

# Press Kit

## The Chronocar



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## About The Author



Steve Bellinger is the author of the award winning science fiction novel, *The Chronocar* for Barking Rain Press. He was born and raised on the West Side of Chicago by a single mother who worked nights for a printing company. She would bring home books and magazines to encourage her children to read. This is how Steve discovered Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, and the other masters of classic science fiction. It didn't take long for him to get the itch to write. His stories usually involve ordinary people, and appeal to more than just fans of science fiction. Over the years he has written everything from newspaper articles, comic strips and radio drama to short stories and fan fiction.

An alum of the [Illinois Institute of Technology](#), Steve has worked in technology for over 40 years, from cable TV and satellite communications to computers. He was a free-lance webmaster and software trainer for many years.

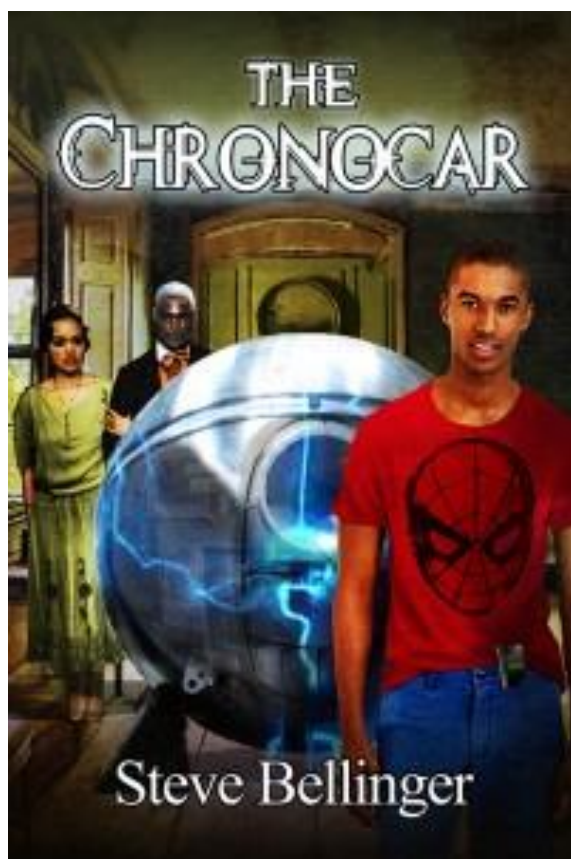
He and his wife are also Whovians (Dr. Who fans) and Trekkies (Star Trek fans). They plan to renew their vows with a Star Trek themed ceremony where he will wear a dress Admiral's uniform and she will be decked out in a leather and lace Klingon wedding dress.

Steve lives in the Lincoln Park community in Chicago with his wife Donna, [business coach](#) and author of [You Lost Me @ Hello, Actionable principles that move you beyond Networking](#), and a cat to be named later.

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## About *The Chronocar*

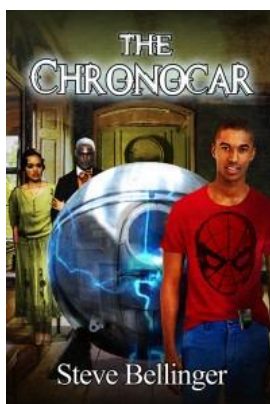


Imagine being born the son of a slave with the mind of a genius. That was Simmie Johnson in the years following the Civil War. After a perilous escape from lynch mobs in Mississippi, he manages to earn a PhD in physics at Tuskegee, and in his research, discovers the secret of time travel. He develops a design for a time machine, which he calls a Chronocar, but the technology required to make it work does not yet exist.

Fast forward a hundred and twenty-five years. A young African American [Illinois Tech](#) student in Chicago finds Dr. Johnson's plans and builds a working Chronocar. He goes back to the year 1919 to meet the doctor and his beautiful daughter, Ollie, who live in [Chicago's Black Belt, now known as Bronzeville](#). But, he has chosen an unfortunate time in the past and becomes involved in the bloodiest race riot in Chicago's history.

