

Commemorating the Life of Lincoln

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Editorial

COMMEMORATING THE LIFE OF LINCOLN

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Two hundred years ago this month, our nation's sixteenth president was born in a one-room log cabin in Hardin County, Kentucky. As so many Americans learned in grade school and have read in numerous books, Lincoln rose from those humble beginnings to become president of a nation in the midst of its greatest crisis. He succeeded in saving the Union and died for that cause. So goes the simplified (and somewhat romanticized) version of the Lincoln story. Yet the story itself has become ingrained in American culture. In so many ways, the life of Abraham Lincoln personifies all that we believe about the American dream, the promise of the common man rising to greatness, and even the very type of person we want to be. The story of Lincoln's life--and plenty of the Lincoln myth--resound in the minds of a wide range of people, from the careful student of Civil War and 19th century history to the casual reader.

In this year's editions of *Civil War Book Review*, we commemorate the life of Abraham Lincoln. Each issue will contain special features on the life of Lincoln and on the latest scholarship on the 16th president. Of course, in this bicentennial year of his birth, scholars have renewed their already prodigious interest in Abraham Lincoln, his life, his presidency, and his significance in American history. Some seek to correct old myths, others seek to retell the amazing story of Abraham Lincoln's life. But all seek to understand a man who most everyone would agree was one of our nation's greatest leaders--if not the greatest. *CWBR* will fully cover the burst in Lincoln scholarship as this bicentennial year unfolds.

In this issue, readers will find several important features on the latest in Lincoln studies. The *CWBR* Author Interview features renowned Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer discussing his new book *Lincoln President-Elect: Abraham Lincoln and the Great Secession Winter, 1860-1861*. Several historians have reassessed Lincoln's ascent to power and how he handled the crisis of the Union prior to his inauguration. And as Holzer discusses in his interview, he believes that Lincoln faced the challenges not as an inexperienced political novice, but

as a savvy politician. In addition to his political career, students of the Civil War era remain fascinated by Lincoln's personal life. Daniel Mark Epstein has written a book about the marriage of Abraham and Mary Lincoln, a hotly debated subject since the death of Abraham Lincoln in 1865. Virginia Laas reviews *The Lincolns: Portrait of a Marriage*. In his latest installment of *Rediscovering Civil War Classics*, David Madden discusses a new release—Fred Kaplan's *Lincoln: The Biography of a Writer*—a book that rediscovers the literary side of the 16th president. Madden critiques Kaplan's analysis while suggesting other ways to view Lincoln as a writer. And in *Civil War Treasures*, Leah Wood Jewett combs the archives of the Louisiana State University Libraries' Special Collections division for primary and secondary source material related to Abraham Lincoln. Her latest column serves as a ready reference guide to Lincoln and the archival collections of our host institution.

In addition to our special focus on Lincoln in this issue, we also include plenty of new titles on the Civil War era in general. Georgia receives special attention in this issue, as we feature reviews of two books on the city of Savannah, reviving interest in the study of the war's impact on southern cities. Jacqueline Jones has written *Saving Savannah: The City and the Civil War*, which Mary A. DeCredico reviews. And Mark A. Smith reviews *Guardian of Savannah: Fort McAllister, Georgia, in the Civil War and Beyond*. Sherman's March to the Sea continues to fascinate scholars; perhaps no military engagement had such a deep psychological impact on southerners as this engagement. Noah Andre Trudeau's *Southern Storm: Sherman's March to the Sea* offers a narrative history of Sherman's campaign. Brian Melton reviews this new release. And in *Sherman's March in Myth and Memory*, Edward Caudill and Paul Ashdown discuss how different groups of Americans have remembered the march since the end of the war itself. Glenn Robins reviews this book.

Finally, 2009 marks the tenth anniversary of *CWBR*. We are fortunate to have such a loyal base of readers—2.5 million last year alone—who support our work by frequenting the web site, sharing with friends, and contributing to the financial support of the journal. As we begin Volume XI of *CWBR*, we thank you for your continued interest and support and look forward to many more years of studying the rich history of the Civil War.