



The Secret Trial of Robert E. Lee

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1865. The Civil War is over and the South lies in ruins. But for some, the former slaveholders have not been punished enough. A cabal of powerful men, led by Charles A. Dana, the Assistant Secretary of War, plot to break the spirit of the South once and for all--by convicting General Robert E. Lee of treason and hanging him like a common criminal.

To this end, they have convened a secret military tribunal in Lee's former home in Arlington, Virginia. Jeremiah O'Brien of *The New York Tribune*, a long-time protege of Dana's, is the only reporter allowed to attend the trial. His exclusive reports on this momentous event, and the book he intends to write, will surely make his fortune. Yet as the trial proceeds, pitting the general against his accusers, O'Brien finds himself torn between his loyalty to Dana, his love for a beautiful Confederate spy, and his growing respect and compassion for Lee himself. The young reporter is supposed to be only an observer, but, in the end, it is O'Brien who must evaluate the evidence . . . and determine the true meaning of honor.

Written by acclaimed author and historian Thomas Fleming, *The Secret Trial of Robert E. Lee* brings to life a fascinating chapter in American history that might well have happened--and perhaps truly did.

The Secret Trial of Robert E. Lee Details

Date : Published January 10th 2006 by Forge Books

ISBN : 9780765313522

Author : Thomas J. Fleming

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Military History, Civil War, Science Fiction, Alternate History, Fiction

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From Reader Review The Secret Trial of Robert E. Lee for online ebook

gilbert vega says

Very informative book about the characters involved who fought for the south. Great Narrative.

Much important information about the civil war not found in other books. Why did some states secede from the union many important details in book.

Lee says

If you are a Civil War fan you will enjoy this book. By his fictitious account of the trial of Robert E. Lee, Fleming takes the reader through many of the causes of the Civil War. It's an interesting approach of what might have happened had Lee actually been tried for treason. Great reading!

Allan says

I'd not read any of Thomas Fleming's works before, but I'll remedy that situation soon. I enjoyed this historical fiction for the best reasons: good research, excellent writing, and revealing insight into that remarkable period.

I love George MacDonald Fraser's works with his fabulous Harry Flashman bouncing in and out of Victoria's little wars. Fraser's historical accuracy was always spot on while the raucous Flashie gave humor to some horrific events. While Fleming offers no humor, he holds you close to the period of post-war America in 1865, revealing much of the heroes and villains of the day. His story-teller, O'Brien, carries us through a fictional event with outstanding clarity. Voices of the time from Grant, Mosby, Lee and more ring true.

A good story, well told, awaits and I applaud you for considering this fine effort.

Kristen says

Okay, I'm a sucker for historic novels anyway. And the Civil War has been a current interest to me, as I've been researching my great-great-grand uncle, Theodore Rosette, a Civil War soldier.

I liked the Irish immigrant narrator, loathed his guardian/mentor and was overall interested in how people then viewed the war.

Joey says

I have read a great deal of books mostly biographies and memoirs with some fiction and novels once in a blue moon. This book has been on my list for weeks, time and time again I overlooked it for another but finally I picked it up and read it all I can say is it was by far one of the best books I've ever read I stayed up till past 3 reading forcing myself to stop at the end of a chapter which fittingly said something to the effect "court shall be adjourned till the morning" it was truest a wonderfully written and believable account at the end I thought to myself wait did this happen?! I rarely give reviews but I rarely read a book that I think deserves five times five stars well done Thomas!

Robbi Leah Freeman says

Here I am reading history again! This book was full of details from the time after the civil war. Being from the South, I had heard the war was not started over slavery but states rights and that slavery was the issue half way through the war because Lincoln needed troops. After reading this I'm not so sure anymore because everything in the end goes back to slavery. Also the NUMBERS of 4million slaves (slave revolt I would be scared of too!) and ONLY 1 in 10 people owned slaves Only??? Really? that's still many slaves and many people! I will also say our government hasn't changed much at all...Still have far right, far left and many many people in the middle having to watch these two sides argue and get very little accomplished!

I don't want to give it away so I will stop here but read this book! I

Will says

Interesting book. I wanted to like it more than I did.

Karen A. Wyle says

I found this book engrossing and -- at least to some extent -- educational. I'm not assigning a rating because I'm not historian enough to know whether the extremely negative portrayal of Civil War era newspaper editor Charles Dana has any (let alone adequate) basis in fact.

That substantial caveat aside, this alternate history, in which Dana engineers a secret court-martial of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, presented interesting and varied views of the causes of and the necessity of the Civil War (as we Northerners call it). Historical figures with whom I'm somewhat familiar, including Lee as well as Generals Longstreet and Butler and General-and-eventual-President Ulysses S. Grant, were portrayed plausibly and in considerable depth. I generally sympathized with the fictional POV character, Irish immigrant Jeremiah O'Brien, as he struggled with whether to reassess the motives and character of Dana, his mentor, and whether to further or obstruct Dana's goals.

