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**A Union Officer in Civil War Louisiana**  
*LSU Press to Publish New Book from Civil War Scholar Michael Pierson*

**Baton Rouge**—To be published in November 2016, *Lt. Spalding in Civil War Louisiana* delves into the life of Union Lieutenant Stephen Spalding, his elitist social attitudes, and his consuming ambition, examining the mind of a man of privilege as he turns to humor to cope with unwelcome realities. In July 1862, Spalding wrote a long letter from his post in Algiers, Louisiana, to his former college roommate. Equally fascinating and unsettling for modern readers, the comic cynicism of the young soldier's correspondence offers an unusually candid and intimate account of military life and social change on the southern front. A captivating primary source, Spalding's letter is reproduced here for the first time, along with contextual analysis and biographical detail, by Michael D. Pierson.

Spalding and his correspondent, James Peck, both graduates of the University of Vermont, lived in a society dominated by elite young men, with advantages granted by wealth, gender, race, and birth. Caught in the middle of the Civil War, Spalding adopts a light-hearted tone in his letter, both to mask his most intimate thoughts and fears and distance himself from those he perceives as social inferiors. His jokes show us an unpleasantly stratified America, with blacks, women, and the men in the ranks subjected to ridicule and even physical abuse by an officer with more assertiveness than experience. His longest story, a wild escapade in New Orleans that included abundant drinking and visits to two brothels, gives us a glimpse of a world in which men bonded through excess and indulgence. More poignantly, tactless jests about death, told as his unit suffers its first casualties, reveal a man struggling to come to terms with mortality.

Evidence of Spalding's unfulfilled aspirations, like his sometimes disturbing wit, allows readers to see past his entitlement to his human weaknesses. An engrossing picture of a charismatic but flawed young officer, *Lt. Spalding in Civil War Louisiana* offers new ways to look at the society that shaped him.

**Michael D. Pierson** is professor of history at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell and the author of *Mutiny at Fort Jackson: The Untold Story of the Fall of New Orleans* and *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics*.

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Civil War / Louisiana Studies

To request a review copy or set up an interview with the author,  
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