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Letter From the Editor

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Letter From the Editor

■ During the summer of 2009, I had a series of conversations with Dr. Michael J. Birkner, who was then commencing his tenure as Interim Director of the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College. One of our conversations dealt with the lack of an undergraduate journal focusing on the field of Civil War Era Studies. We agreed that this void could be easily addressed. Over the course of the subsequent months, we drew up a proposal for a journal, gathered a group of dedicated students to serve on the editorial board, drafted and disseminated a call for papers, and waited to observe the response. It is pleasing to note that we received about thirty submissions from students at different colleges and universities. With such a large field of submissions, we were able to cull out the best submissions. That is and will continue to be the goal of this journal: to solicit and showcase the most compelling work in the field of Civil War Era Studies by undergraduate and recently graduated students.

The four papers selected for this volume treat a variety of topics. Kristilyn Baldwin, in *The Visual Documentation of Antietam: Peaceful Settings, Morbid Curiosity, and a Profitable Business*, offers a thoughtful consideration of the how people documented war. By focusing on Alexander Gardner and the photographs he took in the wake of the battle of Antietam, Baldwin offers a critical perspective on the uses of photography and sketches to document the aftermath of the terrible and bloody battle of Antietam. Ashley Whitehead,

in *"A Debt of Honor": The Hegemonic Benevolence of Richmond's Female Elites at the "Last Confederate Christmas" of 1864*, analyzes the 1864 Christmas celebration in Richmond. Whitehead considers the role of the social elites of Richmond and how they used the Christmas celebration to maintain their leadership positions. Annie Powers examines the conflict between Congressmen Francis Cutting and John C. Breckenridge in *An Altercation Full of Meaning: The Duel between Francis B. Cutting and John C. Breckinridge*. Powers also describes how the conflict between the two men was part of a culture of violence influenced by the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Finally, in *"The Fall of a Sparrow": The (Un)timely Death of Elmer Ellsworth and the Coming of the Civil War*, Adam Q. Stauffer offers his perspective on the life and death of Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, his connections with Abraham Lincoln, and his death in the early weeks of the Civil War. Stauffer considers the reactions to Ellsworth's death in the North and the South and connects Ellsworth to the culture of death during the Civil War.

It is my hope that this journal, in addition to being a vehicle to showcase the best student work concerning the Civil War Era, will also be a resource for both students and professors. With that, I now present the inaugural issue of *The Gettysburg College Journal of the Civil War Era*.

Evan Rothera
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May 10, 2010