



Front Line of Freedom: African Americans and the Forging of the Underground Railroad in the Ohio Valley (Ohio River Valley Series)

Keith P. Griffler

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The Underground Railroad, an often misunderstood antebellum institution, has been viewed as a simple combination of mainly white "conductors" and black "passengers." Keith P. Griffler takes a new, battlefield-level view of the war against American slavery as he reevaluates one of its front lines: the Ohio River, the longest commercial dividing line between slavery and freedom. In shifting the focus from the much discussed white-led "stations" to the primarily black-led frontline struggle along the Ohio, Griffler reveals for the first time the crucial importance of the freedom movement in the river's port cities and towns. Front Line of Freedom fully examines America's first successful interracial freedom movement, which proved to be as much a struggle to transform the states north of the Ohio as those to its south. In a climate of racial proscription, mob violence, and white hostility, the efforts of Ohio Valley African Americans to establish and maintain communities became inextricably linked to the steady stream of fugitives crossing the region. As Griffler traces the efforts of African Americans to free themselves, Griffler provides a window into the process by which this clandestine network took shape and grew into a powerful force in antebellum America.

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