***The Chronocar*** is available in paperback and eBook everywhere online. Or ask for it at your favorite bookstore. It can also be found in a number of libraries nationwide.

**Click Image to download high resolution picture**



## What People are saying about *The Chronocar*

**"Incredibly clever!"** —Rick Kogan, *After Hours with Rick Kogan, WGN Radio*

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"An inherently engaging and entertaining read from beginning to end, *The Chronocar* showcases author Steve Bellinger's genuine flair for originality and narrative driven storytelling." —*Midwest Book Review*

*The Chronocar*...has something for just about everyone as it takes you for a ride through time."  
—*BlackSci-Fi.com*

"...the most innovative take on time travel that I have ever read...Be prepared for some interesting twists." —*Ronald Jones, Black Science Fiction Society*

"*The Chronocar* is an excellent time-slip story that excels in unpredictable twists and strong characterization; both of which keep readers on edge and completely engrossed."  
—*recommended Reading, Donovan's Literary Services*

"...I found *The Chronocar* an excellent read that I would recommend especially to teens and young adults." —*Reader's Favorite*

## ACCOLADES

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**The Black Science Fiction Society  
August 2015 Book of the Month**

**2018 Best Indie Book Award for Science Fiction**

**Five Star Review - Readers Favorite**

**Part of the University archives at the  
Illinois Institute of Technology**

## Questions

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND *THE CHRONOCAR*

#### **Q. How did you get started as a writer?**

A. I've been writing all my life, from home-made comic books and adventure stories written in wire bound notebooks while in elementary and high school, to newspaper articles, training manuals, radio scripts, Sunday school lessons, fan fiction, and short stories. *The Chronocar* is my first novel, published when I was 65 years old. I have 4 others on the way.

#### **Q. How did you get into science fiction?**

A. My mom worked for a printing company and brought all sorts of books and magazines home for us to read. At the age of 12, I read Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot* and fell in love with science fiction. I am a convention-attending, uniform-wearing Trekkie and big fan of classic Dr. Who. My wife Donna and I plan to renew our wedding vows with a Star Trek themed ceremony. I'll wear a dress Admiral's uniform and she will be decked out in a leather and lace Klingon wedding dress. It will be the only time I outrank her.

#### **Q. How did you get the idea for *The Chronocar*?**

A. I always wanted to write the 'great American Science Fiction novel.' I also wanted it to, in some way, reflect the Black Experience. Since I have long been a fan of time travel stories, I got the idea of a Black college student traveling to Chicago's past. I needed a historical event to anchor the story and in my research, discovered the little known Red Summer Riot. It was a perfect match.

#### **Q. You refer to *The Chronocar* as being real science fiction. What do you mean by that?**

A. In real Science Fiction, the science, whether real or imaginary, should be so central to the story that, without it, the story would fall apart. By this definition, Star Wars is not science fiction. In *The Chronocar*, I used a technique that I learned from Asimov, I start off with a little real science and extrapolate the science fiction from there.

#### **Q. How did you come up with your characters?**

A. I cheated. The main protagonist, Tony Carpenter is based on me when I was a college student. Like me, Tony attended IIT. Whenever he was faced with a crisis in the story, I simply asked myself what I might have done. Then I wrote just the opposite. Some of my favorite scenes with Simmie Johnson came from stories told to me by my grandfather.

**Q. How did you get *The Chronocar* into print? Did you self-publish?**

A. No. I considered that route, but it had been my lifelong dream to have my novel produced by a legitimate publisher. I was fortunate enough to find Barking Rain Press, a non-profit independent publisher. They did an amazing job on the cover and the editing. I am extremely proud of this book.

**Q. What sort of accolades has the book earned?**

A. Lots of great reviews from the Black Science Fiction Society and the Midwest Book Review just to name a few. Rick Kogan had very kind things to say about it when he interviewed me on WGN a couple of years ago. In 2015 *The Chronocar* was the Black Science Fiction Society's August Book of the Month. A couple of years ago I did a presentation at my alma mater, IIT, and they honored me by adding a copy to the University's archives. That blew me away. And most recently it won the 2018 Best Indie Book Award in the Science Fiction category, a major international competition.

