**Thanks to Rhoda Sneller for hosting our website**

**Des Moines Civil War Roundtable**

# September 2024
# Headquarters District Iowa
# General Order No. 494

- The **First meeting** of the Fall campaign will be **September 4** at the **Machine Shed Restaurant**
  The bar will open at 5:30 with the meal served at 6:30.
- Our program **Jeff Kleuever (DMCWRT) Freedom Will Be Theirs by the Sword: US Colored Troops at New Market Heights**
- Meal **Hickory Smoked Chicken and Pork Loin $24.00**
- **Reservations & payment will be accepted until September 1**

By command of Brigadier General Gordon McKenzie

Ronald R. Nurmi
Colonel & Adjutant
email- dmcwrt@gmail.com
1424 E Walnut St #4 DM 50316

**Our web address www.dmcivilwar.com**

**For many it is time to renew your membership in the DMCWRT.**
**$30.00 Newsletter via email**
**$35.00 Newsletter via USPS**
**$40.00 for Family**

Payments can be combined with your dinner reservation.
Send to--
Ron Nurmi
1424 E. Walnut Street #4
Des Moines IA 50316
or notify me by
email—dmcwrt@gmail.com
phone 515-491-3626

I will have a list at the end of the Newsletter for those whose membership expires in the fall.

## A Review of The Demon of Unrest by Ranney Ramsey

# Erik Larson
# *The Demon of Unrest: A Saga of Hubris, Heartbreak and Heroism of the Dawn of the Civil War* 2024, Random House

Recommendation: Strongly recommend for Readers wanting an interesting narrative of Great Winter of Secession

What's It About? The author writes a thoughtful account of the Great Winter of Secession. This is the period from November, 1860, to April, 1861; from the election of Abraham Lincoln to the conclusion of the attack upon Fort Sumter.

Who Wrote It? Erik Larson is a professional writer who likes to "tell a good story". He is well known for his authorship of *The Splendid and the Vile*. His work reflects care in drafting a story that is based on historical evidence.

What were the Strong Points of the Story?

The story follows the chronological timeline from the Election to the maturity of Rebellion. Larson's skills as a novelist [equivalent to a professional storyteller] endow the timeline with suspense and a genuine sense of the openness of history to the participants. An additional useful technique is Larson's references to the Code Duello -linked to the Southern sense of honor - as a way of looking at the stages of the crisis.

The episodes are made significant by profiles of key Characters including President Abraham Lincoln, Edmund Ruffin, Secretary of State William Seward, Governor Pickens of South Carolina, Senator James Hammond of South Carolina, Mary Boykin Chestnut, and Major Robert

Anderson. These Characters provide the Reader with insight into the prejudices and assumptions that are the basis for momentous decisions that prove to be catastrophic for the South.

The importance of Seward's independent negotiations with the commissioners of the so-called Confederate States of America is better detailed than in other accounts. Major Anderson's command decision to evacuate Fort Moultrie is given due credit as significant for the development of the crisis. James Hammond's personal indiscretions are explained in detail. The ubiquitous presence of Edmund Ruffin rivals the appearances of 'influencers' on MSNCB and Fox News. Lincoln's desperate but sometimes fumbling attempts to keep Fort Sumter occupied are also evident.

Prospective readers may appreciate a comparison of Larson's work with three other accounts:
- A standard account by James McPherson in the *Battle Cry of Freedom* [1989]
- William Freehling's *The Road to Disunion, Volume II* [2007]
- Maury Klein's *Days of Defiance: Sumter, Secession, and the Coming of the Civil War* [1997]

These other accounts were written by academic historians; each provides a distinctive emphasis that can complement Larson's account.

McPherson emphasizes the Great Winter of Secession as the triumph of a Counter-Revolution.

He explicitly draws upon the work of the historian, Arno Mayer, for this perspective. Mayer's work on European history argues that the collapse of the European monarchies in the 20 th century [resulting in World I and II] resulted from an attempt to pre-emptively forestall the success of European regimes based on democracy, capitalism and urban cultures that threatened the extinction of the ancien regimes.

