Summer 2016 Conference Updates

"Reconstruction and the Legacy of the War"

Space is still available for the June 2016 conference (June 17-June 22), but is filling quickly!

Despite the fact that media outlets have already proclaimed the end of the sesquicentennial with retrospectives on the anniversary, at the Civil War Institute, the commemoration continues. There is no one date that definitively marks the end of the war, and ending anniversary commemorations in 2015 obscures the close linkages between the conflict and its aftermath. For that reason, CWI’s chronological march through the war will continue in 2016 with Reconstruction & the Legacy of the War.

With more than 300 current registrants and a faculty of nearly 50 professional historians, the 2016 Civil War Institute Summer Conference promises to be an exciting and educational week! Attendees will gain close access to our faculty in small classroom sessions on Reconstruction and dine-in discussions over daily meals. In addition to our standard lectures, the conference will also utilize a new presentation format that fosters on-stage discussion amongst several panelists about a specific topic. Conference attendees will have the opportunity to break out of the classroom during two days devoted to battlefield tours, in which participants will not only look at the Gettysburg battlefield through the eyes of individual soldiers who fought here, but will also examine the battlefield as a facet of historical memory and as a training ground for future military personnel.

We have been working all year to create a distinctive and exciting program for all of our attendees. If you haven't already registered, please consider joining the CWI staff and 300 fellow Civil War enthusiasts this June!

Register here!
Summer Conference Scholarship Program: Applications Due February 15

Interested in spending five days in Gettysburg exploring the Civil War through small group discussions, battlefield tours, and lectures? Scholarships are now available for high school students, K-12 teachers, and public historians to attend the 2016 CWI Summer Conference. All scholarships include an air-conditioned dorm room, meals for the duration of the conference, tours, and tuition fees. Applications are due FEBRUARY 15; click here for more information.

High School Scholarship program coordinators Peter Vermilyea and Jared Peatman have worked with CWI staff to assemble an exciting lineup for 2016 high school scholarship recipients. In addition to participating in lecture sessions, tours, and panel discussions, scholarship recipients will receive special tours of the battlefield, engage in a historical simulation activity, and meet in small group sessions with leading historians serving on the Institute faculty.
High school student scholarship recipients pose for a photo in front of the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond, VA with NPS Ranger Ashley Luskey during a tour of the Confederate capital, part of an overnight excursion during the June, 2015 CWI Summer Conference.

Curious about the scholarship program experience? 2015 alumnus Emily Timberlake has this to say:

“When I first heard about the Civil War Institute’s Summer Conference and its scholarship program for high school students, I was a senior in high school dead set on becoming a Civil War historian. I had no idea how to go about achieving that goal yet, although I had already been accepted to attend Gettysburg College in the fall, which seemed like a good first step. I applied rather last minute for the program, and the fact that I was so generously awarded a scholarship to attend has made all the difference in my college experience. The summer conference is most easily described as an amazing, eye-opening experience that allowed me to bond closely with Civil War enthusiasts my own age. Each program we attended was intriguing, and offered angles on either familiar or unfamiliar subjects that I had never considered before. It was such a rewarding experience to meet historians I had looked up to for so long, discuss both their writing and my questions about their ideas, and do it all on the campus of my new school. All of the scholarship students quickly bonded, as we were some of the youngest people attending the conference and we all had a similar passion for Civil War history.”

Read more about Emily’s experience [here](#).
Recipients of the Public Historians Scholarship pause for a "selfie" with some Gettysburg students at the CWI Summer Conference in June, 2015

**Interested in contributing to the annual scholarship fund?** Through the generous donations of attendees and friends, we were able to sponsor 13 high school students to attend the 2015 CWI conference. The recipients of these scholarships came to us from as far away as Alabama and Oregon. Many former scholarship recipients have gone on to pursue careers in history; program alums are now working as college professors, museum professionals, National Park Service rangers, authors, and K-12 teachers.

We would like to guarantee scholarships for 2016, and, in order to achieve this goal, we need your support. A full annual scholarship, which includes room, board and tuition, averages $960.00, but donations may be made in any amount.

