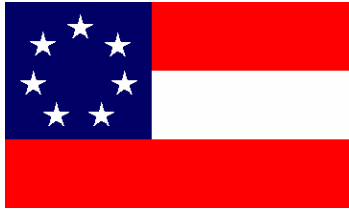
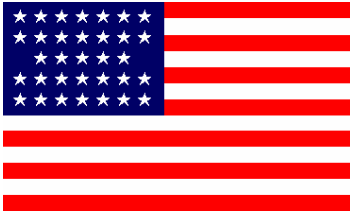


CIVIL WAR AUTHOR WALTER COFFEY

OFFICIAL MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



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www.WalterCoffey.com

FROM THE AUTHOR

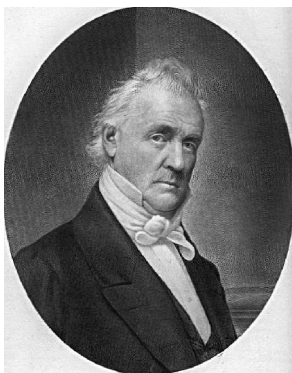
This is my first “official” newsletter in PDF format, and I hope you enjoy it. I published a newsletter on my website previously, but with this new format I can contact all of you who sign up and give you not only detailed historical articles but also news about my upcoming books and appearances. As always, your feedback is welcome and appreciated!

I’m pleased to announce that I have begun the fourth book in my Civil War series. The first draft is underway and I’m hoping that it will be my best effort yet. More details will be provided in the coming months. I have no timetable as to when it will be completed, but my books usually take anywhere from nine to twelve months to complete, so either late this year or early 2010 is my tentative goal.

I attended a meeting of the Houston Civil War Round Table on January 15, where the guest speaker was the prolific historian Edwin Bearss. Mr. Bearss spoke about three battles of the war: the Battle of Big Bethel, Virginia (considered to be the first battle), the Battle of Palmetto Ranch, Texas (considered to be the last battle), and the Battle of Perryville, Kentucky. It was an enjoyable evening and I encourage anyone interested in Civil War history to research local organizations and get involved.

As 2009 begins, the nation is in a bit of disarray. Hopefully this year will prove to be a turning point in a positive direction. Hard work has gotten us out of tough times before, and this will be no different. Here’s to a happy and successful new year!

JANUARY 1861: APPREHENSION BECOMES CRISIS



-- James Buchanan, 15th
U.S. President

He asserted that although secession was illegal, it was also illegal for the federal government to stop it and thus did nothing. For this he is ranked as one of the worst U.S. presidents in history.

As 1861 began, there was apprehension throughout America. South Carolina had already seceded from the United States, and although the U.S. government opposed the action, Democratic President James Buchanan declared that the government had no legal right to stop it. Members

of Congress proposed various compromises but none could be agreed upon. Republican President-elect Abraham Lincoln opposed any efforts at compromise with the rebellious South. While the South Carolina state militia began massing in Charleston Harbor, many still believed that a single state could not defy the U.S. government for long and there would be no violence.

In Charleston Harbor, a U.S. garrison commanded by Major Robert Anderson was isolated at Fort Sumter. The garrison was safe but would soon need reinforcements and supplies. However the South Carolina government had prohibited any assistance to the garrison. After weeks of contemplation, President Buchanan dispatched the civilian merchant vessel *Star of the West* to reinforce Major Anderson and his troops. On January 9, South Carolina artillery fired on the ship as it arrived in the harbor. The ship turned back to New York, leaving the U.S. troops

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isolated in Fort Sumter. These were considered the first major shots of the war.

By January 4, Southern states began seizing U.S. forts and arsenals. Alabama troops took the U.S. arsenal at Mount Vernon and secured forts protecting the vital naval port of Mobile Bay. Georgia troops seized Fort Pulaski near the Savannah River as well as the U.S. arsenal at Augusta. Florida troops took Fort Marion at St. Augustine. Mississippi troops secured installations along the Gulf Coast. And Louisiana troops seized the U.S. Branch Mint and Customs House in New Orleans. Then came more secession.

Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia and Louisiana all joined South Carolina in seceding from the U.S. this month. On January 21, five Senators from Florida, Alabama and Mississippi resigned from the U.S. Senate. All of them, including Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, gave moving and eloquent farewell speeches expressing sorrow for leaving but determination to defend the South.

Meanwhile President Buchanan cryptically informed Congress that the situation was beyond Executive control. He urged Congress to pass the Crittenden Compromise, which had been a Senate bill that proposed extending the Missouri Compromise line separating North and South to the Pacific Ocean and guaranteeing protection of slavery south of the line. This bill was seen by many as too little, too late, and one of the last desperate attempts at compromise failed.

By the end of January, the situation had escalated from apprehension to crisis, thus growing much worse than many had anticipated. Five more Southern states had seceded, several federal arsenals and forts in the South had been seized by state troops, and U.S. troops in Fort Sumter were in danger of being starved into submission. All the while, the Buchanan administration stood helpless as President-elect Lincoln's inauguration was still over a month away.

