

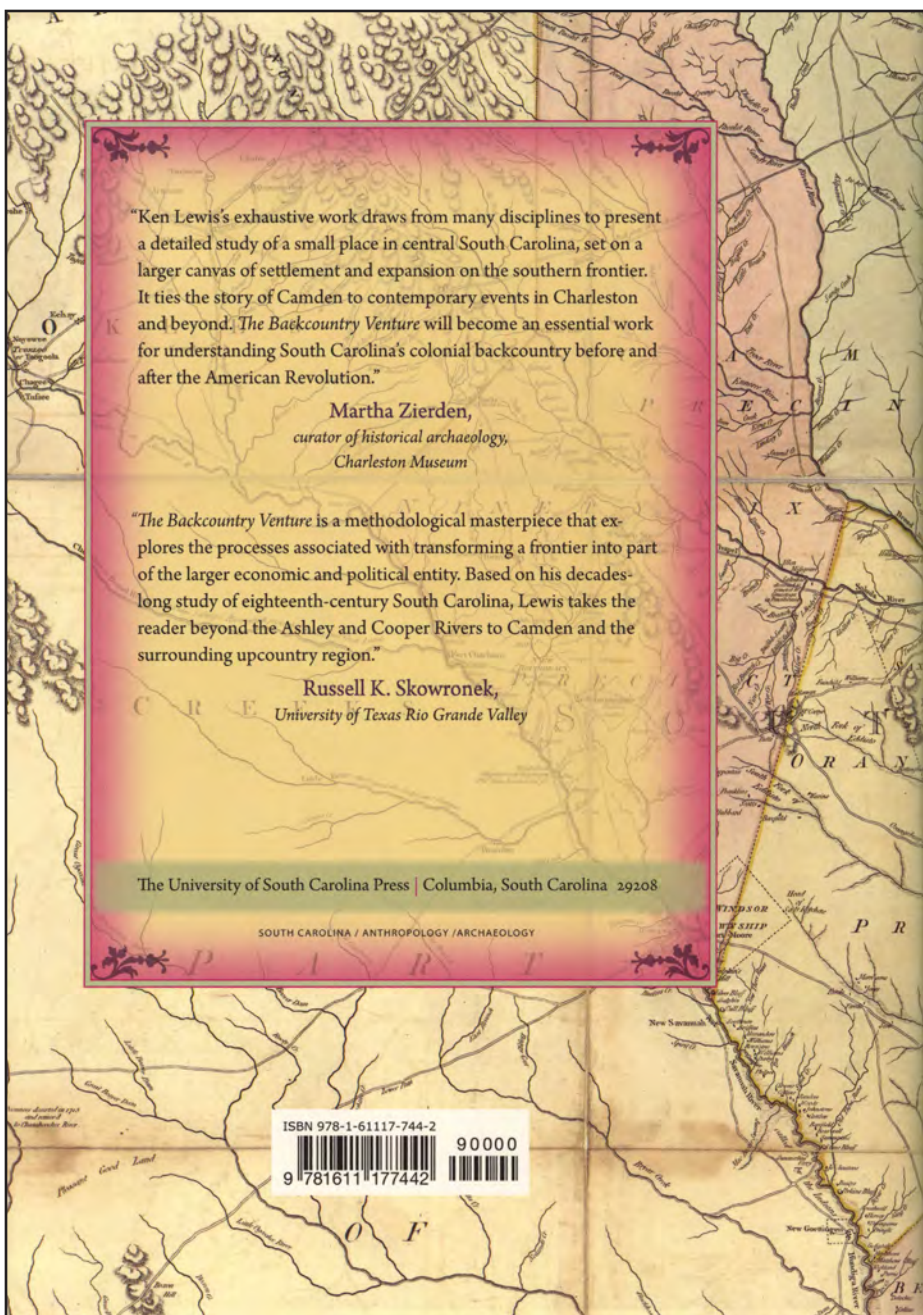
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"Ken Lewis's exhaustive work draws from many disciplines to present a detailed study of a small place in central South Carolina, set on a larger canvas of settlement and expansion on the southern frontier. It ties the story of Camden to contemporary events in Charleston and beyond. *The Backcountry Venture* will become an essential work for understanding South Carolina's colonial backcountry before and after the American Revolution."

