



“We Took to Ourselves Liberty”

Historic Sites Relating to the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Oneida County and Beyond



A HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY

Judith Wellman, Principal Investigator,
with Jan DeAmicis, Mary Hayes Gordon, Jessica Harney,
Deirdre Sinnott, and Milton Sernett

“We Took to Ourselves Liberty”

A Historic Resource Study of
Sites Relating to the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life
in Oneida County and Beyond

By Judith Wellman, Principal Investigator, with Jan DeAmicis, Mary Hayes Gordon,
Jessica Harney, Deirdre Sinnott, and Milton Sernett

Presented to Interior Region 1: North Atlantic-Appalachian

Prepared under a cooperative agreement between
The Organization of American Historians and The National Park Service
January 2022

*(Title quote adapted from “He took to himself liberty” from “Tributes to Samuel Dove,”
Utica Daily Press, April 27, 1904.)*

Cover Images:

“Southern View of Rome,” John W. Barber and Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of the State of New York* (New York: S. Tuttle, 1846), 367.

William Chaplin, from William R. Smith, *The Case of William L. Chaplin: Being an Appeal to All Respecters of Law and Justice, against the Cruel and Oppressive Treatment to Which, under Color. . . of Columbia and the State of Maryland* (Boston: Chaplin Committee, 1851).

Beriah Green, *Sermons and Other Discourses* (New York: S. W. Green, 1861), engraving by A. H. Ritchie.

Walter Hawkins, S. J. Celestine Edwards, *From Slavery to a Bishopric, or, The Life of Bishop Walter Hawkins of the British Methodist Episcopal Church Canada* (London: Kensit, 1891).

Louisa Jacobs, Courtesy of Jean Fagan Yellin, New York State Woman’s Suffrage Exhibition Collection.

Rev. Jermain Loguen, 1835, painted by William Simpson, Courtesy of Howard University.

William Still, *The Underground Railroad* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1872).

Harriet Tubman, Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

Charles Wills, Courtesy of Mary Hayes Gordon.

Disclaimer: The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of this author and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the U.S. Government. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by the U.S. Government.

“We Took to Ourselves Liberty”
**Historic Sites Relating to the Underground
Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American
Life in Oneida County and Beyond**

A HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY

Judith Wellman, Principal Investigator,
with Jan DeAmicis, Mary Hayes Gordon, Jessica Harney,
Deirdre Sinnott, and Milton Sernett

Prepared for
the National Park Service
in cooperation with
the Organization of American Historians

National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
JANUARY 2022

To all those who appreciate the power of the past
to influence the future.

And to those who work for justice and respect for all people.

Contents

List of Figures.....	ix
Preface	xi
Acknowledgments	xiii
A Note on Terminology.....	xvii
Introduction.....	1
CHAPTER ONE.....	19
“A Free Person and a Lawful Citizen of the State of New York”: Multiculturalism and the Underground Railroad in the Mohawk Valley, 1609–1790	
CHAPTER TWO	47
“A Mulatto Woman Who Belonged to Him”: Slavery and Freedom in Oneida County, 1780–1827	
CHAPTER THREE.....	73
“Three Fugitives Shipped On Board the Old Line of Packets”: Canals, the Burned-Over District, and African American Communities, 1820–1835	
CHAPTER FOUR	89
“He Felt Himself to Be a Man”: The Dramatic Beginnings of Abolitionism and the Underground Railroad in Oneida County, 1830–1842	
CHAPTER FIVE.....	127
“Forced Flight to Liberty”: Abolitionism and the Underground Railroad in Oneida County, 1842–1850	
CHAPTER SIX	161
“A Well Perfected Organization”: The High Point of the Underground Railroad, 1850–1861	
CHAPTER SEVEN	191
“The True Completion of the American Revolution”: The Civil War and Beyond	

Epilogue.....	199
Recommendations for Further Research	201
Bibliography.....	213

APPENDICES

Appendix A.....	235
List of Historic Sites Related to the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life Outside Oneida County	
Appendix B.....	237
List of Known African Americans in Slavery and Freedom in Oneida County before 1820 (by Jan DeAmicis)	
Appendix C.....	239
Brief Biographies of Select People Who Attended the Organizational Meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, October 21–22, 1835 (by Deirdre Sinnott)	

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

The following supplemental materials are available on the Resources page of the OAH Website, located at www.oah.org/nps, along with a Part II continuation of this text, in the form of essays on each of the sixty-nine respective historic sites.

Supplemental Appendix D

Database of All African Americans listed in the US and New York State census records from 1855 to 1870 (1850, 1855, 1860, 1865, and 1870) (by Jan DeAmicis)

Supplemental Appendix E

Project Database of Underground Railroad Places and People within Oneida County (by Mary Hayes Gordon and Judith Wellman)

Figures

Figure I.1. (Left) Oneida County map. (Right) Shaded relief map of the state of New York	3
Figure I.2. “Map of the Frontiers of the Northern Colonies with the Boundary Line Established between Them and the Indians at the Treaty Held by W. Will. John at Ft. Stanwix in Novr 1768”	4
Figure 1.1. Henry Bakeman, pension application	37
Figure 1.2. Plan of Ft. Herkimer	38
Figure 1.3. Aerial view of Fort Stanwix during excavation	44
Figure 2.1. Hugh White’s home in Whitestown	65
Figure 2.2. <i>Oneida Observer</i> , March 28, 1820	71
Figure 3.1. “Map 5, Detail, Utica through Syracuse,” from Theodore Dwight, <i>The Northern Traveller and Northern Tour</i> , new ed. (1831)	76
Figure 3.2. “Erie Canal,” <i>New York State Encyclopedia</i> (2005)	77
Figure 3.3. <i>Miniature Map of the City of Utica</i> , 1836	78
Figure 3.4. E. Rogerson and E. J. Murphy, <i>Map of Oneida County</i> , New York (1852)	87
Figure 4.1. “Kidnapping in Utica!” <i>Friend of Man</i> , January 3, 1837	90
Figure 4.2. Report of anti-abolition resolutions from Utica Common Council, January 10, 1834	100
Figure 4.3. <i>Friend of Man</i> , April 18, 1838	123
Figure 5.1. <i>Utica Daily Gazette</i> , December 12, 1843	136
Figure 5.2. “The Christian Convention,” <i>Onondaga Standard</i> , December 20, 1843	138
Figure 5.3. <i>The Liberty Press</i> , August 6, 1844	145
Figure 6.1. “William Chaplin Arrested!”	163
Figure 6.2. Southern view of Rome	168
Figure 6.3. The City of Utica, 1855	169
Figure 6.4. “Maria Weens escaping in male attire”	181
Figure 6.5. “A Bold Stroke for Freedom,” the Wanzer Party	183

Preface

“History is not the past. It is the present. We carry our history with us. We are our history.”

James Baldwin, *I Am Not Your Negro*
(New York: Vintage Books, 2017), 107

.....

The histories of Africans in North America are inextricably intertwined with the stories of Europeans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Latinx people, and Pacific Islanders. People originating from around the world created the history of the whole United States. From the very beginning of European settlement in the New World, much of that story revolved around slavery.

Just as slavery is part of America’s creation story, so too are efforts to resist slavery. The Underground Railroad and the abolitionist movement shaped what we, as a nation, have become. As historian Fergus Bordewich pointed out, the Underground Railroad was America’s “first racially integrated civil rights movement,” an “epic story,” “an answer to slavery’s legacy of hurt and shame.” The late J. Blaine Hudson called it “one of the great human rights movements in human history.” Conflicts between slavery and antislavery—epitomized, personalized, and dramatized by the Underground Railroad—ultimately brought us to the Civil War and echo still in our own time.¹

In 2020–21, Ft. Stanwix National Monument sponsored this Historic Resource Study of historic sites relating to the Underground Railroad in Oneida County and beyond. Amid continued police violence against people of color, the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement, and efforts by Americans of all backgrounds to understand and confront systemic racism, this project took on special significance. America was founded on the ideal that all men are created equal. This project is part of an attempt to bring us closer to that vision.

Stories of the Underground Railroad lend themselves to romantic and fictional interpretations. This project offers an alternative approach, rooted carefully in primary source evidence about the reality of lived experience in the past.

¹ Fergus Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan: The Epic Story of the Underground Railroad, America’s First Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Amistad, reprint 2006); J. Blaine Hudson, *Fugitive Slaves and the Underground Railroad in the Kentucky Borderland* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Press, 2002).

The Underground Railroad was a grassroots movement, connected to other local networks across upstate New York and the country. The appropriate place to begin any study of the Underground Railroad is in local places, with local people and local events. As P. Gabrielle Foreman, Jim Casey, and Sarah Lynn Patterson noted in their preface to a collection of essays on Black conventions, “Local Black histories matter.” Just as local Black histories matter, local abolitionist histories also matter. The Underground Railroad could not have functioned as effectively as it did without local organizing by people of European, Native, and African descent. The New York State Anti-Slavery Society, centered in Utica, recognized this: “[T]he nation is made up of localities; and local effort everywhere existing, is the whole work we wish and need to have accomplished,” they asserted in 1839. This report follows that insight.²

Oneida County offers a prime example of the importance of local studies. Its geographic position made it an important anchor for the Underground Railroad, both a jumping-off point to the West and a cauldron of cultural contact between people of European, African, and Native descent. Honoring the legacies of local people and local action, we have highlighted names of real people, some well-known and others less so. Wherever possible, we have also incorporated their own words.

History contains stories of both pain and promise. Echoes of slavery and the Underground Railroad haunt us still. The pain of slavery and the Civil War profoundly affects us to the present day, as we continue to confront systemic racism. Yet the past reminds us also of the promise and possibility of resistance. Enslaved people took their future into their own hands by leaving slavery for freedom. In so doing, they started the Underground Railroad. People of African, Native, and European descent acted not only as allies but as citizens, working in their own self-interest to create a democracy based on equal rights for all people, guaranteed by a responsible and vigilant community. Inspired by both a secular vision that “all men are created equal” and the biblical admonition to “remember those in bonds, as bound with them” (Hebrews 13:3), Americans of all backgrounds—young and old, rich and poor, women and men, African, Native, and European—worked for a vision of justice, equality, and respect for all people. They challenge us to do the same.

² P. Gabrielle Foreman, Jim Casey, and Sarah Lynn Patterson, eds., *The Colored Conventions* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, iii; “Fourth Annual Report of the New York State Antislavery Society,” *Friend of Man*, October 2, 1839.

Acknowledgments

Collaboration is an essential part of projects such as this. While physical descendants of local freedom seekers and allies in Oneida County were few, cultural and spiritual descendants were many.³

For Oneida County, the Oneida County Freedom Trail Commission has been the moving force behind local research, tours, markers, and an archaeological dig. Co-chaired by Jan DeAmicis and Mary Hayes Gordon and officially created by the Board of Supervisors of Oneida County in 2001, the Oneida County Freedom Trail Commission continues to coordinate efforts to commemorate the history of African Americans in Oneida County. This current study builds on this foundation.

This project also draws on the expertise and advice of a local advisory committee representing various stakeholders, including Sharon Baugh, Pastor, AME Zion Hope Chapel, and President, NAACP, Utica; Jan DeAmicis, Co-Chair, Oneida County Freedom Trail, and Professor Emeritus, Utica College; Matt Fidler, retired history teacher; Mary Hayes Gordon, Co-Chair, Oneida County Freedom Trail, and Director of Program Operations, Young Scholars Liberty Partnerships Program, Utica College; Jessica Harney, Oneida County Freedom Trail and Teacher, Camden School District; Rebecca McLain, Director, Oneida County Historical Society; David Mathis, Branch Manager, Oneida County Workforce Development, and NAACP; Milton Sernett, Professor Emeritus, African American Studies Department, Syracuse University; Marques Phillips, Director of City Initiatives, City of Utica; James Ponzo, Assistant Professor, Department of Transnational Studies, Buffalo University; Keith Routley, Chief, Division of Cultural Resources, Ft. Stanwix National Monument; Art Simmons, Director, Rome Historical Society; Deirdre Sinnott, Independent scholar and author of *The Third Mrs. Galway*, Oneida County Freedom Trail; and Paul Zwirecki, Public Historian, Organization of American Historians.

Long before this project started, local historians began to look in detail at the Underground Railroad in Oneida County. This project owes much to the extensive research of members of the Oneida County Freedom Trail Commission. Jan DeAmicis, Mary Hayes Gordon, and Deirdre Sinnott have worked as coauthors, remarkable researchers, and project planners. They have shared their hugely important previous work, made

³ Archaeologists who focus on Black history sites have done far more than historians to develop the theoretical basis for their work, including the importance of collaboration with representatives of descendant groups and community organizations. See, for example, Christopher N. Matthews, *A Struggle for Heritage: Archaeology and Civil Rights in a Long Island Community* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2020); Oliver Harris and Craig N. Cipolla, *Archaeological Theory in the New Millennium: Introducing Current Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017); and the many publications of Uzi Baram relating to Angola, an African American community on Florida's west coast.

Acknowledgments

introductions to many local people, and written many of the historic essays available online as Part II of this study. Milton Sernett, author of *North Star Country: Upstate New York and the Crusade for African American Freedom* and *Abolition's Axe: Beriah Green, Oneida Institute, and the Black Freedom Struggle*, has been, as he always is, a delightful as well as knowledgeable colleague. We are grateful for his essay on the remarkable Beriah Green and the Oneida Institute. Jessica Harney has done amazing work with her students and with New York State officials on the Florence Farming and Lumbering Association, and she wrote the essay on that site (available online in Part II). We are immensely grateful to Ellie Collins, member of the Oneida County Freedom Trail, who shared her extensive research on the Underground Railroad in Rome, New York. Her research was impeccable and gave a huge leap forward to this project. Many other local historians have done extensive work on the Underground Railroad in several places, including Richard L. Williams in Clinton, James Pitcher in Boonville, and Mary Ellen Smith.

We are very grateful for the memorable day in Rome, New York, when Art Simmons took us on a tour of historic sites throughout the city. We also shared our work with Kandace Watson, Oneida Nation historian. Raven DeLong recounted her family's tradition about their role as Brothertown Indians in the Underground Railroad. Thanks to the Landmarks Society of Greater Utica for providing background and architectural information about the Munn House in Utica. We were delighted to have guest talks from descendants of freedom seekers associated with Oneida County. JoAnne Bakeman (a descendant of Henry Bakeman) and Judith Burgess (a descendant of Harriet Tubman) both shared their stories with us. Paula Miller and Susan Hughes of the William G. Pomeroy Foundation and Diane Miller, Kamal McClarin, and Robin Krawitz of the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom helped us understand how our project relates to their organizations.⁴

We have also been blessed to have help from other scholars in this field. As we traced freedom seekers in Oneida County to their places of origin in Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia, Mary Tyler-McGraw, and Jane Ailes were particularly helpful. Craig Cipolla shared his extensive knowledge of Brothertown Indians.

We are especially indebted to keepers of historical records. Thanks to Rebecca McLain and her staff at the Oneida County History Center for sharing their extensive resources; to Art Simmons, Director, Rome Historical Society; the Onondaga Historical Association; the Madison County Historical Society; and Syracuse University, keepers of the Gerrit Smith Papers. The Clinton Historical Society found invaluable records about the Ladies' Domestic Seminary. After a delay because of COVID closures, we were able to work on deed searches, thanks to Sandy DePerno, Oneida County Clerk, in the spring of 2021.

⁴ Milton Sernett, *North Star Country: Upstate New York and the Crusade for African American Freedom* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001); Milton Sernett, *Abolition's Axe: Beriah Green, Oneida Institute, and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986).

Acknowledgments

Marjory Allen Perez stepped in to help us at a crucial point. We were grateful to receive the skilled and enthusiastic help of Lee Davis and Joe Jonquil in doing searches for both deeds and maps. Many thanks to John Snow, Supervisor of the Town of Granby, who shared his research on Henry Bakeman. We are grateful to many local historians throughout Oneida County and the surrounding region.

Diane Miller, Coordinator, National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, has been a stalwart promoter for all of this work. Paul Zwirecki, of the Organization of American Historians, has been a pleasure to work with, attending our advisory committee meetings, answering questions, and helping us meet our difficult deadlines when COVID made our research difficult. Members of the Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State continue to be an amazing group of allies.

A Note on Terminology

Terminology for people of various backgrounds has changed dramatically over time, depending in part on whether names came from first peoples, people of color, immigrants from various parts of Europe, or dominant-culture English-speaking settlers.

For purposes of this report, we will use names for Native people generated in part by Native people themselves and in part by people of European descent. We use Brothertown Indians and Stockbridge Indians, for example. We use “Haudenosaunee” instead of “Iroquois” for people of the Five (or Six) Nations. We do, however, refer to various Haudenosaunee peoples not by names in their own languages but by names more common among British settlers, including Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora. We use “Native Americans” or “first people” as generic terms. In discussing treaties, we use the term “Indians,” since primary sources themselves used that reference.

For African Americans, we use “African Americans,” “people of color,” “people of African descent,” or “Black people” interchangeably. In parallel terminology, we have used “European Americans,” “people of European descent,” or “White people.” In keeping with Chicago Manual of Style guidelines, we have capitalized both “Black” and “White.”

In terms of the Underground Railroad, we have used “freedom seekers” or “self-emancipated people” instead of “fugitives” or “runaways,” unless we are quoting primary sources that use the latter terms. We use “enslaved people” or “people in slavery” rather than “slaves,” to indicate that slavery is a condition that is not inherent in one’s personhood. We use “enslavers” rather than “owners” or “masters,” to suggest the functional relationship of enslavers and enslaved people.

Introduction

“When Justice opens a picture gallery to display the faces of those who have done much for African freedom, we shall see many noble faces in it, which are now obscure, in our villages and towns.”

Jerman Loguen, *The Rev. Jermain Wesley Loguen as a Slave and as a Freeman: A Narrative of Real Life* (Syracuse: Truair, 1859), vi.

“This mythical R. R. was wherever a true friend of a Fugitive happened to be.”

Carlton Rice, in “Wilbur H. Siebert Underground Railroad Collection,”
Ohio Historical Society.

“This road had its regular lines all the way from Washington. . . . It had its depots in Philadelphia, New York, Albany, Troy, Utica, Syracuse, Oswego and Niagara Falls.”

Florence T. Ray and H. Cordelia Ray,
speaking of their father Charles B. Ray, September 26, 1894,
“Wilbur H. Siebert Underground Railroad Collection,” Ohio Historical Society.

.....

This Historic Resource Study focuses on historic sites relating to the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African American life, in the larger context of reform in Oneida County and central New York before the Civil War. Geographically, Rome, Ft. Stanwix, and the areas that became Oneida County are at the center of this story. But the Underground Railroad extended far beyond county borders, and local Underground Railroad supporters did not operate in isolation. Ft. Stanwix is an anchor for an area that stretches from New York City to Niagara Falls. Identifying local physical resources in the context of regional and national reform movements helps us understand

the regional and national importance of Underground Railroad cultural resources associated with Ft. Stanwix and Rome, New York.¹

This project is technically split into two parts: Part I, which you are reading at present, and Part II, a series of essays on each historic site that we identified in this report, along with supplemental appendices available online at the Organization of American Historians website. Part I of this project includes a Historic Context Statement, placing Ft. Stanwix and Oneida County in the larger context of major economic, social, and cultural change in upstate New York and the nation between the Revolution and the Civil War. Part II, available online only, includes sixty-nine essays on individual sites related to the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African American life in Oneida County, organized by township. These site-based essays highlight stories about individual people and places. The appendices (both those included here and the supplemental appendices available online) provide a list of eighteen relevant sites outside Oneida County; names of known people enslaved in Oneida County; biographies of people, both Black and White, who attended the 1835 organizational meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society; a database of all African Americans listed in Oneida County in state and federal census records, 1850, 1855, 1860, 1865, and 1870; and a second database that includes the names of more than three hundred key people, events, and places associated with the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African American life in Oneida County.

The Underground Railroad in Oneida County

The Underground Railroad operated as part of a large support network that included people of African, European, and sometimes Native descent, men as well as women, and children as well as adults. Because the Underground Railroad worked in the context of particular times and places, local studies enhance our understanding of how this system actually worked. Various individuals, churches, and communities in Oneida County were

¹ Both the 2009 General Management Plan for Fort Stanwix National Monument and *NPS-28: Cultural Resource Management Guidelines* note the importance of research related to cultural resources within a National Park Service site, as well as resources related to themes important to a park but outside park boundaries. The General Management Plan, as noted in the Scope of Work, “outlines a goal to preserve the location, resources, and stories associated with the military, political, and cultural events that occurred at the site of Fort Stanwix, and to provide opportunities for visitor understanding of, and appreciation for, those events.” *NPS-28* suggests that “[p]arks are part of larger cultural environments. Social and economic trends outside park boundaries can profoundly affect the Service’s ability to manage and protect park resources, and not all cultural resources related to a park may be within its boundaries.” For more on Ft. Stanwix, see Mike Caldwell, “The Fort Stanwix Administrative History: A Superintendent’s Perspective,” *The Public Historian* 31:2, 66–70, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/tph.2009.31.2.66?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents; William J. Campbell, *Negotiating at the Oneida Carry: Historic Resource Study, Ft. Stanwix National Monument* (National Park Service and Organization of American Historians, 2019); Joan Zenzen, *Reconstructing the Past, Partnering for the Future: An Administrative History of Fort Stanwix National Monument* (2009), <http://npshistory.com/publications/fost/adhi.pdf>.

hotbeds of Underground Railroad activity. We have situated these Underground Railroad stories in the context of abolitionism and African American life at a time of deep economic, social, and cultural change in America.

In both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, geography determined Oneida County's importance (Figure I.1). Located in central New York, just east of Oneida Lake, the county lay in the path of one of the two waterways that connected the East Coast with the interior of North America. One was the St. Lawrence River. During most of the colonial period, the French controlled this major route. The other route led directly through what became Oneida County, at the west end of the Mohawk River. Coming west from Albany along the Mohawk, travelers reached a small carrying place, west of what is now Rome, New York. This three-mile Oneida Carry led from the Mohawk River to Wood Creek into Oneida Lake. From there, people could travel north along the Oswego River to Lake Ontario. In 1727, the British built their "eye on the lake" at Oswego, to counter French efforts to control the Great Lakes. From Oswego, the British could travel a thousand miles inland along the Great Lakes waterways.

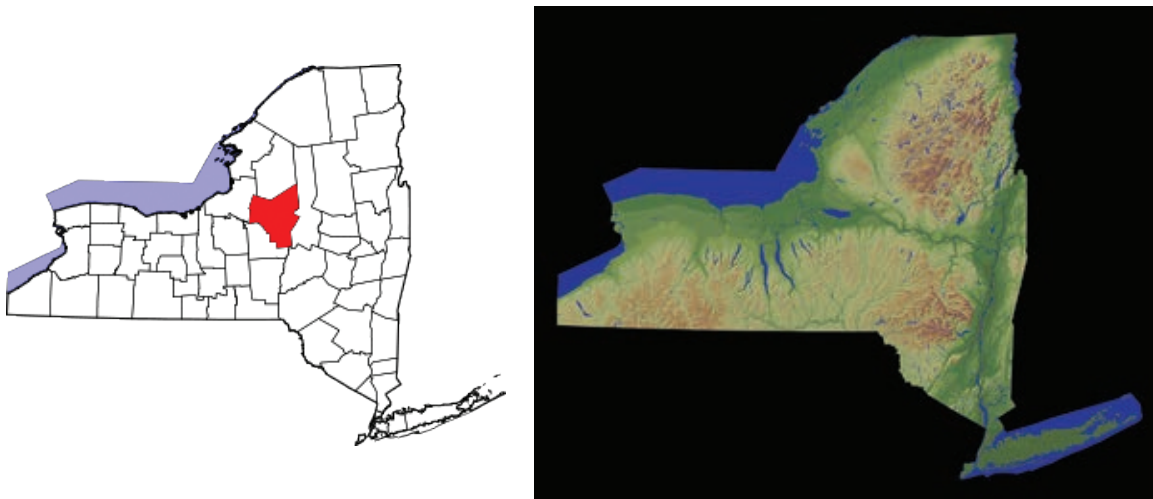


Figure I.1. (Left) Oneida County map. From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_New_York_highlighting_Oneida_County.svg. (Right) Shaded relief map of the state of New York. From the US Geological Survey.

By the mid-eighteenth century, Oneida County marked the boundary between villages and farms dominated by settlers of European and African descent in the east and Haudenosaunee territory in the west. This area became part of the worldwide struggle for empire between the Haudenosaunee, British, and French during the French and Indian Wars of the 1750s. Ft. Stanwix and smaller British outposts (including Ft. Bull) in what is now Rome were key to British control of lucrative trading routes with Indian peoples through Ft. Ontario at Oswego.

In 1763, after the French and Indian War, the British drew a north-south Proclamation Line just east of the Oneida Carry, directly through what became Ft. Stanwix in Rome, New York. The Proclamation Line went south along the Appalachian Mountains, separating European settlements on the east from Native American settlements to the west. They confirmed this line in a treaty with Haudenosaunee people in 1768 (Figure I.2).



Figure I.2. “Map of the Frontiers of the Northern Colonies with the Boundary Line Established between Them and the Indians at the Treaty Held by W. Will. John at Ft. Stanwix in Novr 1768.”
Courtesy of the New York Public Library.

The Proclamation Line represented how the area that became Oneida County straddled different worlds in both time and place. On the one hand, it encompassed a transition in time from colonial America to a post-Revolutionary world. It also represented a transition in space from eastern settlements to lands controlled by Native people in western New York and beyond.

It also represented a bridge from a world of slavery to one of legal freedom, after New York State abolished slavery in 1827. For Americans of African descent, the abolition of slavery represented both the vision and the limits of American promises. On the one hand, it symbolized the hopefulness of potential freedom—with the possibility of land

ownership, education, work, and independent families and cultural institutions. On the other hand, the reality of life with nominal freedom continued to embody the legacy of persistent racism.

In the nineteenth century, Oneida County continued its role as a crossroads of time and place, bridging the world of colonial America with the dramatic changes in transportation, industrialization, urbanization, and immigration that marked the emergence of the modern world. The Seneca Turnpike, Erie Canal, and railroads linked Oneida County to an international trade network, connecting New York City with the Great Lakes and Canada. After completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, Utica and Rome emerged as dynamic urban centers, surrounded by productive farmland, small villages, and industrial centers (particularly along the Sauquoit Creek).

Rapid economic change led to corresponding changes in social and cultural institutions. Oneida County, like much of upstate New York, became part of the “burned-over district,” so called because it was swept by the fires of religious revivalism and reform. This ferment of reform created what folklorist Carl Carmer called a “psychic highway” and helped Americans make sense of the revolutions in economic conditions and social life. Religious revivals, education, temperance, and women’s rights all worked to maintain some sense of community and cultural stability in a changing world. All found fertile soil in Oneida County.²

What happened in Oneida County affected the rest of the country. Oneida County’s geographic position as both a cauldron of revivalism and reform and a jumping-off point for the West gave it national significance. Rooted in religious revivals as well as a commitment to democratic ideals of equal rights, Oneida County became the pulsing center of abolitionist organizing in the 1830s, sending shock waves across the state and the nation. Riots at the organizational meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society on October 21, 1835, brought Utica to the forefront of national attention. And this was just the beginning.

New rotary printing presses made Oneida County a center of publishing. Students and teachers who had formed their worldview at the Oneida Institute in Whitestown and the Ladies’ Domestic Seminary in Clinton moved west to influence Western Reserve College, Lane Seminary, Knox College, and Oberlin College. Some also went South to start Freedmen’s Schools after the Civil War. Oneida County people also helped shape the rise of aggressive abolitionism, to use Stanley Harrold’s term, carrying abolitionist ideas and

² Clyde Griffin, *Ferment of Reform, 1830–1860* (New York: Routledge, 1969); Whitney Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950); Marvin S. Hill, “Rise of Mormonism in the Burned-Over District: Another View,” *New York History* 61:4 (October 1980), 411–30; Michael Barkun, *Crucible of the Millennium: The Burned-Over District of New York State in the 1840s* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986); Judith Wellman, “Crossing over Cross: Whitney Cross’s Burned-Over District as Social History,” *Reviews in American History* 17:1 (March 1989), 159–74.

Underground Railroad activism into the upper South (especially Washington, DC) as well as the newly opened West. Elusive shadows of evidence suggest that several biracial family, church, and business networks in Oneida County contributed to spreading abolitionist and Underground Railroad ideas throughout the upper South and West.

In this context of rapid change, major Underground Railroad routes in central New York ran through Oneida County. Freedom seekers followed roads, canals, and railroads to and through Oneida County toward freedom in upstate New York or Canada. One main route went west from Albany to Syracuse, Rochester, and Niagara Falls. A second went north from Elmira through central New York to Oswego and the Thousand Islands area. Both routes channeled many freedom seekers directly through Oneida County.

People across Oneida County today can tell you about homes that were safe houses on the Underground Railroad. Most of these, they say, had a tunnel or a hidden room. This report explores those local oral traditions (and did find one 1852 document that referred to what may have been a hidden room). But it also goes far beyond them. In 1961, historian Larry Gara urged historians to refocus their lens from those who kept safe houses to freedom seekers themselves. As Karolyn Smardz Frost has noted, the Underground Railroad emerged as a reaction to the exodus of enslaved people from the South toward freedom. She argued, “The Underground Railroad owed its existence to the fact that, in the hundreds and thousands, enslaved African Americans were abandoning slavery in their search for liberty.”³

In 1998, the Network to Freedom program of the National Park Service reinforced this insight, recognizing that the Underground Railroad began when people escaped from slavery. They defined the Underground Railroad as “the effort of enslaved African Americans to gain their freedom by escaping bondage.” We have used that definition for this report.⁴

Focusing on the experience of people who escaped from slavery allows us to recognize that the Underground Railroad changed over time. From the colonial period up to 1827, people escaped from slavery within New York State. From the end of slavery in New York State in 1827 until after the Civil War, freedom seekers came to and through Oneida County from southern states. In the earliest years, it was a relatively unorganized network of support. By the 1850s, newspapers referred to it as a “well-perfected organization.”⁵

³ Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1961, repr. 1996); Karolyn Smardz Frost, *I've Got a Home in Glory Land: A Lost Tale of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008), xxvii. Many slave narratives are now available online through <http://www.docsouth.org>. For a good overview of changing historiographical perspectives on the Underground Railroad, see Cheryl LaRoche, *Free Black Communities and the Underground Railroad: The Geography of Resistance* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

⁴ “What Is the Underground Railroad?” *National Park Service Network to Freedom*, October 15, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/undergroundrailroad/what-is-the-underground-railroad.htm>.

⁵ *Utica Telegraph*, quoted in *Syracuse Daily Standard*, June 1, 1854.

Focusing on the experience of freedom seekers mandates that we move beyond documenting safe houses. This report translates stories of freedom seekers and their helpers onto a wide variety of places on the landscape, including safe houses; places from which people escaped; routes and transportation methods (whether roads, boats, or railroads); sites related to people who helped them (whether with food, shelter, transportation, money, clothes, or homes and jobs); and homes, workplaces, and churches where freedom seekers settled.

Recognizing that enslaved people began the Underground Railroad when they escaped and sought freedom, it is also clear that a wide variety of local people of African, Native, and European descent created and sustained this network. They often played different roles in the Underground Railroad, depending on color, gender, age, and economic status. African Americans tended to be at the forefront of those who used street action to help freedom seekers. The mob that rescued Harry Bird and George in Utica in December 1836, for example, was made up mostly of African Americans. People of European descent were more likely to have and use legal expertise. Women of all colors were probably more likely than men to provide food and clothing, while men and sometimes boys were more likely to assist with transportation. None of these generalizations always hold, however. Men, women, and children, both Black and White, stormed the Munn home in Utica as they tried to rescue a woman named Rina from enslavement, for example.

While differences certainly existed in the methods and skills of Underground Railroad helpers—Black and White, men and women, old and young—they shared goals and motivations. Across the board, their first aim was to create safe spaces for freedom seekers, whether in upstate New York or Canada. All were motivated by a sense of compassion for others, enhanced by both secular and religious values. Many worked to rescue their own family members. No matter their background, whether Black or White, they were sons and daughters of the Revolutionary generation. Their parents had fought and sometimes died for the ideals of the Declaration of Independence, that “all men are created equal.” They were also children of the Second Great Awakening, inspired by the Christian admonition to “remember those in bonds as bound with them” (Hebrews 13:3), based on a belief that “in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female” (Galatians 3:28). United by the desire to make real a democratic system that respected equal rights for all people, they also recognized their own responsibility for creating such a community.

The relationship between freedom seekers and allies was not a one-way street. Freedom seekers received assistance from local people of African, European, and Native descent. People respond powerfully to personal connections. Through sharing their stories with local people and speaking to public groups, freedom seekers contributed to the emergence of a widespread and vibrant movement for the abolition of slavery. As local

people personally met and heard stories from those who spoke of slavery and escape from their own lived experience, they understood and responded with a sense of shared humanity. Some of those who shared their stories were nationally famous, such as Frederick Douglass, who spoke in Rome in 1857. Others were more ordinary people, such as Mrs. Culbert (who appeared at a meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society in 1837 to plead for the rescue of her two children) and George French (who spoke in 1842 at Capel Ucha, the Welsh church in Steuben). Both famous and ordinary freedom seekers reinforced the commitment of local people to work against systematic enslavement.

While the Underground Railroad was certainly a secret movement, participants did leave many traces of their work—often deliberately but sometimes unintentionally. To find people and sites within Oneida County associated with the Underground Railroad, we relied on census records, newspaper accounts, local histories, antislavery petitions, oral traditions, printed memoirs, a few manuscripts, cemetery records, military records, church records, family histories, and photographs. Jan DeAmicis created a database with 2,597 names of all African Americans listed in state and federal census records for Oneida County for 1850, 1855, 1860, 1865, and 1870.

To find specific Underground Railroad stories, including the names of those who helped freedom seekers, we relied on newspapers, local histories, oral traditions, and memoirs. Deirdre Sinnott found more than 1,500 newspaper articles relating to the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African American life in Oneida County through a search of <http://www.fultonhistory.com>. With help from James Ponzo at Buffalo University, we augmented our core list with searches for specific people and places in African American newspapers in Accessible Archives, and in Newspapers.com, Genealogy Bank, and Chronicling America.

