leasing system. One of *Vengeance and Justice's* most important interventions is Ayers analysis of the generation of a uniquely Southern violence. He argues that Southern notions of honor were holdovers from antebellum and explain the prevalence of violence in both the antebellum and postbellum South.

Woodward, C. Vann. *The Strange Career of Jim Crow, a Commemorative Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

The seminal work about the Jim Crow South. Woodward authored this book in 1955 and changed the way that historians understood the creation of Jim Crow in the post-emancipation United States. A timely reinterpretation of the South, *Strange Career* impacted the Civil Rights movement recentering the reasons for the creation of Jim Crow as the reactionary response of the Redeemers to the emancipation of enslaved people. His work is cited in nearly all text interpreting the South, criminal justice, Jim Crow and race relations in the United States.

Blackmon, Douglas A. *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. New York: Anchor Books, 2008.

A journalist by trade Blackmon uses the story of one incarcerated laborer to discuss the convict leasing system and the corporations that profited from it. He takes an activist stance when comparing the scrutiny of corporations that worked for and supported Nazi Germany

in WWII to the lack of scrutiny given to the corporations that made fortunes off the backs of incarcerated laborers in the United States. He makes broad declarations about the glaring lack of historical interpretations and racial stereotyping by historians of convict leasing ignoring over sixty years of authorship. But it is an engaging read that provides an interesting argument about the capitalist incentives of the convict leasing system.

Gender and Race in Convict Leasing

Haley, Sarah. *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Haley, like LeFlouria examines the convict leasing system in Georgia. She looks at the women in the convict leasing system and the creation of Jim Crow racial control. *No Mercy Here* is especially interesting for the conversation about incarcerated women's use of sabotage and resistance.

LeFlouria, Talitha. *Chained in Silence: Black Women and Convict Labor in the New South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

LeFlouria dismantles the argument that convict leasing was an extension, or "worse than slavery" by looking at the convict leasing system and slavery from the lens of women and girls lived experiences within both systems of control. She uses the Georgia convict leasing system to make her historical argument. She unearths the stories of individual women and girls to investigate the lived experiences of incarcerated laborers and the unique brutality that women faced.

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press, 2010.

Alexander's work is a must read for people wanting to understand the historical context of the mass incarceration system and race in the United States.

Ehle, John. *The Road*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1998.

The Road is a historical fiction about the building the Western North Carolina Railroad from Salisbury to Asheville. John Ehle was an author and generational resident of WNC. Originally written in 1967, *The Road* openly included the convict leasing system and the racial and gender components of that system within the story he weaves. Well researched and engaging, its an easier read for fiction fans than the other nonfiction books on the list.