



Jesse James: Last Rebel of the Civil War

T.J. Stiles

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A brilliant biography of Jesse James, and a stunning reinterpretation of an American icon. Stripped of the familiar myths surrounding him, James emerges a far more significant figure: ruthless, purposeful, intensely political; a man who, in the midst of his crimes and notoriety, made himself a spokesman for the renewal of the Confederate cause during the bitter decade that followed Appomattox.

Traditionally, Jesse James has been portrayed as a Wild West bandit, a Robin Hood of sorts. But in this meticulously researched, vividly written account of his life, he emerges as far more complicated. Raised in a fiercely pro-slavery atmosphere in bitterly divided Missouri, he began at sixteen to fight alongside some of the most savage Confederate guerrillas. When the Civil War ended, his violent path led him into the brutal conflicts of Reconstruction.

We follow James as he places himself squarely in the forefront of the former Confederates' bid to capture political power with his reckless daring, his visibility, his partisan pronouncements, and his alliance with a rising ex-Confederate editor, John Newman Edwards, who helped shape James's image for their common purpose. In uniting violence and the news media on behalf of a political cause, James was hardly the quaint figure of legend. Rather, as his life played out across the racial divide, the rise of the Klan, and the expansion of the railroads, he was a forerunner of what we have come to call a terrorist.

T.J. Stiles has written a memorable book--a revelation of both the man and his time.

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