



The Year of Jubilee: Men of God

George F. Nagle

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In late June of 1863, Harrisburg's African American community witnessed the influx of refugees streaming into town from the Cumberland Valley, fleeing the rapidly advancing invasion forces of General Robert E. Lee. Among the panicked and footsore mobs were hundreds of people of color like themselves who had abandoned their homes and businesses, most escaping with little more than the clothing on their backs, all in the hope of preserving the one possession that was most dear to them: freedom. This book tells the story of the struggle faced by African American people in and around Harrisburg to establish their freedom, and to maintain it over the decades against the corroding effects of racism, economic hardship and civil war. It traces the beginnings of that community as it emerged from a legacy of slavery in the mid-1700s and follows it through the development of social institutions, ultimately achieving social and economic independence. The constant struggle by this community to defend that independence, and its resulting freedom, against everyone from paternalistic local lawmakers to predatory kidnappers, is a theme that runs throughout the book, culminating in the momentous decision in June 1863 to make a stand in Harrisburg against the Confederate invasion.

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