

[PDF] Bloody Crimes: The Chase For Jefferson Davis And The Death Pageant For Lincoln's Corpse

James L. Swanson - pdf download free book

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Description:

: It's April 1865 and General Lee's troops have officially surrendered. Abraham Lincoln, looking forward to rebuilding the nation, celebrates with an evening—his last alive—at the theater. On the other side of the Mason-Dixon Line Jefferson Davis plans to move the Confederate government to North Carolina, away from Union troops that have captured Richmond. Under much different circumstances, both men embark on a dramatic final journey depicted by James. L. Swanson in *Bloody Crimes*, a gripping account of the weeks following Lincoln's death and the end of the Civil War. While arguments erupted about where and how Lincoln's burial should take place, Jefferson

Davis—refusing to let the South succumb—attempted to rally his people despite being hunted by Northern troops who suspected his involvement in Lincoln’s assassination. Using relics and key documents of the day, Swanson juxtaposes the travels of Davis and Lincoln, weaving a fast-paced narrative that lures readers in from the get-go. We know that eventually Lincoln makes it to his final resting place and Davis is captured, but along the way it’s hard not to wonder if these two heroic leaders were more similar than perhaps anyone would have guessed. Whether read as a companion to *Manhunt*—Swanson’s account of the 12-day search for John Wilkes Booth—or on its own, *Bloody Crimes* is the next great Civil War-era read worthy of the recognition that Lincoln once said we should all strive for. --Jessica Schein

Amazon Exclusive: James L. Swanson on Writing *Bloody Crimes*

I wrote *Bloody Crimes* as a way of answering a question many readers asked: “What happened next?” In *Manhunt* I told just one of the three incredible stories that unfolded at the climax of the Civil War. I could only hint at the strange and amazing things that happened to Lincoln’s body after he died, and I could do no more than allude to Jefferson Davis’s dramatic flight from Richmond and his six week odyssey to save the Confederacy. So it would be correct to say that *Bloody Crimes* is a sequel to *Manhunt*.

Since I was a child, I’ve been fascinated by the Lincoln funeral train, and I debated whether to write a book about that story alone. It is hard for a modern reader to comprehend how much Lincoln’s death, the White House funeral, the Pennsylvania Avenue procession, and the president’s sojourn home to Illinois influenced America. Imagine the death of President Kennedy and intensify by several degrees the emotions it released. As I researched the Lincoln funeral pageant, I began thinking about another president on his great journey. As I studied Davis, I realized that he is one of the “Lost Men” of American history. Today we know so little about him. To my great surprise, he and Lincoln had much in common. Some of their shared experiences were stunning, even profound. And in April 1865, both presidents left their White Houses, took to the field, and sought to rally their armies at the climax of the war.

Combining the final journeys of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis into one book presented several challenges. I needed to return to the assassination, but I did not want to repeat material from *Manhunt*. I solved that problem by, like a film director, shifting the camera and pointing it in a different direction. In *Manhunt*, my camera captured every moment of action inside Ford’s Theatre. In *Bloody Crimes*, that camera never sets foot inside Ford’s, but instead takes position inside the Petersen House, capturing the assassination through fresh eyes, those of the boarders who lived there and the visitors who descended upon it. In *Manhunt*, once Lincoln was dead, he ceased to be a principal character in the book. In *Bloody Crimes*, though Lincoln is dead, he remains a vital character until the end. One of the pleasures of writing the book was meeting the splendid cast of characters who played significant roles in the death pageant, including the larger-than-life Commissioner of Public Buildings in Washington, D.C., Benjamin Brown French, who kept an amazing diary.

Another great pleasure was experiencing the final journey of Jefferson Davis through the firsthand accounts of his inner circle, cabinet members, young female loyalists, and his family, especially Davis’s wife Varina. The love letters they exchanged during his darkest days go unread today, but they are as moving as the correspondence of John and Abigail Adams.

I cannot write a book without holding in my hand the original sources—Civil War newspapers, documents, photos, and artifacts—and I must visit the sites where history happened. Through these objects and places, I travel back in time and, I hope, take my readers with me. Many of the places I visited while writing *Bloody Crimes* still haunt me: The Confederate White House, where toys still lie upon the floor, as if the Davis children will return momentarily to continue their play; the East Room of Lincoln's White House, site of his majestic funeral; the cemetery vault in Georgetown, where Abraham Lincoln's dead son Willie waited for his father to claim him and bring him home to Illinois; and the graves of Jefferson Davis and his family at Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond. Indeed, shortly before the publication of *Bloody Crimes*, I visited the grave of Jefferson Davis. A powerful storm had twisted and torn from the ground a mighty oak tree that had, for the past century, offered shade to Davis's grave and bronze statue. Had the massive tree fallen in a slightly different direction, it would have smashed the gravestone and toppled Jefferson Davis from his pedestal.

The final journeys of Lincoln and Davis, each a martyr to his cause, tell the stories of two men, two peoples, and two nations during the most thrilling days in American history. Their dual stories form an American epic, a kind of American Iliad, that made our history, and that continues to influence it to this day.

From Publishers Weekly The disparate fates of contending presidents make an odd juxtaposition in this ungainly history of the Civil War's last gasps. Swanson recounts the April 1865 odyssey of Abraham Lincoln's funeral train as it wound through the North, intercutting it with Jefferson Davis's flight south from Richmond through a disintegrating Confederacy. The intertwined narratives lack the drama of the John Wilkes Booth saga Swanson told in his bestselling *Manhunt*. Lincoln's progress is a vividly described but lugubrious study in Victorian pomp, with giant hearses, trackside bonfires, choruses of white-robed young women, and huge crowds filing past the slow-moldering corpse. Davis's journey is a deluded, lackadaisical picaresque as he tries and fails to rally demoralized Southerners--his own cavalry escort pillaged the accompanying treasury wagons--until his anticlimactic capture by Union forces. Swanson works hard to make Davis a noble (no, he was not captured wearing his wife's dress, just her shawl) worthy of the Dixie-wide memorial procession with which the book closes. But Davis's story is incomparably less resonant than the martyred Lincoln's; in Swanson's best sections, outpourings of grief--Lincoln's own and those of his mourners--make for a moving evocation of wartime loss. B&w photos.

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