

**THE
CONFEDERATE
STATES OF
AMERICA**

What Might Have Been

ROGER L. RANSOM



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PREFACE

THIS IS A BOOK about what might have been. It contemplates a world that never existed. A world where Pickett's charge, if it occurred at all, was a stunning success, not a disastrous failure. A world where the Confederate States of America emerged from the American Civil War as a full-fledged nation. A world that is unlike the one we live in today. It is a world that has intrigued me since I was a boy of fifteen.

In the summer of 1953 I checked a novel entitled *Bring the Jubilee Again* out of the local library.¹ It is a story written by Ward Moore that relates the adventures of a young man named Hodge Backmaker, who grew up in a United States that had lost the Civil War. "How well I remember my mother and father talking bitterly of how the war ruined everything," writes Hodge, "they were speaking of . . . the War of Southern Independence which still, nearly 40 years later, blighted what was left of the United States." The "Peace of Richmond," Hodge observes, "was a just and even generous disposition of a defeated foe."² Nevertheless, the victors forced the losers to pay heavy indemnities and made territorial demands that left the United States destitute. The Confederacy, by contrast, proceeded to conquer Mexico and eventually ruled over an empire that stretched from Alaska to the southern tip of South America.

As the story unfolds, Hodge, who is studying to be a historian at a

small Pennsylvania college, gets involved in a bizarre experiment to transport people back in time. Hodge volunteers to be the first major test of the machine. The machine works, and he is transported through time to the afternoon of July 2, 1863, on a road just outside the town of Gettysburg. In the course of wandering around, Hodge encounters some Confederate soldiers on their way to take up a position on Little Round Top, one of two hills at the southern end of the Confederate line of battle. Hodge has agreed as part of the experiment that under no circumstances is he to become involved in any actions while he is in the past. But the Rebel soldiers accost him and insist he is a Union spy. From there things go badly for the Confederates. Their commander is killed in an argument over what to do with Hodge, and the men elect not to occupy the position on Little Round Top. Years later Hodge recalls his experience on the following afternoon when he witnessed the final day of the Battle of Gettysburg: "All my life I'd heard of Pickett's charge on the third day. Of how the disorganized Federals were given the final blow in their vitals. Well, I saw Pickett's charge on the third day and it was not the same charge in the historic place. It was a futile attempt to storm superior positions (positions, by established fact, in Lee's hands since July first) ending in slaughter and defeat. All because the North held the round tops."³ With that, Hodge Backmaker is trapped in a world where the South has lost the Battle of Gettysburg.

In the years since I first read *Bring the Jubilee Again* I have felt the urge to create my own version of what might have happened if the South had won the American Civil War many times. When I got to graduate school in the 1960s, I learned that my childhood fascination with what might have been not only had a very fashionable name—counterfactual analysis—but was also actually one of the cornerstones of the "new economic history" taught by Douglass North at the University of Washington. Somewhere in my subconscious I knew that I had found my calling. I remained a closet counterfactual historian

while teaching in the economics departments at the University of Virginia and the University of California at Riverside for the next twenty years. When I moved from the economics department to the department of history at Riverside in 1985, I promised myself that someday I would write a book examining a counterfactual world in which the South won the Civil War.

Several years ago I volunteered to teach an introductory course on the twentieth-century world. Explaining the global history of the twentieth century to undergraduates gave me a new perspective on what matters in history. As I pored over the materials preparing to teach that course for the first time, I was struck by how little attention the American Civil War has received as a historical turning point in the textbooks on world history. The more I thought about it, the more I became convinced that in Lincoln's words, the war was a struggle for the "whole family of man." My objective in constructing a counterfactual world in which the South won the war, therefore, is not only an attempt to satisfy the curiosity that we all have about what might have been but is intended also to demonstrate that the American Civil War was both an important turning point in American history and a decisive event for the course of world history.

One of the problems facing those who would write a history of what might have been is that there are no historical records to document a counterfactual world. I have therefore had to draw upon both my own imagination and the speculations of many other scholars. In this age when cries of plagiarism echo through the halls of academe, I have taken care to document my debts to other people's work. The one exception to this rule is my own work—much of it in collaboration with Richard Sutch—which forms the intellectual foundation for many of the arguments in the book. Let me acknowledge at the outset, therefore, that ideas that Richard and I have developed over the course of three and a half decades of research on the economic history of the United States permeate the text of chapters 1 through 4.⁴ Our

collaboration is founded on a friendship that dates back to the year we spent at Berkeley in 1967–68. My intellectual debt to Richard is too enormous to calculate.

Among the many legacies of my work with Richard Sutch was the creation of the maps of county-level data in chapter 1 of this book. More than a decade ago Richard and I hired Dovey Dee, an art student who happened to have a talent for working with GIS files, to create county-level base maps for the decennial censuses taken in 1840 through 1880. Using the Atlas Graphics program, we have been able to build computerized maps from the published data of the 1860 census published by the U.S. Census Bureau. The physical and political maps of chapters 2 through 5 are of more recent vintage; they were constructed using computerized maps available from Digital Wisdom, Incorporated, in Tappahannock, Virginia. I appreciate the assistance of the technical staff at Digital Wisdom in providing me with a set of customized Mountain High Maps. I am also greatly indebted to Dave Scharfenberg, who provided me with a customized computer that could handle the enormous files that the maps demanded.

For the past decade my friends, students, colleagues, and I have amused ourselves with speculations about a world where Southern dreams came true in 1865. My debt to those who offered even the most casual comments on those thoughts is considerable. If nothing else, their interest and suggestions fed the enthusiasm that kept the project going. Among those who deserve special credit is a cadre of faculty colleagues and graduate students here at UCR who offered comments over a long period. The most persistent of these include: Michael Bonner, Kimberly Earhart, Tom Cogswell, Peter McCord, and John Neff. My longtime friend and editor at Cambridge University Press Frank Smith deserves a vote of thanks for the encouragement and editorial suggestions he offered during the painfully slow period of gestation while this project was maturing.

In the summer of 1998 I circulated a manuscript for an article dealing with the consequences of a Southern victory in the Civil War that

eventually appeared in *Civil War History*. That manuscript was my first attempt to put my ideas about a counterfactual war down on paper, and the favorable reaction it received encouraged me to continue my efforts to construct the imaginary world described in this book. Among the many people who offered helpful feedback on that manuscript, and the various drafts and presentations that followed, were: Richard Bensel, Stanley Engerman, Eric Foner, Michael Holt, John Hubbell, James Huston, Frank Lewis, Rebecca Manes, James McPherson, John Majewski, Peter Temin, and Gavin Wright.

The people at W. W. Norton, particularly Steve Forman, who went through the entire manuscript with a fine-tooth comb and offered countless helpful suggestions, have been generous with their help. Sarah England provided the editorial and production assistance that is essential in turning a manuscript into a finished book.

Finally, my wife, Connie, was, as always, my greatest fan and one of my best critics. Connie read the penultimate draft of the book in its entirety and offered invaluable advice from someone who is *not* wrapped up in Civil War history. Her enthusiasm for pursuing this task at times proved to be more than I could handle. On several occasions I had to remind her that she could read much faster than I could write.

Thanks to her efforts and those of so many others, the final draft is much improved.

—Roger L. Ransom
Riverside, California
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