

EDITORIAL Changing People Over Time and Making History

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Editorial

EDITORIAL CHANGING PEOPLE OVER TIME AND MAKING HISTORY

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We often study history so that we can better understand ourselves, so that we can understand how events have influenced the decisions of people and society throughout our past. Every day people around the world make choices that will alter the course of history and that fact has always remained the case. That idea, that sense of choice and change over time and the ways in which events and our decisions affect Americans was no more paramount than during the Civil War and the decades before and after the four years of conflict. This, the Winter 2011 issue of *Civil War Book Review* features works that illustrate how people have changed over time and how they have tackled important decisions that altered the course of history.

Our feature soldier for this issue of our Civil War Sesquicentennial remembrance is Private William S. Askew, Company A, (Newman Guards) 1st Georgia Infantry. The age of this young soldier remains unknown but shows, clearly, one of those historical actors who fought during and helped to shape the course of the Civil War.

Our feature reviews, which illustrate change over time and the ways in which people made decisions that altered the course of history, include Steven Lubet's *Fugitive Justice: Runaways, Rescuers, and Slavery on Trial*. Lubet provides a fine study of the decade preceding the Civil War by looking at three fugitive slave trials that demonstrate the growing sectional conflict between North and South. Next Shearer Davis Bowman (a reminder of our own mortality), in *At the Precipice: Americans North and South during the Secession Crisis*, provides a synthesis of the scholarship concerning the secession crisis, the moment when the tumultuous 1850s boiled over into secession and a final step toward war. In *Topsy-Turvy: How the Civil War Turned the World Upside Down for Southern Children* Anya Jabour shows us how the war affected southern children, both white and black, as conflict forced them to make choices to face an increasingly changing world while coming to grips with a new social

environment. Finally, Ronald S. Butchart demonstrates how recently freed people coped with their new freedom and sought social equality through education in *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876*. In this important study, Butchart navigates the choices that freed people made in an effort to gain access to education and gives us a better understanding of how they embraced and approached their radically-changing world.

George Rable, author of *God's Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War*, graciously granted Civil War Book Review a very fine and insightful interview in which we discuss his book. Rable's most recent contribution to Civil War scholarship examines the role of religion during the Civil War as both northerners and southerners, white and black, coped with the massive destruction and changing world. His text will most likely serve as an influential and vital source for understanding the religion during the Civil War years.

This Winter, Leah Wood Jewett provides a look into the memory of a young Confederate girl. A resident of Louisiana, Sarah Morgan Dawson, provides us with a window through which to look at how the war affected society, especially those at home. Her remembrances show how a young girl interpreted and reacted to the war all around her as slaves enjoyed emancipation, the Union army advanced and southern society turned seemingly upside down.

I would like to thank, once again, the staff at LSU Libraries, and Special Collections for their help and support. They continue to support *Civil War Book Review* endlessly and their assistance helps us to deliver the best product available. Without them, the Winter 2011 issue simply could not have happened.