Greetings from the Simms Society Executive Council. We are pleased to report that 2011 is closing out as one of the most exciting years for Simms scholarship in recent memory.

First, the Simms Initiatives at the University of South Carolina will celebrate the hard launch of its new website on the evening of November 14. With the long-anticipated public roll-out of this massive resource, Simms studies will enjoy a web presence unlike that of any other American single-author collection. This will help to foster a large and collaborative coterie of scholars to build Simms studies into its proper scale in the academic world.

On another front, the University of South Carolina Press is going forward with the production of a new book on Simms. It is the collection of essays announced in the last newsletter, but now titled William Gilmore Simms’s Unfinished Civil War. Editors are also hard at work preparing two volumes of original Simms writings: one is a collection of Simms reviews titled Literature and Civilization, and the other is a volume of Simms’s two unpublished and unfinished novels Brothers of the Coast and Sir Will O’Wisp. We will be thrilled to see such new titles emerge and add to the growing body of Simms studies.

Adding to the momentum of these efforts, plans are now underway for the next Simms Society conference in 2012. The Executive Council held its annual meeting in the summer to begin to hammer out the details of this biennial event.

So, though 2011 is almost over, we all look forward to 2012 and all that it promises to bring for Simms and his admirers. If you have questions about the Simms Society and our ongoing efforts, please contact us at: 803-777-2403 or tclsimms@mailbox.sc.edu.

Welcome

Inside this issue:
- Invitation to the launch preview event for the Simms Initiatives website in November
- Society membership news
- A Simms book review
- The complete introduction by James Everett Kibler to the new Print-on-Demand edition of Simms’s Woodcraft
- Information about the recent changes to the Simms Society dues structure
- Recently uncovered evidence of Simms’s work “inspiring” an Edgar Allan Poe poem

New Print-on-Demand Titles are Here

As was announced in the last issue of Simms Society News, the University of South Carolina Press, in collaboration with the Simms Initiatives and utilizing the same electronic resources as the Digital Simms Edition, plans to release the bulk of Simms’s books — all of his major works — in affordable Print-on-Demand editions.

Each volume will feature the last version of the work that Simms himself prepared for press. In addition, each will contain a biography of the author, a general bibliography, a select bibliography, and an introduction to the work by a scholar in the field. Look inside for a sample introduction by James Everett Kibler. A review of Vasconselos, introduced by Kevin Collins, will appear soon in The Simms Review.

Priced at $29.95 these Print-on-Demand volumes will make Simms affordable for classroom assignment. They also will invite the casual and the curious to investigate the work of the man Edgar Allan Poe in 1845 called, “the best novelist which this country, on the whole, has produced.”

Never in Simms’s lifetime was as much of his work in print at one time as the Print-on-Demand edition will offer, when complete. This will mean, too, that Simms will be more available to scholarship than ever before. For many purposes, the digital edition of his work makes research easier, but for the intensive reader, the book in hand provides the better means.

Look forward to an average of 20 volumes appearing each of the next few years. Visit the Simms Initiatives site to learn more: simms.library.sc.edu
Simms Society Membership News

The latest edition of American Literary Scholarship (2009) lauds Masahiro Nakamura’s Visions of Order in William Gilmore Simms as a “splendid book,” naming it “one of the year’s best literary studies.” We congratulate him on garnering this high esteem and, in the process, advancing the recognition of Simms and his place in the larger context of nineteenth-century fiction.

A volume of essays dealing with Simms and the Civil War is now in production with University of South Carolina Press. Originally announced as a possible publication in the last issue of the newsletter (and under the old title The Transformation of War in the Writings of William Gilmore Simms), the book will be called William Gilmore Simms’s Unfinished Civil War and will contain thirteen original essays (including six from literary and six from historical scholars), plus an introduction by David S. Shields, McClinton Professor of Southern Letters at University of South Carolina.

This October, Finishing Line Press published a chapbook by immediate Past-President Matt Brennan titled The Light of Common Day. Brennan also has a poem on the subject of William Hazlitt in the fall issue of South Carolina Review. We look forward to perusing these works and encourage all Simms Society members to pick up these publications today.

Editorial Board member David Moltke-Hansen has been active as a reviewer lately. He has a review essay forthcoming in Reviews in American History and a review forthcoming in the Journal of Social History. Also, his article on Elizabeth Fox-Genovese as a southernist will appear in Mississippi Quarterly shortly.

President-Elect Kevin Collins has been newly appointed this year as the Faculty Senate President at Southwestern Oklahoma State University.

Society President Sean Busick was heavily involved in the American Political Science Association meeting in Seattle this past August. He delivered a paper titled “Confederational Thought, 1789—1828” as part of the panel “Confederational American Political Thought” and served as commentator on the panel “Rights, Place, and Alienation in America.” This latter panel featured a paper on Simms.

Noted Simms scholar Colin Pearce has returned “home” to South Carolina, taking a position teaching at Clemson University beginning this fall term. We welcome him back!

Professor Masahiro Nakamura writes from Japan that he is translating Woodcraft into Japanese, a project which will occupy him for the next few years. We thank him for his continued diligence in making Simms’s works available to a Japanese audience. Previously, Nakamura has published a translation of The Yemassee and some of Simms’s short fiction, all of which have been justly celebrated.

An anonymous donor would like to sponsor 10 graduate student memberships in the Society in an effort to grow our base of young, up-and-coming Simms scholars. If you know of a promising student who could benefit please contact us at tclsimms@mailbox.sc.edu so the arrangements can be made. We would like to thank this member for these recruiting efforts, as we do all members who help spread the word about Simms and the Society.

The two-volume collection Mary Chesnut’s Illustrated Diary: Mulberry Edition Boxed Set, which was released on October 15, features a Foreword written by founding Review editor James Everett Kibler. Kibler’s piece begins volume two of the set, Mary Chesnut’s Civil War Photograph Album, for which he also penned an entry on Simms to accompany the author’s photograph in the album.

The Simms Initiatives at USC has been receiving some international attention since the announcement of the beta phase of the website last summer. Site visits and feedback from scholars in the Netherlands, England, and Russia, coupled with our existing Simms Society members in Canada, Japan, and other countries clearly shows that Simms studies is thriving outside the United States.

Editorial Board member and Grateful Dead Archivist Nicholas G. Meriwether has a chapter called “A Joyful Alternative to War: the Counterculture as Local Culture” included in the book Rebellion in Black and White: The Sixties in the South, under consideration by Johns Hopkins UP; he just finished a 225-page exhibit book for the Grateful Dead Archive’s first exhibition, entitled The Attics of Our Lives: A Preview of the Grateful Dead Archive; and he just had a book of Grateful Dead essays accepted by Scarecrow Press.

