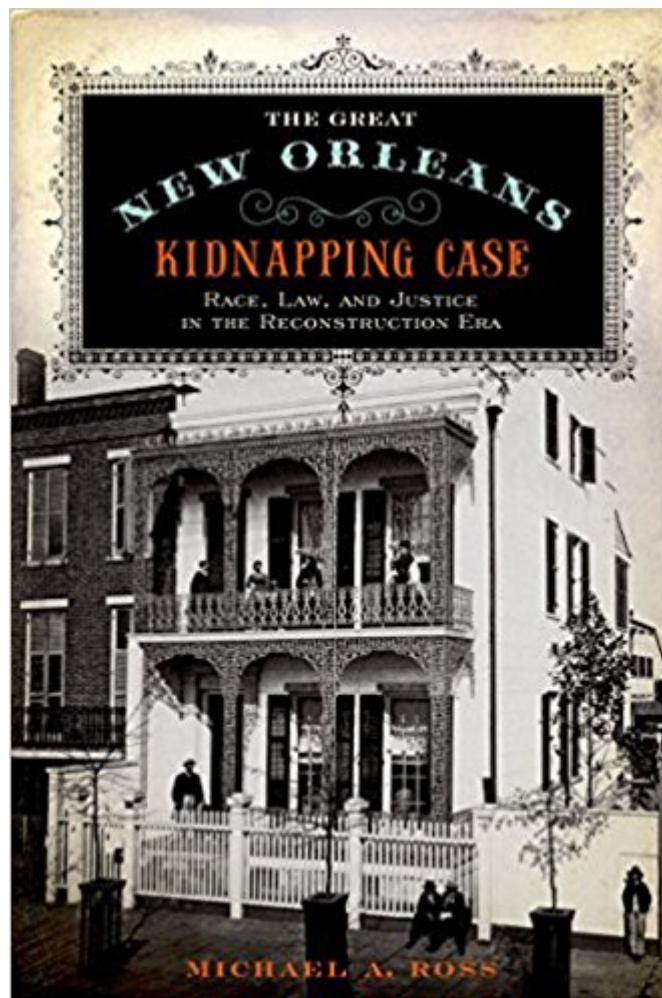




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# The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case: Race, Law, And Justice In The Reconstruction Era



## Synopsis

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 kidnappers. 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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I 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!

This 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 ("mulatresses") 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!

Was assigned this book for a Louisiana history class and was quite surprised with how interesting it was. Easy read. Well written. Great story.

A thoroughly researched and well told micro-history of Reconstruction era New Orleans. The characters came to life on the page for me. Seems like it would make a great mini-series or documentary. I especially enjoyed the afterword and its connections between the past and present

that pulled the author to the story (before he even understood what was pulling him and why). I asked Santa for Mr. Ross' first book, and I expect that it will be just as good as The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case was. Thank you.

Very interesting; had to read for class. I am giving 3 stars because the author blames whites for everything and plays the race-card.

This book provides a compelling and interesting way to learn a lot about an important part of our nation's history -- especially in regard to race relations. I'm normally a fiction reader, but this non-fiction, history book completely held my interest as it told an interesting story with a wealth of insightful and interesting asides to add depth and allow for greater understanding of both the story and the time period. I learned a lot, painlessly and enjoyably.

It took me less than a page to become totally hooked on this story. Mr. Ross' style of writing brings an obscure historical event to life in a compelling, gripping manner. He weaves history, politics, law, race, and a myriad of other genres into one cohesive story, placing it in the larger historical context. I couldn't recommend this book any more, even for those who normally steer clear of books on historical events.

I saw the author discuss his book on CSPAN and wanted to read a few pages before making a decision to purchase. The book is phenomenal . ! It is one of those books once you pick it up you do not want to put it down. Very good read and interesting to learn about American history. Always wondered what happened after the Civil War in America. This book answers that question.

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