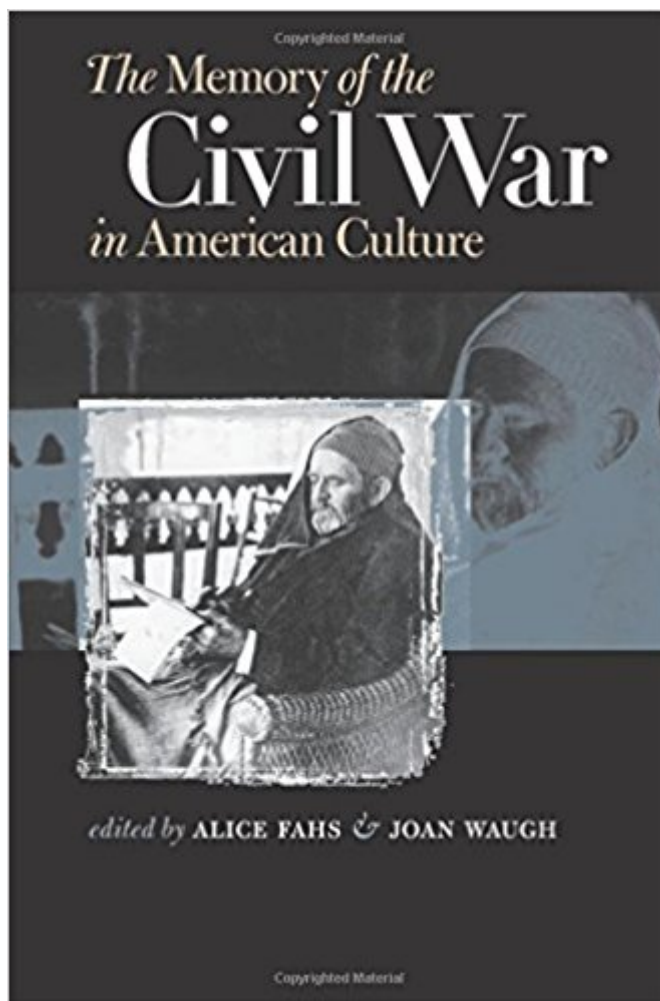


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The Memory Of The Civil War In American Culture (Civil War America)



Synopsis

The Civil War retains a powerful hold on the American imagination, with each generation since 1865 reassessing its meaning and importance in American life. This volume collects twelve essays by leading Civil War scholars who demonstrate how the meanings of the Civil War have changed over time. The essays move among a variety of cultural and political arenas--from public monuments to parades to political campaigns; from soldiers' memoirs to textbook publishing to children's literature--in order to reveal important changes in how the memory of the Civil War has been employed in American life. Setting the politics of Civil War memory within a wide social and cultural landscape, this volume recovers not only the meanings of the war in various eras, but also the specific processes by which those meanings have been created. By recounting the battles over the memory of the war during the last 140 years, the contributors offer important insights about our identities as individuals and as a nation. Contributors: David W. Blight, Yale University Thomas J. Brown, University of South Carolina Alice Fahs, University of California, Irvine Gary W. Gallagher, University of Virginia J. Matthew Gallman, University of Florida Patrick J. Kelly, University of Texas, San Antonio Stuart McConnell, Pitzer College James M. McPherson, Princeton University Joan Waugh, University of California, Los Angeles LeeAnn Whites, University of Missouri Jon Wiener, University of California, Irvine

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Customer Reviews

"A valuable new contribution. . . . Provides new insight." *#151; "H-Net Reviews"

Those curious about the war's larger place in American history and its continuing relevance will find here much to ponder.--Civil War NewsThis is a great collection of essays, all of which speak to the powerful and ongoing hold the Civil War has had, and continues to have, on the American imagination.--Nina Silber, Boston University The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture is an excellent distillation of . . . scholarship, a kind of greatest hits collection that brings together a distinguished collection of middle period historians who perform characteristic riffs in a genre that they play with ease, skill, and insight. . . . It is hard to imagine a better distillation, even summation, of the study of the memory.--Journal of American HistoryA valuable new contribution. . . . Provides new insight.--H-Net Reviews

This is a useful collection of essays on shaping in popular culture the memory of the meaning the Civil War. In some ways this book is more topical than when published in 2004. That is particularly true of James McPherson's essay "Long-Legged Yankee Lies: The Southern Textbook Crusade" which has continuing echoes in battles over Texas schoolbook selection and LeeAnn Whites' "You Can't Change History by Moving a Rock: Gender, Race, and the Cultural Politics off Confederate Memorialization." That essay focuses on statuary and displaying the rebel flag in Boone County, Missouri and the University of Missouri where charges of racism continue to roil the campus. There are several other strong essays. "Ulysses S. Grant, Historian" by Joan Waugh points to her later monograph on Grant's image and is an early example of the ongoing positive revision of his reputation. Alice Fahs "Remembering the Civil War in Children's Literature in the 1880s and 1890s" although somewhat mis-titled contrasts the Union centric children's novels of the 1860s to the more ambivalent national reconciliation approach that dominated late 19th century children's books. "Shaping Public Memory of the Civil War: Robert E. Lee, Jubal A. Early, and Douglas Southall Freeman" by Gary Gallagher is a fair-minded reappraisal of the preeminent proponent of the heroic Southern narrative school of Civil War military history. David Blight's "Decoration Days: The Origins of Memorial Day in North and South" is an adaptation of Chapter 3 "Decoration Days" in his pathbreaking book "Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory" (2001). Blight's excellent essays on Bruce Catton and and Robert Penn Warren in his later book "American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era" (2011) develop themes Jon Wiener sketched in "Civil War, Cold War, Civil Rights: The Civil War Centennial in Context, 1960-1965.

Excellent collection of essays discussing the Civil War in American memory - at times, much different from actuality. Joan Waugh's essay on Grant as historian is worth the price alone.

This work starts out strong, with two very solid essays. The following material -- most of the first half of the book is nearly equally as good. McPherson, Whites, Gallagher and Waugh wrote the strongest essays. Blight's essay was a slower, cumbersome read. Brown's essay seemed a bit out of place, and I didn't care for it. But overall, an excellent book. Its strength lies in the variety of material presented, as essayists contribute perspectives on different issues. Other readers may like or dislike various parts, but I think many will appreciate the overall package.

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