



# Last in a Long Line of Rebels

*Lisa Lewis Tyre*

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## **Last in a Long Line of Rebels** Lisa Lewis Tyre

Debut novelist Lisa Lewis Tyre vibrantly brings a small town and its outspoken characters to life, as she explores race and other community issues from both the Civil War and the present day.

Lou might be only twelve, but she's never been one to take things sitting down. So when her Civil War-era house is about to be condemned, she's determined to save it—either by getting it deemed a historic landmark or by finding the stash of gold rumored to be hidden nearby during the war. As Lou digs into the past, her eyes are opened when she finds that her ancestors ran the gamut of slave owners, renegades, thieves and abolitionists. Meanwhile, some incidents in her town show her that many Civil War era prejudices still survive and that the past can keep repeating itself if we let it. Digging into her past shows Lou that it's never too late to fight injustice, and she starts to see the real value of understanding and exploring her roots.

## **Last in a Long Line of Rebels Details**

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Author : Lisa Lewis Tyre

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# From Reader Review Last in a Long Line of Rebels for online ebook

## Susan Alexander says

Struggling with how to explain enduring and insidious racism to your middle school students without their eyes glassing over? This is the book for you! It's funny, mysterious, and moves along at a nice clip. The main character, Lou, is someone both boys and girls will root for. I'm using it in my sixth grade classroom as a companion piece with Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Serious topics wrapped in Lou's accessible, hopeful, Southern charm. And Tennessee football to boot!

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## Alex (not a dude) Baugh says

It's summer vacation 1999 and in the small town of Zollicoffer, TN, Louise "Lou" Mayhew, 12, daughter of the town's junkman, has just bragged to her nemesis Sally Martin that she and best friend Benjamin "Benzer" Zerto have some exciting plans to look forward to. Truth be told, there were no plans at all, except perhaps the birth of Lou's first sibling. So when bookworm Benzer comes to over Lou's house, they two decide pray on an old Bible for something exciting to happen and in return, they promise to start going to church.

But then, they inadvertently overhear Lou's parents and grandmother Bertie talking about the possibility that their 175 year-old home, a large rambling, crumbling three story house that generations of Mayhews have lived in, might be torn down unless they could raise \$25,000 to pay a lawyer to fight for the house in court. Crestfallen by what she overhears, Lou nevertheless decides to try and find a way to save the home she loves so much.

But just to play it safe, Lou pulls out the old Bible to take back the prayer request or something exciting to happen when a letter falls out addressed to Lou's namesake, Louise Mayhew, and dated March 12, 1864. Together with friends Benzer, Franklin and Patty, a plan is hatched to try and get the Mayhew house listed as an historic landmark, which would also get Franklin another Boy Scout merit badge to help in his quest to become an Eagle Scout.

Mrs. Hall, the town's librarian, adds incentive to their house quest by telling them about some rumored gold that had been stolen during the Civil War and, since, Lou's great-great-great-grandfather was the suspected thief, it is believed the gold was hidden somewhere in the Mayhew home. Lou begins to think if she could find the gold, it would really save her house. There's just one hitch - who is George Neely and why is he so interested in the Mayhew house, too?

Together, the friends set about unearthing all kinds of information about the Mayhew family and the role they really played in the Civil War, while unraveling an interesting mystery or two.

Since I love history and historical fiction is my favorite genre, I found myself enjoying *Last in a Long Line of Rebels*, Lisa Lewis Tyre's debut middle grade novel. She begins each chapter with a diary entry by Lou's namesake but it isn't until more than half way into the story that the readers learns their origin. Delaying that information only adds to the mystery surrounding the Mayhew house and the missing gold. In the end, it all gets explained and it is well worth the wait.

Lou, her family and her friends are all great characters, well developed and believable. The kids are spunky

and clever, and really loyal to each other, which is always nice to see in a middle grade book (nemesis is away on a cruise).

There is a lot going on in the novel, besides the possible home demolition. There is the race issue surrounding Issac, a black teen who works part-time for Lou's dad and who is hoping for a scholarship to the University of Tennessee to play football. When Issac is cheated out of the scholarship by a bigoted coach, there are repercussions for him but wonderful community support for Issac.

It may seem odd that the story is set in 1999, but it means that there is limited Internet available for the kids to use and that they really must use their heads to find information in the resources available to them. It also means no cell phones and let's face it, how many times have you been reading a book or watching a movie set in the past and fleetingly wondered why don't the characters use their phones to call for help before you were jolted back to the reality of the fiction you are watching.

