



The Jerry Rescue: The Fugitive Slave Law, Northern Rights, and the American Sectional Crisis (Critical Historical Encounters Series)

By Angela F. Murphy

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This compelling micro-history explores how the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 affected fugitive slaves, free blacks, abolitionists, and northern white citizens. *The Jerry Rescue: The Fugitive Slave Law, Northern Rights, and the American Sectional Crisis* is a narrative of the events surrounding the arrest of William "Jerry" Henry on October 1, 1851. Jerry, who thought he was to be charged with a minor infraction committed in Syracuse, went peacefully with the officials who arrested him; but he soon realized that he was in far more trouble than they had indicated. They were detaining him under the provisions of the recently passed Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, and federal officials intended to hold a hearing to determine whether Jerry would remain a free man in New York or if he would be sent to the slave state of Missouri as the property of John McReynolds, who claimed Jerry as his slave. Because of the actions of a variety of individuals in Syracuse, that hearing was abruptly cut short and Jerry was forcibly removed from the custody of his captors. *The Jerry Rescue* provides an absorbing narrative of the events that the arrest of Jerry set in motion, illuminates the motives and concerns of those who were involved in those events, and places the story in the wider context of the American sectional crisis. Examining such topics as northern defiance of the Fugitive Slave Law, the growth of sectional tension in the United States, antislavery debates about how best to attack the institution of slavery, black and white cooperation in the movement to end slavery, and the question of northern states' rights, *The Jerry Rescue* is eminently rich with historical details, clarity, and objective analysis.

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- Sales Rank: #213471 in Books
- Published on: 2014-12-30
- Released on: 2014-12-30
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 5.50" h x .60" w x 8.20" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 216 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"*The Jerry Rescue* brilliantly connects micro-history with the macro-history of slavery in the United States by illuminating the complex historical context that preceded the Civil War."--Ana Lucia Araujo, *Howard University*

"A powerful rendition of how the fugitive slave interrupted this one northern community and the issues it raised about states' rights, federal power, and the individual's responsibility to contest unjust laws."--James L. Huston, *Oklahoma State University*

"Dramatic and gripping. Murphy does a great job exploring the history of abolitionism, the Liberty Party, and states' rights while sticking fairly close to the narrative of Jerry's escape."--Amy S. Greenberg, *Pennsylvania State University*

About the Author

Angela F. Murphy is Associate Professor of History at Texas State University. She is the author of *American Slavery, Irish Freedom: Abolition, Immigrant Citizenship, and The Transatlantic Movement for Irish Repeal* (2010).

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