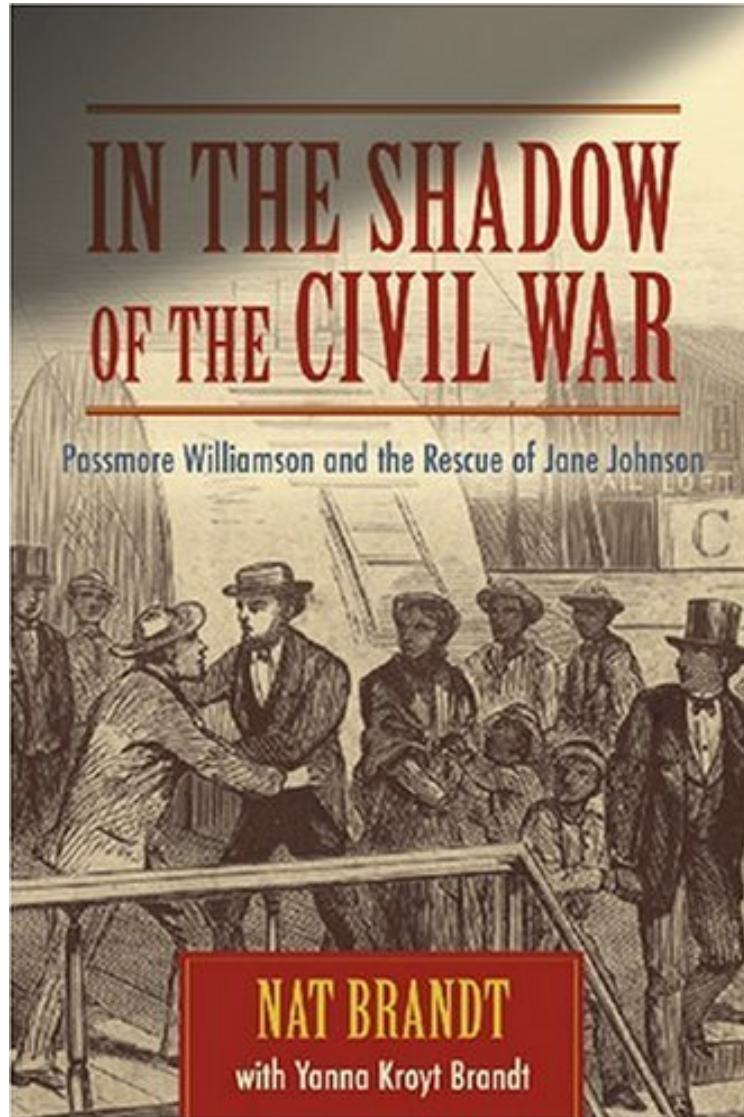


(Free download) In the Shadow of the Civil War: Passmore Williamson and the Rescue of Jane Johnson

## In the Shadow of the Civil War: Passmore Williamson and the Rescue of Jane Johnson

*Nat Brandt*

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**Nat Brandt : In the Shadow of the Civil War: Passmore Williamson and the Rescue of Jane Johnson** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised In the Shadow of the Civil War: Passmore Williamson and the Rescue of Jane Johnson:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. In The Shadow of the Civil WarBy Barbara And Byron SkinnerThis is an excellant book for those with an interest in how the Fugitive law of 1850 was applied. The book is based on the

trial of a slave named Jane Jackson who took advantage of Pennsylvania's freedom law, that states that once a slave sets foot on Pennsylvania's soil they are free. The main character in the story though is not Ms. Jackson but a white abolitionist named Passmore Williamson who "aided" Ms. Jackson and her two children in their escape from their owner" a Col. John Hill Wheeler an U.S. diplomat on his way to Central America and was passing through Philadelphia when Williamson with the help of some black dock workers and ship crew made the snatch and release of the Jackson family. The story has no real clear cut conclusion and is a telling tale of how often U.S. courts can be less than conclusive in their findings. If you are a Civil War buff who is interested in the war beyond the battles and personalities this makes a good read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. eyeopener By susieq Several years ago I read the book *The Bondswoman Narrative* and was amazed to read that Jane Johnson possibly could have been the author of *The Bondswoman's Narrative*. It was very informative about her life and struggles to be free.

