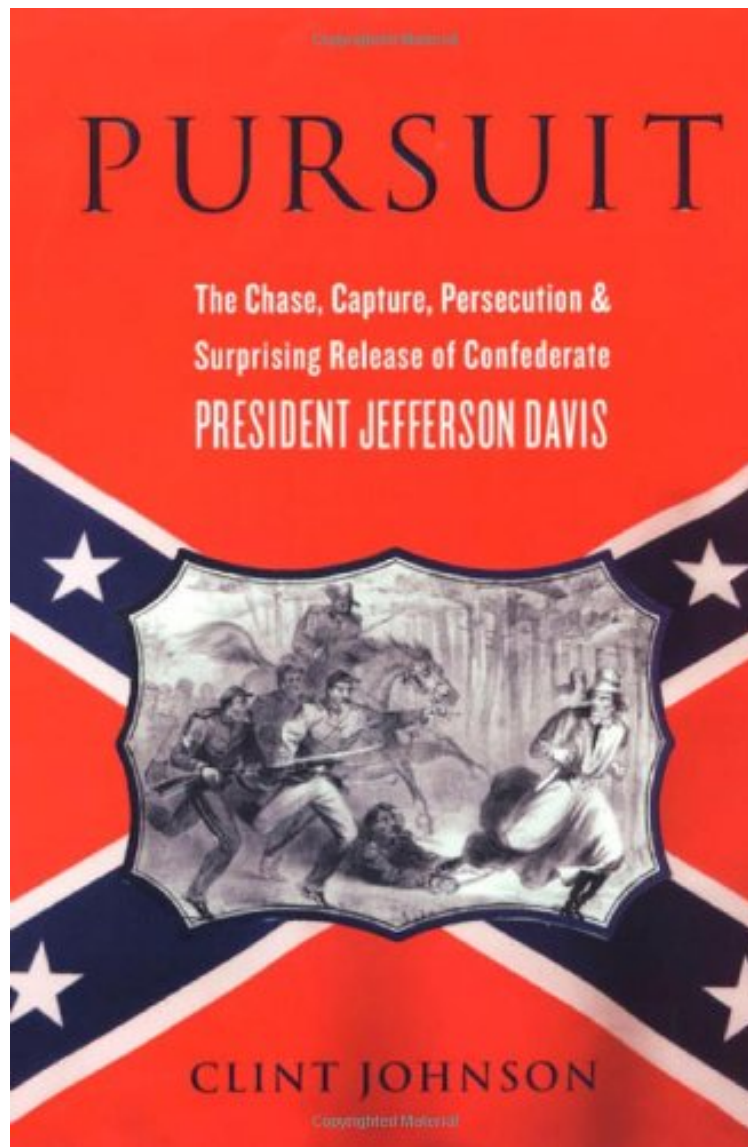


(Download) Pursuit: The Chase, Capture, Persecution, and Surprising Release of Confederate President Jefferson Davis

