

### Understanding the Civil War Experience

Christopher Childers

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## **Editorial**

### **UNDERSTANDING THE CIVIL WAR EXPERIENCE**

**Childers, Christopher**

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#### **Understanding the Civil War Experience**

The books featured in this issue of *Civil War Book Review* capture the impact of the war on American history in its totality. From the rumblings of sectional controversy over the expansion of slavery as seen in the Texas annexation controversy and the political situation in California following the gold rush to the crusade of a Ohio carpetbagger to achieve racial justice in the Reconstruction-era South, these volumes show the continued and unflagging creative energy of scholars to understand the origins of the Civil War, the war itself, and the postbellum reconstruction of a militarily reunified but still divided nation.

Students of the Civil War era have eagerly awaited the publication of William W. Freehling's second volume of *The Road to Disunion*. Almost sixteen years after the issue of *Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854*, Freehling has completed his exhaustive study of the South's movement toward secession. Bruce Levine reviews *Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861* in this issue. Additionally, our *CWBR* Author Interview features Freehling discussing his work.

Community studies have gained attention recently as a way of understanding the impact of war on the home front. Indeed in many places, local civil wars erupted as Unionist and pro-Confederate residents clashed. Robert Tracy McKenzie reviews Jonathan Dean Sarris's *A Separate Civil War: Communities in Conflict in the Mountain South*, which offers an investigation of this sort of conflict in the Appalachian regions of north Georgia.

Scholarship on the experiences of the common soldier abounds in Civil War studies. Michl T. Smith reviews *The Soldier's Pen: Firsthand Impressions of the Civil War*, a book that examines how soldiers lived in combat conditions and how they communicated with those on the home front. Mark H. Dunkelman continues his research on the 154th New York Volunteer Infantry by focusing on

the lives of twelve soldiers in that unit. Derek W. Frisby reviews *War's Relentless Hand: Twelve Tales of Civil War Soldiers*.

Leah Wood Jewett outlines a remarkable set of letters from New York Private Abraham Garrison, who laments the nature of the war as he sees it a rich man's war and a poor man's fight. Fighting far away from home, Garrison frequently communicated with his wife, as evidenced by the collection, and offered a blunt assessment of the war's progress in his theater. And David Madden rediscovers the Civil War novels of Jules Verne, who penned a colorful and exciting version of a war known for precisely the opposite.

The sesquicentennial of the Civil War begins in 2011, and many individuals and organizations are planning for this event. However, do not forget the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth in 2009. Students of the Civil War certainly have not forgotten our sixteenth president, as shown by the torrent of new books on Lincoln. In this issue, Lincoln scholar and frequent *CWBR* contributor Frank J. Williams reviews Gabor Boritt's *Gettysburg Gospel: The Lincoln Speech that Nobody Knows*. Additionally, we are pleased to announce that Mr. Williams will serve as lead contributor of a new *CWBR* column series on Lincoln that will review new and notable Lincoln books and place them in a broader context. This series will serve, in part, as our commemoration of Lincoln's birth.

As always, enjoy reading and learning about the Civil War!