

## Civil War Book Review

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Winter 2007

Article 2

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### The Civil War and the Lives of Americans

Christopher Childers

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#### Recommended Citation

Childers, Christopher (2007) "The Civil War and the Lives of Americans," *Civil War Book Review*. Vol. 9 : Iss. 1 .

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cwbr/vol9/iss1/2>

## Editorial

### THE CIVIL WAR AND THE LIVES OF AMERICANS

Childers, Christopher

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#### The Civil War and the Lives of Americans

After reading the books reviewed in this issue of *Civil War Book Review*, one cannot miss the incredible and almost incomprehensible effect that the war had on individual people—both its participants and the civilians who witnessed its destructive impact. The mobilization of a nation's economy into wartime status; the military struggles of the combatants in the Union and the Confederacy; the everyday ideas, beliefs, thoughts, and practices of common people; the actions of leaders; the sheer desolation of the vanquished South; the continued fight over the meaning of freedom in America—all these important themes and more are explored in the new books you will find in this issue. Indeed, we continue to search for the meaning of the Civil War experience.

In this issue, Ethan S. Rafuse reviews **The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864**. This volume, edited by Gary W. Gallagher, gathers essays from ten scholars who take another look at various aspects of this campaign into the breadbasket of the Confederacy by using newer modes of inquiry as well as traditional military history techniques. The lives of generals in blue and gray still captivate audiences. And as reviewer William D. Bushnell describes, Edward G. Longacre's **General Ulysses S. Grant: The Soldier and the Man** chronicles the personal and professional life of this fascinating figure, both through his triumphs and his foibles. While economic history often receives slight treatment in modern historiography, Mark R. Wilson's **The Business of Civil War: Military Mobilization and the State, 1861-1865** stands as a welcome addition to the existing literature. Nothing like this has ever been published, writes reviewer Frank J. Williams, as he evaluates this significant new study of how the Union mobilized for war.

Our column series *Perspectives From Afield and Afar* returns with Daniel W. Stowell's vivid analysis of John Townsend Trowbridge's classic **The South: A Tour of Its Battlefields and Ruined Cities, A Journey through the**

**Desolated States, and Talks with the People, 1867**, now reprinted in unabridged form by Mercer University Press. Stowell offers a thoughtful essay on the significance of this work to Civil War students. Leah Wood Jewett reveals several significant new letters from the Siege of Port Hudson, Louisiana. And David Madden prods students to explore unanswered questions about the Civil War. Yes, there are parts of the Civil War that remain unexplained!

In February, noted Civil War era scholar Leonard L. Richards's new book **The California Gold Rush and the Coming of the Civil War** arrived in bookstores. In an interview with *CWBR*, he discusses his latest work and reveals the significance of the forty-niners to the sectional crisis. Indeed, the political tug-of-war between the state's southern and northern politicians impacted the course of national events in the 1850s.

We have made several design changes to *CWBR* starting with this issue. If you are here, you have already seen our new front page. Readers will also notice a change to the format of our annotations. All annotations for books now include a hyperlink to the book's specific web page from the publisher's web site. This new format allows us to provide readers with far more information about annotated books than the brief summaries we have published in the past. We hope you find this new feature useful.

Enjoy the wide and varied perspectives these authors bring to our understanding of the Civil War!