Thank you to all of the members who contributed news—your efforts make the Society the convivial and collegial group that it is. If you have any membership news to include in our next issue, please send it to Todd Hagstette at tclsimms@mailbox.sc.edu.
It must be highly gratifying to you in the South, my dear Mercury, to see the very decided movement which is making among the literary men of your region. It is not enough that a people are possessed of large mental endowments; they must prove this possession by their performances. Hitherto, the South has chiefly employed her great intellect in politics. This field, even though it may give freedom to oratory and eloquence, is yet, in our country at least, totally void of a sufficient domain for the exercise of a nation’s genius. This demands, and must employ, other avenues, if it would duly assert itself, and properly defend its material possessions; and, in general terms, these other avenues must be found in Art and Literature.

Of late days, we note a stir among your minds, pointing in these directions. Galt, a young Virginian, has been doing some very beautiful things, in marble, which bespeak him a sculptor of rare merit. The State of Virginia, I am happy to perceive, has given him some liberal commissions. Crawford, we know, has had, for a long time, in hand a noble piece of work, destined to adorn the Capitol at Richmond, a Monument to Washington, which is to include, in a tributary group around the statue of the Father of his Country, a noble train of his greatest patriots and sages. Chapman is still in Italy, a devoted worker in colors—a man of fine fancy, and a highly picturesque talent. Your own State, the birth-place of Allston, has had, and I believe, still possesses, many artists, who have more or less developed the resources of genius and talent. Mendelssohn, in London, has this day occasion to mention the writings of Gayarre, of Louisiana. But there are several others still, who have recently taken the field in polite letters, and hold forth a cheering promise of future vigorous performance. Among these writers is the author of “The Virginia Comedians,” a highly spirited picture of society in olden times in the Old Dominion; a work distinguished by a sustained interest; by a striking delineation of character, and by scenes and descriptions of great power and beauty. The author of this work is said to be Mr. Cooke, a native Virginian, and the brother of Phillip Pendleton Cooke, a true poet, whose “Foissart,” and other ballads, will always stand in rank with the best American poetry up to this period. Unfortunately, he died young, at the very threshold of fame and excellence. "Flush Times of Alabama and Mississipi, and Party Leaders," both from the pen of Joseph G. Baldwin, are among the most readable, spirited and attractive of the publications of the day. The former gives us a lively series of sketches of Bar Practice in the Southwest, in a free, dashing hand, enlivened with anecdote, full of life, racy, witty, never tedious, and always truthful. The ease, freshness, and vivacity of these sketches deserves all praise, and will find few rivals to approach them.

The work entitled “Party Leaders," though not of superior merit to the other, is yet more ambitious, and in a more deliberate mood. But the nature and plan of the performance cannot check materially the buoyancy and life of the author’s genius. It consists of rapid sketches, biographical and dramatic, of many of our great statesmen: Jefferson, Hamilton, Jackson, Clay, Randolph, and others who occupied the same fields with them, and are inseparable from their portraiture. In these biographies, our author sketches, lightly and gracefully, as if in passing only, but not to the omission of any of these characteristic features which are necessary to the perfect portrait. It is easy and pleasant reading. Our author writes current calamo; is copious of speech, with a lawyer’s fluency, but does not vex or weary us by diffuseness. His volume will always prove acceptable to the generous reader. All of these works proceed from the publishing house of Appleton and Co., the largest Publishers in the country.

A Treatise on Sociology, theoretical and practical, from the press of Lippincott, Grambo and Co. is from the pen of Henry Hughes, esq. of Mississippi. This volume demands and deserves the careful perusal, not only of Southern politicians but of philosophers in general. It works out ab ovo, and from first principles, the great problem of slavery and common labor. It is a profound, searching investigation; exhibiting a well drilled and highly logical mind; a deep and abiding faculty of thought; and a perfectly honest, as it is a perfectly conclusive, argument. The good faith of the author—which is absolutely necessary to all philosophical investigations, is conspicuous throughout; and carries the consenting reader along with him to the most difficult solutions, forcing convictions upon him, and making his way clear to the perfect adoption of all his deductions. This volume fully establishes the claims of Mr. Hughes as one of the most logical and complete reasoners upon the subject, of all who have striven in its investigation. In justice to itself, the intellect of the South should be put in possession of this production. Mr. Hughes, by the way, is quite a young man; but, we are told that he has enjoyed the advantages of foreign travel as well as European education. He proves that these advantages have not been thrown away upon him; and we trust that the people of Mississippi will take early occasion to put him, and them, to their proper uses.

Alone, is the title of a novel of Virginia origin, published by “Marion Harland.” It is issues from the Richmond press of A. Morris, and we rejoice to perceive, that it has already gone through three editions. But, “Marion Harland” is a nom de plume. The true author is Miss Hawes, a young girl of Virginia, now not more than twenty years of age. This beautiful tale, which would be highly creditable to any lady novelist living, is still more remarkable, as the production of a girl scarcely out of her teens. It is a story of domestic life; a sad story, calculated to beguile your tears, if you are ever in the weeping mood. The style is very good and very energetic. The writer thinks boldly, and utters herself with equal confidence and clearness. Her tastes are refined; her thoughts pitched loftily; her fancies delicate; her pathos unstrained and natural. Altogether, it is a most remarkable book, full of beauties, and every chapter marked by talent.

The Joys and Sorrows of the Ecclesiastical Year, is from the pen of another Southern lady—Maria G. Milward, of Virginia also, we are told, though now a resident of Mobile, Ala. This volume is a series of moral essays, illustrating the religious and moral holidays and marked periods of the Church—such as Advent, Christmas, or the Nativity; Epiphany; Lent; Easter; Ascension Day; Whitsunday; Trinity; St. Andrew’s Day; St. Thomas, the Apostle; St. John, the Evangelist; the Holy Innocents; Conversion of St. Paul; Christ in the Temple, &c. &c. To each of the days in these several festival terms, an essay is given; each chapter being rounded with an appropriate emotional poem. All of these are gracefully written and in the proper strain; calm, gentle, persuasive. This volume is from the press of Herman Hautzinger, of Philadelphia; well known as a Christian preacher as well as publisher. I shallprobably, in a future letter, make report of others, of your Southern writers, as they occur to me. Some of them are already in my mind to notice, but I am nearly at the end of my sheet. I perceive that a collection of Poems, by Paul H. Hayne, of your city, is just announced; and a politico-moral poem, by an unknown Charlestonian, entitled “The Hireling and Slave;” but these have not reached me. The Fugitive poetry of Mr. Hayne, I have frequently seen; and thought it indicative of fine talent, good taste, and a vivacious and thoughtful mind.

