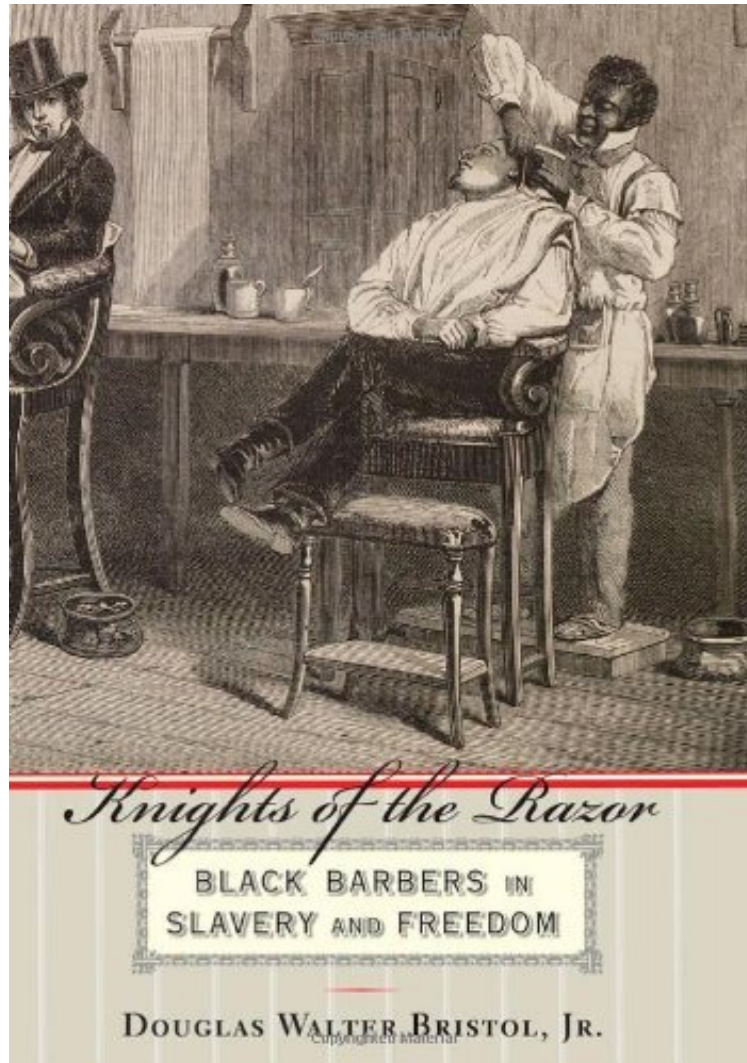


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## Knights of the Razor: Black Barbers in Slavery and Freedom

*Douglas W. Bristol Jr.*

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**Douglas W. Bristol Jr. :** **Knights of the Razor: Black Barbers in Slavery and Freedom** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Knights of the Razor: Black Barbers in Slavery and Freedom:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. I desperately wanted to enjoy this bookBy MattI desperately wanted to enjoy this book. This book is clearly written by an academic for academics. It is exhaustively researched and certainly fascinating, and if you were interested in the history of barbering as it relates to race relations in the US, then this is the book for you. But the writing style is more for academics than for laymen.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. I Recommend Douglas Walter Bristol's "Black Barbers in Slavery and Freedom"By William D HowardI am researching my great-great-great grandfather who was a free person of color and a barber in North Carolina. I just finished reading this book last night and found it loaded with facts and perspectives that have helped

me focus more clearly on my ancestor and his descendants. Combined with reading John Hope Franklin's "Free Negro," (and other resources), I now have a more solid foundation to move forward on my book about these paternal ancestors. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. I would recommend it to anyone who would like to know more ...By CustomerDr. Bristols book on black barbers in America is well written. The author gets to the point and stays there. I would recommend it to anyone who would like to know more on a

