

# Civil War Book Review

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Winter 2020

Article 1

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## **Editorial**

**Andrew L. Hargroder**  
**Chief Editor**

**Winter 2020**

As winter rolls into spring, the Editorial Staff of the *Civil War Book Review* is honored to provide you with an exploration of some of the most important Civil War scholarship published in 2019. Our contributors represent nearly every field of nineteenth-century American history and hail from all corners of the country. May their insights offer a brief respite from the anxiety of our times but also serve as a reminder of the past's indelible mark on the present.

The Winter 2020 issue presents one essay, one feature work and interview, and twenty-four reviews of scholarship that addresses topics ranging from the history Native southerners to the impeachment of a United States President. All of them inform a larger picture of the lived experience of nineteenth-century Americans and the Civil War era. As we move further into 2020, recent scholarship indicates both the state of the field and growing trends in research and perspectives. Eight of the works under review in this issue confirm that race and gender remain dominant themes among historians as they continue to expand our understanding of the causes, courses, and effects of the Civil War. Most of the reviewed scholarship reveals that historians are also broadening and deepening the field by examining subjects like antebellum politics and religion, wartime diplomacy, the experiences of southern Unionists, and the lives of people who led and fought in the armies of our nation's greatest conflict.

The issue opens with the Civil War Treasures essay by John D. Miles and the interview with Dr. James Broomall about his recent book *Private Confederacies*. As the sesquicentennial of Reconstruction marches on, scholars continue to uncover new evidence and offer fresh analysis of that critical era. One aspect that historians have greatly investigated in recent years is the extent of violence that pervaded the post-war South. James Broomall and John Miles offer deeper insight into the origins and nature of that violence and its implications for the twentieth century. John Miles's essay examines a little-known incident that unfolded in Tensas Parish, Louisiana, resulting in the murder of thirty-five to eighty African Americans. The account reveals several key insights into how "Redeemers" organized and committed relentless acts of

violence against former slaves and their white Republican allies. It also raises larger questions about when Reconstruction ended in Louisiana and the extent of political solidarity among white southern Democrats. James Broomall's *Private Confederacies* explores the emotional transformations of a generation of white southern men devastated by war and defeat. Though many Confederate veterans coped with the experience of war through correspondence with old comrades and reunions, others sought identity and comradeship within paramilitary organizations like the Ku Klux Klan. Broomall's *Private Confederacies* and Miles's essay strengthen the case that Reconstruction did not fail as a result of policy but was – down to the local level – violently overthrown by an insurgent population dedicated to restoring white supremacy. We had the honor of interviewing James Broomall to learn more about his fascinating study of white southern manhood and the Civil War era. In addition to Adam Pratt's review of *Private Confederacies*, you will find the full audio interview and an excerpt of our conversation.

The review section begins with five works that broaden our perspective of antebellum Americans and the origins of national discord. Fred L. Johnson and Stephen E. Maizlish's reviews of Joshua Lynn's *Preserving the White Man's Republic* and Johnathan D. Wells's *Blind No More* open our antebellum collection. Lynn and Wells provide great insight into the racial politics over slavery and expansion that brought the nation to the point of conflict. Next, Sam Elliott reviews *For Duty and Honor*, a captivating work by Timothy D. Johnson about Tennesseans' experiences in the U.S.-Mexican war and their impact on state politics before, during, and after the Civil War. Candy Moulton's *The Mormon Handcart Migration* and Gregory D. Smithers's *Native Southerners*, reviewed by Douglas Montagna and Zach Isenhower, complete the antebellum collection. Moulton and Smithers offer a deeper understanding of the experience of two religious and ethnic minorities in antebellum America: Mormons and Native southerners. Smithers's work is of particular importance as it seeks to incorporate Native peoples into the center of southern history.