It is enough, I think, to justify our confident expectations of the further future developments of the Southern intellect, that we note these indications. Here are productions, appearing at the same moment, from Virginia, Carolina, Alabama, and Louisiana—all exhibiting decided talent, and the degree of resolution and industry which are calculated to make the talent turn to profit and fame hereafter.
Join us for a preview celebration of the Hard Launch of the Simms Initiatives website

The invitation below is for the preview of the hard launch of the Simms Initiatives website: simms.library.sc.edu. We look forward to seeing many of you there, as all Simms Society members are invited to join in the festivities. What a momentous occasion it will be for the future of Simms studies and readership!

The story of how the website came into being is worth recounting. Begun in June 2010, the Simms Initiatives drew on a national team of advisers in its planning and had the soft launch of its database and website on June 15, 2011. Concluding a five-month beta phase, the Initiatives will commence with the hard launch on November 15. At that point, all major site functionalities and features will become available to the public user.

The site is continuing development, however, both as it adds content and as it further refines and supplements its capabilities. Future additions will include education-directed materials for teachers and students, visual and cartographic resources, a growing array of links to related, digitally available materials, and partner-developed packages for the cultural tourist in the many parts of the South on which Simms wrote.

With the hard launch on November 15, the Simms Initiatives website will offer a complete array of resources for the casual reader, student, and advanced researcher of Simms and his writing. These include:

- Full-text online versions of Simms’s books and other works (all of his separately-published titles will soon be available)
- Full-text search capabilities
- Browsing of the complete collection by genre, date, and subject
- Faceted browsing of search results
- Bibliography of all Simms’s published writings
- New Simms biographical overview
- List of Simms’s works and works on Simms
- Timelines of Simms’s life, times, and subjects
- Publication schedule for Print-on-Demand titles
- Well-documented API for advanced researchers and site developers

When it is completed, the Simms Initiatives website will be one of the largest single-author resources available online. Readers will enjoy growing access to the long-neglected author’s work, access that comes through both Print-on-Demand and digital editions. The Initiatives also are compiling as complete a bibliography of Simms’s writings as possible. The result will be kinds and degrees of access given to few authors.

The launch preview on November 14 celebrates the completion of the first major phase of this massive project. We hope that all Simms Society members will make plans to join us.
Woodcraft is the fifth novel composed in Simms's saga of the American Revolution. Set during the chaotic close and aftermath of the war, it is the last (eighth) Revolutionary Romance in terms of chronological action. As the work opens, the British are evacuating Charleston in December 1782. Then the novel shifts to a ruined rice plantation, Glen-Eberley, on the Ashepoo River south of Charleston, where the plantation community is striving to establish relative civil order and comity. To resist being stolen by the British, some of the plantation's slaves have hidden in the swamp, and as their master, Porgy, returns, they come forward to seek normalcy and put in a crop to feed the near starving. In achieving order, some of the "woodcraft" maneuvers of both war and survival in wild nature must be utilized. Hence the title. As Porgy will state, life, even in peace, is eternal civil war. Proper woodcraft is necessary at every turn and juncture if man is to survive intact as a full being.

The general critical consensus for the last hundred years has been that Woodcraft is among Simms's best novels. Many, in fact, deem it his masterpiece. Donald Davidson, perhaps still the most perceptive critic to have written on Simms, for example, wrote in 1952: "It is not too much to say that Woodcraft is Simms' highest achievement. Certainly it stands... without a rival in its day and time, and hardly excelled or even paralleled later in its peculiar vein" (Letters 1:xiv). It is a many-faceted, exceedingly rich and complex work. Critics have rightly discussed it from a multitude of vantage points, but the full measure of the novel has yet to be taken. It is one of those inspired works that resists simple treatment. To do it justice would require a study as long as the novel's 518 pages. It is just that good.

Like its themes, the composition history of the novel is among the more complex of Simms's works. It first appeared serially in the Charleston Southern Literary Gazette a year after the serialization there of The Golden Christmas, to which it bears some thematic affinities and related imagery (Kibler "Pairing," 13-16). Its title in the Southern Literary Gazette was The Sword and the Distaff; or, "Fair, Fat and Forty," A Story of the South, At the Close of the Revolution. The novel ran from February to November 1852. In a letter to James Henry Hammond on 18 August 1852, Simms reported the novel finished (Letters 3:193). Before the last section of the serialized version appeared, the complete novel issued as a separately published work in Charleston from Walker and Richards (publisher of the SLG) in September 1852. It was still entitled The Sword and the Distaff, and bore on its title page "Second Edition," which is actually the first book edition, created from the typesettings for the SLG. It was reissued by Lippincott, Grambo of Philadelphia from the same plates and with the same title in 1853.

This early title effectively represents the complicated mesh of contrasts and opposites that fill the novel. The sword here is emblematic of war and the male world. The distaff (a part of a spinning wheel, or in heraldry, the distaff or female side of the family) stands for the peaceful domestic sphere, the home and hearth, and the female world. In other words, the novel is Simms's War and Peace, seventeen years before Tolstoi. The subtitle "Fair, Fat and Forty" refers most specifically to the Widow Eveleigh, Porgy's love interest and plantation neighbor, who stands in contrast to him. As a British officer says of her, she is more of a man than some men, while Porgy is inactive, passive, and less than heroic. Like Falstaff, who is partly a model, he is a likeable comic, mock heroic figure. His unusual name likely derives from a scrappy fish common off the Carolina coast. Its shape, like Porgy's, is round and fat-bodied. The fish was usually only eaten by the poor, owing to its boniness. Just as the worlds of male and female get blurred by Porgy and Eveleigh, the world of domestic peace gets mated with the maneuvers of war.

Simms asked his friend Hammond to comment upon the work, and in a letter of 8 July 1853, he called it "fully equal to any of your novels." He went on to advise Simms to "strike out" the subtitle "Fair, Fat and Forty," because it was "decidedly vulgar." He also noted several inconsistencies and a "fault in your geography" (Letters 3:243). Simms revised the novel, subsequent to its Lippincott, Grambo appearance in 1853, along the lines Hammond suggested. The new, revised edition appeared from Redfield in late September 1854 as Woodcraft or Hawks About the Dovecote. A Story of the South at the Close of the Revolution.

