



Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President

By Candice Millard



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A Booklist Notable Book of 2012

The extraordinary *New York Times* bestselling account of James Garfield's rise from poverty to the American presidency, and the dramatic history of his assassination and legacy, from bestselling author of *The River of Doubt*, Candice Millard.

James Abram Garfield was one of the most extraordinary men ever elected president. Born into abject poverty, he rose to become a wunderkind scholar, a Civil War hero, a renowned congressman, and a reluctant presidential candidate who took on the nation's corrupt political establishment. But four months after Garfield's inauguration in 1881, he was shot in the back by a deranged office-seeker named Charles Guiteau. Garfield survived the attack, but became the object of bitter, behind-the-scenes struggles for power—over his administration, over the nation's future, and, hauntingly, over his medical care. Meticulously researched, epic in scope, and pulsating with an intimate human focus and high-velocity narrative drive, *The Destiny of the Republic* brings alive a forgotten chapter of U.S. history.

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Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President By Candice Millard Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

A Letter from Author Candice Millard

At the heart of *Destiny of the Republic* is the story of the assassination of President James Garfield. What made me want to write this book, however, was not what I knew about President Garfield—that he had been shot by a deranged man in the summer of 1881—but all that I did not.



In everything I read, I am always looking for the thread of an idea, something that surprises me, and leaves me wanting to know more. To me, that's the best part of being a writer—following an idea to see where it leads. Most of the time, after doing a little research, I quickly come to a dead end. One day four years ago, however, I found much more than I had ever expected.

While reading a biography of Alexander Graham Bell, I learned that Bell had tried to help save Garfield's life after the President was shot. I wondered why a man as famous and powerful as Bell, who had invented the telephone just five years earlier, would abandon everything he was working on, put his life on hold, to help any man, even a President. The only way to answer that question, I realized, was to understand exactly what Bell had invented, and, more than that, to find out what kind of man Garfield had been.

After the assassination attempt, Bell devoted himself night and day to inventing something called an induction balance, a type of metal detector, to locate the bullet lodged in the President's body. The induction balance that Bell used for the final time on Garfield is on display in the National Museum of American History, on the National Mall. What most people don't know, however, is that the museum also has all of the versions of Bell's induction balance, in various shapes and sizes, with hanging wires and unfinished edges, that he created while trying to perfect his invention. As I held these fragile instruments in my gloved hands, carefully examining their intricate workings, I could almost see Bell's mind working, and his heart racing, as the President drew closer and closer to death.

Although, in the end, I would spend three years working on this book, it took only a few days of research to realize what Bell must have known—that President Garfield was not only a tragic figure, but one of the most extraordinary men ever elected President of the United States. A passionate abolitionist, Garfield was not only hailed a hero in the Civil War, but was a fierce champion of the rights of freed slaves. At the same time, he was a supremely gifted scholar who had become a university president at just 26 years of age, and, while in Congress, wrote an original proof of the Pythagorean Theorem.

With each diary entry and letter I read, each research trip I took, Garfield came more clearly and vividly to life. It was not until I visited the National Museum of Health and Medicine in Washington, D.C., however, that I began to understand the extent of the suffering that Garfield, and the nation with him, had endured. In its archives, in a large metal cabinet with long, deep drawers, the museum keeps the remains of two presidential assassins: John Wilkes Booth and Charles Guiteau, the man who shot Garfield. In the same cabinet, in a drawer just below Guiteau's, lies a six-inch section of Garfield's spine, a red pin inserted

through a hole in the knobby, yellowed bone to show the path of Guiteau's bullet. It is impossible to look at this heartbreaking collection without being struck by the fact that this story, now hardly remembered, was once a tragedy so wrenching that it transfixed and terrified an entire nation.

This book is my attempt to step back in time, to understand these men and this moment in history, and to tell a story that should never have been forgotten.

Review

A New York Times Notable Book

"Crisp, concise and revealing history. . . . A fresh narrative that plumbs some of the most dramatic days in U.S. presidential history."

—*The Washington Post*

"A spirited tale that intertwines murder, politics and medical mystery. . . . Candice Millard leaves us feeling that Garfield's assassination deprived the nation not only of a remarkably humble and intellectually gifted man but one who perhaps bore the seeds of greatness . . . splendidly drawn portraits. . . . Alexander Graham Bell makes a bravura appearance."

—*The Wall Street Journal*

"Fascinating. . . . Gripping. . . . Stunning. . . . The haunting tale of how a man who never meant to seek the presidency found himself swept into the White House. . . . Millard shows the Garfield legacy to be much more important than most of her readers knew it to be."

—*The New York Times*

"*Destiny of the Republic* displays Millard's energetic writing and rare ability to effortlessly educate the listener."

—*USA Today*

"A staggering tale. . . . Millard digs deeply into the turmoil that got James A. Garfield elected, the lunacy that got him shot and the medical malfeasance that turned a minor wound into a mortal one."

—Janet Maslin, Top 10 Recommendations for 2011

"One of the many pleasures of Candice Millard's new book, *Destiny of the Republic*, [is] that she brings poor Garfield to life—and a remarkable life it was. . . . Fascinating. . . . Millard has written us a penetrating human tragedy."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

"Brings the era and people involved to vivid life. . . . Takes the reader on a compelling fly on-the-wall journey. . . . Millard takes all of these elements in a forgotten period of history and turns them into living and breathing things."

—Associated Press

"Think you're not interested in James Garfield, our 20th President? Millard's action-packed account of his life and truly strange death should change your mind."

