

# Civil War Book Review

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Spring 2018

Article 1

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## Editorial

**Barber, Tom**

**Spring 2018**

I'll start by addressing the elephant in the room: the *CWBR*'s website has changed! Along with the new design, the *CWBR* has a new URL: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cwbr/>. Using *CWBR.com*, however, should still redirect you to the new website.

We migrated digital platforms because our previous site contained security vulnerabilities. In the process, the site received a redesign. To create a cleaner look, I jettisoned cover images for the books reviewed and annotations in the journal. This, however, does not mean images will no longer accompany content. Quite the opposite. Images will still appear within reviews and featured essays, and their overall quality will be higher.

In addition to streamlining the site's design, the redesign should make browsing *CWBR* content easier. Before this change, the site required readers to toggle between the homepage, which only displayed featured content, and second page that included features and book reviews. Now, from the homepage, all of the *CWBR*'s content is accessible by clicking on the .PDF icon located beside each title. Another related change is the elimination of reviews from our featured content. All reviews now appear under the "Review" heading because no qualitative difference existed between featured reviews and regular reviews. Featured content now consists of regular columns, such as Civil War Treasures, and thematic essays.

The Annotations section also received an upgrade. Before I go on, I want to take a moment to explain the purpose of annotations, and why they constitute an important part of each issue. As shocking as this might sound, the *CWBR* does not review every book that comes across its desk. For this reason, each issue features an annotations section, which contains a list of the books we missed and the publication information required to obtain them. Before the redesign, each annotation received its own entry, and had to be accessed individually. This made browsing the annotations a cumbersome process. Now, each issue's annotations are located in a single .PDF located on the homepage.

The change I'm most excited about concerns our search engine. The previous platform's limitations forced the editor to place content into broad categories, such as military, economic, or political history. Such a system often placed books that involved multiple approaches into the wrong categories, and turned browsing the journal by topic into a haphazard experience. Author name and book title were also ways to browse content on the old platform, but these searches left no room for error. Names and titles had to be correct for positive results. These limitations curbed intellectual curiosity and made research needlessly difficult. Now, a simple search for "Lincoln," or something far vaguer like "cultural" returns any related content and organizes it by relevance.

None of these changes diminished this issue's superb content.

Frank Williams reviews *Lincoln's Sense of Humor* by Richard Carwardine. Williams finds Carwardine's book a worthwhile venture for its succinct explanations of how humor helped Lincoln survive the rough-and-tumble world of antebellum politics and navigate the presidency.

For this issue's author interview, I spoke with Brook Thomas about his new book *The Literature of Reconstruction, Not in Plain Black and White*. In the interview, Dr. Thomas not only shared his thoughts about the period's major novels, but he also explained why the era's fictional works are essential for understanding the era's political and legal debates.

In Civil War Obscura, our new column about classic books, Meg Groeling takes a close look at Mary Chestnut's diaries. Groeling not only revisits Chestnut's significance as an eye-witness, but also provides a short history about the book's life after its original 1905 publication.

Special Collections librarian Hans Rasmussen discusses the fortifications of Civil War Washington, D.C. in this issue's Civil War Treasures column. Be sure to view the detailed sketches Hans included by downloading the images from the supplemental materials link beside the article's abstract.

As excited as I am about these changes, I realize that not all readers will be pleased with the redesign. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly (tbarbe6@lsu.edu) with questions, or concerns, about the new format. As always I want to thank the *CWBR*'s contributors for their hard work, and our readers for their patience and attention.