William P. Trent, Joseph V. Ridgely, and later critics could see no apparent reason for the change and felt the new title had no bearing on the text. Yet it is equally effective, perhaps even moreso than the first. It broadens the focus. Woodcraft is the figurative image of maneuvering through life, full as it is of pitfalls and dead ends. In this way, with his new title, Simms highlights the Bildungsroman novel of character development (especially for the main character Porgy) and in general broadens the psychological implications outside the smaller (albeit still epic) panorama of war and peace, of the "soldier's pay" of coming back to normalcy in a ruined, war-ravaged land. In twentieth century fashion, the outer world of the landscape mirrors the scarred inner world of the characters, especially the returning veteran Porgy, who in the early stages of the book, is fatalistic, self-indulgent, and self-pitying, and says that he might best slit his own throat. Simms's belief in the flawed nature of man and his insistence on human frailties and limitations has always been a hallmark of Southern literature.

Likewise, Porgy's overseer, Sergeant Millhouse, is only a partial man, as reflected by his loss of an arm. As in Flannery O'Connor, physical deformity is an outward sign of an inner lack, a spiritual deficiency. Although he may seem more "practical" than Porgy in his thorough-going materialistic attitude toward the world, he is close to being a grotesque. It is no wonder that slave Tom can assess his shortcomings. He concludes that Millhouse lacks the proper balance for dancing, which he forswears as frivolous.

In addition to the new title, Simms made a few substantive changes and cleared up inconsistencies. For example, Corporal and Sergeant Millhouse become consistently Sergeant Millhouse, as suggested by Hammond. Unfortunately, the Redfield Edition also bears Redfield house-styling and what appears to be some substantive editorial tampering. The Redfield Edition has two unsigned illustrations by F.O.C. Darley, engraved by Whitney, Jocelyn, and Annin in South Carolina. The title page verso indicates that the text was stereotyped by C. C. Savage of New York.

Both editions of the novel are dedicated to Joseph Johnson, MD. Johnson (1776-1862) was a Charleston friend and author of Traditions and Reminiscences.
Chiefly of the American Revolution in the South (1851). To Duyckinck in 1854, Simms declared Johnson to be “one of the best living reminiscents” of the war (Letters 3:343). In the dedication, Simms suggested that the novel is a roman à clef, populated with fictional portrayals whose real-life antecedents Johnson would surely have no trouble recognizing; “The humorists of ‘Glen-Eberley’ [Porgy and his comrades at his plantation] were well-known personages of preceding generations, here thinly disguised under false names and fanciful localities, which, I am inclined to think will prove no disguise to you. I shall keep my secret, however, as a matter of course” (Woodcraft 3). Simms went on to state that Johnson was under no similar obligation to remain silent about the true identities of the characters and, in fact, was encouraged to name them.

George Hayhoe writes that Johnson’s Traditions (p. 408) describes “a widow lady of great respectability,—fair, fat, and forty,—who entertained the soldiers, and one young officer who flattered himself that he might acquire her wealth by marrying her” (Hayhoe 524). Hayhoe feels that this “description is quite probably the germ of the novel,” considering the fact that Johnson’s “fair, fat, and forty” became the subtitle of The Sword and the Distaff. The phrase in Johnson, incidentally, likely derives from Sir Walter Scott’s St. Ronan’s Well (1823) and/or Redgauntlet (1824). Hayhoe might also have used the fact that Traditions had just appeared the year before Simms wrote his novel to explain it as the impetus for Simms’s composition.

As for the Eveleigh surname, the Eveleighs were well-known in early Lowcountry and Charleston Revolutionary War history. Legend has it that it was from the window of the George Eveleigh house on Church Street in Charleston that Francis Marion leapt to avoid capture by the British. A Nicholas Eveleigh of Charleston had an illustrious revolutionary history.

Of Porgy, Hayhoe writes, while he bears resemblance to Falstaff, “it is likely that much of the inspiration for Simms’s portrait...is derived from a sketch of Dr. Alexander Skinner of Lee’s legion in Alexander Garden’s Anecdotes of the Revolutionary War in America (1822). Garden describes Skinner as an honest fellow, just as ready to fight as eat” (136) and points out his “strong resemblance to Falstaff” as well as Sancho Panza” (Hayhoe 527). Hayhoe continues: Garden also notes that Skinner was unsuccessfully trying to court the widow Mrs. Charles Elliott of “Sandy Hill” plantation, but even though she refused him, the fact that he had “a kind invitation to feel himself at home” in her house, “the most hospitable mansion in the State, made Skinner the proudest and happiest of men” (Garden 138; Hayhoe 527). These details fit Porgy perfectly.

Simms’s character colonel Moncrieff is based upon James Moncrieff (1744-1793), a Scot who served as a military engineer for England during the siege of Charleston in 1780. He supervised slaves stolen from outlying plantations for resale, and in March 1782, Colonel Balfour suggested he lead a brigade of blacks against the Patriots. Moncrieff is known to have shipped eight hundred slaves to the West Indies, where he sold them as his own property. According to Hayhoe, “such exportation of slaves was illegal” yet it “was such a common offense that Cornwallis had issued orders forbidding it without his express permission on 2 August 1780” (Hayhoe 524). M’Kewin is very likely based on James McCloun, a Scot and loyalist, whom the Patriots did not banish after the war.

Porgy’s body servant and cook, Tom, as well as slaves Jenny, John, Jupe, Maum Sappho, Charlotte, Betty, Sally, and Bob, “may be based on or named after Simms family slaves” (Letters 1:clii, 2:590-1). The novel is peppered with allusions to historical figures such as Harden (Colonel William Harden) and Withers (William Withers), Captain Henry Barry, General Francis Marion, General Henry Lee, General Horatio Gates, General Nathaniel Greene, General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, General Alexander Leslie, Colonel Nesbit Balfour, Major Andre, and others. Porgy’s consistent praise of the Patriot militiamen of South Carolina reflects Simms’s attitudes toward the South’s role in the Revolutionary War.

There is no known counterpart for Samuel Bostwick, Dory Bostwick, or Lance Frampton, though their family names are common in the time and place. There is a Frampton plantation (“The Hermitage”) near Pocotaligo, whose master, John Edward Frampton (1810-1896), was a state senator from 1842-1846, while Simms was in the legislature. He was one of the largest planters in Prince William’s Parish of Beaufort District and had ties to Simms’s Barnwell District. He married there in 1842. Having been long active in the Nullification Movement, Frampton attended the Southern Rights Convention of 1852, and signed the Ordinance of Secession. Lance Frampton, an admirable, sober, common-sensical farmer-soldier, may have been either an ancestor or a tribute to the senator from one who obviously shared political beliefs. In courting, Frampton is Porgy’s superior. The Widow Griffin, Millhouse, Absalom Crooks, Dr. Oakenburg, and Geordie (George) Dennison may be purely fictional creations. Yet, as Hayhoe suggests, “it is possible that, although Simms used published anecdotes and traditions such as Johnson’s [and Garden’s] as the basis for some of his characters, he modeled others on figures he had heard Johnson and others talk about” (Hayhoe 521).

