

## Editorial: Fall 2017

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## Editorial

### EDITORIAL: FALL 2017

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Welcome to the *CWBR*'s Fall 2017 issue. This issue covers a range of topics that include family in antebellum America, U.S. Grant's life, and slavery. Though these subjects receive regular attention in some capacity, many of the works reviewed highlight often neglected aspects of familiar topics.

Two of our feature reviews examine the people and institutions that perpetuated slavery before the Civil War. Charles B. Dew finds Hank Trent's *The Secret Life of Bacon Tait, a White Slave Trader Married to a Free Woman of Color* an especially valuable contribution for its ground-level analysis of Richmond, Virginia's slave-trading enterprises. Born in 1796, Tait participated in, and profited from, slavery's expansion; a growth that Trent suggests led to Tait's informal marriage to Courtney Fountain, a freed woman of color living near the slave trader in Richmond.

Moving beyond individual lives, Katherine Mooney reviews Jennifer Oast's *Institutional Slavery: Slaveholding Churches, Schools, Colleges, and Businesses in Virginia, 1680-1860*. Oast's work yields fresh insights into how Virginia's leaders tethered educational philanthropy to enslaved labor. In doing so, Mooney commends the book for its convincing portrayal of how "slavery dictated relationships of every degree of power and intimacy."

Our third and fourth featured reviews also confront neglected, but essential, subjects. Catherine Jones praises Dawn Peterson's *Indians in the Family: Adoption and the Politics of Antebellum Expansion* for its seamless integration of household organization and the history of empire. As an act that reconfigured households, adoption enabled indigenous leaders and parents to adapt to white encroachment through kinship ties, while white leaders such as Andrew Jackson used adoption to soften his personal and political image.

Mark A. Neels' review of Stephen Engle's *Gathering to Save a Nation: Lincoln & the Union's War Governors* turns our attention from understudied

private households to neglected aspects of Union leadership during national crisis. Looking closely at efforts to mobilize the nation's resources, Engle argues that the dynamic between Lincoln and the Union Governors reflected collaborative relationship, not top-down leadership. As the first comprehensive study of the Union's wartime governors relationship with Lincoln in almost seventy years, Neels considers the book a much needed update.

For our feature column, Daniel W. Crofts reviews Edward L. Ayers' latest work *The Thin Light of Freedom: Civil War and Emancipation in the Heart of America*, a follow-up of Ayers' 2004 book *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: The Civil War in the Heart of America, 1859-1864*. In addition to being well-crafted, Crofts' essay deserves a special attention because his essay acts as part refresher and part review, an important element for those of us who missed *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*.

This issue I interview Matthew Stanley about his new book *The Loyal West: Civil War and Reunion in Middle America*. By carefully following the region's political culture from the antebellum era to the early twentieth century, this work enriches our understanding of how Middle America's postwar commemorative ceremonies anticipated, and influenced, national reconciliation efforts.

Putting all things Lincoln aside for a moment, Frank Williams reviews Ron Chernow's *Grant*. Fusing historical nuance with lively prose, Williams considers Chernow's work a welcome and much needed addition to the historical literature about Grant.

Finally, do not miss the latest edition of Civil War Treasures, our regular column dedicated to exploring Hill Memorial Library's collection of Civil War and Reconstruction era archival materials. In this issue, Hans Rasmussen shares an encrypted letter from George Blake, a disgruntled sergeant in Company H of the 18th New York Infantry Regiment.

As always, I'd like to thank all of our contributors who donated their time to craft the thoughtful reviews and essays that fill this issue's digital pages.

Tom Barber, Editor