

★ **William Still: The Underground Railroad and the Angel at Philadelphia**

William C. Kashatus

University of Notre Dame Press (Apr 1, 2021)

Hardcover \$35.00 (356pp)

978-0-268-20036-7

In *William Still*, William Kashatus relates the story of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (PASS) clerk who risked his life to help nearly a thousand escaped slaves reach freedom during the tumultuous years leading up to the American Civil War.

The book begins with the poignant story of Still's encounter with his older brother, one of two who had been missing since they were left behind when their mother and sister escaped from slavery. It details how Still, in defiance of the federal Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, became a pivotal Underground Railroad agent known as "The Angel at Philadelphia." Self-taught and ambitious, the free Black abolitionist and director of the Eastern Line of the Underground Railroad also became a writer, philanthropist, and early civil rights leader, but his anti-slavery work was ignored until the late twentieth century, as early accounts of the Underground Railroad were written by white abolitionists who tended to emphasize their own contributions.

Kashatus's account is the first comprehensive biography of William Still. It includes the records Still kept, listing the names, places of origin, dates of escape, genders, and ages of each of the fugitive slaves he helped, making it a valuable resource for scholars and Black Americans researching their ancestry. Still had also interviewed each of the fugitives and compiled their stories into a book; his *Underground Railroad* is regarded as the most authentic source of information on the clandestine route to freedom.

Kashatus's detailed biography of William Still, with its stories of courageous slaves plotting daring escapes, and moving accounts of free Black people who were kidnapped and taken into slavery, reveals the interracial cooperation involved in helping escaped slaves reach freedom, and honors the man who, at his death in 1902, was named "Father of the Underground Railroad."

KRISTINE MORRIS (March / April 2021)

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