

Inheriting the Trade: A Northern Family Confronts Its Legacy as the Largest Slave-Trading Dynasty in U.S. History

Thomas Norman DeWolf. Beacon, \$25.95 (272p) ISBN 978-0-8070-7281-3

In the summer of 2001, Katrina Browne led nine distant family members on their own triangular passage as she made a documentary film (*Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North*) about their DeWolf ancestors, “the largest slave-trading dynasty in early America”—who transported 10,000 Africans to America and the Caribbean between 1769 and 1820. DeWolf, one of Browne’s cousins, traces the journey in this soul-searching memoir, beginning in Bristol, R.I., the hub of the late-18th-century trade, and continuing to Ghana, Cuba and back to New England. At each station of the trip, the “Family of Ten” visits historic sites, and distinguished historians address the group about aspects of the slave trade. DeWolf’s account gains immediacy as he reports these presentations and the ensuing group discussions, along with their personal struggles to come to terms with an ignominious family history and his own sharp learning curve. His narrative, however, bogs down toward its conclusion in an irrelevant account of allegations of sexual harassment made against him and a digressive though thought-provoking discussion of reparations for slavery. Nevertheless, DeWolf promotes conversation about “truth of the past and its impact on the present.” (Jan.)

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