



1824: The Arkansas War

Eric Flint

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In the newest volume of this exhilarating series, Eric Flint continues to reshape American history, imagining how a continent and its people might have taken a different path to its future. With *1824: The Arkansas War*, he spins an astounding and provocative saga of heroism, battlefield action, racial conflict, and rebellion as a nation recovering from war is plunged into a dangerous era of secession.

Buffered by Spanish possessions to the south and by free states and two rivers to the north, Arkansas has become a country of its own: a hybrid confederation of former slaves, Native American Cherokee and Creek clans, and white abolitionists—including one charismatic warrior who has gone from American hero to *bête noire*. Irish-born Patrick Driscoll is building a fortune and a powerful army in the Arkansas Confederacy, inflaming pro-slavers in Washington and terrifying moderates as well. Caught in the middle is President James Monroe, the gentlemanly Virginian entering his final year in office with a demagogic House Speaker, Henry Clay, nipping at his heels and fanning the fires of war. But Driscoll, whose black artillerymen smashed both the Louisiana militia in 1820 and the British in New Orleans, remains a magnet for revolution. And fault lines are erupting throughout the young republic—so that every state, every elected official, and every citizen will soon be forced to choose a side.

For a country whose lifeblood is infected with the slave trade, the war of 1824 will be a bloody crisis of conscience, politics, economics, and military maneuvering that will draw in players from as far away as England. For such men as Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Sam Houston, charismatic war hero Andrew Jackson, and the violent abolitionist John Brown, it is a time to change history itself.

Filled with fascinating insights into some of America's most intriguing historical figures, *1824: The Arkansas War* confirms Eric Flint as a true master of alternate history, a novelist who brings to bear exhaustive research, remarkable intuition, and a great storyteller's natural gifts to chronicle the making of our nation as it might have been.

From the Hardcover edition.

1824: The Arkansas War Details

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Beau says

I really enjoyed this book. Without spoiling the story, let me say that I enjoyed the real characters such as Sam Houston, Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and Zachary Taylor. I also enjoyed the fictitious characters, especially the Laird of Arkansas, Patrick Driscoll.

The previous book in the series wasn't in my library, so I had to pretend like I knew the alternate history from the first book. It wasn't too much of a stretch, Flint made it almost stand alone.

I thought I was reading a Harry Turtledove book some of the time. Compared to the Grantville / 1632 series, these books have characters who I find broader and deeper. I prefer this series to the other.

If you like alternate histories, I recommend that you find two days and read the 417 pages.

Stephanie says

This is the follow-up to 1812 – The Rivers of War and picks up the story of Sam Houston, Patrick Driscoll and the other characters from the first book a decade or so later. The Confederation of Arkansas is growing and becoming a magnet for freed slaves, displaced Native Americans and others who are not welcomed in the growing Republic of the United States.

This is a pure alternate history novel and while Eric has teamed up with David Weber and others on the 1632 series of alternate history, those have the sci-fi base of the ring of fire which transplanted the characters from 20th century West Virginia to 17th century Europe. This series “turns” on the fact that Sam Houston was not seriously wounded in the war of 1812 and became a driving force in establishing a nation of freed slaves and native American tribes displaced in the war.

The thrust of this story is the issue of abolition and how it will destroy the Southern way of life. The people who were influential in the politics of the day were also slave owners and the feared that the safe haven of Arkansas would encourage more slaves to seek freedom and bring about the abolishment of slavery very quickly. In this story Henry Clay is most capable of garnering enough support to run for President and then calling for an invasion of Arkansas.

I won't give away the ending but you will find it interesting. As with all Flint books his characters are well written and likable. A young, just freed slave becomes a pivotal officer in the Arkansas army and finds himself in love with a girl that at first is unapproachable. The other thing about the characters in this book is that only a few are not actual historical characters. Eric knows his history and it is obvious he has become intimate with many of these people from our past.

