Historian Amy Laurel Fluker’s *Commonwealth of Compromise* explores the complex history of Civil War commemoration in Missouri, a western border state that did not necessarily conform to Lost Cause, Unionist, or emancipationist narratives. Missouri’s Civil War generation included disparate groups—Union, Confederate, and African American—who competed and collaborated with one another to frame the meaning of the war and, in so doing, Fluker argues, contributed to a broad narrative of reconciliation.

Missouri’s unique situation as a geographically and culturally western state led to several “firsts” in the history of Civil War commemoration. In the contentious years after the war, black veterans from the 62nd and 65th regiments of the United States Colored Troops founded the Lincoln Institute in Jefferson City (now Lincoln University) to serve black Americans, the only institution of higher education founded by Civil War veterans of any color. Missouri became the first state to officially sponsor veterans’ homes for both Union and Confederate veterans. The Missouri division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) became the first of its kind in the West. The Department of Missouri’s pro-Union Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) and Women’s Relief Corps (WRC) ranked highest in membership among the border states.

Fluker describes Missouri as historically more western than southern, a middle ground, and a place of pragmatism and compromise. At the outset of the war, most Missourians stuck to their conservative Unionist principles. The Civil War galvanized the various interest groups that had converged in Missouri, however. Guerrilla-style fighting incessantly plagued the state during the war, and Missourians felt compelled to support Union occupation. Approximately thirty thousand Missourians eventually joined the Confederate army, according to Fluker, while about one hundred thousand, including eight thousand African Americans, enrolled with the Union (pp. 38-39).

After the war, the pro-Union GAR and WRC asserted Missouri’s loyalty to the Union cause in commemorations despite local Confederate resistance, as well as other northern states’ occasional dismissiveness. Although the veterans in the GAR aligned closely with the Radical Republican agenda between 1865 and 1868, demanding that ex-Confederates prove their loyalty before enfranchisement, radicalism did not square well with most white Missourians. After 1868, the GAR in Missouri continued to admit African American veterans while publicly promoting bipartisanship to recruit more white members.

African Americans remembered the Civil War both within and outside the GAR to promote “mu-
tual aid and racial uplift,” Fluker writes (p. 73). As manifested in Emancipation Day celebrations in Missouri—illustrious and often well-attended events organized annually on January 1, January 11, April 16, or most often on August 1—African Americans connected the cause of the war to the abolition of slavery, political equality, access to education, and race pride. Fluker points out that the black veteran-founded Lincoln Institute itself “represented Missouri’s Emancipationist Cause more than any oration, parade, or monument” (p. 80). With funding from the Freedmen's Bureau and the state legislature in 1870, the Lincoln Institute became an important training school for black teachers.

Devoting equal attention to Missouri’s most significant strands of Civil War memory, Fluker next traces the fraught efforts of the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) and UDC to promote Confederate memory in a loyal border state with determined Unionists and a grisly history of guerrilla violence. Confederate organizations in Missouri never received enrollments nearly as high as their pro-Union counterparts. They promoted the Lost Cause narrative in pro-Confederate histories, featuring newly branded Confederate heroes, such as Jo Shelby and William Clarke Quantrill. They also promoted monuments honoring Confederate soldiers in Missouri parks. After a decade-long dispute over the erection of a pro-Confederate monument in St. Louis, a staunchly pro-Union city, the committee finally permitted a monument in Forest Park broadly honoring soldiers on the Confederate side; the inscription more than the iconography on the monument “reified the Lost Cause,” Fluker writes (p. 120). As Fluker points out in the epilogue, Missourians remain as conflicted as ever over Civil War memory. In June 2017, in the wake of Black Lives Matter demonstrations in St. Louis, authorities elected to move the Confederate monument from Forest Park to a museum.

Fluker explains the varied attempts of Union and Confederate veterans in Missouri to cooperate on commemorations and thus build a framework for reconciliation. While debates over monuments in public parks remained heated, cemeteries were a different matter; veterans representing both sides worked to incorporate the burial of ex-Confederate soldiers into the Springfield National Cemetery, for example. Fluker documents the rise of “Blue and Gray” societies in Kansas City and St. Louis, such as the Old Soldiers’ Association. The Vicksburg National Military Park featured a monument to both Union and Confederate soldiers. Most remarkably, in Fluker’s estimation, Missouri became the first state to fund both Union and Confederate veterans’ homes in 1897. These facilities served as “part nursing home and part shrine,” Fluker writes (p. 161). Fluker acknowledges the limits of reconciliation, however, pointing out that Unionism and racism often coexisted and that turn-of-the-twentieth-century nationalism and imperialism contributed to the push for the reconciliation of white men especially. In barring African Americans, both the Missouri Confederate Home and the Federal Soldiers’ Home worked toward reconciliation “by privileging the status of white veterans” (p. 12).

After the Civil War, various groups remembered the conflict in ways that complemented their regional identities, promoted their preexisting values, and served their own interests. Fluker’s book shows how Missouri’s unique regional identity has shaped the ways Missourians have remembered the Civil War.
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