**Q. Where can people find *The Chronocar*?**

A. It's available in paperback and eBook everywhere online, or ask for it at your local bookstore. It is also in several libraries nationwide, something that would not have been likely had it been self-published.

**Q. So what's next?**

A. My second novel, *Edge of Perception*, a paranormal thriller also taking place in Chicago, will be released in 2019. There is also a sequel to *The Chronocar* and two other stories in the works.

**ABOUT THE RED SUMMER RIOT****Q. What was the Red Summer Riot?**

A. The Summer of 1919 was called the Red Summer because of the violence that took place in Chicago and elsewhere. To date it is still considered the bloodiest riot in Chicago's history. 38 people died, mostly black, and more than 500 more people, again mostly black, were injured. Around 1,000 black families were left homeless after rioters torched their residences.

**Q. What triggered it?**

A. The Black population exploded on the South Side during the Great Migration, where Blacks came up from the South to seek a better life. That cause tension with other ethnic groups trying to make lives for themselves. When white servicemen returned home from World War I, they found that Blacks had not only encroached on their communities but had taken over many of their jobs (someone had to work the mills and stockyards during the war, and blacks labor was cheap). This intensified racial tension. Then on a hot Sunday in July, 1919, a black youth was

murdered on 29<sup>th</sup> street beach for inadvertently wandering into the waters of the white beach. That's where the violence began.

**Q. You used this in *The Chronocar*?**

A. Out of respect for the actual victims and for dramatic effect, I made a few changes, but the basic story is the same

### **THE CHRONOCAR AS HISTORICAL FICTION**

**Q. Could *The Chronocar* be considered historical fiction?**

A. I think so. Part of the fun of writing the story was the things I learned about life in 1919 that made the story vivid. For example, the hero, Tony Carpenter is shocked to see the elevated train station at 47<sup>th</sup> street. The "EL" is a lot older than most people think. Also, there is a scene where he, visits White City, a major amusement park that was located at 63<sup>rd</sup> and South Parkway (now Martin Luther King Drive), that had a Ferris wheel and roller coasters.

## Excerpt from *The Chronocar*

### Chapter One

*August 11, 1888*

*Somewhere near Jackson, Mississippi*

"Quittin' time!" Straw Boss called out just before the whistle blew. Thirty shirtless exhausted men, their brawny bodies gleaming with sweat in the hot Mississippi sun, stopped what they were doing, not wanting to give the company a minute more than what they were getting paid for. It was a typical railroad work gang: coolies from China carried and placed the heavy ties, their bowed heads covered in traditional straw hats, and the Irishmen were trusted with actually laying the track. But the Negro men did the hardest and dirtiest work—digging ditches, moving big rocks, and some were allowed to pound in the spikes that fastened the iron to the wooden ties. Three-and-a-half miles of fresh railroad track lay behind them, and nobody had died. It had been a good day.

Simmie Johnson was in mid-swing. His herculean arms glistened in the sun as he brought the big hammer down. His cousin Willie held the stake in place and barely got his hand away as Simmie punched it several inches into the ground with a loud *plink*! Only one more stroke to go.

Simmie wielded the heavy mallet with ease. He was a tall, buff, handsome young black man, with a gentile nature about him, qualities that did not go unnoticed by young females. But Simmie had no time for women. Not now, at least. He had more important things to concern himself with, like finishing up here, collecting his pay, and getting home. The time would soon come when he would leave this dreadful life behind and make something of himself. Soon, very soon.

"Come on, Simmie," Willie called. "We done fo' today."

Simmie followed Willie and the other weary workers to the tool wagon, where they surrendered their picks, shovels, and hammers to Straw Boss, a wiry middle-aged sunburned white man who had earned his position solely through his heritage.

"Put mine in the corner," Willie said as he handed in his pick. "I want to use the same one next week." Straw Boss threw Willie's pick onto the pile.

"Hurry up, Simmie." Willie tugged his arm, as Simmie lifted the heavy hammer to Straw Boss, who almost toppled out of the wagon from the weight. A minute later, they were standing in line at the pay wagon where Old Mr. Sykes distributed the wages.