We found memoirs at “Documenting the American South” at the University of North Carolina (<http://www.docsouth.unc.edu>). Seven memoirs (those of Alexander Helmsley, Thomas James, Jermain Loguen, J. D. Green, Walter Hawkins, Daniel H. Peterson, and Levin Tilmon), as well as the collection of Benjamin Drew, contained small but specific references to Oneida County.⁶

⁶ Benjamin Drew, *Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* (Boston: Jewett, 1856); S. J. Celestine Edwards, *From Slavery to a Bishopric, or: The Life of Bishop Walter Hawkins of the British Methodist Episcopal Church Canada* (London: Kensit, 1891); J. D. Green, *Narrative of the Life of J. D. Green, a Runaway Slave, from Kentucky, Containing an Account of His Three Escapes, in 1839, 1846, and 1848* (Huddersfield, UK: Henry Fielding, 1864); Thomas James, *Life of Rev. Thomas James, by Himself* (Rochester: n.p., 1886); Jermain W. Loguen, *The Rev. J. W. Loguen, as a Slave and as a Free Man: A Narrative of Real Life* (Syracuse: J. G. K. Truair, 1859); Daniel H. Peterson, *The Looking-Glass: Being a True Repot and Narrative of the Life, Travels, and Labors of the Rev. Daniel H. Peterson, a Colored Clergyman* (New York: Wright, 1854); Levin Tilmon, *A Brief Miscellaneous Narrative of the More Early Part of the Life of L. Tilmon: Pastor of a Colored Methodist Congregational Church in the City of New York* (Jersey City: W. W. & L. A. Pratt, 1853).

Finally, we found personal information (including burial places, home addresses, and military service records) about key people from Ancestry.com. Mary Hayes Gordon compiled results from this first phase of research into a project database with more than three hundred entries related to people and events associated with the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African American life in Oneida County.

Of the 2,597 entries of African American names from census records in Oneida County for 1850, 1855, 1860, 1865, and 1870, 1,557 people were listed in only one census record. However, more than four hundred (403) African Americans lived in Oneida County for at least two census years. They formed a relatively stable population. They raised their families, worked (primarily in service occupations as barbers, cooks, and stewards, as well as transportation jobs related to canals and railroads), bought property, sent their children to local schools, and began to form separate African American organizations. In Utica, African Americans developed Hope Chapel, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, which still exists today. In Rome, they formed an African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1853.

We also paid special attention to those people of African descent who listed their birthplaces as a southern state, foreign country, or unknown. These individuals were most likely to have escaped from slavery. Of the total number of African Americans listed in census records, we found 236 people who fit that category. Census records noted that twenty-six of this group also owned property. Thirteen of these people listed different birthplaces in different census records. This is typically a red flag that someone had escaped from slavery. Of the 403 people who were counted in a least two census years, thirty-nine people were born in a southern state, foreign country, or unknown area.

Much to our surprise, the journals of two Underground Railroad operatives—William Still in Philadelphia and Sydney Howard Gay in New York City—contained no mention of Oneida County. We know that freedom seekers came regularly through Oneida County, traveling from both Philadelphia and New York City. By the mid-1850s, when Still and Gay kept their records, freedom seekers may have used other Vigilance Committee offices, not affiliated with Still or Gay. The advent of a unified rail system connecting both cities to Niagara Falls may also have led to a consolidation, centering Still's and Gay's network on the safe house kept by Jermain and Caroline Loguen in Syracuse.⁷

To identify historic sites related to these people and stories, we focused on the best-documented people (including African Americans listed in two or more census records who were born in the South, a foreign country, or an unknown place). We began with a list of about 150 possibilities. We looked at maps, deeds, city directories, and the physical buildings themselves. Most important in the first part of this property research were images and maps, including bird's eye views of Utica and Rome (1850, 1873, and

⁷ Richard J. M. Blackett, *The Captive's Quest for Freedom: Fugitive Slaves, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, and the Politics of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 390–91.

1884); Oneida County maps for 1852, 1858, 1874, and 1907; and Sanborn insurance maps (Utica, 1884, and Rome, 1886). Once we identified probable locations of specific sites, we took several driving and walking tours in August, September, and October 2020 and June 2021 to see how much of the historic fabric remained on the landscape.

We know that the story will always remain woefully incomplete. But through this process of systematic and thorough research, combined with deep listening to the voices of those in the past, we heard faint echoes of the experience of those who traveled on the Underground Railroad and those who helped them.

Project Overview

This Historic Resource Study is organized into two main sections. Part I, the “Historic Context Statement,” contains seven chapters, organized primarily by chronology. Part II, available online only, is composed of sixty-nine historic site essays, organized by township within Oneida County.

Each chapter in Part I begins with a list of historic sites in Oneida County that represent the themes of the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African American life in that period. It then highlights an Underground Railroad story. After a discussion of economic, social, and cultural developments in Oneida County and the nation, each chapter ends with a summary of documented Underground Railroad people and events that are dealt with in detail in historic site essays.

As noted in the “Statement of Commitment” drafted between the OAH and Principal Investigator at the onset of the project, this study is designed to assist “multiple park constituencies, partners, and stakeholders to have access to current research exploring these historic contexts, as relates to the park and the broader community. This study will inform public programming and future interpretive exhibits available to the public.”⁸

The remainder of this introduction will provide a summary of each chapter.

⁸ “Statement of Commitment: Historic Resource Study, Ft. Stanwix and the Underground Railroad,” Judith Wellman and the Organization of American Historians, June 24, 2019.

Chapter Summaries

In Chapter 1, we are introduced to Henry Bakeman, an African American soldier in the Revolutionary War, who represents the opportunities and challenges experienced by people of color in the unstable conditions of eighteenth-century Oneida County.

In colonial America, what became Ft. Stanwix was the linchpin of the main route from East Coast settlements to the Great Lakes, along the Mohawk Valley and into Oneida Lake and the Oswego River to Lake Ontario. Attracted by rich farmland, a multicultural population settled along this gateway, including Dutch, English, Scotch Irish, Germans, Yankees, Mohawks, and Oneidas, as well as people of African descent from a variety of African regions, both free and enslaved.

The American Revolution became a war of neighbor against neighbor. Along with the whole Mohawk Valley, Oneida County shared in ferocious confrontations between regular armies and guerrilla fighters that swept everyone—Patriots, Tories, Europeans, Native Americans, Africans, civilians, and soldiers—into the desperate struggle. Homes, villages, farms, and people were destroyed, and the whole population was terrorized.

The instability of this period opened both challenges and opportunities for enslaved African Americans, as for the rest of America's population. Military maneuvers brought freedom to some African Americans through escape or enlistment.

In Chapter 2, we meet an unknown African American who became the first post-Oneida settler in Oneida County, one of many enslaved people who found tenuous freedom after the Revolution. During this time, European Americans and African Americans poured into former Haudenosaunee lands in the western part of Oneida County and beyond. They used colonial routes, newly developed with turnpikes and canals. Enslaved people came with European Americans. Many were bought and sold, some within Oneida County and some apparently into the South. Some found freedom through flight, others through manumission, and still others through the legal end of slavery in New York State in 1827. This chapter highlights both the economic and social development of Oneida County, with a special focus on African Americans in slavery and freedom.

Chapter 3 follows the path of young Thomas James, who, having had enough of cruel treatment, left enslavement near Fort Plain, New York, in 1821. He headed west along the survey line of the Erie Canal, becoming one of the first but certainly not the last person of color to seek freedom via the canal.

In 1825, New York State completed the famed Erie Canal directly through Oneida County. Begun in Rome, New York, in 1817, it connected East Coast cities with newly opened lands along the Upper Great Lakes. Starting in the late 1830s, railroads solidified Oneida County's position as a linchpin of national transportation systems. By 1853, the

New York Central Railroad ran directly through Oneida County, connecting New York City with Niagara Falls. Supported by its officers, the New York Central became a major Underground Railroad route.

Religious revivals, particularly those initiated by Charles Grandison Finney, took root in the fertile religious soil of Oneida County, splitting apart existing congregations, creating new denominations such as the Wesleyan Methodists, and contributing to the explosion of abolitionism. Utica became the headquarters for major benevolent reform organizations, including the American Sunday School Union.

Many of the earliest settlers of European descent brought enslaved people with them, and slavery was a persistent if small part of Oneida County's social and economic milieu until New York State abolished slavery in 1827.

Many transplanted Yankees flocked to the southeastern part of Oneida County in what are now the townships of Whitestown, Paris, New Hartford, Marshall, Sangerfield, and Bridgewater. These towns became hotbeds of abolitionism, as did the major cities of Utica and Rome; the Town of Steuben, where many Welsh immigrants settled; and several other small villages.

In Chapter 4, we witness the story of two men, Harry Bird and the other known only as George, who stood in front of judge Chester Hayden in his offices on Genesee Street, Utica, after escaping from Shenandoah County, Virginia. Slave catchers stood ready to take them back until they were spirited away to freedom by a crowd of men—mostly African Americans.

By the 1830s, Oneida County became a hotbed of antislavery activism. In 1834, abolitionists debated colonizationists (those who wanted to send formerly enslaved people back to Africa). In October 1835, riots broke out when four hundred abolitionists from all over the region met first in Utica and then in Peterboro, New York, to form the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. Oneida County residents contributed thousands of names to antislavery petitions sent to Congress, and Oneida County (with nearby Madison and Oswego Counties) took the lead in developing radical political abolitionism in the late 1830s and 1840s. Two schools—the Oneida Institute in Whitesboro and H. H. Kellogg's Female Seminary in Clinton—accepted students of both African and European descent, providing support for the emerging abolitionist movement.

In Chapter 5, we witness the story of John Thomas, who left slavery at the Carmelite Convent in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1843 to settle in Paris, New York, along with his wife Sarah (born in New York State) and John and Mary Roberts, who had also escaped from slavery in Maryland.

The national antislavery movement split apart in 1840. Political abolitionists, who had started to organize in Oneida County and central New York in 1838, left the American Anti-Slavery Society to form a new Liberty Party in 1840. Abby Kelley and the Boston wing of abolitionists organized a strong counterattack in Oneida County in 1842–43. But most

Oneida County abolitionists joined the radical political wing of abolitionism. Gerrit Smith, Alvan Stewart, and William Chaplin, all with ties to central New York, became major leaders. They supported an aggressive attempt to connect enslaved people in Washington, DC, with safe places in central New York, perhaps sending the Bowen-Stevenson family from Washington, DC, to create a safe house along the canal in Rome.

In Chapter 6, we meet William Chaplin, who was racing in a carriage across the Maryland countryside with Garland White and Allen, enslaved by two prominent Georgia senators. Their capture inspired a huge response from William Chaplin's friends in upstate New York, as they raised bail to rescue Chaplin from prison.

The 1850s saw a flood of people escaping from slavery through New York State. Two major events precipitated this movement. The first was the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act on September 18, 1850. The second was the completion of the New York Central Railroad in 1853. It ran across central New York directly to the new Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge. This chapter looks at examples of famous people who came through Oneida County along this route (including Harriet Tubman and Ann Marie Weems). It also analyzes those African Americans who had escaped from slavery to settle in Oneida County, including Henry Howard in Kirkland and Samuel Dove in Utica.

With help from Gerrit Smith from Peterboro and Stephen Myers from Albany, African Americans created an independent farming and lumbering community in Florence, New York, which included several freedom seekers, the best known of whom was Walter Hawkins, who left to become the bishop of the British Methodist Church in Canada.

In Chapter 7, we meet Robert Wilson, who escaped from service in the Confederate Army and enslavement on a plantation in Culpeper County, Virginia, when Union troops—many from Oneida County—freed him as contraband of war in 1863. He served with the 117th Regiment throughout the war. After the war, he came to Rome, New York, where he lived the rest of his life.

This chapter summarizes the impact of the Civil War and the beginnings of Reconstruction on people in Oneida County. During the war, 4,125 African Americans served in the US Colored Troops from New York State. We know the names and home sites of many of these from Oneida County, including Robert Wilson from Rome and Henry Howard from Kirkland. After the war, many people who had escaped from slavery to live in Canada returned to the United States.

Epilogue

The Epilogue focuses on how the echoes of slavery and the Underground Railroad haunt us still. This country's founding document, the Declaration of Independence, asserts, "We hold these truths to be self-evidence, that all men [and women] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." But we continue to face the challenge of implementing the ideal of equality for all people.

Recommendations, Bibliography, and Appendices

This section provides several areas for further research. It discusses sites with Underground Railroad oral traditions that this survey was not able to document in primary sources. Finally, it suggests historic sites relating to the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African American life that may be eligible for the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, the National Register of Historic Places, or historic markers from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation. The Bibliography and online-only site essays and Appendices provide even more information, including:

- A list of eighteen historic sites outside Oneida County (most in New York State) that relate to people who escaped from slavery and came to or through Oneida County. These include places from the Stephen and Harriet Myers' residence in Albany in the east to the Gerrit Smith Estate in Peterboro, to Underground Railroad exhibits in Syracuse and Rochester, to the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center and the Michigan Street Baptist Church in the west. They also include references to the North County Underground Railroad Museum in the north and the John Jones Historic Site in the south.
- A list of known African Americans enslaved in Oneida County, compiled by Jan DeAmicis
- Brief biographies of select people who attended the organizational meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, October 21–22, 1835, compiled by Deirdre Sinnott
- A database of all African Americans listed in US and New York State census records from 1855 to 1870 (1850, 1855, 1860, 1865, and 1870), compiled by Jan DeAmicis
- A project database of Underground Railroad places and people within Oneida County, compiled by Mary Hayes Gordon and Judith Wellman

Part II: Online Content

In addition to the Appendices that are available online, Part II of this study, along with additional Appendices, are available online at the Organization of American Historians website, www.oah.org/nps. Part II contains sixty-nine essays on historic sites related to the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African American life in Oneida County. Each essay includes current and historic photographs, maps, a site description, and a discussion of the site's significance.

Of these sixty-nine sites, twenty-five were identified specifically with freedom seekers, seventeen with abolitionism, three with enslaved people, fifteen with free people of color, and twenty-one with Underground Railroad helpers, Black, White, and Native. Several of these sites fit more than one category, including Hope Street, Post Street, and Hope Chapel in Utica; the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Rome; the Oneida Institute in Whitesboro, and the Methodist Church in Clinton. Of the sixty-nine sites identified in this report, thirty-one (thirty-two, if we include Ft. Stanwix) remained standing in 2021.

Utica and Rome, Oneida County's major cities, experienced much destruction of their historic built environments. Downtown areas were drastically changed from their pre-Civil War appearance. Fire was one culprit, with one 1837 incident responsible for the destruction of several blocks of downtown Utica. In 1851, the beautiful First Presbyterian Church on Washington Street in Utica was entirely consumed by fire. Just as destructive were deliberate human choices. Urban renewal in the 1960s and 1970s destroyed dozens of historic buildings and blocks of Utica's historic fabric. The reconstruction of eighteenth-century Ft. Stanwix in 1976, the country's largest bicentennial project, necessitated the demolition of much of downtown Rome.

Rural areas fared better. Although key sites, such as Capel Ucha, the Welsh Congregational abolitionist church in the Town of Steuben, were taken down, much of the built environment remained standing. Many buildings were still used in homes, churches, and public gathering places, just as they were before the Civil War.

Conclusion

Our research confirmed that Oneida County was, indeed, especially important in reform movements, including religious revivals, abolitionism, and the Underground Railroad. These movements transformed life within Oneida County and profoundly influenced national culture and politics. Religious revivals promoted by Charles Grandison Finney spread a new version of religious conversion across the northeast, promoting antislavery and leading to splits within major religious denominations. Presbyterian churches in

Western, Rome, and Utica were especially important in the birth of these revivals. Temperance, the attempt to limit or cut off the consumption of alcoholic beverages, went hand in hand with many of these religious revivals.

As elsewhere, in Oneida County the Underground Railroad was, as noted by William Howard, son of freedom seeker Henry Howard, “not underground at all.” It was part of a local, regional, and national network of supportive people and places. This network included people, both Black and White, who kept safe houses. It also included supporters also arranged transportation and provided funds, clothes, food, and—for freedom seekers who settled locally—jobs and homes. This local network was nestled in African American communities, particularly those in Utica (which included multiracial neighborhoods on Post Street, Hope Street, and West Street) and Rome. It also relied on networks of European American abolitionists, particularly those of New England or Welsh background. Specific churches—whether predominantly African American, European American, Native American or racially diverse—became major supporters.⁹

Oneida County’s role as a transportation hub meant that these local networks were powerfully connected to other communities across New York State and the nation. In particular, local Underground Railroad supporters worked with colleagues across New York State in Peterboro, Mexico, Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Oswego, Watertown, and Niagara Falls. They were also connected with a national network that included radical abolitionists, both Black and White, in Washington, DC, Maryland, Philadelphia, and New York City.

This network included African Americans, European Americans, and sometimes Indigenous people (specifically Brothertown, Stockbridge, Mohawks, and Oneidas). Both men and women were active in the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African American life. Women, children, and men all escaped on the Underground Railroad.

Women’s rights found fertile soil in abolitionism, as women played an extremely important role in antislavery activities, including signing petitions sent to Congress. Although no women appeared in the call to the organizing meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society in 1835 or in the minutes of that organization in succeeding years, women served on the Executive Committee of the Central New York State Society when it succeeded the statewide group in 1842. They were also very active in the antislavery petition campaign. Cynthia DeLong, for example, organized a petition from the Utica Female Anti-Slavery Society that included the names of hundreds of women, accepted in Congress on February 22, 1843. Abby Kelley’s work in Oneida County in 1843 led to the recruitment of two women, Paulina Wright Davis and Jane Elizabeth Hitchcock Jones, who became nationally important figures in abolitionism and women’s rights. Caroline Storum and Louisa Jacobs, both African American women, also had ties to Oneida County.

⁹ “Son of Fugitive Slave Tells of Negro Race’s Love for Gerrit Smith,” *Utica Daily Observer*, March 29, 1936.

Introduction

Finally, we confirmed the hypothesis that many freedom seekers did not go to Canada but settled in upstate New York. We found the names of at least thirty-nine people of color who listed their birthplaces in a southern state, foreign country, or unknown, and whose names appeared in at least two census records for Oneida County. We found extant houses for at least four families of freedom seekers, with locations for several more.

These are the amazing stories of ordinary people who took extraordinary actions. As they worked to secure freedom for people who escaped from slavery, they also worked to secure freedom for themselves. They understood that a democracy depends on both individual rights and community responsibility. It relies on protecting equal rights for all its citizens, including freedom of speech, of the press, of religion, and of basic safety. It also demands that citizens take responsibility for ensuring those rights.

Listen to their stories. Consider their legacy.

CHAPTER ONE

“A Free Person and a Lawful Citizen of the State of New York”: Multiculturalism and the Underground Railroad in the Mohawk Valley, 1609–1790¹

Historic Sites Associated with Freedom Seekers

1. Ft. Stanwix
2. Ft. Bull
3. Oriskany Battlefield

On the cold morning of February 9, 1783, sixteen-year-old Henry Bakeman marched past Ft. Stanwix with four to five hundred fellow soldiers. Like Henry Bakeman, as many as one hundred of these soldiers were men of color. Some were free; some were enslaved. Some came from Mohawk Valley farms; others were part of the integrated First Rhode Island Regiment. Their goal? A surprise attack on British-held Ft. Oswego.

Bakeman had enlisted in April 1781, after British and Mohawk troops had destroyed his home village of Stone Arabia in October 1780. Involved first in carrying packages from one Patriot fort to another, resulting in “many skirmishes with the Indians & Tories,” Bakeman found himself now involved in what would be the last engagement of the Revolutionary War. Disaster awaited them.

Crossing the frozen Oneida Lake on sleighs on February 9, they stopped at Oswego Falls (now Fulton) to build ladders to scale the walls of Fort Ontario. A wrong turn through heavy snow and swampland brought them to the Fort far past sunrise on the morning of February 11, too late to surprise its defenders. Turning homeward, they left three people to die in the snow. Bakeman survived, but his frozen feet left him crippled for the rest of his life.

Bakeman left the army in 1783, married a woman of Dutch descent, and returned to Oswego Falls, where he operated a ferry across the Oswego River, bought a farm, received a certificate of freedom in 1819 from the Town of Granby, and died on February 6, 1835.

¹ “Certificate of freedom for Henry Bakeman,” “Minutes,” Town of Granby, Oswego County, February 25, 1820. Board of Supervisors, Town of Granby, June 1820. Many thanks to John Snow, Granby Town Supervisor, for locating these records.

Bakeman’s story was well-documented through his pension record in 1834. But his experience reflected that of many other Black Revolutionary War soldiers. To honor his service, the Daughters of the American Revolution erected a memorial stone in Mt. Adnah Cemetery, Fulton.

Bakeman’s march took him along the Mohawk Valley, past Ft. Stanwix, to the Oneida Carry into Wood Creek and Oneida Lake. It was the most important route west from the Hudson Valley to the whole Great Lakes region. Oneida County’s importance depended on this geographic location.

The Mohawk River began just west of Rome, New York, and flowed east 150 miles to the great falls at Cohoes, New York, east of Albany, where it met the Hudson River flowing south to New York City. The Mohawk River created what Dutch agent Arent Van Curler called in 1642 “the most beautiful land that the eyes of man ever beheld.” It also provided the only water route in the northeastern United States through the Adirondack Mountains north of the river and the Appalachian Mountains south of it. As such, it played a major role in US history, from the earliest Haudenosaunee settlers to the present.²

The Mohawk Valley became the country’s most important route from the east coast to the west, a position it retained to the present day. Rich farmland made the region a breadbasket of the nation. Fast-running streams provided power for mills and factories. They became particularly important in the nineteenth century, fueling America’s industrial revolution. All of these advantages of population, transportation, rich land, and water-power brought prosperity to the Valley. But all of this was also disrupted in the eighteenth century as the Valley was wracked again and again by desperate warfare, culminating in the American Revolution.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the Mohawk Valley, including Oneida County, was a prototype for what America would become. It was home to people of many different cultures and ethnicities, broadly divided into groups of settlers of European descent (Dutch, English, Yankees from New England, Scots Irish, and German), Native Americans (Mohawks, Oneidas, Brothertown, and Stockbridge Indians, and those they had adopted from other Native nations), and people of African descent (mostly from eastern New York or the West Indies, but a few who came directly from Africa). Oneida Indians are a good example of this intermixing of cultures. “Among the Oneidas,” reported two visitors of European descent in 1796, “there is scarcely an individual who is not descended on one side

² Van Curler quoted in “The Valley” in *The Mohawk Valley and the American Revolution* (Albany, 1972), <http://threeivershms.com/valley.htm>. For other early accounts of the Mohawk Valley, see Dean R. Snow, Charles T. Gehring, William A. Starna, eds., *In Mohawk Country: Early Narratives of a Native People* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996).

from Indians of other nations, or from English, Scots, Irish, French, German, Dutch and some few, from Africans.” As Oneida County residents intermarried, they hinted at a population change, to use a twenty-first-century metaphor, from a fruit salad to a fruit smoothie.³

An estimated 12 to 15 percent of the Valley’s population was enslaved in the eighteenth century. Both prosperity in times of peace and chaos in times of war brought opportunities for enslaved people to seek freedom. This chapter outlines their story and its context in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁴

Settling the Mohawk Valley

From at least the fifteenth century, Mohawks, “flint people,” dominated the land from Albany west, extending to the St. Lawrence River in the north and into Pennsylvania in the south. In 1677, noted Wentworth Greenhalgh, the Mohawks had four main villages and about three hundred warriors. By the mid-eighteenth century, there were three main villages south of the Mohawk River. The largest was at Canajoharie, with other villages at what are now Schoharie and Fort Hunter, with four more along the St. Lawrence River. In the late seventeenth century, Catholic Mohawks established four more villages along the St. Lawrence River.⁵

Oneida people, “people of the standing stone,” occupied what became Oneida County, east of Oneida Lake. Four Oneida villages stood in a line from Ft. Stanwix west: Oriske (near Ft. Stanwix), Kanonwalohale (near the current village of Oneida), Old Oneida, and Canseraga (south of Oneida Lake). A fifth village, Oquaga, was located near the current New York–Pennsylvania border, on the upper reaches of the Susquehanna River.⁶

Both Mohawks and Oneidas were part of the great Haudenosaunee League, the Confederacy of Five (and later Six) Nations that extended from the Mohawks in the Albany area, west to Oneida territory, Onondaga homelands (near present-day Syracuse), and Cayuga land (near present-day Auburn), until finally reaching Seneca lands, west of

³ Jeremy Belknap and Jedidiah Morse, *Report on the Oneida, Stockbridge, and Brotherton Indians, 1796*, reprint, *Indian Notes and Monographs* (New York: Museum of the American Indian, 1955), 8.

⁴ Edgar J. McManus, *A History of Negro Slavery in New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966) offers a classic overview of slavery in New York state.

⁵ Wentworth Greenhalgh, “Observations of Wentworth Greenhalgh,” in “Papers Relating to the Iroquois and Other Indian Tribes, 1666–1763,” Edmund O’Callaghan, *Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany, 1849), vol. 1: 11–12. The following descriptions of Haudenosaunee life are based on Karim M. Tiro, *The People of the Standing Stone* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), ch. 1, “A Place and a People in a Time of Change,” 1–19; Isabel Thompson Kelsay, *Joseph Brant, 1743–1807: Man of Two Worlds* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), ch. 1, “The World of the Longhouse,” 1–37; Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Vintage, repr. 2010); Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Tuscarora: A History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 72–75; and Gavin K. Watts, *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley: The St. Leger Expedition of 1777* (Toronto, Oxford: Dundurn Group, 2002), Kindle edition.

⁶ Tiro, *The People of the Standing Stone*, 1–19.

Rochester to the Niagara Frontier. Senecas formed the largest group of the Confederacy. In 1714, they welcomed the Tuscaroras, who moved from the Carolinas to settle in Oneida villages, primarily at Ocaqua, and later on land near Niagara Falls. Almost all villages contained people from more than one nation, reflecting intermarriage among Haudenosaunee people as well as the adoption of people from other nations.

The Confederacy was a League of Peace, conceptually sharing a traditional longhouse. As Canaqueese, son of a Mohawk mother and Dutch father, explained to a French missionary in 1654, “We, the five Iroquois Nations, compose but one cabin; we maintain but one fire; and we have, from time immemorial, dwelt under one and the same roof.” Mohawks were keepers of the eastern door, Onondagas were keepers of the council fire, and Senecas were keepers of the western door.⁷

All Haudenosaunee people shared similar economic, social, and cultural backgrounds. All were matrilineal, organized around kinship ties and clan affiliations inherited through women. Women controlled home and village life, maintaining the longhouse (or, by the mid-eighteenth century, log cabins) and growing most of the food. Richard Smith, visiting an Oneida village in 1769, noted that women grew “Corn, Beans, Watermelons, Potatoes, Cucumbers, Muskmelons, Cabbage, French Turneps, some Apple Trees, Sallad, Parsnips, and other Plants.” As heads of families, women also appointed chiefs and influenced decisions about war and peace by providing (or refusing to provide) food.⁸

Men might be sachems, chosen by clan mothers, representing each nation at the council fire at Onondaga and conducting diplomatic negotiations with people outside the Confederacy. Other elders were respected as village councilors. Much of their influence came from their generosity. Redistribution of wealth, rather than the accumulation of wealth, was an important source of their power. Younger men were hunters, warriors, and guides. They brought wealth to themselves and their villages through hunting game for food and sale to Europeans in the fur trade. They also earned money as guides for Europeans. In all of these roles, men frequently traveled long distances through the country outside the villages.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, people in the lush Mohawk Valley were stressed both by disease and continual warfare. In 1635, smallpox devastated the Mohawk people. Their population dropped precipitously. They also faced almost constant warfare. In the seventeenth century, from the 1640s to the 1680s, the Haudenosaunee fought neighboring peoples. One of the principal enemies of the Haudenosaunee were the Hurons (also called Wyandot), centered in what is now the Province of Ontario, Canada. In what would be called the Beaver Wars, the Haudenosaunee expanded their control of

⁷ Quoted in Reuben Gold Thwaites, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610–1791* (Cleveland: Burrows, 1899), XLI, 87.

⁸ Quote from Smith, *Tour of Four Great Rivers*, 64–67, quoted in Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 9.

territory and thus the fur trade all the way south into Pennsylvania, north in Canada, and west into Ohio and Illinois. Victorious in these wars, the Haudenosaunee often pushed other people west into new areas.

In 1614, the Dutch established their main fur trading post at Albany. After Mohawks drove Mohican people from the Hudson Valley, Mohawks became major providers of fur for Europeans. As early as the 1630s, however, French competitors challenged Dutch hegemony. In 1634–35, Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert traveled as far west as Oneida territory to report that French traders offered Oneida and Mohawk people much better terms than the Dutch.⁹

After the English took over the colony of New York in 1664, Mohawks became embroiled further in clashes between the English and French. The French attacked and burned all three Mohawk villages in 1666. Most Mohawks espoused, at least superficially, the Anglican faith, reflecting the strong presence of the British. But Jesuit missionaries also converted many Mohawks to Catholicism, including Kateri Tekakwitha. Born in the late 1650s, she became the first Native American saint in 2012.

In 1701, the Haudenosaunee decided on a new strategy. They made peace treaties with both the French and British. Control of their homelands in upstate New York meant that the Haudenosaunee held the balance of power between the British and French, as both countries fought what became a worldwide struggle for empire. Their position of neutrality allowed them to play one European nation off against the other. Throughout the French and Indian Wars of the eighteenth century, they attempted (not always successfully) to maintain a neutral stance, facing attempts by each to win their favor. Wars between the British and French brought almost constant involvement from the Haudenosaunee peoples. Today, names such as Fort Hunter, Fort Johnson, Fort Klock, Fort Frey, and Fort Plain reflect the war-ravaged landscape of the Mohawk Valley in the eighteenth century.¹⁰

Such diplomatic and military maneuvering brought considerable material wealth to the Haudenosaunee people. European trade goods—cloth, rifles, knives, sewing needles, tin and brass kettles, spoons, and beads—became an integral part of Haudenosaunee life. Estate claims after the Revolution listed the possessions of various Mohawk and Oneida families. Jacob Anenghrateni Corneliu Sug-go-yone-tau, Oneida, died during the war, but his widow claimed restitution from the federal government for:

- 4 Cows—2 Horses 1 saddle horse, common size
- 1 Sett Horse tackling 4 brass sugar kettles
- 1 Sleigh, not shod 1 sleigh & harness, shod & 1 horse

⁹ Charles T. Gehring, Charles T., William A. Starna, and Gunther Michelson, eds. *A Journey into Mohawk and Oneida Country 1634–1635: The Journal of Harmen Meyndertsz Van Den Bogaert* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013).

¹⁰ Thomas E. Burke Jr., “A Sad and Deplorable Massacre,” *Mohawk Frontier: The Dutch Community of Schenectady, New York, 1661–1710* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 68–108; Japp Jacobs, *New Netherland: A Dutch Colony in Seventeenth-Century America* (Brill: Leiden-Boston, 2005).

3 Large Trunks 1 gun
1 Chest 2 trammels
12 pewter plates 1 large breeding sow (with small pigs)
1 Hand-Saw 1 Large English axe
2 Large brass kettles 1 small house of hewed logs
1 small ditto
6 painted Chairs
1 Unfinished framed house with
Two Chimneys
1 finished ditto one fire-place¹¹

Material wealth and the diplomacy and warfare that produced it brought great stress on pre-contact lifestyles. Families lost large numbers of people. Diplomats and warriors gained prominence, often in competition with each other. As warriors grew wealthier from the fur trade, they also grew more vocal, challenging the traditional authority both of clan mothers and sachems.¹²

To replace family members lost in warfare, the Haudenosaunee regularly adopted former enemies, including people of European and African descent as well as Native peoples, to become new family members. Thus their villages were seldom made up only of Mohawks, Oneidas, or Senecas. This population mix was enhanced by intermarriage, as men moved to live in the homes of their wives. The great warrior Joseph Brant, for example, although born at the Mohawk village of Canajoharie, spent time with the family of his Oneida wife at Oquaga. Joseph Brant's grandmother was a Wyandot, adopted through warfare. Native villages thus reflected a wide variety of cultures. By the mid-seventeenth century, Jesuit priests counted eleven different Indian nations living among the Senecas and seven among the Onondagas.¹³

Many Africans and Europeans also lived among Haudenosaunee people. Some were captives. Others ran away from indentured servitude, enslavement, or the army. Gideon Hawley, missionary to the Oneidas and Tuscaroras at Oquaga, noted in 1753 that almost every family had “more or less” European American “blood.” Many also had African American as well as Native American ancestry. James Dean, missionary to Oneida villages, thought that by the end of the Revolution, almost all Oneidas were of mixed ancestry.¹⁴

By the mid-eighteenth century, settlers from many parts of Europe also lived in the Valley. Their farms and villages intermingled with Mohawk and Oneida settlements, extending as far west as the Town of Deerfield in eastern Oneida County. Dutch names

¹¹ Ft. Stanwix, “The Oneida Nation in the American Revolution,” <https://www.nps.gov/fost/learn/historyculture/the-oneida-nation-in-the-american-revolution.htm>.

¹² Tiro, *The People of the Standing Stone*, 1–19.

¹³ Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 23.

¹⁴ Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 24.

predominated from Albany west. Palatine Germans arrived after 1710, first settling in New York City. In 1712, with permission from the Mohawks, they established villages in the Schoharie Valley southwest of Schenectady. Mohawks, as well as the Germans in eastern New York and the British at Ft. Hunter, supplied them with food their first two winters. Johann Conrad Weiser, Palatine leader, sent his son Conrad to live among the Mohawks, who adopted him. One observer recorded that only a quarter of the villagers at Schoharie in 1752 were Mohawk. Germans later established villages north of the Mohawk River at Stone Arabia and Burnetsfield (German Flatts), near Mohawk settlements, on land that became some of the richest and most productive in the northern colonies.¹⁵

Sir William Johnson, a British agent to the Haudenosaunee and of Irish descent, brought Scots Irish settlers to the area near Johnstown. English people from eastern New York and Yankees from New England joined the crowd. One observer noted in 1802 that Montgomery County “appears to be a perfect Babel, as to language. . . . The articulation even of New-England people, is injured by their being intermingled with the Dutch, Irish, and Scotch.”¹⁶

In this complex mix of people from various cultures, Sir William Johnson played a key role in maintaining alliances between British and Haudenosaunee peoples. His relationship with Mohawk people was particularly solid, since his second wife, Molly Brant, was sister to Joseph Brant, famed Mohawk war chief. In 1755, he became Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the British. He built his first home, a stone fortress-like structure, in Fonda in 1749. In 1763, he built an elegant mansion north of the Mohawk River at Johnstown. Both houses were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. In 1769, Johnson erected a church for Mohawk people on land donated by Joseph and Molly Brant. Now often called the Indian Castle Church, it was placed on the National Register in 1971.