FYI - that deal Lou and Benzer made with God - yes, they keep their part of the bargain and they do go to church every Sunday.

All in all, *Last in a Long Line of Rebels* is sure to please readers from start to finish.

This book is recommended for readers age 9+

This book was sent to me by TLC Book Tours

This review was originally posted on Randomly Reading

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## **Kim says**

Being a junkman's daughter isn't always easy for 12-year-old Lou. When Sally, the richest girl at school, teases Lou about her broken-down old house and how she'll be spending the summer sorting scrap metal, Lou prays for some excitement. Her prayer is answered but not the way she hoped. Lou learns that her antebellum home is about to be torn down by the city. It might be old, but it's been in her family since before the Civil War and she loves it.

Lou and her friends, Benzer, Franklin and Patty, have a plan to save the house. They'll get it registered as a National Historic Site. All they have to do is a little bit of research and find some significant event that happened at the house. During the research, Lou discovers that her great-great-great-great grandfather was suspected to be a thief and murderer. Even worse, he was a slave owner! She's so ashamed, she's not sure she wants to dig any deeper into her family history. But she has to save her house because if she doesn't, she'll have to move out of town. She wouldn't be going to the same school as her best friends. Can Lou and her friends solve the mystery of the missing gold and the murder in time to save her house and her family pride?

Written with just the right touch of humor, Tyre's debut novel is rich with unique characters and snappy dialogue. On the surface, this story is a humorous mystery, but the underlying layers of history, genealogy, friendship, loyalty, courage and race relations, make it so much more. I predict *LAST IN A LONG LINE OF REBELS* will be on lots of state award lists soon. Perfect for readers 10 and up.

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## **Terri says**

Louise Mayhew and her friends pray for the summer before they enter middle school to be memorable and exciting. Louise decides God may have an odd sense of what is exciting when she overhears her parents discussing the very real prospect that their small town politicians are going to force her family from their Civil War-era home in the center of town. She vows to do whatever it takes to save her house, the oldest house in Zollicoffer, Tennessee. She and her friends explore the possibility of having the house declared a National Historic Landmark and also search desperately for a legendary horde of missing Confederate gold. Finding the gold would not only clear the name of Louise's great-great-great grandfather, who has long been suspected of stealing the gold he was supposed to be guarding, but would provide the funds to fight the town council in court. Along the way Louise discovers amazing truths about her ancestors and her house as well as painful truths about the racism and prejudice that still exist in her hometown.

Each chapter is introduced by an excerpt from the Civil War diary of the first Louise Mayhew, and the tone of both the diary entries and the contemporary action and dialogue ring true. The action is fast-paced, the light-hearted mystery offers intrigue and comic relief as the young people try to find the missing gold, and Louise and her family and friends are endearingly sassy. This is a winner for readers in grades 4-6.

This book was reviewed from an advance reader's copy provided by the publisher. Hopefully the few typos in the text will be corrected in the published copies.

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## **Yapha says**

Lou lives in the oldest house in a small town in Tennessee. It has been in her family for 175 years. When the town wants to get rid of it, Lou and her friends fight to save it. Together they begin to research the history of the house in the hopes of putting it on the Historic Register. While doing so, they find a story of gold stolen by her great-great-great grandfather during the Civil War that was never recovered. It is presumed to still be somewhere near by. Can they find the gold in time to save the house? And who is this mysterious historian that seems to be following them? An additional plot line deals with the still present racism that pervades their town.

My only qualm with this story is that the African-American point of view is quite limited and the African-American characters feel one dimensional. It focuses on the white kids dealing with their own slave-owning ancestry without looking at it from the other side.

ARC provided by publisher

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## **Debbie says**

Lou Mayhew is a spunky 12-yr-old who is determined to save their historical family house in Zollicoffer, TN. The narrator's voice is so authentic and the reader gets to know all the wonderful and quirky characters along the way. It's also a fun book to read aloud and the southern humor is priceless. The author delicately weaves in the more serious topics of racism, the civil war and, of course, SEC football. I would definitely

recommend this book to both girls and boys in 5th & 6th grade. Not only is it very entertaining, but it opens up some opportunities to discuss choices people make and how they affect history. This book a perfect middle grade story that keeps the reader engaged until the end.