Sykes was a chubby old man who wore thick spectacles and a green eyeshade that framed his balding head. "Okay, Willie J." Sykes adjusted his glasses and licked his thumb. Then he peeled off dollar bills and counted out coins as he read off Willie's pay record. "Five dollars and seventy-five cents."

"Thank ya, suh." Willie bowed, which was a slight gesture since his back naturally bent forward.

"Simmie Johnson," Sykes said as he flipped through the book. Simmie stepped forward. "Here you go—seven dollars and twenty-five cents."

"Thank you," Simmie said, wondering why he should thank the man for giving him the money he had worked so hard to earn.

"Wait!" Willie grabbed Simmie's arm and glared at Sykes. "Why he get more than me?"

"You didn't show up for work on Wednesday," Sykes said flatly, "and you left early yesterday. Lucky I don't fire you!"

Willie frowned. "White man tryin' to cheat me," he mumbled as they stepped out of line.



"He's not trying to cheat you." Simmie sighed. "You've got to work a full day to get a full day's pay."

"You as bad as him," Willie said, stuffing the money into his pocket. "Come on, let's go get somethin' to drink."

Simmie carefully folded his money, placed it in a tattered envelope, and slipped it into his pocket. "I told you before, I don't drink, and I don't carouse around."

"Naw, man, I mean let's go to Ol' Ben's and get a cold pop."

Simmie saw no harm in that, so they started down the dusty road toward town. Willie talked Black Pete into joining them. Black Pete was big, dark-skinned, and had even less sense than Willie. Simmie walked a few paces ahead of them, lost in thought.

*"The quantity of motion, which is collected by taking the sum of the motions directed towards the same parts, and the difference of those that are directed to contrary parts, suffers no change from the action of bodies among themselves."*

"Hey, Simmie!"

"What?" Simmie said, annoyed at the interruption.

"How come it is that you so smart?" Willie asked.

"What?"

"I mean, you can read, you can do 'cipherin'. You about as smart as any white man."

Simmie stopped and looked at him. "Maybe smarter."

"But why?" Willie said.

"Yeah, why?" Black Pete parroted.

Simmie shrugged. "I guess the good Lord saw fit to bless me with a good mind."

"But why?" Willie asked again.

"I don't know, ask him!" Simmie pointed toward the sky as he started walking again.

"Don't make no sense," Willie puzzled. "Why would the Lord give them kinds of smarts to a colored man?"

"What in the hell are you talking about, Willie?" Simmie stopped walking again.

"You smart, Simmie. Smarter than all the white men we works for. But what can you do with it?"

Simmie turned and resumed his pace. "I got plans." He put his hand in his pocket and felt the envelope with money inside. Just a little more money and he could get away from this place. Then, finally, he could put his mind to work. No more pretending to be stupid just to stay out of trouble with the white man.

"What kind of plans?" Willie asked.

"I got plans. Don't you worry about what kind. They are my plans. Hopefully, it is God's will that I see them through."

"So you do believe they's a God, right?"

"Now, what kind of question is that?" Simmie scowled. "I'm the one who has to read the scriptures to *you* every night."

"Big Momma say you don't believe. Big Momma say you a heathen!"

"A heathen!" Black Pete echoed.

"Big Momma," Simmie scoffed. "What does she know?"

"She say you study the devil," Willie said softly.

"The devil," Black Pete whispered.

"Now why would she say that?"

“Cause she found that book under yo’ bed.”

Simmie turned and faced Willie. “What book?” he asked, knowing full well which book. He only owned two. And what was Big Momma doing going through his things?

“That... prince book.” Willie cringed under Simmie’s glare.

“*The Principia*? She found my *Principia*?” he asked, carefully using the pronunciation that Miss Abigail had taught him six years ago.

Willie looked around to make sure no one could hear him. “She said all the crazy writin’ and the lines and circles and numbers was all the work of the devil!”

“Man, what you been doin’?” Black Pete cried.

“Big Momma don’t know... What did she do with my book?” Simmie snatched Willie by the collar. “What did she do with my book?”

