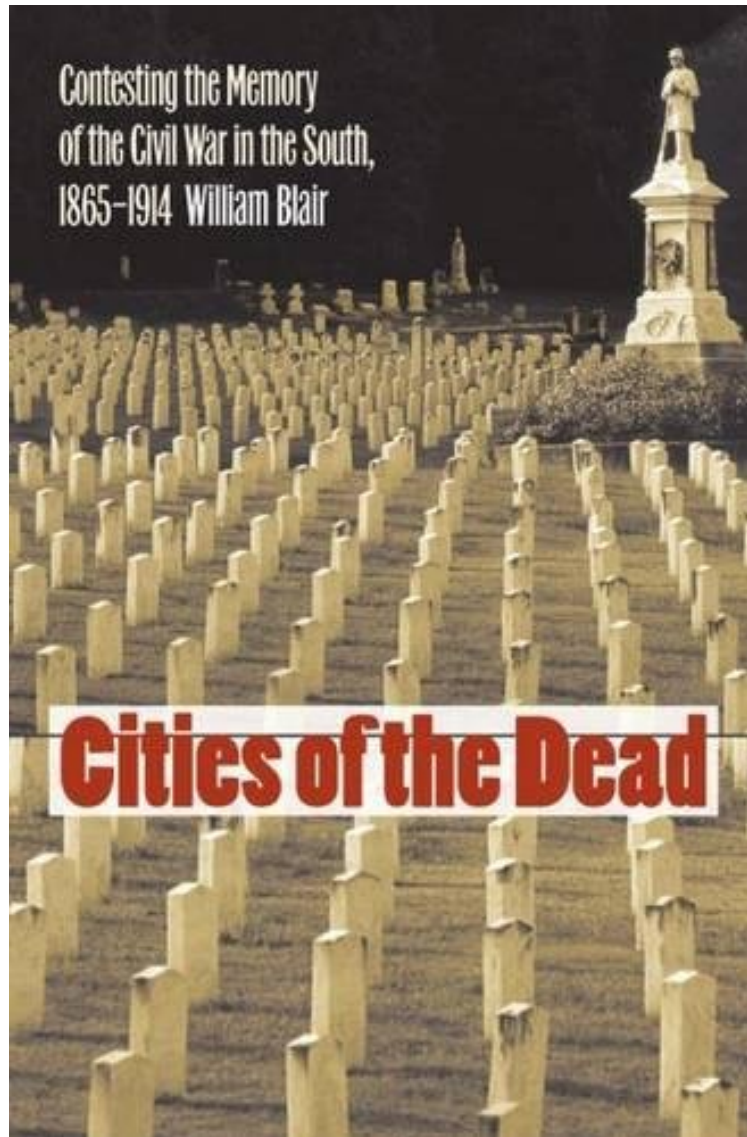


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Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914 (Civil War America)

William A. Blair

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William A. Blair : Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914 (Civil War America) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914 (Civil War America):

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A MUST read for those with interest in the Civil War--By MBCWhile Civil War buffs typically read about the subject for its military bent, this book is highly recommended for its explanation of how the Civil War became defined among the American populace in the years after the war, especially in the South. If you're looking to understand the Lost Cause whether you believe in its precepts or not, this is a must read.

Exploring the history of Civil War commemorations from both sides of the color line, William Blair places the development of memorial holidays, Emancipation Day celebrations, and other remembrances in the context of Reconstruction politics and race relations in the South. His grassroots examination of these civic rituals demonstrates that the politics of commemoration remained far more contentious than has been previously acknowledged. Commemorations by ex-Confederates were intended at first to maintain a separate identity from the U.S. government, Blair argues, not as a vehicle for promoting sectional healing. The burial grounds of fallen heroes, known as Cities of the Dead, often became contested ground, especially for Confederate women who were opposed to Reconstruction. And until the turn of the century, African Americans used freedom celebrations to lobby for greater political power and tried to create a national holiday to recognize emancipation. Blair's analysis shows that some festive occasions that we celebrate even today have a divisive and sometimes violent past as various groups with conflicting political agendas attempted to define the meaning of the Civil War.

A book worth reading, especially for those interested in questions of memory and commemoration." --American Historical Provocative. . . . A sophisticated and nuanced analysis.--Arkansas Historical Quarterly Readers who want to think about the broader aspects of the 1860s and those interested in current controversies over such Civil War-related matters as 'Dixie' and the Confederate flag will profit greatly from Blair's book.--Civil War NewsAlthough a number of scholars have been interested in the issue of postwar reunion and reconciliation, much of this work fails to fully explore the political content of these commemorations, and so often misses the political battles that may have lain behind these events. Because there were significant changes in this process over an extended period of time, Blair's book-length analysis is welcome. One of the book's strongest contributions is the consideration of black emancipation day celebrations and the illumination of black politics that often lay behind these events. Cities of the Dead will be important for scholars studying southern history and Civil War memory.--Nina Silber, Boston University Blair does an excellent job of tracing the subtleties of political discourse. . . . [Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914] reminds us that politics cannot be extricated from the tangle of memory, commemoration, and reunion in the post-Civil War South.--Civil War History[An] excellent study. . . . [Blair] effectively highlights African American political struggle through the creation and use of public commemorative events.--Journal of African American HistoryThe more clearly we understand how commemorative activities have functioned in the past to influence political outcomes, the more effective we can be in the present. William Blair deserves credit for a fine effort in this direction.--H-SouthThat southerners would feel compelled to commemorate the Civil War was inevitable, but the form and content of their commemorations was not. Blair has written a fascinating and deeply researched account of the commemorative impulse in the postbellum South when the first 'culture wars' flared up. He reveals the grief, pride, and pluck that southerners, black and white, displayed as they tried to impose order on their region's recent past.--W. Fitzhugh Brundage, author of Where These Memories GrowCities of the Dead ranks Blair among a growing group of scholars studying memory and the Civil War. [His] genius lies in his carefully reasoned explanations, of how and why these celebrations carried political meaning in particular historical moments.--Civil War Book Commemoration in the postwar South is an intriguing topic that has been neglected until now.--Virginia Magazine of History and BiographyBlair has produced a worthy exploration of the evolution of Emancipation Day and Memorial Day celebrations in post-Civil War Virginia.--Virginia LibrariesFrom the Inside FlapBlair examines Civil War commemorations of blacks and whites and shows how arguments over how the war would be remembered and memorialized were part of a larger competition over how society would be structured and power exercised.