If you like Harry Turtledove and other alternative fiction you will enjoy this book. I would strongly recommend reading the first one though since it paves the way for this and makes this one much more enjoyable.

Tina says

Excellent alternate history, a genre that also fits science fiction-- What if there had been an early Arkansas confederacy opposing slavery, composed of former slaves, Cherokee and Creek clans and white abolitionists? Peopled with an fair scattering of historical figures-- James Monroe, Henry Clay, John C Calhoun--and Andrew Jackson, Zachary Taylor, John Brown, Charles Ball and Henry Shreve, the story did a few things for me. First, it allowed one to consider what the US wold look like if slavery and the South were challenged, much earlier than the 1865 date. Flint manages to weave in a few details on women, too-- including a women's council in the confederacy. It is also the first thing I've read since "Johnny Tremayne" back in high school which made war interesting -- about questions of morale and capacity, along with troop movements. A friend always urged me to watch football because it's really a war game. THAT didn't work. This did - perhaps because Flint is never really just writing about the battles.

I also started it as an escape. The news this week, on the Zimmerman(Trayvon Martin) trial makes it not escapist at all, but a salutary putting into context a long and bloody history of oppression- and a pleasant consideration of how it might be challenged.

Joseph Farand says

In the second book of the series, the new nation of the Confederacy of the Arkansas has become a haven for freed slaves, abolitionists and Indian tribes forced out of the United States. The upcoming presidential elections of 1824 will play a pivotal role in its future since Arkansas and slavery are both hot issues with the candidates - Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay and John Calhoun. This is where a major divergence in Flint's history occurs - in our history Clay allied with Adams to make Adams president, here Clay becomes president with the support of the Southern states concerned about Arkansas. This plunges the United States into a war with Arkansas with surprising results. Flint creates a completely plausible alternative history in a fast-paced story with dozens of major characters most of whom are actual historical figures. The action is described in vivid detail whether its during the 19th century political process or on the battlefield. Highly recommended and I'm looking forward to the next book in the series.

Carolyn Fitzpatrick says

The Confederation of Arkansas is an independent nation populated by free blacks and five Native American tribes, and its existence is resented by pro-slavery factions in the US. The historical characters who inhabit this hypothetical situation are vividly portrayed - JQ Adams, Andrew Jackson, Sam Houston, William Henry Harrison, Henry Clay, Zachary Taylor...

Bryan says

As a sequel to 1814, it is good. If you are just looking to continue with the characters introduced in 1814 then it is absolutely worth the read. On its own, however, it is an incomplete narrative. What the book says its about and what it is really about are two different things. I looked online and could find no word of a third novel in the series. If that is the case, this book is even worse, because it ends smack dab in the middle of most of the major plotlines that it introduces.

A good part two in a trilogy, but by no means is it good if this is a two part series.

Kris says

1824 is a sequel to 1812: The Rivers of War (Trail of Glory, Book 1), and if you enjoyed that book, you'll enjoy this one. Taking place ten years after the end of the first book, it explores the new nation that's come into existence in that time, and the effect it has on the US, especially with regards to slavery. My only disappointment is that while the title is the Arkansas War, it really only covers the beginning of that war, so it feels somewhat unfinished. Maybe the author plans to write a third book to wrap things up?

Justin says

a page turner; i could not stop reading once i started. the ending was a bit abrupt since the war between the US and the Confederacy of Arkansas was not resolved.

there are plenty of alternate universe / points of divergence but that did not detract. in fact, it made me actually go look up the original characters and how they lived and died.

unfortunately, no sequel has been planned(?).

Martin says

I'll try the pros and cons approach this time, just for a change.

Pro:

Flint's been writing for a while now, and I believe he's getting better at it. In the past I've found his style to be heavy-handed, prone to repetition and very unsubtle handling of emotion. There's elements of this remaining here, but it seemed much reduced in frequency and degree.

A lot of historical research has clearly gone into this - it's not a period I know well, but as luck would have it I've recently done a bit of reading on it, and what little I knew from that was correctly presented in the book.

