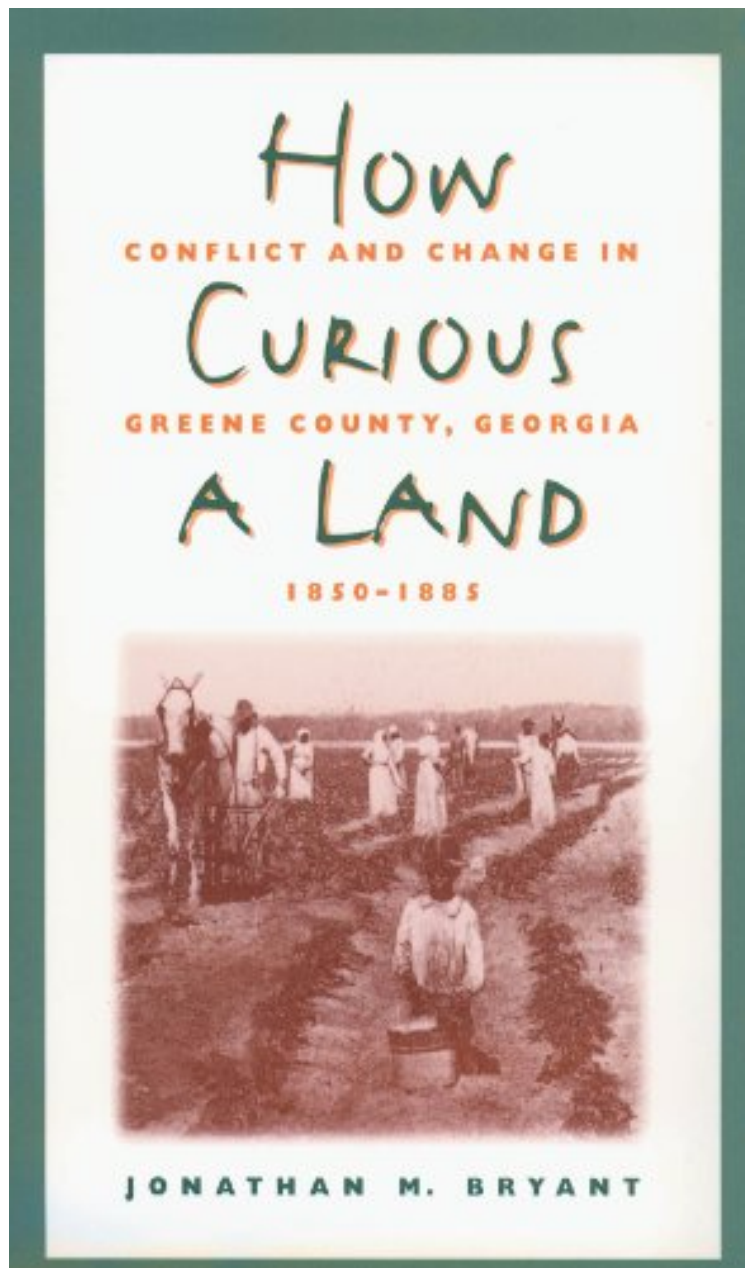


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## How Curious a Land: Conflict and Change in Greene County, Georgia, 1850-1885 (Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies)

*Jonathan M. Bryant*

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before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *How Curious a Land: Conflict and Change in Greene County, Georgia, 1850-1885* (Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies):

1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. *How Curious an Opinion* By Denise W. Recently, the gifted class of Washington Wilkes Comprehensive High School read *How Curious A Land* in order to find out more information about our home and the territory around our home, which is Wilkes County. We are awfully close to Greene County and it was decided that events that happened in Greene County would be mirroring events that occurred in Wilkes County. Many of the students found the book to be highly satisfying and informative. My opinion of the book confirms theirs totally. I feel that *How Curious A Land* was very informative and that it colorfully and very intellectually describes the institution and escalation of the expansion in our area. It fully describes the lifestyle of both African-Americans and Caucasians who lived in the area before our time. I enjoyed the book to a surprising extent. At times I didn't devote my full attention to the book. That's probably what happened to the other students and it affected their judgment. My conclusion is that *How Curious A Land* is a good book and I would recommend it to other people. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Great history book. By Loretta Recently, my teacher assigned our freshman/ sophomore Gifted class of Washington-Wilkes Comprehensive High School to read Bryant's *How Curious A Land*. I found the book expertly written and researched. Bryant's writing style is impressive and confident, and his vocabulary is extensive. We were assigned to read the book to supplement our local history studies. Our teacher wanted us to read the book to absorb Bryant's expert writing style and also because the history of Greene County mirrors the history of my own Wilkes county. Though the book was very well-written, I, as a freshman in high school, found the book at times hard to follow. It is evident that Bryant spent much time and effort on this book and I respect the work that he put into writing it. . Thank you. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. *I Had No Idea* By A Customer While working on family history a friend recommended I read this book as some of my family are from Greene County. It was not at all what I expected. The story of how the Civil War changed the county was very well done, but even better was the story of blacks and whites during Reconstruction. This is a very different story from the one I learned 40 years ago in school. The bravery of the blacks and the failure of their struggle is fascinating and very moving. If you are interested in the South read this book!

The story of the Civil War and Reconstruction in Greene County, Georgia, is a remarkable tale of both fundamental change and essential continuity. In *How Curious a Land*, Jonathan Bryant follows the county's social, economic, and legal transformation from a wealthy, self-sufficient plantation economy based on slavery to a largely impoverished, economically dependent community dominated by a new commercial class of merchants and lawyers. Emancipated slaves made up two-thirds of the county's population at the end of the Civil War, and thanks to an able, charismatic, and politically active leadership, they enjoyed early success in pressing for their rights. But their gains, says Bryant, were only temporary, because the white elite retained control of the legal system and used it effectively against blacks. Law also helped shape the course of economic change as, for example, postbellum laws designed to benefit the new commercial elite ensured poverty for most of the county's small farmers, both black and white, by relegating them to the status of sharecroppers and tenants. As a result, the county's wealth, though greatly diminished in the postbellum years, remained concentrated in the hands of a small elite.