

The Power of Politics

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Editorial

THE POWER OF POLITICS

Summer 2012

As November draws closer in this, a presidential election year, we are reminded of the importance and the power of politics. The realm of politics has the power to unify, to divide, to create, and to tear down but the strong political tradition throughout the history of the United States will always help to keep modern voters informed as they make their decisions. The power of politics most certainly influenced Americans during the Civil War period, even for those not invested in politics directly. Looking at recent publications in the field, it remains certain that we are still trying to grapple with the power of politics during the nineteenth century, a point in this nation's history when it progressed through its formative years. The power of politics, in life and in literature, continues to be a powerful tool for the understanding of the American Civil War; our featured reviews in the Summer 2012 issue of *Civil War Book Review* reflect that persistent dominance.

Our editorial image this quarter shows Thomas Kitchen, a private in a Georgia Regiment, a reminder that the power of politics often has very personal results.

Michael Perman's *The Southern Political Tradition*, the result of his Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History, explores the vast realm of southern politics across time, investigating how southern politics transformed throughout American history from the first presidential elections into the twentieth century. In *America's Great Debate: Henry Clay, Stephen A. Douglas, and the Compromise That Preserved the Union*, Fergus M. Bordewich examines the crucial years following the Mexican War when the mounting sectional crisis threatened unity between North and South. Through the Compromise of 1850, and the power of politics, Americans succeeded in staving off war for ten more years. As the war loomed closer, however, America undertook an ambitious project when Congress began exploring its options to build the United States Capital. Guy Gugliotta's *Freedom's Cap: The United States Capital and the Coming of the Civil War* highlights the relationships between a powerful cadre of inter-sectional politicians who commissioned the building of the greatest symbol

of unit while the nation split apart around them. Finally, Harold Holzer examines the Emancipation Proclamation and the role that it played in creating Abraham Lincoln's image, both then and now, in *Emancipating Lincoln: the Proclamation in Text, Context, and Memory*.

Civil War Book Review was very pleased to be able to spend some time talking with Earl J. Hess, author of *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi*. This expansive book details the war in the Western Theater, detailing how the Union achieved such success and the challenges that northern commanders had to overcome to attain that victory.

Michael Taylor, this quarter, has provided a very useful essay that explores the ways in which Baton Rouge women negotiated the difficulties of war. Taylor shows us how they adapted and navigated the challenges that living in an occupied town deep in the heart of the Confederacy provided for them. *Civil War Book Review* is proud of the Summer 2012 issue; we believe it is a very strong one and we hope that our readers will agree. We certainly appreciate you taking the time to read the contents and we humbly thank the reviewers, publishers, and readers who make the effort, not only possible, but worthwhile.