

### EDITORIAL Political History Remains Vibrant

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#### Recommended Citation

Buman, Nathan (2010) "EDITORIAL Political History Remains Vibrant," *Civil War Book Review*: Vol. 12 : Iss. 2 .

Available at: <https://repository.lsu.edu/cwbr/vol12/iss2/1>

## Editorial

### EDITORIAL POLITICAL HISTORY REMAINS VIBRANT

Buman, Nathan

Spring 2010

Long have historians studied history by examining the political actors and politics of those involved. In recent decades scholars have begun to focus their attention on social, economic, and cultural history yet political history continues to thrive. Political history remains a vibrant and viable lens through which to view past events, especially the American Civil War. Those political actors who guided the United States during the antebellum period, through the Civil War and into the Reconstruction period influenced the course of events immensely.

The Spring 2010 issue of *Civil War Book Review* focuses heavily on the politics of the period. The newest addition to Louisiana State University Press's Southern Biography Series, Sam Davis Elliott's *Isham G. Harris of Tennessee: Confederate Governor and United States Senator*, focuses our attention on one of the key figures of the period's political activity. Harris provides a look into the political world of the Civil War era as Elliot gives an account of his senatorial and gubernatorial experience in the often-disjointed state of Tennessee. Next, Stephen C. Neff details the legal issues that arose from the Civil War as he studies the lawfulness of many of the political decisions including secession, executive powers, and more in *Justice in Blue and Gray: A Legal History of the Civil War*. Howard Jones's new synthesis, *Blue & Gray Diplomacy: A History of Union and Confederate Foreign Relations* provides a masterful account of the diplomatic relations between the northern and southern governments and the European powers, especially Great Britain and France. His study illustrates, at its best, the value of understanding political history as Jones gives an account of the actors who maintained a constant conversation with foreign powers about the possibility of intervention in the American conflict. Finally, eminent historian, Michael Perman provides a sweeping survey of southern politics. His most recent work, *Pursuit of Unity: A Political History of the American South*, take readers on a journey, narrating the political history of the American South from 1800 through the present-day political environment.

*Civil War Book Review* would like to thank Professor Christian G. Samito for taking the time to discuss his recent book, *Becoming American under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship during the Civil War Era*. In this, well-researched and well-argued study, Professor Samito raises a great number of significant questions about citizenship during the Civil War era. He graciously spoke with *Civil War Book Review* about some of the issues that arise out of his book as Irish Americans and African Americans sought to become a part of the United States, taking an active role in the politics of this nation.

This quarter, Leah Wood Jewett provides an account of some Louisianan planters' views on the question of secession. Their political course, dictated by the election of Abraham Lincoln, changed significantly over the months preceding secession of the state of Louisiana and Jewett has provided first-hand accounts that help us to explore and understand the complexity of the political world that these Louisianans occupied.

I am pleased to be able to feature a wonderful piece in which Frank J. Williams uses Grant Havers's recent work, *Lincoln and the Politics of Christian Love* to examine the intersection between Christianity and Abraham Lincoln's political actions. Williams has, yet again, provided an insightful piece of writing that uses a recent historical study of the Civil War era to reflect on our lives today.

As always, this effort would not be possible were it not for the assistance and support that I receive daily from the staff at LSU Libraries and the Special Collections Department here at Louisiana State University. Their dedication and attention help to make this quarterly journal seem effortless and I thank them.

Lastly, *Civil War Book Review* regrets that an error was made in a Winter 2010 review of Brian McGinty's *John Brown's Trial*. We would like to retract the criticism of Mr. McGinty for his usage of "Harper's Ferry" in Jeannine Marie DeLombard's review; the review incorrectly neglected to take into account the endnote in which Mr. McGinty details his usage over the more common "Harpers Ferry."