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Simmons's "Pursuing gold: A novel of the Civil War" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Simmons, C. L. (2016). *Pursuing gold: A novel of the Civil War*. Plymouth, MA: Elk Lake Publishing, Inc. 388 pp. \$12.99. ISBN 9781944430764

Can you imagine the personal struggle of Christian Tennesseans after the state chose to secede from the Union in order to uphold slavery? Cynthia Simmons describes the day to day conflicts of two young people caught in this nightmare.

Chattanooga was a fairly cosmopolitan town, although not particularly large. While Tennessee was part of the Confederacy, during the time frame of this story, Chattanooga was home to both Union and Confederate citizens and soldiers.

Mary Beth Roper's father is dying of heart-failure. He has been a founding partner in Chattanooga's C&R Bank. Mary Beth nurses her father with homemade herbal medicines and constant watching. She has taken Confederate boarders into her home to help provide some needed income. Mary Beth confronts soldier-boarders who treat her black employees as their personal slaves. She fends off the unwanted attentions of visiting officers. During the course of the novel, Mary Beth uses her bookkeeping skills to audit recent C&R Bank records and comfort wounded soldiers in the town hospital.

Twenty-one years old and inexperienced, Peter Chandler attempts to run the C&R Bank after his father's sudden death. It would have been hard enough to take over the bank during peace time, the war brought much bigger challenges. Politicians demand bank "loans" to support the Confederate cause. Scoundrels present fake bonds, looking for the bank's backing. Counterfeiters produce currency bearing Peter's authorization. And someone inside the bank has been embezzling funds very successfully.

Cynthia Simmons' engaging story suffers from poor editing and a somewhat stilted writing style. This reviewer would strongly encourage Simmons to engage a vigorous editor to help her present this remarkable fiction in a format that will draw in both young and old readers. This is a story and a history that deserves broad readership. Congratulations to Cynthia Simmons for producing an excellent concept.

Reviewer

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