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Book Review: Virginia at War: 1865

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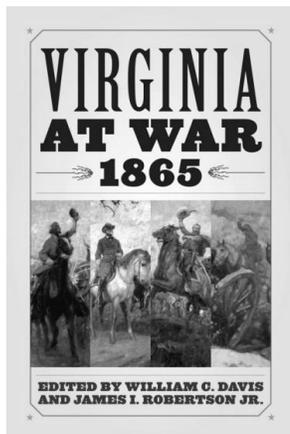
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BOOK REVIEWS

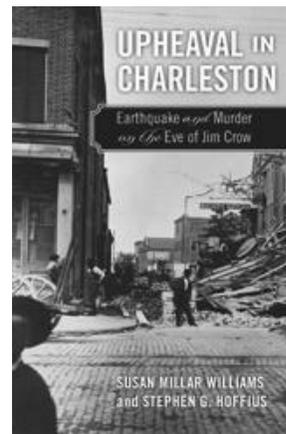


Davis, William C. and James I. Robertson, Jr., eds. *Virginia at War: 1865*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0813134680. \$40.00, hardcover.

This book is the fifth and final volume of the well-received series published by the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies. Each volume in the Virginia at War series focuses on exactly one year in the state of Virginia during the American Civil War. Essays by contributors to each volume cover a wide range of social and military topics. A reprinted selection from the diary of Judith Brockenbrough McGuire, who was a resident of Virginia during this time period, is also included as the final chapter of each book in the series. The primary source diary selections provide an eyewitness perspective on everyday life during the featured year and are edited with helpful notes to illuminate the text for modern readers by James I. Robertson, Jr.

Edited by William C. Davis, director of programs at the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies and James I. Robertson Jr., Alumni Distinguished Professor of History at Virginia Tech, the final volume in this series includes essays on: land operations in Virginia by Chris Calkins, women and families on the home front by Ginette Aley, Virginia's wartime economy by Jamie Amanda Martinez, wartime music and entertainment by E. Lawrence Abel, the city of Danville by F. Lawrence McFall, Jr., the demobilization of Lee's army by Kevin Levin, Afro-Virginians and the emancipation by Elvin L. Jordan, Jr., and the aftermath of the war by John M. McClure. Together, these essays provide a broad overview of the many different aspects of daily life in Virginia at the war's end. Libraries which already own previous volumes in this series will want this final volume to complete their collection, and although the work can easily stand on its own, libraries with larger collections in Civil War history or the history of Virginia may want to consider purchasing the entire series as well.

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Williams, Susan & Stephen Hoffius. *Upheaval in Charleston: Earthquake & Murder on the Eve of Jim Crow*. University of Georgia Press, 2011. 392 p. ISBN 978-0820337159. \$29.95 hardcover.

In August 1886, a huge earthquake centered in Charleston, South Carolina hit the east coast of the United States. Charleston's buildings and historic architecture took a severe battering from the earthquake, but things became even more difficult for the residents of Charleston. The earthquake couldn't have come at a worse time. Charleston was experiencing the dismal economic effects of Reconstruction, and whites and blacks were still trying to figure out how to live without war and slave labor. Now they had to figure out how to rebuild their city.

Upheaval in Charleston tells the fascinating story of how the people of Charleston went about rebuilding their city, but it covers several other important aspects of late 19th Century America. Two of the biggest issues of the day were race relations and labor. White laborers resented increased competition while black Americans resented the constant political ploys to strip them of their civil rights, especially the right to vote. The events of 1886 would go a long way in forecasting the political battles faster than anyone thought possible.

This is also the story of Frank Dawson, the editor of Charleston's *News & Courier*, the influential local newspaper. Dawson plays a big part of this story since he helped coordinate relief efforts and used his position as editor of a popular newspaper to drum up support for the city. But he was an interesting contradiction. A native of England, he was inspired by the Confederate's struggle, and he moved to the United States to take up arms for The South. After the war, he ended up purchasing the *News & Courier*, but still struggled with acceptance within some circles in Charleston. Dawson realized he had a certain degree of power in shaping politics and the message that went out about the disaster. He maneuvered through his contacts intelligently with the sole purpose of getting