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### **Virginia McGee Butler says**

*Last in a Long Line of Rebels*

Bits of a Civil War diary by Louise Duncan Mayhew in the 1860s, introduce each chapter of Lisa Lewis Tyre's middle grade novel, *Last in a Long Line of Rebels*. That story informs the primary one of present day urgency for the writer's namesake Lou Mayhew as she tries to save her home from being demolished in a case of eminent domain.

In her debut novel, Lisa Tyre sets her story in rural Tennessee where the characters ring true and the family doorbell plays "Rocky Top," the University of Tennessee theme song.

Lou has several issues beside saving her house that are skillfully woven into the mix. There's the richer classmate gloating over her upcoming trip while insinuating that Lou will have nothing interesting to tell at the end of the summer, the embarrassment of discovering that her ancestors were slave owners, the black high school friend shafted by a racially biased coach who recommends a less skilled white player for an athletic scholarship at UT, and the impending birth of a new sibling. She gets her adventure underway with a rash promise to attend church in a last resort prayer and a hope that she and her cronies can find some rumored gold hidden during the Civil War. Her hip grandmother Bertie, who is bound to be up to something, adds additional color.

Near the halfway mark in the novel, Lou discovers the diary. The note at its beginning gives her a connection with its author:

If you find this, my dear friend  
The heartfelt musings I have penned  
Know they belong to me alone  
Until I lie beneath cold stone.  
Louise Duncan

Humor abounds in comments like, "Just my luck. The one time I wanted to hear the preacher ramble on, he couldn't" or "Pastor Brown said . . . that money doesn't buy happiness. I could tell him that being poor ain't no big whoop either." Other lines touch the heart, "It struck me that mothers spend a lot of time saying bye." If you have a middle schooler who loves a good book, buy a copy for a gift. Treat yourself and pre-read it before you give it away. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

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### **Vernon Area Public Library KIDS says**

Lou Mayhew lives in the oldest house in Zollicoffer, TN. The house has belonged to her family since before the Civil War, but that's about to change. There are some folks in town who don't like the looks of her father's junk business, which takes up most of the yard, and they're plotting to condemn the house, demolish it and build offices on the land. It's up to twelve year-old Lou and her best friend Benzer to come up with a plan to save it before time runs out. A Civil War era diary, found hidden in an old box, may just hold the key

to preserving the house as a historical site. But its well-kept secrets might also lead the kids to hidden treasure.

This book would be a great read-aloud for classrooms grades 4-7. It artfully weaves the issues of slavery and modern-day racism into an appealing tale for a wide range of ages. Equal parts adventure and mystery, *Last in a Long Line of Rebels* is a promising debut for Tyre.

Reviewed by Laura Lieske, Youth Services, Vernon Area Public Library

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### **Lauren says**

4.5 stars. A great historical fiction book for kids ages 8-13 that exposes them to the continuing racism and divide below the Mason Dixon line while adding an exciting family mystery going back to the Civil War. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book! The characters are bright and funny, the Mayhew family mystery and hunt for the lost Union gold is riveting and keeps you guessing to the very end! I can't wait to recommend this to kids at my shop.

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### **Ms. Yingling says**

E ARC from Netgalley.com

When Lou Mayhew overhears that her family might lose their home, she is understandably upset, but since the house has been in her family since the Civil War, it's even worse than it could be. Her father runs a junk yard on the property, which is in the middle of town, and there are several people who would like to see the house gone. Lou knows she must do all she can to save it, and uncovers a mystery about some lost gold. Thinking that the money would help somehow, she and her friends start researching the story to find clues to where the gold might have been buried. Along the way, she also finds out upsetting information about her family during the Civil War, and racism persists in the school system when her father's assistant Isaac doesn't get a scholarship because of the coach. Lou's mother is also due to have a baby very soon, adding a level of urgency to her search. Lou wanted the summer to be interesting, but perhaps not as interesting as it is turning out to be!

Strengths: Lou is a well-meaning, hard working character who is facing difficulties in a constructive way. I would like to see more books like that. The house and town are well described, and the supporting characters have enough depth to make them interesting. Lou starts to go to church to fulfill a promise she has made, and I liked the fact that she went, got involved, and enjoyed going to church without anything preachy about religion. Even though I am not religious and wouldn't go to church now, I spent many, many hours involved in youth group activities, and that's not something that is addressed very often in middle grade literature. Weaknesses: Somehow, I still wanted MORE descriptions of the house! Some of the mystery got a little convoluted at the end, but it still worked.