Likewise, the Secession of the Southern States was a counter-revolution against the electoral success of the newly formed Republican Party and its hostility to Slavery. At the state level, he emphasizes the division in South Carolina between 'Cooperationists', 'Ultimationists', and 'Conditional Unionists' as rival factions following Lincoln's election. By contrast, Larson presents divergent views through his choice of Characters using their writings or speeches to

present these political divisions.

Freehling's contribution is the emphasis he places on the '1860 Association' in Charleston, South Carolina. He argues for the importance of this group of Charleston planters, politicians and merchants in being at the right place at the right time to swing South Carolina toward immediate Secession and away from joint action with other States or – above all – away from taking a "wait and see" attitude toward the Lincoln administration. The '1860 Association' included chiefly: John Townsend, a coastal planter; Andrew Magrath, a state jurist; and Robert Gourdin, merchant and activist. Larson's account does not include these personages as Characters – Magrath and Gourdin are mentioned as associates or friends of other Characters [e.g., Mary Boykin Chestnut or Governor Pickens].

Klein presents Rival administrations stumbling toward each other often relying on the growing importance of Press reports. At this time, Northern and Southern newspapers dominated the media of public discourse. Klein emphasizes the importance of the newly formed Associated Press in collecting and distributing information to local newspapers in the North. There is a symmetry here between 20 th century accounts of governments watching CNN to discover what is taking place.

Along this separate vein of insights, both Larson and Klein devote special attention to William Russell – the visiting correspondent of the London Times – and a personification of the importance of foreign recognition for the South.

Klein captures the 'fog of peace' as the Lincoln and Davis administrations struggle to discover and interpret each other's intentions. This contrasts with Larson's Characters who are presented generally as captives of their 'ideological bubbles'. These 'bubbles' were protected by decades of de facto censorship in the South.

# REPUBLICANS PRESS FOR PEACE

Thanks to Walter Coffey and his The Civil War Months

Since the season's campaigns began in May, the Federal military had sustained a horrific number of casualties with little to show for it. This along with recent failed peace talks made this the most demoralizing month of the war for the North. While the Radical Republicans condemned President Abraham Lincoln for not waging harsher war on the South, conservative Republicans and pro-war Democrats urged Lincoln to try negotiating peace once more.

War Democrats argued that the Confederates would be willing to discuss restoring the Union if Lincoln would only drop his insistence on slave emancipation, even though Jefferson Davis had clearly insisted on Confederate independence. An editorial in a Democratic newspaper declared, "Tens of thousands of white men must yet bite the dust to allay the negro mania of the President." A Connecticut soldier voiced the sentiment of many comrades by writing, "Is there any man that wants to be shot down for a niger? That is what we are fighting for now and nothing else."

Even conservative Republicans called making emancipation “a fundamental article” for peace a “blunder” because it “has given the disaffected and discontented a weapon that doubles their power of mischief.” Knowing that he needed conservatives and War Democrats for reelection, Lincoln wrote a letter stating, “If Jefferson Davis… wishes to know what I would do if he were to offer peace and re-union, saying nothing about slavery, let him try me.” However, Lincoln ultimately decided not to publish this letter.

Horace Greeley, influential editor of the *New York Tribune* who had pushed so hard for Lincoln to negotiate a peace in July, continued to press the president. Greeley wrote Lincoln on August 9, “I beg you to inaugurate or invite proposals for peace forthwith. And in case peace cannot now be made consent to an armistice for one year.” Greeley did not get a commitment to this proposal, but he did get permission from Lincoln to publish the correspondence regarding the recent peace talks. Navy Secretary Gideon Welles wrote in his diary that “the President expressed a willingness that all should be published” regarding the **failed talks at Niagara Falls**.

Republican boss Thurlow Weed wrote his good friend Secretary of State William H. Seward from New York, “Nobody here doubts it; nor do I see anybody from other states who authorizes the slightest hope for success… The people are wild for peace.” Even Lincoln’s campaign manager at the 1860 Republican convention, David Davis, had to confess: “There is no disguising the fact that people are getting tired of the war. Some of them can’t see a ray of light. I am speaking of good men.” When some advisors urged Lincoln to resign to avoid defeat, Lincoln said, “No. Unless the people have a chance to express their will, the purpose for which the war is being waged will be forfeited.”