Woodcraft appeared during a period incredibly fruitful and rich for both Simms and American literature. The decade of the 1850s has been named the American Literary Renaissance by historian and literary critic F. O. Matthiessen (1902-1950) in his landmark volume American Renaissance: Art and Experience in the Age of Emerson and Whitman (1941). Although Matthiessen makes no mention of Simms, Woodcraft would be legitimate there squarely in the middle of the brief period that produced The Scarlet Letter, Moby Dick, Walden, and Leaves of Grass. Interestingly and significantly, if placed there, Simms’s work would be the only humorous novel of the decade, and well before Huckleberry Finn. A persuasive case has been made by recent critics, most particularly Jan Bakker, that it is as well the first realistic novel in America.

The novel incorporates a complex system of character contrasts, pairings, and comparisons in Faulknerian manner. As in Faulkner, plot and action are driven in this way: and character provides order, structure, and themes. Themes grow out of character rather than the other way around. The centrality of character is likely what lifts the work from the rhetorical to the dialectic and accounts for its literary stature. In general, abstractionist themed driven, rhetorically conceived fiction is not as effective, and Woodcraft escapes these limitations by a Shakespearean, Dickensian focus on the complexities of human personalities in conflict with themselves and each other.

This is not to say that ideas and views and philosophies are not present, but they grow out of character that is alive (not flat cardboard), believable, engaging, and memorable. Captain Porgy first appeared in The Partisan (1835) as a rather simple supporting figure and, frankly, at times...
something of a bore. He makes a cameo appearance in *Melilchampe* (1836), is resurrected fully and effectively in *Katharine Walton* (1850), and later appears briefly in *The Forayers* (1855) and *Eutaw* (1856). But here he takes central stage as chief protagonist. He is the most beloved character in Simms’s work but nevertheless elicits debate as to just how sympathetically we should see him.

Wimsatt has made a good case for Porgy as very sympathetically human despite his exasperating self-indulgence and self-pity early in the novel (168-72). William Taylor has him the perfect embodiment of the Cavalier plantation South, with all its strengths and defects (288).

Wimsatt treats the novel’s “dominant mode” as a “comedy of plantation manners” (167). One question *Woodcraft* poses is whether plantation civilization and its traditions will survive. Involved in this focus is a definition of community and how such communities are kept whole and vital. For the community to persist, there must be hospitality, neighborliness, tolerance, good naturedness, and nurturing through food, fellowship, and friendship—as opposed to self-centeredness and extreme individualism outside society (Kibler, “Pairing” 13).

Beyond considerations such as these, *Woodcraft* bursts with life and its myriad possibilities. Its world is full of miracles and mystery. The spiritual suffuses the empirically real. As Porgy says, the “devil is at our elbow” (410), ready to delude, defraud, degrade, and destroy. Porgy continues, and “with foes among those who surround us, and the vices and vanities at our own hearts to second their labors, unless Heaven help us in season, and with all its angels, hope and humanity stand but a poor choice for happiness” (410). In this struggle to survive and maintain community, life is war, civil war, very much like the military conflict that has just ended. It is chaotic, confusing, contradictory, paradoxical, violent, and absurd enough in its particulars. It requires the maneuverings of woodcraft to get through it, often in a dark wood, and along winding, circuitous, and dangerous paths. The novel’s sometimes tedious first hundred pages, set in the woods, are necessary to frame the figurative comparison. There are all sorts of snares and false paths throughout the novel, false “ologies” and “isms” that lead to dead ends and sometimes to death. Two such are atheism (as expressed by the squatter Samuel Bostwick) and utilitarianism (as demonstrated by Millhouse), but there are numerous others as well. Many times the novel’s paths (in and out of the woods) go in circles, leading nowhere. What Simms provides here, beyond “ology” and “ism” or specific concerns (like, for instance, answering *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*), is a way of seeing the world, a Weltanschauung, that encompasses and transcends topical issues. This way of seeing opens doors to possibilities rather than closing them with easy explanations that oversimplify and thus distort truths—as Simms felt, and had his omniscient narrator suggest, transcendentalism, abolitionism, utilitarianism, hedonism, realism, naturalism, empiricism, determinism, Marxism, spiritualism, and other passing ideological approaches all did and will. “My writings are not to be...
estimated by things of a clique or of a day," he wrote (Letters 4: 454). He was aware of literary trends, but was equally the possessor of a strong historical consciousness and was cognizant of the broader context and the constants of literature, which a grounding in the Classics gave him. In the final analysis, in this instance, if not always in his fiction, the shifting fashions, while they made an imprint on his work, seem only superficially secondary when placed against these constants.

The novel’s doors indeed open to mysteries, unexplainable riddles, and miracles that are at the heart of life. This world has miracles at every turn of the path. The characters learn practical woodcraft in going down the novel’s paths, but real wisdom comes from the particular way of seeing man as finite, flawed, and imperfectible, but yet still capable of transcendence of his animal nature. It is a book that centers around transcendence and transfiguration, both sought and rejected, both accomplished and not achieved.

Man’s animal nature, determined by animal desires in an animal world that ends in death, is a part of this novel’s realistic universe; but equally realistic is man’s capacity for salvation through faith. The character Dory Bostwick is essential in this respect. A faith in miracles is essential for redemption and transcendence. Actions matter and character is fate, but the possibilities for growth and transfiguration confront those who reject salvation and end their lives in the failed horror of spiritual emptiness.

Woodcraft is thus a book about possibilities, especially the possibilities for redemption and transcendence. Actions matter and character is fate, but the results of these actions are not always pat. Wisdom is a matter of learning that life, with its deep, sad, and grand mysteries, can never be fully fathomed—that it is both inscrutable and unconquerable. Evil exists. It comes from within and is not imposed from without. The novel is thus a grappling to discern the very nature of life as a constant struggle with the devil “at our elbow.” Thus, Woodcraft is anti-determinist. Men are not fated, not determined by environment and heredity. Simms even left the resolution of his main plots open to conjecture, but the conjecture alone is enough to undercut rigid determinism (Kibler “Dory” 211). What is clear is that at the novel’s end a character’s treasure of faith is proved true and life affirming, while his foil’s reliance on the material proves false and leads to emptiness and a death that is at once physical and spiritual. One of the novel’s primary miracles, Dory Bostwick, daughter of a cruel and malignant squatter, “blossoms” in her squalid shack. Man’s animal world is still ordered in its larger design by a Providence which allows miracles even for the humblest.