At the end of the last French and Indian War in 1763, France ceded its northern colony of Quebec to Britain. But the war was not over. Native people in the western Great Lakes region organized resistance to British rule. Spreading eastward, it became known as Pontiac’s Rebellion, after the Ottawa leader. Pontiac signed a peace treaty with Sir William Johnson at Ft. Ontario in 1766, but conflict along the border between European land speculators, settlers, and Indian people continued. In 1768, Johnson and governors from several British colonies met with about three thousand Native Americans at Ft. Stanwix, “the largest assembled council in early North America” and “a who’s who of colonial North America,” noted historian William Campbell. With extensive entertainment, three months of meetings, and the payment of immense amounts of English money and trade goods, British and Haudenosaunee sachems and warriors finally agreed on November 5,

¹⁵ Philip Otterness, *Becoming German: The 1709 Palatine Migration to New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 136–160.

¹⁶ John Taylor, “Journal of the Rev. John Taylor,” *Documentary History of the State of New-York*, E. B. O’Callaghan, ed. (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1850), III: 1129.

1768, on a controversial treaty outlining a line running from Ft. Stanwix south, all the way to Florida, separating Indian people west of this line from European settlers in the east, but opening much of the Ohio Territory to European settlement.¹⁷

African Americans in the Mohawk Valley

People of color were part of this multiethnic mix. The Colony of New York supported slavery for almost two hundred years, from its earliest introduction by the Dutch in 1626 until its final abolition in 1827. After New York became a British colony under the control of the Duke of York in 1664, its residents became major purchasers of enslaved people from the Royal African Company. During the colonial period, New York had the largest percentage of enslaved people (12–15 percent) north of the Mason-Dixon Line. In 1703, about 42 percent of households in New York City held people in slavery, more than any other city except Charleston, South Carolina. In 1991, the discovery of more than four hundred graves in the African burial ground in Manhattan jolted the country into confronting New York’s reliance on enslaved people as major producers of the colony’s wealth.¹⁸

Recent attention has focused on slavery in New York City. But when Dutch, English, and Scottish settlers headed north along the Hudson River to Albany and then west along the Mohawk Valley, they brought enslaved people with them. On the night of February 8, 1690, when the French attacked the stockade of Schenectady, Dutch residents owned at least sixteen people in slavery.¹⁹

German settlers, although never organized in opposition to slavery, were much more likely than English or Dutch colonists to welcome people of color in their churches and families. Lutheran churches in New York City had both German and African members. Sometimes they intermarried. As historian Philip Otterness noted, in 1714, Anna Barbara Asmer, a German widow, married Madagascar-born Peter Christiaan, enslaved by Jan van Loon. Anna Maria (the illegitimate daughter of Maria Catharina Zoller, a German woman, and “Jan, a negro from Martinico”) was baptized in 1715.²⁰

¹⁷ William Campbell, “Accomplices: The 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix,” *Negotiating at the Oneida Carry: Historic Resource Study, Ft. Stanwix National Monument* (Washington, DC: National Park Service and Organization of American Historians, 2019), 55–76.

¹⁸ Edgar J. McManus, *A History of Negro Slavery in New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966); Ira Berlin and Leslie Harris, eds., *Slavery in New York* (New York: The New Press, 2005); Michael E. Groth, *Slavery and Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley* (Albany, State University of New York, 2017), reprint edition.

¹⁹ Thomas E. Burke Jr., *Mohawk Frontier: The Dutch Community of Schenectady, New York, 1661–1710* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 62–63.

²⁰ Philip Otterness, *Becoming German*, 148; Graham Hodges, “The Pastor and the Prostitute: Sexual Power among African Americans and Germans in Colonial New York,” in Martha Hodes, ed., *Sex, Love and Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

Most enslaved people in the colony of New York lived in or near European American households. Usually, only a small number of African Americans lived in each household. They would work alongside European Americans on farms, mills, and homes. A few, however, lived in larger groups. Up to fifty enslaved people, for example, worked in the mill at Philipsburg Manor, owned by Dutch-born Frederick Phillipse on the Hudson River. Irish-born Sir William Johnson, British agent to the Indians, carried on this tradition. When he arrived in the Mohawk Valley in 1738, he counted only a few enslaved people in his household. Before his death in 1774, however, at least forty different people in slavery appeared in his records, twenty-one of them living with him at his Johnstown headquarters in the 1770s. His Mohawk widow Molly Brant continued to hold people in slavery. When Americans attacked her home in Johnstown, “she left her House with reluctance & with a Sore heart taking her Children, Seven in number, two black men Servants & two female Servants.” His son, Sir John Johnson, also continued to hold people in slavery. In 1781, he made a list of forty-one people who had fled to the British for protection. Nineteen of them were from his own estates.²¹

From their elegant four-story brick house on the south side of the Mohawk River, Nicholas and Maria Herkimer were some of the largest owners of enslaved people in the Mohawk Valley, with enslaved laborers inherited from Nicholas Herkimer’s father Johan Yost Herkimer. Enslaved laborers from their estate helped transfer goods around the “little falls” at Ft. Herkimer. They almost certainly were also part of the laborers who helped John Yost Herkimer transport goods to the Oneida Carry.²²

Some of these African colonists were free people, intermarried with Dutch and Mohawk families. The little village of Willigee (derived from Dutch for “willow”), just west of Schenectady, was founded in 1685 by Cornelius Antonissen van Slyck, of Dutch descent, and Ochs-Toch, his French-Mohawk wife. Their daughter Hilletie became an important interpreter for Mohawk and Dutch people. In gratitude, the Mohawks gave her land at Willow Flats. In 1689, Philipse the Moor, of African descent, and his wife Elizabeth bought part of this land for 167 beavers. By the time that William Johnson arrived in 1738 to supervise his uncle’s land next door to this settlement, this group was known as the “Willigee Negroes.”²³

²¹ Philipsburg Manor, “A Note on Large Slaveholdings in the North,” <http://www.hudsonvalley.org/content/view/73/138/>; Wanda Burch, “‘He Was Bought at Public Sale’: Slavery at Johnson Hall,” *Sunday Leader-Herald*, February 27, 2000; Kelsay, *Joseph Brant*, 140; Watts, *The Burning of the Valleys*, Kindle location 4164, 21747.

²² Cynthia Falk, “Forts, Rum, Slaves, and the Herkimers’ Rise to Power in the Mohawk Valley,” *New York History* 89:3 (Summer 2008), 221–34. Thanks to Art Simmons for suggesting that Johan Yost Herkimer’s enslaved people may have helped moved goods to the Oneida Carry.

²³ Daniel Weaver, *“The Willigee Negroes”: Sir William Johnson, Sir Peter Warren, and an 18th Century Free Black Community in the Mohawk Valley* (Amsterdam, New York: Lock 11 Media, 2019), 14–23.

Just as slavery existed in the Mohawk Valley, so did the Underground Railroad. During the colonial period, an unknown number of African Americans escaped from slavery to become integral members of Mohawk and Oneida communities. A few scattered references appeared in historical records. When Joseph Brant met Nicholas Herkimer at Unadilla, for example, he brought with him, noted historian Gavin K. Watts, not only a clan matron but also twenty warriors. Among them was “a curly-headed man of mixed native and black blood named Pool.” Louis Atayataghronghta was a Mohawk warrior from Canawaugha, near Montreal. He was half Indian (his mother was Abenaki) and half African American. He fought in several battles in New York State, including Oriskany, and would later become known as the highest-ranking Native person (and probably also the highest-ranking person of African descent) in the Continental Army.²⁴

Treaties between Native people and colonial governments often included provisions for the return of people who had run away from slavery. Colonial New York governments feared not only that enslaved people would incite Indians to rebellion but also that they would flee to Canada, where they could give valuable information to French enemies.²⁵

Oneida County did not assume its current boundaries until 1816, so we do not have accurate figures for how many people of African descent lived in that area in the colonial period. In 1790, what became Oneida County was still part of Montgomery County (formerly Tryon County in the colonial period). Census figures indicate 588 people living in slavery in the whole of Montgomery County in 1790.²⁶

Revolutionary War in the Mohawk Valley

The Revolutionary War was a political revolution, with Patriots winning independence from Great Britain. It was also an economic and social revolution, with people of color challenging slavery and Native people fighting for control of their own territory. As such, both enslaved people and Native Americans often found their best allies for liberty and independence among the British.

Like the French and Indian War, the American Revolution disrupted the whole of New York State. Fighting between British and Patriots destroyed villages and forced local people to make choices about their own allegiances. The Mohawk Valley was a particular site of Patriot-Loyalist conflict for people of Native and African descent as well as those of

²⁴ Watts, *The Burning of the Valleys*, Kindle location 1061; Larry Lowenthal, *Marinus Willett: Defender of the Northern Frontier* (Fleischmanns, New York: Purple Mountain Press, 2000). For more on intermarriage, see Tom Arne Midtro, “The Flemish Bastard and the Former Indians: Métis and Identity in Seventeenth-Century New York,” *American Indian Quarterly* 34:1 (Winter 2010), 83–108.

²⁵ McManus, *Slavery in New York*, 102; Kenneth W. Porter, “Relations between Negroes and Indians: Contacts as Allies,” *Journal of Negro History* 17:3 (July 1932), 308.

²⁶ “Slaves,” *Census of the State of New-York for 1855* (Albany: Charles Van Benthuyzen, 1857), xi.

European descent. About one-third of the battles of the American Revolution were fought in the Mohawk-Hudson corridor. The war devastated the Mohawk Valley, changing it from a place of prosperity and plenty, with immensely productive farmlands (providing about one-third of the provisions for the American Army), to a “valley of ashes,” in the words of historian Richard Berleth. No one escaped trauma.²⁷

None were more affected than the Haudenosaunee. For the first time since the formation of the Confederacy, members of the Six Nations fought not together but against each other. Mohawks, Onondagas, and Senecas fought on the side of the British, a tribute to Johnson’s success in creating a powerful British-Haudenosaunee alliance. In 1774, when Johnson died unexpectedly at age fifty-nine, his nephew Guy Johnson took his place as Superintendent of Indian Affairs. His son John Johnson, together with friends and allies John Butler and Walter Butler, became major leaders, with Mohawk Joseph Brant, of Loyalist and Mohawk troops during the Revolutionary War. Historian Gavin K. Watts called John Johnson “the most prominent Loyalist in the Mohawk Valley.” The homes of Walter and John Butler and John Johnson still stand in Fonda and Johnstown. Both are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.²⁸

The Oneidas and Tuscaroras, on the other hand, became American allies. The Oneidas were not pleased with British actions. The British had drawn the Proclamation Line of 1768 so that it encroached on Oneida territory, and William Johnson had refused to provide them with either a blacksmith or a church. On the other hand, Rev. Samuel Kirkland came as an American Congregational missionary to the Oneida homelands in 1770. Many Oneidas were intrigued by Kirkland’s Christian ideas—and by the hymns he taught them. However, as Karim M. Tiro noted, “The Oneidas engaged with Christianity, but they integrated it into an Indigenous framework.” In effect, much like the Mohawks, they used Christian ideas to support their own worldview. In turn, Kirkland helped preserve Oneida language and culture, recording more than two hundred Oneida words. His presence acted as a counterweight to the influence that Sir William Johnson held over the Mohawk people. In 1793, Kirkland organized the Hamilton-Oneida Academy, which taught boys and girls of both Oneida and European descent.²⁹

Like Indigenous people and European Americans, African Americans also experienced war’s disruption. But in many cases, they were able to turn it to their own advantage. In central New York, British soldiers did not attack people in slavery unless such people

²⁷ Richard Berleth, *Bloody Mohawk: The French and Indian War & American Revolution on New York’s Frontier* (Hensonville, New York: Black Dome Press, 2010).

²⁸ “Tory, Allied Indian, and British Military Leaders in New York,” Ft. Stanwix, National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/fost/learn/historyculture/tory-leaders-british-military-allied-indian.htm>; Watts, *The Burning of the Valleys*, Kindle location 172.

²⁹ Philip Otterness, *Becoming German*, 136–60; Joseph T. Glattner and James Kirby Martin, *Forgotten Allies: The Oneida Indians and the American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007). Thanks to Michelle Riter for her insight about Oneida dissatisfaction with the British.

actively took up arms to support Patriot families. Their tactics often worked. Enslavers who lived in the Mohawk Valley were vigilant about keeping enslaved people under control. The Albany Committee of Safety, for example, imposed a curfew on enslaved people and refused to allow local militia units to leave the area, fearing a slave rebellion. If people in slavery were found on the streets of Schenectady at night, they were beaten.³⁰

Beginning in 1779, the British offered freedom to enslaved people in New York who supported them. Often people in slavery fled to British lines. Hundreds of African Americans worked as laborers with Burgoyne’s army at Saratoga. Many went to New York City, where they worked for pay as laborers and wagon drivers. In 1781, of the forty-one people listed as fleeing to Loyalists under Sir John Johnson, fifteen of them had been owned by Patriots. Half a dozen of these had been serving with Patriot militia along the Mohawk River. At the end of the war, the British took about three thousand African Americans with them when they left New York City. Many settled in Nova Scotia, where their descendants still live today.³¹

Colonial militias often included both Native people and African Americans. In 1758, for example, the three battalions of the New York Provincial Regiment included a high proportion of African Americans. The 1777 Patriot call for militiamen in New York State explicitly excluded Indians and enslaved people (along with indentured servants and lame people). But free people of color were drafted, along with enslaved people who served with their owners’ permission.³²

We will never know for certain how many African American soldiers served in the Revolutionary War. Benjamin Quarles suggested that about five thousand people of color served in the Patriot forces, but he cautioned that only about a third of these soldiers of color were labeled by race.³³

People of color alone made up some units. The Sixth (later renamed the Fourth) Connecticut Regiment was composed entirely of African Americans. But as historian Michael Lee Lanning suggested, the First Rhode Island Regiment was “the only black unit of significance to serve in the American army during the Revolution.” On February 14, 1778, the Rhode Island legislature made provisions to recruit this regiment. Enslaved people who joined were promised freedom. They were paid equally with other Continental Army soldiers and promised support if they were disabled as a result of the war. This act remained in place for only four months. In that time, eighty-eight enslaved men joined the

³⁰ MacManus, *Slavery in New York*, 154–59.

³¹ MacManus, *Slavery in New York*, 154–59; Watts, *Burning of the Valleys*, Kindle location 21747. For an overview, see Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

³² Watts, *Burning of the Valleys*, Kindle location 2048; Muster rolls that list names of African American militia men, 1755–64, are noted in Benjamin Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 8–9, fn. 19.

³³ Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*, xxix.

unit, with perhaps as many as 140 African Americans (including free people) who served for the duration of the war. At the Battle of Yorktown, French General Rochambeau noted that “three-quarters of the Rhode Island regiment consists of negroes, and that regiment is the most neatly dressed, the best under arms, and the most precise in its maneuvers.”³⁴

Many other units were racially integrated. In August 1778, for example, a list of soldiers returning from leave in New England listed 755 men of color in 14 different brigades. One German officer who served with the British under Burgoyne noted that “no regiment is to be seen in which there are not Negroes in abundance. Among them are able-bodied, strong, and brave fellows.”³⁵

Some of these soldiers were from the Mohawk Valley, including a young man named Henry Bakeman, who enlisted at Stone Arabia in April 1781. Bakeman and other African Americans who enlisted in New York State were certainly aware of a law passed by the legislature in March 1781. It freed all enslaved people who served in the American Army for three years or until their regular discharge, and it gave five hundred acres of land to those who gave permission for enslaved people to enlist.³⁶

Few African Americans served above the rank of private, but they seem to have been well-accepted and honored for their commitment. As Michael Lanning suggested, “the majority of white officers and soldiers. . . apparently accepted the blacks and willingly fought as part of the integrated units.”³⁷

³⁴ William C. Nell, *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* (Boston: Robert F. Wallcut, 1855); Robert A. Geake and Loren M. Spears, *From Slaves to Soldiers: The 1st Rhode Island Regiment in the American Revolution* (Yardley, PA: Westholme, 2016); Judith Van Buskirk, *Standing in Their Own Light: African American Patriots in the American Revolution* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017), 6–13, 22; quoted in Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961, repr. 1996), xxix.

³⁵ Geake and Spears, *From Slaves to Soldiers*; Quote from Hessian soldier in MacManus, *Slavery in New York*, 157.

³⁶ Michael Lee Lanning, *African Americans and the Revolutionary War* (New York: Kensington, 2000), 73–86, and Appendix H, “The Rhode Island Slave Enlistment Act, February 14, 1778.” Reference to New York State law comes from James Kent and William Lacy, *Commentaries on American Law 2* (Blackstone, 1889), Kindle locations 7379–7391; Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*, 56; MacManus, *Slavery in New York*, 157. The sixth section of this Act read: “Any person who shall deliver one or more of his able-bodied servants to any warrant officer . . . shall, for every male so entered and mustered as aforesaid, be entitled to the location and grant of one right, in manner as in and by this act as directed; and shall be, and hereby is discharged from any further maintenance of such slave. . . . And any such slave so entering as aforesaid, who shall serve for the term of three years or until regularly discharged, shall, immediately after such service or discharge, be, and is hereby declared to be, a free man of this State.” Noted in Joseph Thomas Wilson, *The Black Phalanx: A History of the Negro Soldiers of the United States in the War of 1775–1812, 1861–’65* (American Publishing Company, 1888), Kindle edition, 56–57, Kindle location 766.

³⁷ Lanning, *African Americans and the Revolutionary War*, 81.

Ft. Stanwix in the American Revolution

The Oneida Carrying Place remained extremely important during the American Revolution. Ft. Stanwix was the key to controlling that carrying place. In 1776, Americans took over the abandoned fort and renamed it Ft. Schuyler, although most people continued to call it Ft. Stanwix. Under American command, the fort played a major role in the American Revolution, defending the western gateway to the whole Mohawk Valley.³⁸

Most importantly, Ft. Stanwix successfully resisted the attempt in 1777 by British General Barry St. Leger to lead British and Indian allies down the Mohawk Valley to meet General John Burgoyne at Saratoga. After the United States took over the abandoned fort in 1776, they garrisoned it with about seven hundred soldiers, in charge of protecting the Oswego and Mohawk Valleys from British attack. In 1777, their worst fears came true. British General Barry St. Leger came from Montreal through Oswego, heading southeast along the Oswego River, then along Oneida Lake, across the Oneida Carrying Place to Ft. Stanwix. His mission was to capture Ft. Stanwix as the western gateway to the Mohawk Valley. Subduing villages in the Valley, destroying the breadbasket of the Continental Army, and then meeting General Burgoyne at Saratoga seemed like a brilliant British plan for splitting the emerging United States apart.

Ft. Stanwix was St. Leger’s downfall. Its defenders, through trickery and sheer courage, survived St. Leger’s three-week siege. He was forced to withdraw his troops back to Canada, leaving the Americans in charge of Ft. Stanwix.

One of the major players in the defense of Ft. Stanwix was Lt. Colonel Marinus Willett, Peter Gansevoort’s second-in-command at Ft. Stanwix. Willett gained a reputation for anti-British feelings as a Son of Liberty in New York City before the war. As a soldier, Willett showed himself to be courageous, creative, and often rash and rabble-rousing, first in the Continental Army as part of the Third New York infantry and then in the New York State militia.³⁹

When a few of St. Leger’s British troops began to withdraw their siege from the Fort, defenders thought it was an attempt to draw the Americans into foolhardy pursuit. In fact, it was St. Leger’s response to news that the American militia and Oneida allies under General Herkimer had tried to come to the aid of Ft. Stanwix.

Herkimer left from Ft. Dayton, twenty-five miles east of Ft. Stanwix, with four battalions of militia volunteers and sixty Oneidas. Among them was Louis Atayataghronghtha, of mixed Indian and African heritage. Probably several of Herkimer’s own enslaved workers were also present. At a small place in the woods near the Oneida

³⁸ Nellis M. Crouse, “Forts and Blockhouses in the Mohawk Valley,” *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association* 14 (1915), 75–90.

³⁹ Larry Lowenthal, *Marinus Willett: Defender of the Northern Frontier* (Fleischmanns, New York: Purple Mountain Press, 2000).

village of Oriska, a combined group of Senecas, Mohawks, and Loyalist volunteers drew this force into an ambush on August 6, 1777. John Johnson officially led the expedition for the British, but the daring plan of attack was developed by Seneca leaders Old Smoke and Cornplanter, with Mohawk Joseph Brant.⁴⁰

The result was a ferocious hand-to-hand struggle. British desertion left Americans in control of the field, but the battle was a disaster for everyone. It was in fact a civil war. For Haudenosaunee people, it was the first time that one Native nation had fought against another. Twenty-three Seneca chiefs and more than eighty warriors died. For Americans of European descent, it was a vicious fight of neighbor against neighbor. They had started with eight hundred men plus Oneida allies. Of these, 80 percent ended up dead or wounded. General Herkimer lost both his leg and his life in the battle.⁴¹ As Richard Berleth noted, “Historians assert that the battle of Oriskany was the bloodiest of the American Revolution, which indeed it was.” Oriskany was, suggested Berleth, “less a fight over nation-building than over race, ethnicity, and cultural identification—the worst conflict possible in a plural society.” And, “it was just the beginning.”⁴²

Two factors finally ended the brutal battle. First, it rained heavily. Second, Senecas, Cayugas, and Loyalists discovered that their camp—filled with women, children, and all their supplies—had been looted, and they left the field. The looter? None other than Colonel Willett, who had taken 250 American troops from Stanwix to attack the deserted enemy camp.

Two days later, St. Leger demanded the surrender of Ft. Stanwix, threatening Indian retaliation if Gansevoort did not comply. Instead, Lt. Colonel Willett responded in a ringing speech, reprinted in Willett’s own account of the war. Willett managed to state the American position and, at the same time, insult the British emissaries:

Do I understand you, Sir? . . . You come from a British colonel, to the commandant of this garrison, to tell him that, if he does not deliver up the garrison into the hands of your Colonel, he will send his Indians to murder our women and children. We are doing our duty: this garrison is committed to our charge, and we will take care of it. After you get out of it, you may turn around and look at its outside, but never expect to come in again, unless you come as prisoner. I consider the message you have brought a degrading one for a British officer to send, and by no means reputable for a British officer to carry. For my part, I declare, before I would consent to deliver this garrison to such a murdering set

⁴⁰ Gavin Watts, *Burning of the Valleys*, Kindle location 2107 and 2434. Thanks to William Sawyer for information about Seneca leaders.

⁴¹ Lowenthal, *Marinus Willett*; Berleth, *Bloody Mohawk*, 236–37.

⁴² For a detailed account of this battle, see Richard Berleth, *Bloody Mohawk*, 223–237, 242–43.

as your army, by your own account, consists of, I would suffer my body to be filled with splinters and set on fire, as you know has at times been practiced, by such hordes of women and children killers, as belong to your army.⁴³

In an attempt to rally support for Ft. Stanwix, Willett then undertook an arduous journey on foot, with only one companion, through British lines to friendly communities along the Mohawk. There he presided over a trial of Tory leader Walter Butler, a hated man among Patriots. Butler and a compatriot, Han Yost Schuyler, were tried and sentenced to death. Butler escaped. But General Benedict Arnold made a deal with Han Yost Schuyler. If Schuyler would travel west to tell the British and Indians that Arnold was advancing toward Ft. Stanwix with a force of thousands, his life would be spared. Schuyler’s story must have been good. St. Leger may have been influenced by it. More importantly, Indian allies began to desert the British to protect their own camp from Willett’s raid. Rather than face an attack by an overwhelming American force with his own supply lines in danger, St. Leger withdrew and went back to Oswego. Defenders of Ft. Stanwix must have seen this as nothing short of miraculous. St. Leger, noted Willett, “was wholly baffled in all his designs.” As reported by Willett, the *British Annual Register* wrote that Americans called this, along with the battle of Bennington, Vermont, “great and glorious victories.” They were filled with “exultation and confidence,” while Gansevoort and Willett “were considered as the saviours of their country.”⁴⁴

St. Leger’s retreat led directly to American victory at Saratoga. Saratoga became the turning point of the war, as American victory there convinced the French to send men and money for the American cause. Without France’s help, the United States would not exist.

We do not know whether soldiers of color were present at Ft. Stanwix in 1777 either as Patriots, Native people, British soldiers, or local militia. We do know, however, that neither St. Leger’s abandonment of his siege of Ft. Stanwix nor the American victory at Saratoga left the Mohawk Valley in peace. For the rest of the war, the Valley was a major site of fighting, and the War itself became a civil war between neighbors, Patriots against Loyalists, Mohawks against Oneidas. All of these raids and campaigns disrupted life, bringing tragedy and devastation for African Americans as well as people of European and Haudenosaunee descent.

In 1778, Joseph Brant, headquartered near present-day Windsor, New York, commanded raiding parties of British troops, Loyalists, and Mohawk and Seneca warriors. Brant began his Mohawk Valley raids in May with an attack on Cobleskill, pursuing a scorched earth policy, destroying dozens of homes, barns, and mills, driving off or killing cattle and sheep, and burning crops. Meanwhile, John Butler attacked frontier settlements in northern Pennsylvania, including a rout that Americans called a “massacre” in July in the

⁴³ William M. Willett, *A Narrative of the Military Actions of Colonel Marinus Willett, Taken Chiefly from His Own Manuscript* (New York: G. & C. & H. Carville, 1831), 57–58.

⁴⁴ Willet, *Narrative*, 59–64; Berleth, *Bloody Mohawk*, 244–50.

Wyoming Valley. These frontier raids struck at the breadbasket of the Continental Army, depriving it of food and manpower and decimating settlements. The nascent United States was fighting for its life, in what seemed like a losing battle. Governor George Clinton feared total depopulation of the frontier if the Mohawk Valley could not be protected. Americans in the Mohawk Valley responded by strengthening a series of forts, constructed from Ft. Orange at Albany west to Ft. Stanwix.⁴⁵

Continuing his attacks, Brant struck German Flatts in September with several hundred Mohawks and Loyalist volunteers. Alerted by the remarkable run of thirty miles or more by Adam Helmer, a scout who had escaped Brant, settlers took refuge in Ft. Dayton on the north side of the river and Ft. Herkimer on the south side. First built in 1740, Ft. Herkimer had been rebuilt of stone in the summer of 1778, just in time to repulse Brant’s raid. Unable to enter the fort, Brant’s raiders destroyed dozens of farms and villages on both sides of the river. Only two or three Americans died, but seven hundred people were left homeless. That raid resulted in an American counterattack on Brant’s own headquarters in October.⁴⁶

Reinforced by Walter Butler, Brant continued his attacks in the Mohawk Valley. He had a force of three to four hundred Senecas and fifty regular British soldiers, as well as Loyalist volunteers. Under the command of Walter Butler, Brant participated in an attack on Cherry Valley on November 11, 1778. It was one of the most brutal engagements of the whole war, with Senecas in particular slaying non-combatants, including women and children.

In retaliation, Congress authorized in 1779 a massive Continental Army campaign—the only major American campaign in the North that year—against the very heart of Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca settlements in central and western New York. Their goal was to inflict permanent damage on Haudenosaunee resistance. Gen. John Sullivan gathered troops at Canajoharie and headed south, while James Clinton came up the Susquehanna River Valley from Pennsylvania. They met in late August near the New York–Pennsylvania border. A major American victory at Newtown opened the way for destruction of every Cayuga and Seneca village north along Cayuga and Seneca Lakes and west to Niagara. At the end of this campaign, more than five thousand Indians had fled to the British Ft. Niagara. More than forty villages had been destroyed, along with millions of bushels of corn and untold numbers of peach and apple orchards and vegetables. Marinus Willett took part in this expedition as part of the Third New York Regiment.

⁴⁵ Clinton to Willett, March 15, 1779, in Clinton Papers, IV, 612, cited in Larry Lowenthal, *Marinus Willett: Defender of the Northern Frontier*, 42–43; Nellis M. Crouse, “Forts and Blockhouses in the Mohawk Valley,” 75–90.

⁴⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Herkimer; Isabel Thompson Kelsay, *Joseph Brant, 1743–1807: Man of Two Worlds* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984).

In response, in 1780, Loyalists and Seneca warriors took revenge once more on American and Oneida farms and villages in the Mohawk Valley. Oneida people had served the Americans as scouts as well as warriors, and these attacks severely disrupted American ability to protect the area.

Henry Bakeman, Marinus Willett, and the Last Expedition of the American Revolution

British soldiers, Mohawks, and Loyalists under the command of Sir John Johnson destroyed Stone Arabia and the surrounding farms in October 1780. That raid almost certainly included the home of Henry Bakeman, a fifteen-year-old African American boy. Born on January 1, 1765, in Rocky Hill (in New Jersey or New York State), he moved with his father when he was three years old to Simon’s Kill near Schenectady, then in 1770 to a place near Ft. Plain, and then in 1776 to the German settlement of Stone Arabia (or “Stone Rabby,” as Bakeman called it in his pension application), all in the Mohawk Valley. We do not know whether Bakeman was free or enslaved.⁴⁷

Desperately trying to defend American frontiers, Congress also increasingly faced unrest among its troops. Lack of funds and depreciation of currency led many soldiers and officers alike to complain of lack of pay. Marinus Willett was one of three officers who presented a petition to the New York State legislature, asking for proper payment. At the same time, Congress consolidated its forces to bring each regiment up to full strength. On January 1, 1781, for example, Congress cut New York regiments in the Continental Army from five to two. In the process, some lesser-ranking officers lost their positions.

Marinus Willett, by then a full colonel in charge of the Fifth New York Regiment, was suddenly out of a job. In these dire circumstances, Governor Clinton convinced Willett to accept command in April 1781 of all state and militia troops in the Mohawk Valley. Supposedly made up of 1,100 men, the large Tryon County militia was severely depleted when Willett took command. “I don’t think I shall give a very wild account if I say, that one third have been killed, or carried captive by the enemy; one third removed to the interior places of the country; and one third deserted to the enemy.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ “Historical and Biographical Sketch of Henry Bakeman (also spelled Bateman) a Revolutionary War Soldier,” November 16, 1912, from a Daughters of the American Revolution scrapbook kept by Mrs. Schenck, Fulton Public Library, Fulton, New York. Thanks to Peter Palmer for finding this. Bakeman’s birthplace is listed in several sources as Rocky Hill, Somerset County, either in New Jersey or New York. There is no Somerset County in New York State, but there is a Rocky Hill in Orange County, along the Hudson River. A migration pattern from mid-New Jersey to the Mohawk Valley would have been an unusual pattern. See also Henry Bakeman, Pension Record, National Archives and Records Administration.

⁴⁸ Larry Lowenthal, *Marinus Willett: Defender of the Northern Frontier* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 2000), 48–49, 59.

Colonel Willett desperately needed to recruit men for his militia. Perhaps in response to this need for manpower, the New York State legislature decided in 1781 to free all enslaved men who served as soldiers for at least three years. Among those African Americans who joined Willett’s forces was young Henry Bakeman. Did British and Indian destruction of Stone Arabia and surrounding farms in October 1780 inspire Bakeman to join the Patriot Army? Was Bakeman enslaved and viewed the army as a way to gain his freedom? Certainly, he must have been aware of New York State’s decision to give freedom to enslaved people who joined the army.

Whatever his motivations, Bakeman enlisted a month later in Captain Henry French’s company (other sources suggest that he enlisted under Captain Benjamin Pierce or Putnam) at Stone Arabia on April 17, 1781. Bakeman’s first enlistment was for nine months. In July 1781, he re-enlisted for three years in a company of light infantry led by Captain Peter P. Tiree (or perhaps Captain Cannon Jr.). Both companies served in Colonel Marinus Willett’s regiment.

In the summer of 1782, according to Bakeman’s pension application, “his duty was to carry packages between Fort Plain & Herkimer and when not engaged in this service, he did his duty in this company.” He was “not engaged in any battle of any note,” he reported, “but many skirmishes with the Indians & Tories.” His first skirmish was with Indians at Fort Plain. His role as a package carrier may have included assignments as a scout, also—a replacement for Oneida Indians whose lives had been disrupted in the 1780 raids.⁴⁹

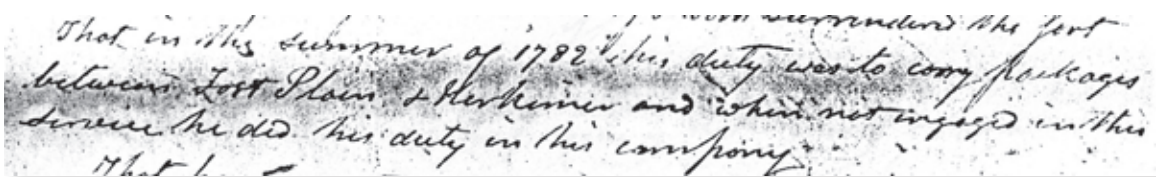
A photograph of a handwritten document, likely a pension application, showing a portion of the text in cursive script. The text is somewhat faded and difficult to read, but it matches the quote in the text above: "That in the summer of 1782 his duty was to carry packages between Fort Plain & Herkimer and when not engaged in this service he did his duty in this company."

