

# Civil War Book Review

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## Putting the Civil War in Context

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## Editorial

### PUTTING THE CIVIL WAR IN CONTEXT

Childers, Christopher

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#### Putting the Civil War in Context

Context. Students of the Civil War and of any branch of history for that matter always search for the context in which events happened. Historians have always taken special interest in why the Civil War came, what provoked armed conflict between North and South, what events in the years preceding 1861 led to such a cataclysmic event. We still search for these answers. Likewise, those who study politicians, military leaders, and even common people look for different sources to gain a better understanding of those who lived the Civil War experience. Context; it's the lifeblood of Civil War history and what motivates us to keep researching and reading.

The books reviewed in this issue of *Civil War Book Review* reflect our quest for context. The issue of slavery and the Union appeared as early as the Constitutional Convention of 1787, yet the Missouri Controversy of 1819-1821 marked a fire bell in the night as Thomas Jefferson described it that boldly illustrated the corrosive effect of slavery and the territories on the American political establishment. Robert Pierce Forbes studies the controversy and the compromise in *The Missouri Compromise and its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning in America*, the first book-length treatment of this subject in 55 years. Kevin R.C. Gutzman reviews this book.

Historians have long looked at the history of the Mexican War for insights into how Civil War-era military officers learned how to fight. Many of the top brass in the Civil War served in the Mexican War. Richard Bruce Winders reviews Kevin Dougherty's *Civil War Leadership and Mexican War Experience*, a book that examines this important facet of military history.

Orville Vernon Burton's *The Age of Lincoln* proves that ample room still exists for scholarly syntheses that provoke thought about how we conceptualize the Civil War era. Burton takes a broad view by starting his narrative at the

Second Great Awakening and ending in the 1890s. J. Matthew Gallman reviews this book.

Robert E. Lee remains a perennial favorite of Civil War biographers. In *Reading the Man: A Portrait of Robert E. Lee Through His Private Letters*, Elizabeth Brown Pryor looks to the Confederate general's personal letters to gain new insights on his public and private life. Caroline E. Janney reviews Pryor's book.

In the *CWBR* Author Interview, Aaron Sheehan-Dean answers questions about his new book *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia*, a fascinating look at one of the central questions in Civil War history. David Madden takes a look at some notable Lincoln books that merit reprinting in his latest installment of *Rediscovering Civil War Classics*. And Leah Wood Jewett looks at one man's efforts to create a model freedmen community during the Civil War in *Civil War Treasures*.

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In Memoriam: Frank Winter Hardie

1979-2007

The *Civil War Book Review* mourns the loss of former editor Frank Winter Hardie, who died on December 26, 2007. Frank is remembered as a warm, humble, and caring person who immersed himself in the job of editing this journal. In his first editorial, Frank remarked, I was a little tentative as to whether or not I would fit in with the prestigious staff of the United States Civil War Center, but I am relieved to report that they have been nothing but gracious and pleasant in welcoming me into the close-knit society of those who study the war. On behalf of that close-knit society, I offer our sincere condolences to the Hardie family and thank them for sharing Frank with us.

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As always, enjoy studying the rich history of the Civil War era.