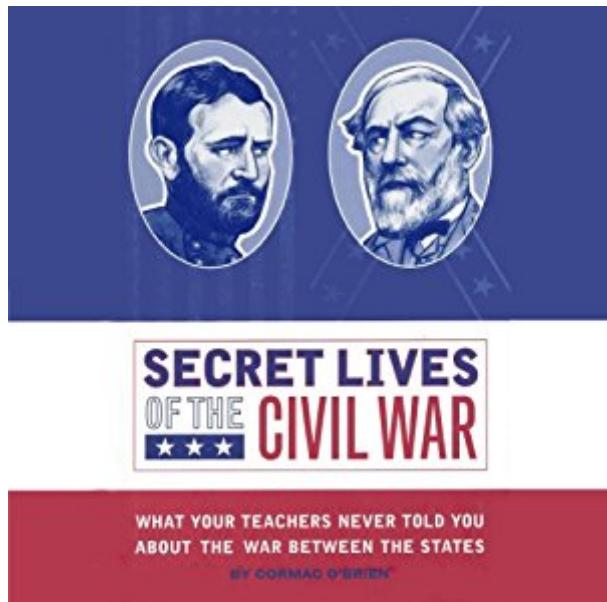


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# Secret Lives Of The Civil War: What Your Teachers Never Told You About The War Between The States



## **Synopsis**

Legendary Heroes of U.S. History - As You've Never Seen Them Before! Secret Lives of the Civil War features irreverent and uncensored profiles of men and women from the Union and the Confederacy - complete with hundreds of little-known and downright bizarre facts. You'll discover that: Mary Todd Lincoln claimed to receive valuable military strategies from ghosts in the spirit world. Jefferson Davis once imported camels for soldiers stationed in the American southwest. Ulysses S. Grant spent much of the Vicksburg campaign on a horse named "Kangaroo." James Longstreet fought the Battle of Antietam wearing carpet slippers. William T. Sherman was the victim of two shipwrecks on the same day. Harriet Tubman experienced frequent and bizarre hallucinations. Stonewall Jackson was a notorious hypochondriac (he always sat up straight, fearing that slouching would compress his vital organs). With chapters on everyone from William Quantrill (a guerilla leader whose skull later ended up in the basement of a fraternity house) to Rose O'Neal Greenhow (perhaps the South's most glamorous spy), Secret Lives of the Civil War features a mix of famous faces and unsung heroes. American history was never this much fun in school!

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Nicely enhanced with occasional illustrations by Monika Suteski, "Secret Lives Of The Civil War": What Your Teachers Never Told You About The War Between The States" by Cormac O'Brien is an informed and informative compendium of odd facts, unsung heroes, obscure vignettes, and bizarre anecdotes that are a part of the American Civil War that are not presented in traditional classroom

lectures, textbooks, or histories. For example, Mary Todd Lincoln's claim to receive valuable military strategies from ghosts in the spirit world; Jefferson Davis importing camels for Confederate soldiers stationed in the American southwest; Ulysses S. Grant mounted on a horse named 'Kangaroo' during the Vicksburg campaign; James Longstreet fighting in the Battle of Antietam wearing carpet slippers; William Tecumseh Sherman surviving two shipwrecks on the same day; and so many more surprising and unexpected but quite true stories of people and events. Not the least of which is the story of the infamous and feared Confederate guerrilla leader William Quantrill whose skull was to end up in the basement of a fraternity house from 1905 to 1942. "Secret Lives Of The Civil War" is the result of meticulous and painstaking research, making it an absolute 'must' for personal, academic, and community library Civil War Studies reference shelves and supplemental reading lists.

Over the past few years, a sub-category of history books has emerged with the goal of presenting a warts-and-all retelling of the historical record. This book, for instance, wants to unveil "what your teachers never told you about the War between the States." The resulting volume is a broad, interesting and informational introduction to some famous Civil War movers and shakers. The personalities covered in O'Brien's 26 chapters are mostly "the usual suspects" such as 'Father Abraham' and his wife, Grant, McClellan, Burnside, Sherman, Jefferson and Varina Davis, Lee, Jackson, Stuart and others such as Harriet Tubman, William Quantrill, etc. The life of each is covered in 10-12 pages with O'Brien relating their triumphs, tragedies and pecadilloes in a lighthearted, evenhanded fashion. Dedicated Civil War buffs will be familiar with much of the material appearing in the hefty (300+ pages) little volume. But it only retails for \$16.95 so what the heck! Likewise if you're just getting interested in the Civil War, this is a very HUMAN introduction to some people who have since assumed legendary stature. Recommended.\*\*\*\*One suggestion: Drop the illustrations and go with period photographs.

...I might have come to love history as a subject a lot sooner. This book is just a series of biographical sketches of the main players on both sides of the American Civil War, but truly, it's one of the best history books I've read on the topic. O'Brien's prose has such a very light touch that it sometimes reads like something out of stand-up comedy act, but even though some passages are very funny, O'Brien seems to get his facts straight, and it would take someone better versed than I to find fault with his scholarship (and I've read a fair bit in the last ten years). Get it and enjoy!

I enjoyed this author's Secret Lives of the First Ladies book and bought this for a friend who already knew a lot about the civil war. I expected he would enjoy all the little behind the scenes types of things that the first ladies book had included. Instead, this was more of a chronology of the war, just done person by person. The little anecdotes on the cover that inspired me to buy the book were some of the only interesting tidbits in the book. The person I bought it for already knew all about the battles and commanders and this was just all review to him with very few interesting new facts. I can't imagine who the audience for this book is because it's so little of what was promised by the title and cover and goes more to a historian's interest although surely they have already read other books on the subject. My friend was nice about it but I felt bad that the book didn't deliver what I'd thought it would and I feel like he wasted his time reading this just to make me happy.

You thought you knew everything about the Civil War? Think again. Included are some offbeat material but most are fascinating things that leave you wondering why you never learned that before and Gee doesn't that make history more interesting? I highly recommend buying this book.

Of all American history, the Civil War seems to be the subject that generates the most interesting trivia. Cormac O'Brien's book is a series of vignettes about politicians, generals, and other prominent figures, North and South, and a lot of fun trivia about each one of them. Granted, I knew a lot of it before. It's still fun to read. And behind the fun is evidently a lot of research. The writing style is down-to-earth. Sometimes it gets a little vulgar for my preference--I've never seen a Civil War scholar refer to a general as "getting shafted," or getting "pissed off." But then, I guess this isn't exactly Douglas Southall Freeman or Bruce Catton! Monika Suteski's illustrations are great!

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