To donate to the annual scholarship fund, please send a check to:

Civil War Institute  
Gettysburg College  
300 N. Washington St. ~Campus Box 435  
Gettysburg, PA 17325

or contact the Institute at civilwar@gettysburg.edu or 717.337.6590 for more information about donating.
Over the course of this year, we will be interviewing some of the historians scheduled to speak at the 2016 CWI conference about their upcoming talks and their thoughts about Reconstruction and its legacies. We recently interviewed Brooks Simpson, ASU Foundation Professor of History at Arizona State University. His numerous publications include: The Reconstruction Presidents (University Press of Kansas, 2009), Union and Emancipation: Essays on Politics and Race in the Civil War Era (Kent State University Press, 2009, a volume co-edited with David Blight), The Civil War in the East, 1861-1865 (Potomac Books, 2013), and The Civil War: The Third Year Told by Those Who Lived It, an edited volume published in 2013 by the Library of America. He also maintains the blog Crossroads.

CWI: What were Ulysses S. Grant’s goals for the newly reunited nation during the Reconstruction period? How did his vision for postwar America evolve over time?

DR. SIMPSON: Grant sought to balance sectional reconciliation and reunion among whites with protecting the freedpeople in the aftermath of the destruction of slavery. Over time, he came to realize that African Americans needed protection and assistance as they defined what freedom meant, adding political rights (including suffrage) to the need to secure equality before the law regardless of race. Grant contended that reconciliation did not require the acceptance of continued rebellious behavior. Furthermore, he believed that the continued resistance to Reconstruction by those people in the North who had not wholeheartedly supported the war effort should not be tolerated. Grant never doubted the cause for which he fought and saw no reason to apologize for or tolerate criticisms of the Union war effort.

CWI: What role did Grant play, both before and during his presidency, in helping to realize his visions for postwar America? In what ways was he successful, and in what ways did he fall short?

DR. SIMPSON: As general-in-chief of the armies of the United States during the administration of Andrew Johnson, Grant supervised the occupation of the former Confederacy, including keeping the peace in the face of friction and violence. Over
time the army came to be the administrative arm of congressional reconstruction
policy, with Grant in sympathetic support as well as an active advocate and adviser
to Republican leadership. Increasingly unhappy with Johnson’s course as president,
Grant eventually supported his impeachment and removal from office. In choosing
to run for president, he hoped to bring the political controversy over Reconstruction
to an end. Much to his frustration, support for protecting black rights declined during
his presidency, and although he took forceful steps to assure a peaceful resolution
of the disputed election of 1876, he conceded later that the combination of
persistent white supremacist violence by white southerners, increasing division and
alienation among Republicans, eroding public support in the North, and an
insufficient institutional network to subdue terrorism led to Reconstruction’s failure.
Perhaps, he later reflected, it was a mistake to seek such a rapid restoration of civil
rule in the South.

CWI: How did public perceptions of Grant in the postwar period evolve throughout
the late nineteenth century? How did Grant’s Reconstruction-era policies and the
controversies surrounding his presidency shape public memory of him in the
present?

DR. SIMPSON: Although Grant as president had his critics, he was also fairly
popular among many white and most black Americans. Republican supporters
sought a third term for him in 1880; at the time of his death he was widely
respected as both a general and a president, despite the persistent denigration
offered by dissenters. As American historians questioned the wisdom of
Reconstruction and drew largely on the writings of Grant’s critics, his reputation as a
president declined, and that did not immediately improve when historians began to
reassess Reconstruction. At first scholars criticized Grant for his support of
Reconstruction as a means to secure black freedom and equality; later historians
asserted that he had not been supportive enough. Few people saw him as an
effective chief executive or a skilled politician, although not everyone agreed with
those assessments. Those dissenting voices became louder in the 1970s and 1980s,
with a more compelling reassessment of Grant as president, especially when it came
to his Reconstruction policy, appearing in the 1990s. If anything, the balance of
historical assessment may have gone too far in the other direction, although it is not
yet clear how much that reassessment has changed popular understandings of what
was once seen as a largely dismal tenure in the White House.

To read more interviews with this year’s CWI conference speakers, please visit The
Gettysburg Compiler.

