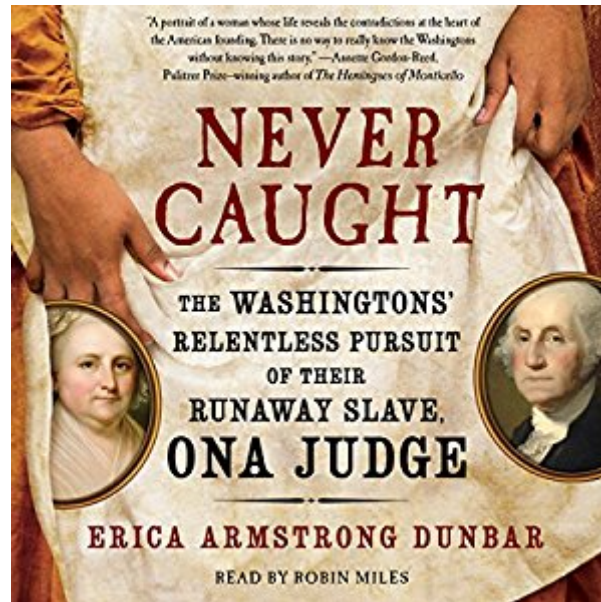


The book was found

Never Caught



Synopsis

A startling and eye-opening look into America's first family, *Never Caught* is the powerful narrative of Ona Judge, George and Martha Washington's runaway slave who risked it all to escape the nation's capital and reach freedom. When George Washington was elected president, he reluctantly left behind his beloved Mount Vernon to serve in Philadelphia, the temporary seat of the nation's capital. In setting up his household, he took Tobias Lear, his celebrated secretary, and eight slaves, including Ona Judge, about which little has been written. As he grew accustomed to Northern ways, there was one change he couldn't get his arms around: Pennsylvania law required enslaved people be set free after six months of residency in the state. Rather than comply, Washington decided to circumvent the law. Every six months he sent the slaves back down south, just as the clock was about to expire. Though Ona Judge lived a life of relative comfort, the few pleasantries she was afforded were nothing compared to freedom, a glimpse of which she encountered firsthand in Philadelphia. So, when the opportunity presented itself one cold spring day in Philadelphia, Judge left everything she knew to escape to New England. Yet freedom would not come without its costs. At just 22 years old, Ona became the subject of an intense manhunt led by George Washington, who used his political and personal contacts to recapture his property. Impeccably researched, historian Erica Armstrong Dunbar weaves a powerful tale and offers fascinating new scholarship on how one young woman risked it all to gain freedom from the famous founding father.

Book Information

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#117 in Books > History > Americas > United States > Revolution & Founding

Customer Reviews

What an incredible piece of history. Startling and inspiring at once. In Ona Judge Staines, I'd say we have a new American hero. A 22-year old enslaved girl who chose a dirt poor fugitive's life in New Hampshire over a "privileged" life of slavery, a girl who ran away from no less than the beloved first president of the USA! Her courage is hard to fathom. And the Washingtons -- wow -- how slyly and relentlessly they chased her down. Amazing story. Must read!

I picked this book up after reading a small portion of it that had been featured on Longreads, and I was immediately struck by how powerful and compelling Dunbar's writing is. This book is wonderfully researched and informative and provides an unflinching look at what life was like not just for Ona and her family but for others who had been enslaved. Reading material like this is absolutely vital for those who want a complete picture of what American history was like, and I appreciate the effort and research that Dunbar put into crafting this. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

A good read about a piece of history I never knew. Really thoroughly researched and footnoted. (Notes at the end so reading is not interrupted.) One more piece of the true heritage we all share but mostly weren't ever taught -- Just one of Washington's slaves.

Ona Judge shows courage and tenacity. These qualities sustain her struggle and enable her survival. I found it interesting that while the first leader of our country, President George Washington, was fighting for our individual freedom he himself was enslaving so many people of color. Both he and his wife, Martha, owned family slaves and had for many generations. When Ona Judge decides to make her daring escape it set off a half-century of cat-and-mouse game that ends in an unbelievable tale.

Fascinating story. I never knew anything about slavery in colonial days, and this book is so informative about the conditions that the slaves were forced to live and work in. It's a heartbreaking story. We've always been taught that George Washington was a heroic, saintly man, but the people he enslaved and "owned" definitely knew otherwise. Read this book!

Author Erica Armstrong Dunbar's fast-moving, well-researched book, "Never Caught: The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge," tells the little-known story of Ona Judge, Martha Washington's personal slave. Judge accompanied the First Family to New York

and Philadelphia during George Washington's presidency, making a daring (and successful) escape just months before the president's second term, setting him on a vengeful mission to recapture her. Dunbar's meticulous research helps paint a detailed picture of what life was like for slaves in the Washington household and for those who escaped to freedom in New England. Where she was unable to provide documentation for specific events in Judge's life, she describes the kinds of things that other slaves experienced. It's a good approach that avoids projecting about things that can't be documented. With George Washington's voluminous public and private correspondence, his actions and comments are far easier to report. While Dunbar notes that he wasn't as cruel as many slave-owners of his time were, Washington's response to Judge's escape shows him to be a meaner, more spiteful person than the usual image of the first president. Furious at the 19-year-old's escape, Washington dispatched slave-hunters and leaned on federal officials up and down the East Coast to find the girl and return her to Alexandria. But, with abolitionist sentiment growing in New England, Washington's political allies in New Hampshire, who know where Judge is living, were reluctant to assist the president. She would remain free and outlive the Washingtons by several decades but always labor under the fear that their descendants could force her (and her New England-born children) into slavery. "Never Caught" is a page-turner that those interested in learning about another side of George Washington and a daring young woman who risked it all for freedom will enjoy.

What a great book and a great important part of history. I thank the author for her well done, in depth hard work!! I am passing this to my daughters because though we think we know & care about the injustices of slavery, there is always so much more to the story!!

This is a quick read that gives us insight into an important slice of history and increases our puzzlement over the conundrum we face when trying to reconcile our views of our founding fathers who were also slaveholders. Well worth the few hours it takes to make your way through this story.

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