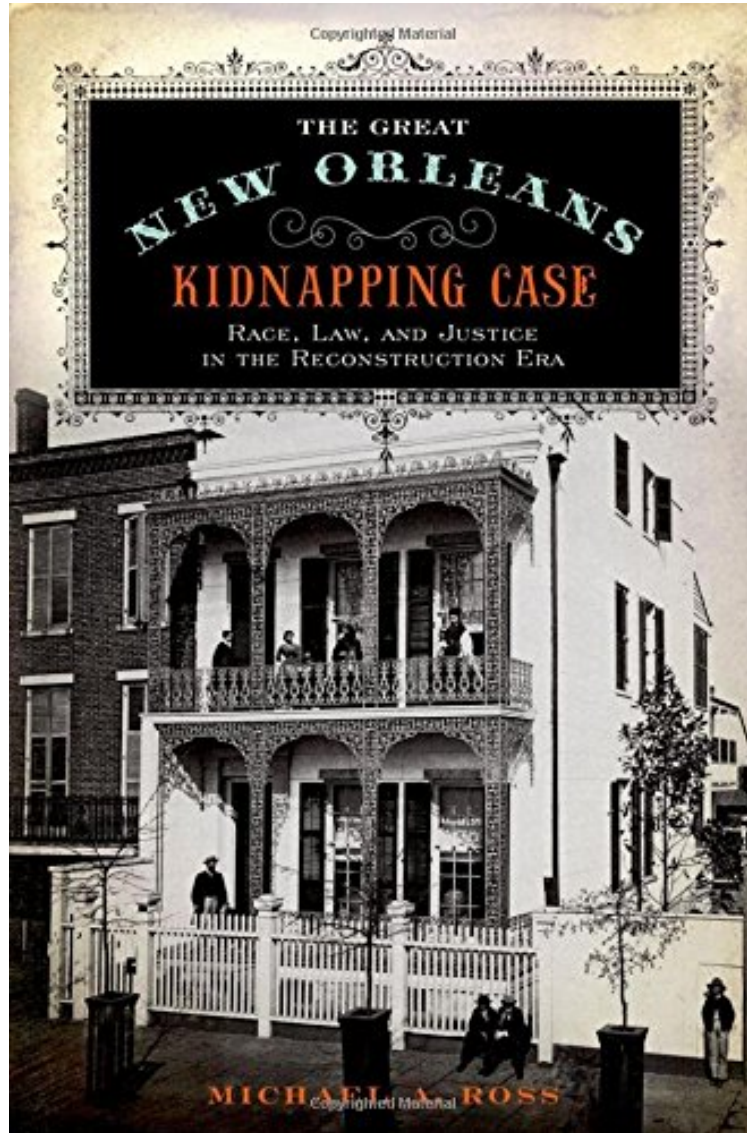


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The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case: Race, Law, and Justice in the Reconstruction Era

Michael A. Ross

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Michael A. Ross : The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case: Race, Law, and Justice in the Reconstruction Era
before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Great New Orleans
Kidnapping Case: Race, Law, and Justice in the Reconstruction Era:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. I couldn't put this down. It's a whodunnit detective ...By Richard J. BellI couldn't put this down. It's a whodunnit detective mystery, a courtroom drama, and a wrenching tale about family all wrapped into one. It's full of oddball characters, local color, and lots of action, and every time you think you know where this true crime story is going, it turns and goes somewhere else! You learn a lot about New Orleans and its peculiar place in the history of Reconstruction and the two big surprises at the very end of the story make its climax all the more astonishing. This a masterpiece of historical detective work and I'm not surprised that it has so many five star reviews!1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An exciting kidnap case and history of Reconstruction in one bookBy Chris NolanThis book was recommended by a fellow New Orleans history buff and it recounts the true kidnapping account of an Irish infant and the trial of Afro-Creoles ("mulattresses") charged with the crime- all amidst a detailed backdrop of bi-racial unions of the time and societal changes of Reconstruction (integration of blacks into police and government positions and juries) following the Civil War. A great read!1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Easy read. Well written. Great story.By MaloriWas assigned this book for a Louisiana history class and was quite surprised with how interesting it was. Easy read. Well written. Great story.

