



Under Live Oaks: The Last Great Houses of the Old South

Caroline Sebohm

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“Southerners seem to stay close to each other, accumulating ties of kinship in a way that ultimately becomes almost impossible to unravel, and thus the family house remains the center of births, marriages, and deaths through the generations.”

—From **Under Live Oaks**

There is a part of the South that clings to its past, whether that past is an imagined or a real one. Resonant with antebellum elegance and sometimes turbulent history, the houses of Under Live Oaks act as a touchstone for another time, becoming repositories of rich family traditions for their owners.

This tenacity to hold on to their history is beautifully demonstrated in the decor of these houses, filled with antiques and personal treasures, decorated in the style that was fashionable 150 years ago and that has not been tampered with since. More than 200 images from acclaimed photographer Peter Woloszynski fill the pages of Under Live Oaks, giving a provocative view into a world many never see—a world of faded portraits, shelves of dusty porcelain, dolls lined up in an armchair, family letters, lace fans, invitations to the cotillion, old steamer trunks. These houses were the royal palaces of the age, furnished with the finest objects and fabrics—many imported from Europe—that the first half of the nineteenth century had to offer. Under Live Oaks offers a remarkably consistent vision of a period, a period that takes its place in the dark history of America and that casts a permanent shadow over its legacy.

The houses range from an Italianate villa in Columbus, Georgia, to a masterful Greek Revival mansion in Fairvue, Tennessee; from the charming Catalpa in St. Francisville, Louisiana, to the melancholy Winter Place in Montgomery, Alabama. The classic plantation houses of Natchez, Mississippi, compete in beauty with an elegant townhouse in Walterboro, South Carolina, and the historic Sherwood Forest in Charles City, Virginia. All the states of the Deep South are represented. A few of the houses are open to the public; others are unknown and unvisited except by family and friends. Yet all of them stand as witnesses to a bygone era.

Noted author Caroline Seebohm eloquently casts the stories of the land, the houses, and their owners. She vividly evokes the power of the architecture and interior design of these houses, and through her we hear the owners' pride of place and staunch allegiance to their family history. Under Live Oaks is an intimate tour of the Old South, an experience available to only a few and that in the not-too-distant future will be lost forever.

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