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6-1-2012

Review of *The Won Cause: Black and White  
Comradeship in the Grand Army of the Republic*

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Published version. *Journal of the Civil War Era*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (June, 2012): 279-281. DOI. © 2012  
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contribution to scholarship and an accessible introduction to the subject for college students and a wider public.

*Adam Fairclough*

NOTES

1. Ronald E. Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1980).

ADAM FAIRCLOUGH, Raymond and Beverly Sackler Professor of American History at Leiden University, is the author of *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South* (Belknap Press, 2007).

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***The Won Cause: Black and White Comradeship in the Grand Army of the Republic.*** By Barbara A. Gannon. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011. Pp. 282. Cloth, \$39.95.)

There were well over 1 million white and nearly 200,000 black veterans of the armies that saved the Union. Oddly, considering the long rows of bookcases filled with accounts of their exploits and suffering as *soldiers*, relatively little has been written about them as *veterans*. Studies of those few years in their youth when they were famously touched by fire far outnumber books covering the long decades that followed. And those historians who have examined the experiences of veterans have segregated their subjects nearly as completely as the armies in which they served. Historians such as Stuart McConnell and the writer of this review have explored white veterans, while Donald Shaffer and others have begun to examine black veterans. By painstakingly seeking out evidence of integrated Grand Army of the Republic posts not only in far-flung GAR records but also in black newspapers and other sources, Barbara Gannon provides a wonderful service to the field.

At one level, the purpose of this book is fairly simple. "Black and white veterans were able to create and sustain an interracial organization in a society rigidly divided on the color line," Gannon says of the GAR, "because the northerners who fought and lived remembered African Americans' service in a war against slavery" (5). Although Gannon places her book in the context of historical memory, she avoids at least some direct comparison with David Blight's *Race and Reunion* (2001) by focusing on the personal memories of the men she studies: the way individuals or small groups of men remembered specific actions and experiences. It is worth

noting that most of the GAR posts mentioned in this book were formed after Reconstruction and most of the comradeship it describes took place while the country slid into the tragic “nadir” period of race relations.

In addition to providing a nuanced analysis of the role of race in the GAR, Gannon provides fascinating accounts of posts’ week-to-week functioning, ranging from the public entertainments they sponsored, to the elaborate processes and rituals central to the fraternal tone of the organization, to their charitable activities. A very real contribution is her discovery of the work of African American auxiliary organizations; we know much more about how southern white women promoted war memories than about how northern women did, but this book provides a useful, if preliminary, corrective to that lacuna.

Black and white veterans in integrated posts linked emancipation with reunion. Gannon’s book is not so much a corrective to Blight’s bittersweet chronology of memory and forgetfulness than it is a reminder that it is too easy to overlook interpretations that lie below the featured narrative of any period or place. In another nod toward Blight, Gannon argues that the most important link between white and black GAR members was their common recognition that they had all made sacrifices, endured hardships, and risked lives in the name of a cause. Those shared experiences drew them together in ways that transcended race. Of course, that same set of experiences, as Blight and others have shown, also led to a deep if at times problematic sense of comradeship with Confederate veterans, which undermined the emancipationist vision of the war that was eventually relegated to the African American community. Ironically, the shared experiences in camp and combat that could have brought together all three groups—white northern, white southern, and African American veterans—were actually trumped by race.

As this bias shows, there were limits to comradeship. African Americans were rarely elected to the most important positions in GAR posts, although they were often chosen to become delegates to state or national encampments or named “color bearers,” a post with little responsibility but a great deal of honor attached to it. White members rarely supported African Americans’ advocacy of civil rights or of federal action against lynching. Whites separated emancipation—which Gannon argues they believed to be one of the great outcomes of the war—from notions of racial equality or justice. This fine distinction between freeing slaves and accepting them as social and political equals—not just in GAR halls but in the larger political arena—suggests that the term “comradeship” needs to be defined a little more carefully.

Despite Gannon's exhaustive research, most of her evidence is anecdotal. Gannon has identified over 450 integrated posts, but because of the GAR's official color-blindness, she is usually unable to determine if a post had three black members or thirty. In addition, although Gannon devotes a few pages to the pension issue, she could have linked that issue more closely to the political priorities and choices of white veterans. Rather than spending their substantial political capital on issues important to their black colleagues but less clearly supported by their white comrades, white veterans chose to focus on the less controversial (at least to them) movement to expand the pension system rather than on civil rights and antilynching legislation. Finally, it would also have been useful to have some idea if any of the myriad other veterans' organizations—the Union Veterans Union, for instance, or the societies formed by individual units or by special groups (military telegraphers and prisoners of war, to name just two)—dealt with race in any way.

Despite these small concerns, *The Won Cause* is a unique and important contribution to the slowly growing literature on Civil War veterans and will help inspire historians to take closer looks at the ways that veterans and their communities responded to the decades following the war.

*James Marten*

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JAMES MARTEN, professor of history and department chair at Marquette University, is the author of *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

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***Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America.*** By James Marten. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011. Pp. 352. Cloth, \$39.95.)

In 1892, Sarah Orne Jewett penned a short story for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* that surely resonated with many Civil War veterans. Jewett's tale opens with three old soldiers discussing the mundane aspects of weather and crops. But soon their conversation drifts to the community's apparent apathy toward the upcoming Memorial Day. Reflecting on the day meant to honor the cause for which they had sacrificed so much, they recounted brothers and friends who died in the war, another who had never been able to fit back in his community and turned instead to the bottle, and yet others who now slumbered in the paupers'