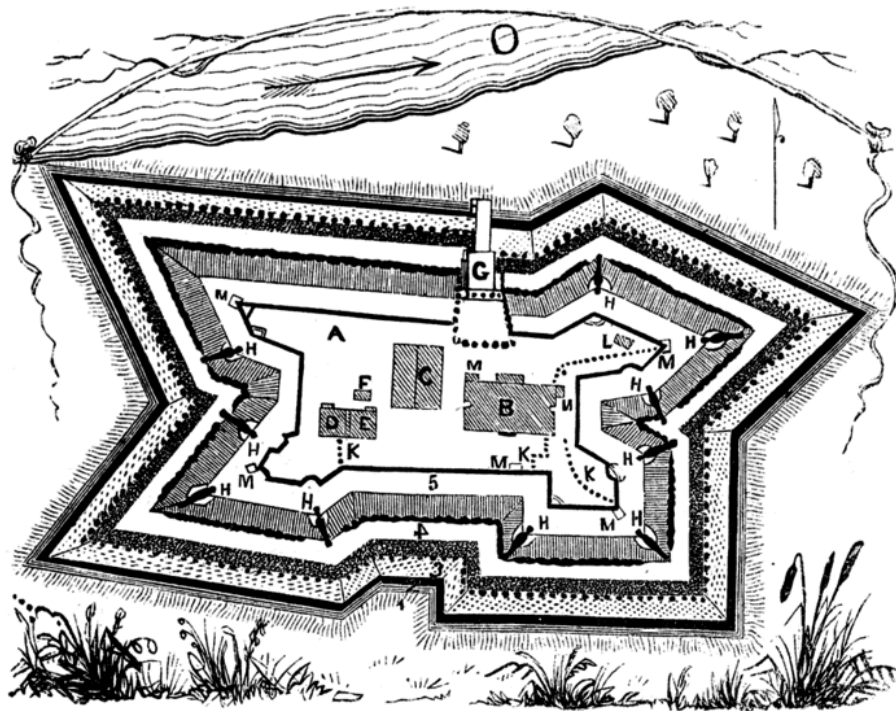
Figure 1.1. Henry Bakeman, pension application.
From the National Archives and Records Administration.

Bakeman’s fate was tied to that of his commander Colonel Marinus Willett. And he had joined Willett’s regiment just in time to take part in the very last campaign of the American Revolution. Washington hoped to ensure American control of western lands after the Revolution by capturing British-held Ft. Oswego, where the Oswego River reached Lake Ontario. The British had reoccupied this fort in 1782. Washington wanted it back. He asked Colonel Marinus Willett to lead this campaign.

⁴⁹ For more on the destruction of Stone Arabia in October 1780, see “Path through History, Mohawk Valley Region, Stone Arabia Battlefield,” <https://www.mohawkvalleyhistory.com/destinations/listing/Battle-of-Stone-Arabia>.

Willett’s schedule was determined by the calendar. The plan was to reach Ft. Oswego in the early morning of February 11, just as the waning moon had set, so that Americans could climb fort walls under the cover of darkness, catching defenders by surprise. Washington cautioned: no surprise, then no attack. In eighteenth-century language, he had written to Willet, “If you do not succeed by Surprise, the attempt will be unwarrantable.”⁵⁰

On February 8, 1783, Willett left Ft. Herkimer, at German Flats, about twenty-five miles east of Ft. Stanwix. He led a force of four to five hundred men, including as many as one hundred people of color. The integrated First Rhode Island regiment marched with him, as did young men of color such as Henry Bakeman from the Mohawk Valley. Joseph Perrigo, fifer for the First Rhode Island, became a lifelong friend of Henry Bakeman.⁵¹



FORT HERKIMER.¹

Figure 1.2. Plan of Ft. Herkimer: Willett’s campaign against Oswego, with Henry Bakeman, left from Ft. Herkimer. From Benson John Lossing, *Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper, 1860), Kindle location 7966.

⁵⁰ Lowenthal, *Marinus Willett*, 74.

⁵¹ Robert A. Geake and Loren M. Spears, *From Slaves to Soldiers*; Michael Lee Lanning, *African American in the Revolutionary War* (Kensington, 2000), 73–86, estimates that the First Rhode Island never had more than 140 men of color. Van Buskirk, “A Bold Experiment in Rhode Island,” *Standing in Their Own Light*, 95–141. This narrative of the 1783 expedition is based primarily on Lowenthal, *Marinus Willett*, 72–75, and on Henry Bakeman’s account, given in his pension record (NARA). Geake and Spears dealt with this 1783 expedition briefly (*From Slaves to Soldiers*, 85). Lanning mentioned it only in passing. Berleth mentioned neither the First Rhode Island Regiment nor the Oswego expedition.

Willett and his men, including Henry Bakeman, headed west past Ft. Stanwix. After a fire left it severely damaged in 1781, the Americans abandoned Ft. Stanwix. But it still stood on the main route to the Oneida Carrying Place. The regiment crossed the frozen Oneida Lake on sleighs on February 9 and then abandoned their sleighs the next day to walk through the snow to Oswego Falls (now Fulton). There they stopped to build ladders for their final assault. On February 10, they followed the river until late evening. By that time, they were only about four miles from the fort. They had four more hours until darkness would allow them to attack. Their Oneida guide, Captain John, convinced Willett to move away from the rapidly flowing river to follow snowshoe tracks that, according to Captain John, led directly to the fort. Not so. Two hours of slogging through heavy snow and swamps, carrying ladders, left the company confused and disoriented. They finally reached the fort only after dawn.⁵²

Unable to attack under cover of darkness, discouraged, cold, and disheartened, they turned around and headed back to Ft. Herkimer. The return trip was a nightmare. Willett had brought no food for the trip home, expecting to stock up on supplies at Ft. Oswego. Without any prospect of victory, “great fatigue got the better of the spirits of the soldiers,” Willett reported. At least three men—two from Rhode Island and one from New York—were left to die in the snow. Many suffered frostbite and permanent damage to their feet. Henry Bakeman’s feet were frozen by the end of the journey, which left him “a cripple” for the rest of his life. Bakeman noted that one soldier of color froze to death while another, “with his fiddle and song, did much to keep up the spirits of the men, and to induce them to active exercise, by which they were saved the fate of their comrade.”⁵³

Washington recognized that the campaign against Ft. Oswego had been risky at best. In the end, it was a total failure. Ft. Oswego remained in British hands until the Jay Treaty of 1796.

Willett, however, was celebrated as a hero. He was best known for his exploits at Ft. Stanwix in 1777. But, as historians Geake and Spears noted, “it is likely that he performed a greater, if less recognized, service in saving the Mohawk Valley.” And saving the Mohawk Valley involved people of color, as well as Oneida Indians and people of English, French, French, Scottish, and German descent.⁵⁴

After his terrible ordeal in the Oswego expedition, Bakeman began a year’s service in June 1783 as a waiter or personal servant with Elias Van Bunschotten. Bakeman was discharged at Poughkeepsie in June 1784.⁵⁵

⁵² Lowenthal, *Marinus Willett*, 72–75; Henry Bakeman, pension record (NARA).

⁵³ Henry Bakeman, Revolutionary War Pension, National Archives and Records Administration, also available in Fold 3; “Henry Bakeman,” November 16, 1912, clipping from in Mrs. Schenck’s Daughters of the American Revolution scrapbook, 1902-ff, Fulton Public Library. Many thanks to Peter Palmer for finding this.

⁵⁴ Geake and Spears, *From Slaves to Soldiers*, 71.

⁵⁵ Henry Bakeman, Pension.

Whether Bakeman was a free person of color or enslaved when he enlisted at Stone Arabia, we do not know. But he represented thousands of African Americans who joined both British and Patriot armies and navies. After the war, Bakeman returned to Montgomery County. In 1792, he married Jane Christianse, a woman of Dutch ancestry, in the Dutch Reformed Church of Fonda. Their first child, Caty, likely died. But eventually, they had at least five living children: Magdalena (Laney), Rachel, Mary, Andrew, and Benjamin.⁵⁶

Some accounts suggest that Henry and Jane Bakeman lived in Charleston, Montgomery County, for eleven years. But, like thousands of other former soldiers, Henry Bakeman saw an opportunity for owning land in central and western New York, once part of Haudenosaunee territory but opened for by treaty for non-Haudenosaunee settlement. About 1800, he left Montgomery County and went west to Oswego Falls (Fulton), which he had first seen during his war service. There he bought part of Military Lot 4, on the west side of the Oswego River, and set up a ferry service. The lengthy rapids at Oswego Falls meant that most boats portaged around the Falls. Individual travelers took advantage of Bakeman’s ferry. In 1810, Bakeman was listed as a resident of the Town of Lysander, Onondaga (which then included part of Oswego County), as head of a household that included eleven free people of color.⁵⁷

By 1818, Henry had accumulated enough money to purchase more land. He bought 100 acres for \$500, immediately sold half of it for \$276, and two months later sold another 34 acres, leaving him with 16 acres. The depression of 1819 brought financial trouble, and Henry lost his land through foreclosure in March 1820. Henry’s son Benjamin Bakeman bought this land, however, so it remained in the Bakeman family.⁵⁸

In 1822–24, the only years for which we have assessment records, Bakeman paid taxes on this property. In 1822, he was taxed \$1.42 for ten acres of land on Lot 4, valued at \$64.00 in 1822. The assessed value rose to \$120.000 in 1823. In 1824, he owned only two acres on Lot 4, valued at \$10.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ We have considerable evidence about Bakeman, including a biography in a 1912 *Daughters of the American Revolution* publication, pension records, marriage records, deeds, a statement affirming his free status in 1819, and a reference in *Landmarks of Oswego County* (1895). Thanks to Barbara Bakeman Fero and Joanne Bakeman, descendants, for sharing their amazing stories, and to Peter Palmer and John Snow for sharing sources they found. “Dutch Reformed Church Records in Selected States, 1639–1989 for Henry Beckman,” Ancestry.com.

⁵⁷ It is possible that Bakeman also owned land in Somerset County, New Jersey. Tax records in Bridgewater Township, Somerset County, New Jersey, for June 1792 and September 1808 listed a “Henry Beckman” as the owner of land. *New Jersey Tax Lists Index 1772–1822*, Ancestry.com.

⁵⁸ Deeds, Oswego County Clerk’s Office; “Land in Lysander Sold,” *Oswego Palladium Times*, March 30, 1820.

⁵⁹ “Henry Bakeman,” DAR scrapbook, 1912, in Fulton Public Library; *Landmarks of Oswego County*, 518–19, noted, “About 1800 a mulatto, Henry Bakeman, from New Jersey, purchased the improvements of Lay and Penoyer on Lot 4 and became a permanent resident there.” Town of Granby, “Assessment Roll, 1822, 1823, 1824,” Granby Town Supervisor’s Office. Many thanks to John Snow, Granby Town Supervisor, for locating these records.

Perhaps to support his claim as the legal owner of his land, Henry Bakeman approached the Granby Town Board of Supervisors in April 1819 to ask for an official certificate of freedom. We do not know why he felt that he needed to have official recognition of his free status. And we do not know whether he was born free or whether became free as a result of his service in the Revolutionary War. But two local residents of European descent certified that as long as they had known him (twenty years and fourteen years, respectively), he had been free:

Certificate of the freedom of Henry Bakeman. On this 20th day of April 1819, came before me John P. Walradt who on oath did declare and say that he has been acquainted with Henry Bakeman a mulatto person for nearly twenty years and that he always understood him to be a free person and that it was never disputed by any person. And the undersigned also being acquainted with the said Henry for upwards of fourteen years has always understood him to be a free person and a citizen of the State of New York. I therefore certify that I am fully satisfied that said Henry Bakeman aged 58 years born at Rocky hill in the State of New York born free is a free person and a lawful citizen of the State of New York.

Barnet Mooney First Judge
Oswego Com. Pleas.

Recorded Feb. 25, 1820 Nehemiah B. Northrup Town Clerk⁶⁰

According to the 1820 census, Henry Bakeman lived in Granby as head of a household of ten free people of color, three of whom were engaged in commerce. The family began to move to separate households in the 1820s. Two Bakemans, Jacob and John, perhaps grandsons of Henry, began to operate local mills. In 1825, Jacob Bakeman bought two mills in the hamlet of West Granby, where he built a small house. John Bakeman ran a mill near what later became the Oneida Street bridge in Fulton. Henry and Jane’s son, Benjamin, moved to South Onondaga and married Rachel Day, who was born in New Jersey around 1801. They raised a large family of children, including Marinda, Oliver, Artemus, Lovicia, and Charity. By 1830, the census listed Henry Bakeman as head of a household of four people: two people of color and two white.⁶¹

In September 1834, Henry Bakeman was granted a pension for his service as a soldier. In his application, he noted that he was a cooper (perhaps working for Jacob Bakeman, making barrels for flour at the mill). He listed his assets:

⁶⁰ “Minutes,” Board of Supervisors, Town of Granby, June 1820. Many thanks to John Snow, Granby Town Supervisor, for locating these records.

⁶¹ US Census, 1820, Ancestry.com, https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/7613/4433229_00058?pid=306451&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?dbid%3D7613%26h%3D306451%26indiv%3Dtry%26o_vc%3DRecord:OtherRecord%26rhSource%3D8058&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&usePUB-Js=true; Judith Wellman, “Benjamin and Rachel Bakeman House,” *The Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Syracuse and Onondaga County*, https://pacny.net/freedom_trail/Bakeman.htm.

Real Estate none. Personal exclusive of necessary wearing apparel and bedding as follows: 1 cow, 1 two year old heifer, 7 sheep and calf [?] 3 hogs Tools as follows 2 janisters [?], 3 staves, 1 jack plaine [?], 1 hand saw, 1 old cross cut saw, old Flat [?] head ax, 1 narrow ax, 1 compass, 1 old post ax, 1 brest bit, 1 crzie [?], 1 old chain 4 feet long, 6 small match [?] pieces [?], about 1 M. pine staves, 2 salt barrels, 1 4 pail [?] kettle, 4 small do, 2 small pots, 2 Tea kettles, 1 Frammel, 6 plates, 1 platter, 6 knives & forks, 1 chest, 4 Bots [beds?] Schs?⁶²

Henry received only one pension payment before his death on February 6, 1835, at the age of seventy. Jane also received only one pension payment before her death in 1856. Both Henry and Jane are buried in South Onondaga Cemetery, near their son Benjamin's home. A memorial stone erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution in Mt. Adnah Cemetery, Fulton, New York, memorializes Henry Bakeman as a local resident who served in the Revolution.⁶³

One of those who accompanied Bakeman on the ill-fated expedition to Oswego was Joseph H. Perrigo. He became a friend of Henry Bakeman and moved with him to Fulton. Perrigo was a fifer for the First Rhode Island Regiment, but it is not clear whether he was of European or African descent. He moved with Bakeman to Oswego County, and he and Robert Perrigo (perhaps his brother), along with Robert's wife Ida, are also buried in Mt. Adnah Cemetery in Fulton, New York.⁶⁴

Traces of other African American soldiers from the Mohawk Valley emerge through the mists of time. In his 1855 book *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution*, William Cooper Nell, one of America's first African American historians, mentioned Ebenezer Hill (or Hills), who died in Vienna, Oneida County, New York, aged 110. Hills had been born enslaved in Stonington, Connecticut, freed when he was twenty-eight years old, and fought throughout the Revolution, including at Saratoga.⁶⁵

⁶² Henry Bakeman, pension application, from the National Archives and Records Administration.

⁶³ “Pension Records for Henry and Jane Bakeman,” National Archives; “Petition of Juliett Bakeman to Surrogate's Court, Onondaga County, April 12, 1856”; “Henry Bakeman,” DAR scrapbook, 1912; <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/97969937/henry-bakeman>.

⁶⁴ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/196817623>. There is a Joseph Perrigo, fifer, First Rhode Island Regiment, listed in pension records in 1831, living in Washington County, northeast of Albany, New York. He seems to have a son also named Joseph Perrigo. “US Pension Roll of 1835,” Ancestry.com, https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/60514/pensionroll1835ii-003311?pid=40307&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D60514%26h%3D40307%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26_phsrc%3DxdO694%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=xdO694&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true.

⁶⁵ William Cooper Nell, *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* (Boston: Robert F. Wallcut, 1855), 81; “Death of a Revolutionary Patriot,” *Utica Morning Herald*, August 13, 1849.

After the War

At the end of the war, the treaty of Paris in 1783 made no mention of Haudenosaunee people or enslaved people. Subsequent treaties between New York State and Haudenosaunee leaders at Ft. Stanwix in 1784 and 1788 did not recognize the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Instead, both federal and state officials adopted a divide-and-conquer policy, dealing with individual groups as separate peoples. Joseph Brant led most of the remaining Mohawks to the Grand River reservation in Ontario, Canada, set aside for them by the British. European American Loyalists became some of the earliest settlers in the rest of Upper Canada, now the province of Ontario. In 1781, Butler’s Rangers founded what is now the village of Niagara-on-the-Lake to help supply farm produce to the British Ft. Niagara across the river.⁶⁶

After the war, a small community grew up around the old Ft. Stanwix. Some activity seems to have taken place there during the 1784 treaty. We know the name of one African American who passed through Ft. Stanwix. Joe Hodge, once enslaved in eastern New York, was captured during the Revolution and released at Ft. Stanwix by 1784. In 1786, he went to Buffalo Creek, married a Seneca woman, and set up a store. Ezekial Lane, the first European American born in the area, reported to General Henry A. S. Dearborn in 1838 that the only house at Buffalo Creek besides that of his own family was owned by “a Negro, who kept a little shop to trade with the Indians.” When Samuel Kirkland visited Buffalo Creek in 1788, he noted Hodge’s presence. Fluent in both English and Seneca, Hodge became a bridge between African, European, and Seneca people.⁶⁷

In 1826, shortly after the Erie Canal came through, remains of the old Ft. Stanwix were dismantled. Rome expanded over the site of the old fort to become a small city. In 1935, President Franklin Roosevelt designated the site of Ft. Stanwix as a national monument. In 1962, it was listed as a national historic landmark.

To commemorate the bicentennial of American independence, the National Park Service, responding to intense political pressure, decided to reconstruct Ft. Stanwix, in conjunction with the Rome Urban Renewal Agency. As National Park Service Ranger Keith Routley noted, “Prior to the reconstruction large scale archeology was conducted of the

⁶⁶ For more on treaties at Ft. Stanwix, see William J. Campbell, *Negotiating at the Oneida Carry: Fort Stanwix National Monument Historic Resource Study* (Organization of American Historians and National Park Service, 2017).

⁶⁷ Ena L. Farley, “The African American Presence in the History of Western New York,” *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 14:1 (January 1990); Barton Atkins, *Modern Antiquities: Sketches of Early Buffalo* (Buffalo: Courier Company, 1898), 6–7; *The Circle Association’s African American History of Western New York State, 1770 to 1830*, <http://www.math.buffalo.edu/~sww/circle/circle.html>, which includes a brief biography of Joe Hodge by University of Buffalo archivist Christopher Densmore, May 16, 2000.

demolished areas to locate the substantial remains of the original fort and its inhabitants.” Reconstruction in the mid-1970s demolished much of downtown Rome, leaving Ft. Stanwix National Monument as its major legacy.⁶⁸

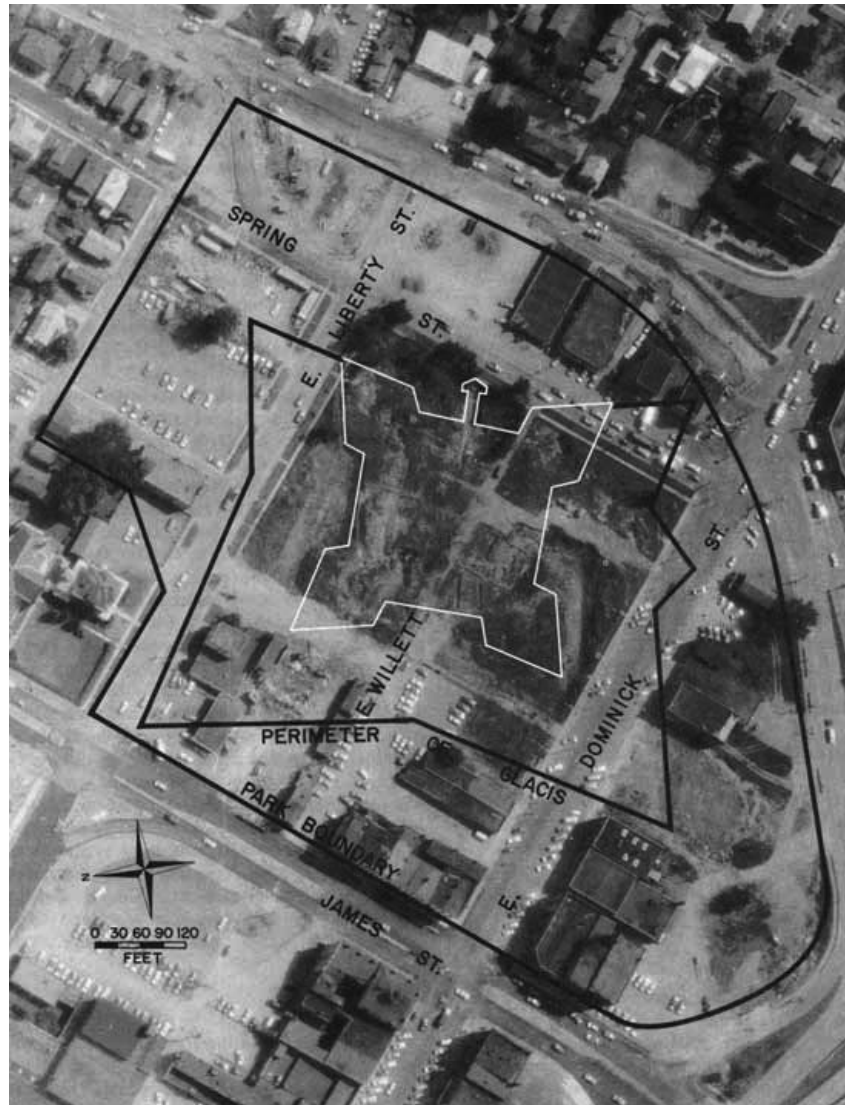


Figure 1.3. Aerial view of Fort Stanwix during excavation. From Lee Hanson and Dick Ping Hsu, *Casements and Cannonballs* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1975), fig. 2.

Henry Bakeman’s legacy has only recently been rediscovered. As an African American soldier from the Mohawk Valley (perhaps free, perhaps enslaved), he represents hundreds of others who fought for either the British or the Americans in the Revolutionary War in this area. He also represents the many people—Native, African, or European—who

⁶⁸ “From Memory to Monument,” Ft. Stanwix National Monument, <https://www.nps.gov/fost/learn/historyculture/from-memory-to-monument.htm>; *Casements and Cannonballs: Archeological Investigations at Fort Stanwix National Monument*, 1975.

intermarried with people of a different ethnic background. In Bakeman’s case, he married a woman of Dutch descent. Their descendants still live in central New York today, some identifying with their African background, some with their European heritage, and some recognizing both.⁶⁹

Out of this multicultural mix of Native Americans, Europeans, and people of African descent came a new country, forged in the crucible of the American Revolution. The young Republic was on the brink of revolutions in transportation, industry, and settlement patterns, but it was still plagued by the curse of slavery. In Oneida County and elsewhere, some Americans of all ethnic backgrounds resisted enslavement of themselves and others. They built on the ideal of equality to organize both for the abolition of slavery and, through the Underground Railroad, the immediate freedom of those already enslaved.

⁶⁹ Many thanks to Jo Anne Bakeman and Barbara Bakeman Fero, descendants of Henry Bakeman, for sharing their stories.

CHAPTER TWO

“A Mulatto Woman Who Belonged to Him”: Slavery and Freedom in Oneida County, 1780–1827¹

Historic Sites

A. Sites Associated with Freedom Seekers

1. Kirkland: Griffin Home
2. Marshall: Brothertown Indian Cemetery
3. Paris: First Post-Oneida Settler in Oneida County
4. Western: Floyd Home

B. Sites Associated with Enslavement

1. Western: Floyd Home
2. Deerfield: Coventry Home
3. Kirkland: Griffin Home
4. Utica: Walker Home

C. Sites Associated with Free People of Color

1. New Hartford: Wills Home
2. New Hartford: Storum Home

Sometime in the 1770s or early 1780s, a young Black man traveled west from the Mohawk Valley town of German Flats, following an old Indian trail later called the Moyer Road. Perhaps brought to this region by an officer in the British or US armies, he sought a haven from slavery and war. He found it near a large spring just west of the Sauquoit Creek. There he cut down trees, built himself a substantial log cabin, planted fields of corn, and set out an orchard of young apple trees. He became the very first person to settle in what became the Town of Paris after the American Revolution. Native people

¹ “A mulatto woman who belonged to him” quoted in John Barber and Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of the State of New York* (New York, 1842), 379–80.

found his clearing. Resenting the incursion of settlers of whatever color, they burned everything except the clumps of young apple sprouts. By the time the first people of European descent arrived about 1785 in what became the Town of Paris, the apple trees were large enough to transplant. They formed the source of the first orchards for several European American families.

Local historian Henry Rogers recognized that this African American’s claim as the first post-Haudenosaunee settler in the region was “incontrovertible.” But “as the name of the poor, black runaway-slave pioneer is lost and none of his descendants are likely to put in a claim, we can go on composedly reading our histories as they are written, only, ‘in the mind,’ inserting the word ‘white’ before the words pioneer or first settler, wherever they occur.”²

Even before Oneida people were forced out of their homelands, new settlers began flooding into what became Oneida County. They were part of one of the largest mass migrations in US history, pouring out of overcrowded rocky farms in New England and tenant lands in eastern New York, like bees swarming from a hive, to claim rich land in Haudenosaunee territories. They included newly arrived immigrants from western Europe, especially England and Ireland. They also included a few people of African descent. Although people of color formed only a small percentage of those who poured into the area, they echoed larger state and national patterns. Many came in slavery. A few more were free people. Some, like the Paris settler, found freedom by their own actions. All of them—Yankees, English, Dutch, Germans, Irish, and Africans—formed an intertwined cultural matrix in their new homeland.

² Henry C. Rogers, *History of the Town of Paris, and the Valley of the Sauquoit* (Utica: White & Floyd, 1881), Kindle edition. Rogers gave details about the location of this log cabin: “Our negro pioneer selected his future home at a point west of the creek and south of the great trail near the great elm—destroyed by tempest a year or two since—and not far from the bank of the unfailing spring brook that takes its rise on the western hillside, at the famous spring on the old William Babbitt farm, (now Mr. Throop’s.) At the foot of the little mound—the old burying ground where some of the Paris pioneers silently and solemnly sleep—the runaway slave struck the first axe (of a settler) in a tree in the great town of Whitestown, afterwards Paris. With great industry and perseverance he ere long completed a substantial and comfortable log cabin, located between the little mound and the present site of the ruins of the Franklin factory, and then set to work vigorously to clear up the land, of which he had possessed himself by right of ‘Squatter-Sovereignty.’”

Oneida Indians: “The Voice of the Birds from Every Quarter, Cried Out You Have Lost Your Country!”

Oneida people benefitted not at all from this wave of new settlers. After the Revolution, some Oneida left for the Grand River reservation in Canada. But many came back to their historic villages. They found a landscape devastated by war. In Kanonwalohale alone (now the site of the European American village of Oneida Castle), seventy-three houses had been destroyed, most in a raid led by Mohawk Joseph Brant in 1780.³

And as they soon learned, their former allies in the US and state governments were of no help. In the 1784 Treaty at Ft. Stanwix, federal commissioners refused to deal with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy as a whole. Instead, they made separate treaties with each different nation. With their allies the Oneidas, they endorsed the 1768 Oneida nation boundary, giving Oneidas “full and free enjoyment of their possessions.” But they were contemptuous and disrespectful toward Mohawks, Senecas, Onondagas, and others who had fought with the British. Contradicting Congressional powers granted by the Articles of Confederation, New York State tried to promote its own interests, as did France.⁴

As the Oneidas discovered, however, neither New York State nor the federal government could be trusted to keep their promises. Although determined to keep their land, the Oneidas were weakened by population loss, alcohol, destruction of houses and farmland, and tension among families. Attempting first to lease land to New York State, they agreed in 1785 to sell 300,000 acres for \$0.04 per acre, hoping to create a barrier against further European encroachment.⁵

Oneidas had a tradition of welcoming newcomers to their homelands. These included Tuscaroras, who found shelter on Oneida lands after a disastrous war with European settlers in North Carolina in 1711–13. In the 1780s, as part of their complicated land transactions with New York State officials, they also welcomed Stockbridge and Brothertown Indians from New England. These groups were bonded by a shared commitment to Christianity, many converted by Rev. David Brainerd or Rev. John Sargeant, both missionaries of European descent. Stockbridge Indians had coalesced into a Christian community in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, represented remnants of Housatonic, Mohican, and Wappinger (and later Delaware) peoples. Brothertown Indians included people from

³ Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 65–67; Timothy Dwight, *The Northern Traveler: Containing the Routes to Niagara, Quebec, and the Springs, with Descriptions of the Principal Scenes, and Useful Hints to Strangers* (New York: Wilder & Campbell, 1825), 168–71, described Brothertown Indians in Paris.

⁴ “Treaty and Land Transaction of 1784,” Ft. Stanwix, <https://www.nps.gov/fost/learn/historyculture/treaty-landtransaction-1784.htm>; Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 61–64; Laurence Hauptman and L. Gordon McLester, III, eds., *The Oneida Indian Journey from New York to Wisconsin, 1784–1860* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999).

⁵ Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 67–72.

seven different Indian communities in New England, Long Island, and New Jersey. Some took the name Brothertown to reflect their relationship to each other as brothers, adopting English as a common language. They were united under the leadership of Rev. Samson Occom, educated in Eleazer Wheelock’s Indian school. Occom established the first Baptist Church west of Albany on Stockbridge lands. Historian David J. Silverman suggested that Native people appreciated Occom’s style, but they also appreciated the substance of his message. Christianity, Occom argued, helped Native people maintain their culture as they adapted to changing times. “Occom and a number of his Indian peers saw Christianity and civilized reforms as a means of strengthening Indian autonomy and a number of Indian traditions and values,” noted Silverman. Christianity “became a driving force for Indian unity and migration beyond the colonial pale.”⁶

These communities also included many people of mixed African and Native descent. DeWitt C. Hadcock, an Oneida Indian historian, recalled in the early twentieth century that two hundred people of African descent had escaped from slavery to find safety in Oneida-Stockbridge-Brothertown territory.⁷

European settlers had seen the rich lands of central New York on their military expeditions, and they were not to be denied. In 1788, Oneidas, tired of constant attempts from a variety of people to buy their land, after “much anxiety and great pain” made a deal with John Livingston and the Genesee Company of Adventurers to lease their land for 999 years. New York State’s 1777 Constitution forbade leases of Indigenous land to private individuals, and Livingston had characterized himself to the Oneidas as an official New York State representative. He was no such thing. The legislature nullified Livingston’s “Long Lease.” They did not, however, inform the Oneidas.

At a meeting at Ft. Stanwix in August 1788, Oneida—both male and female—arrived, dressed in their finest traditional clothing. Elkanah Watson found “the whole plain around the fort covered with Indians, of various tribes, male and female.” The Oneidas made what they thought was a lease of six million acres of their land with the State of New York, hoping to avoid further pitfalls with private individuals. The written treaty, however, recorded a sale. When the Oneidas discovered the deception, they formally complained. “Since we had time to consult the Writings and have them properly explained,” they wrote,

⁶ For more information, see Craig N. Cipolla, *Become Brothertown: Native American Ethnogenesis and Endurance in the Modern World* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013); David J. Silverman, *Red Brethren: The Brothertown and Stockbridge Indians and the Problem of Race in Early America*, rep. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 42–43, 56–60.

⁷ “An Old Indian Graveyard,” *Utica Daily Press*, September 7, 1906.

“we find our Hopes and Expectations blasted and disappointed in every particular. Instead of leasing our Country to you for a respectable Rent, we find that we have ceded and granted it forever for the . . . inconsiderable sum of Six hundred Dollars per Year.”⁸

Their complaints had no impact. With lies and fraud, New York State had made an amazing land acquisition, and they had no intention of returning any of it. A measles epidemic and famine among the Oneidas in 1789 left them in no position to pursue legal redress. Chief Good Peter summed up their despair: “The voice of the birds from every quarter, cried out you have lost your country!” Samuel Kirkland estimated in 1790 that there were only 588 Oneidas left, along with 287 Tuscarora, Stockbridge, and Brothertown Indians, living in five small villages. In 1794, the United States paid \$5,000 to Oneida people who had lost homes and property as a result of their alliance with Patriots during the Revolution. Most Oneida people left Oneida County by 1820, headed for the Grand River Reservation in Canada or new lands in Wisconsin. Not until the twentieth century did many return to reclaim their historic homelands.⁹

Oneida County’s Geography: The Basis of Its Development

Between the Revolution and the Civil War, upstate New York was affected by economic and social changes so dramatic that historians, careful with their language, have called them revolutions—in transportation, immigration, industrial development, and urban growth. Oneida County’s geography brought it to the forefront of these changes.

Geography determined the county’s transportation routes, economic resources, and settlement patterns. The area incorporated parts of two major mountain ranges. The ancient Adirondacks, with some of the oldest rocks in the world, lay to the north. The wide hills of the Appalachian Mountains, with some of Oneida County’s best farmland, lay to the south. In between, the broad Mohawk Valley bisected the county, forming the easiest route in the new United States between eastern seaboard cities and the western Great

⁸ Winslow C. Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution; or, Memoirs of Elkanah Watson, Including Journals of Travels in Europe and America, from 1777 to 1842* (New York: Dana and Company, 1856), 272; Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 76–80; William J. Campbell, *Negotiating at the Oneida Carry: Fort Stanwix National Monument Historic Resource Study* (Organization of American Historians and National Park Service, 2017).

⁹ Tiro, *People of the Standing Stone*, 84–85; Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution; or, Memoirs of Elkanah Watson*, 297; Laurence Hauptmann and L. Gordon McLester, eds., *Oneida Indian Journey: From New York to Wisconsin, 1784–1860* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999).