Related to that, Flint clearly doesn't just want to use his premise to set an adventure story in a differently-evolved America; he tries hard to show why those differences have arisen, advancing both political facts and personalities in support of his vision. This isn't particularly surprising, for anybody who's been reading his better known 1632 series, but it's something that I like in theory - the practice does have some drawbacks, as we'll see below.

Finally, the plot itself did keep my interest.

Con:

A minor one first: it's been a long time since the first entry in this series was published, and no allowance is made for this. Given the heavy referencing of previous events, I think the omission of a recap of those events

is a disservice to readers.

The biggest issue though is related to the research and ambition of the series. There's simply too much talk, and the plot can't carry a book of this length. While I applaud the desire to produce a book that's more than a series of battle descriptions, I think the determination to delve into every single facet of 19th century American politics is misguided. At times it feels like the author is bragging, as he throws in yet another detail about some minor person or has somebody launch into a speech in support of some policy or another (how many people these days care enough about the debate over a national bank that they want to read rehashed contemporary speeches about it?).

And to finish on a nitpick, I was very unconvinced by the description of the climactic battle. It seemed to me that the way it unfolded made no sense in a military context, but was set up simply to give the reader some emotional satisfaction. No real explanation was given as to why the leaders involved would have made those choices.

Overall though, as the rating showed, I did like it - more than I do most of the 1632 books, which have in spades all the disadvantages described here, with few of the good points.

Mickey Schulz says

Immediately after finishing the first free ebook, I raced out and bought this one in hardcopy. Loved it, absolutely loved it, and I'm waiting eagerly for a third installment.

I really enjoy the characterization of Andrew Jackson and Sam Houston. Nothing feels forced or out of character for any of the historic figures.

Michael Brown says

Read part one of this series some time ago and never listed the follow up. An alternate history with the western bank of the Mississippi remaining Indian territory and very disputed. Not a bad story but a bit hard to accept some of the alternate concepts from book one and now two.

Patrick says

Bad, implausible alternate history that revolves around Indians but pretty much relegates them to stock background characters, indistinguishable from one another. And the notion of Andrew Jackson as a progressive force for racial tolerance is flatly ludicrous.

B. Ross Ashley says

Ten years later, I finally get around to reading the second volume of the Rivers of War series. Dammit, it's better than the first! Some of Eric's finest writing.

(It does not hurt that my American hero John Brown is a minor character.)

Someday, Red Bear, you really have to finish this saga.

Amber says

I want, nay, NEED, the next book to come out. The whispers in the aether says there is at least one more story to be told, but Flint is so prolific that I don't know when it will ever happen. This is a worthy sequel to 1812: Rivers of War and if you read the first one and enjoy it (as any bibliophile probably will), you will be very pleased with the progression of this story. The pathos, adventure, and pure emotion in this story grabbed me by the heartstrings. I didn't think it was possible for the series to get better, but it did. Do not read this book first; with some series you can get away with reading out of order, but I don't feel this is one of them.

Mara says

Well, to begin with: I didn't realize this was the second in a series. So the events that led up to the Arkansas Confederacy are a total enigma to me. That didn't help when I began, although it's not uncommon for books to avoid exposition.

In any event, it's an interesting view of alternate history, and I do like the author in general. However, the fact that the Arkansas Confederacy is in no large part Indian was a little annoying considering there were really no indigenous people in any major roles. And Andy Jackson as anti-slavery and essentially backing the Confederacy? I laughed. I had to.

There's also the problem of how abruptly it ended, though the fact I've learned it's part of a series may mean a continuation. However, I doubt it, and the sudden stop in the middle of what was essentially a pre-Civil War of sorts is really quite annoying. Arkansas Post was taken by the Americans, and....what? Nothing? Everyone goes about their day despite the slow advance of an army? That was a little odd, almost as if Flint decided no one cared for anything that happened afterward.

An enjoyable alternate history book, but with flaws.
