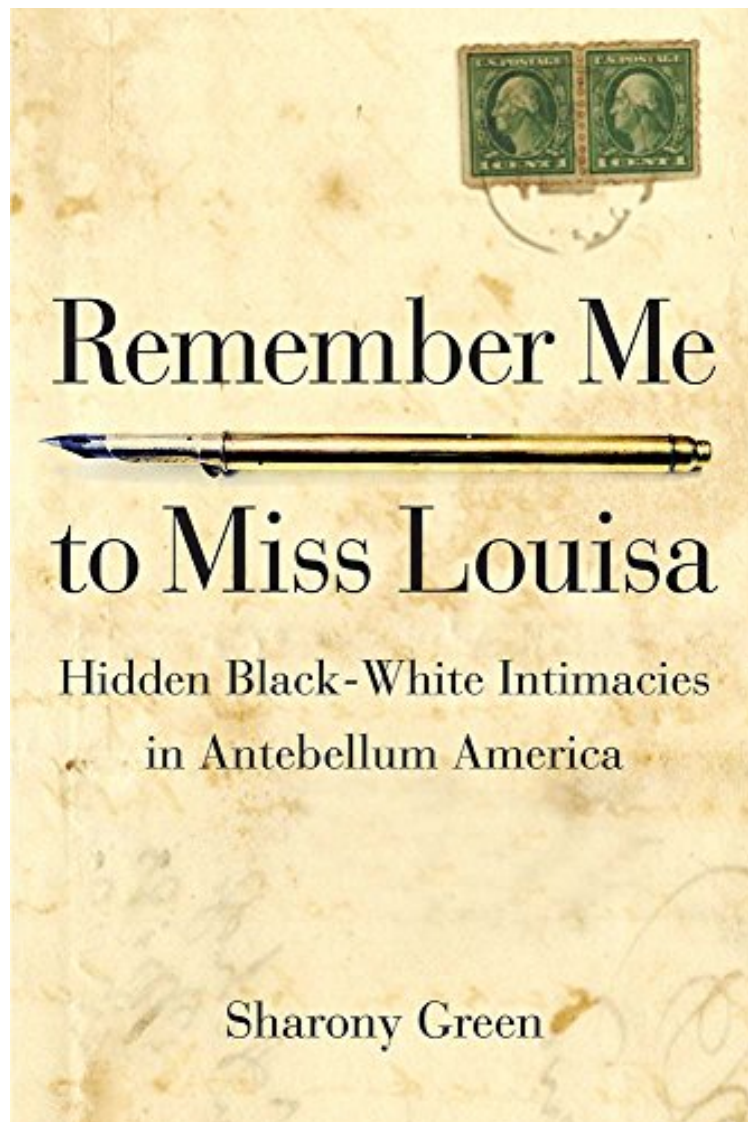


(Online library) Remember Me to Miss Louisa: Hidden Black-White Intimacies in Antebellum America (Early American Places)

Remember Me to Miss Louisa: Hidden Black-White Intimacies in Antebellum America (Early American Places)

Sharony Green

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Sharony Green : Remember Me to Miss Louisa: Hidden Black-White Intimacies in Antebellum America (Early American Places) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Remember Me to Miss Louisa: Hidden Black-White Intimacies in Antebellum America (Early American Places):

