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Gordon B. Bonan. *The Edge of Mosby's Sword: The Life of Confederate Colonel William Henry Chapman.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2009. xii + 220 pp. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8093-2932-8.

Christopher Phillips. *The Making of a Southerner: William Barclay Napton's Private Civil War.* Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008. x + 162 pp. $19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8262-1825-4.

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The Continuing Significance of Civil War Biography

Biography continues to be one of the most fruitful means of historical study and this is made quite clear in *The Making of a Southerner: William Barclay Napton's Private Civil War* by Christopher Phillips and *The Edge of Mosby's Sword: The Life of Confederate Colonel William Henry Chapman* by Gordon B. Bonan. Phillips, a history professor at the University of Cincinnati, examines the life of Missouri judge William Napton and argues that his subject's shift from a Western to a Southern identity was completed by the bitterness of the Civil War. Bonan, a senior scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Colorado, takes up the task of historical biography in writing about one of his ancestors and argues that William Henry Chapman was a contradictory figure whose service as a Confederate cavalryman was followed later by his embrace of the Republican Party and work as an Internal Revenue Service agent. These biographies reflect the recent trend toward biographies of more obscure figures, even as new volumes dedicated to the famous generals and politicians continue to appear. The significance of these two brief books is that they not only establish the historical roles of their subjects, but that they also shed light on important topics in the history of the Civil War and the South.

Phillips takes up the critical question of identity in his biography of William Barclay Napton (1808-83). Napton, a native of New Jersey and graduate of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University), became an attorney and lived in Virginia before moving west to Missouri. He practiced law before turning his efforts to publishing a newspaper, all the while cultivating connections with wealthy and powerful men. Napton became a firm believer in states' rights and a staunch Democrat. Something of an intellectual, he preferred reading and theorizing to arguing cases in court and this soon led him to seek other pursuits. Thus, he accepted appointment by the Democratic governor, first to the post of state attorney general, then to the state supreme court. He was well suited to life on the bench and, although he complained about a judge's onerous duties and low salary, he used his position to defend his political views and improve his standing in society. Napton married the daughter of another judge and they started a family on a country estate with a large home and slaves to serve them and work the land.

Initially, Napton saw himself as a Westerner, but began to develop a Southern identity through politics, especially in relation to sectionalism, slavery, and the ideology of states' rights. Phillips argues that race and slavery were essential to Napton's new identity and his views on these issues came out of his political and legal experience, as his judicial defense of the "peculiar institution" brought together "two strains of reasoning, one constitutional … the other … ideological" (p. 56). Although the judge later claimed that his constitutional reasoning had been consistent throughout his career, Phillips contends that Napton was not always an unwavering supporter of slavery. Instead, his ideas evolved over time, and were rooted in particular court cases, as he moved from sometimes ruling against slaveholders to staunchly supporting their rights. Furthermore, his views changed as sectionalism divided the nation and he joined other Democrats in defending states' rights and slavery. Involved in party politics and intrigue, he became enmeshed in internal party fights that led to him losing his seat on the Missouri Supreme Court in 1851 after the voters won the right to elect their judges. He returned to a lucrative law practice and his wealth enabled him to buy more slaves and

travel widely in the Deep South. Throughout the 1850s, he became more committed to proslavery ideology and, as free labor rose to threaten the peculiar institution in Missouri, he turned again to politics. Active as a delegate to conservative Democratic conventions and as a newspaper editor, he was disappointed that the party did not choose him to run for Congress. But his work was rewarded when he was reelected to the state supreme court in 1856, too late to rule on the Dred Scott case.

