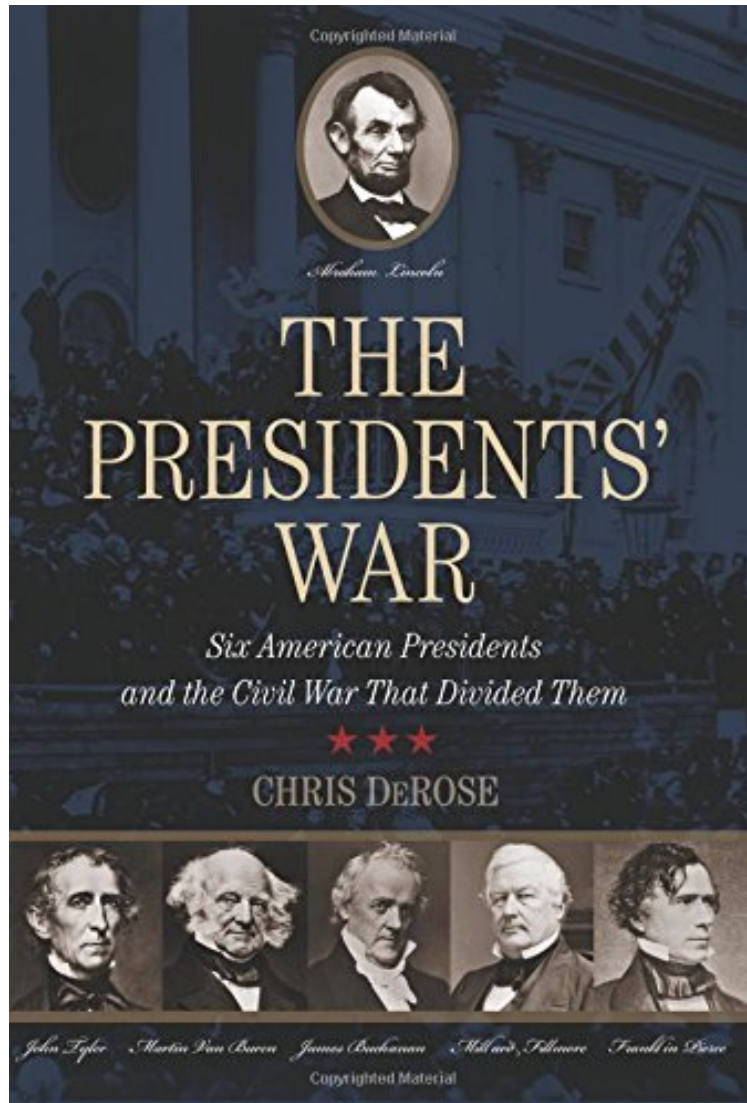


[Read ebook] The Presidents' War: Six American Presidents And The Civil War That Divided Them

The Presidents' War: Six American Presidents And The Civil War That Divided Them

Chris DeRose

*ePub | *DOC | audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF*



#113203 in Books 2014-06-17 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.31 x 1.12 x 6.251, 1.49 #File Name: 0762796642392 pages | File size: 39.Mb

Chris DeRose : The Presidents' War: Six American Presidents And The Civil War That Divided Them before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The Presidents' War: Six American Presidents And The Civil War That Divided Them*:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Outliving their TimesBy Jason GalbraithI saw the author of this book speaking about it on C-SPAN last year and immediately wanted a copy, but waited until last month to order one.

