



Two Captains from Carolina: Moses Grandy, John Newland Maffitt, and the Coming of the Civil War

Bland Simpson

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In *Two Captains from Carolina*, Bland Simpson twines together the lives of two accomplished nineteenth-century mariners from North Carolina--one African American, one Irish American. Though Moses Grandy (ca. 1791- ca. 1850) and John Newland Maffitt Jr. (1819-1886) never met, their stories bring to vivid life the saga of race and maritime culture in the antebellum and Civil War-era South. With his lyrical prose and inimitable voice, Bland Simpson offers readers a grand tale of the striving human spirit and the great divide that nearly sundered the nation.

Grandy, born a slave, captained freight boats on the Dismal Swamp Canal and bought his freedom three times before he finally gained it. He became involved in Boston abolitionism and ultimately appeared before the General Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1843. As a child, Maffitt was sent from his North Carolina home to a northern boarding school, and at thirteen he was appointed midshipman in the U.S. Navy, where he had a distinguished career. After North Carolina seceded from the Union, he enlisted in the Confederate navy and became a legendary blockade runner and raider. Both Grandy and Maffitt made names for themselves as they navigated very different routes through the turbulent waters of antebellum America.

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