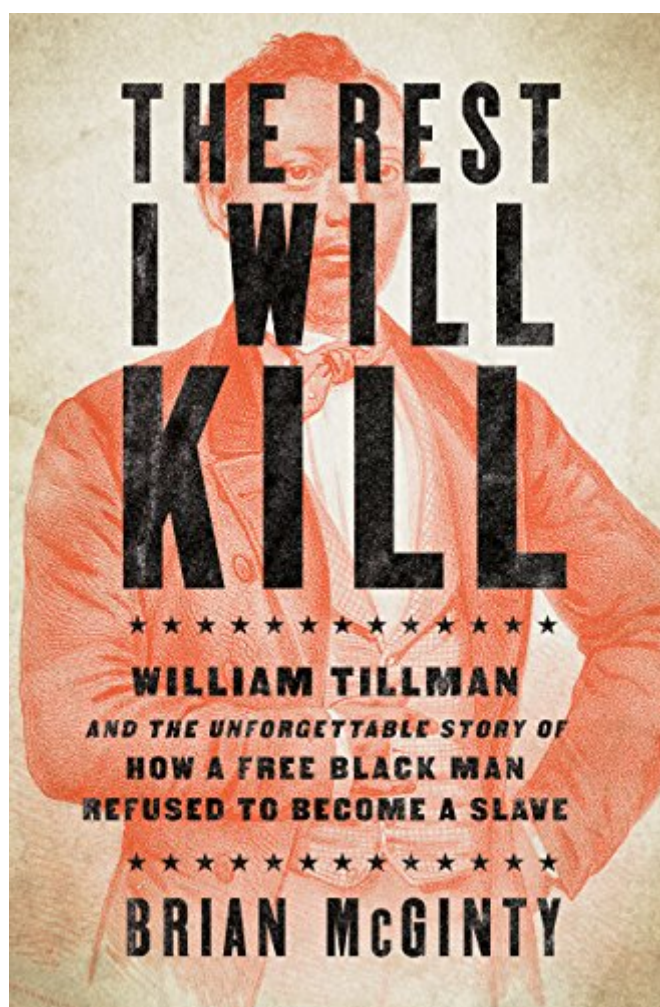


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# The Rest I Will Kill: William Tillman And The Unforgettable Story Of How A Free Black Man Refused To Become A Slave



## Synopsis

A surprising work of narrative history and detection that illuminates one of the most daring and long-forgotten heroes of the Civil War. Independence Day, 1861. The schooner S. J. Waring sets sail from New York on a routine voyage to South America. Seventeen days later, it limps back into New York's frenzied harbor with the ship's black steward, William Tillman, at the helm. While the story of that ill-fated voyage is one of the most harrowing tales of captivity and survival on the high seas, it has, almost unbelievably, been lost to history. Now reclaiming Tillman as the real American hero he was, historian Brian McGinty dramatically returns readers to that riotous, explosive summer of 1861, when the country was tearing apart at the seams and the Union army was in near shambles following a humiliating defeat at the First Battle of Bull Run. Desperate for good news, the North was soon riveted by reports of an incident that occurred a few hundred miles off the coast of New York, where the Waring had been overtaken by a marauding crew of Confederate privateers. While the white sailors became chummy with their Southern captors, free black man William Tillman was perfectly aware of the fate that awaited him in the ruthless, slave-filled ports south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Stealthily biding his time until a moonlit night nine days after the capture, Tillman single-handedly killed three officers of the privateer crew, then took the wheel and pointed it home. Yet, with no experience as a navigator, only one other helper, and a war-torn Atlantic seaboard to contend with, his struggle had just begun. It took five perilous days at sea—all thrillingly recounted here—before the Waring returned to New York Harbor, where the story of Tillman's shipboard courage became such a tabloid sensation that he was not only put on the bill of Barnum's American Museum but also proclaimed to be the "first hero" of the Civil War. As McGinty evocatively shows, however, in the horrors of the war then engulfing the nation, memories of his heroism—even of his identity—were all but lost to history. As such, *The Rest I Will Kill* becomes a thrilling and historically significant work, as well as an extraordinary journey that recounts how a free black man was able to defy efforts to make him a slave and become an unlikely glimmer of hope for a disheartened Union army in the war-battered North.

## Book Information

File Size: 13437 KB

Print Length: 240 pages

Publisher: Liveright; 1 edition (August 16, 2016)

Publication Date: August 16, 2016

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B016E0ROHG

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #192,502 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #3 in Books > History > Americas > United States > Civil War > Naval Operations #27 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > United States > African American #51 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > United States > Civil War > Abolition

## Customer Reviews

I may not be a Civil War aficionado, but I have read extensively and visited nearly all the major battle fields. This book was a total surprise. I had not heard of William Tillman and his heroic escape from certain slavery. He acts as a role model for us all to never give up. I highly recommend this 'rediscovered' bit of US history.

I have read some of McGinty's previous books about Lincoln and the Civil War and found this one every bit as good as the others. It is an exciting story about a free black man's efforts to save himself from slavery in the earliest days of the Civil War period. William Tillman worked as a cook and steward on a merchant vessel that had been commandeered by Confederate Privateers. Unwilling to be sold into slavery in the slave markets of Charleston or Savannah, he put his own life in danger, killed the "pirate" crew, recaptured the vessel and sailed the ship back to New York. Once again, McGinty sheds much deserved light on a little known historical event. This book will appeal to those interested in Black History, piracy, the Civil War and, especially, the Civil War at Sea. The book is thoroughly researched and very well documented. I highly recommend this interesting read.

It often seems that the most exciting, engaging, and sometimes upsetting accounts are the true ones. Several times I caught myself thinking that this book could make a great movie. I was surprised that I was not familiar with the story. The author takes time to set the historical stage to give the reader an understanding of the times and delicate position of free persons of color. You cannot read this excellent writing and not know that well documented research is very important to

the author. Without giving anything away, since the story is true the reader cannot anticipate the twists and turns and will be shocked along the way. I enjoyed it very much.

I follow Mr. McGinty on a regular basis. I find his style one that keeps me reading and not wanting to put a book down. This one is no exception. I wonder who has his movie rights. Astounding story about this William Tillman who was brave and seemingly intuitive enough to prevent his capture and return to safety. D.M. Swaney, Gilbert, Arizona

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