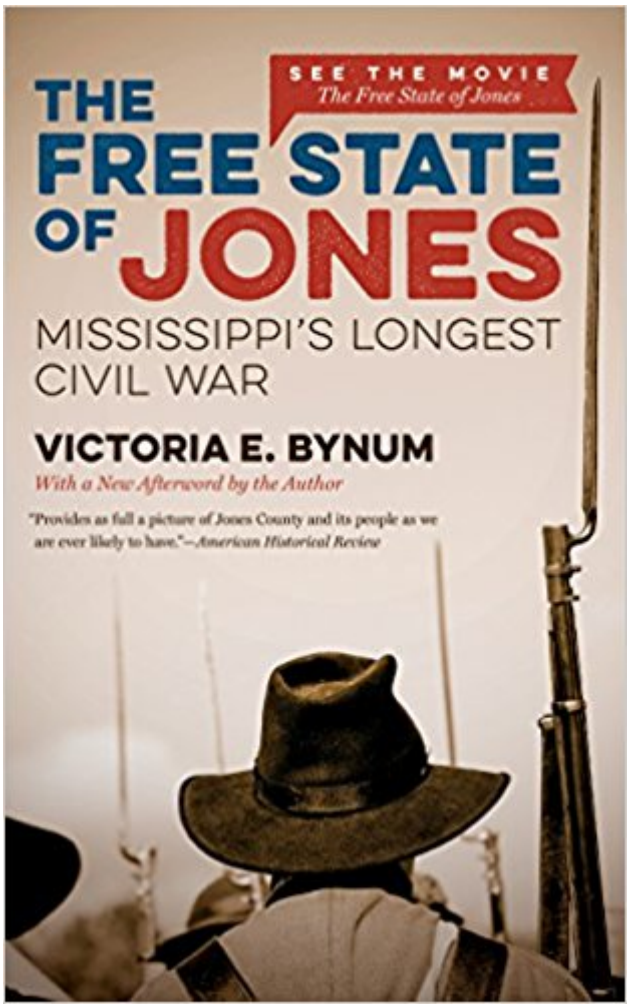
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The Free State Of Jones, Movie Edition: Mississippi's Longest Civil War (The Fred W. Morrison Series In Southern Studies)



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Synopsis

Between late 1863 and mid-1864, an armed band of Confederate deserters battled Confederate cavalry in the Piney Woods region of Jones County, Mississippi. Calling themselves the Knight Company after their captain, Newton Knight, they set up headquarters in the swamps of the Leaf River, where they declared their loyalty to the U.S. government. The story of the Jones County rebellion is well known among Mississippians, and debate over whether the county actually seceded from the state during the war has smoldered for more than a century. Adding further controversy to the legend is the story of Newt Knight's interracial romance with his wartime accomplice, Rachel, a slave. From their relationship there developed a mixed-race community that endured long after the Civil War had ended, and the ambiguous racial identity of their descendants confounded the rules of segregated Mississippi well into the twentieth century.Victoria Bynum traces the origins and legacy of the Jones County uprising from the American Revolution to the modern civil rights movement. In bridging the gap between the legendary and the real Free State of Jones, she shows how the legend--what was told, what was embellished, and what was left out--reveals a great deal about the South's transition from slavery to segregation; the racial, gender, and class politics of the period; and the contingent nature of history and memory.In a new afterword, Bynum updates readers on recent scholarship, current issues of race and Southern heritage, and the coming movie that make this Civil War story essential reading. The Free State of Jones film, starring Matthew McConaughey, Gugu Mbatha-Raw, and Keri Russell, will be released in May 2016.

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Customer Reviews

Bynum is to be saluted not only for her profound scholarship but for her evenhanded accounts of matters that remain volatile and controversial. . . . [This] book should be praised as an original and cogent piece of scholarship on a devilishly complicated and demanding subject.--Washington TimesAn important book that may cause historians who are skeptical about putting too much stress on an 'inner' Civil War to rethink their position.--American Historical ReviewPowerful, revisionist, and timely, Bynum's book combines superb history with poignant analysis of historical memory and southern racial mores.--Choice

