

*Mrs. Mattingly's Miracle: The Prince, the Widow, and the Cure That Shocked Washington City.* By Nancy Lusignan Schultz. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011. xii, 274 pp. \$30.00.)

The point of departure for Nancy Lusignan Schultz's book is the astounding occurrence of March 10, 1824, when Ann Carbery Mattingly, a widow living in the home of her brother, the mayor of Washington, D.C., was suddenly cured of an overwhelming cancer. With several witnesses on hand as the devout Catholic woman received the Eucharist from the hands of a priest, she instantaneously revived, showed no symptoms of her previous affliction, and lived for the next thirty-one years. The news of the cure spread quickly through Washington and resulted in a flurry of debate and controversy in the capital city.

A second element in the miracle story was the German priest Prince Alexander Hohenlohe, already widely known for numerous cures in Europe. His fame had spread to America, and he supposedly had planned healing rituals at Mrs. Mattingly's request. Her family believed that they were participating in the rituals at the same time (although other evidence suggests that Hohenlohe was traveling at that time and was not aware of their plans at all).

The author wisely makes no attempt to explain the cure, pointing out that miracles are by definition events that cannot be explained by any rational means. She considers her work instead an exploration of social history that "endeavors to illuminate the historical contexts, both in the United States and abroad, for these events" (p. 23). She also sees her work as "a biographical voyage to discover the charismatic Prince Hohenlohe and the enigmatic Ann Mattingly" (p. 18). These separate purposes took the

author into widespread researches in genealogy, local history, ecclesiastical history, cultural history, and literature.

The cultural context that Schultz explores leads to an analysis of nativism and antinativism in the early nineteenth century. Nativists in America seized on the story of the cure to point out the supposedly superstitious and irrational nature of Catholicism, and they pointed to the involvement of Hohenlohe as evidence of the dangerous influence of foreign Catholicism. The Catholic response was divided; some feared exposing themselves to the accusations of the nativists, and others pointed to the miracle as evidence of divine approval of Catholicism. Schultz also introduces a related cultural element: how the issue of gender in nineteenth-century America was reflected in the miracle controversy. This issue is less well argued, and its relevance to Mattingly's case seems unclear.

Despite the ambitious research reflected in this book, there is some evidence of an unwillingness to leave anything out and to delve into matters that are only remotely related to the main subject. Several pages are devoted to the explosion aboard the warship *Princeton* in the Potomac River in 1844, with many of the Washington elite on board. The only relevance found was that a great-grandson of Ann Mattingly, born in 1854, was named after a senator killed in the disaster. Schultz pursues at great length the question of whether Ann Mattingly's son John became estranged from the family because he had married a woman of mixed race. These digressions and the episodic method of the account give the book a somewhat chaotic tone.

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doi:10.1093/jahist/jas033