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FureyI read this for research on a novel, but I am a literary historian, and in that capacity I strongly endorse this scholarship. Very insightful, carefully thought out research. I learned a lot.1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. looks wonderful. Challenges pre-conceptionsBy snudd1211On first quick glance, looks wonderful. Challenges pre-conceptions.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Award-winning study probes the tensions and complexities of interracial relationships in antebellum AmericaBy RJPTThis excellent book is the recipient of the Western Association of Women Historians Penny Kanner Award. The citation reads: "Sharony Green's *Remember Me to Miss Louisa: Hidden Black-White Intimacies in Antebellum America* is an extensive, well-documented monograph about interracial relationships and their aftermath in antebellum America. In it, the author carefully interweaves documentary materials into a narrative that brings nuance to the question of African-American women's experiences under slavery. Green manages to craft a story of the complicated, fraught, nonetheless "beneficial" experiences that developed out of these relationships. Situating them carefully in the wider socio-political context, neither treating them as examples of unmitigated oppression nor celebrating them as examples of women's agency, her book illuminates the contradictions of the times. With material focusing on four "case studies" Green offers a story of complexity and ambiguity, cutting through any simple ideological interpretation of these lives to enable their stories to emerge in fullness, treating these tales with the seriousness and unflinching observation they deserve. Admittedly a controversial topic, Green brings dignity above all to the African-American lives scarred by slavery, without avoiding the question of whether the strategies pursued to escape "the taint" served self-interest or the "wider good." In fact, she refuses that dichotomy."

It is generally recognized that antebellum interracial relationships were "notorious" at the neighborhood level. But we have yet to fully uncover the complexities of such relationships, especially from freedwomen's and children's points of view. While it is known that Cincinnati had the largest per capita population of mixed race people outside the South during the antebellum period, historians have yet to explore how geography played a central role in this outcome. The Mississippi and Ohio Rivers made it possible for Southern white men to ferry women and children of color for whom they had some measure of concern to free soil with relative ease. Some of the women in question appear to have been "fancy girls," enslaved women sold for use as prostitutes or "mistresses." Green focuses on women who appear to have been the latter, recognizing the problems with the term "mistress," given its shifting meaning even during the antebellum period. *Remember Me to Miss Louisa*, among other things, moves the life of the fancy girl from New Orleans, where it is typically situated, to the Midwest. The manumission of these women and their children—and other enslaved women never sold under this brand—occurred as America's frontiers pushed westward, and urban life followed in their wake. Indeed, Green's research examines the tensions between the urban Midwest and the rising Cotton Kingdom. It does so by relying on surviving letters, among them those from an ex-slave mistress who sent her "love" to her former master. This relationship forms the crux of the first of three case studies. The other two concern a New Orleans young woman who was the mistress of an aging white man, and ten Alabama children who received from a white planter a \$200,000 inheritance (worth roughly \$5.1 million in today's currency). In each case, those freed people faced the challenges characteristic of black life in a largely hostile America. While the frequency with which Southern white men freed enslaved women and their children is now generally known, less is known about these men's financial and emotional investments in them. Before the Civil War, a white Southern man's pending marriage, aging body, or looming death often compelled him to free an African American woman and their children. And as difficult as it may be for the modern mind to comprehend, some kind of connection sometimes existed between these individuals. This study argues that such men—though they hardly stand excused for their ongoing claims to privilege—were hidden actors in freedwomen's and children's attempts to survive the rigors and challenges of life as African Americans in the years surrounding the Civil War. Green examines many facets of this phenomenon in the hope of revealing new insights about the era of slavery. Historians, students, and general readers of US history, African American studies, black urban history, and antebellum history will find much of interest in this fascinating study.

"Dr. Green has done a great job combing together crumbs of historical evidence from disparate places and using them to weave together a credible set of narratives. I was impressed by how extensive her research was across time and topic. *Remember Me to Miss Louisa* promises to challenge the consensus that most relationships between enslaved women and white men were rooted in oppression, inequality, and exploitation." —Nikki M. Taylor, author of *Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati's Black Community, 1802–1868* and *America's First Black Socialist: The Radical Life of Peter H. Clark* "Much about the intimate ties between African Americans and whites in the Old South has yet to be explored. Green brings to life a new understanding of why the ties that bound the enslaved to their masters and mistresses came about and the residual effects of those bonds in the social, economic, and political landscape of the antebellum South." —Victoria Ott, author of *Confederate Daughters: Coming of Age during the Civil War* "Green's addition to the field is an important one as she challenges our understanding of the disempowered enslaved African American woman. She complicates antebellum race dynamics and reveals the 'messiness' of black-white encounters."