Lakes. This geographic configuration made Oneida County a linchpin of transportation and commerce, a rich area of agricultural production, and a major site of America’s earliest factories.¹⁰

Attracted by the ease of transportation and the abundance of jobs in agriculture, trade, and industry, a tsunami of people moved into Oneida County between 1790 and 1820. Although the War of 1812 slowed settlement briefly, the county’s population continued to explode. From fewer than 2,000 people in 1790 (1891), it grew by a factor of 10 (to 20,839) in 1800, adding another 50 percent by 1810 (to 30,634), and 60 percent more in 1820. (50,997).¹¹

Transportation: “Seeking the Land of Promise”

Remarkable changes in transportation made population expansion possible. In the 1780s, the first immigrants of European and African descent traveled either by water or land. Many immigrants came by water along the Mohawk River in bateaux, with families and all their material possessions sheltered under an awning, camping along the river at night. This was the easiest route. Even so, the work was “extremely laborious and fatiguing,” noted Elkanah Watson. Beginning in Albany (whose inhabitants remained almost entirely Dutch in language, religion, and architecture), they traveled upstream against a current of three miles an hour, fourteen miles a day. Their route took them through the productive farms of the Mohawk Valley (settled largely by Germans, Scotch-Irish, and Mohawks in four settlements) before they reached former Oneida lands. Elkanah Watson traveled this route in 1788. “We met numerous bateaux coming up the river,” he noted, “freighted with whole families, emigrating to the ‘land of promise.’”¹²

Alternatively, emigrants could travel west by land along historic Indian pathways, using horses, ox carts, or in the case of Elkanah Watson in 1791, “in a miserably covered wagon, and in a constant rain.” As early as 1790, a stage line went west from Albany, combined with once-a-week mail delivery. In spring and fall, roads were often almost impassable. Watson spent three hours traveling the last six miles to Utica in 1788. The four miles from Utica west to Whitesboro were no better. The road was, in fact, “as bad as possible, obstructed by broken bridges, logs, and stumps,” he reported, with mud so deep that his horse sank up to its knees with every step.¹³

¹⁰ For a good overview of Oneida County, see Alex Thomas, “Oneida County,” in Peter Eisenstadt, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York State* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 1140–43.

¹¹ US Census Records, reported in “Comparative Population of Towns and Counties at Different Periods,” “Oneida County,” *Census of the State of New-York, 1855* (Albany: Charles Van Benthuyzen, 1857), xxiv–xxv.

¹² Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution; or, Memoirs of Elkanah Watson*, 275, 293–94.

¹³ Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution; or, Memoirs of Elkanah Watson*, 270, 314–15.

Even with these conditions, people swarmed into former Oneida territory. In 1788, Elkanah Watson predicted that “the enthusiasm for the occupation of new territory . . . will in the period of the next twenty years, spread over this fertile region a prosperous and vigorous population.” He was right. In 1791, he noted that “emigrants are swarming into these fertile regions in shoals, like the ancient Israelites, seeking the land of promise.” Many traveled in the winter when roads were frozen. In the winter of 1795, noted Moses Bagg noted in his *Memorial History of Utica*, “1200 sleighs loaded with furniture and with men, women, and children passed through Albany in three days, and 500 were counted between sunrise and sunset of February 28th of that year. All of them were moving westward.”¹⁴

Improvements in both land and river transportation brought even larger swarms of people. In 1794, New York State chartered the new Genesee Road, designed to go west from Utica in a “nearly straight line” through the New Military Tract to a ferry at Cayuga Lake and on to Canandaigua, New York. Not until 1797, however, did the legislature appropriate significant funds for it. On September 30, 1797, a stagecoach with four passengers left Utica. It arrived in Geneva, a hundred miles west, on October 2. By 1800, a private turnpike company enlarged the old Genesee Road to form the Seneca Turnpike, and a bridge was completed to carry turnpike traffic across Cayuga Lake. Today, Routes 5 and 173 follow this basic route, with Genesee Streets in every urban area from Utica to Buffalo.¹⁵

By 1804, a regular stage line ran from Utica to Canandaigua twice a week, taking only two days. The fare was five cents per mile. In 1810, daily stages ran from Albany to Utica, and by 1811, stages ran all the way from Albany through Utica to Buffalo and Niagara Falls.¹⁶

By 1811, the Cherry Valley Turnpike (now Route 20 to Cazenovia and Route 92 from Cazenovia to Manlius) opened travel through Oneida County in the hills south of the Seneca Turnpike. Although the terrain was hillier, it was also straighter than the Seneca Turnpike (and thirteen miles shorter to Syracuse). It attracted a large volume of commercial traffic and cattle drovers, as well as private and public coaches. Inns catered to travelers every mile or two along this road, including in the Oneida County Towns of Bridgewater and Sangerfield.¹⁷

¹⁴ Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution; or, Memoirs of Elkanah Watson*, 295; M. M. Bagg, ed., *Memorial History of Utica, N.Y.* (Syracuse: D. Mason, 1892), 54, quoting from *Annals of Albany*.

¹⁵ Durant, *History of Oneida County, New York* (Philadelphia, 1878), 174–76; Barbara S. Rivette, “Genesee Road,” *Encyclopedia of New York State*, Peter Eisenstadt, ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 631.

¹⁶ Durant, *History of Oneida County, New York*, 177.

¹⁷ Richard Palmer, “The Cherry Valley Turnpike,” *The Crooked Lake Review* (Spring 2005), https://www.crookedlakereview.com/articles/101_135/135spring2005/135palmer.html.

River traffic also expanded. Before 1790, boats could travel all the way from Schenectady to Ft. Stanwix and then via a short portage to the Oswego River and Lake Ontario. As such, Ft. Stanwix controlled trade from the eastern seaboard into the whole Great Lakes system. As John Taylor noted in 1802, “it is a very great singularity, that the waters of the Mohawk and those of Wood Creek, which run in opposite directions, should here come within a mile of each other—and should admit of a communication by water through canals. This communication is of incalculable benefit to this part of the world. Produce may be sent both ways.”¹⁸

In the 1790s, commissioners of the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company enhanced the traditional water route, viewing Ft. Stanwix as “the future great city west of Albany.” In 1797, they created a canal to connect the Mohawk River and Wood Creek. They also improved water transportation through dams and locks along the Mohawk River.¹⁹

Between 1817 and 1825, improved water access between Albany and Buffalo opened direct trade between New York City and the upper Great Lakes through Oneida County via the new Erie Canal. In the 1830s, railroads opened Oneida County to even quicker access to eastern markets and western trade. Both canals and railroads will be explored in depth in later chapters.

Economic Development: “Unrivalled in America”

Settlers poured into Oneida County because they saw economic opportunities based on farming, trade, and industry. “The state of New-York is essentially agricultural,” noted Horatio Gates Spafford in 1813, “and the splendid success that crowns the labors of agriculture, together with our superior facilities of trade, constitute the basis of its commercial character, unrivalled in America.” In no place west of the colonial settlement line was this truer than in Oneida County. It lived up to its promise. In 1878, Samuel Durant reported with pride that “Oneida is one of the best agricultural and dairy counties in the State.”²⁰

New settlers were attracted primarily by the “soil of great fertility,” but they also created cities—both Utica and Rome—based on trade. As Durant labeled it, Utica was the “central city, for it stands very near the geographical center of the Commonwealth, and in the most delightful portion of the Mohawk Valley.” Utica stood on the south bank of the Mohawk River, where the river road intersected an old Indian path to Oneida Castle.

¹⁸ “Journal of Rev. John Taylor’s Missionary Tour through the Mohawk & Black River Countries in 1802,” from *Documentary History of the State of New York*, III (Albany, 1849?), 1138.

¹⁹ Bagg, *Memorial*, 18–19.

²⁰ Horatio Gates Spafford, *A Gazetteer of the State of New-York* (Albany: H. C. Southwick, 1813), 20; Durant, *History of Oneida County, New York*, 10.

During the French and Indian War, Ft. Schuyler had been built on this site to protect the ford across the river (later the site of the Genesee Street bridge). Rome, the “center of the county and its *demi*-capital,” as noted by Durant, grew up around the ruins of Ft. Stanwix, near the old Oneida carrying place, the hub of waterborne trade between Albany and Oswego. (A third city, Sherrill, located on a main village of the Oneida people, was not formally recognized until 1916.²¹)

In the early nineteenth century, Oneida County residents planted the seeds of a third economic engine: industry. Horatio Gates Spafford predicted in 1813 that Oneida County would become “the greatest seat of manufacturing in this state.” Most important for developing factories were fast-running streams to supply waterpower. The Sauquoit Creek, west of Utica in the Town of Paris, was especially important for early textile factories. Other streams, including Oriskany Creek, also supported mills. As Horatio Gates Spafford noted in his 1824 gazetteer, “These streams supply an abundant profusion of mill seats, and no County in the State is better furnished with durable streams, waterpower, and hydraulic works.” Oneida County “has now probably more capital employed in manufactures, than any other County of this State,” noted Spafford. He backed these assertions with specific numbers. Oneida County contained “8 grist mills, 64 saw mills, 147 oil mills, 9 fulling mills, 56 carding machines, 62 cotton and woolen factories, 19 iron works, 5 trip hummers, 4 distilleries, 32 asheries,” he reported in 1824.²²

Settlement Patterns: “The Garden of the World”

Beginning in 1784, new settlers poured into Oneida County. They did not distribute themselves evenly over the landscape; they chose land based both on transportation and potential for economic growth. Those who arrived early and had money to invest chose sites with the most fertile land, the fastest-running streams, and the best access to river and road transportation. By far the largest number of employed men in Oneida County (statistics did not count women who worked for pay) were farmers, with 10,111 people in the early 1820s. A large number, 2,575, worked in manufacturing. And 184 listed their employment as commerce and trade.²³

Almost all were European Americans from New England or eastern New York. Elite settlers—large landowners, lawyers, and business people—commonly brought enslaved people with them. A few free people of African descent also bought land in Oneida County.

²¹ Durant, *History of Oneida County, New York*, 10.

²² Spafford, *Gazetteer* (1813), 88; Horatio Gates Spafford, *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (Albany: B. D. Packard, 1824), 369–71, 402–3. Rogers, *History of the Town of Paris*, 317–73, lists manufacturing establishments along the Sauquoit Creek.

²³ Spafford, *Gazetteer* (1824), 371.

Southeastern Oneida County attracted the earliest and largest number of European and African settlers. It held Oneida County’s best agricultural land; it was close to the Genesee Road, and it was the site of potentially productive waterpower for mills and factories. Between 1784 and 1790, transplanted Yankees from New England, many from Connecticut, settled Whitestown (1784), which included the villages of Whitesboro and Utica. The Towns of Paris (with the villages of Clinton and Paris Hill) and New Hartford split from Whitestown in 1792 and 1827.²⁴

By 1788, Elkanah Watson reported that “Whitesborough is a promising new settlement.” It was only four years old, but “log houses are already scattered in the midst of stumps, half-burnt logs, and girdled trees” and “log barns are well-filled.” He enthusiastically reported, “Settlers are continually pouring in from the Connecticut hive, which throws off its annual swarms of intelligent, industrious, and enterprising emigrants—the best qualified of any men in the world to overcome and civilize the wilderness.” By the 1790s, this area was heavily settled. In the village of New Hartford, “the lands are excellent and well-cultivated, and everything wore the cheerful air of rapid improvement,” noted Timothy Dwight in 1798. “No settlement, merely rural, since we left New-Lebanon can be compared with New-Hartford for sprightliness, thrift, and beauty.” Rev. John Taylor called Whitestown “the garden of the world.” Of the Town of Floyd, Taylor noted, “It is incredible how thick this part of the world is settled—and what progress is making in opening the wilderness and turning it into a fruitful plan. The land in this town is most excellent—crops are rich.”²⁵

By the early nineteenth century, Whitestown was by far the largest township in Oneida County. In 1810, it included the villages of Utica (300 houses), Whitesborough (100 houses), and New Hartford (60 houses), compared to Rome’s 90 houses and stores.²⁶ By 1824, Whitestown, with an economy based primarily on farming, was both the wealthiest township in the County and the second largest in population, with 5,219 residents.²⁷

The Town of Paris was fast becoming both the most populous township and the second wealthiest. Its soil was “of the best quality,” reported Timothy Dwight in 1798, “and all the vegetable productions of the climate flourish here.” In 1802, Rev. Taylor described the village of Clinton as “a flourishing place. The land is the best I have seen since I left home, and is the best tilled. The people are principally from Connecticut.” By 1824, Paris

²⁴ Parts of Whitestown became the Towns of Paris (1792), Steuben (1792), Westmoreland (1792), Augusta (1798), and New Hartford (1827). “Comparative Population of Towns and Counties at Different Periods,” “Oneida County,” *Census of the State of New-York for 1855*, xxiv–xxv.

²⁵ Timothy Dwight, *Travels in New-England and New-York* (New Haven, 1821), 167; John Taylor, *Journal of the Rev. John Taylor’s Missionary Tour through the Mohawk and Black River Countries in 1802*, from *Documentary History of the State of New York III* (Albany, 1849), 1133, 1136.

²⁶ Spafford, *Gazetteer* (1813), 7.

²⁷ “Journal of Rev. John Taylor,” 1133; Spafford, *Gazetteer* (1824), 369.

had become “a very large and opulent township, rich in enterprize and resources,” noted Spafford. Its 6,707 residents were “principally of Yankee origin, a sober, industrious, moral people.” “There are no handsomer, and very few better towns in this state,” he added.²⁸

Paris offered not only rich agricultural land but also immense waterpower for mills. By 1820, the Sauquoit Creek, fourteen miles long, averaged one mill every forty yards, reported Spafford. It supported eleven fulling mills and twenty-two carding machines, and six cotton and woolen factories, along with thirteen grist mills, nineteen sawmills, one oil mill, two ironworks, four trip hammers, nine distilleries, five asheries, one gypsum mill, two clover mills, and six tanneries. The Oneida Factory was the first to be organized in 1808. Other factories followed: the Eagle Cotton Factory in 1809, Farmers’ Factory in 1812, and Quaker Mills in 1813. In 1818, the Oneida Factory began to use power looms, incorporating mechanized weaving and spinning under the same roof, the first factory west of the Hudson to do so.²⁹

Two key points along the river, Rome (the site of Ft. Stanwix) and Utica (the site of Ft. Schuyler), seemed obvious locations for developing trade and commerce. In 1791, Elkanah Watson thought the future of these sites as urban areas was obvious. “An Indian road being opened from this place (now Utica,) to the Genesee county [*sic*],” he reported, “it is probable the position at Fort Stanwix and this spot will become rivals as to the site of a town, in connection with the interior, when it shall become a settled country.”³⁰

But emigrants were slow to settle in either Utica or Rome. In Utica in September 1788, “there was no tavern and only a few scattering houses,” reported Watson, one of them occupied by “an ill-natured German woman” who gave the hungry traveler “two ears of green corn and some salt.” Utica’s development was further hindered by the few large landowners, who refused to sell in small lots for the widespread settlement of families.³¹

Rome did not fare much better. Watson predicted that its location one mile east of Wood Creek would make it “the emporium of commerce between Albany and the vast Western world.” In 1788, it did not look quite like that. The fort was deserted, but “the plain in the vicinity of the fort has already been laid out into a town-plot; a few houses have

²⁸ Spafford, *Gazetteer* (1824), 369, 402, 403.

²⁹ Spafford, *Gazetteer* (1824), 370. Spafford reported somewhat different figures under the heading for Oneida County, “8 cotton factories, 3 woollen factories, 8 grist mills, 14 saw mills, 7 fulling and carding works, 1 nail factory, 1 clover mill, 2 oil mills, 2 paper mills, 2 bark mills, 1 blast furnace, and 1 trip hammer” (1824), 370. Wellman, “The Burned-Over District Re-visited: Mexico, Paris, and Ithaca, New York, 1825–42,” PhD dissertation, University of Virginia (May 1974), 16–17.

³⁰ Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution; or, Memoirs of Elkanah Watson*, 294.

³¹ Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution; or, Memoirs of Elkanah Watson*, 270.

been erected, and also saw-mills, and other improvements, at a distance of a mile on Wood Creek.” Watson sheltered in the attic of one house, where New York State commissioners stayed during treaty negotiations.³²

In 1791, Watson visited Ft. Stanwix once more. It “appears destined to become a great city,” he wrote. “It lies in an open plain,—healthy and exactly at the point where the eastern and western waters unite. There is a large clearing about the old fort with two or three scattering houses. No progress has, however, been made, since I attended the treaty here in 1788, although the plan of a city is now contemplated.”³³

Transportation improvements changed the future for both cities. Completion of the Seneca Turnpike led to Utica’s rapid expansion as the jumping-off point for emigrants going west. Improvements at the Oneida Carry had the same effect on Rome.

To attract western travelers, Moses Bagg built a tavern on the banks of the Mohawk River in 1794, the present site of Bagg’s Square in Utica. In 1799, the Holland Land Company opened a large brick hotel, later called the York House, hoping to lure emigrants to purchase land in Oneida County. It was a square building, with three stories, and it “loomed above all the story and a half wooden houses of the village like a palace among hovels.” This was probably the largest building between the Hudson River and the Pacific Ocean. So great was the Utica’s traffic that guests regularly occupied not only the beds but the floors of these hotels.³⁴

When Rev. John Taylor visited Utica in 1802, he stayed at Bagg’s Hotel. He found “a very pleasant and beautiful village” of ninety houses with “a great quantity of people of all nations and religions,” “a mix mass of discordant materials,” with “people of ten, or 12 different nations, and of almost all religions and sects.”³⁵

From its one log tavern in 1794, Utica had expanded by 1804 to 120 houses, “almost all on a single street, parallel to the river,” reported Timothy Dwight. Its settlers were almost all “traders and mechanics,” “and not a doubt was entertained, that their village would at no great distance of time become the emporium of all the commerce carried on between the ocean and a vast interior.” By 1815, however, Utica still had only one main street and no sidewalks. All but one of its buildings were frame.³⁶

By 1820, Utica had become Oneida County’s largest city, with 2,972 residents. Its original forest of maple, beech, basswood, elm, and hemlock was largely gone, replaced by four hundred houses, a courthouse/academy, seven churches, two banks, and five printing establishments. The first part of the new Erie Canal had been completed directly through

³² Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution; or, Memoirs of Elkanah Watson*, 272–74.

³³ Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution; or, Memoirs of Elkanah Watson*, 295.

³⁴ Bagg, *Memorial*, 19, 54–55.

³⁵ “Journal of Rev. John Taylor,” 1113, image after 1132.

³⁶ Memories of Dr. John Marchisi, quoted in Samuel Durant, *History of Oneida County. N.Y.* (1878), 357.

downtown Utica, and roads spread out in all directions. Utica had made, noted Horatio Gates Spafford, “immense sums by trade.” And it “was adorned by many edifices, public and private, of good taste in architectural design.”³⁷

Expanded traffic at the historic Oneida carrying place brought new growth also to Rome. When Rev. John Taylor visited Rome in 1802, he found not the “two or three” houses of 1791 but “a pleasant village, upon the banks of the Mohawk.” The old Ft. Stanwix still stood thirty rods from the river, with a deep moat around it and an old block house at its center. It was filled primarily with Dutch families who portaged boats across the Oneida Carry.³⁸

By 1820, Rome had expanded to one hundred houses and stores, and one church. Its courthouse reflected its status as a half-shire county seat. Just west of the village, a US arsenal had been built after the War of 1812. The first part of the Erie Canal ran near the village center, with roads converging at its core. Immigrants from eastern states dominated the population. The Town itself had 3,569 people in 1820, 803 of whom were farmers, with 178 working in manufacturing (with two textile factories and a stoneware factory). Only fourteen residents worked in commerce, even though many workers came through on the new Erie Canal.³⁹

Much of the northern part of Oneida County, with less fertile farmland, remained sparsely settled. In the northwest part of the county, the Town of Camden was part of “the wilderness indeed,” reported John Taylor in 1802. “The openings are small—the people rub hard—some of them feel a want of the necessaries of life.” In Steuben, in the northeast, “but a very little part of this county is settled.”⁴⁰

Land speculators in the northern part of the County included the Holland Land Company, which was organized in 1792. While their largest purchase was all of western New York, they also bought smaller tracts in Madison and in the northern part of Oneida County. The villages of Holland Patent, Barneveld, and Boonville commemorate their ownership.

Henry Remsen, a New York City merchant, was part of a group that administered a colonial land grant in what became the Town of Remsen, north of Utica. Early settlers came from New England. In 1795, five families emigrated from Wales, the beginning of a large Welsh population in the area. Welsh also settled in the nearby towns, including

³⁷ Dwight, *The Northern Traveler*, 166; Spafford, *Gazetteer*, 535.

³⁸ “Journal of Rev. John Taylor,” after 1136; Dwight, *The Northern Traveler*, 181; Spafford, *Gazetteer* (1824), 449.

³⁹ Spafford, *Gazetteer* (1824), 449.

⁴⁰ “Journal of Rev. John Taylor,” 1802, 1135, 1138.

Steuben, Floyd, Trenton, and Utica, many of them buying land from the Holland Land Company. By 1850, they formed three quarters of the Remsen population, with Welsh churches and Welsh-language newspapers.⁴¹

Many early landowners in Oneida County had come directly from service in the American Revolution. Wealthy people acquired land in Oneida County but never lived there. These included the owners of the colonial land grant Cosby’s Manor, belonging to the Bleecker, Morin, and Schuyler families. Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton, widow of Alexander Hamilton, owned much of what became West Utica. She sold it to people such as A. B. Johnson, who developed it for residential areas, some of which were later sold to families of color.⁴²

Just northwest of Remsen, Baron Frederick Wilhelm Von Steuben received a grant of 16,000 acres in thanks for his role in the American Revolution. In 1778, Von Steuben had joined Patriot troops at Valley Forge. Washington quickly made him a major general, in charge of organizing, disciplining, and drilling American troops. He left his mark in Oneida County, where people remembered him as “that generous hearted, and ardent volunteer, in the cause of our young Republic, Father of our national freedom.” Before his death in 1794, Von Steuben spent summers at his upstate cabin.⁴³

As these new settlers came to Oneida County, they brought with them their ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural traditions. These characteristics would predispose some of them to hold people in slavery and others to become abolitionists.

Churches

New transportation systems led to the influx of a polyglot population. Yankees came from New England. English and Dutch came from eastern New York and the Mohawk Valley. African Americans came—some willingly and others in bondage—from eastern New York. And English, Irish, and Welsh came directly from Great Britain.

Some observers feared that such a rapid population influx, throwing together people from different cultural hearths in eastern New York and western Europe, threatened social chaos. Elkanah Watson, who kept a journal of his visits to this area in 1788–89 and 1791, noted that “mutual prejudices ran high” between Germans and New Englanders. Rev. John Taylor noted in 1802, “In this part of the county may be found all ye shades of

⁴¹ Paul Demund Evans, “The Welsh in Oneida County, New York” (Siloam Road E-books, 2001), reprint of MA thesis, Cornell University, 1914.

⁴² Pomroy Jones, *Annals and Recollections of Oneida County* (Rome, 1851), Kindle locations 6944–6950.

⁴³ Spafford, *Gazetteer* (1824), 403.

character, from the most ignorant and abandoned, to the most virtuous and excellent. Society is in a miserable state—it is, however, progressing on towards order. There is a mixture of all sects, which will undoubtedly for a long time retard religious order.”⁴⁴

As Americans struggled to find a balance between individual rights and social order, religious groups entered the struggle. They were primarily Protestant in the early nineteenth century, with Catholic churches organized to serve Irish immigrants beginning in the 1820s. Methodists and Baptists organized throughout the county. Some of these would later split into proslavery and antislavery congregations.

Importantly, Congregationalists sent missionaries west from New England, while Presbyterians moved north from Pennsylvania. The goal of these missionaries was to bring frontier settlers into orderly churches. Congregationalists placed ultimate institutional authority in the local congregation, organized into Associations, while Presbyterians were organized more hierarchically, with ruling elders, presbyteries, and national General Assemblies. But both groups shared Calvinistic beliefs. In order to use their resources most efficiently, they agreed in 1801 to a Plan of Union. Both groups would send missionaries to upstate New York, ministers from either denomination could be hired by the other, and local converts could choose which church they would organize.

Most of those who settled in the southeastern part of Oneida County (Whitestown, Paris, New Hartford) were from New England and created either Presbyterians or Congregational churches. “Most of the chhs. In this part of the world are on the Presbyterian plan. The chh. at Clinton is, however, congregational,” noted Rev. John Taylor. They laid out orderly towns, organized around a central commons, flanked by churches and often academies. They even had a college. Hamilton College had been organized by Congregational missionary Samuel Kirkland in Clinton, New York, in 1793 as Hamilton-Oneida Institute. Originally, it served students of both European and Oneida Indian descent. In 1799, it had fifty-two students, both male and female. It became Hamilton College in 1812. A huge stone building, fifty feet by ninety-six feet, four stories high, stood on a hill overlooking the village.⁴⁵

Visitors from New England were impressed. Taylor reported in 1802 that in Clinton, “Mr. Norton has a chh, containing 240 members; and this people is considered to be most harmonious, regular, and pious of any in the northern part of the State of New-York.” The few Baptists and Universalists in town were “not a sufficient number to have any influence.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution*, 292.

⁴⁵ Spafford, *Gazetteer* (1824), 402–3; Charles Richmond, “Early Institutions of Learning in the Mohawk Valley,” *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association* 14 (1915), 132–40.

⁴⁶ “Journal of Rev. John Taylor,” 1112.

As for the rest of the county, missionaries saw a vast field of work. Rev. John Taylor described Utica’s population in 1802 as “a mixed mass of discordant materials. Here may be found people of ten, or 12 different nations, and of almost all religions and sects; but the greatest part are of no religion. The world is the great object with the body of people.” The population of the Town of Floyd left him speechless. “I know not what to make upon the inhabitants of this town,” he concluded. “They seem to be the fag-end of man in disorder, and confusion of all kinds. I had almost as many nations, sects, and religious to hear me preach as Peter had on the day of Pentecost. . . . In fact, this is a most miserable place.”⁴⁷

If their goal was to create an orderly, educated, Christian (particularly Congregational or Presbyterian) population, what should they do? Their methods were to hold large public meetings called revivals. Revivals swept Oneida County, part of religious movements that extended all across the west as the Second Great Awakening. They also shocked more conservative churchgoers with what Charles Grandison Finney later called “wild excitement passing through that region.” Methodists and Baptists, in particular, were known for appealing to all kinds of people, including women. Taylor reported that, shockingly, Methodists in Floyd were “producing the scenes which are transpiring in Kentucky,” where revivals produced wild behavior that more staid eastern audiences found appalling. Most egregious, Methodist women “pray in their families instead of ye men—and with such strength of lungs as to be distinctly heard by their neighbors.”⁴⁸

A huge revival, conducted in 1825 by famed Charles Grandison Finney, transformed much of the religious landscape not only of Oneida County but of the northeast. Challenging the Calvinist emphasis on predestination—God had decided before you were born whether you would be saved or go to hell—Finney appealed to human free will. This will be examined further in the next chapter.

In many ways, these revivals were successful. Villages of any size organized churches. Perhaps unexpectedly to Congregational and Presbyterian missionaries, many of the new converts joined Baptist or Methodist congregations. By the early 1820s, for example, Rome had one Presbyterian church, one Baptist church, and a few Methodists. Utica had seven churches, one of them a Welsh Baptist Church and another the Welsh Congregational Church. Settlers of English background organized separate Congregational and Baptist churches in Utica. Welsh people in Steuben organized several churches, including Congregational, Calvinistic Methodist, and Baptist churches. A Union Church built the stone Chapel Ucha in 1820. Catholic churches emerged when Irish canal workers began to settle in Oneida County. Some African Americans attended mixed-race churches, such as the Methodist Church on Bleecker Street in Utica. They also formed two separate

⁴⁷ “Journal of Rev. John Taylor,” 1112–13, 1134.

⁴⁸ “Journal of Rev. John Taylor,” 1134.

congregations: an African American Episcopal church in Rome in 1850 and an African Methodist Episcopal Zion church in Utica in 1866. Utica African Americans had been meeting informally, however, for many years.⁴⁹

Many of these churches took up the struggle to abolish slavery. By the 1830s, Congregational, Welsh, and African Methodist Episcopal Zion churches, along with some Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist churches, would lead abolitionist and Underground Railroad activities.⁵⁰

African Americans in Oneida County

Among this polyglot population came a few people of African descent. Some were free-born, some enslaved, and some escaped from slavery by their own actions. Jan DeAmicis has done the most careful analysis to date of enslaved people in Oneida County, using census records, New York State tax assessments (which counted enslaved people aged twelve to fifty years old, along with real estate, cattle, horses, carriages, clocks, and watches), advertisements for people who escaped, printed local histories, and one remarkable journal kept by enslaver Alexander Coventry.⁵¹

As DeAmicis has argued, “slavery could be Oneida County’s best-kept secret.” In the colonial period, New York State had the largest proportion of people in slavery—12 to 15 percent of the population—north of the Mason-Dixon line. Many Mohawk Valley settlers of English, Dutch, and German descent, both Patriots and Tories, held people in slavery. Among them was Patriot General Nicholas Herkimer, who held thirty-three people in slavery from his home on the south side of the Mohawk near Little Falls. Sir William Johnson, British Superintendent of Indian Affairs, along with his son John and nephew Guy, held enslaved people at his home in Johnstown.⁵²

Since Oneida County developed at a time when slavery as an institution was declining in the North, slavery never became a major economic engine in Oneida County. It existed, however, partly for the convenience of elite White enslavers, partly as a sign of status.

⁴⁹ Spafford, *Gazetteer* (1824); Evans, “The Welsh in Oneida County, New York,” 20–23.

⁵⁰ For a good overview of the relationship between religion and abolitionism, see Mary Hayes Gordon, “Oneida County Churches in the Abolition Era: Leaders in the Fight Against Slavery,” unpublished paper, 2012.

⁵¹ Jan DeAmicis, “‘For Sale, A Young Black Woman’: Slavery in Oneida County, New York,” *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 27:2 (July 2003), 69–134.

⁵² Cynthia G. Falk, “Forts, Rum, Slaves, and the Herkimer’s Rise to Power in the Mohawk Valley,” *New York History*, 89 (Summer 2008), 221–34; “Herkimer Home State Historic Site,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herkimer_Home_State_Historic_Site; Dave Dudajek and Bill Farrell, “Piecing the Past Together: 1st Black Settler? No One Knows,” *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, Feb. 3, 1991.

Economically, enslaved people worked in Oneida County as laborers and domestics on farms and canals and in homes, alongside people of European descent. Enslavers may have seen an economic advantage in buying and selling other people. Often, however, they used their “ownership” of other people to buttress their identity as part of the upper classes. As Jan DeAmicis concluded, “Slaveholders constituted the social and economic elite of Oneida County. Their ownership made slavery seem not only legal but a symbol of high status as well.”⁵³

After the American Revolution and before the first official census in 1790, people who had once been enslaved came to and through Oneida County. Local histories—all written by people of European descent—contained shadowy anecdotal references to people of color. Even in the earliest years of settlement by dominant culture Europeans, we know that people of African descent were visible. The first was the unnamed settler in Paris, the first post-Oneida settler in the area.

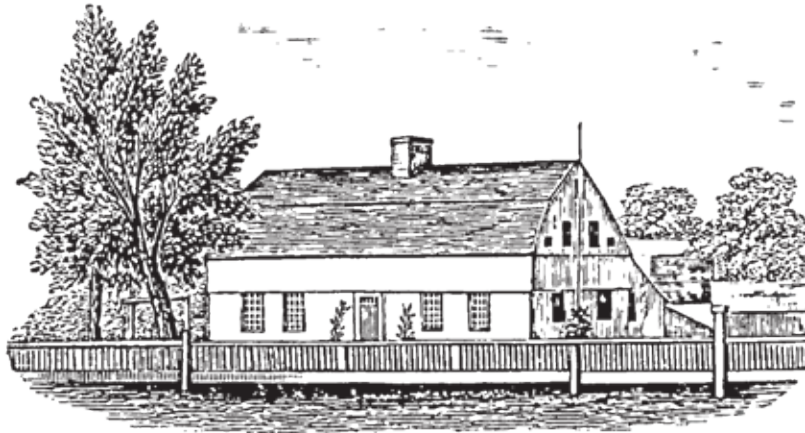
Another African American, Joe Hodge, was enslaved in eastern New York, captured by British or Indians during the Revolutionary War, and released at Ft. Stanwix in 1784. By 1786, Hodge had settled among Seneca Indians at Buffalo Creek (now part of the City of Buffalo), where he kept a small store.⁵⁴

Han Yerry, despite his Dutch name, was an Oneida leader who had sided with the British during the Revolution. He lived in Oriskany in a log house with “a mulatto woman who belonged to him, and who acted as his interpreter,” noted Samuel Barber and Henry Howe in 1842, quoting an earlier account. She may also have been Yerry’s wife. The two visited Hugh White in Whitestown, probably shortly after White’s arrival in 1785. Yerry asked to take White’s three-year-old granddaughter home with him for the evening. In spite of her mother’s frantic objections, White let her go. She returned the next day, clothed entirely in Native dress. White’s decision led to a strong and continuing friendship between Han Yerry and the new White settlers.⁵⁵

⁵³ DeAmicis, “For Sale, A Young Black Woman,” 69–134.

⁵⁴ Ena L. Farley, “The African American Presence in the History of Western New York,” *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 14:1 (January 1990); Barton Atkins, *Modern Antiquities: Sketches of Early Buffalo* (Buffalo: Courier Company, 1898), 6–7; The Circle Association’s African American History of Western New York State, 1770 to 1830, <http://www.math.buffalo.edu/~sww/circle/circle.html>, which includes a brief biography of Joe Hodge by University of Buffalo archivist Christopher Densmore, May 16, 2000.

⁵⁵ John Barber and Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of the State of New York* (New York, 1842), 379–80.



House of Judge White, Whitestown.

Figure 2.1. Hugh White’s home in Whitestown. From John Barber and Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of the State of New York* (New York, 1842), 379.