The Free State of Jones is clearly a story that needs to be told, and Bynum has done impressive research to bring it to a modern audience. She uses a wide range of social history sources to trace the long history not only of Newt Knight and his gang but also of their ancestors. She is interested in social structure, economic patterns, migration, religious revivals, family formation, and community relations--in short, a genealogy of the entire Jones County community before they became famous during and after the Civil War. This is an ambitious project that brings the Jones County community to life for scholars, students, and lay readers.--Altina L. Waller, author of Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860-1900 Local studies have made us increasingly aware of the many different ways in which southerners experienced the Civil War. Few communities fought as much of the war on their own terms or generated as distorted yet profound a legacy afterward as did the men and women of this renegade county in Mississippi's Piney Woods. It's a fascinating story, and Victoria Bynum tells it remarkably well.--John C. Inscoe, coauthor of The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War

I grew up in Jones County during the sixties and, frankly, found it to be a very confusing place. For example, on the bus trip to my new high school we stopped at a house to pick up five children. The previously noisy bus got deathly quiet as it rolled to a stop. One person spoke. He called out "N-word Knights" loud enough for everyone to hear. The five kids boarded the bus under cold, you're-not-wanted-here stares of twenty to twenty-five kids. These five children were to all appearances white, but were apparently considered mixed-race. I had no knowledge or understanding of the hundred year-old history leading up to this day, but it is a day that still remains fresh in my memory.Racism in 1950's and 60's Jones county went beyond "Whites Only" signs over

water fountains. A classmate’s father was arrested for the firebombing and murder of Vernon Dahmer in his home. I never will forget my classmate’s response. "I can’t wait until I’m 18 so I can be the best Klansman I can be." That was his life goal. I didn’t understand that level of fear, anger and hatred then and don’t truly understand it now, but Ms. Bynum’s book sheds a lot of light, history and context upon the human, political and cultural events leading up to that day on the bus.The book does read like a dissertation, a series of dissertations actually, but that should not deter the reader who wants to understand this fascinating bit of history and culture. I am grateful to have found this book which has provided me with an insight and understanding of why things were the way the were in my hometown so many years ago. Thank you, Ms. Bynum.

I couldn’t put the book down. It was a page turner for sure. There was so much information given, that I think I will have to read it again, just to make sure I understood it completely. I am still amazed that these stories of the Civil War are not included in our history books for our students in high school and/or college. Thank you, Vicki, for writing such a interesting and truthful history of the Civil War, before, during and after, which took place in Mississippi and the South. I feel that my husbands family, living in Leake County, Mississippi at the time, were part of this movement because his great great grandfather also deserted the Confederate army, moving through Madison County and eventually into the piney woods of Louisiana. There was a marriage with a Choctaw girl on my husband’s mother’s side. I am doing Genealogy and am digging deeper into his family’s history. This book is bringing many things clearer to me about my husband’s family.

It has been a while since I bought an physical book. I found that the background material was highly interesting since it explained why many people were migrating across the United States prior to the civil war. In addition, a couple of people in one branch of my family were involved, So, I fely=t compelled to buy a "hard copy". I was not disappointed.Ms Bynum also presents an uncommon view of what happened in some areas both during and after the conflict. I gained an appreciation for the trials and tribulations of the period of reconstruction in the South. Something I never really understood in High School or college.

My great grandfather, Edmond Maclin DeVall, was sheriff of Jones County during the Civil War. I was born and reared in Mississippi and four generations of my family are buried in the Ellisville Cemetery. I had heard of the "Free State Of Jones" growing up, but always in "secretive and hushed tones". I believed in the "Solid South " and had never, in all my days , ever heard of "Southern

Unionists".I discovered Vikki Bynum’s book in 2003 and my education began about the "Rest of the Story". I am not a professional historian, but I am a seeker of the truth who is open to learning new ways of viewing old theories and past events. Vikki’s book, The Free State of Jones, is the kind of book that pulls you in and engages you. I could not put it down! There is a palpable passion in the writing. I felt like I was deeply immersed in the conflict and turbulence and struggles of my ancestors. I began to understand the struggles of the yeoman farmers of Jones County and the meaning of "a rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight". I found myself actually kinda understanding Newt’s viewpoint and that was a SHOCK!The movie version of the book is a little different than the original book in that Vikki wrote an afterword. We are living in turbulent times and this book is as relevant today as it was when it was first written in 2001. Take the time to read this book, share it with family and friends and discuss it with others. The Free State Of Jones is packed full of well researched and historically accurate information written with a commitment to "educate the reader about the rest of the story".

Reads like a PhD thesis, not for a general audience.

Bynum’s book tells a riveting story about the price paid by so many in a nation divided during Civil War. The story factual, with detailed footnotes, about this little known rebellion in a Mississippi during the Civil War. Five stars from this history buff!

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