Conference Tour Teasers

This year’s conference will include an array of exciting new battlefield tours led by a
talented group of public historians, Civil War scholars, and licensed battlefield
guides. Jared Frederick, Instructor of History at Penn State—Altoona and Christian
Keller, Professor of History at the U.S. Army War College, will explore the fascinating
history of the on-going military relationship between the U.S. Army and the
Gettysburg battlefield after the Civil War through tours that examine, respectively, the active role that the battlefield played in a variety of military operations and exercises during the World Wars, as well as the battlefield’s contemporary use in professional military education. Keith Bohannon, Associate Professor of History at West Georgia University, will use various sites on the Gettysburg battlefield to discuss General James Longstreet’s postwar career and writings and his role in the creation of the Lost Cause narrative. Charles Burkell, a Licensed Battlefield Guide, will lead attendees across some of the battlefield’s most pivotal strategic locations to explore the various decisions made by the controversial Union general, Oliver Otis Howard on July 1, 1863, within the broader context of the General’s army experiences over four decades. Burkell also will discuss Howard’s post-war perspectives of the battle and his return visits to Gettysburg, as well as the important role that he played in Reconstruction.

For more information on these and other tours, please click [here](#).

**Tour selection forms** will be distributed in late February/early March, but only to those CWI attendees who have paid in full! Make sure to submit your final payment soon to improve your chances of getting the tours you want! Fully-paid attendees will receive an emailed tour selection form, in which you will indicate (and rank) your top three tour preferences for both Monday tours and Tuesday tours.

**Recommended Pre-conference Reading**

Conference registrants who wish to familiarize themselves with some of the material featured in this year’s conference can find a list of recommended reading [here](#).

For additional questions about conference basics (lodging, directions, meals, etc.), check out our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page on the CWI website. If you have any questions related to the CWI Summer Conference, please contact Allison at [ajordan@gettysburg.edu](mailto:ajordan@gettysburg.edu).

**CWI Involved in MERCY STREET Launch**

With the premiere of PBS’s much-anticipated new Civil War drama, MERCY STREET, this January, CWI staff and students have been involved in a wide range of conversations surrounding the show’s launch, exploring everything from the material culture of the hospital scenes to the history of contraband policy. Based on true stories, MERCY STREET takes viewers behind the front lines of the Civil War and into the lives of a diverse cast of characters — doctors, nurses, contraband laborers and Southern loyalists — who intersect in the chaotic world of the Mansion House Hospital in Union-occupied Alexandria, Virginia. Jill Ogline Titus and Ian Isherwood appeared live on WITF’s “Smart Talk” to discuss the show, and along with Jim
Udden from Film Studies, joined producer and co-creator Lisa Wolfinger, a Gettysburg College parent, in a panel discussion following a WITF-sponsored sneak preview screening at the Majestic Theater. CWI Fellows will be blogging about the series this winter on our blog, The Gettysburg Compiler, and Isherwood will be a regular contributor to WITF’s podcast conversations responding to episodes of the show. Click here to listen to the first podcast.

CWI's Jill Ogline Titus and Ian Isherwood discuss the new PBS series, Mercy Street, alongside Film Studies professor Jim Udden and producer and co-creator, Lisa Wolfinger at Gettysburg's Majestic Theater

The Gettysburg Compiler: Connecting the #greatwork of Our Students to You

The Gettysburg Compiler is written and edited by students and staff of the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College. Its purpose is to serve as a virtual bridge between student research and the public. Each entry is researched and written by a Gettysburg College student while serving as a Civil War Institute Fellow. Our students write on Civil War history and issues of public commemoration and memory, cover events in our area, and write interpretative opinion pieces on the importance of history. As we approach the 2016 summer conference, we will be posting more interviews with our CWI summer faculty and writing pieces directly related to this year's conference theme. We invite our attendees to follow the blog.
and to get the summer conversation started by reading/commenting on this space and our Facebook page.

**Changes Ahead for the CWI Summer Conference**

The Civil War Institute is seeking to freshen up its summer conference with a new programmatic approach. Beginning in 2017, the annual conference will move away from its singular thematic organization and instead will be framed around exploring new developments and questions in the field. This reorganization will allow for a broader program that will provide attendees with the opportunity to hear from speakers who have recently published new works that will undoubtedly shape the field in important ways.

Additionally, in order to avoid what has become a yearly conflict with Father’s Day weekend, CWI plans to stagger the annual conference dates. In 2017, the conference will run from June 9-14; in 2018, the conference will take place June 22-27; and in 2019, the dates will be June 14-19. Although staggering dates is not ideal, CWI seeks to be sensitive to participants’ family responsibilities while simultaneously avoiding conflicts with other large conferences held on the Gettysburg College campus during the month of June.