



The Life of William J. Brown of Providence, R.I. (Revisiting New England)

William Brown

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The son and grandson of slaves owned by abolitionist Moses Brown, William J. Brown was a free African American born in Providence, in 1814. Brown published his captivating autobiography, "The Life of William J. Brown of Providence, R.I.", in 1883. His compelling and insightful story is a memorable portrait of life and society in nineteenth-century New England: his childhood, his unusually good educational opportunities, employment, contemporary race relations, the port's bustling seafaring life, temperance, religion, organized societies, and local and national politics. He wrote of prominent African American contemporaries, including Frederick Douglass and Henry Bibb, and of African American troops in the Civil War. This is an impressively rich text, remarkable for its time and place. Unlike official records and other types of primary sources - frequently written from the opaque, self-interested perspective of upper-middle-class white Americans - this extraordinary memoir provides an authentic window on black experiences in nineteenth-century New England. Expertly framed by Rosalind C. Wiggins's engaging preface and a new scholarly introduction by historian Joanne Pope Melish, "The Life of William J. Brown of Providence, R.I." will spellbind readers interested in African American and New England literature, history, and culture.

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