I at times questioned whether the colorful and vituperative rhetoric of some of the participants in the court-martial were plausible -- but such rhetoric may properly belong to the historical period.

Albert Halprin says

Excellent

Very fast moving and well paced story with enough history in it to seem possible. The only weak part was the happy ending pulled out of a hat.

Gabby says

In school I learned that the Civil War was fought to end slavery in the South. As a simplistic definition, that has worked to explain why such an atrocity (both slavery and the war to defend/oppose it) existed. The fact of the matter is that it's not that cut and dried. For instance, I did not get the implications of States' Rights nor the legality of states wishing to secede from the Union. Nor was I ever made aware of the political forces that prevailed before the war and impacted decisions made after it. Thomas Fleming has written a very good book including the many aspects of what brought the Civil War about as well as some of the ramifications after Appomattox. Now I want to read more about this period of history to get an even better sense of the times and issues that galvanized the North and the South. It appears that Fleming has only whetted my appetite for more knowledge about my country. All in all, I'd say that's high praise for any author.

Josh Sieders says

I picked this book up on a whim from an ebook bargain email I rarely purchase from. I hesitated on starting it, and even had trouble getting into it due to lack of time to read in a larger chunk. However, after a 1/4 of the way through, the stage was set, the main characters introduced, the trial began and I was hooked. The more I read, the more I wanted to abandon all responsibility and see it through.

As I read, the author's intent to present both (or even multiple) sides and angles of the history surrounding the American Civil War became clear. This was captured well, late in the book with this question: "Was history unendurable when you saw it from too many sides?" That is and will remain the take away for me.

I appreciated the history and the nuanced and careful perspectives, especially in story form. Perhaps that makes me a non-scholar when it comes to history, but the unwillingness of the author to tie anything up in a neat bow was what made this a thrilling read. Every time a witness was questioned, I felt swayed to the prosecution or defence. And every time a cross-examination occurred I swung back. Much like the main character O'Brien, making a simple, easy moral judgment on either side was near impossible.

Instead, the reader is left to feel what the generals feel on their ride back to Washington after the trial was over - regret, anger, frustration, complicity and sorrow for what happened, with no simple answer of how it could have been prevented, nor a clear direction how to move forward after it had. The only hope? That honour will endure, and truth will eventually set us free, even when pursuing it to completion can be the loneliest place imaginable. Perhaps honour and truth sound cliché or trite, but I believe in virtue and this book showed the value and the cost.

I've often wondered about the reverence for Lee in the American psyche, and this book was timely considering the re-writing of history by removal or renaming occurring across North America in our public spaces and oldest institutions. I'm left without a simple solution, but with a respect for temperance, nuance, self-examination, and developing thicker skin so as not to be so easily offended by those with whom I disagree.

If you like historical fiction, in part (but less so) as a way to know the facts, but also to understand the story, I highly recommend this book.

Bob Congdon says

A Great What If.

Enjoyable read. Actually some accurate historic occurrences. Not a lot of revisionist history involved. With all the crappola going on with Lee statues a great timely read.

Damon says

Warning: The Secret Trial of Robert E. Lee is not some McThriller you can eat at noon, digest by three, and feel hungry again for something again by supper time. Thank God. Thomas Fleming has offered his readers something infinitely more valuable - a deep dive into the politics, history, sociological mores, and government institutions of America in the days immediately following the War Between States.

Not interesting, you say? Think again. Fleming does what all good author's of historical fiction accomplish, drawing eye-popping parallels between the world that was and the world that is.

If you want to cling to your grade school teachings and continue to believe that the Civil War was fought over slavery . . . that President Lincoln was a latter day Jesus Christ who freed the slaves because it was the right thing to do . . . that war's are never engineered by rich men trying to get richer and that the United States government is an institution of saints which has everyone's best interests in mind . . . well, I suggest you pick up another book. Maybe something in an Archie Comics. That Jughead's always worth a laugh, right?

Fleming won't let you off the hook. His characters offer compelling viewpoints to the sordid and byzantine history your mother never told you about. If his storyline gets complicated from here and there, I found the offense forgivable. He's simply trying to tell the truth and the truth - the deeper you dig - is never easy.

Again: this isn't the easiest read. Probably not something you'd want to take to the beach. If you're looking for some thick meat to chew on, however, look no further. Fleming delivers.

Patrick says

Thomas Fleming, IMHO, is the leading American author/historian for the genres of narrative history and historical fiction (or novels of the historical imagination). This is a prime example of notable historical fiction. It is amazing how he is able to weave together plausible fictional characters and incidents, historical events, and the documented opinions of distinguished military and civilian participants of events surrounding the Civil War to create a spell-binding story. It is filled with historical insight to some of the political reasoning that led to and prolonged this catastrophic war and as well as the varied ideas of how the Nation should deal with its aftermath. One is left with the thought: "Yes. This could actually have happened."

Harold Jones says

Excellent book looking at treatment of Robert E. Lee after the Civil War. I was reading this about the time of the removal of his statue. Lee had so much more class than his detractors and feel many people should read this book!