Throughout this period, Napton found himself caught up in the political battles that so deeply divided Missouri. Sectionalism in the Border States brought loyal support as well as bitter resentment and the judge became a leading figure among the proslavery Democrats, rubbing shoulders with men like Governor Claiborne F. Jackson. When the Civil War began, Napton denounced Abraham Lincoln and the Republicans while still holding out hope for peace–until emancipation, the actions of Unionist militias in "harassing" him, and his wife's death in childbirth all combined to move him into full support for the Confederacy. The experience of the war completed Napton's transformation into a Southerner. The actions of Unionists in searching his house, the deaths of family members, and the defeat of the Confederacy forced him to define himself more clearly and he chose to be a Southerner. Arguing that "Napton's southern identity was enhanced but not dictated by his Confederate connection" (p. 116), Phillips shows how the judge's view of himself developed fully amid the fear and frustration of the hard times he faced following the war. More than just a choice, his Southern identity was a "right" (p. 116) that he had won and he would cherish it and defend it to his death. In the years after the war, he supported the myth of the Lost Cause as he continued his work on the bench and remained active in Democratic Party politics. Indeed, it was in those years of Reconstruction and after that he most clearly understood himself to be a Southerner, as the "postwar politicization of the war's memory completed this southernization process" (p. 117) for others as well as him.

Phillips's argument is intriguing and enlightening but not quite persuasive. While his evidence certainly supports his contention that Napton's identity shifted and became more clearly defined through politics, he may overstate the case, as he does not fully establish that the judge saw himself as a Westerner in anything more than geography. Even more important is that Phillips may go too far in asserting that the judge was not culturally Southern. In fact, as Phillips mentions, New Jersey had slavery long after most other Northern states and the school that became Princeton was once a bastion of Presbyterian conservatism that granted degrees to many Southern students. Thus, his native state and the college in which Napton was educated were fertile ground for states' rights, proslavery, and elements of Southern culture. And, while his views did change over time, Napton was quite consistent in his support of states' rights and one might interpret some of his early rulings from the bench against slaveholders as defenses of those rights rather than an indication of ambivalence about slavery. More importantly, however, Phillips misses a key ingredient of Southern culture that clearly motivated Napton and helped him forge his identity: honor. From his early years, the judge displayed concern with his honor, as he sought to avoid the shame of his father's business failure, struggled to find a place and achieve gentility in Virginia, achieved success and tried to maintain it in Missouri. Napton did begin to identify himself as a Southerner amid sectional politics, but he usually did so in response to perceived slights from Northerners or abolitionists. He did most clearly wear the label of Southerner in the postwar years amid the mythmaking of Civil War memory, but he did so as a matter of honor. This is a fine biography, but more attention to Southern honor would have made the author's argument more persuasive even as it would have shifted the nature of that argument.

The contradictory life of William Henry Chapman (1840-1929) is the subject of his descendent Gordon Bonan's book. Although he accepted his family's romanticized view of his ancestor as a boy, Bonan's balanced analysis makes this a valuable contribution to our understanding of the Civil War. Arguing that historians and biographers have given plenty of attention to Confederate General John S. Mosby and the enlisted men in the ranks of the ranger unit that won so much fame, Bonan hopes to fill the gap in the literature left by scholarly neglect of Mosby's officers. While the primary sources and all of the "histories of the rangers are replete with references to William Henry Chapman, second in command," the young lieutenant colonel "is an enigma" (p. 3).

Born and raised in Luray, Virginia, on the western side of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Chapman hailed from a well-to-do family that ranked high in the county, but beneath the highest ranks of the state's tidewater elites. With roots in the colonial period, the family had acquired wealth and status over several generations and, by 1860, William Henry Chapman's father owned hundreds of acres of farmland, eleven slaves, and was "among the richest 1 percent" in the county (p. 11). Well educated at home and at the Mossy Creek Academy in Augusta County, Chapman attended the University of Virginia, where he won fame for his courage by putting out a fire

in the Rotunda. While his heroic action was a lasting contribution because it saved the school's signature building, the university also made a lasting mark on Chapman. There he imbibed deeply of states' rights ideology and proslavery and secessionist rhetoric. Chapman had attended the university for only two years when the Civil War began and he quickly volunteered for military service.

He joined the Southern Guard, a unit made up of ninety-nine students from the University of Virginia that began its training on the campus even before the state seceded from the Union. After this initial enlistment and service as an infantry private, Chapman joined the Dixie Artillery and, attached to General James Longstreet's division, fought in the first Battle of Bull Run (Manassas) and the Peninsular Campaign. By the time of the second Battle of Bull Run in August of 1862, he was a captain and commanded the battery. He fought well, winning praise and recognition for a timely barrage against advancing Union soldiers that helped turn the tide of the battle, but the Dixie Artillery had lost more than half of its men and was disbanded during General Robert E. Lee's reorganization of the army. After a period of service as a conscript officer, Chapman joined Mosby's cavalry unit of partisan rangers and was given command of Company C at the age of twenty-three. In the remaining two years of the war, Chapman rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel, becoming Mosby's trusted second in command, as the rangers fought in some of the large battles as well as raiding in the areas of northern Virginia controlled by Union forces.

