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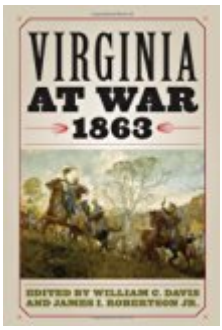

William C. Davis, James I. Robertson, eds.. *Virginia at War, 1863.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009. xii + 218 pp. $35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8131-2510-7.

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Commissioned by Matthew E. Mason (Brigham Young University)

In their third volume of the *Virginia at War* series, editors William C. Davis and James I. Robertson Jr. present a series of essays by fellow historians which reveal, through microstudies, the many fascinating aspects of Virginia's social fabric during 1863. The topics covered include the military actions in and around Virginia; the everyday lives of Virginia's youth; the work of the freedmen's missionary schools in southeastern Virginia; the gritty existence of the Virginia "Home Guards" in the rugged western mountains; the influence of civilian scrapbooking on the collective memory of the war; the pervasive, yet contradictory, role of religion; the distorted portrayal of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address by the Southern newspapers; and the intimate thoughts and experiences of a prominent Richmond lady and avid journal-writer. The collection enables readers to delve into the dynamic, everyday life of Virginians on both the home front and the battlefield. Furthermore, it provides a valuable lens into how the intertwining of these two spheres--the home and the battlefield--created such a complex and unique society in Virginia by (and after) 1863.

As the editors stress in their comprehensive introduction to the book, the essays included therein provide an excellent understanding of the human aspect of the Civil War and the far-reaching effects of particular events and individuals on the political, social, and religious spheres. The various contributors to this volume do a uniquely excellent job of highlighting how ***perspective*** and ***reality*** often clashed throughout the Civil War as participants and observers chose to remember and interpret specific events in vastly different ways. Additionally, the contributors clearly and vividly point out the vastly different experiences of Virginians from various geographic areas, religious backgrounds, ages, races, and literary backgrounds, reminding us that, even within one state in the Confederacy, there was no one standard experience of the war.

A . Wilson Greene's opening essay provides an excellent military overview of 1863, rooting

the reader in time and space as to the causes, significance, and ramifications of the 1863 battles in the context of the overall war. As the editors state in the introduction to the book, 1863 proved to be a relatively quiet year of battle for the Virginia home front, but still a significant one. By highlighting the major campaigns and players of 1863, Greene sets the stage nicely for the succeeding essays to elaborate upon how the conditions of life at home changed in response to the actions on the battlefield. Though detailed and well-organized, Greene's essay might have benefited from the use of geographical and troop movement maps to help guide the reader through more complicated campaigns such as Chancellorsville.

James Marten's work, which depicts Virginian children's experiences and the young adult's perspective on the war, flows nicely from Greene's essay. Marten notes how Virginian children were forced into maturity at a sometimes unsettlingly fast pace, due to the continuous sacrifices and suffering that the war compelled them to endure. In some cases, Marten writes, the immense suffering of children led to more lenient parenting by sympathetic mothers and fathers. Marten makes a valuable point by noting that, in many ways, Virginian children of the war era proved mirror images of their soldier fathers and "nurse angel" mothers, yet maintained the innocence, excitement, and dramatic flair of youth. However, his most important contribution to Civil War scholarship is his evaluation of the transformation of wartime Virginian youths into war-seasoned adults by 1865. Marten's assessment of children's experience of war offers a fascinating explanation for why the postwar generation of young adults ultimately created a unique society burdened by the memory of war and premature adulthood.

Benjamin Trask's essay on missionary teachers and freedpeople in southeastern Virginia adds to the picture the ever-present complexities of race relations and the "problem of the freedman" in Virginia during the height of the Civil War. Trask discusses the varying relationships between Northern missionary teachers and the freedpeople under their tutelage, as well as the evolution in black education and standards of living as a result of the help of those missionaries. However, in the vein of the new social history, Trask emphasizes, above all else, the role that blacks themselves played in pursuing an education and an independent lifestyle once out of bondage. While Trask's work adds to the larger picture of 1863 Virginia the important component of race relations and freedmen's experiences of war, and while his emphasis on black agency nicely complements recent trends in historiography, Trask's argument does not seem particularly new or groundbreaking. Additionally, Trask's essay might have been more compelling or thought-provoking if combined with a discussion of the ironies of free blacks ***relying*** on missionary aid and following the "white path" to independence while trying to ***escape*** from the grips of white paternalism that dominated Southern culture.

