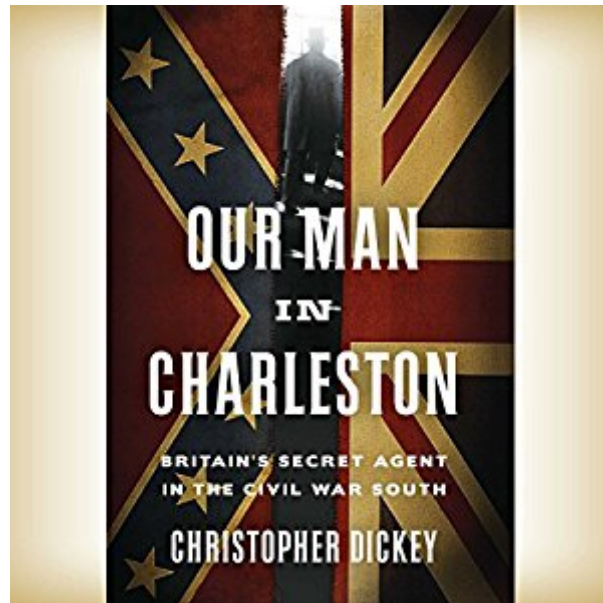


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# Our Man In Charleston: Britain's Secret Agent In The Civil War South



## Synopsis

The unlikely man at the roiling center of this intrigue was Robert Bunch, an American-born Englishman who had maneuvered his way to the position of British consul in Charleston, South Carolina, and grew to loathe slavery and the righteousness of its practitioners. Bunch used his unique perch and boundless ambition to become a key player, sending reams of dispatches to the home government and eventually becoming the Crown's best secret source on the Confederacy. But doing so required living a double life. To his Charleston neighbors, Bunch was increasingly a pillar of Southern society. But to the British government, he was a strident abolitionist, eviscerating Southern dissembling on plans regarding the slave trade. *Our Man in Charleston* is a masterfully told story of an unknown crusader. Award-winning author Christopher Dickey locates Consul Bunch as the key figure among Englishmen in America. Determined to ensure the triumph of morality in the inevitable march to civil war, he helped determine the fate of a nation. Featuring a cast of remarkable characters, *Our Man in Charleston* also captures a decisive moment in Anglo-American history: the pitched battle between those who wished to reopen the floodgates of bondage and misery and those who wished to dam the tide forever.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Well-written, well-said, well-done, Mr. Dickey. A year or so ago, I started reading books written by British authors who wrote about America from a British point of view. It is a totally refreshing way to look at history that you KNOW already. As a history buff, my love of ALL history just grows as the

years go by. Mr. Dickey's story is told after he unearthed tons of primary sources in numerous data digs. The main character, Robert Bunch, slowly evolved out of the author's searching of American and British sources. Mr. Dickey seems to be as surprised as I was that Robert Bunch accomplished as much as he did for the British. The main setting for the story is Charleston, South Carolina. In the decade before the American Civil War, Charleston is captured in great and loving detail. As Robert Bunch, the British consul assigned to Charleston, learns more and more about the very horrible evils of slavery, he commits himself to helping Britain figure a way to eliminate slavery in the Americas. To add a twist to the story, Mr. Bunch must pretend to endorse slavery to help defeat it. In other words, Robert Bunch was a spy for a foreign government. He was not actually against the Union as the Confederacy grew, but since he was a spy he actually was thought by the Union to be against America. The author, Mr. Dickey, tells his story in a way that reads like a spy novel. I kept saying to myself that this is not a Ludlum, or Clancy book of fiction, this was real. We all know that the Union prevailed, the Confederacy lost and that slavery was banished. But do you understand how close other countries came to recognizing the Confederacy or starting a war with the Union? Mr. Dickey shows quite clearly that there were numerous opportunities for things to go horribly wrong.

In "Our Man in Charleston: Britain's Secret Agent in the Civil War South", Christopher Dickey tells the riveting tale of a largely forgotten figure in British - American diplomatic history during the period immediately before and during the American Civil War, one Robert Bunch, who could truly be viewed as someone whose complex family history stretched across two continents. Born in New York City in the 1820s, Bunch's mother was descended from prominent New York families, while his father was a wealthy English arms smuggler who supported Simon Bolivar's revolutionary wars in South America, eventually receiving as a present from Bolivar himself, a vast Colombian estate. An ambitious young member of Victorian Great Britain's diplomatic corps, Bunch arrived in Charleston with the aim of repairing damage done by his predecessor as consul, while seeking to amend or to end a harsh South Carolina law, the Negro Seaman Law, which was an ever present danger to Black British seamen serving aboard ships visiting Charleston harbor. After years of effort Bunch would succeed in having the law overturned, earning the trust and loyalties of many of Charleston's notable citizenry, while detesting in private, the abomination that was American slavery. As Dickey depicts in gripping, often compelling prose, Bunch was a secret agent of the British Empire, seeking to end the clandestine African slave trade that sent scores of new slaves to Cuba and the South, despite the best efforts of a decades-long Royal Navy blockade off the coasts of Africa and South

America.

Our Man In Charleston, by Christopher Dickey 4 of 5 Stars A British Diplomat Spying In the Pre-Civil War South Christopher Dickey's new book "Our Man In Charleston" tells the story of Robert Bunch, the British consul in Charleston, SC in the years prior to and during the Civil War. The book is well-researched and provides an amazing level of detail concerning Bunch's official duties, personal relationships, and covert activities on behalf of Great Britain. Bunch begins as nothing more than an ambitious official in the British diplomatic service. However, he soon finds himself in a unique position to report on Southern political events, attitudes, and motivations in the years leading up to the Civil War. While personally opposed to slavery, Bunch is able to feign sympathy for Southern concerns and maintain friendships with many leading secessionists, reporting on their activities as the crisis develops. The book provides fascinating insights into the intricate political and social factors leading up to secession and war. It explains the many competing and sometimes conflicting attitudes prevalent in the North, the South, and Britain, and how they interacted to produce a tragic conflict. It describes how many Northerners opposed slavery, but some actually financed slave trading expeditions for profit. Many Southerners, despite their support for slavery in America, actually opposed the re-opening of the African slave trade (which had been outlawed decades previously) due to the horrors of the "Middle Passage" slave transports. Others opposed the African slave trade simply because an influx of new slaves would reduce prices and devalue their existing stocks of domestic slaves.

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