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Clint Johnson

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Clint Johnson : Pursuit: The Chase, Capture, Persecution, and Surprising Release of Confederate President Jefferson Davis before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Pursuit: The Chase, Capture, Persecution, and Surprising Release of Confederate President Jefferson Davis:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. "Is Ours a Valid Government?" By Thomas Shuford
The title of this review is inspired by an editorial of that title that appeared 143 years ago (1866) in a prominent northern newspaper, Harper's Weekly. Quoting from the Harper's Weekly editorial: "Suppose the court should solemnly decree that secession is constitutional. What then? Are we deliberately to submit to perish? There could be no more suicidal folly that to commit the decision of our national existence to any court." (p254)
The Harper's Weekly editorial encapsulates the drama associated with the United States government's three year effort to bring Jefferson Davis to trial. How'd did that ordeal --- and it was an ordeal --- for the government as much as for Davis, end? Read on. * * * But first, let me say that there is no matching Robert C. Hufford's earlier review for providing a sweeping sense of Clint Johnson's fine, reads-like-a-novel account of the waning days and immediate aftermath of the Confederate States of America. I choose to concentrate on a few details on what intrigued me most about PURSUIT: 1) the tragic, enigmatic, self-deluding figure of Jefferson Davis, AND 2) the paralyzing quandary Davis' capture presented the United States government, because of the secession question: Was secession unconstitutional -- or not? * * * Jefferson Davis made this impression on the James H. Wilson, the Union general who led the pursuit and capture of the Confederate president on May 10, 1865 in south Georgia: "His [Davis'] comments and criticisms were clothed in excellent language and delivered with felicity and grace, while his manners were stately and dignified without being frigid or repellent." p190
One year later, U. S. Treasury secretary Hugh McCullough, sent by President Johnson to check on the health of the imprisoned former president, wrote: "Instead of meeting a devil [Johnson had referred to Davis as 'the head devil among the traitors'], McCullough found there were 'few men more gifted than Mr. Davis . . . [who] had the bearing of a brave and high-bred gentleman, who knowing that he would have been highly honored if the Confederate States had achieved their independence, would not and could not demean himself as a criminal because they had not.'" pp244-245
Turning to the secession question, here is how the federal government FINALLY rid itself of the radioactive issue: "Sometime in the weeks after December 7 [1968], [federal prosecutor William M.] Evarts approached [Davis attorney Charles] O'Connor with the offer that he would enter a nolle prosequi [agreement not to prosecute] if O'Connor and his defense team would drop the matter entirely and not appeal the case to the Supreme Court. Without consulting with Davis, who was still in Europe [out on bail by then, attending to business], O'Connor agreed to give up Davis' day in court in exchange for a promise that no matter who was elected president, representative, or senator in the future that Jefferson Davis would never be put on trial for being president of the Confederacy" "Then Christmas Day, 1868, Johnson issued a blanket amnesty that finally included Davis. For the first time in three and a half years, Davis was not being accused by the United States Government of being an assassin, a murderer, or a traitor." "Varina [Davis' wife] was happy, but Davis was disappointed. He had wanted to clear his name and prove that forming the Confederacy was a constitutional means of protesting the actions of the United States government. He would never get his trial to prove that he was right and all those millions of Northerners were wrong." "Even if [Supreme Court Chief Justice Salmon] Chase had not been around to rig the outcome, O'Connor was confident that he would have won a trial that tried to define secession as treason." pp276-277
And thus was the secession issue "resolved." Do not miss the fascinating details, however, recounted in the latter third of PURSUIT, of the political and legal mess the United States government found itself in when it chose to imprison Jefferson Davis. PURSUIT is superbly-written and a very important book. The secession issue will confront the United States again, and in not too many years. U. S. immigration policy is on automatic pilot to slowly, incrementally --- but radically --- alter the nation's demographics --- ratcheting up the risks of Balkanization, and then fragmentation.
This is a timely book.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. From a Northern perspective, A fine work about a difficult subject, Jefferson Davis
By Bustleton
Pursuit is a well written book of a political figure that frankly I did not know well from a Northern perspective of the North-South conflict. I had always believed that Davis' various crimes (authorizing the Jacob Thompson/Clement C. Clay behind the lines warfare from Canada in the North during the war; authorizing through the Confederate War Dept. (ie. Sec. of War, James Seddon) the executions of black Union P.O.W.'s; Andersonville and other Civil War death camps for Northern P.O.W.'s, treason, etc.) had warranted a trial which he had almost certainly would have never received had Lincoln lived. As Lincoln did not live, I never understood why Andrew Johnson and Edwin Stanton did not authorize a military tribunal of Northern officers to try Davis as indeed the Lincoln conspirators and the Andersonville warden had received. If they had, I would have been perfectly comfortable had Davis received a date with the hangman as well, as did the others as it seems that justice would have demanded it, but of course it never happened. As the book highlights the significant Northern support that Davis received after the War which in fact was critical to his release from prison, one wonders how secretly grateful Davis was for this, which, were I Davis I certainly would have been. However no matter; history is what history is. Again, to summarize, a fine book; well written of a greatly misunderstood subject surrounded by much controversy. My critical remarks in this review are directed more towards the actual events described in the book, and well as the subject, and not the book itself.
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Jeff Davis
By stewjoybow
I never knew much about Davis except that he was supposedly captured wearing women's attire. After having visited his estate in Biloxi, I became curious and researched books on him. This book verifies that he was not wearing female clothing and this was just another attempt to degrade the man who was President of the losing side of the war. The book does a great job of taking a good look at this man's character.

While much has been written about the hunt for John Wilkes Booth, much less has been written about the efforts to apprehend Confederate President Jefferson Davis in the days following the dissolution of the Confederacy, and the subsequent attempt to try him for treason. In the only book to tell the definitive story of Davis's chase, capture, imprisonment, and release, journalist and Civil War writer Clint Johnson brings this chapter in our nation's history to vivid life, and paints a fascinating portrait of one of American history's most complex and enduring figures. In the vulnerable weeks following the end of the War and Abraham Lincoln's assassination, some in President Andrew Johnson's administration burned to exact revenge against Davis. Trumping up charges of conspiracy to murder Lincoln and treason against the Union, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton ordered cavalry after Davis. After a chase through North and South Carolina and Georgia, Davis was captured on May 10, 1865. The former United States Senator and Mexican War hero was imprisoned for two years in Fortress Monroe, Virginia, where he was subjected to torture and humiliation--but never brought to trial. Remarkably, the Johnson administration knew Davis was innocent of all crimes before he was even arrested. With a keen eye for the period's detail, as well as a Southerner's insight, Johnson sheds new light on Davis's time on the run, his treatment while imprisoned, his surprising release from custody, and his eventual exoneration--exposing the powerful political forces involved, and their lasting impact. Johnson draws on extensive official historical documents as well as countless archived private materials such as diaries, letters, and private papers. With the 200th anniversary of Davis's birth in 2008, the time has never been better for a compelling account of such a defining episode of the Civil War.

Advance Praise for *Pursuit: The Chase, Capture, Persecution, and Surprising Release of Confederate President Jefferson Davis* "A master storyteller exposes one of the most fascinating and overlooked dramas in Civil War history." --Rod Gragg Author of *Covered With Glory* and *Confederate Goliath*

"Using solid research, an engaging style and a novelist's eye for details, Clint Johnson has produced a vivid, fresh and entertaining look at Jefferson Davis's flight and capture. This book is a welcome addition to the literature on the final days of the Confederacy and the fate of its one and only chief executive." --Chris Hartley Author of *Stuart's Tarheels: James B. Gordon and His North Carolina Cavalry*

"If there was one Civil War historian I would choose to tell the story of Jefferson Davis, it would be Clint Johnson. In these pages, Johnson brings the mercurial Confederate President alive with a riveting and revealing narrative that sheds important new light on one of the pivotal figures in American history. Highly recommended." --Marc Leepson Author of *Desperate Engagement*, *Flag: An American Biography*, and *Saving Monticello*

"Clint Johnson's *Pursuit* is a spellbinding tale of the last days of the Confederacy. The author's crisp prose and solid research give readers a riveting view of Jefferson Davis's last days in power." -- David J. Eicher, author of *The Longest Night* and *Dixie Betrayed*

"Meticulously researched and well written." --Armchair Interviews