

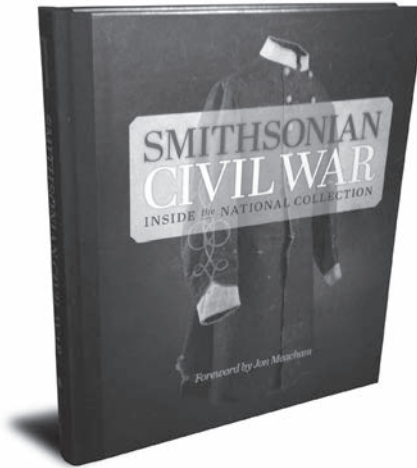
Passing in Review

Myths That Can Be Told and Touched

BY RONALD S. CODDINGTON

At first glance, a severely weathered ambrotype of a woman and child seems completely out of place in *Smithsonian Civil War: Inside the National Collection*. A full page of the handsome volume is dedicated to this young lady with neatly parted hair. She stares intently ahead, her face almost obscured by nicks, scratches and fragments of organic matter. Time and the elements have all but erased the face of the infant in her lap. The condition of the mat, glass cover and frame add to the effect. They appear fused together by decayed lichens and dirt smudges.

A caption makes it instantly clear why it was included: Found on the battlefield of Gettysburg, it is a rare and haunting relic that triggers a visceral reaction. Pulitzer-prize winning author Jon Meacham supports this notion in his foreword, writing, "It is our good fortune to experience the past not only intellectually and imaginatively but tangibly. Our myths can be told and touched."



Smithsonian Civil War
Edited by Neil Kagan and
Stephen G. Hyslop
Hardcover, 368 pages
Smithsonian Books
\$40.00

The inclusion of this image is the work of editors Neil Kagan and Stephen G. Hyslop, who teamed up previously on the gloriously illustrated *Eyewitness to the Civil War* (National Geographic, 2006), and other lavishly presented titles. Their projects often feature photos, uniforms and other personal items that pay tribute to ordinary men and women who participated directly and indirectly in all aspects of the war.

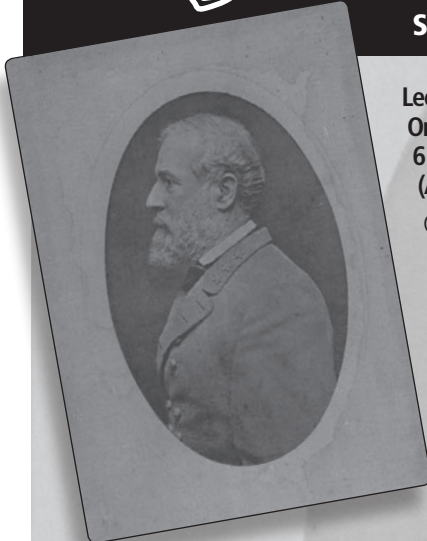
As Meacham also observes, "The fates of empires and of armies depend as much on ordinary mortal men as they do on the grand impersonal forces of economics and even of geography."

The soldier who left behind the ambrotype of the woman and child was one such man. *Smithsonian Civil War* recognizes his sacrifice and those made by countless others from all walks of life through the objects they left behind.



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Lee, Robert E. Albumen Photograph with Autograph Signature of Mary Custis Lee. On the Vannerson "Blockade" Portrait of Robert E. Lee by Anderson Studio, 1864. 6 1/2" x 5 1/2" (sight), in matte; inscribed on verso and signed by Mary Custis Lee (April 9, 1901).

General Lee's daughter inscribed this famous left profile portrait to Mrs. St. John Alison Lawton. Inscription reads in full "General Robert E. Lee/of Virginia/C.S.A./To dear Mrs. Lawton/from/his daughter,/Mary Custis Lee/(date partially obscured). Accompanying card identifies Lawton as President General of the U.D.C., in 1925.

Very light stain on photo mat. A vivid image, handsomely framed.

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