It was not exactly what I had expected. At times it seemed there was too much about Lincoln's predecessors (as with the first hundred pages) but on reflection, I realized it was indeed essential to show the presidencies of each one who was alive when Lincoln came into office and how they wrestled with the question of slavery, which dominated American politics for the generation prior to the Civil War. At other times I thought there was not enough about Lincoln's predecessors -- some of the chapters dealing with the Civil War itself featured only Lincoln, his generals, and the conduct of the war. On March 4, 1861, when Lincoln was inaugurated, the surviving ex-Presidents were, in order of service, Martin van Buren, John Tyler, Millard Fillmore, Benjamin Pierce and James Buchanan. Van Buren and Tyler both died in 1862, before the Emancipation Proclamation gave the war a new purpose which the other three all condemned. Chris DeRose makes a convincing case that the pre-war Presidents' history of conciliating slavery left them singularly unprepared to deal with a new era in which both elite and mass opinion denounced it as the greatest evil in human history (even greater than Lincoln's own suspension of habeas corpus). Of the five of them, Van Buren probably deserves the highest commendations (for shutting down an ex-Presidents' conference at which Pierce planned to blast Lincoln). Buchanan comes off somewhat more sympathetic than expected -- he was saddled with secessionist advisors at the beginning of the secession crisis, one of whom at least later became a Confederate General, and it appears that they rather than he facilitated the quick exit from the Union of seven states -- but there is still a striking contrast with Jackson, who is President at the beginning of the book and quickly shut down the secession talk from South Carolina when Van Buren was secretary of state. Buchanan's last secretary of state asked him in a letter why he could not have acted at least as vigorously as Lincoln had before the actual outbreak of hostilities six weeks into the latter's first term, a question he was never quite able to answer. Buchanan may still be marked as the worst President, but clearly the worst ex-President was John Tyler, who saw himself as a leader of the Southern revolution against the United States, led the secession faction in Virginia's secession convention, and was elected to the Confederate Congress before becoming the first of Lincoln's peers to die in January 1862. Fillmore was at first all for the war and the Union, unlike Pierce, but the Emancipation Proclamation turned him violently against Lincoln. Both Fillmore and Pierce were rooting for McClellan in 1864. Pierce went further, writing to Jefferson Davis during the secession crisis that he was in the right, letters which became public when Davis' Mississippi plantation was seized by Union troops in 1863. Pierce's reputation never recovered. Fillmore was likewise (unfairly) accused of not mourning the death of President Lincoln, but in fact invited Robert and Mary Lincoln to his home on their trip with Lincoln's body back to Springfield. Mary Lincoln was unable to take Fillmore up on this invitation as she did not make the great circle of Northern cities that Lincoln's body did on its way back to Springfield. All five of these ex-Presidents became President during the Second Party System (Whigs vs. Democrats) and found public opinion and even American morality utterly transformed by the Third Party System (Republicans vs. Democrats). Fillmore, a Whig, joined Democrats Pierce and Buchanan in opposing Lincoln's entire platform and policy by 1864. Most of us, if we live long enough, will see our opinions rendered similarly obsolete by changing political currents, so I would not judge these men too harshly, with the exception of Tyler, whose name should be execrated for all time.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.
More intriguing as you go
By buskin4jesus
At first it was hard to understand the purpose of this history but as it moves on the reader is presented with a slice of civil war perspective not usually in focus-- how Lincoln's predecessors helped the nation stumble into war and how they participated (basically from the sidelines except for Tyler) in its prosecution. Relatively brief descriptions of maneuvers and battles and short but powerful biographical details of Lincoln's strategy and character are well chosen and serve both as background and connective tissue for the depictions of the ex-presidents and how they acted and reacted during this national crisis of the highest order, in most cases cementing their images as minor, ill-esteemed, and ineffectual players on the stage of history.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.
Unique perspective on history we already know
By Christopher L. Holm
I consider myself a bit of a Civil War buff; the more I read and learn about the Civil War, the more, fascinated I become by it. I didn't know so many ex-presidents were still alive when Lincoln took office. The book refreshingly added a new dimension on history I already love to read about. If you love learning about the Civil War, and American history in general, you need this book. To see how former chief executives looked upon, supported or spoke out against such issues as states rights, slavery and abolition, and Lincoln's administration is truly fascinating. The layout of the book was great, and created a truly fun read into a time in our history where change - historic constitutional change - was upon our country and how the great minds of the time felt, thought and reacted to that change.

For the first time, readers will experience America's gravest crisis through the eyes of the five former presidents who lived it. Author and historian Chris DeRose chronicles history's most epic Presidential Royal Rumble, which culminated in a multi-front effort against Lincoln's reelection bid, but not before:

- * John Tyler engaged in shuttle diplomacy between President Buchanan and the new Confederate Government. He chaired the Peace Convention of 1861, the last great hope for a political resolution to the crisis. When it failed, Tyler joined the Virginia Secession Convention, voted to leave the Union, and won election to the Confederate Congress.
- * Van Buren, who had schemed to deny Lincoln the presidency, supported him in his efforts after Fort Sumter, and thwarted Franklin Pierce's attempt at a meeting of the ex-Presidents to undermine Lincoln.
- * Millard Fillmore hosted Lincoln and Mary Todd on their way

to Washington, initially supported the war effort, offered critical advice to keep Britain at bay, but turned on Lincoln over emancipation. * Franklin Pierce, talked about as a Democratic candidate in 1860 and '64, was openly hostile to Lincoln and supportive of the South, an outspoken critic of Lincoln especially on civil liberties. After Vicksburg, when Jefferson Davis's home was raided, a secret correspondence between Pierce and the Confederate President was revealed.* James Buchanan, who had left office as seven states had broken away from the Union, engaged in a frantic attempt to vindicate his administration, in part by tying himself to Lincoln and supporting the war, arguing that his successor had simply followed his policies. How Abraham Lincoln battled against his predecessors to preserve the Union and later to put an end to slavery is a thrilling tale of war waged at the top level of power.

At the time of Abraham Lincoln's election to president, five former presidents were still alive—an unprecedented and never-again achieved number. DeRose provides a fresh look at the politics of the Civil War by focusing on the interactions between the eloquent and passionate Illinoisan and predecessors John Tyler, Franklin Pierce, Martin Van Buren, James Buchanan, and Millard Fillmore. He reveals the former presidents' opposition to Lincoln's presidency and many of his now-historic positions, such as the Emancipation Proclamation, and their constant fight against Lincoln's administration. DeRose sets this thorough and fascinating history in a well-developed and rich foundation of the presidencies and politics leading up to Lincoln's two terms, and he concludes by pointing out the way Lincoln changed the presidency as his predecessors had feared: into a 'dynamic' and 'powerful force for principle,' which was for Lincoln the principle of freedom for all men. . . . [T]his book is a well-written, thorough, and engaging look into a unique political situation in American history. (Publishers Weekly)It is a masterful analysis. . . .The Presidents' War is well written and well researched. It addressed an interesting component of the Civil War that is sure to enlighten and entertain anyone interested in the war, politics or the presidency. (Civil War News)“A history of the Civil War as told through the six American presidents that experienced it firsthand. . . . While discussing Jackson and Lincoln, DeRose smartly focuses his attention on a few of the lesser-known, but not less valuable presidents. The author's narrative . . . reveals eye-opening facts that are otherwise overlooked—e.g., John Tyler was the only president to die an enemy of his country. . . . [A]n informative compendium of the political struggles leading to the Civil War.” —Kirkus s