Clearly Woodcraft (1852-1854) is close in spirit and philosophy to Simms’s Poetry and the Practical (1854), in which poetry, or the way of seeing that it requires, is the only truly practical. The novel’s main character, Porgy, accepts the mysteries of life, sees the true value of music, poetry, and dance, values the eccentricities of human personality that would prevent easy case-book explanations of human nature, and refuses (like Simms) to allow life to be explained only by uninspired science and the cash nexus or by the empirical and practical alone. Porgy tells us: "The true man does not live by money....There is still better food than that for which I hunger" (Woodcraft 235).

On the other hand, Porgy’s foil, his utilitarian overseer Millhouse (shades of John Stuart Mill and the mill house of industry), can see no good in allowing slaves to coon hunt or dance or Porgy to entertain poets and guests who cannot pay their way. He would turn out immediately foppish, eccentric Dr. Oakenburg, that “puzzle in a bottle” as Porgy calls him, and poet Geordie Dennison, who is chronicling the late war and its heroes in his verse. Dennison rode with Marion, and who will be there to pass down the Swamp Fox’s exploits and their meaning if not the poet? To summarize the novel in terms of “finance vs. romance,” however true the phrase rings, is not the whole story. Although Simms himself famously said that the novel was “probably as good an answer to Mrs. Stowe as has been published” (Letters 3:223), his answer was more philosophical than direct. To treat it simply as a reply to Uncle Tom’s Cabin is to miss many even more important dimensions and to greatly impoverish the novel.

Porgy’s “woodcraft” in the novel has not led to perfection, but he is a tolerant and much wiser man by novel’s end. Furthermore, the circumstances of the novel and the plot prove Porgy to be correct in his major assumptions and surmises. His woodcraft has led him a long way; and learning to be less indulgent has opened up the larger possibilities of life. He has not gone in circles in the dark like the embittered, demonic Bostwick.

Porgy, the cook for his band of soldiers, now becomes the peace-time food provider for those on the plantation who look to him for protection and sustenance. The novel’s complex patterns of food imagery thus provide depth of meaning and thematic unity. That Porgy’s name derives from a fish—perhaps a sacrificial one suggesting the abiding early Christian symbol IXOYX, the ichthus, the Greek word for fish that became the acrostic for Christ, with connotations here of the Christ-fish that fed the multitudes—becomes all the more relevant. Porgy is his plantation. His imposing round body is imaged as both host and rice barrel from which his rice plantation community draws its life. The feeding, feasting, and food imagery takes on great importance in delineating both Porgy’s character and the novel’s themes. So does the imagery of dressing, clothing, and sans culottism (324).

As in the ancient Celtic Arthurian legend and Fisher King myth, Porgy’s kingdom can be only as healthy as he is. That is another reason that it is crucial that he lift himself out of hedonism, self-pity, and despair—and act manfully. Many are depending upon him. The very existence of the complex little plantation kingdom is at stake. Porgy finally accepts responsibility, imagines himself as the head of a body, with many hands to direct, and understands that this head must be kept soundly functioning. His body servant Tom is a key in that soundness. In a sense, he is the cook who feeds the cook (mentally, spiritually, physically), who feeds the plantation. Both Woodcraft and The Cassique of Kiawah (1859) show that it is through the noble sacrifice of itself that civilization is able to survive at all—even if only by the skin of its teeth.

At the novel’s end, the reader is left wondering what will happen to Porgy’s plantation community. It seems to be enduring the fortunes of war. Dory may marry Arthur and the plantation world return to harmony. Or maybe Porgy’s bachelor world will doom the plantation to a dead end. We should not forget, however, that The Sword and the Distaff was preceded in the Southern Literary Gazette by The Golden Christmas the year before—another comedy of manners set in a Lowcountry plantation community. That setting is 1850, and the fact that the agrarian society is still intact and functioning strongly suggests that Woodcraft’s chaotic world will finally be survived one way or another through accommodation. In 1850, the plantation community has its own new struggle, with
the outcome once again determining whether that community will continue into the future. This time it is the prejudice and pig-headedness of family that might be the end of the plantation. The Sword and the Distaff, following on its heels as flash-back to an even more crucial time, might tip the scales into an over-riding optimism premised by the wisdom that the community has been there before and survived. And, after all, survival is triumph enough—indeed is a southern specialty. It is one of Simms’s key themes throughout his works. The home and hearth abide. As David Moltke-Hansen makes clear, Simms’s 1850 review of Mrs. Ellet’s Women of the Revolution, declares that it “is from the home that ‘spring all the virtues and securities of the nation,’ even in the midst of wars and political turmoil” (12).

But for Woodcraft, Porgy’s way into the light of responsible action has been the path through the dark tangled wood of the returning veteran, physically and psychologically burned out. At first depressed and at brief moments even suicidal, repairing his ruined plantation lands had seemed too much. Such a treatment thus fully qualifies Woodcraft as a “soldier’s pay” novel ahead of Stephen Crane, Faulkner, and Hemingway. Porgy’s complex psychology is only one of several superb, complex characterizations in the work. The others are Bostwick, the Widow Eveleigh, Dory, and Arthur Eveleigh, all very complex and memorable figures.

Porgy stands opposite to Millhouse, Tom to Porgy, Porgy to Bostwick, Millhouse to Dennison and Oakenburg, M’Kewn to Bostwick, Tom to Millhouse, Lance Frampton to Millhouse, Frampton to Porgy, the Widow Griffin to the Widow Eveleigh, but the most important central contrast is of Porgy, surrogate father to Dory, and the Widow Eveleigh and her son Arthur. This double pairing may achieve its resolution at novel’s end in classic romance fashion, with the strong likelihood that Dory will marry Arthur and the couple will eventually take possession of both Porgy’s and the neighboring Eveleigh lands. All this is left to conjecture however. Woodcraft is too sophisticated a book for that. The world it portrays is not assuring a happy ending. What is clear, however, is that, in the end, Dory’s and Porgy’s treasure of trust and faith are proved true and life-affirming, while M’Kewn’s and Bostwick’s lust for gold proves false and death-dealing, mirroring them in their own personal hells in a culture of death. Appropriately, the novel’s image patterns associate Dory with the light and Bostwick and M’Kewn with the dark. Dory herself is the gold of genuine treasure. Perhaps her name is a play on the Spanish “D’Or.” The title of Chapter 34, in fact, gets specific by calling her Bostwick’s real “Treasure.”