Black barbers, reflected a freed slave who barbered in antebellum St. Louis, may have been "the only men in their community who enjoyed, at all times, the privilege of free speech." The reason, of course, lay in their temporary?but absolute?power over a client. With a flick of the wrist, nineteenth-century black barbers could have slit the throats of the white men they shaved. In *Knights of the Razor*, Douglas Walter Bristol, Jr., explores this extraordinary relationship in the largely untold story of African American barbers, North and South, from the American Revolution to the First World War. Besides establishing the modern-day barbershop, these barbers used their skilled trade to navigate the many pitfalls that racism created for ambitious black men. They dominated an upscale market that catered to prosperous white men. At the same time, their respect for labor itself preserved their ties to the black community. Successful barbers assumed leadership roles in their localities, helping to form a black middle class despite pervasive racial segregation. They advocated economic independence from whites and founded insurance companies that became some of the largest black-owned corporations. Bristol engagingly narrates this story of skilled blacks and elite whites. More broadly, he offers a thoughtful study of the nuances of race relations and the ingenuity of black enterprise. *Knights of the Razor* tackles a rich and tangled subject.

"An insightful and well-written analysis of race, racism, and the resourcefulness of black enterprise in the long nineteenth century. Douglas Walter Bristol has illuminated a history that well represents the process of African American men transforming themselves from enslaved workers and servants into successful businessmen and community leaders." (Journal of African American History)"In this imaginatively researched and engagingly written book, Douglas Walter Bristol, Jr. provides a rich historical study of a long-neglected and much-deserving subject." (Journal of American History)"The *Knights of the Razor* definitely get their due in this wonderfully crafted and highly entertaining book. It is a cornucopia of themes, insights, data, and mini-biographies about fascinating characters... What Douglas Bristol accomplishes in this book is to give black barbers real faces and personalities, and their profession much redeeming dignity beyond the stereotypes of racial and ideological politics. He restores them to American history." (Joe Short Internet of Books)"This is a valuable book that makes clear that African American barbers have long been due more attention from scholars. Bristol succeeds in returning them to their place in the history of both the black middle class and the struggle for racial equality, humanizing and giving voice to hardworking, dignified men whom many scholars had long unfairly dismissed as unavoidably compromised because of their chosen paths to success." (Scott Giltner H-CivWar, H-Net s)"A well-written, tightly packed history that confronts pressing questions and will appeal to readers interested in African American history, race, and slavery as well as those concerned with the larger implications of practicing social history." (Thomas H. Sheller Maryland Historical Magazine MHS Publications)"A fascinating look into the largely unknown lives of black barbers from the American Revolution through the early twentieth century... This book effectively underscores the role of barbers and barbering in the African-American struggle to attain equality and respectability... A stimulating and informative work." (Alexa Benson Henderson Business History )"The book's broad chronological and geographical scope that allows Bristol to examine many critical aspects of the black barber experience makes his study the most comprehensive work written on this topic to date." (Robert C. Kenzer Journal of Southern History)"[A] well-written exploration of the lives of so-called knights of the razor... [A] fine study that will do much to advance our understanding of race relations in nineteenth-century America." (L. Diane Barnes Alabama )From the Back CoverBlack barbers, reflected a freed slave who barbered in antebellum St. Louis, may have been the only men in their community who enjoyed, at all times, the privilege of free speech. The reason lay in their temporary?but absolute?power over a client. With a flick of the wrist, they could have slit the throats of the white men they shaved. In *Knights of the Razor*, Douglas Walter Bristol, Jr., explores this extraordinary relationship in the largely untold story of African American barbers, North and South, from the American Revolution to the First World War. In addition to establishing the modern-day barbershop, these barbers used their skilled trade to navigate the many pitfalls that racism created for ambitious black men. Successful barbers assumed leadership roles in their localities, helping to form a black middle class despite pervasive racial segregation. They advocated economic independence from whites and founded insurance companies that became some of the largest black-owned corporations. "An insightful and well-written analysis of race, racism, and the resourcefulness of black enterprise in the long nineteenth century. Douglas Walter Bristol has illuminated a history that well represents the process of African American men transforming themselves from enslaved workers and servants into successful businessmen and community leaders."? Journal of African American History"In this imaginatively researched and engagingly written book, Douglas Walter Bristol, Jr. provides a rich historical study of a long-neglected and much-deserving subject."? Journal of American

History Douglas Walter Bristol, Jr., is an associate professor of history at the University of Southern Mississippi. About the Author Douglas Walter Bristol, Jr., is an associate professor of history at the University of Southern Mississippi.