

The Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War - A Nation Divided

When discussing the American Civil War, it is impossible to overlook the role played by the Southern secession commissioners. These individuals were appointed by the seven seceding southern states to travel across the nation, seeking support for their cause and advocating for secession. Their actions and arguments fueled the growing tension between the North and South, ultimately leading to the division of the nation and the outbreak of the Civil War.

Before we delve into the details of the secession commissioners and their impact, let us first understand the causes that led to such a significant rift in the United States.

The Causes of the Civil War

At the heart of the conflict were fundamental differences between the North and South, primarily centered around slavery and states' rights. The North, led by President Abraham Lincoln, sought to prevent the spread of slavery into new territories and preserve the Union. In contrast, the South, influenced by its agrarian economy heavily reliant on slave labor, saw any threat to slavery as a direct attack on their way of life.

Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War (A Nation Divided) by Charles B. Dew (Kindle Edition)

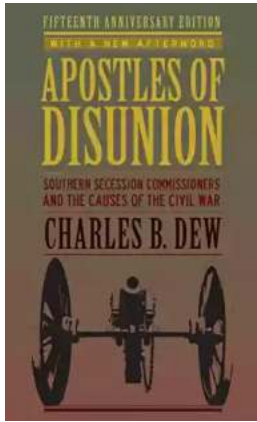
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The debate over slavery became increasingly heated as both sides strongly defended their positions. Southern states, frustrated with what they perceived as growing northern influence, began considering secession as a means to protect their interests.

The Emergence of Southern Secession Commissioners

In the wake of President Lincoln's election in 1860, South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 20th of that year. Shortly after, six more southern states followed suit: Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. The secession commissioners were appointed by these states to travel throughout the United States, persuading other states to join their cause.

These commissioners were prominent political figures and influential leaders within their respective states. Their goal was to gather support for secession, highlight the Southern grievances, and argue for the legality of their actions. They aimed to convince other states that secession was both constitutional and necessary to protect their rights.

The Arguments of the Commissioners

The secession commissioners presented a range of arguments to rally support for their cause. They argued that the North had infringed upon the states' rights outlined in the Constitution, specifically regarding the issue of slavery. They claimed that the federal government had overstepped its boundaries by attempting to regulate and abolish slavery, threatening the economic prosperity and social fabric of the South.

Furthermore, commissioners emphasized that secession was a last resort - a defensive action taken to safeguard their constitutional rights. They emphasized that secession was not an act of aggression but rather a means of preserving the principles upon which the nation was founded.

The commissioners also expressed concerns over the growing power and influence of the federal government. They feared that a centralized government would undermine the sovereignty of individual states, leading to the erosion of the delicate balance envisioned by the Founding Fathers.

The Impact of Southern Secession Commissioners

The efforts of the secession commissioners had a profound impact on the nation. Their speeches and public appearances stoked the already mounting tensions between the North and the South. They successfully convinced some states to follow their path, further deepening the divide within the country.

In response to the growing disunity, President Lincoln and his administration vehemently opposed secession, declaring it unconstitutional. The refusal of the seceding states to back down led to the outbreak of the Civil War on April 12, 1861, when Confederate forces attacked Fort Sumter in South Carolina.

While the commissioners did not single-handedly cause the Civil War, their actions and arguments were instrumental in fueling the conflict. They played a

crucial role in cementing the division between the North and the South, ultimately leading to a war that would claim the lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans.

The Legacy of the Civil War

The American Civil War remains one of the most defining moments in the nation's history. It reshaped the United States politically, economically, and socially. The war led to the abolition of slavery, the strengthening of the federal government, and the reunification of the Union.

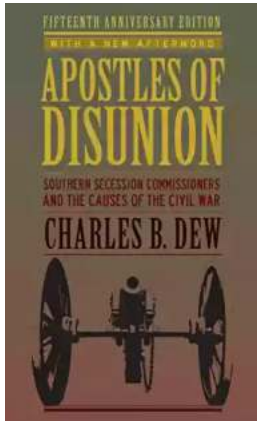
However, it is essential to acknowledge the ongoing impact of the Civil War. Its scars still linger, and the racial and political divisions it exposed continue to shape American society. Understanding the role played by the secession commissioners and the causes that led to the war helps us grasp the complexities of this momentous event in our nation's past.

The Southern secession commissioners and their arguments played a pivotal role in further dividing the North and South during a tumultuous period in American history. Their efforts to garner support for secession heightened tensions and set the stage for the outbreak of the Civil War.

By examining the causes of the Civil War and the impact of the secession commissioners, we gain a better understanding of the complexities of this pivotal moment in American history. Acknowledging the legacy of the Civil War helps us recognize the ongoing struggles and challenges faced by the United States today.

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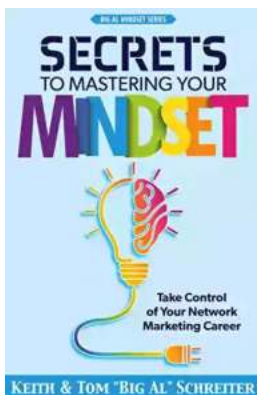
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Charles Dew's *Apostles of Disunion* has established itself as a modern classic and an indispensable account of the Southern states' secession from the Union. Addressing topics still hotly debated among historians and the public at large more than a century and a half after the Civil War, the book offers a compelling and clearly substantiated argument that slavery and race were at the heart of our great national crisis. The fifteen years since the original publication of *Apostles of Disunion* have seen an intensification of debates surrounding the Confederate flag and Civil War monuments. In a powerful new afterword to this anniversary edition, Dew situates the book in relation to these recent controversies and factors in the role of vast financial interests tied to the internal slave trade in pushing Virginia and other upper South states toward secession and war.



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