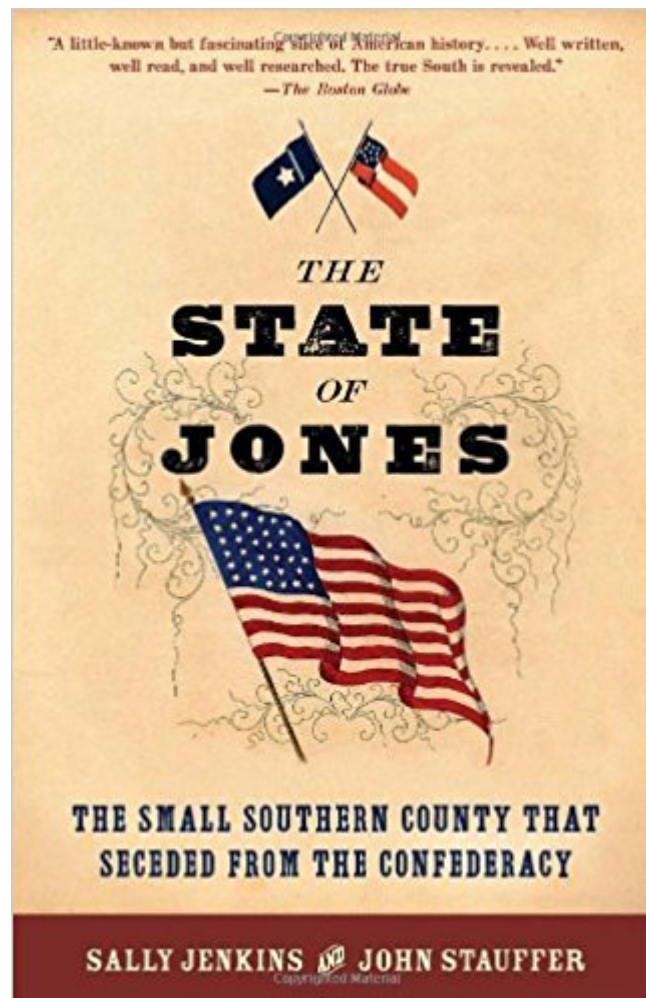




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# The State Of Jones: The Small Southern County That Seceded From The Confederacy



## Synopsis

Covering the same ground as the major motion picture *The Free State of Jones*, starring Matthew McConaughey, this is the "An extraordinary true story of the anti-slavery Southern farmer who brought together poor whites, army deserters and runaway slaves to fight the Confederacy in deepest Mississippi. "Moving and powerful." -- The Washington Post. In 1863, after surviving the devastating Battle of Corinth, Newton Knight, a poor farmer from Mississippi, deserted the Confederate Army and began a guerrilla battle against it. A pro-Union sympathizer in the deep South who refused to fight a rich man's war for slavery and cotton, for two years he and other residents of Jones County engaged in an insurrection that would have repercussions far beyond the scope of the Civil War. In this dramatic account of an almost forgotten chapter of American history, Sally Jenkins and John Stauffer upend the traditional myth of the Confederacy as a heroic and unified Lost Cause, revealing the fractures within the South.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

[www..com/gp/feature.html?docId=1000400211](http://www..com/gp/feature.html?docId=1000400211) > Best of the Month, July 2009: Make room in your understanding of the Civil War for Jones County, Mississippi, where a maverick small farmer named Newton Knight made a local legend of himself by leading a civil war of his own against the Confederate authorities. Anti-planter, anti-slavery, and anti-conscription, Knight and thousands of fellow poor whites, army deserters, and runaway slaves waged a guerrilla insurrection against the secession that at its peak could claim the lower third of Mississippi as pro-Union territory. Knight,

who survived well beyond the war (and fathered more than a dozen children by two mothers who lived alongside each other, one white and one black), has long been a notorious, half-forgotten figure, and in *The State of Jones* journalist Sally Jenkins and Harvard historian John Stauffer combine to tell his story with grace and passion. Using court transcripts, family memories, and other sources--and filling the remaining gaps with stylish evocations of crucial moments in the wider war--Jenkins and Stauffer connect Knight's unruly crusade to a South that, at its moment of crisis, was anything but solid.