What I really think: The Gilbert Ford cover doesn't work for me, somehow, although I really like his Mr. Lemoncello's Library cover, and several others. For a book set in the South, I liked this much more than I expected to and will probably buy a copy. But that cover... I don't think students will pick it up. Maybe the orange and purple combo?

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## **Kimberly says**

Amigos, if you decide to read this book, I highly encourage you to do it on audio. The narrator is wonderful! I love hearing other accents and dialects, and I definitely found myself trying out a Southern accent as I was listening to this. The grandmother in this book, Birdie, is an absolute delight and I hope I am just like her when I grow up...except still married to my husband. :)

This is a lovely charming book about growing up, solving mysteries, respecting history, fighting racism/injustice, and also locating buried treasure. There are several laugh-out-loud moments and plenty of touching ones as well, although I did not find Lou's parents to be particularly believable. Those two are either on some really good drugs or they are blessed with the patience of saints. My parents would have lost their sh\*t for shenanigans half as bad as Lou pulls off!

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## **Laurie Cariker says**

Great read aloud for fifth grade! Couldn't put it down!

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## **babyhippoface says**

I grew up in a house that had originally been a two-room school house. My parents bought it at auction and converted it into a three-bedroom home that was by no means fancy but held lots of love and laughter over the years. I never looked at it and thought it was not as good as my friends' homes. So what if their bedroom carpet was all one piece? My daddy spent days cutting pieces of different carpet scraps to cover the bedroom floors (there was lots of shag, baby). He worked hard on those carpets, and it didn't really occur to me to think of them as "less". It was our house, and I loved it. That's why I could identify with Lou, who loves her 175-year-old house, sagging roof, peeling paint, and all.

When Lou overhears a conversation about the city taking their home, she determines to do something to stop it. She enlists the help of her friends Benzer, Franklin, and Patty, and together they will do whatever it takes to save Lou's home.

If they could find a way to get the house on the National Register of Historic Places, that would work, but they don't know of anything that would warrant that designation. If they could find the missing Civil War-era gold that Lou's ancestor was rumored to have stolen, that would help, too. But so far all they have found is more trouble than they wanted, and no hope is in sight. Can Lou's house be saved, or will she have to move to a new town and make all new friends?

As a Nancy Drew fan from way back, I really liked this story. I wanted to be there with Lou as she made each new discovery.

Completely believable characters, a stimulating mystery, a dire situation, and exciting connections to the past make this middle grade novel a huge winner.



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## Heather Taake says

It was ok. I liked the idea of it, but was just a little bored in some parts. Might be better for 4th or 5th graders....not my mature sixth grade readers. :)

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## Emily says

I loved Lisa Lewis Tyre's debut novel, *Last in a Long Line of Rebels*. It's such a funny summertime read, perfect for this time of year. My aunt gave me a copy of the book as a Christmas gift since she knew the author. (I know, I'm so late reading this! But hey, my procrastination paid off, because the start of my summer vacation was a great time to read the setting of this story.)

This is a middle grade story about twelve-year-old Lou who is praying for an exciting summer vacation. When she and her friends begin to uncover the mysteries of her 175-year-old house, they end up on a thrilling goose chase for Civil War gold! (Umm can my summer please be that fun?!)

Right away I was swept up in the setting: a hilarious small Tennessee town based upon the author's own experiences as a child. Its history and people were so fun (and reminded me of my own crazy Southern family - ha!) Lou's family was well-meaning and lovable, and I fell right into place with them; it was so easy to be drawn into the story.

Lou's home plays a major role in the story, and was so fascinating. It had been in her family since the 1860s and when it is condemned, she decides to do everything she can to save it. (Understandably so!) All the descriptions - the secret hiding places used for loot, gold, diaries, slaves - had me craving for a house with rich history such as that myself!

What I most loved were the history tie-ins. I loved that the story was a contemporary/historical crossover (sort of; the main year is 1999, but whether or not that's counted as contemporary or historical I don't know. Is 17 years ago historical?) When Lou finds her namesake's Civil War-era diary, she discovers more than she bargained for. I absolutely loved the moral lessons in the story: though Lou's ancestry held both abolitionists *and* slave owners, she learned that it was important to remember her history so as not to repeat it.

Mrs. Tyre combined a fun summertime children's novel with history, race, and prejudice and I was impressed! *four stars!* :) ★★★★★☆

- Emily @ forthebookish.com

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