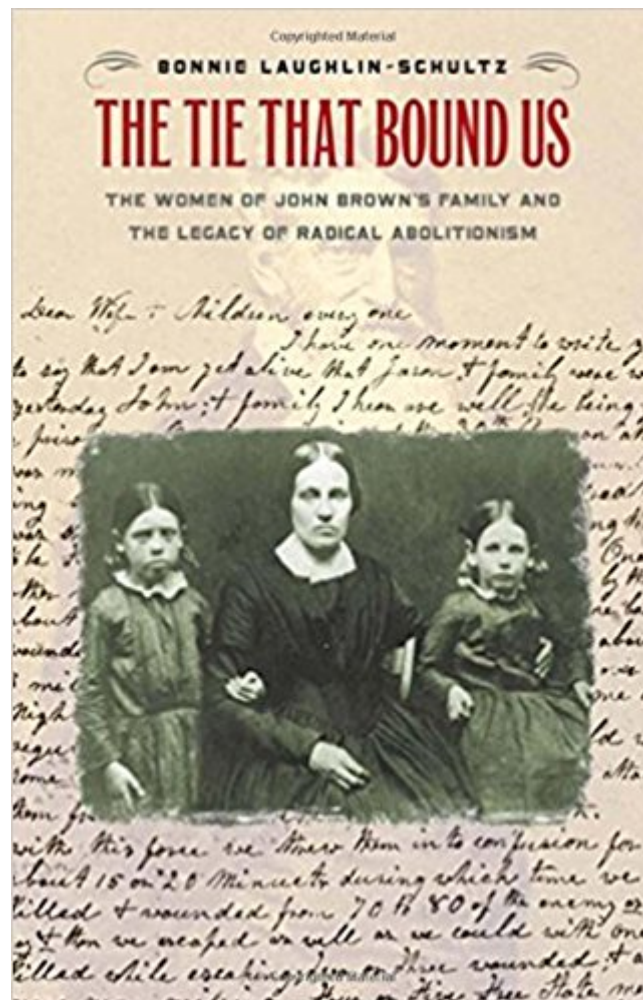


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The Tie That Bound Us: The Women Of John Brown's Family And The Legacy Of Radical Abolitionism



Synopsis

John Brown was fiercely committed to the militant abolitionist cause, a crusade that culminated in Brown's raid on the Federal armory at Harpers Ferry in 1859 and his subsequent execution. Less well known is his devotion to his family, and they to him. Two of Brown's sons were killed at Harpers Ferry, but the commitment of his wife and daughters often goes unacknowledged. In *The Tie That Bound Us*, Bonnie Laughlin-Schultz reveals for the first time the depth of the Brown women's involvement in his cause and their crucial roles in preserving and transforming his legacy after his death. As detailed by Laughlin-Schultz, Brown's second wife Mary Ann Day Brown and his daughters Ruth Brown Thompson, Annie Brown Adams, Sarah Brown, and Ellen Brown Fablinger were in many ways the most ordinary of women, contending with chronic poverty and lives that were quite typical for poor, rural nineteenth-century women. However, they also lived extraordinary lives, crossing paths with such figures as Frederick Douglass and Lydia Maria Child and embracing an abolitionist moral code that sanctioned antislavery violence in place of the more typical female world of petitioning and pamphleteering. In the aftermath of John Brown's raid at Harpers Ferry, the women of his family experienced a particular kind of celebrity among abolitionists and the American public. In their roles as what daughter Annie called "relics" of Brown's raid, they tested the limits of American memory of the Civil War, especially the war's most radical aim: securing racial equality. Because of their longevity (Annie, the last of Brown's daughters, died in 1926) and their position as symbols of the most radical form of abolitionist agitation, the story of the Brown women illuminates the changing nature of how Americans remembered Brown's raid, radical antislavery, and the causes and consequences of the Civil War.

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Customer Reviews

"To the vast literature on John Brown, Laughlin-Schultz offers something new and revealing—namely, an intelligent and informative study of the women who stood behind and for John Brown and his family in their radical abolitionism and then in preserving their memory as men of principle. . . . She shows how the private became public and the personal political. In doing so she brings us close to the man John Brown, and his sons, who understood and demanded the necessity of women's courage. This is a book every student of antislavery, women's, and Civil War history will read with profit." [Library Journal](#), 1 August 2013 (starred review) "This book offers an approach to the John Brown saga that focuses on the women of the family, while not neglecting his importance. Laughlin-Schultz . . . emphasizes the fact that the Brown women made it possible for Brown to implement his militant abolition plans in Kansas and at Harpers Ferry. A poignant account of a neglected side of the John Brown saga." [Choice](#) (1 January 2014) "Historian Bonnie Laughlin-Schultz sheds light on the Brown family women—long neglected in historical studies of Brown—in order to "offer insight into nineteenth-century American women's lives". . . . The Tie that Bound Us is a significant contribution to women's history and to studies examining the ways that Americans have remembered the Civil War. . . . Though Laughlin-Schultz's focus is not on Brown himself, what she reveals about the women of his family—especially their support and devotion to him—is nonetheless important to understanding the abolitionist." [Kelly Erby, Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains](#) (Vol. 37.1, 2014) "[The Tie That Bound Us] is outstanding and will appeal to various readers. Historians of antislavery will find it a fascinating study of radical abolitionism, and those who study women's history will appreciate Laughlin-Schultz's careful analysis of the Brown women, their participation in John Brown's vision, and their attempts to shape and craft his legacy and the place of their family in American history." [Karol K. Weaver, Journal of the Civil War Era](#) (September 2014) "In The Tie That Bound Us, Bonnie Laughlin-Schultz analyzes John Brown's wife and daughters. In doing so, Laughlin-Schultz makes an important contribution to the scholarly literature on John Brown. . . . This is a deeply researched, well-written, and important book. Laughlin-Schultz succeeds in rescuing Mary Brown and her daughters from obscurity and her analysis of their lives, their sacrifices and struggles, and how they contested and shaped

