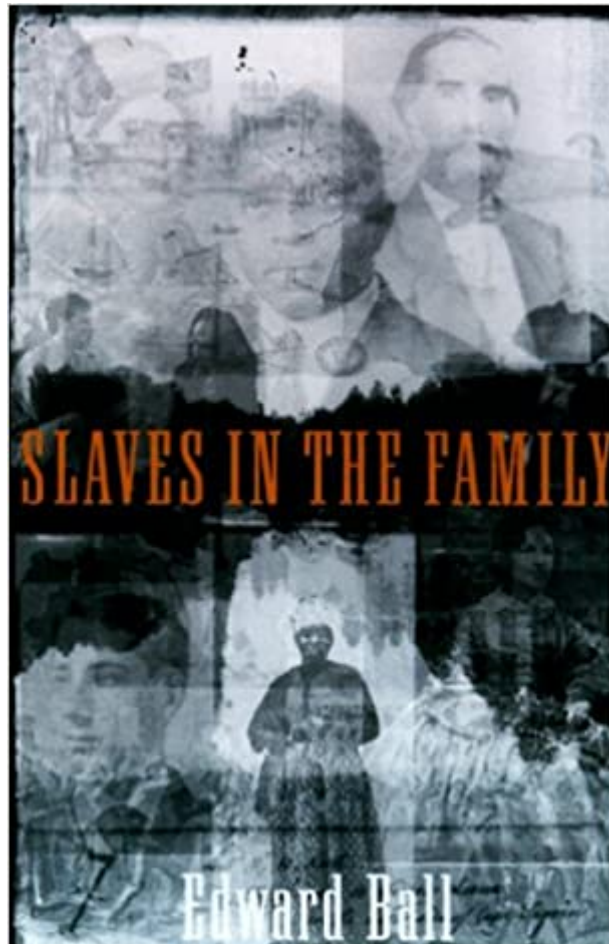


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# Slaves In The Family



## Synopsis

Former "Village Voice" columnist Edward Ball takes readers on an unprecedented journey into his family's slave-owning past, telling the story of black and white families who lived side by side for five generations--and a tale of everyday Americans confronting their vexed inheritance together. Photos 7-city author tour. National publicity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Writer Edward Ball opens *Slaves in the Family* with an anecdote: "My father had a little joke that made light of our legacy as a family that had once owned slaves. 'There are five things we don't talk about in the Ball family,' he would say. 'Religion, sex, death, money and the Negroes.'" Ball himself seemed happy enough to avoid these touchy issues until an invitation to a family reunion in South Carolina piqued his interest in his family's extensive plantation and slave-holding past. He realized that he had a very clear idea of who his white ancestors were--their names, who their children and children's children were, even portraits and photographs--but he had only a murky vision of the black people who supported their livelihood and were such an intimate part of their daily lives; he knew neither their names nor what happened to them and their descendents after they were freed following the Civil War. So he embarked on a journey to uncover the history of the Balls and the black families with whom their lives were inextricably intertwined, as well as the less tangible resonance of slavery in both sets of families. From plantation records, interviews with descendents of both the Balls and their slaves, and travels to Africa and the American South, Ball has constructed a story of the riches and squalor, violence and insurrection--the pride and shame--that

make up the history and legacy of slavery in America.

YA-A compelling saga, Ball's biographical history of his family stands as a microcosm of the evolution of American racial relations. Meticulously researched, and aided by the fact that the South Carolina Ball families were compulsive record keepers, the story begins with the first Ball to arrive in Charleston in 1698. The family eventually owned more than 20 rice plantations along the Cooper River, businesses made profitable by the work of slaves. In the course of his research, the author learned that his ancestors were not only slave owners, but also that there was a highly successful slave trader company in his background. He was able to trace the offspring of slave women and Ball men (between 75,000 and 100,000 currently living) and locate a number of his own African-American distant cousins. Although records indicate that the author's forebearers were not by any means cruel or vicious owners, his remorse for these facets of his family history is clear. In the course of his research, he visited Bunce Island, off the coast of Sierra Leone, to see the fortress from which his ancestors loaded terrorized men, women, and children onto slave ships. Their story represents that of many African Americans. This book helps readers to visualize, if not understand, the slave legacy still enmeshed in this country today. Despite its length, this is an important, well-written slice of history that will be of interest to young adults. Carol DeAngelo, Garcia Consulting Inc., EPA Headquarters, Washington, DC Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Very interesting take on a southern family's genesis and one man's attempt to find out about his family's past. I love that he included the huge index on genealogic sources and places he went to get info since I'm researching my southern family as well. It was refreshing that he included the negative and positive things he found out about his slave owning ancestors and that he went to such lengths to locate the decendants of the slaves. This man was very lucky that his family members were such pack rats and record keepers!

I picked up *Slaves in the Family* because I have been doing research on family who owned plantations in South Carolina in the 1700s and 1800s. Like me, Edward Ball's family owned numerous plantations across South Carolina, and he wanted to explore the relationships and usually unspoken family ties between masters and slaves. This is a long book, and it does get confusing at times keeping all of the various Ball family members straight. However, the author does an excellent job of writing an interesting narrative that keeps moving, and he does a good job of reiterating throughout "who is who." The thing that struck me the most in this book is the tremendous

amount of research the author did about social history, plantation life, slave trade, etc., in addition to family history. The amount of information he has been able to unearth about Ball family members and slave families is unbelievable. The Notes section of the book is a huge resource for new sources to check for information for my family research. Anyone interested in family history or the antebellum south will greatly enjoy this book.

Heard about this book years ago while living/working in the south. Being that one of the "families" of slaves has our family name, this book has been an eye-opener to history I'd not known too much about. We're of no relation, but still a great history lesson. John Whitlock

I was pleased with the condition of the book, and ordered it as required reading for a writing course I am taking. Although I have started reading it, it may take me awhile to finish as it contains a lot of information. I appreciate the pictures and the maps, and look forward to a better understanding of the practice of slavery in our country.

This is one of the best books I have ever read. I've never been much on history books, but this is more than the history of a family. This could be anyone's family. The integration of the English and the African and Native American people is unbelievable. This should be a school text book. It explains more of the why of the wars instead of just the fighting. It also points out that people have practiced the caste system for ever. I commend the author on how well his story was told.

Very good book; very informative.

Provocative insights into the complex relationship between slaves and a prominent family of the South through the well researched history of the white and black Ball family members joined by legend and birth. He demonstrates that roots intertwined over centuries to create one family tree with members from the enslaved as well as the owners.

This is one of my favorite books about Southern heritage and genealogy. Edward Ball does a spectacular job of tracing his own roots which lead him to discover that at one point, his family was among the largest slave owning families in the country. He offers an olive branch to the black Balls in an effort to seek a truce and apologize for the wrongs of his white ancestors.

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