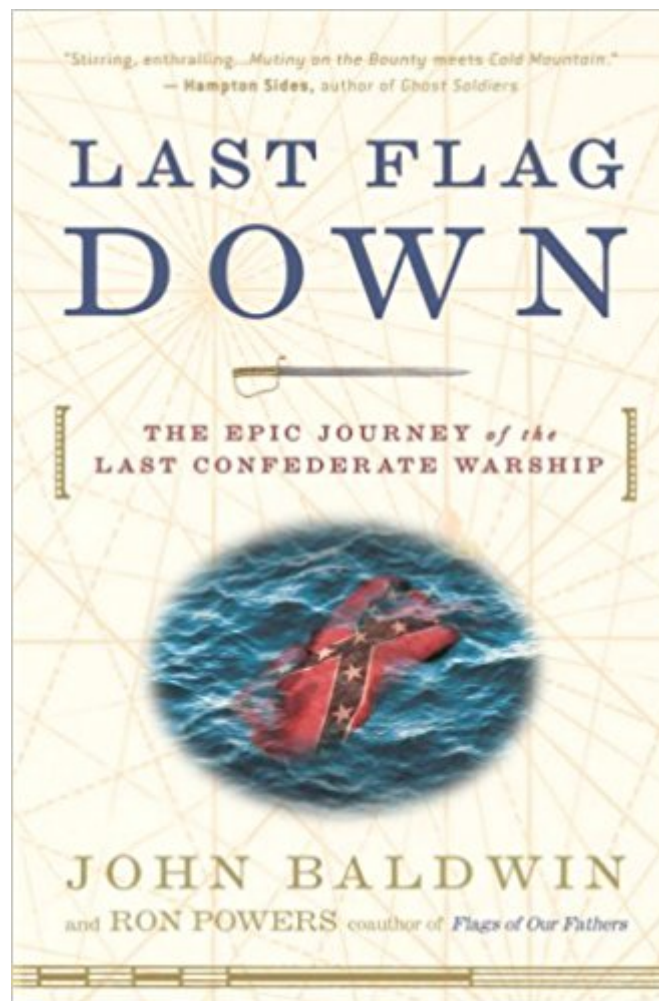




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Last Flag Down: The Epic Journey Of The Last Confederate Warship



Synopsis

As the Confederacy felt itself slipping beneath the Union juggernaut in late 1864, the South launched a desperate counteroffensive to shatter the U.S. economy and force a standoff. Its secret weapon? A state-of-the-art raiding ship whose mission was to prowl the world's oceans and sink the U.S. merchant fleet. The raider's name was Shenandoah, and her executive officer was Conway Whittle, a twenty-four-year-old warrior who might have stepped from the pages of Arthurian legend. Whittle would share command with a dark and brooding veteran of the seas, Capt. James Waddell, and together with a crew of strays, misfits, and strangers, they would spend nearly a year sailing two-thirds of the way around the globe, destroying dozens of Union ships and taking more than a thousand prisoners, all while continually dodging the enemy. Then, in August of 1865, a British ship revealed the shocking truth to the men of Shenandoah: The war had been over for months, and they were now being hunted as pirates. What ensued was an incredible 15,000-mile journey to the one place the crew hoped to find sanctuary, only to discover that their fate would depend on how they answered a single question. Wondrously evocative and filled with drama and poignancy, *Last Flag Down* is a riveting story of courage, nobility, and rare comradeship forged in the quest to achieve the impossible.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Thriller writer Baldwin (*The Eleventh Plague* et al.) joins forces with the prolific Powers (coauthor of *Flags of Our Fathers* et al.) to come up with a fast-reading Civil War true adventure saga centered on a young CSA navy lieutenant. The 24-year-old Conway Whittle, an ancestor of Baldwin's, was

assigned as first lieutenant and executive officer on the Confederate raider Shenandoah late in the war. The ship sailed from London disguised as a merchant vessel and underwent a memorable cruise round the globe, attacking and destroying Yankee merchant ships and whalers. Whittle and company kept up their daring sea raids until August of 1865, when they learned that the war had ended five months earlier. The ship returned to England, having flown the last Confederate flag at sea in defiance of the U.S. Baldwin and Powers recount their tale in a lively, evocative style and may be forgiven for being overly fond of their hero. Whittle, they say, "was as good a man as history seems able to produce: a warrior of courage inconceivable to most people; a naval officer of surpassing calm and intelligence; a seeker after Christian redemption; a steadfast lover; a student of human nature; a gentle soul; a custodian of virtue." (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

By late 1864, it seemed clear that the Confederacy had only a short time to live. In the west, the Army of the Tennessee was a spent, shattered force. In the east, Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was besieged at Petersburg, and the depredations of Sherman and Sheridan brought Southern soldiers to the brink of starvation. In the midst of this gloom, a Confederate ship, the Shenandoah, left Britain and launched a series of remarkably successful raids on Union shipping across vast expanses of open sea. However, cut off from communication with the Southern homeland, the crew was unaware of the surrender of Confederate armies in April 1865. Since the Shenandoah continued raiding, in strictly legal terms the sailors on board were now pirates. When the officers realized this, they began a heroic effort to find a refuge for themselves and their crew. Baldwin and Powers have written a stirring account of one of the more obscure episodes of the Civil War, filled with stunning examples of personal courage in the face of adversity. Jay Freeman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