Brown's memory is superb. . . . This compelling book will be welcomed by anyone interested in New York history, John Brown, gender, slavery and abolition, as well as the Civil War and its legacy; and will appeal to both a scholarly and a lay audience." Evan C. Roth, *New York History* (Spring 2014) "Laughlin-Schultz complicates the abolitionist argument that the Brown women supported John's agenda unquestioningly and describes the role of daughters Ruth and Annie in their father's mission. Perhaps most interestingly, the author describes the competition between the Brown family and the abolitionist community to shape the memory of the man and his actions in Kansas and at Harpers Ferry. . . . [The] book makes a valuable contribution to abolition studies as well as to women's history." Beverly C. Tomek, *The Journal of Southern History* (November 2014) "This fascinating work acts as a supplement to previous scholarship on Brown. Reading this book is a wonderful way to obtain more information about the endlessly fascinating John Brown family." Harriet Hyman Alonso, *American Historical Review* "With skillful writing rooted in exemplary research, Bonnie Laughlin-Schultz explores the complex relationships of a family constituted by and for abolition. She reminds us that marriage, parenthood, childhood, and sibship configure women's roles in movements for social change." Lee V. Chambers, *The Journal of American History* (vol. 102, no. 3) "In *The Tie That Bound Us*, Bonnie Laughlin-Schultz liberates the John Brown story from its conventional manliness. She reveals the pivotal roles played by Brown's wife and daughters, who melded ordinary domestic duties with the extraordinary demands of militant abolitionism. Deeply researched and lucidly told, this is a pioneering exploration of the dramatic, often tragic lives of women in the Civil War era." Tony Horwitz, author of *Midnight Rising: John Brown and the Raid that Sparked the Civil War* "Bonnie Laughlin-Schultz has opened up new territory. Among its important original contributions, *The Tie That Bound Us* brings the women of John Brown's family into rich and critical relation to Brown himself, explains how this relation continues to develop and change long after Brown's own death, and, for the first time, shows that these crucial associates of Brown are at the center of his story rather than at its margins. Such recentering casts new light on that story and on the larger stories of antislavery reform and militant abolitionism." Evan Carton, University of Texas at Austin, author of *Patriotic Treason: John Brown and the Soul of America* "The *Tie That Bound Us* is an essential read for anyone interested in John Brown, the fight against slavery, and the coming of the Civil War. Bonnie Laughlin-Schultz offers a new and fascinating look at John Brown and the raid on Harper's Ferry from the perspective of his wife and daughters. She shows how the Brown women participated in John's war on slavery in essential ways: by moving to North Elba; by sacrificing their husbands, brothers, and sons; and by housekeeping at Harper's Ferry. In

addition, after John Brown's execution, the Brown women, especially his wife Mary, became public symbols of his martyrdom. As Laughlin-Schultz argues, their story is both ordinary, in their daily labors for their households, and extraordinary, in their famous connection to the antislavery warrior." — Carol Faulkner, Syracuse University, author of *Lucretia Mott's Heresy: Abolition and Women's Rights in 19th-Century America*

Bonnie Laughlin-Schultz is Assistant Professor of History and Social Science Teaching Coordinator at Eastern Illinois University.

Wow! An amazing story of some brave women.

A most readable and fair account of supportive women at home and women close to action in the family of the abolitionist John Brown. A good work of scholarship.

I've read every book I can find about John Brown. This was among the most unique. Great literary style.

UPDATE: I have now finished the book, May 2015. It is just as fantastic as I said before. This academic read is a good book. I will say that I have not finished reading the book. However, I can't wait to finish the book to write a review because I LOVE this book! This book is very readable and very real. I don't want to read through it too fast because there is so much to absorb in what I am reading. I feel as if I am sitting beside these women as they go through their life. The author does a very good job of putting the events in a larger context of the time. She does not show bias toward any one side. She simply tells us what these women went through and to the extent possible, she tells us what they felt about it. This is not simply a book about the women in John Brown's family. This is not simply a book about radical abolitionism. This is a book about a nation, a struggle, a time period. I would recommend a physical copy of the book as it would be easier to refer to the notes on the author's source material. And I would recommend buying this book and not simply borrowing it from the library. You will want to read it more than once. If you are interested in the lives of women, get this book. If you are interested in abolitionism, get this book. If you are interested in the Civil War era, get this book. If you are interested in family dynamics, get this book. If you are even slightly interested in history, get this book. I received a free copy of it through NetGalley with the agreement that I give an honest review. My review is rather late at this point, but better late than never,

hopefully.

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