Martha Zierden,
curator of historical archaeology,
Charleston Museum

"*The Backcountry Venture* is a methodological masterpiece that explores the processes associated with transforming a frontier into part of the larger economic and political entity. Based on his decades-long study of eighteenth-century South Carolina, Lewis takes the reader beyond the Ashley and Cooper Rivers to Camden and the surrounding upcountry region."

Russell K. Skowronek,
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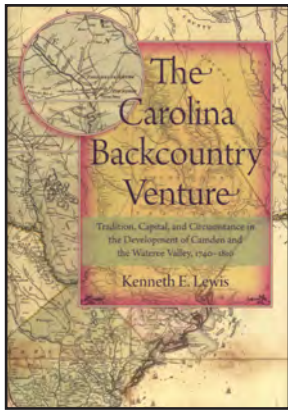
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The Carolina Backcountry Venture

Kenneth E. Lewis. 2017. [The University of South Carolina Press](https://www.usc.edu/press/). xviii+448 pp. 65 figures, notes, index. \$59.99 (Hardback, E-book)

Reviewed by Mark J. Wagner, Associate Professor in Anthropology and Director of the Center for Archaeological Investigations, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Kenneth Lewis has been conducting historical and archaeological research in regard to the South Carolina “backcountry” town of Camden since 1974. In this volume he synthesizes his over 40 years of research into the mid-1700s

Euro-American colonial settlement of this part of the Carolinas into an comprehensive study of the economic and social factors that led to the establishment of Camden as an interior market for manufactured goods from Charleston in return for source of the agricultural and other natural produce of the Carolina backcountry. Foremost among these merchant “princes” was Joseph Kershaw, an English-born colonialist whose career mirrored that of the rise and decline of Camden. Lewis’s detailed delineation of the web of economic and social relationships that bound Kershaw and other seacoast merchants together in this mercantilist endeavor, as well as the way they established similar ties with the small farmers of the interior, is simply outstanding. In addition to economic factors, Lewis also examines the role that landscape features such as waterways, roads, soil type, and trails linking individual households and farms together played in the establishment of Camden and its rise to the most prosperous interior settlement in South Carolina prior to the Revolutionary War.

To those interested in 18th and early 19th century British and colonial settlement patterns in the interior Southeast this book should be particularly invaluable. What is striking is how many of the economic, political, and social characteristics of the Upland South region of the Southeast had their genesis in the Carolina backcountry. These include the involvement of local entrepreneurs in a variety of economic activities such as milling, store keeping, farming, and participation in local or county government that enabled them to extend their political and economic influence as the region developed. The barter economy exhibited in Camden, for example, where early merchants took in agricultural produce, hides, furs, and other items in exchange for manufactured goods is also one that typifies early nineteenth century southern Illinois, for example, an area settled by Scotch-Irish emigrants from South Carolina and other interior areas of the Southeast. Also striking is how Lewis ties the emergence of frontier bandits in the Carolina backcountry to the gradual shift to a cash economy and possession of portable wealth (e.g., money) that could be more easily stolen than agricultural produce, farm animals, or hides. This same pattern emerges in southern Illinois some fifty years later, where frontier bandits concentrated their activities on major interior trails and the Ohio River where they could expect to encounter travelers carrying money as opposed to robbing interior settlers who possessed little in the form of portable wealth. Also striking is the identical response to such banditry in the two regions

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in the form of vigilantes known as “Regulators” headed by the leading men in the community that chased down and punished such malefactors.

In closing, I would highly recommend this book to scholars investigating the development of European settlement and economic patterns in interior areas along the southeastern coast of the United States as well as to researchers working in other areas such as interior southern Illinois, Missouri, and Kentucky where Scotch-Irish settlers from the Carolinas carried these same patterns a generation later. It represents a classic example of the benefits of a long term (as in decades) research program in identifying and delineating the economic, physical, and social factors associated with 18th century European colonial settlement that smaller short-term studies simply cannot adequately address.