As we move into open conflict between the United States and the newly formed Confederacy, we review scholarship that challenges some of our deepest assumptions about the war and the role of people within it. First, Jean H. Baker evaluates Stephanie McCurry's *Women's War*, a force of scholarship that places women as actors, not merely observers, who shaped the outcome of the Civil War. Next, Angela Zombek reviews David Silkenat's *Raising the White Flag*, an important study that upends long-held assumptions about the notion and

practice of surrender throughout the Civil War. Slikenat's examination of black and white southern Unionists after the end of prisoner exchange is of particular note as it reveals a bitter contradiction of surrender in the Civil War: the likelihood of execution. Stephen Hoy and William Smith's *Camp Oglethorpe*, reviewed by Angela M. Riotto, provides further insight into the POW experience at a forgotten camp outside of Macon, Georgia. Next, Sharon Roger-Hepburn reviews a work centered on one of the most controversial topics of the Civil War: the presence and role of black Confederates. Kevin M. Levin's *Searching for Black Confederates* is a concise and thorough account of the role of enslaved people in Confederate armies and how Americans have chosen to remember (and forget) that role since the Civil war ended.

Transitioning away from Levin's work are two reviews by Marcus Cox and Leonne Hudson that evaluate recent scholarship on southern Unionists in South Carolina and Alabama. John Saucer's *An We Ob Jubilee* expands our understanding of military service among former slaves and Christopher M. Rein's *Alabamians in Blue* challenges our assumption of Confederate solidarity in the Deep South. The next collection reviews works about Civil War figures, more popular and less familiar. Christian Keller's *The Great Partnership* and Huston Horn's *Leonidas Polk*, reviewed by Chris Mackowski and Christian Keller respectively, investigate the leadership and personalities of three Confederate commanders: Robert E. Lee, Thomas J. Jackson, and Leonidas Polk. Kim Crawford reviews Jack Dempsey's *Michigan's Civil War Citizen-General*, an examination of the life and service of a lesser known but important Union officer, Alpheus Williams. As a break from military profiles, we feature George C. Rable's review of *Untouched by the Conflict*, edited by Jonathan W. White and Daniel Glenn. The book's subject, a Dickinson College student named John S. Ashenfelter, left a collection of letters behind that reveal the often boring, drunken, and comical life of a college student in the midst of the Civil War.

Though once out of vogue, scholarship on foreign relations and diplomacy is resurging due to continued interest in the Civil War as a global or transnational phenomenon. We present two reviews by Frank J. Williams and Bart Talbert that evaluate Joseph A. Fry's *Lincoln, Seward, and Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era* and Stéve Sainlaude *France and the American Civil War*. Fry approaches the subject of foreign relations from the perspective of the Lincoln Administration while Sainlaude dives deep into the Civil War's impact on French politics. Sainlaude's work is particularly noteworthy in its examination of the Civil War's impact well beyond the borders of the United States.

In addition to the early features of this issue, other historians have contributed to the growing literature on Reconstruction. Three reviews by Mark A. Neels, David Prior, and Peter Wallenstein offer a glimpse of work that challenges and expands our understanding of Reconstruction and its consequences. Brenda Wineapple's timely and sweeping book *The Impeachers* examines the political context and figures behind the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson. Wineapple's narrative style brings new appreciation to a political controversy that seems all too familiar. Since Heather C. Richardson's *West from Appomattox* (2007), Mark W. Summers's *The Ordeal of the Reunion* (2014), and others, historians have sought new ways to explore the impact and course of Reconstruction beyond the confines of the American South. *United States Reconstruction Across the Americas*, edited by William A. Link, pushes the boundaries even further beyond the United States and investigates the broader, global impact of Reconstruction-era policies. Closing the collection of post-war scholarship in this issue is James A. Bateman, Ira Katznelson, and John S. Lapinski's *Southern Nation: Congress and White Supremacy After Reconstruction*. Their sweeping study not only explains the making of the "Solid South," but the profound influence of southern Democrats in crafting national policy between 1880-1920. *Southern Nation* highlights the long-term impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on national politics well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Finally, the issue closes with two reviews by Wallace Hettle and Wang Xi. Gary Gallagher and Stephen Cushman's *Civil War Writing* provides an insightful collection of fresh interpretations on a variety of primary sources. Paul D. Escott's *Rethinking the Civil War* offers an impressive overview of the state of Civil War historiography. While applauding the continued expansion and incorporation of recent scholarship on many fronts, Escott calls for an increased use of digital research methods, more emphasis on the theme of war and society, and, as we will explore in the Spring issue, the war in the West. Both works not only accounts for the state of contemporary scholarship but provide a roadmap for future research into the era that remains the most divisive and important in American history. On behalf of the Editorial Staff, we hope you enjoy the Winter 2020 issue of the *Civil War Book Review*.