In 1793–94, Jason Parker established a mail service from Albany west to Utica. From Utica west to Ft. Stanwix, he employed a young Black man named Jack and “a darker dog, a large noble fellow” named Tray. With the mail lashed to Tray’s back and Jack “whistling by his side,” they made the mail trip to Rome in one day and back to Utica the next.⁵⁶

Several free families of color also settled in Oneida County during this period. In 1790, three free people of color lived in a household headed by Enoch Fortune. The Fortune family remained in Oneida County at least through 1800, when they were listed as living in the Town of Deerfield. In 1800, Sampson Wills from Pittsfield, Massachusetts, bought land in New Hartford. Although he lost this land in 1835, Richard Wills (perhaps a son) purchased land in 1817, where the family homestead still stands. On January 30, 1812, Charles Storum and his free family of color, recently emigrated from Connecticut, bought land in New Hartford, which he then sold to William Storum on May 15, 1812. Joshua Howe, born enslaved in Connecticut about 1776 and freed about 1803, headed a household of three people in Oneida County in 1810. He purchased land by 1814 and then lived on land that became part of Roscoe Conkling Park in Utica. Local oral tradition suggests that he was an Underground Railroad operative.⁵⁷

Numbers are difficult to pin down with accuracy. Census records routinely undercounted people of color, and county boundaries were not finally established until 1816. From 1790 to 1814, the number of people of color in slavery expanded from three in 1790 (when enslavers included Revolutionary War veteran Nathan Townsend in Westmoreland,

⁵⁶ Pomroy Jones, *Annals and Recollections of Oneida County* (Rome, 1851), Kindle locations 7418–7433.

⁵⁷ William Henderson to Charles Storum, January 30, 1812, Liber 22:306; Charles Storum to William Storum, May 15, 1812, Liber 21:343, Oneida County Clerk’s Office.

Zenas Gibbs in New Hartford, and Charles Putnam) to thirty-three in 1800 to a high of eighty-four in 1814, before dropping to nine in 1820. Hugh White, whose family were the first settlers in Whitestown, may or may not have brought people in slavery with him from Connecticut. No evidence suggests so, but his son Daniel enslaved four people in 1800.⁵⁸

By 1800, most enslaved people, twenty-eight (owned by sixteen enslavers), lived in Whitestown, which included Utica. Two lived in Rome, and one each lived in Deerfield, Floyd, and Trenton. Thirty-two free people of color also lived in Oneida County. Nine of the fourteen towns in Oneida County counted no enslaved people, and six included no African Americans whether enslaved or free.⁵⁹

Certificates of the birth and sale of enslaved people were sometimes recorded in public records. In October 1804, Pascal DeAngelis, a Revolutionary War veteran and mill owner in the Town of Trenton, sold to William Miller “a Negro Girl Slave named Patience,” aged twenty-four. Others were recorded in private notebooks. One from the Town of Vernon recorded births of six enslaved children from 1803 to 1814.⁶⁰

By 1810, Oneida County reached its peak numbers of enslaved people. While 214 people of color lived in Oneida County, 84 of them (39 percent) lived in slavery. The 130 free people of color outnumbered people in slavery and accounted for 61 percent of the total African American population.

The year 1810 also recorded the largest number of enslavers (fifty-five total) in Oneida County. Most (thirty-nine, or 71 percent) had only one enslaved person in their household. William Floyd’s household in Western, however, held six enslaved people, along with four free people of color. J. Van Rensselaer counted five; J. Bellinger counted four; and J. Lynch, M. Miller, and S. Seward counted three each.

⁵⁸ DeAmicis, “For Sale, A Young Black Woman,” 69–134; US Census, 1790 and 1800. In 1790, when the new United States took its first census, what became Oneida County was part of the Town of Whitestown, Montgomery County, which included central and western New York. In this vast area, seven people lived in slavery, and three of them lived in what is now Oneida County.

⁵⁹ DeAmicis, “For Sale, A Young Black Women.” The 1830 census listed thirty people still living in slavery in Oneida County. The 1817 law freed all people born in slavery after that date as age twenty-one. Their status after 1827 may have been as indentured servants. In 1800, different sources reported different numbers of enslaved people in Oneida County, from thirty-two (based on a count of enslaved people owned by the twenty enslavers listed in the 1800 census) to fifty (reported in the summary compiled for the 1855 New York State printed census).

⁶⁰ “Old Book Tells of Vernon Slaves,” *Clinton Courier*, January 12, 1933, reported that this book was given to the Vernon Public Library.

By 1814, slavery had clearly begun to decline in Oneida County. Twenty-eight residents (down from fifty-five in 1810) held thirty-seven others in slavery (compared to eighty-four in 1810). Thirty-one enslaved people lived in Whitestown, three in Western, three in Trenton, and one each in Sangerfield, Vernon, and Rome. In 1814 as in 1800 and 1810, most enslavers owned only one person in slavery.⁶¹

By 1820, slavery had almost disappeared in Oneida County. Only nine of the 377 people of African descent in Oneida County were enslaved (six in Western, one in Westmoreland, and two in Whitestown). The six in Western lived in the household of General William Floyd, along with two free people of color. Floyd was a major landowner from Brookhaven, Suffolk County, Long Island, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. In 1803, Floyd moved from his Long Island estate to Westernville in the Town of Floyd (named after him) with six people in slavery and two free people of color. He built a fine new residence in 1804, now listed as a National Historic Landmark. In 1820, William Floyd, eighty-six years old, was the only one who had been listed in earlier census records as an enslaver.⁶²

Notably, no enslaved person lived in New Hartford by 1820. The end of slavery in that town came about when one enslaver, a “hard-fisted farmer,” offered freedom to a young enslaved man, athletic and strong, if the man could clear a heavily timbered piece of land within a very short time. The man took on the impossible task, camping on the grounds, desperately working by day and far into the night to meet the deadline. At last, realizing that he could not possibly finish, he asked for more time. When his enslaver refused, he decided to abandon the effort. But all was not lost. Local townspeople heard of his plight, held a “grand rally,” and appeared with “stalwart arms, sharp axes, and willing hearts.” They cleared the whole lot, the man was freed, and New Hartford never again had slavery within its borders.⁶³

With few exceptions, slaveholders themselves were a shifting population. As Jan DeAmicis noted, of the twenty enslavers in Oneida County in 1810, none of them had held people in slavery in 1790. Of these twenty people in 1800, thirteen remained in Oneida County in 1810, but only six of them were still holding people in slavery in 1800. These six

⁶¹ Those who enslaved more than one person included Abraham Varick in Whitestown, who had five people in slavery in his household; William Floyd in Western and Jeramiah Van Rensaler in Whitestown, both of whom counted three enslaved people; and Henry Chesborough, James Van Rensaler, and Theophilus Lockwood in Whitestown, who had two enslaved people in their households.

⁶² For a detailed discussion of slavery in Oneida County, see DeAmicis, “For Sale, A Young Black Woman,” 69–134. The other three enslaved people in 1820 were John Ellis and Daniel Ferguson in Whitestown and John Schuyler in Westmoreland. In contrast, 368 of the total Oneida County African American population of 377 were free people. African Americans both enslaved and free lived throughout the County, in the town of Whitestown (79), city of Utica (75), and the towns of Augusta (42), Paris (39), Western (25), Vernon (16), Westmoreland (15), Remsen (15), Deerfield (13), Bridgewater (12), Trenton (10), Florence (9), Verona (5), and Sangerfield (4), with 3 each in Boonville and Lee, 2 each in Steuben and Vienna, and 1 in Camden.

⁶³ *The Romantic History of Old New Hartford*, 8, quoted in DeAmicis, “For Sale, A Young Black Woman,” 69–134.

(Arthur Breese, Thomas R. Gold, Amos B. Hull, Elizur Mosely, Jonas Platt, and John Post) all lived in Whitestown. In total, fifty-five people enslaved others in Oneida County in 1810. By 1820, the number of enslavers had dropped to three.⁶⁴

Census records do not tell the whole story. Many enslavers and enslaved people alike were not listed in any census records. We must rely on sporadic anecdotal evidence for small clues. Using both census records and anecdotal evidence, DeAmicis has created a list of forty-one people of color, both enslaved and free, as well as names of their enslavers (Appendix B).

Several enslavers had direct connections to the American Revolution. Colonel Benjamin Walker, Revolutionary War officer and Von Steuben’s adopted son, inherited Von Steuben’s land and settled in Utica to administer it. Benjamin Walker counted three enslaved people in his Utica household. William Floyd from Brookhaven, Suffolk County, New York, on Long Island, moved to the Town of Western in 1803, where he kept a summer home. He brought credentials as a Revolutionary War general and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He also owned six people in slavery. His house, completed in 1804, still stands on Main Street. Alexander Coventry, physician and farmer, commented often in his journal about the people he held in slavery. Nathaniel Griffin settled in Kirkland on land he bought directly from George Washington and New York State Governor George Clinton.⁶⁵

Wherever slavery existed, resistance also existed. The American Revolution, with its ringing declaration that “all men are created equal,” brought strong antislavery sentiments statewide among people of both European and African descent. In 1785, New York City residents of European descent formed the New York Manumission Society. In 1810, European American residents of central and western New York formed the Ontario County Manumission Society. In 1799, New York State passed legislation that freed every male born after July 4, 1799, at the age of twenty-eight years and every female at age twenty-five. In 1817, a second law freed all people when they were twenty-one years old, adding requirements for educating enslaved children and prohibiting the exporting and importing of people in slavery from other states. Slavery came to an official end in New York State on July 4, 1827.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ DeAmicis, “For Sale, A Young Black Woman,” 69–134.

⁶⁵ “Remembering the Revolution in Oneida County,” Oneida County History Center, <https://www.oneidacountyhistory.org/revolutionary-war.html>.

⁶⁶ *Census of New York State for 1855* (Albany: Charles Van Bentheysen, 1857), xi. The 1830 census listed “30?” enslaved people still in Oneida County. It is not clear why. These may have been indentured servants.

Enslaved people had their own forms of resistance, and that included flight. We catch glimpses of people who escaped from slavery in Oneida County through one key source: advertisements placed in local newspapers by enslavers who wanted to retrieve enslaved people who had run away. Jan DeAmicis has done a thorough review both of local histories and local newspapers for these advertisements from 1803 to 1817.

Through these advertisements, DeAmicis identified the names of several people who escaped from slavery in Oneida County, including four who escaped in Utica (Susan Bateman, who escaped from Jonathan Hedges; Dinah Cook, who escaped from C. W. Heist; Jack Sharp, who escaped from David Hasbrouck and/or Amos G. Hull; and Frank, who escaped from the same people), two from Whitestown (Morris Dublin, who escaped twice, in 1811 and 1812, from Roger Maddock, and Jake, who escaped from Oliver Sandford), one from Western (Harry Howard, who escaped from William Floyd), and one from Clinton (Lid, who escaped from Ava Woodruff). In addition, Thomas J. Potter (called Jack) escaped from Nathaniel Griffin of Clinton in 1827, as well as Adney Williams, who escaped in 1820 from Israel Denio of Rome.

Two people escaped from Deerfield. John Lewis or John Symond escaped, perhaps from Alexander Coventry, in 1806. In addition, Coventry offered a ten-dollar reward in the *Columbian Daily Gazette* in 1818 for “a runaway slave, James or Jacobus, who had a halt or limp in his walk.”⁶⁷

When Dinah Cook escaped from C. W. Heist in 1815, Heist advertised for her return in the *Utica Club*, on May 1, 1815: “Runaway from the subscriber on Friday evening last Dinah Cook, a black slave, very large and fleshy, and has lost one of her front teeth. Ten dollars reward and all reasonable charges will be paid for her delivery to me, or for securing her in any jail in the country. All persons are forbid harboring her on the penalty of the law.”⁶⁸

On March 18, 1820, the *Oneida Observer* in Rome, New York, contained two advertisements for people who had left slavery. Amid ads for cough drops and carriages, flaxseed and potash kettles, Israel Denio of Rome offered six cents reward for the return of Adney Williams, eighteen years old, “of light complexion and light brown hair,” wearing “a snuff colored coat, satin vest and pantaloons, a dark colored great coat, and a napped hat.” Nathaniel Hanna of Westmoreland offered only a half-cent reward for the return of eighteen-year-old John Y. Golden. It is possible that Golden, listed as an “indentured apprentice to the farmer’s trade,” was of European descent.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ DeAmicis, “For Sale, A Young Black Woman,” 69–134; *Columbian Gazette* article quoted in *Utica Daily Gazette*, June 15, 1926.

⁶⁸ Reprinted in *The Utica Club*, May 15, 1815, and copied in *Utica Daily Observer*, December 2, 1902.

⁶⁹ “One Half Cent Reward” and “Six Cents Reward,” *Oneida Observer*, March 28, 1820. Found by researcher Ellie Collins.

<p>NOTICE.</p> <p>THE stockholders of Oneida Iron & Glass Manufacturing Company are hereby notified and required to pay to their Treasurer, one dollar each, on or before the 30th of April next, or forfeit their shares and all arrears payments made thereon.</p> <p>In order of the board of directors.</p> <p>Wm. WRIGHT, Secy.</p> <p>Rome, March 20, 1820. 6-1w.</p>	<p>One Half Cent Reward.</p> <p>RAN AWAY from the subscriber, on the day of the date hereto, an indentured apprentice by the former's trade by the name of John Y. Golden, aged 18 years the first of this month. Whosoever will return the said apprentice shall be entitled to the above reward, but no charge paid. All persons are forbidden to harbor or trust said boy on penalty of the law.</p> <p>NATHANIEL HANNA.</p> <p>Westmoreland, March 6, 1820. 1-3w.</p>	<p>CARRIAGES, WAGGONS & SLEIGHS.</p> <p>Made and repaired by</p> <p>S. WHITE, Junr.</p> <p>AT his shop, one door west of S. White's Tavern, where all branches of the business, including Painting and Trimming, are carried on, and will be furnished on short notice and reasonable terms.</p> <p>He has on hand a Coach, & 4 dozerdurable Fancy Chairs.</p> <p>Rome, June 15, 1819. 28152w</p>	<p>FOR SALE.</p> <p>THE subscribers offer for sale on reasonable terms, the Tavern Stand and Room formerly occupied and occupied by Thomas Gilbert, late of Rome, deceased. Said farm and stand are about five miles from the village of Rome, and are too well known to need a particular description.</p> <p>A liberal credit will be given for the principal part of the purchase money and an indisputable title given.</p> <p>FANNY GILBERT.</p> <p>ZENANA GILBERT.</p> <p>Rome 30th Aug. 1819. 39</p>
<p>NEW AND HIGHLY INTERESTING TO THE AFFLICTED.</p> <p>Anderson's Cough Drops.</p> <p>THE great and increasing sales of Anderson's Cough Drops, since they have been offered to the public, more fully than any other preparation, prove their real value and we boldly venture to assert, that no medicine ever yet prepared for Coughs and Consumptions has gained so much credit, in so short a time, as this composition. If the attestations of persons of the highest respectability, for the great and increasing demand for this medicine, may be called proof of its good effects, it is proved. Two other good remedies by referring to some and adopting the opinion of others prevail; thereby presenting a trial of such medicine as might afford relief under the idea that no relief can be obtained. Scarcely a case occurs but may be relieved by the timely application of Anderson's Cough Drops, which have proved to be a cure for Coughs, Colds, Asthmas, and Consumptions.</p>	<p>Six Cents Reward.</p> <p>RAN AWAY from the subscriber on the 24th inst. an indentured apprentice named Adsey Williams, eighteen years of age, of light complexion and light brown hair. He wore when he went away a snuff colored coat, saddle red and pantaloons, a dark colored great coat, and a napped hat. Whoever will return said boy to the subscriber shall receive six cents reward but no charges. All persons are forbidden to harbor or trust said boy on penalty of the law.</p> <p>ISRAEL DENIO.</p> <p>Rome, March 13, 1820. 7-3w.</p>	<p>FLAXSEED.</p> <p>CASH will be paid for a small quantity of good Flaxseed, if delivered immediately, at the store of Mr. J. C. Davenport, in Utica.</p> <p>Sept. 27, 1819.</p>	<p>POT ASH KETTLES & HOLLOW WARE.</p> <p>MADE AT THE YARROW'S BREWERY.</p> <p>THE subscriber offers for sale a large quantity of the above articles. The quality of the articles made at the Taberg Furnaces too well known to need recommendation, and will be sold in large or small quantities to suit purchasers, and on advantageous terms for cash or approved credit.</p> <p>S. B. ROBERTS.</p> <p>Rome, Dec. 29, 1818. 46</p>
<p>For the further satisfaction of the public, the following Certificates are of record for perusal.</p> <p>That Samuel H. Jones, of Salisbury, do hereby certify that my wife has for more than five years been troubled with a violent Cough, difficulty of breathing, and loss of appetite, and almost entirely deprived of sleep; and having tried, as we supposed, every thing that could relieve her without receiving any benefit, even induced to have her make trial of Anderson's Cough Drops, and after us</p>	<p>NOTICE.</p> <p>THE stockholders of the Oneida Cotton Manufactory are hereby notified, that the annual meeting for the choice of three trustees to manage the concerns of said company, will be holden at the Factory of the said company in Vernon on Monday the 30th day of April next, at 2 o'clock P. M.</p> <p>E. E. WALKOTT, Secy.</p> <p>Whitesboro, March 4, 1820. 7-3w.</p>	<p>By order of the Hon. Charles Wylie, one of the judges of the court of Common Pleas of Oneida county, notice is hereby given to all the creditors of George W. Perry, of Rome in Oneida county, an insolvent debtor, to show cause, if any they have, before the said judge at his office in the town of Rome, in the county of Oneida, on the fourth day of April next, at 10 o'clock in the fore noon, why an assignment of the said insolvent's estate should not be made, and his person be exempted from imprisonment, pursuant to the act, entitled "An act to abolish imprisonment for debt in certain cases," passed April 7, 1819. Dated the 17th day of January, 1820.</p> <p>GEORGE W. PERRY.</p> <p>4-10w.</p>	<p>New & Cheap GOODS.</p> <p>THE subscribers are just receiving at their store in the village of Rome, in addition to their former stock, a large and general assortment of DRY GOODS, among which are a great variety of</p> <p>Julian, French, & Indan } GOODS,</p> <p>bought principally at auction. Also a large assortment of GROCERIES, HARDWARE, CROCKERY, CODFISH, DYE-STUFFS, IRON & STEEL, &c.</p> <p>all of which will be sold, at wholesale or</p>
	<p>Sale of Lands for Taxes.</p> <p>State of New York, Comptroller's Office.</p> <p>PUBLIC notice is hereby given, that lists of certain lands liable to be sold for taxes, have been forwarded to the several counties in this state, in order to be deposited in the several county treasuries and town clerks' offices, respectively, for the information of all persons concerned; and that the said lists may be examined at either of the said offices, at all reasonable hours.— And notice is hereby also given, that</p>	<p>Flaxseed.</p> <p>CASH will be paid for Flaxseed by the subscriber, delivered at his store in Rome.</p> <p>W.M. WRIGHT.</p> <p>Oct. 4, 1819.</p> <p>CHEAPER THAN EVER! WRIGHT & HYDE,</p> <p>HAVING added to their former</p>	

Figure 2.2. Advertisements for runaways, Oneida Observer, March 28, 1820.

Until the mid-nineteenth century and beyond, settlers from different ethnic groups and religions continued to influence different communities. English, Dutch, Germans, Yankees, Irish, and Welsh retained their traditional languages, religions, and values. Elkanah Watson had predicted in 1791, "In twenty or thirty years, the shades of discordance will be hardly perceptible. The whole will amalgamate, and all be dignified by the general name of American; speaking the same language, and possessing the same genius and education." Some people did indeed intermarry to create the beginnings of an American melting pot. But many communities kept their dominant cultural viewpoints far into the nineteenth century.

These ethnic differences would be a strong indicator of which communities would become abolitionist hotspots. Townships dominated by Yankees—such as Paris, New Hartford, and Whitestown—became centers of both abolitionism and the Underground Railroad. So did the Town of Remsen, which harbored Welsh immigrants. So did areas of African American settlement, including Paris, Rome, and Utica.⁷⁰

With the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, these hotspots would fan into flame, making Oneida County one of America’s earliest areas of organized resistance to slavery by European Americans and one of the country’s most important Underground Railroad nodes.

⁷⁰ David Maldwyn Ellis, “Whitestown: From Yankee Outpost to Cradle of Reform,” *New York History* 65:1 (January 1984), 32–59; DeAmicis, “For Sale, A Young Black Woman,” 69–134.

CHAPTER THREE

“Three Fugitives Shipped On Board the Old Line of Packets”: Canals, the Burned-Over District, and African American Communities, 1820–1835¹

Historic Sites

A. Sites Associated with Freedom Seekers

1. Rome: Erie Canal, Site of Thomas James' escape, 1821
2. Utica: Hope Street, African American neighborhood
3. Utica: Post Street

B. Sites Associated with Abolitionism and Reform

1. Western: Presbyterian Church
2. Rome: First Presbyterian Church
3. Utica: First Presbyterian Church

In 1821, disgusted by hard work and the constant threats of violence, seventeen-year-old Thomas James left enslavement on a farm high above the Mohawk Valley near Fort Plain, New York, headed for freedom in Canada. He followed the survey line of the new Erie Canal, passing through both Utica and Rome in Oneida County. He told the story in his autobiography in 1886:

My master had worked me hard, and at last undertook to whip me. This led me to seek escape from slavery. I arose in the night, and taking the then newly staked line of the Erie canal for my route, traveled along it westward until, about a week later, I reached the village of Lockport. No one had stopped me in my flight. Men were at work digging the new canal at many points, but they never troubled themselves even to question me. I slept in barns at night and begged food at farmers' houses along my route. At Lockport a colored man showed me the way to the Canadian border. I crossed the Niagara at Youngstown on the ferryboat, and was free!

¹ “Three fugitives shipped on board the old line of packets,” from William M. Clarke to Cox, May 31, 1841, Courtesy Onondaga Historical Association.

Thomas James stayed in Canada only three months before moving to Rochester. There he supervised a warehouse on the Erie Canal, taught at a school for Black children, and founded the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church. He became an AME Zion minister, serving AME Zion churches in New York State and New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he ordained Frederick Douglass as an elder. He moved back to Rochester in 1856. He worked for freedom and equal rights for African Americans for the rest of his life. In 1889, he returned to Utica, selling his autobiography. Although he was then blind, he was “quite an entertaining talker,” according to the *Utica Daily Observer*. He died two years later, in 1891.²

James was one of the first to use the canal as a route to freedom, but he was certainly not the last. For African Americans as for people of European descent, canals and railroads were major routes to the west. They also became major sources of employment for African American canal boat operators, laborers, cooks, stewards, and barbers.³

Completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 initiated a series of revolutions in economy, society, and culture. This confluence of revolutions occurred just before a key point in another revolution. On July 4, 1826, the nation celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. How would Americans in the 1820s carry out that revolutionary legacy?

Events in 1825, 1826, and 1827 highlighted that awareness. First, in 1825, the Marquis de Lafayette, hero of the American Revolution, visited all twenty-four US states, and Americans everywhere greeted him with enthusiasm and adoration. In the late spring of 1825, Lafayette visited Niagara Falls and then took the Erie Canal from Lockport to Albany, reaching Oneida County on June 8, where Governor DeWitt Clinton met him with a brand-new packet boat, *Governor Clinton*, pulled by white horses instead of mules.⁴

And then, on July 4, 1826, the day of the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Massachusetts-born John Adams, second president of the United States, and Virginia-born Thomas Jefferson, third president, died within hours of each other. Their last years were a time of reconciliation. Both of them worried about the future of this new and fragile republic. Slavery threatened to divide the country irrevocably. “This momentous question, like a firebell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror,” wrote Jefferson on April 22, 1820. In 1825, Adams wrote to Jefferson with nostalgia,

² *Utica Daily Observer*, September 26, 1889.

³ Thomas James, *Life of Thomas James, by Himself* (Rochester: Post Express Printing Company, 1886), <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/jamesth/jamesth.html>; Judith Wellman, “Site of Thomas James Home,” *Uncovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Montgomery County, New York, 1820–1890* (Canajohare: Montgomery County Historian’s Office, 2011).

⁴ Peter L. Bernstein, *The Wedding of the Waters* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), 308–9.

“I look back with rapture on those golden days when Virginia and Massachusetts lived and acted together like a band of brothers.” Slavery brought that band of brothers into bloody warfare.⁵

Finally, on July 4, 1827, New York State officially outlawed slavery within its borders. New York State had passed gradual emancipation laws in 1799 and 1817. In 1820, for example, only nine of the 377 African Americans listed in the Oneida County census were enslaved. On July 4, 1827, freedom became official. All enslaved people within New York State were formally freed, although some people remained virtually enslaved as indentured servants. What opportunities did this pose for newly freed people in New York State? What did it mean for those who escaped from slavery in the South?

Like the rest of upstate New York, Oneida County between the Revolution and the Civil War was affected by economic and social changes so dramatic that historians called them revolutions—in transportation, industrial development, immigration, and urban growth. With these economic and social upheavals came cultural changes, reflected most strongly in religious and reform movements. So pervasive and dramatic were these ideas that contemporaries often referred to this region as the “burned-over district.” Oneida County was at the forefront of these changes. All of them set the stage for an explosion of organized commitment to abolitionism and the Underground Railroad.

The Erie Canal

The War of 1812 made clear the limitations of both water and land routes from east coast cities to the West. It also highlighted the limitations of using private companies to develop these routes. Things were soon to change. On April 15, 1817, New York State’s legislature authorized funds to build both the Erie Canal and the Champlain Canal (north from Albany). Dignitaries dug the first shovelful of dirt for the Erie Canal in Rome, New York, on July 4, 1817. By October 1819, the canal had been completed as far east as Utica and as far west as Syracuse along the “long level.”⁶

The whole canal opened in October 1825, extending 363 miles west from Buffalo to Albany. This first canal was just four feet deep, twenty-eight feet wide at the bottom and forty feet wide at the top. It bisected Oneida County, from Utica on the east through Whitesboro, Oriskany, Rome, Hawley’s Basin, New-London, and Oneida Creek to

⁵ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, February 25, 1825, Adams Papers, Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-7962>.

⁶ For more information on the Erie Canal and its impact on upstate New York, see, for example, Peter L. Bernstein, *Weddings of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation* (New York: W. W. Norton, repr. 2010); Jack Kelly, *Heaven’s Ditch: God, Gold, and Murder on the Erie Canal* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2016); Carol Sheriff, *Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997).

Durhamville on the west, paralleling the south side of the Mohawk River from Utica west to Rome before turning south to go into Madison County. Eighty-three locks helped boats navigate the drop of 560 feet from Lake Erie to the Atlantic Ocean. On October 26, 1825, in the “wedding of the waters,” Governor DeWitt Clinton dumped barrels of Lake Erie water into the harbor in New York City, and the Canal was complete.⁷

Oneida County engineers and laborers played a major part in developing this remarkable feat. Benjamin Wright, from the Wright settlement near Rome, New York, was the canal’s main designer. In Wright’s honor, the first boat to use the canal was called the “Chief Engineer.” His experience led him to be called the father of American civil engineering. Oneida County resident Nathan Roberts began his engineering career as an assistant to Benjamin Wright. He gained fame by designing the flight of five double locks at Lockport, New York, to raise and lower the canal along the seventy-foot Niagara Escarpment.⁸

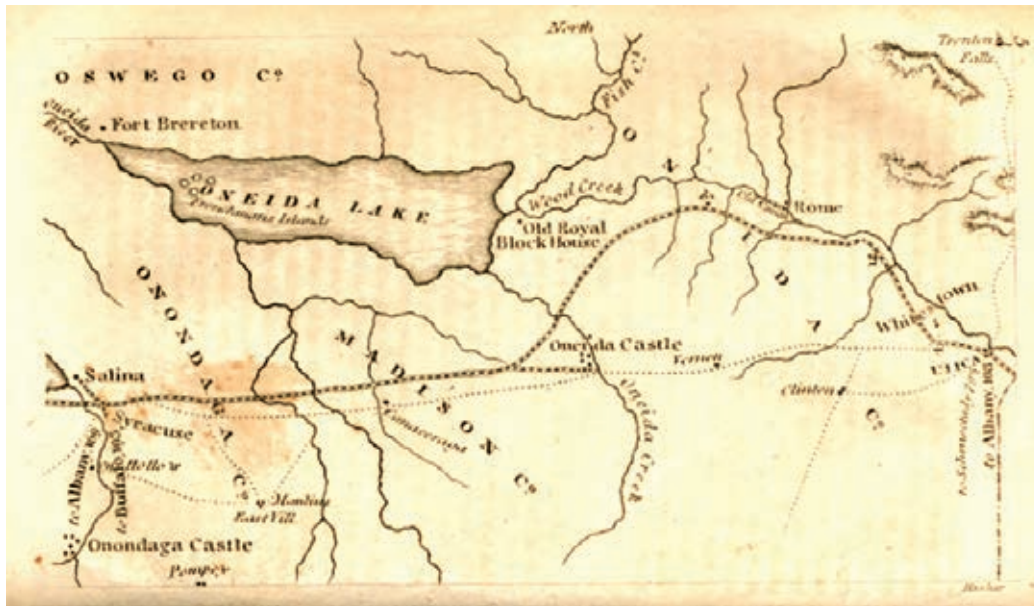


Figure 3.1. “Map 5, Detail, Utica through Syracuse,” from Theodore Dwight, *The Northern Traveller and Northern Tour*, new ed. (New York: J&J Harper, 1831), <http://www.eriecanal.org/maps/Dwight-05.jpg>.

⁷ *Erie & Junction Canal Directory; Containing a List of the Principal Places on Said Canals* (Little Falls: Griffing’s Press, 1828), New York State Library, http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/mssc/eriecanal/pdfs/bro1091plus_erie-junction-canal-directory_ncn.pdf.

⁸ Dorris Moore Lawson, *Nathan Roberts: Erie Canal Engineer* (Utica: North Country Books, 1998).

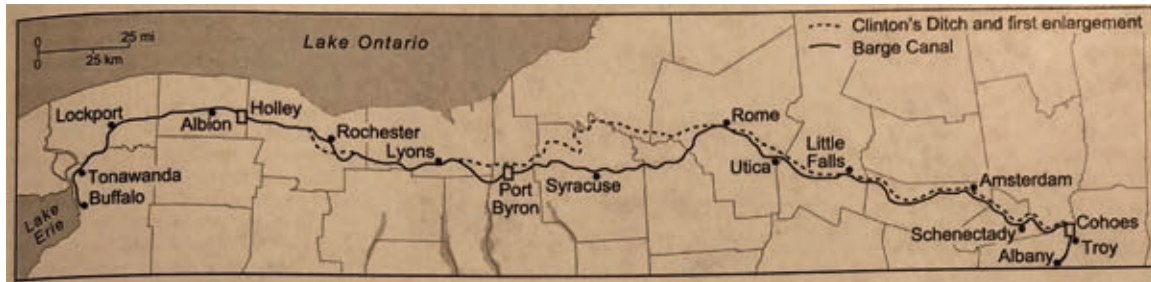


Figure 3.2. “Erie Canal,” *New York State Encyclopedia* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 515.

In 1833, New York State registered more than 1,600 canal boats, pulled by horses or mules. Revenue had doubled since 1825 to one million dollars in 1831, two million by 1844, and three million in 1847. Cargo boats predominated, carrying salt from Syracuse, grain from western fields, and lumber from Canada and the upper Great Lakes. Passenger packets offered regular, dependable transportation to businessmen, tourists, families, and freedom seekers.

Beginning in 1833, New York State made plans to enlarge the canal to seventy feet wide and seven feet deep, with vastly enlarged locks. Faced with a major depression in the late 1830s, New York State abandoned construction on the enlarged canal until 1847, and it was not completed until 1862. Slight changes in the canal’s route left some communities off the new route. Others such as Rome, however, were delighted when the enlarged canal was re-routed to go directly through the downtown.⁹

Two more canals connected Oneida County with points south and north. The Chenango Canal opened in 1834, bringing Pennsylvania coal to Utica’s new steam-powered industries. Between 1837 and 1855, the Black River Canal was completed, extending thirty-five miles from Rome north to Carthage in Jefferson County.

Other canals led north and south from the Erie Canal. The Champlain Canal, finished in 1823, connected the Hudson River to Lake Champlain. In 1828, the Oswego Canal connected Syracuse to Oswego along the Oswego River on Lake Ontario, while the twenty-mile-long Seneca and Cayuga Canal connected the Erie Canal to Cayuga and Seneca Lakes.¹⁰

⁹ F. Daniel Larkin, “Erie Canal,” *Encyclopedia of New York State*, Peter Eisenstadt, ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 514–20; Ronald E. Shaw, *Erie Water West, A History of the Erie Canal, 1792–1854* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966); Carol Sheriff, *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress, 1817–1862* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1996); Peter Bernstein, *Wedding of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation* (New York: Norton, 2006).

¹⁰ F. Daniel Larkin, “Black River Canal,” *Encyclopedia of New York State*, 186; Larkin, *New York State Canals: A Short History* (Fleischmanns, New York: Purple Mountain Press, 1998).

grist mills sawmills, paper mills, iron furnaces, agricultural implement factories, and machine works. The Chenango Canal brought relatively inexpensive coal from Pennsylvania mines to the Utica and Rome area, spurring factory production.¹¹

The Erie Canal led to an explosion of population in Oneida County and created the settlement pattern that endured into the twenty-first century. The County’s population grew from 50,997 in 1820 to 71,326 in 1830. The population shifted away from villages such as Whitesboro and New Hartford, along the Seneca Turnpike. Utica overtook Rome as Oneida County’s major city. Utica’s population grew from 2,972 to 8,323, while Rome grew from 3,569 to 4,360. In 1832, Utica was incorporated as a city. Villages along the Sauquoit Creek continued their importance as industrial centers. Other villages in twenty-five townships throughout the county remained trading and religious centers for area farmers.¹²

African Americans, the Erie Canal, and the Underground Railroad

The canal transformed Oneida County’s economy, both in terms of freight and passenger traffic. It also played a key role in the Underground Railroad. Canals became escape routes from slavery. Canal villages became havens for freedom seekers and workplaces for both people of color and European Americans. The canal impacted three major African American groups: (1) freedom seekers who used the canal, (2) local African American residents who worked and lived along the canal, and (3) African Americans who worked on the canal itself but who did not necessarily live within Oneida County.