It is clear that bachelor Porgy has become Bostwick’s replacement in his fatherly protection of Dory. He sees her worth and the “miracle” she is—this flower blossoming in a mud puddle. Although separated by class, she shares much in common with Porgy. They appreciate the non-utilitarian but, more importantly, are both striving for redemption. That search thus becomes a central theme of the novel, one that has universal implications. To treat Woodcraft as a social thesis, a probing of history, a critique of the antebellum planter, a close depiction of landscape, a definition of community, a defense of slavery, or a weighing in on various topical issues, while helpful in understanding the great expansive world of the novel, is only to see one or another facet of this work, whose depths are still to be properly plumbed. What elevates the work to greatness is its verisimilitude of complex, engaging character, its believable settings, effective poetic use of imagery and image patterns, and above all its universal themes of redemption and transcendence.

Woodcraft, as Wimsatt shows, is a social comedy of manners. Its comic surface has its charms, but the surface belies the true nature beneath, which is anything but humorous and placid. In fact, it is this contrast that often provides the dramatic tension—for example, in Simms’s attitude toward nature, which can be both a peaceful sanctuary (as for Marion’s men), or a place where danger lurks in the form of “varmints,” both animal and human. Hence, we get Simms’s very complex view of life as a thing of illusions, masks, violent contradictions, and strongest paradoxes. Life can bear its rose among the thorns, but it is more often the twisting path through the dark woods, demanding “woodcraft” at every turn. A man’s woodcraft in this light most often involves coming to terms with the world by regarding even its harsher aspects as having ends (a Providential design) that one does not and can never fully comprehend.

Simms uses his tangible, carefully limned, accurate local physical settings to explore the nature of mankind and his world in general and through the ages. From his broad reading and well-developed historical consciousness, Simms learned early that despite shifting social forms and fashions, man’s nature is always constant, revealing the same vices, in all times and places. He found these in the society he knew, but just as certainly fully recognized that they were not original with or limited to that society. Simms saw that the hypocrisies and weaknesses in his local scene were the same that all flesh is heir to. He was capable of diving below the surface and thus reaches the great universal depths and profundities. He was always fond of saying that in poetry, as in fiction, a writer should find out the depths of feeling within oneself, and then he would know and be able to portray the same in human nature.

In portraying these depths of universal human nature, he presents us with the man God intended, and his opposite, the retort-made, self-made, monomaniacal, modern man. The latter loses the whole man as a result of his selfish will to greed, hedonism, and the narrowly utilitarian, thus robbing life of meaning, beauty, and interest and reducing living to the mechanical routine of going through the dull motions. Man preempts God’s place; and the accompanying loss of values reduces him to “the creature he was not made.” In this way, man is diminished to the animal, and reality is shrunk to scientific empiricism in a greatly impover-
ished universe. Such is the trap of determinism and empiricism. In its modernist image patterns of retort-made, obsessive, narcissistic men going in circles in the dark and getting nowhere, placed in the healthy context of whole self-sacrificing men held within a Providential design, the novel is a bridge from Old America to the New.

Yet another of the novel’s strengths is that, despite its length and unlike so many works of its day, the novel has little that is superfluous or extraneous. A case in point is a minor character, Geordie Dennison, who is, after proper consideration, not minor at all. Dennison is the resident poet, and Millhouse rants and raves that he is not providing food or wealth to keep the plantation going. Porgy understands his value, however, and counters that the world must have its “singing birds” as well as poultry. Furthermore, James Cantrell accurately reinforces Davidson’s view of Simms as a saga-man by discussing his creation of Dennison as the Irish-descended bard with the mission of that central figure’s keeping and furthering of the people’s story and cultural identity. Davidson writes: “The real strength of Simms is his unselfconscious nearness to what might be called—folk tradition, which is pre-literary or pre-bookish….The best fiction of Simms is not a long step away from saga and folk tale” (Letters 1: liii). With this context in mind, Cantrell writes of Simms’s book: “Throughout the Revolutionary War series, Dennison is shown to be the folk poet, the natural bard of both the war and South Carolina and its culture” (90). Simms understood well the mission of the bard, and Woodcraft, his humorous mock epic in prose, shows that he deserves Davidson’s appellation and accolade. There is a further dimension to consider as well. Woodcraft draws heavily on legend, reminiscence, and folk culture. Simms was committed to capturing in print the oral lore that Cleanth Brooks claimed characterized the traditional South as primarily an oral folk culture (332-8). By the mid-nineteenth century, many Europeans were similarly exploring their traditions, myths, and memories with great literary consciousness. The Southern writer, as Brooks shows with his comparison of Faulkner to Yeats, was not alone in this. Davidson again hits the mark even more precisely: “As a writer of fiction, Simms belongs to another age—a heroic age….He became what might be called the ‘saga-man’ of that age.”

The other member of the minor pair of impractical characters for whom Porgy serves as patron is the eccentric Dr. Oakenburg. He can’t be figured out or classified, and that keeps Porgy constantly aware that people cannot be reduced or oversimplified to figure, statistic, or idea. Empirical science is good at recording and quantifying, but not explaining. The thorough-going materialist could never understand Porgy’s honoring the riddle and celebrating the mystery. Oakenburg, minor character that he is, is thus, like Dennison, not so minor after all. The abundance of small side-bar touches like these coalesce to contribute to the novel’s major strengths to make Woodcraft the masterpiece critics have found it.

The novel’s reception was favorable from the start. It was not widely reviewed however. Only ten reviews and notices appeared from 1852 to 1854 (Butterworth and Kibler 84-98). Simms blamed his publisher for not disseminating the volume. Many notices were short and non-specific, placing into question whether the reviewer read the volume. The more specific reviews rightly praised Simms’s verisimilitude, humor, authentic use of locale, and “actual scenes and circumstances” (Courier 21 October 1852; Butterworth and Kibler 86). Attesting to the work’s continued popularity, however, Woodcraft was reprinted many times by a number of northern publishers in the late nineteenth century. Several paperback editions have been available for the last half century. The 1854 Redfield Edition is still the standard, but imperfect text owing to copious house-styling.