“Sh-she burned it,” Willie said meekly.

“Good thang!” Black Pete said.

“Shut up, Pete!” Simmie bellowed, and Black Pete cowered away. “She burned my book?” He imagined his prize possession aflame. One of the most important things he owned, the thing that sparked his dream of starting a new life. He felt a tightening in his gut.

“She said it was the work of the devil and that it was goin’ to ruin yo’ soul. She burned it to protect you, to keep you and all the rest of us from goin’ to hell!”

“*She burned my book?*” Simmie roared as he raised a fist.

“Don’t hit me! I didn’t do it!” Willie cried. “Big Momma did!”

Simmie released Willie and tried to calm himself. His *Principia*! He had had that book since he was twelve years old when he rescued it from the trash behind the town library. So what if the pages were tattered and the cover was torn off? It was *his* book! He had begged Miss Abigail, the teacher at the white children’s school, to teach him to read, just so he could discover what that book was all about. After he’d breezed his way through all of the readers and textbooks she had, he showed her his *Principia*. She’d looked at it and dismissed it as nonsense, which Simmie found to be odd since she had heard of it and even knew the correct pronunciation of the title. It turned out that she had never actually seen a copy of it before, and young Simmie was able to understand it all better than she could. And the knowledge! The wisdom! Written two hundred years ago by Sir Isaac Newton, a genius of a man! It was as valuable to Simmie as his Bible. For over six years he coveted that book, and now Big Momma, in her senile ignorance, had destroyed it. Fortunately, Simmie had it all memorized.



## **BRP PUBLISHING GROUP**

### ***Books with Bite!***

#### **Now in Print & eBook: *The Chronocar* by debut Chicago author Steve Bellinger**

July 27, 2015 — Vancouver, WA (USA) — Barking Rain Press, a non-profit fiction publisher, announced the paperback and eBook release of the science fiction time travel thriller *The Chronocar* by Chicago, Illinois, debut author Steve Bellinger.

Simmie Johnson was born the son of a slave. He was also a genius. After earning a PhD in physics from Tuskegee Institute, he wrote a paper outlining a theory for time travel, including plans for a time machine—called a Chronocar—which was published in a scientific journal in the early 1900s. Since the technology required to build the Chronocar did not yet exist, the paper and its brilliant writer faded into obscurity.

A century later, a young Illinois Tech student, Tony Carpenter, discovers the journal article and decides to build a Chronocar so he can travel back to 1919 to meet the black scientist he hopes to emulate. Unfortunately, time is not on his side. Dr. Johnson is living in Chicago's Black Belt with his beautiful daughter—and Tony arrives just in time for the bloodiest race riot in the city's history. Can Tony use the Chronocar to save his new friends, or will his attempt forever alter the future he hopes to return to?

Ask for *The Chronocar* at your favorite bookstore, or buy it online at the Barking Rain Press website, Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, Books-a-Million, Powells, Waterstones, and many other Internet bookstores. It is also available as an eBook through Amazon Kindle, Barnes & Noble Nook, iTunes iBooks, Kobo, Content Reserve/Overdrive, the Barking Rain Press website and many other outlets worldwide.

Interested readers can preview the first four chapters of *The Chronocar* for free by visiting the Barking Rain Press website at [barkingrainpress.org](http://barkingrainpress.org).

#### **THE CHRONOCAR**

##### **BISAC Genre Codes:**

FIC028080 — FICTION / Science Fiction / Time Travel

FIC049070 — FICTION / African American / Urban

FIC027090 — FICTION / Romance / Time Travel

##### **BIC Genre Codes:**

FL — Science Fiction

FR — Romance

**LCCN:** 2015941739

**Trade Paperback (148 pp)**

**ISBN-13:** 978-1-941295-18-2

**ISBN-10:** 1-941295-18-5

**Retail Price:** \$12.95 USD

**Distributors:** Ingram, Bertram Books, Gardners Books

**eBook (ePub, Kindle, PDF)**

**ISBN-13:** 978-1-941295-19-9

**ISBN-10:** 1-941295-19-3

**Retail Price:** \$5.95 USD

**Distributors:** Content Reserve/Overdrive, Ingram

**About Barking Rain Press**

Barking Rain Press is an imprint of the BRP Publishing Group (BRP), which is a non-profit publisher located in the greater Portland/Vancouver metropolitan area—a thriving hub for independent publishers, writers, and literary venues. BRP currently operates three imprints, including Barking Rain Press, Virtual Tales, and Nitis Books. Find out more about the BRP Publishing Group at their website, [www.barkingrainpress.org](http://www.barkingrainpress.org).

