

## Editorial: The History We All Live

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## Editorial

### EDITORIAL: THE HISTORY WE ALL LIVE

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A special spring season is upon us. As our readers have come to expect, the latest issue of *Civil War Book Review* is full of excellent content, but this spring in particular marks the 150th anniversary of the end of the American Civil War, and with it, a winding down of our Sesquicentennial series. The past four years—more in many cases—have been a tremendously exciting time for Civil War scholarship. Rarely have the fields for Civil War research been so fertile, and the importance of such scholarship so immediately apparent in our everyday world.

We are not quite done with the Sesquicentennial yet. This issue features a retrospective collection of all our Sesquicentennial columns, and readers can look forward to a concluding column on Reconstruction in the Summer issue. It is fitting, too, that this issue features John McCardell Jr.'s review of Samuel C. Hyde's *The Enigmatic South*, a collection of essays honoring the career and scholarship of William J. Cooper, Jr., who recently retired from LSU. Professor Cooper's impact on the field of Southern and Civil War history is well known to many *CWBR* readers. Those who are unfamiliar need only consult our issue archives, any number of academic journals, or the citations of myriad books to get a sense of Professor Cooper's contributions. Though we should note he is scarcely done producing scholarship or appearing on campus, we wish him the best in retirement.

Scott Hancock reviews another eminent historian of the era with a look at Eric Foner's *Gateway to Freedom*. Foner argues that the Underground Railroad must be understood not only as the product of the agency of African American actors, but as a major contributing factor in the coming of the Civil War. On the other chronological end of the conflict, Mark Wahlgren Summers offers a new take on Reconstruction with *The Ordeal of the Reunion*, perhaps the most important since Foner's foundational work twenty-seven years ago, reviewed by Douglas Egerton. Moving through Reconstruction and beyond, W. Fitzhugh Brundage gives us a glimpse at M. Keith Harris' examination of veterans, taking

on the notion that former soldiers readily embraced sectional reconciliation, if at all, in *Across the Bloody Chasm*.

In "A Look at Lincoln," Frank Williams reviews two concise new additions to Lincoln scholarship—John F. Marszalek's *Lincoln and the Military* and John C. Waugh's *Lincoln and the War's End*—that together bring the sixteenth president to the conclusion of the war. Michael Taylor of LSU Libraries Special Collections also sheds light on Lincoln, or rather the long shadow Lincoln the historical figure casts on research and artifacts from the era with the mysterious ownership tale of a period dictionary. Finally, we get a chance to chat with Craig A. Warren about his new book, *The Rebel Yell: A Cultural History*, for our author interview, also reviewed by Rod Andrew, Jr.

In his review of *The Rebel Yell*, Professor Andrew notes that the book is, among other contributions, an important reminder that the history of the Civil War did not end in 1865, 1877, the end of the nineteenth century or indeed, the beginning of the twenty-first. Along similar boundary-pushing lines in this issue, Don H. Doyle and Richard S. Dunn both demonstrate that the field does not stop at the water's edge, and Lea VanderVelde shows that voices once silenced can be once again heard. Such history has a very tangible importance beyond honoring the experiences of those who came before or knowing from where our society came, worthwhile as those motives are.

To some extent, I am preaching to the choir of *CWBR* readers, but as we all constantly refine our thirty-second sound bites on the relevance of our work, scholarship such as what we have here offers a lifeline against the currents of historical amnesia. Incidents such as the now-infamous chant uttered by (former) members of the SAE fraternity at the University of Oklahoma last month illustrate the wages of that amnesia. Addressing such controversies, which OU decisively did, obviously goes beyond imparting a sense of history. Yet living without that sense goes a long way toward explaining how students at a prestigious university could fail to appreciate—and willfully ignore—the weight of history behind their words and the actions those words invoked, all atop an association with an organization noted for its origins in the Antebellum, slaveholding South. To pretend that the causes and consequences of the great cataclysm in our country's history are finished and no longer matter in the "real world" is to delude ourselves with a false and fragile complacency. Borrowing Brian Matthew Jordan's description of veterans' struggles after the war, our challenges as teachers and students is unending. Thankfully, so is the good

scholarship.