

Book Reviews

Mrs. Mattingly's Miracle

Reviewed by [Drew Bratcher](#)

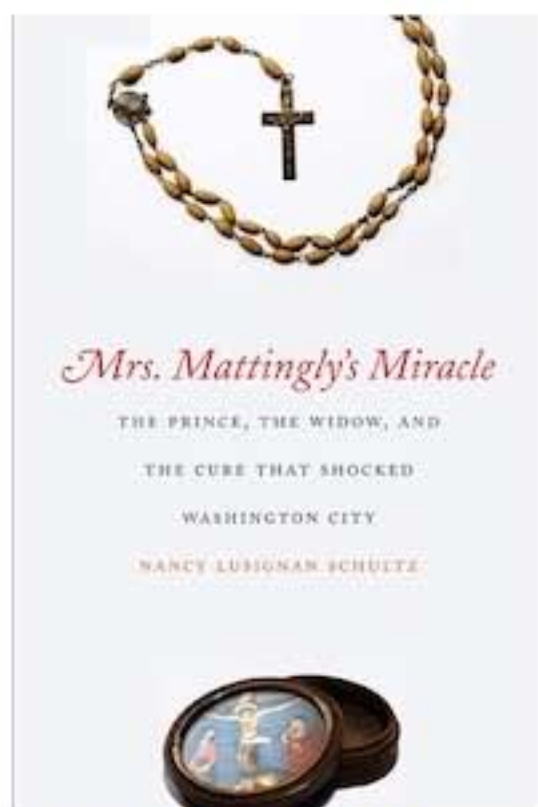
One woman's miraculous recovery divides nineteenth-century Washington along faith and reason.

There was a time when the debate over faith and reason—a dispute that still goes on in books such as **Christopher Hitchens's** *God Is Not Great* and **Timothy Keller's** *The Reason for God*—centered on the legitimacy of miraculous events. The debate entered Washington in the predawn hours of a March day in 1824 when **Ann Carbery Mattingly**, the widowed sister of DC's mayor and somewhat of a local celebrity, rose from bed in the family's Foggy Bottom mansion (now the site of DAR Constitution Hall) suddenly healed of the advanced breast cancer that had kept her holed up for seven years.

The bells of nearby Georgetown College announced the news. Believers exulted. Others lifted fists and cried foul. Doctors could offer no medical explanation, but Mattingly knew who had cured her: a German faith healer whom she had petitioned to say Mass for her that morning.

Nancy Lusignan Schultz's recounting of this story and of the anti-fanatical sentiment it exacerbated on the East Coast feels flimsy and scattershot in places but succeeds at infusing Washington's ragtag days with an aura of supernatural intrigue and makes for a fine field guide to local Catholic lore.

AT A GLANCE



Mrs. Mattingly's Miracle

One woman's miraculous recovery divides nineteenth-century Washington along faith and reason.

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\$30

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Not yet rated

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