



Cumberland Blood: Champ Ferguson's Civil War

Thomas D. Mays

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By the end of the Civil War, Champ Ferguson had become a notorious criminal whose likeness covered the front pages of *Harper's Weekly*, *Leslie's Illustrated*, and other newspapers across the country. His crime? Using the war as an excuse to steal, plunder, and murder Union civilians and soldiers.

Cumberland Blood: Champ Ferguson's Civil War offers insights into Ferguson's lawless brutality and a lesser-known aspect of the Civil War, the bitter guerrilla conflict in the Appalachian highlands, extending from the Carolinas through Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia. This compelling volume delves into the violent story of Champ Ferguson, who acted independently of the Confederate army in a personal war that eventually garnered the censure of Confederate officials.

Author Thomas D. Mays traces Ferguson's life in the Cumberland highlands of southern Kentucky, where—even before the Civil War began—he had a reputation as a vicious killer.

Ferguson, a rising slave owner, sided with the Confederacy while many of his neighbors and family members took up arms for the Union. For Ferguson and others in the highlands, the war would not be decided on the distant fields of Shiloh or Gettysburg: it would be local—and personal.

Cumberland Blood describes how Unionists drove Ferguson from his home in Kentucky into Tennessee, where he banded together with other like-minded Southerners to drive the Unionists from the region. Northern sympathizers responded, and a full-scale guerrilla war erupted along the border in 1862. Mays notes that Ferguson's status in the army was never clear, and he skillfully details how raiders picked up Ferguson's gang to work as guides and scouts. In 1864, Ferguson and his gang were incorporated into the Confederate army, but the rogue soldier continued operating as an outlaw, murdering captured Union prisoners after the Battle of Saltville, Virginia.

Cumberland Blood, enhanced by twenty-one illustrations, is an illuminating assessment of one of the Civil War's most ruthless men.

Ferguson's arrest, trial, and execution after the war captured the attention of the nation in

1865, but his story has been largely forgotten. *Cumberland Blood: Champ Ferguson's Civil War* returns the story of Ferguson's private civil war to its place in history.

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