Throughout his study of Chapman's military service, Bonan rightly relies heavily on the work of other scholars, as there are few primary sources related to the young officer himself. But this does not detract from the drama of good military history and readers will find all of the excitement and exploits of battle even as the author devotes space to broader coverage of campaigns and to stories of Mosby and his rangers. Still, Chapman's role is prominent and examined carefully. He seems to have been a good soldier and, although one cannot help but wonder if the author is biased in favor of his ancestor, Chapman's bravery, intelligence, and heroic deeds seem to be clearly established in the historical record. Military historians and Civil War buffs will find plenty of information about the deeds of Mosby's Rangers, including new interpretations of some of the battles in which they fought. Chapman's view of one fight, for example, exonerates a Federal cavalryman who was blamed for allowing Mosby to escape from a well-devised trap. Amid saber charges, maneuvers at night, and dramatic raids, the reader will also find discussion of camp life and the horrors and hardship of war.

After the defeat of the Confederacy, Chapman returned home a young man. Only twenty-five years old, he began the long struggle to rebuild his life in the wake of having fought on the losing side of the war. He tried his hand at farming and fathered children despite chronic poverty. Unable to make it on the land, he tried partnering with his brother to run a tavern, but that failed. He then worked as a postal clerk for a railway, which paid well enough but required him to be away from his family. Meanwhile, his old commander, John Mosby, had openly declared himself a Republican and built up a successful law practice. Chapman joined Mosby in becoming a Republican and his new political connections opened the door for him to become an agent for the Internal Revenue Service, a job he held until retirement. As a revenue agent, he enforced Federal laws, especially those related to tobacco and alcohol, and he stood as a visible symbol of Northern victory to bitter Southerners who resented him. Still, he eventually helped perpetuate the Lost Cause, as he wrote his memoirs, attended veterans' reunions, and blamed James Longstreet for losing the Battle of Gettysburg. Unlike John Mosby who eventually quit attending the reunions because he saw them as keeping old wounds open instead of healing them, Chapman "basked in the glory of the rangers" (p. 167), and seemed to be at his happiest at such gatherings where he remembered the war and his service to the Confederacy.

By the time of his death in 1929, Chapman had indeed lived a life of contradictions and the reader is persuaded by Bonan's argument in that regard. One wishes for more evidence of Chapman's motivation, but perhaps the author is right not to go beyond the evidence and speculate too much. Bonan does mention the role of honor, which was clearly manifested in the soldier's life and career. More worrisome is how he viewed the events of the postwar period which made up the bulk of his life. One longs for more explanation about how and why Chapman became a Republican, about his views of his work for the IRS, about reunion and reconciliation and the role of race in all of those matters. This is the weakest part of the book, which is a fine study of a Civil War soldier, but is less satisfying as a full biography of the man as a whole. To be sure, Bonan does point out flaws in his ancestor and clearly demonstrates a contradictory life. But more use of historical studies about the postwar period would have allowed the author to more persuasively make his case and, perhaps, answer more questions about Chapman while placing him in the complex context of the time.

Taken together, these two short books demonstrate the continuing vitality of Civil War biography. They show us how studies of more obscure figures can enlighten and intrigue even as they make contributions and raise more questions for further study. Phillips's study delves into the question of Southern identity while Bonan's work helps fill a gap in military history. Both books illustrate the importance of the postwar period and remind readers that the significance of the Civil War did not end in 1865 or even 1877. Indeed, the cultural memory of the war played a powerful role in the lives of both William Barclay Napton and William Henry Chapman. While more might be done with both of these figures, these two studies are fine examples of biography and should be read by historians of the Civil War and the South, and their brevity and readability make them good candidates for more general readers and possible adoption for classroom use.

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