



# **The Allstons of Chicora Wood: Wealth, Honor, and Gentility in the South Carolina Lowcountry**

*William Kauffman Scarborough*

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William Kauffman Scarborough's absorbing biography, *The Allstons of Chicora Wood*, chronicles the history of a South Carolina planter family from the opulent antebellum years through the trauma of the Civil War and postwar period. Scarborough's examination of this extraordinarily enterprising family focuses on patriarch Robert R. F. W. Allston, his wife Adele Petigru Allston, and their daughter Elizabeth Allston Pringle Scarborough.

Scarborough shows how Allston, in the four decades before the Civil War, converted a small patrimony into a Lowcountry agricultural empire of seven rice plantations, all the while earning an international reputation for the quality of his rice and his expertise. Scarborough also examines Allston's twenty-eight-year career in the state legislature and as governor from 1856 to 1858.

Upon his death in 1864, Robert Allston's wife of thirty-two years, Adele, found herself at the head of the family. Scarborough traces how she successfully kept the family plantations afloat in the postwar years through a series of decisions that exhibited her astute business judgment and remarkable strength of character.

In the next generation, one of the Allstons' five children followed a similar path. Elizabeth "Bessie" Allston took over management of the remaining family plantations upon the death of her husband and, in order to pay off the plantation mortgages, embarked on a highly successful literary career. Bessie authored two books, the first treating her experiences as a woman rice planter and the second describing her childhood before the war.

A major contribution to southern history, *The Allstons of Chicora Wood* provides a fascinating look at a prominent southern family that survived the traumas of war and challenges of Reconstruction.

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