—*People*

“Filled with memorable characters, hairpin twists of fate and consequences that bring a young nation to the breaking point, *Destiny of the Republic* brings back to roaring life a tragic but irresistible historical period.”
—*The Christian Science Monitor*

“A winning amalgamation of history and adventure. They [Millard’s books] exhibit a keen eye for human frailties.”
—*The Washington Post*

"Fascinating. . . . Millard colorfully recreates the political milieu of 1880."
—*The Seattle Times*

"Millard provides a splendidly written and suspenseful account of this fascinating episode in American history."
—*The Oregonian*

“By keeping a tight hold on her narrative strands, Millard crafts a popular history rich with detail and emotion. One of the pleasures of the book is the chance to learn more about Garfield, who appears as a fully realized historical figure instead of a trivia answer.”
—*Salon*

“This tale of physician error contextualized by politics and murder makes for riveting reading. Ms. Millard recounts this episode of our nation’s history in a style that keeps readers on the edge of their seats even though the ending is known.”
—*The Washington Times*

“Splendid. . . . recovers for us just what a remarkable—even noble—man Garfield was. . . . She also chillingly depicts his killer. . . . This wonderful book reminds us that our 20th president was neither a minor nor merely a tragic figure, but rather an extraordinary one.”
—*The Plain Dealer*

“An achingly good, suspenseful read. . . . compelling characters and nail-biting storytelling, and [readers] will no doubt walk away even more emotionally affected by Garfield’s tragedy.”
—*The Kansas City Star*

“Blends science, medicine, and politics in a crime story that grabs tight and it does not let go until the very last page. . . . A remarkable book. It is crisply written and riveting.”
—*Tucson Citizen*

"Millard finds the ironies of history throughout this stirring narrative, one that's full of suspense even though you know what's coming. She makes you a witness, not a reader."
—*Erie Times*

“*Destiny of the Republic* is popular history at its best—accessible, educational and entertaining—and Millard renders it with grace, power and sympathy.”
—*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

“Make[s] for compulsive reading. Superb American history.”
—*Kirkus*, starred review

"Splendidly insightful. . . stands securely at the crossroads of popular and professional history."

—*Booklist*, starred review

"Sparklingly alive. . . [Millard] brings to life a moment in the nation's history when access to the president was easy, politics bitter, and medical knowledge slight. Under Millard's pen, it's hard to imagine its being better told."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"Historian Candice Millard's *Destiny of the Republic* is first-rate history, political intrigue, and a true-crime story all rolled into one. . . . An epic must-read!"

—Douglas Brinkley, author of *The Wilderness Warrior*

"In this brilliant and riveting work, Candice Millard demonstrates the power of narrative nonfiction. Through exhaustive research and flawless storytelling, she has brought to life one of the most harrowing and fascinating sagas in American history. . . . This is a book that is impossible to put down."

—David Grann, author of *The Lost City of Z*

"Candice Millard has done it again: She's turned the sometimes stodgy realm of presidential history on its head with a gripping tale of high danger and stoic endurance, a tale that had nearly completely vanished from public memory. What an exceptional man and what an exciting era Millard has brought to elegant life on the page!"

—Hampton Sides, author of *Hellhound on His Trail*

"In President Garfield's assassination, Candice Millard has rediscovered one of the great forgotten stories in American history. Millard has turned Garfield's story into a crackling tale of suspense and a panoramic picture of a fascinating but forgotten era."

—Debby Applegate, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for *The Most Famous Man in America*

"As she did in *The River of Doubt*, Candice Millard has written another riveting narrative. . . . She has skillfully allowed us to share this traumatic moment."

—Ken Burns

About the Author

Candice Millard, the *New York Times*-bestselling author of *The River of Doubt*, is a former editor and contributing writer at *National Geographic* magazine. She lives in Kansas City with her husband and children.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Beverly McGahey:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important work, like looking for your favorite book and reading a guide. Beside you can solve your long lasting problem; you can add your knowledge by the reserve entitled *Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President*. Try to face the book *Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President* as your friend. It means that it can for being your friend when you truly feel alone and

beside that of course make you smarter than in the past. Yeah, it is very fortunate for you. The book makes you far more confident because you can know every thing by the book. So, we should make new experience as well as knowledge with this book.

Alan Torrez:

Playing with family in the park, coming to see the water world or hanging out with pals is thing that usually you may have done when you have spare time, in that case why you don't try thing that really opposite from that. One particular activity that make you not sense tired but still relaxing, thrilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition of knowledge. Even you love Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President, you may enjoy both. It is excellent combination right, you still wish to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh can happen its mind hangout people. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its referred to as reading friends.

Richard Ybarra:

Reading a book for being new life style in this year; every people loves to go through a book. When you learn a book you can get a great deal of benefit. When you read publications, you can improve your knowledge, because book has a lot of information upon it. The information that you will get depend on what sorts of book that you have read. If you need to get information about your research, you can read education books, but if you want to entertain yourself read a fiction books, these kinds of us novel, comics, along with soon. The Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President will give you new experience in studying a book.

James Valenzuela:

As a university student exactly feel bored to reading. If their teacher inquired them to go to the library in order to make summary for some book, they are complained. Just minor students that has reading's heart or real their hobby. They just do what the educator want, like asked to the library. They go to at this time there but nothing reading significantly. Any students feel that studying is not important, boring as well as can't see colorful images on there. Yeah, it is being complicated. Book is very important for yourself. As we know that on this age, many ways to get whatever we wish. Likewise word says, ways to reach Chinese's country. So, this Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President can make you sense more interested to read.

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