Woodcraft has continued to elicit favorable response among a spectrum of critical interests, illustrated by the bibliography which follows. As for its influence on later writers, perhaps the most significant early one is from pages 222-223. The passage concerns Dory’s reading to her father. George Hayhoe finds a close similarity to Chapter 5 of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885), where Huck reads to his father. He notes that “Huck’s father and Bostwick are essentially the same type of character—poor whites who drink too much, abandon their families and are criminally involved” (Hayhoe 539-40). Charles Frazier’s reference to Simms in Cold Mountain is the latest. Odds are that Woodcraft will continue to find an appreciative audience, as well it should. This 1990 assessment of the novel still holds: “It is destined for proper appreciation because it effectively addresses universals” (Kibler, “Major Fiction” 94-5).

Due to space considerations, the full Works Cited list is not included here, but is available in the Print-on-Demand book. Please consider visiting the University of South Carolina website at: www.sc.edu/uscpress/books/simms-initiative/simms-books.html to order a copy of this and other Simms Print-on-Demand titles today.
Edgar Allan Poe & Simms — A Possible Poetic Controversy

The relationship between Edgar Allan Poe and William Gilmore Simms varied at different points in their history, running the full gamut from admiring to contentious. Both could be highly complimentary of the other’s work publicly, while both at times offered rather pointed criticisms as well. At the end of the day, though, each considered the other a friend and a literary fellow-traveler.

Poe once wrote that Simms was “the best novelist which this country has, on the whole, produced.” And yet, in the same breath, he savaged two of Simms’s most popular works at the time: The Yemassee and The Partisan. For his part, Simms concluded that Poe was susceptible to “capricious moods” that sometimes colored his written work, but that, considering his tales, “certainly, nothing more original, of their kind, has ever been given to the American reader.” And, in an 1845 review for the Southern Patriot, Simms praised Poe’s poems as “efforts of pure imagination.”

Simms might have reserved this last judgment, though, had he known what Poe scholar Ton Fafianie of the Netherlands has recently uncovered in Poe’s poetic closet. Dr. Fafianie has contacted both the Simms Initiatives in Columbia and the Poe Society in Baltimore with charges that Poe had, in Fafianie’s words, “cribbed” an 1847 poem supposedly of his own composition from an earlier Simms work “without acknowledgment.”

According to Fafianie, Simms’s “There Are Dreams of Bowers,” originally published anonymously in the American Monthly Magazine in 1834 and reprinted in a revised version in Areytos; or Songs of the South (Charleston: Russell & Jones, 1846), provides the source of Poe’s valentine poem “To Miss Louise Olivia Hunter.” Collating the versions of the poem published by Simms and comparing them to Poe’s work, Fafianie is confident that Poe used the 1846 text of “There Are Dreams of Bowers” in the composition of his 1847 work. The Poe poem was discovered somewhat recently for Poe studies. It was first made public as part of The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1969), edited by American Literature scholar Thomas Olive Mabbott. Dr. Fafianie’s claims though problematize the inclusion of “To Miss Louise Olivia Hunter” in that or any other Poe collection. Jeffrey Savoye of the Poe Society seemingly agrees with Dr. Fafianie’s conclusions, as he penned an opinion for the Society website that declares that “Poe’s valentine to Miss Hunter...must be removed from the canon proper of his poems, and be relegated, at best, to one what Mabbott loosely designated as his ‘collaborations.’”

Little more is known of this turn of events in nineteenth-century Southern Literature, but Ton Fafianie is working on an article that will offer a more complete picture of this intrigue. The essay is reported to be heavily researched and annotated, with copious notes to support the conclusions. Understandably, we eagerly await the completion of Dr. Fafianie’s research and hope that members of the Simms Society will have access to this scholarship in the future. So, keep an eye out for more information on the Simms-Poe poetic controversy coming soon. In the meantime, so that members of the Simms Society may judge for themselves in advance of reading Fafianie’s findings, we have reproduced both poems here:

To Miss Louise Olivia Hunter

Edgar Allan Poe

Though I turn, I fly not —
I cannot depart;
I would try, but try not,
To release my heart.
And my hopes are dying
While, on dreams relying,
I am spelled by art.

Thus the bright snake coiling
‘Neath the forest-tree
Wins the bird, beguiling,
To come down and see:
Like that bird the lover
Round his fate will hover
Till the blow is over
And he sinks — like me.

(Reproduced from The Edgar Allan Poe Society website)

There Are Dreams of Bowers

William Gilmore Simms

There are dreams of bowers,
Beautiful and blest,
Filled with sweetest flowers,
That disturb my rest;
And with rapture smiling,
They are still beguiling,
Though all stand reviling,
My worn and wayward breast.

II.
Though I turn, I fly not—
I may not depart;
I would try, but try not,
To release my heart:
And my hopes are dying,
And my friends are flying,
While, on dreams relying,
I am spell’d by art.

III.
Thus, the bright snake coiling,
’Neath the forest-tree,
Wins the bird, beguiling,
To come down and see:
Like that bird, the lover
Round his fate will hover,
’Till the blow is over,
And he sinks like me.

(Reproduced from the Simms Initiatives website)
One of the most significant decisions to come out of the Simms Society Executive Council meeting this summer was a long-overdue change in our dues structure. It will affect both the amount and basis of the dues collected when it is implemented for the 2012 calendar year.

The Simms Society is a non-profit organization. As such, its sole means of revenue are the dues and donations provided by our membership. These funds go primarily towards the hosting of our biennial conference and the printing of our two main Society publications: The Simms Review academic journal and the Simms Society Newsletter, our biannual newsletter. As costs for these services have risen, so has our need for a reliable and cost-consistent dues influx.

To continue to provide the same level of service to our membership and to persist in our collective mission to promote the work of William Gilmore Simms, the Simms Society is forced to raise dues for the first time in a decade. The Society by-laws provide a clearly demarcated schema for the relationship of the different levels of membership, whereby a Student Membership shall be half that of a Regular Membership, an Institutional Membership shall be one and a half times the rate for a Regular member, and a Life Membership shall be equivalent to ten years of Regular Membership.

So, the new dues structure marks a slight increase in all levels except Student. The new rates appear to the right.

A second change in the dues structure will be in the basis of membership. Beginning in 2012, the Simms Society will annualize membership renewals, rather than working on a rolling basis. What this means is that all renewable membership dues will be collected at the beginning of each calendar year, rather than at the anniversary of a member’s join date. This not only makes the bookkeeping for the Society simpler and more predictable, but also comports with the dues payment process from the initial days of the Society.

We sincerely hope that these changes do not unduly inconvenience any existing members. If you have any questions or concerns about our new dues structure, please contact Society Secretary-Treasurer Todd Hagstette at tclsimms@mailbox.sc.edu.

New Dues Amounts:

- Student Membership $15
- Regular Membership $30
- Institutional Membership $45
- Life Membership $300