

Reviewed by Lee Ashford for Readers' Favorite

Cemetery Whites by Connie Knight is a Caroline Hargrove Hamilton Mystery in which Hamilton relocates from urban Houston, Texas, to the small town of Yorktown, Texas in DeWitt County, where her family legacy has long been established. Enough time has passed since the death of her husband so that she is ready to move back among her numerous cousins, aunts, uncles, and other kin, and get on with her life. Yorktown is accurately described as one of those stereotypical small towns where pretty much everybody is related to everybody else. While in Yorktown, Caroline does exhaustive research into the Hargrove family ancestry, discovers a previously unknown branch of the family, helps solve a murder and an attempted murder, digs up (both literally and figuratively) and reveals hidden family "secrets", and starts to fall in love again, with the local sheriff. *Cemetery Whites* is a stimulating and thought-provoking picture of the history and present-day life of a small Southern town, which could be true of any number of small Southern towns. The title refers to a variety of iris which often was used to mark grave sites, due to its hardiness in the hot, dry Texas climate.

In *Cemetery Whites*, Connie Knight has faithfully recorded a chapter of American history, and focused our attention on a fictional family's personal history, which indubitably mirrors the reality of thousands of real families today. Her use of local vernacular is so authentic you can almost hear it being spoken as you read the words. Knight has fashioned characters of every stripe with uncanny accuracy, from the drunken bigot to the talented local country music band, to the waitress at the local diner. The story is fiction, but the setting is history. *Cemetery Whites* is a charming and captivating tale that not only entertains; it also illuminates. This is one book that everyone should read, for enjoyment as well as personal enlightenment.

Reviewed by Denise Hartman for bookbrowsing.com

Recently widowed Caroline Hargrove Hamilton leaves Houston to go back to her roots in DeWitt County outside San Antonio. Her research sojourn is interrupted by a modern day murder at the old family cemetery and eventually she finds family history and mystery intertwined. Urged on by her family and with the help of the attractive Constable Bob Bennett, Caroline dusts off her journalism skills to uncover the true story.

Connie Knight populates her story with believable and entertaining characters including gun-toting Great Aunt Hettie, Uncle Cotton and the local librarian. She provides a backdrop of information about the Texas colonies and the influence of Spain and Mexico, which makes for a good read and an entertaining way to get a dose of Texas history. Knight takes us along on Caroline's quest through cemeteries, libraries, census records and, of course, the Internet. She discovers relatives with secrets small and large, new and old. Some who will take time before confiding in a newcomer.

The writing is authentic, like getting a letter from a friend and following her adventures. The descriptions of the heat, the light and the plants are particularly good. Sometimes she wanders off onto a tangent but it seems totally natural and conversational with the detours providing background and layers to the two stories past and present. Reveling in the language, she cites vernacular phrases, such as "We howdied but we ain't shook" and captures well the various voices of the countryside.

This book is a treat for anyone who has ever explored genealogy. From the researching and organizing of materials to the decoding and matching of references, the reader gets drawn into the process. There are surprising connections and the ultimate thrill of discovery plus the solving of two crimes. Worth reading.