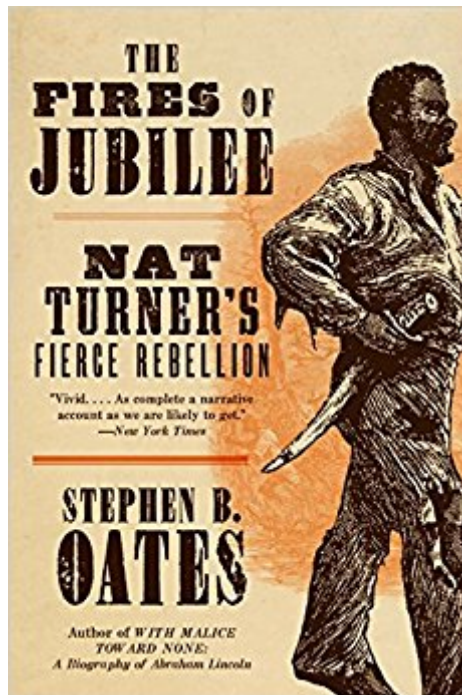




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# The Fires Of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion



## Synopsis

The bloody slave rebellion led by Nat Turner in Virginia in 1831 and the savage reprisals that followed shattered beyond repair the myth of the contented slave and the benign master, and intensified the forces of change that would plunge America into the bloodbath of the Civil War. Stephen B. Oates, the acclaimed biographer of Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr., presents a gripping and insightful account of the rebellion—the complex, gifted, and driven man who led it, the social conditions that produced it, and the legacy it left. A classic now newly reissued for the first time in more than twenty years, here is the dramatic re-creation of the turbulent period that marked a crucial turning point in America's history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“A vivid and excellent narrative account.” • (New York Times) “Oates writes in a vivid... fashion constructing a meaningful historical context.” • (Library Journal) “A vivid and convincing re-creation of the rebellion’s black and white violence, breathing life into chilling scenes of mayhem, against a background of slave reality and slave-holding mentality.” • (Publishers Weekly) “A much needed correction to historical fantasies. ... Grounded in the facts and excellently documented, this volume is essential for students of slavery and of the history of violence in America.” • (FAWN BRODIE, author of *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History*) “A penetrating, moving, gripping, eminently successful and readable account of an important event in American history!” • (Fort Worth Star-Telegram)

Stephen B. Oates is a professor emeritus of history at the University of MassachusettsâAmherst. His books include *Let the Trumpet Sound: A Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* and *With Malice Toward None: A Life of Abraham Lincoln*. Oates has been awarded numerous honors, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, Robert F. Kennedy Book Award, and Nevins-Freeman Award of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago for lifetime achievement in the field of Civil War studies.

I bought this because I saw "Birth of a Nation," and wanted to know how much of it was based on the historical record, and how much was Hollywood embellishment. Fascinating account of an oft overlooked event in American history. The account of the rebellion itself is fast paced. Highly recommended, with an interesting postscript from the writer on his travels to the site. Very readable and balanced in its dealings with all parties involved.

Nat Turner believed he was inspired by God to lead the slaves out of bondage through violent upheaval. He drew on such passages of the Bible as Ezekiel in the Old Testament to justify the killing of men, women and children. In August, 1831, Nat's insurgents went on a nightly rampage from farm to farm in Southampton County, Virginia, killing approximately 60 whites, with axes and other weapons, even beheading children. The insurgency was quelled not long thereafter by federal troops and state militia. In addition, white vigilantes responded by torturing, burning, and killing blacks. At least 120 of those killed were innocent blacks. Nat Turner did, however, choose to spare the lives of some whites, including the slave-owning family of his childhood playmate, John Clark Turner, as well as a poor white family whom he identified with the downtrodden. Further, Nat abstained from the use of alcohol and would become infuriated whenever his followers got drunk. Nat also forbade his followers from engaging in raping. Nat believed he was doing God's will in revolting violently against slavery, preaching to his followers the biblical passage that the first shall be last and the last first. He remained unrepentant to the end, through his trial and up to the time of his hanging. Some southern whites chose to blame Nat's actions on the influence of religious preachers and abolitionists, rather than focusing on the evils of slavery. There never was another slave rebellion of the ferocity and magnitude of Nat's rebellion. Professor Oates goes on to explain the legacy of Nat Turner's rebellion and the ramifications it had on a wider scale as the war between the states loomed in the not too distant future. This narrative can make the hair on one's neck stand up straight, while educating the reader on the evils of slavery.

*The Fires of Jubilee* is an historic account of one of the most significant slave rebellions on

American soil. Thanks to Oates exhaustive research, *The Fires...* provides a vivid portrayal of the gruesome deeds that Nat Turner and his band of brothers committed on that fateful day in August of 1831. Nat Turner, as described, was more than a slave. By all standards, he was literate, intelligent and presented himself as a decent and trustworthy slave. Most importantly, he was, as some considered, blessed with divine gifts and was tormented with possessing such power and yet still a slave: "... behind Nat's well-mannered facade was a messianic individual who felt himself driven into some corner of slavery from which there was no return. He was like a powerful angel whose wings were nailed to the floor." (p.41) Nat believed that the brutality he unleashed was for a higher purpose; a 'you shall reap what you sow' exhibition that would somehow reveal the wrongs of slavery. Around the time of the rebellion, Oates frames the role of the abolitionist movement as well as offering insight into the political climate of the day. Both of which contributed to pitting North and South against each other in that critical time period leading up to the most tempestuous season in American History; the Civil War.

I thought that this book (Kindle format) was an excellent account of the event. The author's narrative style made it an easy read despite it's complicated topic. The author's use of detail combined with concise analysis also was impressive. It was also even-handed in its approach to the topic of Turner's rebellion as well as the institution of slavery. I completely agree with an earlier reviewer of this book - if you want to understand the 19th century South, and the Civil War, and the current day South, this book should be read. Overall, I would highly recommend this book to anyone interested in this event and Southern history. Finally, the details of the events are sickening and disturbing, and we owe much thanks to the author for telling this story, as this history should not be repeated.

See the movie then read this book. Great insight and tells the real story. A must read for any history buff.

Good

It came new and I'm happy

Great book!

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