U.S. HISTORY: PROHIBITION BEGINS AND SOCIETY SUFFERS



On January 16, 1920, the Prohibition era began in the United States. This banned the sale, manufacture and transportation of alcohol for consumption as proscribed by the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Volstead, or National Prohibition, Act defined what constituted illegal alcohol and authorized Federal Prohibition agents to begin

enforcing the law.

The movement to ban alcohol in the U.S. had begun in the 1840s, and in 1851 Maine became the first state to pass a prohibition law. The Prohibition Party was founded in 1869, and as the 20th century began, more people began viewing alcohol and saloons as vices. Those who supported Prohibition were “dries,” and they were a diverse group including Methodists, Baptists, Quakers, Progressives, Ku Klux Klan members, Southerners, rural Americans, and African-Americans. Those who opposed Prohibition were

“wets,” and they included Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, big city politicians, and medical professionals.

Almost immediately after Prohibition began, medical professionals lobbied Congress for its repeal, arguing that alcohol was necessary for medicinal purposes. Meanwhile distilleries in neighboring countries where alcohol was not illegal, such as Canada and Mexico, flourished as their products were illegally imported to the U.S. Big cities such as New York and Chicago became hotbeds of crime as notorious gangsters like Al Capone thrived on a multi-million dollar liquor smuggling (i.e., “bootlegging”) business.



The onset of the Great Depression in the early 1930s coupled with increasing gang crime made Prohibition increasingly unpopular, especially in the big cities. In early

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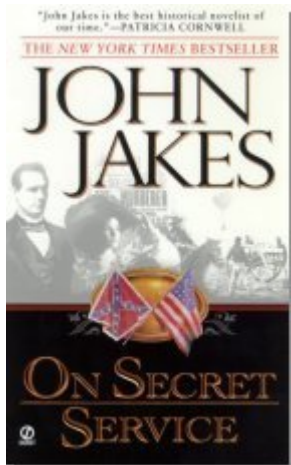
1933, President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Cullen-Harrison Act into law, which allowed the manufacture and sale of certain kinds of beer and wine. Then on December 5, 1933, the Twenty-First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, permanently repealing Prohibition although states are still allowed to restrict the purchase or sale of alcohol if they choose.

Historians have blamed Prohibition for many social problems. During the era, a profitable and violent black market for alcohol had flourished. Gangsters had used racketeering to corrupt law enforcement officials. Stronger

liquor had become more popular because it was more profitable to smuggle. And otherwise law-abiding citizens who had never taken a drink before frequented illegal saloons (i.e., “speakeasies”) in an effort to be fashionable. The cost of enforcing Prohibition was high, and many state and local governments lost important tax revenue formerly taken from alcohol sales. When Prohibition ended, only half the breweries reopened, and a new American style of lager beer was introduced. This style, which is manufactured by companies such as Budweiser, Miller, Coors and others, is the most common form of beer enjoyed by Americans today.

BOOK REVIEW:

ON SECRET SERVICE by John Jakes



John Jakes, the author of over 60 books, including the eight-part Kent Family Chronicles, the North and South Trilogy, and innumerable short stories of the American West, returns to his well-trod Civil War stomping grounds in the engrossing *On Secret Service*. The story of a war within a war on various levels – the North versus the South, the Union’s Pinkerton Detective Agency

versus the Confederacy’s agent provocateurs, youthful idealism versus youthful lust – *On Secret Service* chronicles the lives and times of four young Americans, from the war’s early tremors in January 1861, through its bloody conclusion, Lincoln’s assassination, and John Wilkes Booth’s murder in May 1865.

The main players are Lon Price, the ardent abolitionist and rising-star operative of the Pinkerton Detective Agency, and Margaret Miller, the beautiful, initially vacuous daughter of the South whose chief concern is that the war be over quickly so as not to interfere with Washington’s upcoming social season. After a chance encounter in a Washington park, they are as repulsed by each other’s political views as they are drawn together by an undeniable physical chemistry. As hostilities increase, the Pinkertons are pledged to the service of the Union and Lon becomes, ipso facto, a charter member in the U.S. Secret Service. When Margaret’s stridently pro-slavery father is gunned down by a Pinkerton operative at a clandestine “Secesh” meeting,

Margaret throws off her socialite mantle and vows revenge. She pledges allegiance to the South’s most notorious female spy, the wealthy, well-connected, and equally well-endowed Rose Greenhow.

A parallel relationship develops between Margaret’s unlikely best friend, the boyishly slight Hanna Siegel, a devout abolitionist who longs to prove herself on the battlefield, and the conflicted Captain Frederick Dasher, late of West Point, now of the First Virginia Cavalry, and protégé to Brigadier General “Jeb” Stuart. Played out before a scrim of battles, lives, fortunes, and reputations won and irreparably lost, Lon, Margaret, Hanna, and Fred cat-and-mouse their way through America’s costliest war. While the respective outcomes are somewhat predictable, what is not predictable is the degree to which the reader is captivated by Jakes’s encyclopedic command of historical fact and his unmatched storytelling. The mingling of well-drawn fictional characters with nicely fleshed-out historical figures raises to rare levels circumstances that would, in lesser hands, seem mere contrivances.

Review courtesy of Michael Hudson. This book is available at www.amazon.com.