

More often than not, misstatements and ellipses work to dead-cat the "fanatics" of the North: that is, any Republican editor. Some passages, such as the coverage of the caning of Sumner, are almost indecent in what is stressed and what is left unsaid. Other parts, such as the plea that the Kansas-Nebraska Act was a "compromise" to settle a mounting storm over slavery in the territories, suggest an irrepressible conflict between this book and historical fact. Most unforgivably, when dealing with such a fun topic, this book gives journalism, the liveliest American art, a deadening uniformity. Slack in research, slim in length, *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters* could have used a little fanaticism itself.

An Uncommon Time: The Civil War and the Northern Home Front, edited by Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller. The North's Civil War Series. New York: Fordham University Press, 2002. xx, 362 pp. Tables, notes, index. \$45.00 cloth.

Reviewer Donald C. Elder III is professor of history at Eastern New Mexico University. He edited *Love Amid Turmoil: The Civil War Letters of William and Mary Vermilion* (2003).

During the Second World War, American citizens thought to be shirking their patriotic duties were often met with the sarcastic question, "Don't you know there's a war on?" As the essays found in *An Uncommon Time* make clear, few individuals living in the loyal states during the Civil War would have needed to be similarly reminded of the conflict that had engulfed the nation. Taking their cue from Maris Vinovskis's admonition in 1990 that historians need to study the effects of that war on northern society, Paul Cimbala and Randall Miller have gathered works that cover a broad range of topics relating to that subject. Although a book of this sort cannot fully cover the northern home front, it does bring the overall picture into clearer focus.

The 12 essays contained in *An Uncommon Time* represent an interesting mixture of approaches taken to gain a greater understanding of the civilians' war. Melinda Lawson and Michael Conlin, for example, chose to examine one individual in relation to the conflict. Lawson selected Jay Cooke as her focus, exploring how he used his financial acumen to help the Lincoln administration successfully market war bonds. She finds that Cooke was no Haym Salomon, who risked his personal fortune to help finance the American cause during the Revolutionary War; rather, Cooke managed the bond drive to improve his own economic standing. Joseph Henry, the first secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, is Conlin's subject. He discusses Henry's efforts to preserve his vision of the Smithsonian as a bastion of pure scientific

inquiry even as the demands of the government forced him to work on more practical wartime applications.

Taking a different approach, Bryon Andreassen and Peter Parish selected religion as their focus. Andreassen suggests that dissent during the conflict was not suppressed solely by government agencies; rather, churches in three midwestern states disciplined clergy opposed to the war for their views. Parish discusses how clergy in the North, imbued with the traditional American sense of mission, proved overwhelmingly resolute in their support of the effort to preserve the Union.

Earl Hess and Alice Fahs examined Civil War media. Hess, agreeing with Ambrose Bierce's suggestion that the truth about combat during the conflict would never be written, argues that writers and photographers could capture the essence of the war in only the most general terms. Fahs finds that sensational literature of the time offered stories of women and African Americans actively engaged in aiding the Union war effort. This, she contends, broadens the accepted picture of support on the home front.

In light of the importance of the topic, it is understandable that four essays deal with political considerations during the conflict. Michael Green, Adam Smith, Rachel Seidman, and John Syrett examine that subject from varying points of view, ranging from the wartime confiscation acts to the manner in which the war shaped the perspective of northern women regarding their rights as citizens. All four help place the subject into a broader context.

Finally, two essays view postwar developments that resulted from the conflict. Lex Renda looks at Connecticut's unsuccessful efforts to pass a black suffrage amendment before, during, and after the Civil War. Kyle Sinisi takes as his focus the battle fought by Kentucky to be recompensed by the federal government for expenditures during the war. He argues that the struggle illustrates that state activism within the federal system began earlier than has been previously recognized.

If Cimbala and Miller hoped to present a collection of essays that will challenge the reader's conceptualization of the war in the North, they have succeeded admirably. My only complaint with the book is that it is heavily skewed in favor of the Northeast. Even those essays that mention the Midwest, except Andreassen's, generally give the region short shrift. One essay does specifically look at Iowa: in his treatment of black suffrage in Connecticut, Renda does draw a comparison with the Hawkeye State, though he devotes only slightly more than two pages to the effort. Perhaps betraying my midwestern origins, I would like to see historians give northerners from that region more attention.

This complaint should in no way detract from the value of *An Uncommon Time*. The essays are well written and thoroughly researched. If nothing else, the 12 essays show us that northerners were reminded in a myriad of ways during the conflict that there was indeed "a war on."

A Great Plains Reader, edited by Diane D. Quantic and P. Jane Hafen. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003. xxii, 730 pp. Notes, index. \$70.00 cloth, \$35.00 paper.

Reviewer Amanda Rees is visiting assistant professor of geography and recreation at the University of Wyoming. Her dissertation was "Envisioning the Great Plains: Contemporary Narratives of the Landscape" (University of Kansas, 1998).

You know a book is useful when you employ it in your classroom before you've finished reviewing it. *A Great Plains Reader* is such a text. The editors' aim of exploring historical and contemporary Great Plains experience through regional authors and authors who write about the region is well met. Divided into five sections and an epilogue, the text explores the Lay of the Land, New Comers, Arriving and Settling In, Adapting to a New Country, and Great Plains Community. The editors thoughtfully introduce each author and suggest further readings. They mix classic Plains writers (Hamlin Garland, Mari Sandoz, and Black Elk), with recent writers (Kathleen Norris, Wes Jackson, and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn). Although the Plains core is defined as Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, southern Alberta, and Saskatchewan, the text does occasionally stray into more typical midwestern territory, including Minnesota and Iowa.

Four dominant themes thread through the text: the environment, regional in-migration, ethnicity, and survival. The editors missed a potential fifth theme: out-migration. The lack of migrant voices—people who choose this region but, due to environmental and economic hardship, leave—creates a deep and silent pool. Whether it is the late 1880s, 1930s, or the present day, out-migration profoundly shapes the Plains, from the material culture of abandoned homesteads to their untold stories swirling around each derelict building. Because of the often unique challenges this region presents its inhabitants, out-migration is a critical regional component. With that caveat noted, this text remains a rich, extensive, moving, and much needed collection of Plains voices.

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