Freedom Seekers Who Used the Canal

Canals offered one means of escape for freedom seekers. Thomas James is the earliest documented example of this. But hints of other escapes appear in scattered manuscript sources. Alexander Helmsley, for example, had escaped from slavery in Queen Anne County, Maryland. He lived for several years in New Jersey until he was recaptured, tried, and declared free around March 1837. Fearing recapture, he escaped once more, traveling

¹¹ Thomas, “Oneida County,” 1141; Rogers, *History of the Town of Paris*, 317–73; Wellman, “The Burned-Over District Re-Visited, PhD dissertation, University of Virginia, 1974, 16–27; Judith Wellman, *Grass-roots Reform in the Burned-over District of Upstate New York: Religion, Abolitionism, and Democracy* (New York: Garland, 2000, Routledge, 2011), https://www.google.com/books/edition/Grassroots_Reform_in_the_Burned_over_Dis/7oKrAgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=ransom+goss+williams&pg=PT190&printsec=frontcover.

¹² “Construction of the Erie Canal dried up many of the sources of the prosperity of New Hartford, in common with other villages situated upon the turnpike,” noted Pomroy Jones, *Annals and Recollections of Oneida County*.

through Otsego County, where his wife and three children joined him. They were forty miles from the canal at Utica, and they waited until navigation opened before going on, presumably via the canal, to Farmington, Rochester, and Toronto.¹³

In August 1841, Elizabeth Smith Miller traveled with her mother on the Erie Canal to Rochester. “When Mother left the cabin,” Elizabeth reported, “she found a fugitive slave woman on board with her little boy two years old—we gave her ten shillings.”¹⁴

William Clarke, who owned property in Syracuse near the canal, wrote to a colleague in Oswego in 1841 that “three fugitives shipped on board the old line of packets this morning for Oswego, and amid the hurry and bustle they were not furnished with a pass. They are Mr. Frisbie and wife from Baltimore and another woman from near Baltimore. We commend them to your care.” Expect another one in the next day or two, he added.¹⁵

In August 1841, abolitionist Edwin W. Clarke tried to rescue a young enslaved woman on a canal boat in Oswego. Presumably, both she and her enslavers had come to Oswego via the Erie and Oswego Canals through Utica and Rome. Unsuccessful in obtaining a writ of habeas corpus to rescue the woman, Clarke boarded the canal boat to talk with the woman directly. He informed her that by the laws of the State of New York, she was free. Speaking very clearly, she told Clarke, “I don’t want to go [with her enslavers].” Unfortunately for the young woman, she was quickly moved to a steamboat and taken away, her chance of freedom gone.¹⁶

White abolitionist Charles Torrey worked with Black abolitionist Thomas Smallwood in Washington, DC, sending freedom seekers north through New York State. They sometimes used New York State’s canal system. Smallwood noted in his autobiography that Mr. Torrey, with fifteen men, women, and children, “proceeded North [by wagon] with the people until he arrived at Troy, N.Y., without their owners hearing any thing of them. I received a letter from him dated at that place containing these words in substance, ‘I have arrived at Troy safe, with the chattels, and am now shipping them on board of a canal boat for Canada.’” We do not know whether this group went north on the Champlain Canal or west through Utica and Rome on the Erie (and perhaps Oswego) Canal.¹⁷

The Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 led to increased traffic on the Underground Railroad. At least some of it was via the canal. In Rome, Arden Seymour reported that “a very gentlemanly mulatto” came to his store, a block north of the Erie Canal, and asked

¹³ “Rev. Alexander Helmsley,” in Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery: The Refugee: or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1856), 32–40.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Smith Miller to Gerrit Smith, August 22, 1841, Smith Papers, Syracuse University, discovered by a researcher from Canastota Canal Town Museum, Canastota, New York.

¹⁵ William M. Clarke to Cox, May 31, 1841, Onondaga Historical Association.

¹⁶ Edwin W. Clarke, *Oswego Daily Palladium*, August 11, 1841. Found by Eleanor Cali.

¹⁷ Thomas Smallwood, *A Narrative of Thomas Smallwood (Coloured Man)* (Toronto: James Stephens, 1851), 14–15, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/smallwood/smallwood.html>.

Seymour to contact his wife and children in New York City. Seymour found them on Cherry Street and arranged for their passage “on one of the Oswego line boats, with a captain who sympathized with the situation of the oppressed.”¹⁸ For more on the canal and the Underground Railroad, see Chapter 6.

Canal Villages as Havens for African Americans Who Worked and Lived along the Canal

New York State’s canals led to a rapid and dramatic increase in the population of major cities and villages along their routes. African Americans were part of this expanding population in Oneida County, as elsewhere. Near the canal, African Americans found work in canal-related industries, as laborers, boatmen, cooks on canal boats, hotel workers, livery stable operators, and barbers.

Many of those who listed their occupation as “laborer” were likely canal workers. But we have clues in both census reports and city directories about specific people in canal-related work. Jan DeAmicis compiled a list of African Americans listed in Utica’s city directories. In 1828 and 1832, for example, directories listed David Wycoff as a “cook on packet.” In 1829, John Campbell operated a “Grocery and Canal Stable on Bleeker slip, resides same,” where he sold provisions to Erie Canal traffic and operated a stable for horses and mules used on the canal. William Henry was listed in the 1832 Utica directory as a “cook on packet Eclipse, resides corner William & Water.” Later, he worked on canal boats, running “a line of boats for a New York firm” and working in their warehouses. Henry was more than 6 feet tall and weighed 397 pounds, so he was welcome on jobs that demanded physical strength. Colonel Dexter York was a “cook on packet Victory” in 1832. In 1846, James Washington ran a saloon and restaurant at the Packet Dock. Sometime before 1854, William Johnson succeeded him. Cornelius Harding, born in Hagerstown, Maryland, had arrived in Utica by 1855, where he worked as a barber before he enlisted in the Civil War.¹⁹

Ellie Collins compiled a list of African Americans from city directories in Rome, New York, between 1857 and 1860. No specific canal-related occupations appeared in this list, but seventeen of the thirty people were identified as laborers, barbers, hairdressers, or cooks. They may well have worked in warehouses, docks, or hotels along the canals. Many of them lived in what was locally known as Canal Village, just south of the Erie Canal and downtown Rome. Of the 993 African Americans for whom we have occupations listed in census records from 1850 to 1870, 23 of them listed their occupations as “boatman,” “canal

¹⁸ Col. A. Seymour, “The Underground Railroad for Fugitive Slaves,” *Roman Citizen*, February 23, 1872. Seymour did not record the date of this story.

¹⁹ Thanks to Jan DeAmicis for research in Utica city directories.

boatman,” or “canal driver.” Many of the 79 African Americans listed as barbers or barber’s assistants in this period likely also worked along the canal. Cartmen, cooks, day laborers, laborers, or hostlers may also have worked in canal-related businesses.

By 1828, seven African Americans (Peter Freeman, Joe Ten Eyck, Tudor E. Grant, Joseph C. Pancko, David Vinner, Moses Johnson, and David Wyckoff) had invested in land in a new residential area in Utica. Hope Street was located between the Erie Canal and (after 1836) the railroad, near the juncture with the Chenango Canal. This location provided easy access to transportation-related jobs. It also offered a local haven for people escaping from slavery, who might well have stayed in some of these houses. At least Tudor Grant seems to have once been enslaved in Maryland.

Other African Americans came to Utica right after the Erie Canal opened, perhaps recognizing the economic opportunities it offered. Around 1826, James Fountain, born in Virginia in the late 1780s, settled in Utica with his four children. Likely a freedom seeker, he became a minister and shoemaker and settled on Post Street, where he bought property by 1855 and actively assisted other enslaved people.²⁰

African Americans Who Worked on the Canal but Who Did Not Necessarily Live within Oneida County

Most workers on the canals regularly traveled through Oneida County, even though they did not have permanent addresses there. An unknown number were people of color. One such worker was Moses Roper, who escaped from slavery in Savannah, Georgia, in August 1834. He went first to New York City and then to Albany, where he became a steward on canal boats traveling west on the Erie Canal, almost certainly going through Oneida County, as well as traveling north on the Champlain Canal.²¹

At least one African American operated canal boats himself. Peyton Harris, born in Virginia, became a founder of the Michigan Street Baptist Church in Buffalo, New York. In 1836, he bought land on Grand Island, near the western end of the Erie Canal. There he logged wood for sale in eastern cities. A local newspaper reported that he owned three canal boats—*The Morning Star*, *The Evening Star*, and *The North Star* (perhaps a reference to the Underground Railroad)—with which he carried lumber from Grand Island and Canada to New York City. Harris was “one of the wealthiest men in the city and was extensively

²⁰ In the 1850 census, Fountain listed his birthplace as Virginia, but in 1855, he said that he was born in Herkimer County, New York. Reporting different birthplaces in different census years is often associated with people who had escaped from slavery.

²¹ Moses Roper, *Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper, from American Slavery* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1838), Samuel J. May Collection, Cornell University, <http://digital.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=mayantislavery;idno=19869701>.

engaged in the shipping and passenger traffic between here and New York City via the Erie Canal,” noted an obituary for a son-in-law. Going back and forth from Buffalo to New York City, Peyton Harris—or at least his canal boats—passed directly through Oneida County.²²

In the 1830s, a new form of land transportation, railroads, helped increase freight and passenger travel through Oneida County. Chapter 6 deals with the impact of railroads on the Underground Railroad in Oneida County.

In 2000, 524 miles of the New York State’s canal system became the twenty-third National Heritage Corridor, encompassing four historic New York State canals and the 234 villages, cities, and towns—including those in Oneida County—along their routes. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor described itself as “a place with stories to tell, great works of architecture to see, history to be learned, and hundreds of miles of scenic and recreational waterway and trails to explore.” Some of those stories, architecture, history, and trails involved the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African American life.²³

European Americans: Religious Revivals and Reforms

The Erie Canal created a churning social atmosphere that offered the promise of a new and more moral world, created through revivals of religion and reform movements. Religious revivals swept through upstate New York so regularly that contemporaries often called this region the “burned-over district” or the “burnt district.” Many Christians, newly converted to Protestant churches, believed that if they could make the world perfect, they would begin the thousand years of the millennium, a harbinger of the second coming of Christ.

They went to work immediately. Commitment to reforming the world shaped the culture of grassroots communities across the upstate region. Some people emphasized conservative reform movements, promoting institutions that would bring every child into a Sunday school, place a Bible in every home, and send missionaries to the untamed West. New religions such as the Seventh Day Adventists and Church of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) spread from upstate New York around the world. Others worked to enhance

²² Peyton Harris Obituary, *Buffalo Express*, February 3, 1882; *Buffalo Enquirer*, December 17, 1892. A 1919 article, “Mrs. Talbert, Local Woman Who Has Worked for Advancement of Race for Twenty-Five Years,” *Buffalo Morning Express and Illustrated Buffalo Express*, November 30, 1919, noted the names of the canal boats. We have not been able to confirm Harris’s ownership of them, however. Vicki Weiss, archivist, checked six registers of canal boats in the New York State Archives and the New York State Library, with boats listed from 1832 to 1869. She reported, “I’ve checked all six registers for the names *Evening Star*, *Morning Star* and *North Star* and found no Peyton Harris (or any variations on the spelling of his name) as owner connected with any listings of the names.” Harris may have operated canal boats owned by someone else.

²³ <http://www.eriecanalway.gov>. In 2013, the Erie Canalway Heritage Corridor partnered with New York State’s Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation to create a map of Underground Railroad sites along the Erie Canal. Unfortunately, it is no longer available online: “New App, Map Feature New York Underground Railroad Sites,” *New York Almanack*, October 2, 2013, <https://www.newyorkalmanack.com/2013/10/new-map-app-feature-ny-underground-railroad-sites>.

individual and social health, espousing the total abolition of all alcoholic drinks and promoting natural medicines and healthy food. Water cures, including one at the Verona Springs Hotel in Verona, acted as health spas, featuring homeopathic medicines, cold water cures, and vegetarian diets. Some of those who wanted immediate, dramatic, and nonviolent change joined utopian communities, including the Shakers, Fourierist groups in Skaneateles and elsewhere, and the Oneida Community just over the border of Oneida County, New York. Many brave souls promoted total equality for all people, advocating the abolition of slavery and the rights of women.²⁴

All of these reflected the attempt of local people to create stable institutions in a chaotic world. As the epicenter of transportation, industrialization, immigration, and community formation for thousands of diverse people, Oneida County was in the eye of the storm. While some movements (Mormonism, Adventism, and utopian communities, for example) were centered elsewhere in upstate New York, Oneida County in the 1820s and 1830s was at the forefront of religious revivals and abolitionism.

Oneida County’s leadership role was a direct result of the opening of the Erie Canal. A dramatic influx of people from different cultural backgrounds along the east coast and western Europe helped create a rapidly expanding economy. But social institutions were relatively weak. Exponential growth led to an unstable, shifting relationship of people to each other. As John Taylor noted in 1802, “In this part of the county may be found all ye shades of character, from the most ignorant and abandoned, to the most virtuous and excellent.” Utica was “a mixed mass of discordant materials.” The Town of Floyd was “a most miserable place.” Residents “seem to be the fag-end of man in disorder, and confusion of all kinds. I had almost as many nations, sects, and religious to hear me preach as Peter had on the day of Pentecost. It was a country of “ten or 12 different nations and all religions and sects,” he concluded.²⁵

In such an unstable social setting, many settlers, particularly those from New England, feared instability and widespread immorality. Accustomed to stable social institutions of family, work, church, and schools, they often lived near neighbors with very different life experiences, values, and languages. As they struggled over the future of their communities and their country, religion and politics became battlegrounds for these culture wars. As Christians (or potential Christians), they shared a commitment to the golden rule, to love one’s neighbor as oneself. As citizens, they shared the country’s founding document, the Declaration of Independence, which asserted that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among

²⁴ Mary P. Ryan, “The Power of Women’s Networks: A Case Study of Female Moral Reform in Antebellum America,” *Feminist Studies* 5, no. 1 (1979): 66–85; Sheila Hoffman, “A Brief History of the Town of Verona,” 2014, <https://townverona.digitaltowpath.org:10032/content/History>.

²⁵ Winslow C. Watson, *Men and Times of the Revolution; or, Memoirs of Elkanah Watson, Including Journals of Travels in Europe and America, from 1777 to 1842* (New York: Dana and Company, 1856), 292.

these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” New settlers in Oneida County used both of these traditions to make sense of their new surroundings locally and to assert their place in the emerging new republic of the United States.

Congregational churches in New England and Presbyterian churches in Philadelphia, sharing a common theology, decided to cooperate to send missionaries to set up new churches in the wilderness of upstate New York. They agreed in 1801 that converts could form churches and hire ministers from either denomination. Many new Christians in fact joined neither group but chose to become either Baptists or Methodists, the fastest-growing Protestant denominations before the Civil War.

Known as the Second Great Awakening, religious revivals began in Oneida County, as in they did in other parts of the west, in the early nineteenth century. Frontier areas were particularly susceptible to these revivals. Upstate New York, including Oneida County, had a major revival in 1799 and 1800. Some revivals were enormous gatherings, such as the one in Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in 1801, attended by an estimated twenty thousand people.

In 1825 and 1826, beginning in Oneida County, a new and more dramatic revivalist startled the nation. Connecticut-born Charles Grandison Finney had moved with his parents to Jefferson County, New York, when he was only two years old. As a young man, he studied law with Benjamin Wright, future engineer of the Erie Canal. In 1821, Finney experienced a dramatic religious conversion in the woods near his home in Adams, New York. “In this state,” he added, “I was taught the doctrine of justification by faith, as a present experience.” The very next day, Finney abandoned his law business, telling a client “I have a retainer from Jesus Christ to plead his cause, and I cannot plead yours.”²⁶

Licensed to preach in 1823 by George Washington Gale, Finney worked as an organizer for a female missionary society in Oneida County before he began his career as a preacher in Evans Mills in Jefferson County. “I did not expect or desire to labor in large towns or cities, or minister to cultivated congregations. I intended to go into the new settlements and preach in schoolhouses, and barns, and groves, as best I could.”²⁷

Meanwhile, Reverend Gale had moved to a farm in the Town of Western, where he organized a school for potential ministers. When Finney visited Gale’s farm in 1825, he was invited to speak at a prayer meeting. “I preached all day,” Finney remembered, “and God came down with great power upon the people. It was manifest to everybody that the work of grace had begun.”²⁸

²⁶ Finney, *Autobiography*, 37.

²⁷ Finney, *Autobiography*, 69; Marianne Perciaccante, *Calling Down Fire: Charles Grandison Finney and Revivalism in Jefferson County, New York, 1800–1841* (Albany, SUNY Press, 2012); John H. Martin, “Charles Grandison Finney: Religion on the Frontier of Western New York,” Chapter 7, *Saints, Sinners, and Reformers: The Burned-over District Re-visited*, from *Crooked Lake Review* (Fall 2005).

²⁸ Finney, *Autobiography*, 69.

From Western, Finney went to Rome, where he converted hundreds of people in a revival centered in the First Presbyterian Church. “The state of things in the village, and in the neighborhood round about, was such that no one could come into the village, without feeling awe-stricken with the impression that God was there, in a peculiar and wonderful manner,” he remembered. From Western and Rome, he went to Utica in 1826, and Rochester in 1830–31.²⁹

The secret to Finney’s success lay in his innovations in both theology and methods. Traditional Presbyterian theology was based on the idea of predestination. As articulated by John Calvin in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536, Presbyterians believed that God was all-powerful in determining whether any person would be saved or damned. Nothing that anyone did could change this decision. Finney disagreed. His own experience convinced him that that Christian perfection was possible, that each individual had free will, that anyone could voluntarily choose a “new heart.” He quoted the Bible to support this idea: “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1–3).

In his methods, Finney promoted what opponents called “new measures”: women speaking in public (a practice he said was already common in rural upstate New York), anxious seats (where people on the brink of conversion could be encouraged on a person-to-person basis), protracted meetings, and dramatic conversion experiences.

In 1825–26, every Presbyterian church in Oneida County experienced a revival of religion. Between three and four thousand people within the bounds of Oneida Presbytery were converted, and one thousand new members joined Presbyterian churches. Many other converts joined Baptist or Methodist churches. Revivals continued periodically before the Civil War. The Sauquoit Presbyterian Church, for example, experienced revivals in 1816, 1818, 1820, 1826–28, 1830, 1831, 1834, 1838–40, and 1842–43. By 1845, according to the *New York State Census*, Oneida County had one church for every 507 people. In 1850, Oneida County had forty-three Methodist churches, twenty-nine Baptist churches, twenty-two Presbyterian churches, as well as four Quaker meetinghouses and at least one synagogue. Nationwide (and likely in Oneida County, too), Methodists were the fastest-growing denomination, followed by Baptists and then Presbyterians.³⁰

²⁹ Finney, *Autobiography*, 162.

³⁰ Jan DeAmica, “‘Born in Slavery’: The Underground Railroad in Oneida County,” in James S. Pula and Cheryl A. Pula, eds., *“With Courage and Honor”: Oneida County’s Role in the Civil War* (Utica: Utica College Ethnic Heritage Studies Center, 2010), 1; Fowler, *Historical Sketch of Presbyterianism*, 223–24; Wellman, “Burned-Over District Re-visited,” 112–47 discussed churches in the Town of Paris, as an example of religious institutions throughout Oneida County; Winthrop Hudson, *American Protestantism* (Chicago, 1961), 97–102.

RELIGION			
<i>N^o of Church</i>	<i>Denominations</i>	<i>N^o each will accomod</i>	<i>Value of Ch. Property</i>
24	Baptist regular	11000	41000
1	Christian	200	250
18	Congregational	9700	41400
10	Episcopal	4550	70800
4	Friends	692	2200
43	Methodist	16355	61880
	Weslayan		
22	Presbyterian	11620	59900
7	Roman Cath	2550	7000
3	Universalist	1000	8000
1	Dutch Ref ^d	1000	16000
1	Seventh day	300	600
	Baptists		
4	Other Baptists	1100	4450
2	Free Church	600	2300
2	Lutheran	500	1600
5	Union	2500	7100
3	Unitarian	875	4600
150		64442	329080
LIBRARIES			
<i>N^o of</i>	<i>Kind</i>	<i>No of Volumes</i>	
253	Public	50476	
18	Private	9525	

Figure 3.4. “Religion,” from E. Rogerson and E. J. Murphy, *Map of Oneida County, New York* (Philadelphia: Newell S. Brown, 1852).

A listing of Protestant churches in Oneida County from the 1875 New York State census revealed the impact of revivals locally, shifting the dominant churches from Presbyterian (twenty-five churches) and Congregational (twenty-four churches) to those that emphasized individual choice, including Baptist (twenty-nine churches) and Methodist (fifty-eight churches).³¹

The impact of local religious revivals on African Americans is not well documented. Theodore S. Wright, a Presbyterian minister from New York City and the first Black person to graduate from Princeton Theological Seminary, gave a clue. Wright came to Utica in 1836 to attend the first annual meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. He had recently attended a revival in the area, presumably held in a White-dominated church, but “the colored population was overlooked. . . . Where is the colored man? Where is my brother? Where is my sister? Who is feeling for them? Who is endeavoring to pull them out of the fire? No reply was made.” Perhaps European Americans in Utica took his questions to heart, however, for some people from the First Presbyterian Church worked with

³¹ Reprinted in Samuel Durant, *History of Oneida County, New York* (Philadelphia, 1878), 238.

schools and mission churches for the African American community. Others formed biracial churches. And Hope Chapel, which became the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Utica, found its origins in this ferment of religious feeling.³²

Finney’s legacy spread from Oneida County to the rest of central and western New York and from there to other parts of the country. In 1832, Finney moved to New York City, first to the Chatham Street Chapel in 1832 and then to the new Broadway Tabernacle. There, he worked closely with abolitionists Lewis and Arthur Tappan, denouncing slavery from the pulpit. In 1835, Finney became a professor of theology at the Tappan-supported Oberlin Collegiate Institute. Oberlin became the first college to admit women and men, African Americans and European Americans. From 1851 to 1865, Finney also served as President of Oberlin College. He continued his revivalist work, carrying the techniques he had first used so successfully in Oneida County to other parts of the United States and Great Britain.³³

In the 1820s, revolutions in the material and social bases of life—beginning with the Erie Canal—converged with a powerful awareness that the generation of Americans who had fought in the Revolutionary War was dying. What would be their legacy? Would Americans in the 1820s honor their parents and grandparents by carrying out the ideals of the American Revolution? As an officially free state, what would New York State’s relationship be to slavery?

In the 1830s, an explosive new movement to abolish slavery created shock waves throughout the nation. Many of the most committed adherents to this new movement were converts of Finney’s revivals. In his emphasis on the ability of individuals to become perfect, Finney laid the groundwork for powerful Christian abolitionism. They would create a movement that ultimately led to the Civil War. People in Oneida County, New York, were at the forefront of that struggle.

³² Theodore Wright quoted in *Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, convened at Utica, October 19th, 1836* (Utica: New York State Anti-Slavery Society, 1836), quoted in Paul Zwirecki, “Fighting ‘A Spirit of Fanaticism’: Antirevivalism in Antebellum America,” PhD dissertation, University at Buffalo, 2014, 190.

³³ Charles Grandison Finney, *Memoirs of Charles Grandison Finney*, ed. Garth M. Rosell and Richard A. G. Dupuis (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989); Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, “Charles Grandison Finney,” *New York State Encyclopedia*, ed. Peter Feinman (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 562.

CHAPTER FOUR

“He Felt Himself to Be a Man”: The Dramatic Beginnings of Abolitionism and the Underground Railroad in Oneida County, 1830–1842

Historic Sites

A. Sites Associated with Freedom Seekers

1. Kirkland: Young Ladies’ Seminary, Clinton
2. Kirkland: Howard Home, Clinton
3. Utica: Hayden Block
4. Utica: Hope Street
5. Utica: Post Street
6. Whitestown: Oneida Institute

B. Sites Related to Underground Railroad Helpers

1. Marshall, Brothertown Indian Cemetery
2. Utica: Site of Spencer Kellogg Store
3. Utica: Alvan Kellogg Law Office
4. Utica: Site of New York State Anti-Slavery Society Offices, 56 Genesee Street
5. Utica: Site of *Friend of Man* offices, 177 Genesee Street
6. Utica: Site of Home DeLong Family

C. Sites Related to Abolitionism

1. New Hartford: Wills Home
2. Paris: Congregational Church and Paris Hill Green
3. Paris: Sauquoit Presbyterian Church
4. Rome: First Presbyterian Church
5. Utica: Site of Oneida County Courthouse and Academy
6. Utica: Site of First Presbyterian Church
7. Utica: Site of Blecker Street Presbyterian Church

In September 1836, Harry Bird and George arrived in Utica, New York. At the urging of their dying mistress, who feared they would be sold to a slave trader after her death, they had escaped from slavery in Woodstock, Shenandoah County, Virginia. They found their way first to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, then to New York City, and finally to Utica.

On December 28, 1836, just three days after Christmas, they were captured, probably on Post Street, thrown into the watch house in the basement of Clinton Market on Bleecker Street, and taken the next day to the office of Judge Chester Hayden on Genesee Street for trial. Defended by abolitionist Alvan Stewart, they were confined in a room at the back of Judge Hayden’s office. At 6:30 that evening, a crowd of people, most of African descent, broke open the doors and spirited them away, first to Mexico, New York, and then most likely to Canada. Deirdre Sinnott has described this as “one of the seminal occurrences in the history of the resistance to slavery in Oneida County.” It is also one of the earliest public Underground Railroad acts of resistance to slavery in the northern United States.

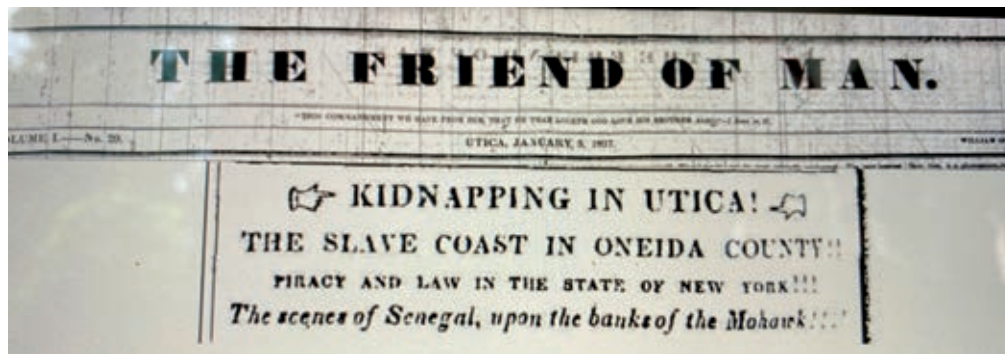


Figure 4.1. “Kidnapping in Utica!” *Friend of Man*, January 3, 1837

The story of Harry Bird and George illustrates the ways in which, by the mid-1830s, the Underground Railroad helped crystallize sentiments both for and against slavery in Oneida County and the nation. It also illustrates the way in which an emerging tri-racial network (including people of African, European, and Native descent) cooperated to carry out Underground Railroad activities.

The Rise of National Abolitionism

On the one hand, the escape of Harry Bird and George took place in the context of tightening restrictions for enslaved people in the South. In August 1831, the rebellion of Nat Turner in Southampton County, Virginia, resulted in the deaths of as many as sixty-five

people of European descent, the execution by the State of Virginia of more than thirty people of color, and the murder by untamed mobs of about 120 more. More than three hundred people free people of color from Southampton County agreed to exile in Liberia.

In response to the Turner rebellion, the State of Virginia debated whether or not to free all children born of enslaved parents after July 4, 1840. Thomas Jefferson Randolph, grandson of President Thomas Jefferson, sponsored this bill. It lost by only one vote. Instead, inspired by the arguments of Thomas R. Dew that slavery was a positive good, Virginia led the way in creating further restrictions on people of color. The state forbade Whites from teaching people of African descent to read, and it prohibited Blacks from holding church meetings unless a White minister was present. In contrast to the early part of the nineteenth century, when Virginia planters freed thousands of people, new restrictions strengthened provisions that forbade enslavers from manumitting people unless they left the state within a year.¹

On the other hand, abolitionists (both White and Blacks) were beginning to organize against slavery. As in the rescue of Harry Bird and George, African Americans were quick to take street action as well as to offer networks of support for travel, food, and places to stay. Formal antislavery organizations were dominated by European American men, but many also welcomed African American members. European Americans provided access to public meetings, legal services, newspaper publicity, and increasingly transportation and safe houses for people on the Underground Railroad. Increasingly, women also began to organize, sometimes separately and sometimes in conjunction with men. As Underground Railroad helpers, women tended to provide shelter and food, while men provided transportation. Churches also cooperated in Underground Railroad activity.

Most outspoken nationally was a mild-looking man with wire-rimmed glasses from Boston. William Lloyd Garrison printed the first issue of *The Liberator* on January 1, 1831. His first editorial clearly stated his approach: “I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. . . . I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD.” *The Liberator* became the longest-lived abolitionist newspaper in the United States. Its doctrine of immediate emancipation would become the inspiration and rallying cry for abolitionists in Oneida County. In so doing, they would contribute to the emerging national confrontation over slavery.

Changing patterns of transportation and communication brought the whole upstate region, including residents of Oneida County, into direct contact with these national political issues. As they faced both an emerging national market economy and a

¹ Stephen B. Oates, *Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion* (New York: Harper, 1975), reprint 2016; Anthony E. Kaye, “Neighborhoods and Nat Turner: The Making of a Slave Rebel and the Unmaking of a Slave Rebellion,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 27:4 (2007), 705–20; Alan Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772–1832* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013).

crystallizing national political system, they were forced to define what it meant to be both Americans and Christians in this new American Republic. Presumably, all citizens of African descent were opposed to a slave system, many based on personal experience. Citizens of European background also began to oppose slavery, both as allies to their African American neighbors and to protect their own rights of free speech and their vision of a country of equal opportunity for all people.

Abolitionism in Oneida County: From Moral Suasion to Political Organizing²

Nurtured by burned-over district enthusiasms, Oneida County residents found themselves abruptly thrown into national debates over equality and slavery in the new nation. For most people of European descent, this was a new experience. Inspired both by religious and secular ideals, many Americans formed a phalanx of people devoted to making the world better.

Two major types of reform emerged by the 1830s. The difference between them focused on their relationship to established institutions, particularly those of religion and government. One type of reform emphasized the development of national institutions. Naming themselves “American,” they worked to create truly national organizations, encompassing the south and west as well as the east. To some extent, they succeeded. Wherever they established themselves, their intent was to promote order and stability, bringing form to what they saw as the unformed chaotic mass of American frontier society and the threatening instability of individuals who asserted their personal rights. Creating institutions rather than promoting individualism, they can be labeled conservative.³

After the War of 1812, a whole variety of these movements emerged. The American Home Missionary Society was the largest. By 1827, they sent 169 missionaries into the field, 120 of them in New York State. The American Bible Society worked to put a Bible in every home. The American Sunday School Union set up Sunday schools with libraries of literature appropriate for all ages. Baptists tended to organize separately, with the American Baptist Home Missionary Society and publication societies.⁴

² “Moral suasion” (instead of “persuasion”) is used here, following contemporary usage before the Civil War.

³ Judith Wellman, *Grassroots Reform in the Burned-over District of Upstate New York: Religion, Abolitionism and Democracy* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000; Routledge, 2011), 180–81.

⁴ Keith J. Hardman, “The Burned-Over District,” *New York State Encyclopedia*, Peter Feinman, ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press 2005), 242–45.

These national societies relied on local action, and Oneida County was one of the leaders. Even before the American Bible Society formed in 1816, Utica Presbyterians formed the Oneida Bible Society on November 15, 1810. Between 1826 and 1842, Utica became the center of the Western Sunday School Union, auxiliary to the American Sunday School Union.⁵

One of the most important of these American reform movements was the American Colonization Society. Founded in 1816, its goal was to send freed men and women of color to Liberia on the west coast of Africa. They named Liberia’s capital Monrovia, after James Monroe, president of the Society and future president of the United States. Concerned about the morality of slavery, colonizationists also feared the growing number of freed people (which expanded fivefold from 60,000 in 1790 to 300,000 in 1830) and the potential for violent rebellion against a slave system. Between 1820 and 1833, they sent 2,886 people to Africa, but only 169 were free African Americans from the North.⁶

While conservative reformers enhanced institutions, radical reformers found themselves in a completely different relationship to institutional power. Abolitionists were a key example. They emphasized individualism and equality, empowering each person to make decisions for themselves. Slavery was itself an entrenched institution whose influence penetrated the heart of every other national organization. Abolitionism challenged the very existence of these national institutions, including the Union itself.

As both Christians and Americans, slavery was an affront to their worldview. As Christians, they tried to carry out the Biblical admonition that “as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them” (Luke 6:31). The masthead of the abolitionist *Friend of Man*, published in Utica from 1836–42, read, “This commandment we have received from him, that he that loveth God love his brother also” (1 John 4:21). Abolitionists often quoted Hebrews 13:3, “Remember them in bonds as bound with them,” and Galatians 3:23, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

The Declaration of Independence, the founding document of the United States, reinforced these religious values, asserting “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

⁵ Durant, *History of Oneida County*, 246; Wellman, *Grassroots Reform in the Burned-Over District of Upstate New York*.

⁶ Eric Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society* (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 2008).

Transplanted Yankees—carrying a sense of community responsibility with them from New England into upstate New York—were especially likely to promote reform movements. Towns in the southeastern part of Oneida County with large numbers of Connecticut-born settlers were early centers of abolitionist fervor.⁷

New York State ended legal slavery on July 4, 1827. Buoyed by this milestone and by subsequent abolitionist organizing—with publications, lectures, petitions, and political lobbying—the Underground Railroad in New York State emerged clearly by the 1830s. We know the names of several people who came through Oneida County from the South before 1842, including James W. Fountain (about 1826), Tudor E. Grant (before 1828), Mrs. Culbert and her children (September 1836), Harry Bird and George (December 1836), Robert (1839), and Henry and Jane Howard (about 1840). The names of most of those who traveled through Oneida County, however, have been forever lost.