--Tom Nissley Sally Jenkins and John Stauffer on *State of Jones* Newton Knight is the most famous Civil War hero you've never heard of, because according to Mississippi legend he betrayed not only the Confederacy but his race as well. In 1863 Knight, a poor farmer from Jones County Mississippi, deserted the Confederate Army and began fighting for the Union after the battle of Vicksburg. It was rumored he even started a separate Unionist government, The Free State of Jones, and for two years he battled the Confederacy with a vengeance that solidified his legend. During his life Knight was hardly regarded as a proper soldier by either side, and after his death his Mississippi backwoods grave went unstrewn with flowers. Many southerners would have preferred to spit on it, and most northerners never recognized that such loyalty to the United States could exist in Dixie. But in truth, this lost patriot was a vital actor in helping to preserve the Union. The recovery of the life of a Mississippi farmer who fought for his country is an important story. The fact that southern Unionists existed, and in very large numbers, is largely unknown to many Americans, who grew up with textbooks that perpetuated the myth of the Confederacy as a heroic Lost Cause, with its romanticized vision of the antebellum South. Some historians have even palpably sympathized with Confederate cavaliers while minimizing and robbing of credit the actions of southerners who remained loyal to the Union at desperate cost. One would never know that the majority of white Southerners had opposed secession, and that many Southern whites fought for the Union. In Tennessee, for example, somewhere around 31,000 white men joined the Union army. In Arkansas more than 8,000 men eventually served in Union regiments. And in Mississippi, Newton Knight and his band of guerillas launched a virtual insurrection against the Confederacy in Jefferson Davis's own home state. "There's lots of ways I'd rather die than being scared to death," Knight said, and it was a defining statement. At almost every stage of his life this yeoman from the hill country of Jones County, Miss., took courageous stands. The grandson of a slave owner who never owned slaves, he voted against secession, deserted from the Confederate Army into which he was unwillingly impressed, and formed a band called the Jones County Scouts devoted to undermining the Rebel cause locally. Working with runaway slaves and fellow Unionists

and Federal soldiers caught behind enemy lines, Knight conducted such an effective running gun battle that at the height of the war he and his allies controlled the entire lower third of the state. This "southern Yankee," as one Rebel general termed him, remained unconquered until the end of the war. His resistance hampered the Confederate Army's ability to operate, forced it to conduct a third-front war at home, and eroded its morale and will to fight. Knight also burst free of racial barriers and forged bonds of alliance with blacks that were unmatched even by Northern abolitionists. He fought as ardently as any man for racial equality during the War, and after, during the terrifying days of Reconstruction, when his life was, if anything, even more in danger. He lived with an ex-slave named Rachel, fathering several children with her (but he never divorced his Caucasian wife, Serena), and worked on behalf of U.S. Grant's Republican administration and against the nascent Ku Klux Klan, and envisioned a world that would only begin to be implemented a century later. Moreover, he operated in an inverted moral landscape in which fealty to country was labeled traitorous, and kinship with blacks was considered morally repugnant. He survived only because he could reload a shotgun before the smoke cleared. As an Alabama Unionist told a Congressional committee in 1866 in testifying about the little appreciated service of southern loyalists, "You have no idea of the strength of principle and devotion these people exhibited towards the national government." Sally Jenkins and John Stauffer (John Stauffer photo © Greg Martin; Sally Jenkins photo © Nicole Bengiveno) --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Starred Review. The grandson of a wealthy Mississippi slave-owner, Newton Knight was an abolitionist and two-time rebel deserter who actively fought against the Confederacy, and bore a large family with a former slave. His home, Jones County, Miss., saw great hardship during the Civil War; Confederate taxes "pushed small farm families, who provided the rank and file foot soldiers, to the brink of destitution." Jenkins (*The Real All Americans: The Team That Changed a Game, a People, a Nation*) and Stauffer (*Giants: The Parallel Lives of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln*) employ painstaking research into Knight and Jones County, resulting in an engaging and original portrait of life inside the Confederacy. Knight's Scouts, formed after Vicksburg set off a wave of rebel desertions, carried out their own justice in Jones County, using clever techniques for communication, intimidation and warfare against the home team ("the sorts of exploits" that Sherman would appreciate). Knight's post-war efforts for equality included building an integrated school; when residents objected to his own mixed-race children attending, however, Knight burned it to the ground. Spanning more than 100 years, this family story brings home the lasting effects of

hate and fear, love and acceptance, as well as the strides that have brought us to where we are.