###

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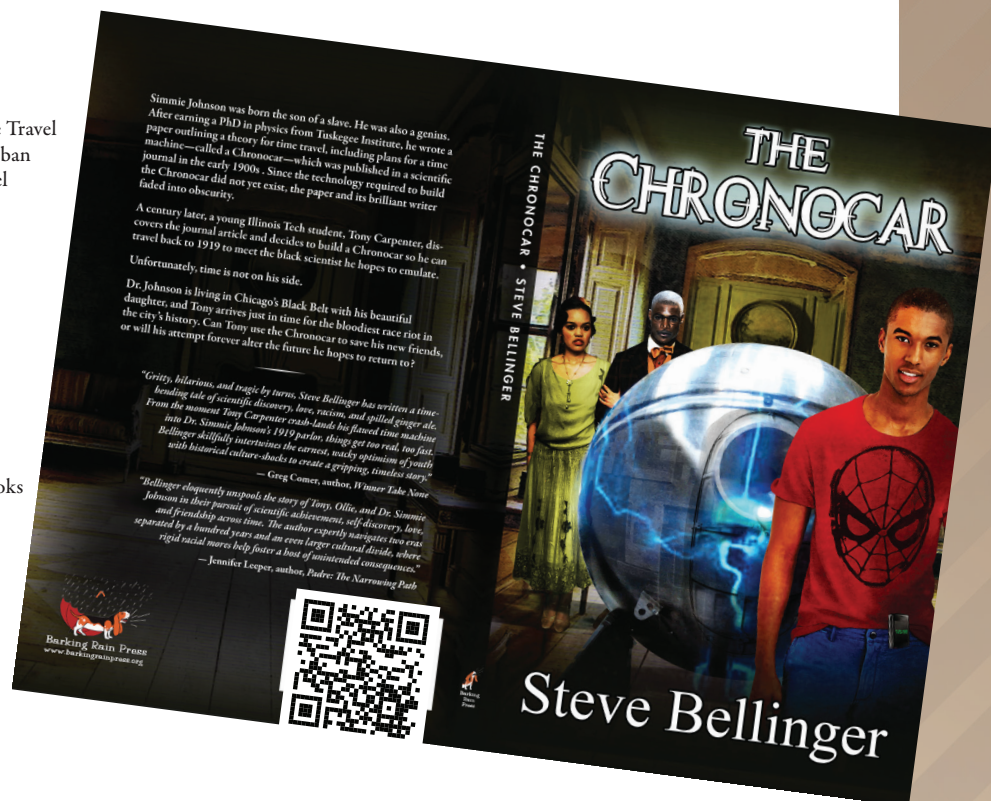
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Retail Price: \$5.95 USD

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[www.stevebellinger.com](http://www.stevebellinger.com)



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"Gritty, hilarious, and tragic by turns, Steve Bellinger has written a time-bending tale of scientific discovery, love, racism, and spilled ginger ale. From the moment Tony Carpenter crash-lands his flawed time machine into Dr. Simmie Johnson's 1919 parlor, things get too real, too fast. Bellinger skillfully intertwines the earnest, wacky optimism of youth with historical culture-shocks to create a gripping, timeless story."

— Greg Comer, author, *Winner Take None*

"Bellinger eloquently unspools the story of Tony, Ollie, and Dr. Simmie Johnson in their pursuit of scientific achievement, self-discovery, love, and friendship across time. The author expertly navigates two eras separated by a hundred years and an even larger cultural divide, where rigid racial mores help foster a host of unintended consequences."

— Jennifer Leeper, author, *Padre: The Narrowing Path*



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