This is a broadly entertaining, quite informative, accounting of the voyage of the Confederate Raider Shenandoah. I enjoyed the detail, and his constant referencing of Executive Officer Whittle's account... As compared to the nearly coterminous "Sea of Grey" by Tom Chaffin, I thought "Last Flag down" to possibly be more detailed in certain interesting respects, such as with disputes among officers, how frequently 'tricing' was used as punishment, and a slightly better description of the ship. Mr. Chaffin was very good with the report of the battles. This book being better on the internecine struggles on board, therefore, whereas Chaffin more so concentrated on the conquests.

They are both fine books. I was slightly disappointed in "Last Flag ..." by the authors always wanting so seem to favor and side with the view of 1st Officer Whittle. Indeed, this work can be seen as an accounting of the Shenandoah as well as a semi-biographical sketch-cum-tribute to William Whittle. And so personally, I would have rather preferred a more so even-handed description of the events and travel. Yet it was well done.

This book has been written with very little research other than reading the self-serving journal of William Whittle. A check of the bibliography reveals only second-hand accounts from other books - not primary sources like officers' journals and the Official Records. The ship's captain wrote a memoir of the cruise, but only the edited 1960 version has been referred to - and there are numerous differences between the two. The authors did not know the difference between Marine Sergeant George Canning and troublemaker Henry Canning, confusing the two, saying the Marine Sergeant was triced up by Whittle. What kind of research is this? And they take Whittle's word for everything without any attempt to look at situations from the captain's point of view. Whittle was, in fact, a whinging young officer who could not accept the authority of his far more experienced commander who, in the end, saw them through, despite being blackmailed by Master's Mate Cornelius Hunt over a liaison in Melbourne with former captive Lillias Nichols, as has been revealed in the recent book, "The Last Confederate Ship at Sea," a much better read.

Shiloh, Antietam, Gettysburg, Liverpool. Liverpool? I've read a fair amount about the Civil War, but this episode of foreign intrigue is one I had never heard of. With many British merchants, especially in the cotton trade wishing to continue trading with southern states and the humiliation of the War of 1812 still rankling many in power, a chance to finance a Confederate privateer was a tempting prospect. The authors reveal the James Bondian intrigues and daring that lead to the secret building and launching of one of the swiftest ships known out of the quays of Liverpool. The CSS Shenandoah secretly sets to sea and begins, as the book cover declares, "The epic journey of the last Confederate warship". With its sleek lines, fast sail rigging and an ingenious retractable steam powered propeller and tilt-down smoke stake, the Shenandoah became the scourge of Yankee shipping and whaling from the Antarctic to the Arctic. One problem though. She was launched just a few months prior to Appomattox. What with near nonexistent communications and all, the bulk of her multitudinous conquests were made after the Confederacy no longer existed! Based primarily on the logs and diary of the first mate, the reader gets a real feel of honor, pride and sacrifice that ultimately drove the Confederacy quite literally into the sea and into the pages of history. This

reviewer at times became as board as the crew itself during the lengthy and repeated documentation of the tedium of the days, weeks and six months spent at sea, The reader is advised to steam ahead when the doldrums of repetition set in until a fresh breeze fills the sails of exciting narrative. Staying aboard this book until the land of the final port hoves into view, the reader will be well rewarded with the knowledge of a unique footnote to this nation's great struggle to define itself.

A thorough chronicle of one of the most amazing and largely unknown campaigns of the Civil War. Documented largely through the log of the voyage kept by the ship's executive officer, the book chronicles the globe spanning mission of a Confederate States steam and sail powered maritime raider, the Shenandoah. I am a casual student of the Civil War and have read much about the strategies, campaigns and battles but I never before heard about the CSA's attempt to attack the Union via the destruction and disruption of its maritime trade. This book is a great read whether you study the Civil War or just enjoy a good story of an amazing adventure.

This book should be required reading in American History-if that is even taught anymore! I'll wager that very few students today even recognize that word- *taught*. I had never even known of a Confederate Navy that involved the entire GLOBE! What a fantastic tale of actual American history! I say that if young people are exposed to this book they will be so much better for it. We need to stop DUMBING DOWN our children! So there! P-

From 1-10, Last Flag Down deserves a 10. I am a avid reader and it has been quite a spell since I enjoyed a book as much as Last Flag Down. The characters came alive for me and I could not put the book down until I finished. The last chapter brought me to tears and a book has NEVER done that to me.

A good read. The author gets way to technical often throughout the book. But the logbook entries and historical timelines will quite often have you feel as though you're on the deck of the Shenandoah while you're reading.

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