Just nine days after urging Lincoln to talk peace, Greeley announced, “Lincoln is already beaten. He cannot be re-elected. And we must have another ticket to save us from utter overthrow.” He urged that Lincoln be replaced as a candidate by Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, or Benjamin F. Butler, “some candidate who commands the confidence of the country, even by a new nomination if necessary.” This came up the next day at the president’s cabinet meeting. According to Welles:

*“Concerning Greeley, to whom the President has clung too long and confidingly, he said today that Greeley is an old shoe,–good for nothing now, whatever he has been. ‘In early life, and with few mechanics and but little means in the West, we used,’ said he, ‘to make our shoes last a great while with much mending, and sometimes, when far gone, we found the leather so rotten the stitches would not hold. Greeley is so rotten that nothing can be done with him. He is not truthful; the stitches all tear out.”*

Hitting closer to home was the National Union Executive Committee, which had nominated Lincoln for reelection. Members met in New York City and issued a statement to Lincoln through Chairman Henry J. Raymond, editor of the *New York Times*. Raymond wrote, “I feel compelled to drop you a line concerning the political condition of the country as it strikes me. I am in active correspondence with your staunchest friends in every state, and from them all I hear but one report. The tide is setting strongly against us…”

Raymond told Lincoln that Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, Oliver Morton of Indiana, and Elihu Washburne of Illinois all reported that their states would vote against him, and Raymond’s home state of New York “would go 50,000 against us tomorrow… Two special causes are assigned to this great reaction in public sentiment, –the want of military success, and… fear and suspicion… that we are not, to have peace *in any event* under this Administration until Slavery is abandoned.”

“Nothing but the most resolute and decided action on the part of the Government and its friends can save the country from falling into hostile hands,” wrote Raymond. As such, he urged Lincoln to send a commissioner “to make distinct proffers of peace to Davis as the head of the Rebel armies, on the sole condition of acknowledging the supremacy of the Constitution–all the other questions to be settled in a convention of the people of all the States.”

Raymond argued that this offer would not mean abandoning emancipation because “if it should be rejected, (as it would be,) it would plant seeds of disaffection in the south, dispel all the delusions about peace that prevail in the North… reconcile public sentiment to the War, the draft, & the tax as inevitable necessities.”

Lincoln read the letter and then authorized Raymond himself to go to Richmond and “propose, on behalf (of) this government, that upon the restoration of the Union and the national authority, the war shall cease at once, all remaining questions to be left for adjustment by peaceful modes.”

Raymond read Lincoln’s message and finally realized that such an effort would be futile. He told Lincoln that “to follow his plan of sending a commission to Richmond would be worse than losing the Presidential contest–it would be ignominiously surrendering it in advance.” Consequently, Lincoln withdrew both the letter and his authorization for Raymond to go to Richmond. From this point forward, Lincoln would insist on both reunion and emancipation as conditions of peace, even if they cost him the election.

## Members with expiring membership and need to renew

Boardman Chase
Bresnan Kenan
Burns Kevin
Campbell Bill
Clingan Tom
Gaard Thomas
Gaard Barb
George Tom
Hanson Darrell
Haskins Robert
Hasson Jerry
Hayhurst-Thomas Susan
Hipp Dr Michael
Hobbs Todd
Hobbs Deb
Kavanagh Colin
King Peter
Kline Marie
Kramer John
Larson Joyce
Liepa John
McKenzie Gordon
Morgan Candy
Nurmi Ronald
Ramsey Ranney
Rasmussen Jim
Rittel Dan
Rittel Mary
Sandstrom Harry
Sherman Bill
Swartzendruber Roberta
Swartzendruber Daniel
Springer John
Swartz Kevin
Voy David
Tayner Randie
Wayne Dr. Kenneth
Wilson Marv