

Greenwich Historical Society

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Wolf by the Ears: The Missouri Crisis 1819-1821, Book Talk by Dr. John Van Atta

Cos Cob, CT, October 8, 2015--From the early days of the republic, American leaders knew that a ticking time bomb--the question of slavery--lay at the heart of national politics. For a time, an implicit understanding between North and South had helped to keep the issue at bay: northern states tacitly agreed to respect the property rights of southern slaveholders, and in return, southerners essentially promised to view slaveholding as a practical evil to be dealt with farther down the road. By 1819-1820, westward expansion had brought the matter to a head. As Thomas Jefferson noted, a nation dealing with the politically implacable issue of slavery essentially held a "wolf by the ears." It could neither let go nor hang on without consequences.

Dr. John Van Atta, Oaklawn Chair in American History at Brunswick School, deftly explains in his book *Wolf by the Ears* how the Missouri crisis revealed the impact that slavery had on American nation building. He explores the external social, cultural and economic forces that gave the confrontation such urgency and examines the beliefs, assumptions and fears that characterized both sides of the argument. *Wolf by the Ears* provides students in American history with an ideal introduction to the Missouri crisis while offering fresh insights for scholars of the early republic.

Dr. Van Atta, a recognized Brunswick master teacher since 1996, has published a number of articles on American history from 1776 to 1861 and two earlier books--*Securing the West: Politics, Public Lands, and the Fate of the Old Republic, 1785-1850* and *A Place for Boys: Brunswick School and the Building of Young Men*. A short Q&A session and book signing will follow the lecture, and *Wolf by the Ears* will be available for purchase.

Thursday, November 19, 2015, 7:00 to 8:00 pm
Greenwich Historical Society, Vanderbilt Education Center
39 Strickland Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807

Members: \$10; nonmembers: \$15

Purchase tickets online at www.greenwichhistory.org or call 203-869-6899, Ext. 10.

Tickets may also be purchased at the door.

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Wolf by the Ears

The Missouri Crisis, 1819 – 1821



JOHN R. VAN ATTA

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