

The Spirits of Bad Men Made Perfect

The Life and Diary of
Confederate Artillerist William
Ellis Jones
Constance Hall Jones

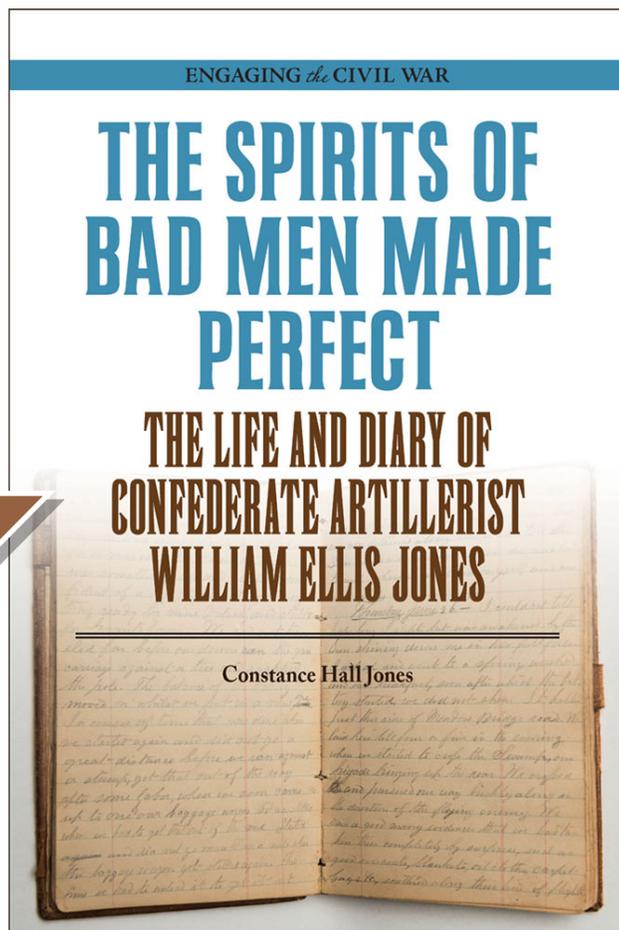
“This book is not a dry chronicling of daily life in the ranks. Rather, Jones used his diary as a confessional, digging deep in his interior world to confront war’s absurdities, and reminding us that scores of Civil War soldiers were deeply introspective when it came to the killing and dying of war.”—Peter S. Carmichael, author of *War for the Common Soldier: How Men Thought, Fought, and Survived in Civil War Armies*

An inside look at the life of a Civil War
artillerist and Lost Cause advocate

This remarkable biography and edited diary tell the story of William Ellis Jones (1838–1910), an artillerist in Crenshaw’s Battery, Pegram’s Battalion, the Army of Northern Virginia. One of the few extant diaries by a Confederate artillerist, Jones’s articulate writings cover camp life as well as many of the key military events of 1862, including the Peninsula Campaign, the Second Battle of Manassas, the Maryland Campaign, and the Battle of Fredericksburg.

In 1865 Jones returned to his prewar printing trade in Richmond, and his lasting reputation stems from his namesake publishing company’s role in the creation and dissemination of much of the Lost Cause ideology. Unlike the pro-Confederate books and pamphlets Jones published—primary among them the *Southern Historical Society Papers*—his diary shows the mindset of an unenthusiastic soldier. In a model of contextualization, Constance Hall Jones shows how her ancestor came to embrace an uncritical veneration of the army’s leadership and to promulgate a mythology created by veterans and their descendants who refused to face the amorality of their cause.

Jones brackets the soldier’s diary with rich, biographical detail, profiling his friends and relatives and providing insight into his childhood and post-war years. In doing so, she offers one of the first serious investigations into the experience of a Welsh immigrant family loyal to the Confederacy and makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Civil War-era Richmond and the nineteenth-century publishing industry.



Paper: 978-0-8093-3761-3
E-book: 978-0-8093-3762-0
\$26.50, 272 pages, 31 illus.
Engaging the Civil War

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SIU SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY PRESS
CARBONDALE

List of Illustrations

Preface

Acknowledgments

1. **Prelude to Soldiering**

Jones's gets his first taste of battle, and expresses his youthful first impression of "the fun."

2. **Stumbling in the Shadows of Giants**

The principal characters and geographies who influenced William Ellis Jones's early life are described. While his Welsh relations were prominent, politically active, and controversial, growing up in Richmond exposed Jones to competing influences.

3. **Before Dixie**

Throughout the late 1850s, as the sectional crisis intensified, Jones's early prospects might have been modest were it not for his father's business and political ambitions, and the good fortune of growing up in close proximity to families of substantially higher social status. The elder's connection to the Central Southern Rights Association of Virginia set the course for how his son's future would unfold once Virginia seceded from the Union.

4. **A True Virginian**

Thomas Norcliffe Jones apprenticed his son, William, to a newly established printing concern in downtown Richmond. As Richmond moved to a war footing, the elder Jones stockpiled commodities and dissolved financial entanglements in advance of conflict, with an eye toward future profits.

5. **Prelude to War**

Described here are Jones's reasons for waiting until the Conscription Act was about to go into effect before joining the Confederate cause, and how he became associated with Crenshaw's Battery, which he joined in March of 1862, naïve to the violence shortly awaiting him and his comrades.

6. **The Civil War Diary of William Ellis Jones, of Richmond, Virginia**

From March through December of 1862, Jones maintained a daily chronical of events—including encounters with locals, the challenges of camp life, sickness and medical treatment, military discipline, witnessed executions, and detailed accounts of nine important battles—throughout the balance of the year. Extensive editor's notes are provided for interpretation.

7. **A Strange and Severe Life**

Following nine months of grueling marches, short rations, illness, bad weather, and horrific violence that claimed the lives of nine of his comrades, Jones and his battery were finally able to rest. Winter quarters were established at Mulberry Place Plantation, the home of Jordan Woolfolk, one of the most influential men in Virginia. Throughout the winter and early spring of 1863, Jones got a close look at exactly what and who he was fighting for.

8. **Bad Men Made Perfect**

Following Richmond's surrender, one of the first businesses to reopen was Clemmitt's printing concern, with Jones as its first employee. Late in 1865, Jones married his longtime sweetheart, setting himself on a course toward rebuilding his life and professional career. This path included embracing a reformed image of the antebellum south and the justness of the Confederate cause, setting the roots of the Lost Cause.

Appendix

Additional Online Appendixes

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