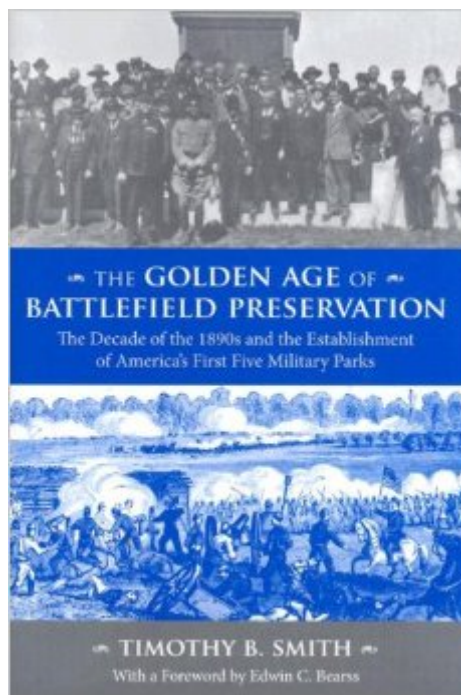


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The Golden Age Of Battlefield Preservation: The Decade Of The 1890's And The Establishment Of America's First Five Military Parks



Synopsis

The 1890s, argues Timothy B. Smith in his new book, represented the climax of battlefield preservation in America. But what makes this decade so important? This decade was the perfect time for the establishment of these national parks. Five Civil War battlegrounds "at Gettysburg, Chickamauga and Chattanooga, Shiloh, Antietam, and Vicksburg" were commemorated as national sites during this time. Just past the bitterness and racial tensions of Reconstruction and prior to the explosive growth brought on by the Second Industrial Revolution, the time was right for the war's veterans from both sides to come together, in a spirit of reconciliation and brotherhood, to lead the efforts to open the parks. As yet unmarred by development, these battlefield sites were preserved mostly intact, just how the veterans would have remembered them. To date, they represent the country's finest preserved battlefields. Smith's book is the first to look at the process of battlefield reservation as a whole. He focuses on how each of these sites was established and the important individuals "the congressmen, the former soldiers, the veteran commissioners" who were the catalysts for the creation of these parks. The Golden Age of Battlefield Preservation is a watershed book about an essential period in the history of battlefield preservation and will be of interest to any reader who wishes to have a better understanding how such preservation efforts were initiated. Timothy B. Smith is the author of This Great Battlefield of Shiloh: History, Memory, and the Establishment of a Civil War National Military Park and The Untold Story of Shiloh: The Battle and the Battlefield. He is a former park ranger at the Shiloh National Military Park and now teaches at the University of Tennessee at Martin.

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Customer Reviews

A couple of years ago, in talking with one of our authors, I observed we badly need a book on the establishment of the National Military Parks. He agreed but said that the book would not have a great market and he doubted we would ever see this book in print. Timothy B. Smith and the University Tennessee Press have decided the need overcomes the possibility of low sales. Smith has already written a well-received history of the Shiloh Park. Now he brings his very readable style to all the parks and the era of Reconciliation. The resulting book is great fun to read and very informative for park visitors and the causal student of American history. The book is a comprehensive treatment of preservation efforts from 1861 to 1933. The chapter on efforts from 1861 to 1890 shows how important this was to the veterans. This is followed with a very solid section on Congress, the War Department and the parks from 1890 to 1933. This traces the ups & downs of the parks as preservation gave way to training facilities. Gettysburg, Shiloh, Antietam, Vicksburg, Chickamauga and Chattanooga are the original parks founded by the veterans. Each park has about 30 pages of information on development and the infighting that occurred. This is a story of high-minded people, sneaky deeds, fraud and outright battles. Even as Reconciliation was progressing, men were unwilling to accept less than they thought their due. The book ends with "The Golden Age Reassessed" and an Epilogue on the state of preservation. This is an excellent book for the Civil War person who visits the parks or for those who wish they could.

A fascinating book on the creation of the first five Civil War battlefields. How were they created and by whom? Prof. Smith puts the battlefields in context of the times. This is not about the battles but about how these five battlefields were protected and ultimately became national parks.

Anyone who has visited or will visit any of these five parks needs to read this book. The veterans as Tim Smith shows us wanted posterity to remember what they did. The memorials remind us of their sacrifice. This is easily readable, informative and has great notes and bibliography. In short- an excellent volume that deserves wide circulation and sales. Can't wait to see what his next book will be.

Having toured many cemeteries and old battlefields throughout the south, this book helps one to understand why it was necessary to preservation them as a part of our history.

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