Taking the reader far away from southeastern Virginia and into the heart of the rugged western mountains, James Prichard delves deeply into the origins of the infamous postwar feuding between the Hatfield and McCoy families that has come to characterize this landscape. Through a detailed analysis of Anse Hatfield, "the Devil at large" himself, Prichard traces the origins of the later inter-family feud to the new "culture of violence" spawned in the mountains by civil war. Prichard identifies the Hatfield-McCoy feud as a direct outgrowth of civil war's guerilla warfare in the mountains, rather than as an incident-specific family dispute. In doing so, Prichard astutely highlights the effects of the Civil War on a particular region of Virginia and explains how methods of waging warfare, as used by "Home Guards" and guerillas during the war, ultimately changed the entire culture of home life in the mountains famously and forever. Though at times reading like a defense of the life of Anse Hatfield, Prichard's essay uses personal anecdotes about

Hatfield to combat myths about the "Devil at large" and to show that he was no more of an "individual devil" than were his peers who participated equally in the evolving culture of guerilla warfare. The unique focus of Prichard's essay, combined with his use of a "microstudy" of a singular personality and region to dissect and explain larger societal trends and the intertwining of the home front and the battle front during the Civil War, make Prichard's essay one of the strongest in the entire book.

Following Prichard with an assessment of the elements of "embattled" Virginian culture in 1863, David Rolfs provides an essay on the "wartime ordeal of Virginia's churches." Rolfs explains the power of religion within Southern culture as well as its use by politicians, soldiers, and civilians alike both to uphold the morale of the South and to explain and justify the Southern cause and the war's tragedies and triumphs. He astutely highlights the inherent contradictions in Southern religion through an explanation of how Virginians experienced and understood the war through the lens of religion-- simultaneously a source of hope, guidance, and regulation so that Virginians might know how to live and act "justly" in order to win the war, and yet also the supposedly divine force which preordained that Southerners, as a chosen people, ultimately would prove victorious in this "holy struggle." Emphasizing one of the major ironies of Southern culture, and a familiar frustration for General Robert E. Lee as he tried to discipline the Southern armies, Rolfs highlights a crucial and provocative element within the fabric of Virginia society as experienced by soldiers and civilians alike. Rolfs also provides an excellent example of the many ways in which Southern society unraveled both externally (on the battlefield) and internally (on the home front) at the same time due to the embattlement of seemingly unsustainable Southern ironies.

Likewise attempting to provide an intimate, introspective lens through which to assess both the individual and collective experiences of the war, William C. Davis follows Rolfs with a short essay about Virginians' hobby of scrapbooking during the Civil War. Though initially coming across as simplistic and obvious, upon thoughtful consideration, Davis's essay provides a valuable lesson in "perspectivist history"; that is, his work reminds readers how and why a significant amount of our knowledge of the war and Southern culture has been acquired and the memory of war, in fact, "manipulated" over time not only by scholars but by participants themselves. Davis's essay reads like a mini-guide to reading and interpreting historical events, cultural history, and historical memory. Davis does an excellent job of highlighting the ways in which witnesses to history have shaped historical memory and events merely by their choice of recollections of those events, a valuable lesson to any historian and certainly to any reader seeking to understand the complexities of perspective in interpreting the historical events discussed throughout this entire book.

In a beautiful transition from Davis's essay, Jared Peatman discusses Southern newspapers' recounting of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and analyzes the reasons for the South's (and even the nation's) contemporary misunderstanding of this important event. Peatman uses Davis's techniques of reading between the lines of his sources to separate reality from the papers' perspectives of the event. In doing so, he uncovers the reasons for the popular notion (initially just within the South) that Lincoln "acted the clown" at Gettysburg and that his so-called Gettysburg Address was a gigantic embarrassment and the product of last-minute preparation. Peatman argues that, due to both pure carelessness and misinformation, as well as to intentional "censoring" of Lincoln's actual address and the accounts of the dedication ceremony (in order to avoid discussions about revolutionary-era rhetoric that "all men are created equal" and about the Union's divine-sanctioning), the Southern newspapers grossly misrepresented

the actual events of November 19, 1863. Furthermore, Peatman wisely points out, the reason for this mass misrepresentation stems from other Southern newspapers' reliance on Richmond's newspapers (the first Southern papers to recount the event), rather than on primary witnesses themselves, to gather "facts" for their news stories about the war. Peatman reinforces Davis's point about the use and abuse--however conscious or unplanned--of historical memory.

In an appropriate concluding chapter, the editors insert portions of the journal of famed Richmond diarist Judith McGuire. This wise choice allows for readers to delve into the heart and soul of 1863 through the eyes of one of the era's most literarily vocal observers. McGuire's journal addresses nearly all of the themes addressed by the preceding essays, including battles, religion, children, race relations, evolving culture, and of course, the press and issues of private and public memory and experience of the war. This final section wraps up the book beautifully by providing a sort of synthesis of the preceding chapters, or, in other words, eyewitness "proof" of the factual grounding for those essays. However, McGuire's chapter also serves as a sort of "test" for readers to use both the content and interpretive "skills" they have learned from the previous chapters to internalize and sort, for themselves, reality from *perspective.*

Davis and Robertson have done an excellent job not only in selecting, but also in laying out, the essays in this volume of work. All of the contributors incorporate first-rate primary resources into their essays, and many provide extremely provocative explanations for the dynamism of Virginian culture in 1863. Additionally, many offer helpful and fascinating lenses into the minds of those who lived through and recorded that dynamism. For both the professional scholar and the history buff, *Virginia at War, 1863* contributes significantly to the interpretation of Virginia's overall experience of four years of war on both its battlefields and the home front.

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