

# 'Palmetto State' is quality *Oct 27 1991* in a quantity market



Chepesiuk



Pettus

## THE PALMETTO STATE

Stories From the Making of South Carolina. By Louise Pettus and Ron Chepesiuk. Sandlapper. 304 pages. \$24.95.

### By MARC RAPPORT

One of the things that struck me after moving down here from the post-modern Great Lakes a few years back was the sense of identity that South Carolinians have about themselves and their home.

A distinct state in a distinct region, in a homogenized time when distinctions are shrinking in our vast land, I thought, these are people who know their history, who feel their history, and I wanted to learn more about them.

Fortunately, this is not difficult. Anything about South Carolina is a popular topic for bookshelves across the state, and those who stock them, and one of the small stalwarts of the trade, Sandlapper Publishing Inc. in Orangeburg, now has out a really good new read on the subject.

From the publishing house that gave us Marion businessman Pratt Gasque's Rum Gully tales of growing up on the beach in Model T times, and Coastal Carolina professor Donald Millus' Grand Strand fishing adventures, we now get "The Palmetto State: Stories from the Making of South Carolina."

This dandy book was written by Louise Pettus and Ron Chepesiuk, two veteran chroniclers from Winthrop College.

Pettus retired in 1989 after 21 years of teaching education and history, while Chepesiuk is a freelance writer and head of the Winthrop College Archives.

Unlike "The South Carolina Story," another recent Sandlapper offering, this book is not a traditional, chronological recapping of S.C. history.

Rather it's a collection of columns, some more anecdotal than others, all vignettes of a specific event in state history, from the Spanish explorers to our century, split into such chapters as war, women and natural disasters, though not necessarily in that order.

Without being too segmented or ridden by substance-less infobits, this book imparts a lot of information in a very readable form. For instance, I found out that the flood of 1916 was caused by the remnants of two hurricanes that collided over the Carolinas, dropping two feet of rain upriver from here. All was lost for many in those days before dams.

And I was distressed to learn that the body of Andrew Jackson's father got lost on the way to cemetery here in our neck of the woods. We also hear from King Hagler, the legendary Catawba chief of the pre-Revolutionary days, and D.B. Johnson, founder of Winthrop College. He's in a chapter titled "Unsung Heroes."

There's a lot of history in our tri-county area of York, Chester and Lancaster, and Pettus and Chepesiuk make sure you get a fair share of it, although they don't ignore the rest of the state by any means.

Besides lively prose, this book features lots of illustrations, nicely packaged with the stories instead of stuck in a section of glossy pages in the middle, like often is done to cut costs.

This is a good book, worth reading and keeping around. But one thing puzzled me.

Pettus and Chepesiuk credit James Glen, the royal governor, for the 1788 treaty that ended war with the Cherokees. Another book I read recently, "The Oligarchs in Colonial and Revolutionary Charleston," put out this year by the University of South Carolina Press, credits Lt. Gov. William Bull II, a native American, for the Indian-crushing pact.

Of course, the latter was written by Kinloch Bull Jr., a career diplomat from Sumter and descendant of the lieutenant governor. He seems to have produced a deeply researched defense of his family honor — a true South Carolinian.

So who's right? I'll just have to find another S.C. history book to see what it says. Fortunately, this is not difficult.

— Marc Rapport is night city editor for The Herald and a native Ohioan.