--This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Wow.. Just now realized my great grand mother and her family (surname of Dossett) lived in Jones County during the era covered by this book. I will be taking trip there soon to explore the status of my relatives further... whether they were among the Confederate resisters there. Prior to this book, I had not known of my g.grandmother's ties to Jones County.... although I did know my father's people (Bullock) came from Covington County, MS (right next door to Jones as it turns out). Discovering this special tie, of course, made the book particularly interesting to me. So glad I happened upon this book.

Coincidentally I chose this of the 3 I bought to read first and it was a good choice. The authors explore the events leading up to the battles of Vicksburg and Corinth that brought about the draft that called up Knight and many of his friends and family. The inept leadership from officers who had bought their commissions, marching them back and forth in endless, meaningless marches that exhausted them before any battles were engaged. And watching these officers living comfortably while the troops were forced to eat little but corn and fatback and to drink water from local streams that made them very sick. Some of them were paroled after the surrender of Vicksburg but their oaths of honor to return home and not fight meant nothing to the officers of the Army of the Confederacy and they were forced back into service. This book covers the tactics of both the Union and Confederate armies and the guerrilla war conducted behind the lines by the racially integrated battalions of the Free Men of Jones and is an excellent introduction to the story. The State of Jones: The Small Southern County that Seceded from the Confederacy

An intriguing page turner. Knight was an amazing man who had to deal with scoundrels his whole life. Fortunately he found some good people along the way. The book gives insight into the hell hole that was the Deep South before, during, and after the civil war, maybe still is some places. Mississippi ought to be thoroughly ashamed of itself. No wonder it's the poorest state in the union. Maybe it should never have been allowed back in the USA.

A good and intriguing read about a little known episode of the Civil War. Nothing much has changed in Mississippi since then. Rabid confederates will hate this book, as it shines a light on how repressive and racist the southern government was. Newton Knight is worthy of admiration.

I was born and raised in Jones County, Mississippi. I am 78 yrs old and recognize many names in the book. I attended Jones County Junior College in Ellisville and no one ever talked of this part of history. I knew a lot of Knights who must have been related. It is a different take on what the south was fighting for.

Very interesting story of the Civil War. It discussed the corruption of the South Plantation owners. Similar situation also existed in the North. But to hear about the actions of those living in areas dedicated to the north in the southern states was a fascinating story. I found this book extremely a good read for anyone who wants to understand what this country went through during that period. It is a great read on that period of time.

The history of black/white relations in the south is much more complicated than popular culture would have us think. This is mainly the story of Newton Knight, a white yeoman farmer from Jones County, Mississippi. During the Civil War, with the leadership of Newton Knight, Jones County became a center of resistance against the Confederacy. Knight had been conscripted into the Confederate Army, fought in numerous battles, and deserted. He, like many others, maybe the majority, in Jones County had no common cause with the Confederacy. The county (where I was born) was not well-suited to commercial farming. While there were slaveowners, the county did not prosper in the southern economy and had no stake in preserving the institution. Newton Knight in particular opposed slavery and found better reason to fight against the Confederacy than for it. He organized a guerilla band that protected other resisters, raided Confederate supplies and troops, and did what he could to hinder the secessionist cause. He also led what amounts to two families, one with his wife Serena, and another through his relationship with former slave Rachel. A movie, *The Free State of Jones*, is to be released soon, telling the story of Newton Knight.

This is the first time that I've seen the movie and then read the book. For this book, I would strongly suggest that you read the book (before or after you see the movie) to get a complete / detailed account of a very important segment of American History. All Americans should read this book to understand the "shaping" of present day Race Relations in America!

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