

### Muddled Memory, Assorted Abolitionists, and Experimental Emancipation

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## Editorial

### MUDDLED MEMORY, ASSORTED ABOLITIONISTS, AND EXPERIMENTAL EMANCIPATION

Hardie, Frank Winter

Spring 2005

With the new year, the *Civil War Book Review* has undergone a few changes. You may have noticed that we've adjusted our cover to accommodate a new, regular column, Civil War Treasures, penned by Leah Wood Jewett. The new column will highlight recent Civil War manuscript acquisitions by the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections of LSU Libraries' Special Collections.

This *Spring 2005 issue* covers all the variety of topics you have come to expect from the *Review*, but the subject of historical myth and memory is a recurring theme in several reviews. To introduce this topic, let me take you to another continent for a moment.

In his book, *History in Three Keys*, esteemed Chinese historian Paul Cohen admirably explains the myth and memory of the Boxer Rebellion (1898-1900), a popular, violent revolt against foreign missionaries, soldiers, diplomats, and Christians. Later generations of Chinese mythologized the Boxers throughout the New Culture movement, May Thirtieth demonstrations, and the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and '70s. Different factions of these 20th century social forces molded the Boxers' story into an image that represented their own ideologies. To some, the Boxers were backward, superstitious butchers who killed defenseless diplomats and priests. To others, the Boxers were glorious defenders against oppressive foreign invaders. To all those in the Cultural Revolution, says Cohen, the point was not to write history that was free of politics; it was to write history that embodied the *correct* politics, (emphasis added). This 19th century conflict has been memorialized and mythologized in ways to serve the political, ideological, rhetorical, and/or emotional needs of subsequent generations ever since.

Cohen's comments can help illustrate the intricacies of the American past, but to further complicate our concept of Civil War memory, we have to keep in

mind that those who actually participated in the conflict were operating within their own myth-induced, need-serving contexts as well. And even more perplexing is that it's not merely historians that are mythologizing history and muddling memory. As participants in the culture, we all do it: politicians, poets, theologians, reformers, journalists, entrepreneurs, teachers, citizens, and individuals with very modern political agendas.

Anything that remains in our consciousness, whether it's the Boxer Rebellion for the Chinese or the Civil War for Americans, it will continue to change in our memory according to our present condition. And the past as we remember it can seem more powerful than our actual past because we act and think and feel based on our *remembered* experiences, accurate or not. Within this issue, several of the following reviews may help us hike back into our history with a less crumpled map.

Edward Linenthal's featured review of **The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture** (University of North Carolina Press, ISBN 0807829072, \$59.95, hardcover) is an excellent discussion starter, and it leads nicely into three more reviews that relate to analogous topics. Paul Ashdown traces the odd journey of the Lincoln assassin's corpse in his review of **The Legend Of John Wilkes Booth: Myth, Memory & a Mummy** (University of Kansas Press, ISBN 0700613528, \$24.95, hardcover). John Stauffer warns against the danger of re-memorialization in his review of **Gettysburg: This Hallowed Ground** (Tide-Mark Press, ISBN 1559498846, \$19.95, hardcover), and for perspective on the fallacies within historical accounts, Edwin Yoder expounds upon the war's greatest con man who is the subject of **Devil's Game** (University of Illinois Press, ISBN 0252028902, \$35.00, hardcover).

As a guest columnist for our Rediscovering Civil War Classics column, Harold Holzer takes us back to the genesis of his pursuit of Lincoln knowledge as he discusses **The Lincoln Nobody Knows** (out of print). And headlining our Perspectives from Afield and Afar column is Colin Woodward's insightful assessment of **Isrl on the Appomattox** (Alfred A. Knopf, ISBN 0679447385, \$35.00, hardcover).

Two more featured reviews include W. Fitzhugh Brundage's appraisal of **No Taint of Compromise** (Louisiana State University Press, ISBN 080712976, \$54.95, hardcover) and John Lundberg's discussion of a lesser known Texas battle, **Sabine Pass** (University of Texas Press, ISBN 0292705948, \$21.95,

hardcover). Our interview features guest interviewer John Idol conversing with David Madden about his new book, **Thomas Wolfe's Civil War** (University of Alabama Press, ISBN 0817350942, \$19.95, softcover).

Several reviews can provide readers with a deeper understanding of various social aspects of the period. Amy Minton discusses **The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1861** (University of North Carolina Press, ISBN 0807828823, \$59.95 hardcover), while Al Neale surveys **Bugle Resounding, Music and Musicians in the Civil War Era** (University of Tennessee Press, ISBN 157233309X, \$45.00, hardcover). James D. Hardy describes the unlikely relations between public and private institutions in **The Railroad and The State** (Stanford University Press, ISBN 0804742391, \$65.00, hardcover), and Jennifer Weber reveals the anti-abolitionist sentiments of Yankee soldier John Chase in **Yours for the Union** (Fordham University Press, ISBN 0823223035, \$55.00, hardcover).

In addition to the reviews in this issue, there are a number of new and reprinted annotated titles that are worthy of note:

**Atlas of the Civil War: Month by Month** by Mark Swanson

**August Reckoning** by William Warren Rogers, Sr.

**Dixie's Forgotten People** by Wayne Flynt

**Finding Sand Creek** by Jerome A. Greene and Douglas D. Scott

**Is He Dead?** by Mark Twain

**John Horry Dent** by Ray Mathis

**Journey of Hope** by Kenneth C. Barnes

So here it is, the first issue of 2005. Creating a publication such as this requires incurring hefty debts of good will, and those from whom I have drawn the most favors are our reviewers. I am extremely thankful for their valuable contributions of time and expertise.