

### Editorial: Wider Worlds And Historical Legacies

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## Editorial

### EDITORIAL: WIDER WORLDS AND HISTORICAL LEGACIES

Barber, Tom

Fall 2016

It is a great honor for me to be able to formally introduce myself to our readers. I have been lucky to take over the *Civil War Book Review* with the support of the staff at LSU Special Collections, and with the journal having been handed off to me in such excellent shape by our previous editor, Zach Isenhower. I look forward to continuing the journal's commitment to providing thoughtful reviews for the latest scholarship on the Civil War and Reconstruction eras.

Now let's talk about our great Fall 2016 issue. This issue highlights two concepts: place and legacy.

Claude Clegg reviews Randy J. Sparks *Africans in the Old South*, which follows the lives of Americans not only of African descent, but also of geographical origin. By doing so, Sparks exposes the cultural, personal, and intellectual networks whose reference points included inland Sierra Leone, South Carolina, Jamaica, and a host of other regions that organized the mental and physical worlds of Africans living in the Old South.

Place also shaped American music in important ways. Laurent Dubois's *The Banjo: America's African Instrument*, reviewed here by Scott Gac, chronicles how the instrument gained notoriety, and later acceptance within the United States. According to Gac, the banjo attained national acceptance only after the cultural processes of "cooperation, appropriation, and transformation," a set of transformations that involved enslaved Africans in the sixteenth century, white consumers in the nineteenth century, and Civil Rights activists in the twentieth century.

Reconstruction's legacies form the issue's second theme. Elaine Frantz Parsons' *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan During Reconstruction* examines how the terrorist group became part of the United States' national imagination. Joshua Hodges points out in his review of *Ku-Klux*, that the nineteenth-century Klan

owed its prolonged notoriety to partisan national papers throughout the North, which used the group's violent tactics, to justify or condemn political reconstruction to the nation at large.

James P. Byrd reviews *Between Fetters and Freedom: African American Baptists since Emancipation*, a collection of essays that interrogates the dual legacies of Emancipation and Reconstruction. Byrd's review suggests that the period between Emancipation and Reconstruction left a mixed legacy in terms of religious freedom. In some instances, Emancipation enabled African American Baptists to embrace new theological concepts. At other times, white backlash to Reconstruction convinced many black Baptists to remain in churches controlled by white officials.

Place and legacy also appear in this issue's author interview and featured column. Interviewed this month is Matthew Clavin, author of *Aiming for Pensacola: Fugitive Slaves on the Atlantic and Southern Frontiers*. In the interview Dr. Clavin explains how the town's place along two, sometimes competing frontiers, undermined the plantation complex that engulfed the United States before the Civil War.

Sheila Sundar's essay on Reconstruction's necessary role in the classroom continues our series on the Civil War and its place in education. In the essay Sundar, the director and founder of the Southern History Project, confronts student ambivalence toward narratives of African American history that read like morality tales filled with easy choices between good and evil. Sundar observes that the Reconstruction era's competing notions of freedom and society offer teachers an antidote for student ambivalence and provide students with the necessary context required to effectively engage in today's political discussions.

In his annual column, A Look at Lincoln, Frank Williams reviews Daniel Crofts' *Lincoln & the Politics of Slavery: The Other Thirteenth Amendment and the Struggle to Save the Union*. In investigating this forgotten amendment, Crofts provides a powerful counterargument to any who would try to find broad support for emancipation before Fort Sumter.

Finally, this issue's Civil War Treasures column, provided by the tireless LSU Special Collections librarian Hans Rasmussen, examines the intersections between legacy, memory, and artifact. In the essay, Rasmussen introduces us to John Hazard Wildman, a LSU English professor, who turned family folklore into

a biting critique of the South's long embrace of the Lost Cause.

Tom Barber