

EDITORIAL Breaking New Ground in Civil War Studies

Nathan Buman

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Editorial

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Buman, Nathan

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Historians of the antebellum, Civil War, and Reconstruction periods often face the task finding new approaches in their studies because of the thriving popularity of these areas throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Scholars have discussed many topics thoroughly but, due to the constantly changing methodologies and evolution of the profession, new ground always remains. Ground-breaking scholarship succeeds in finding new avenues to discuss previously trodden subjects or uncovering new episodes of history altogether.

This, the Winter 2010 issue of *Civil War Book Review*, features exceptional scholarship that breaks ground in many different areas of specialization. In many ways, they look at topics that previous scholars have examined but they achieve new and promising heights through unique conclusions and a careful reinterpretation of the source material. Our first feature, Brian Schoen's *The Fragile Fabric of Union* considers the dominant role that "King Cotton" played in the increasing sectional thinking and budding nationalism throughout the antebellum period, culminating in secession and the American Civil War. Next, David Work explores the role that politically appointed generals played in solidifying Lincoln's presidency as he sought to build a national coalition to fight and win the war in *Lincoln's Political Generals*. William L. Shea, prominent Civil War campaign historian, illustrates the importance of the Prairie Grove Campaign in effectively eliminating Confederate hope west of the Mississippi River. Based on daunting research and deft analysis, Shea shows readers, in great detail throughout *Fields of Blood*, the tactical maneuvers of the campaign. In our last feature, Barbara Brooks Tomblin turns the readers' attention to the role that African Americans played in fighting the Civil War while projecting a broader message about what the war meant to African Americans who fought and died for their own freedom. *Bluejackets & Contrabands* will serve as an excellent bridge between the struggle for emancipation and the end of slavery during the war and the battle for civil rights and equality after the war.

Civil War Book Review is proud and honored to share an interview with Lacy K. Ford, Jr. who discussed with us, his latest book *Deliver Us from Evil: The Question of Slavery in the Old South*. He graciously took time to explore some of the highlights and themes of his book in which he breaks down the idea of a monolithic South in unanimous support of slavery, breaking ground en route to showing a more complex and evolving region.

In her column, Leah Wood Jewett has kindly shared some of the prized possessions of the Special Collections at Louisiana State University to illustrate and narrate the connection between our university and the American Civil War.

This quarter, we are blessed to feature an excellent and insightful column, written by Frank J. Williams, that explores the question of Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation, providing his own analysis and using William Blair and Karen Fisher Younger's recent collection of essays as a backdrop. The proclamation, Williams suggests is very complex and provides many opportunities for historians to consider or re-consider Lincoln's politics, civil rights, and the meaning of the American Civil War to the American memory.

Again, I would like to thank the Special Collections Department and the staff at Louisiana State University for helping me to bring this issue to fruition. I believe we have a very strong Winter 2010 issue of *Civil War Book Review* that speaks to the evolving studies of the antebellum, Civil War, and Reconstruction periods. It certainly is a treat, an honor, and a privilege to be able to share in this discussion with our readers.