Winner of the Kemper and Leila Williams Prize of the Historic New Orleans Collection and the Louisiana Historical Association. Winner of the New Orleans Public Library Foundation Choice Award for Non-Fiction.In June 1870, the residents of the city of New Orleans were already on edge when two African American women kidnapped seventeen-month-old Mollie Digby from in front of her New Orleans home. It was the height of Radical Reconstruction, and the old racial order had been turned upside down: black men now voted, held office, sat on juries, and served as policemen. Nervous white residents, certain that the end of slavery and resulting "Africanization" of the city would bring chaos, pointed to the Digby abduction as proof that no white child was safe. Louisiana's twenty-eight-year old Reconstruction governor, Henry Clay Warmoth, hoping to use the investigation of the kidnapping to validate his newly integrated police force to the highly suspicious white population of New Orleans, saw to it that the city's best Afro-Creole detective, John Baptiste Jourdain, was put on the case, and offered a huge reward for the return of Mollie Digby and the capture of her kidnapers. When the Associated Press sent the story out on the wire, newspaper readers around the country began to follow the New Orleans mystery. Eventually, police and prosecutors put two strikingly beautiful Afro-Creole women on trial for the crime, and interest in the case exploded as a tense courtroom drama unfolded.In *The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case*, Michael Ross offers the first full account of this event that electrified the South at one of the most critical moments in the history of American race relations. Tracing the crime from the moment it was committed through the highly publicized investigation and sensationalized trial that followed, all the while chronicling the public outcry and escalating hysteria as news and rumors surrounding the crime spread, Ross paints a vivid picture of the Reconstruction-era South and the complexities and possibilities that faced the newly integrated society. Leading readers into smoke-filled concert saloons, Garden District drawing rooms, sweltering courthouses, and squalid prisons, Ross brings this fascinating era back to life. A stunning work of historical recreation, *The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case* is sure to captivate anyone interested in true crime, the Civil War and its aftermath, and the history of New Orleans and the American South.

"*The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case* offers a rich narrative of a fascinating case caught in the middle of Reconstruction politics and racial change Ross' strengths lie in his narrative style and his ability to draw the reader in to the individual events and characters of the story while emphasizing their larger importance *The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case* is an exciting and illuminating read about a complicated time and place in America's racial history. Ross' attention to the details of his historic characters adds an important dimension to the story and draws our attention to the stakes of one criminal case to the future of biracial government during Reconstruction."--Mia Brett, *Law and History* "Ross's book will appeal to a wide range of readers both within and beyond the academy. If their experience is like my own, they will find the book fascinating, enlightening, and...entertaining. One wishes many other books produced by professional historians could manage these important tasks as seamlessly as Ross does here, especially when integrating the history of one of the nation's most controversial and complex eras."--Alecia Long, *Journal of the Civil War Era* "Ross decisively helms the story, introducing a sparkling cast of characters and turning the pages with just the right mix of action, suspense and intrigue." --Preston Lauterbach, *Wall Street Journal*"Michael Ross' *The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case* has all the elements one might expect from a legal thriller set in nineteenth-century New Orleans. Child abduction and voodoo. 'Quadroons.' A national headline-grabbing trial. Plus an intrepid creole detective.... A terrific job of sleuthing and storytelling, right through to the stunning epilogue." --Lawrence N. Powell, author of *The Accidental City: Improvising New Orleans*"When little Mollie Digby went missing from her New Orleans home in the summer of 1870, her disappearance became a national sensation. In his compelling new book Michael Ross brings Mollie back. Read *The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case* for the extraordinary story it tells-- and the complex world it reveals." --Kevin Boyle, author of *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age*"Michael Ross's account of the 1870 New Orleans kidnapping of a white baby by two African-American women is a gripping narrative of one of the most sensational trials of the post-Civil War South. Even as he

draws his readers into an engrossing mystery and detective story, Ross skillfully illuminates some of the most fundamental conflicts of race and class in New Orleans and the region." --Dan T. Carter, University of South Carolina