Six years before the onset of the Civil War, two courageous figures - one a free white man and one an enslaved black woman - risked personal liberty to ensure each other's freedom in an explosive episode that captured the attention of a nation on the brink of cataclysmic change. In this deeply researched account of the rescue of the slave Jane Johnson by the Philadelphia Quaker and fervent abolitionist Passmore Williamson, of the federal court case that followed, and of Johnson's selfless efforts to free the jailed Williamson, veteran journalist Nat Brandt and Emmy-winning filmmaker Yanna Kroyt Brandt capture the heroism and humanity at the heart of this important moment in American history. A written plea from Johnson and rushed to the Camden ferry dock to liberate her and her two children from their master in a daring confrontation. Unbeknownst to the abolitionists, Johnson's owner, Col. John Hill Wheeler, was connected to the highest levels of government and was a personal friend of President Franklin Pierce. As a result, Wheeler was able to have Williamson arrested and confined to Moyamensing Prison, an institution notorious for harboring Philadelphia's worst criminals. With famous leaders of the abolitionist movement, black and white, visiting the prisoner. In one of the episode's most dramatic moments, Johnson returned to Philadelphia, risking her own freedom, to testify on Williamson's behalf. There were petitions in many states to impeach Judge John Kintzing Kane, who stubbornly refused to release Williamson. The case became a battle of wills between a man who was unwavering in his defiance of slavery and another determined to defend the so-called rights of the slave owner. Williamson's martyrdom spotlighted Philadelphia as one northern city where the growing rifts between states' rights, federal mandates, and personal liberties had come to the fore. Drama, and the rise of a cult of celebrity, the Brandts' brisk narrative takes readers into the lives of the central participants in this complex episode. Passmore Williamson, Jane Johnson, William Still, Colonel Wheeler, and Judge Kane are brought vibrantly to life as fully developed and flawed characters drawn unexpectedly into the annals of history. In *The Shadow of the Civil War* chronicles events that presage the divisive national conflict that followed and that underscore the passionate views on freedom and justice that continue to define the American experience.

From the Inside Flap "In *The Shadow of the Civil War* is an exciting narrative of a conflict between slavery and freedom that had national consequences beyond the streets and courts of Philadelphia where it took place. Passmore Williamson went to jail for his part in helping Jane Johnson and her children achieve freedom in 1855, but then won his own liberty and vindicated the state sovereignty of Pennsylvania on behalf of freedom over the power of slavery wielded by the federal government. In their riveting account, the Brandts show how the publicity generated by this case moved the nation a step closer to the crisis of 1861." --James M. McPherson, author of *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* and *This Mighty Scourge of War: The American Iliad, 1861-1865* "Based on excellent research, *In the Shadow of the Civil War* brilliantly illuminates the complex personal, legal, and societal factors surrounding slavery and race in the United States in the era just prior to the Civil War. An abolitionist's simple rescue mission in Philadelphia in 1855 emerged as anything but routine, and the resulting legal proceedings reflected the strengths and weaknesses of constitutional law and evoked the passions of a nation. The immense cast of characters superbly described in this comprehensive and elegantly written account reveal to us the human lives at the center of national controversy. This story dramatically and indelibly recreates the divergent ideals that coursed throughout the country on the eve of war and contributes enormously to our understanding of rich regional and national implications inherent in the emancipation of Jane Johnson and her sons. In short, the Brandts, both masterful storytellers, have given us a really marvelous book." -- Franklin W. Knight, Leonard and Helen R. Stulman Professor of History, Johns Hopkins University About the Author Longtime journalist Nat Brandt has been a reporter for the *Newark Star-Ledger*, an editor for the *New York Times*, managing editor of *American Heritage*, editor in chief of *Publishers Weekly*, and a senior news writer for CBS News. He is the author of ten previous nonfiction books--including *The Town That Started the Civil War*, *The Man Who Tried to Burn New York*, and *Chicago Death Trap*--as well as two novels. Brandt is a recipient of the Douglas Southall Freeman Award for Southern History as well as awards from the Illinois State Historical Society and the New Jersey Press Association. Yanna Kroyt Brandt is a writer, director, and producer for film and television. Her work has been honored with nine Emmy awards as well as awards from the Writers Guild of America and prizes from more than fifty film festivals. She is the writer, director, and producer (and cocreator with

Nat Brandt) of the prize-winning PBS documentary series *The Crucible of the Millennium*.