"The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case is a masterwork of narration, with twists, turns, cliff-hangers, and an impeccable level of telling detail about a fascinating cast of characters. The reader comes away from this immersive experience with a deeper and sadder understanding of the possibilities and limits of Reconstruction." --Stephen Berry, author of *House of Abraham: Lincoln and The Todds, a Family Divided by War*

"The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case is such a great read that it is easy to forget that the book is a work of history, not fiction. Who kidnapped Mollie Digby? The book, however, is compelling because it is great history. As Ross explores the mystery of Digby's disappearance, he reconstructs the lives not just of the Irish immigrant parents of Mollie Digby and the women of color accused of her kidnapping, but also the broad range of New Orleanians who became involved in the case. The kidnapping thus serves as a lens on the possibilities and uncertainties of Reconstruction, which take on new meanings because of Ross's skillful research and masterful storytelling." --Laura F. Edwards, Duke University

"Ross adds mystery and intrigue to the historic Reconstruction era in New Orleans through his retelling of a sensational true crime tale... Impeccable research and crisp, compelling writing bring us to the case's resolution." --Library Journal

"Ross slowly reconstructs the case and describes the trial, allowing the mystery of guilt or innocence to crescendo. He also demonstrates how a kidnapping case featuring a disbelieving immigrant father, exotic race and legal systems, and a crime-ridden city known for debauchery captivated national attention. Ross poses relevant questions that show this nearly forgotten case's significance to American history." --Publishers Weekly

"[The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case] is a dazzling work of Reconstruction history, a page-turner to match the best police procedural or legal thriller, and a compelling portrait of a city in transition, a city in crisis." --The New Orleans Advocate

"... Ross delivers a compelling, even intimate story that deals intelligently with broad regional and national political matters at the same time. Few if any historical treatments of Reconstruction have achieved the same measure of analytical clarity in such an attractive and compelling package." --Nashville Scene

"The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case is as much a lively portrait of a unique city as it is a suspenseful mystery and a political history of an all-but-forgotten era. The exotic atmospherics include rumors of voodoo human sacrifices, yellow-fever epidemics, Mardi Gras parades, and the nuanced relationships of Afro- and white Creoles. Ross set out to mine 'a single historical moment for insights into both the history of New Orleans and the Reconstruction era.' He succeeded." --Washington Independent of Books

"...The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case is an exciting and illuminating read about a complicated time and place in America's racial history." --Law and History

"Michael A. Ross's tale of an 1870 kidnapping case transports the reader back to Reconstruction-era New Orleans through his gripping storytelling and the close attention to detail that characterizes the genre of microhistory....Ross has crafted a compelling story that reads like one of the true crime novels that rose to popularity during the period of Mollie Digby's abduction." --Kelly Kennington, Journal of Southern History

"The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case is as much a lively portrait of a unique city as it is a suspenseful mystery and a political history of an all-but-forgotten era. The exotic atmospherics include rumors of voodoo human sacrifices, yellow-fever epidemics, Mardi Gras parades, and the nuanced relationships of Afro- and white Creoles. Ross set out to mine 'a single historical moment for insights into both the history of New Orleans and the Reconstruction era.' He succeeded." --Susan Tejada, Washington Independent of Books

"The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case does indeed read like the best of true crime writing; a story masterfully told, but at its heart is a profound meditation of the world that could have been, when the arc of the moral universe bent a little more closely to justice." --Guy Lancaster, Journal of African American History

About the Author
Michael A. Ross is Professor of History at the University of Maryland. He is the author of the prize-winning *Justice of Shattered Dreams: Samuel Freeman Miller and the Supreme Court during the Civil War Era*.