African Americans who arrived in central New York by the 1830s proved to be particularly dynamic influences on the emerging abolitionist movement. Tudor Grant, who “once had been a chattel,” “although he spoke as though he felt himself to be a *man*, and as having *always* belonged to the race [of men],” reported the *Friend of Man* in 1838, arrived in Utica from Maryland by 1827, although we cannot be sure whether he was a fugitive or had been legally manumitted. About 1832, Grant moved to Oswego, New York, where he became a barber and cloth dyer by trade, as well as a singing master, community leader, outspoken abolitionist orator, and Underground Railroad supporter. He wrote resolutions, signed petitions, acted as an agent for the *Colored American* newspaper, worked against segregated schools, and was a member of the Oswego Vigilance Committee. Very likely, he received many freedom seekers traveling from Oneida County to the port at Oswego.⁸

African Americans most often lived in neighborhoods dominated by European Americans. Many also lived near the canal, sometimes in concentrated Black neighborhoods such as Canal Village south of the Erie Canal in Rome and Hope Street and Post Street in Utica. By 1828, free people of color had purchased land on the south side of Hope Street, located west of downtown Utica between the railroad on the north and the Erie Canal on the south. Post Street, just north of the Erie Canal, two blocks east of Genesee Street, and a block east of the abolitionist Bleecker Street Presbyterian Church, incorporated a wide spectrum of African American families, businesses, and boarders, along with a few people of European descent, both Christians and Jews. Many of these residents held abolitionist sympathies and became reliable supporters of the Underground Railroad.

⁷ Cross, *Burned-Over District*; Mary Hayes Gordon, “Oneida County Churches in the Abolition Era: Leaders in the Fight Against Slavery,” unpublished paper, May 2012.

⁸ *Friend of Man*, May 16, 1838, and July 4, 1838.

The end of slavery in New York State coincided with an expanded period of abolitionist and Underground Railroad activity not only in Oneida County but across the nation. In 1830, African American men began meeting in national Black conventions. Beginning in 1840, they also held annual Black conventions in New York State.

The American Colonization Society offered an early first target for organized resistance. Resoundingly, African Americans opposed colonization in Africa. In 1831, they held huge meetings across the northeastern United States to make their position clear. “We know of no other country,” resolved one meeting in Brooklyn, “in which we can justly claim or demand our rights as citizens, whether civil or political, but in these United States of America, our native soil.”

We are not strangers; neither do we come under the alien law. Our constitution does not call upon us to become naturalized; we are already American citizens; our fathers were among the first that peopled this country; their sweat and their tears have been the means, in a measure, of raising our country to its present standing. Many of them fought, and bled, and died for the gaining of her liberties; and shall we forsake their tombs, and flee to an unknown land? No!⁹

William Lloyd Garrison, outspoken Boston abolitionist, published results of these meetings in 1832, in a booklet called *Thoughts on African Colonization: or An Impartial Exhibition of the Doctrines, Principles and Purposes of the American Colonization Society, Together with the Resolutions, Addresses and Remonstrances of the Free People of Color*. In 1833, Garrison established his newspaper *The Liberator*. Both became important influences on Oneida County abolitionists.

Both roads and canals made Utica the major gateway to the western US. As such, Utica acted like a magnifying glass, creating a hotspot of reform in the heart of Oneida County. George Washington Gale, Finney’s mentor, led the way. In 1827, he moved his school in Western to the Town of Whitestown. On the Seneca Turnpike, near the banks of the Erie Canal, he built a new school in 1827, for young men who wanted to be ministers.

In 1833, Gale turned the school over to Beriah Green. Born in Preston, Connecticut, in 1795, and educated at Andover Theological Seminary, Green became professor of theology at Western Reserve College—the “Yale of the West”—in Hudson, Ohio, in 1830. When a copy of William Lloyd Garrison’s *Thoughts on African Colonization*

⁹ “Address to the Colored Citizens of Brooklyn, (N.Y.) and its Vicinity,” in William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization* (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832), 27.

reached Western Reserve College, Green was profoundly influenced by it. In November and December 1832, he gave four abolitionist sermons in the college chapel, printed in 1833. These sermons created a “firestorm,” noted Green’s biographer Milton Sernett.¹⁰

Green left Western Reserve in 1833, perhaps because of negative reactions to his sermons, to become principal of the Oneida Institute in Whitesboro. Before taking the new job, he insisted on two conditions: (1) that he could promote the immediate abolition of slavery and (2) that the school would admit both Black and White students. As a manual labor school, it also attracted students without financial support who could earn much of their own tuition, room, and board by regular work. Here, Green established “an experiment in practical abolitionism,” organizing both locally and nationally to promote the immediate abolition of slavery. Under Green’s influence, Whitesboro became known, reported *Niles National Register* in St. Louis, Missouri, as “a sort of head quarters of abolition in Oneida County.”¹¹

At least fourteen students of color attended the Oneida Institute from 1834 to 1844. As Milton Sernett has suggested, they included William G. Allen, Amos G. Beman, Garrett A. Cantine, Alexander Crummell, John V. De Grasse, William D. Forten, Amos N. Freeman, Henry H. Garnet, Samuel A. Jackson, Jermain W. Loguen, Thomas S. Sydney, Augustus Washington, Jacob A. Prime, and Elymas P. Rogers. Many of these men became major leaders for the rights of African Americans, both in New York State and the nation. While they attended the Institute, they interacted regularly with Utica citizens. Jermain Loguen, for example, kept a school for colored children in Utica. Not all of their experiences were positive. Several Utica citizens, for example, dragged Henry Highland Garnet out of a streetcar, declaring that “no New-York n— should ride in a Utica street-car.”¹²

Utica and Whitestown organized the first antislavery societies in New York State based on the idea that slavery should be immediately abolished. Under Green’s guidance, the Young Men’s Anti-Slavery Society of Whitestown was organized in 1832, along with two juvenile antislavery societies. By the spring of 1835, 42 of the 221 antislavery societies across the United States were located in New York State.¹³

¹⁰ Beriah Green, *Four Sermons Preached in the Chapel of the Western Reserve College: On Lord’s Days, November 18th and 25th, and December 2nd and 9th, 1832* (Cleveland: Office of the Herald, 1833); Milton C. Sernett, *Abolition’s Axe: Beriah Green, Oneida Institute and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986); Sernett, “Common Cause: The Antislavery Alliance of Gerrit Smith and Beriah Green,” *New York History Net*, *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier* 21:2 (Fall 1986).

¹¹ Sernett, *Abolition’s Axe*; Sernett, “Common Cause.”

¹² See Milton Sernett’s essay in this report on Whitestown: Oneida Institute. *Camden Advance*, March 16, 1882.

¹³ Elizur Wright (secretary of the American Anti-Slavery Society), “Auxiliaries to the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1836,” manuscript in Wright Papers, Library of Congress; Alice Henderson, “The History of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society,” PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1963.

In December 1833, Green traveled to Philadelphia with his neighbor John Frost, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Whitesboro. There they met with sixty-two delegates (a few of African descent) from Boston, New York City, and elsewhere in the northeast to form the new American Anti-Slavery Society. Green was appointed president. Their goal was simple: “the entire abolition of slavery in the United States.” The Constitution of the new society based its appeal both on the Bible and the Declaration of Independence. It began:

Whereas the Most High God “hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth,” and hath commanded them to love their neighbors as themselves; and whereas our National Existence is based upon this principle, as recognized in the Declaration of Independence, “that all mankind are created equal” and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;” and whereas, after the lapse of nearly sixty years, since the faith and honor of the American people were pledged to this avowal, before Almighty God, and the world, nearly one sixth part of the nation are held in bondage by their fellow-citizens;—and whereas slavery is contrary to the principles of natural justice, of our republican form of government, and of the Christian religion, and is destructive of the prosperity of the country, while it is endangering the peace, union, and liberties of the States; and whereas we believe it the duty and interest of the masters, immediately to emancipate their slaves, and that no scheme of expatriation, either voluntary or by compulsion, can remove this great and increasing evil; and whereas we believe that it is practicable, by appeals to the consciences, hearts, and interests of the people, to awaken a public sentiment throughout the nation that will be opposed to the continuance of slavery in any part of the republic, and by effecting the speedy abolition of slavery, prevent a general convulsion ; and whereas we believe we owe it to the oppressed, to our fellow-citizens who hold slaves, to our whole country, to posterity, and to God, to do all that is lawfully in our power to bring about the extinction of slavery, we do hereby agree, with a prayerful reliance on the Divine aid, to form ourselves into a Society.¹⁴

William Lloyd Garrison presented the Society’s “Declaration of Sentiments.” Adopted on December 6, 1833, it based its appeal both on the Bible and the Declaration of Independence. The cornerstone of the “Temple of Freedom” was the Declaration of Independence, with its ringing commitment to the ideal that “all men are created equal.” Abolitionists could do no less than to carry out the mandate of the founders. “The right to enjoy liberty is inalienable,” they agreed. “To invade it is to usurp the prerogative of Jehovah. Every man has a right to his own body—to the products of his own labor—to the protection of law—and to the common advantages of society.” They took particular aim at

¹⁴ “Constitution,” *Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention, assembled at Philadelphia, December 4, 5, and 6, 1833* (New York: Dorr & Butterfield, 1833), 4–5.

colonizationists: “We regard as delusive, cruel and dangerous, any scheme of expatriation which pretends to aid, either directly or indirectly, in the emancipation of the slaves, or to be a substitute for the immediate and total abolition of slavery.”¹⁵

When new officers were elected for the coming year, Arthur Tappan, a wealthy silk merchant from New York City, was elected president, and Beriah Green became one of the vice-presidents. New York State rivaled Boston for cutting edge leadership in the abolitionist movement, with national leadership centered in New York City and statewide leadership emerging in Utica.¹⁶

Green returned to Utica to find an immediate foil for his abolitionist views in the person of Rev. J. N. Danforth, agent of the American Colonization Society. Danforth set up a meeting in the Dutch Reformed Church on Broad Street in Utica on December 21, 1833. His purpose was to gain support for a resolution supporting the American Colonization Society:

Resolved, That the meeting deeply deplores the unfortunate condition of the colored population of this country and commends to the zealous support of the philanthropist and the Christian the American Colonization Society, as the instrument under Providence which is best calculated to alleviate the condition of the free negro and secure the ultimate emancipation of the slave.

Utica abolitionists, led by Beriah Green, met him straight on. For two weeks, until January 10, 1834, they held crowded meetings, most of them in the First Presbyterian Church, that included people of both European and African descent. At least three people of color met directly with Rev. Danforth. One of them “had lately made his escape from the South.” Although one of them voted for Danforth’s pro-colonization resolution, none wanted to leave the country themselves.¹⁷

“The crowd became immense—the interest intense,” reported a reporter for the *New York Journal of Commerce*. “Libraries were ransacked and emptied of every book about *Negroes*. Wit, wisdom, logic, metaphysics, invective, and eloquence all ministered to the delighted assembly. The ground was pretty thoroughly explored.”¹⁸

¹⁵ “Declaration of Sentiments,” adopted December 6, 1833, *Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention, assembled at Philadelphia, December 4, 5, and 6, 1833* (Philadelphia, 1833), 12–16; *Proceedings of the New York Anti-Slavery Convention, Held at Utica, October 21, and the New York Anti-Slavery Society, Held at Peterboro, October 22, 1835* (Utica: Standard and Democrat, 1835), 21.

¹⁶ Leonard Richards, “*Gentlemen of Property and Standing*,” *Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 49.

¹⁷ A Man of Color, “To the Editor of The Emancipator,” Utica, January 30, 1834, published in *The Emancipator*.

¹⁸ This discussion of Utica’s debates over colonization, the founding of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, and the rescue of Harry Bird and George owes much to the work of Deirdre Sinnott. See, for example, “Utica: Hotbed of Abolition,” Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State, <https://www.urnys.org/webinars>.

For two nights, Green spoke, likely giving a version of the sermons he had preached at Western Reserve a year earlier. Prejudice against Americans of color seemed to Green to be “*elementary errors*, subversive of the first principles of Christian truth.” The “plague” of slavery, asserted Green, “has already spread extensively and destructively. May the God of truth and rectitude stay its frightful ravages!” Finding inspiration and guidance from both the Bible and history, Green emphasized the factual basis of his work. He argued that reform was possible, that slave-holding was immoral, and that no one who did not respect “Africo-Americans” could possibly make judgments about and for them. “A man finds a brother in every human being,” Green proclaimed. “A wolf might as well be trusted to devise a plan to protect the sheep! No man is fit to judge of the character of the brother whom he hates. . . . Before he can be qualified to form and publish an opinion about . . . his colored brethren, he must cordially and fully respect their rights and interests.”¹⁹

In spite of opposition from Green and others, the audience endorsed Danforth’s pro-colonialist position by a “*thundering vote*,” including affirmative votes from most of the people of color. In Utica, anti-abolitionists paraded the streets with effigies of Beriah Green and Alvan Stewart.²⁰

The Utica Common Council went even further. On January 10, 1834, they passed unanimously the following resolutions:

Whereas certain individuals now in our city are disturbing the peace of the good citizens thereof, by inculcating sentiments which we deem demoralizing in themselves and little short of Treason towards the Government of our country;

Therefore *Resolved*, That the Common Council of the city of Utica, regard the agitation of the question of Negro Slavery as it exists in the Southern States of this Republic, to be highly inexpedient at the present juncture of our national affairs; and that it can only tend to keep alive the dying embers of internal discord, which we fondly hope and believe, will soon be entirely extinguishes, if not disturbed by the zeal of misguided Philanthropists.

Resolved, That the Clerk be requested to furnish our Representative in Congress with a copy of the preamble and resolution, accompanied with a request that he will not only present the same to the Hon. The House of Representatives, but that he will assure that Honorable body, that we heartily disapprove of all

¹⁹ Daniel Wager, *Our County and Its People*, 312–13; Beriah Green, *Four Sermons Preached in the Chapel of the Western Reserve College: On Lord’s Days, November 18th and 25th, and December 2nd and 9th, 1832* (Cleveland: Office of the Herald, 1833), 5, 38–39, 41.

²⁰ *Circular of the Executive Committee of the Whitestown and Oneida Institute Anti-Slavery Societies* (Utica: William Williams, [1834?]), 3, quoted in James S. Pula and Cheryl A. Pula, eds., “*With Courage and Honor*”: *Oneida County’s Role in the Civil War* (Utica: Utica College Ethnic Heritage Studies Center, 2010.), 23–24; correspondent of the *New York Journal of Commerce*, January 16, 1834, reprinted in *The Liberator*, January 25, 1834.

measures calculated to interfere with the rights of our Southern brethren, which have been solemnly guaranteed to them by the Constitution of the United States.

THOS. COLLING, Clerk

The Council printed these resolutions, and Congressman Samuel Beardsley introduced them into Congress on January 20, 1834.²¹

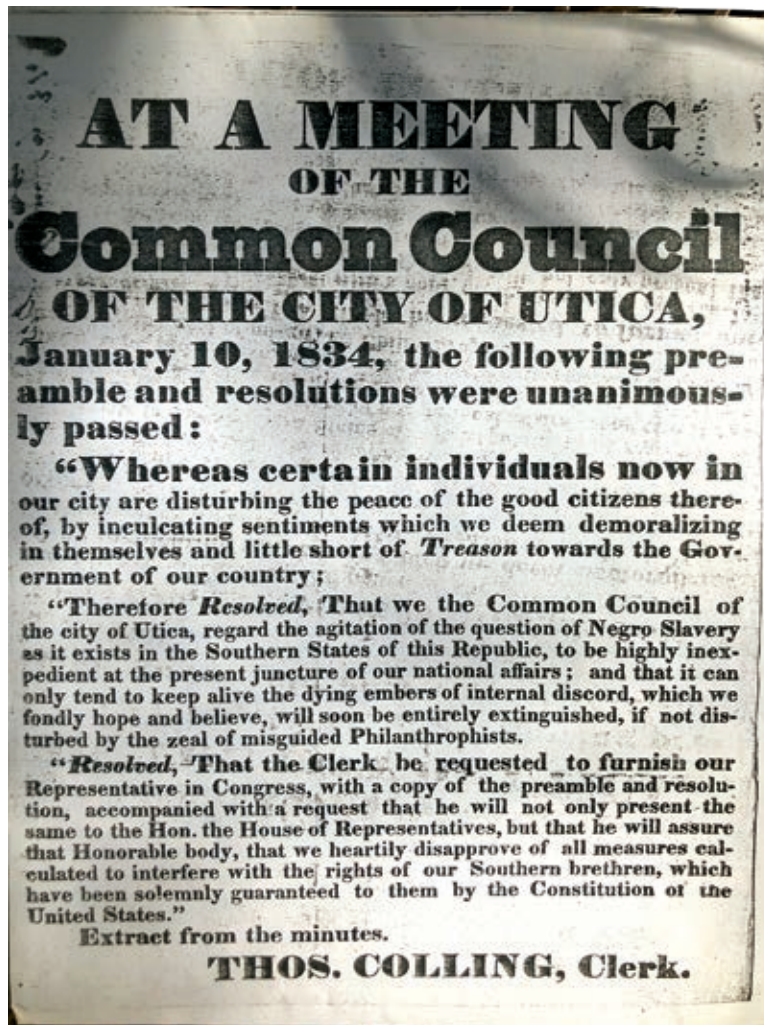


Figure 4.2. Report of anti-abolition resolutions from Utica Common Council, January 10, 1834. Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

In 1833, Rev. Hiram H. Kellogg started the Young Ladies' Seminary in the village of Clinton, Town of Kirkland. Kellogg was a classmate of Gerrit Smith's at Hamilton College and a strong friend of both Beriah Green and Alvan Stewart. It is likely no coincidence that

²¹ "New York Council, Utica Slavery. Jan 20, 1834, Refd to Com on District of Columbia. Mr. Beardsley," National Archives and Records Administration.

he did so in the same year that Beriah Green took over the Oneida Institute. Like the Oneida Institute, the Young Ladies’ Seminary was a manual labor school. Like the Oneida Institute, it admitted students of African as well as those of European descent. Between 1838 and 1841, at least seven African American young women attended this school. Kellogg sold the school to the Free Will Baptists in 1841, but he reopened it himself in 1845 and began to admit both men and women in 1847. In 1850, Louisa Jacobs, daughter of Harriet Jacobs (later the author of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*), attended this Seminary.

Abolitionists renewed the battle. In the spring of 1835, the American Anti-Slavery Society dropped a bombshell, or rather a million bombshells, in the guise of abolitionist pamphlets. At its second annual meeting in May 1835, the Society adopted a new policy. At the suggestion of Lewis Tappan, brother of the society’s president, they decided to flood the nation with antislavery pamphlets. They were aided in this plan by a new invention, the cylinder press, introduced in the United States between 1833 and 1835. Old flatbed presses could produce 2,000 pages a day. The new steam-powered cylinder presses churned out as many as 55,500 copies a day. From six cents a paper, the cost dropped to a penny. “The transformation,” noted historian Leonard Richards, “was indeed ‘revolutionary.’” And its first nationally noticeable impact was in the abolitionist petition campaign. “The printing revolution made the American Anti-Slavery Society appear stronger and wealthier than it actually was,” noted Richards, “and contributed to the anti-abolitionist notion of a monstrous Anti-Slavery Society stimulated both by foreign influence and by foreign funds.”²²

Unlike William Lloyd Garrison, the Tappan brothers thought that moderate southerners would listen to reasonable arguments. With this pamphlet campaign, they could appeal directly to southerners of conscience, undercutting the silence imposed by churches and government institutions. Names of more than 20,000 southerners were on their mail list. By July, the society had sent 175,000 copies from New York City. By the end of 1835, the American Anti-Slavery Society had mailed a million copies of abolitionist publications such as *The Emancipator*, *Liberator*, *Anti-Slavery Record*, *The Slave’s Friend*, and *Human Rights*.²³

Reaction in the South was swift. Southern postal workers began to notice the flood of abolitionist material immediately. By July 1835, Washington, DC, postal clerk James Kennedy reported a bushel basket full of abolitionist literature addressed to local public officials. When the steamship *Columbia* arrived in Charleston on July 29, 1835, laden with mailbags full of abolitionist material, Charleston citizens stole them from the post office. Three thousand people gathered in the city to watch them burn, along with effigies of Arthur Tappan and William Lloyd Garrison. “The South will be unanimous in their

²² Richards, “*Gentlemen of Property and Standing*,” 71–73.

²³ Jefferson Morley, *Snow-Storm in August* (New York: Knopf, 2012), 108–10; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, “The Abolitionists’ Postal Campaign of 1835,” *Journal of Negro History* L:4 (October 1965), 227–38.

resistance,” expostulated John C. Calhoun, “even to the extent of disunion.” Amos Kendall, post-master general in Jackson’s cabinet, banned abolitionist literature along southern postal routes.²⁴

By August, almost every major southern city held protest rallies and search parties. Reuben Crandall, caught with boxes of abolitionist pamphlets in his hotel room, was arrested in Washington, DC, for “circulating Tappan, Garrison, & Co.’s papers.” The *Richmond Whig* demanded that Tappan be sent south for trial. Citizens in Louisiana offered \$50,000 for Tappan, dead or alive. Pro-southern newspapers in New York City accused abolitionists of promoting “civil war, with all its kindred horrors of rape, sack, and slaughter.” Arthur Tappan, Elizur Wright, and William Lloyd Garrison all received threats of assassination. On October 21, 1835, Garrison himself was led through the streets of Boston with a rope around his neck.²⁵

At the same time, publicity around the pamphlet campaign led to immense excitement across the whole country. Sales of abolitionist pamphlets in the North skyrocketed. Fifteen thousand people bought subscriptions to the American Anti-Slavery Society’s publications. And northern towns and villages organized antislavery societies in huge numbers. Two hundred antislavery societies in May 1835 mushroomed into 527 a year later.²⁶

In this context, local debates over slavery quickly heated up. On September 5, 1835, anti-abolitionists held a public meeting in the county courthouse in Utica, passing resolutions denouncing abolition. The grand jury of Oneida County declared on September 17 that those promoting “inflammatory publication” were guilty of sedition. All citizens who supported the Constitution should destroy these publications “*wherever and whenever found*.” Congressman Samuel Beardsley was outspokenly confrontational: “I go revolution when it is necessary,” he said.²⁷

On September 18, the Central Evangelical Association of New-York, which included Congregational Churches in Oneida County, confronted that position. They resolved that slavery “was directly opposed to the spirit of the gospel of Christ; and that the principles of the Anti-Slavery Society are those only by which this heaven-daring sin can be

²⁴ Morley, *Snow-Storm in August*, 108–10; Wyatt-Brown, “The Abolitionists’ Postal Campaign of 1835,” 227–238.

²⁵ Wyatt-Brown, “The Abolitionists’ Postal Campaign of 1835,” 230–232; Richards, “*Gentlemen of Property and Standing*”.

²⁶ Wyatt-Brown, “The Abolitionists’ Postal Campaign of 1835,” 237.

²⁷ Utica Common Council, quoted in Daniel Wager, *Our County and Its People* (Boston, 1896), 312; Richards, “*Gentlemen of Property and Standing*,” 86, noted the courthouse meeting was September 3; William “Defensor” Thomas, *The Enemies of the Constitution Discovered: Or, An Inquiry Into the Origin and Tendency of Popular Violence ...* (Utica, New York, Leavitt & Lord & Co. and G. Tracy: 1835), 58.

driven from our land.” Colonization, on the other hand, rivets more firmly the chains of slavery “and is undeserving the patronage of those who would wipe the withering curse of slavery from our nation.”²⁸

The Utica Anti-Slavery Society went even further. Prodded by national leaders at the American Anti-Slavery Society’s office in New York City, they issued an invitation on September 20, 1835, “To the Friends of Immediate Emancipation in the State of New York” to convene in Utica on October 21, 1835, to form a statewide antislavery society. Attacks on free speech meant that “the whole American people are bound together by common interests and obligations,” they asserted, “and it would seem as if a righteous providence has doomed that we shall speedily be all free or all slaves together. . . . We desire to meet the occasion as becomes men, Christians, and Americans.”²⁹

Four hundred people from across New York State, all men, signed this call. At least twelve African Americans (including at least five Black students from the Oneida Institute) were interspersed among the dominant signers of European descent. Ninety of them were from Oneida County (nineteen from Utica, eleven from Rome, twenty from Westmoreland, five from Clinton, six from New Hartford, nine from Whitesboro, and twenty from Oneida County generally). Sixteen of them resided in New York City. All the rest were from upstate New York. (See Appendix for brief biographies of many of these.)

Not to be outdone, anti-abolitionists, led by Utica Mayor Joseph Kirkland, held a meeting in city hall on October 8. Congressman Beardsley continued his attacks. These abolitionists are “downright idiots,” he shouted. “The question is, whether the peace of this union is to be disturbed or not, and whether we are to be degraded and disgraced.”³⁰

When the Utica Common Council, by a vote of seven to four, agreed to let abolitionists use the supreme court room of the academy for their statewide meeting, Beardsley and his fellow anti-abolitionists were outraged. Hundreds of people signed a call to the “Citizens of Utica!” for a public meeting of protest on Saturday evening, October 17, at 7:00 p.m. The academy “ought not to be polluted by an assemblage of disorderly fanatics.” “Let us decide what the occasion may require, and that let us do.” This meeting, reported the *Albany Argus*, “was one of the most numerous and respectable ever convened in Utica,” characterized by reprobation for the “audacity and incendiary designs of the abolitionists.” The group appointed a committee of twenty-five, including Congressman Samuel Beardsley, Judge Chester Hayden, US District Clerk Rutger B. Miller, and lawyer E. A. Westmore. Samuel Beardsley contended that “the disgrace of having an Abolition

²⁸ Wager, *Our Country and Its People*, 313; “To the Editor of the New-York Evangelist,” September 18, 1835, published *New-York Evangelist*, October 3, 1835.

²⁹ *Proceedings of the New York Anti-Slavery Convention Held at Utica, October 21, and New York Anti-Slavery State Society, held at Peterboro, October 22, 1835* (Utica: Standard & Democraft Office, 1835), 3; *Liberator*, October 3, 1835; *New-York Evangelist*, October 3, 1835.

³⁰ Defensor, 59–62, quoted in Benjamin Sevitch, “The Well-Planned Riot of October 21, 1835: Utica’s Answer to Abolitionism,” *New York History*, 50:3 (July 1969), 255.

Convention held in the city would be deeper than that of twenty mobs, and it would be better to have Utica razed to its foundations, or to have it destroyed like Sodom and Gommorah, than to have the convention meet here.” This was “no riotous assemblage convened for the purpose of encouraging or abetting tumult and disorder, but a meeting of good and reputable citizens,” they assured their Utica residents. To prevent use of the courtroom in the academy, the group agreed to meet in that very space on October 21, the morning of the proposed convention.³¹

On the morning of Wednesday, October 21, 1835, several hundred abolitionists met in the Bleeker Street Presbyterian Church. Alvan Stewart, chair of a committee of the Utica Anti-Slavery Society, gave a fiery sermon. He debunked the threat of disunion, characterizing it as “the universal medicine for every political difficulty, at the south.” And he exhorted his fellow abolitionists to action: “My Countrymen, ye sons of the Pilgrims, the *tyrant* is at your doors, liberty is bleeding, liberty is dying, slavery has robbed you of the liberty of discussion, of conscience and the press.” “You, from this moment, are the *representatives* of American liberty, if you are driven from this sacred temple, dedicated to God, by an infuriated mob, then, my brethren, wherever you go, liberty will go, where you abide, liberty will abide, when you are speechless, liberty is dead.”³²

Inspired by Stewart’s speech, the convention adopted a constitution and formed the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. When Lewis Tappan tried to read their Declaration of Sentiments, he was interrupted by interlopers, who broke down the door of the church, ripping the coat of one of the city aldermen who tried to stop them. Granted the hearing in the convention, anti-abolitionists read several resolutions, and “a momentary calm ensued.” When abolitionists tried to return to their own business, they were interrupted with calls of “no, we won’t hear them” and “turn them out.” Congressman Samuel Beardsley, Judge Chester Hayden, and others from the committee of twenty-five, stirred up the crowd with “opprobrious terms and denunciations.” The intruders rang bells to call others to the church. One newspaper noted that about one thousand people arrived, bringing fire hooks and ladders and ropes, trying to demolish the whole building. “It was evident that a mob of men, inflamed with passion, had been collected to enforce the mandates of the leaders, and that they were ready to proceed to any extremity.” Given the situation, abolitionists adjourned the meeting.³³

³¹ “Excitement at Utica, &c,” *Albany Argus*, reprinted in *Niles National Register*, October 31, 1835; Samuel Beardsley quote from Samuel J. May, *Some Recollections of the Anti-Slavery Conflict* (Boston, 1869), 164, quoted in Benjamin Sevitch, “Well-Planned Riot,” 256.

³² *Proceedings of the New York Anti-Slavery Convention Held at Utica, October 21, and New York Anti-Slavery State Society Held at Peterboro, October 22, 1835* (Utica, 1835), 4–8.

³³ *Proceedings of the New York Anti-Slavery Convention*, 9–13; *Niles National Register*, October 31, 1835; *Niles’ Register*, November 7, 1835.

“Much confusion, but no violence, occurred,” reported the *Albany Evening Journal*. Rev. Oliver Wetmore, the aged Revolutionary War veteran and secretary of the convention, might have disagreed. When a member of the crowd demanded that he give up his papers, he adamantly refused. “God damn you, give them up, or I will knock you on the head,” threatened one young man as he raised his cane over Wetmore’s head. Finally, his own son, E. A. Wetmore, a member of the committee of twenty-five and a future mayor of Utica, approached and said, “Do, father, given them up, and save your life; give them to me, and I will pledge myself they shall be returned to you again.” And so Oliver Wetmore escaped injury. One abolitionist reported that he saw a minister riding his horse down Genesee Street while the mob clubbed him and threw brick-bats at him. That evening, rioters attacked the offices of the *Oneida Standard and Democrat*. Edited by Samuel Lightbody, this newspaper had supported the antislavery convention. In retaliation, rioters threw its presses and type into the street.³⁴

Meanwhile, leaders of the convention met at Clarke’s Temperance House on Genesee Street. A small group of people headed by Rev. Nathaniel Sherrill formed a committee to decide what to do next. Lewis Tappan from New York City, Whitesboro abolitionists Rev. John Frost and Rev. Beriah Green, and Utica leaders Samuel Lightbody, Spencer Kellogg, and Alvan Stewart accepted Gerrit Smith’s invitation to meet the next morning at 8:00 a.m. in the Presbyterian Church in Peterboro.³⁵

Somewhere between three and four hundred abolitionists accepted Smith’s invitation. Some took a canal boat to Canastota and then went on foot the eight miles up the hills to Peterboro, singing hymns as they walked in a driving rain. Others took wagons. The six men who had attended the convention from Rome—Dr. Arba Blair, Judge Seth Roberts, Amos Flint, George Stedman, Jackson Tibbets, and Col. Arden Seymour—drove in Arba Blair’s wagon from Utica to Whitesboro and then to Vernon. There, they found the streets “filled with a maddened mob, led by a lawyer of the village.” Captain Hand, proprietor of a tavern, was too busy to help the men water their horses because he was so focused on protecting his guests from the mob. “They will have to go over my dead body first,” he vowed. Dr. Blair and his friends were pelted “with muds, brick-bats, stones, and clubs” as they escaped, and Blair was clubbed on the head. They finally reached the territory of the Stockbridge Indians, just north of Peterboro, where they had breakfast in safety, “as they were more civilized than some of their neighbors,” reported Arden Seymour.³⁶

³⁴ *Albany Argus* reprinted in *Niles National Register*, October 31, 1835; “The Utica Convention,” *New York Evangelist*, October 31, 1835; Sevitch, “Well-Planned Riot,” 259.

³⁵ “The Utica Convention,” *New York Evangelist*, October 31, 1835.

³⁶ Col. Arden Seymour, *Roman Citizen*, January 26, 1872.

When the convention convened in Peterboro, Oneida County delegates dominated the meeting. They elected Rome’s Dr. Arba Blair as chair, with William Jay from Westchester County (who did not actually attend the meeting) as president. Among the vice-presidents was Samuel Lightbody from Oneida County. Beriah Green from Whitesboro was the corresponding secretary. Uticans Oliver Wetmore and Spencer Kellogg were the recording secretary and treasurer. The nine members of the Executive Committee (Alvan Stewart, Rev. Amos Savage, Dr. Welcome A. Clark, Dr. Arba Blair, Joseph T. Lyman, Francis Wright, James C. Delong, Jacob Snyder, and Rev. Lewis H. Loss) were all from Oneida County (Utica, Whitesboro, Rome, or New York Mills). Several resolutions highlighted their goals. The first two encapsulated their basic purpose: “Resolved, That the slaves in these United States, as men, are justly entitled to the rights and privileges claimed for all, by the Declaration of Independence,” and “Resolved, that holding men in slavery, being contrary to the law written on the human heart, as well as the hole scriptures is a SIN AGAINST GOD.” The minutes recorded that, in contrast to the day before, the business was “happily completed, with perfect harmony within and perfect tranquility without.” Gerrit Smith had stayed up all night getting ready to welcome his four hundred guests. The minutes included a transcript of his speech, as well as two addresses (one “To the Citizens of the United States” and the other “To the Friends of Immediate and Universal Emancipation”), extracts from letters of support, and names of all those who attended the convention. It was clear to many both North and South that confrontations over slavery might lead to the dissolution of the Union. As Gerrit Smith remarked at the New York State Anti-Slavery Society meeting, “war has broken out between the North and the South. . . . True, permanent peace can never be restored, until slavery, the occasion of the war, has ceased.”³⁷

This convention put both Utica and Peterboro on the national map. Newspapers all over the country picked up the convention’s story, including the influential *Albany Argus*, *Richmond Enquirer*, *Washington Globe*, *Niles’ Register*, and New York City’s *Journal of Commerce*. Nor was the Utica mob unique. On the same day that the mob dispersed the Utica convention, William Lloyd Garrison was paraded through the streets of Boston with a noose around his neck. As historian Leonard Richard has suggested, anti-abolitionist mobs exploded in number in 1835 and 1836. While one audience for the mob was certainly the citizenry of Utica, Howard Alexander Morrison has suggested that the real motivation for many of its leaders was to appeal to southern Democrats. The mob of lawyers, judges,

³⁷ Edwin W. Clarke to the *Oswego Palladium*, dated April 13, 1840, printed April 29, 1840; *Speech of Mr. Gerrit Smith in the meeting of the New-York Anti-Slavery Society: held in Peterboro, October 22, 1835*, Gerrit Smith Collection, Syracuse University, <http://library.syr.edu/digital/collections/g/GerritSmith/404.htm>; *Proceedings of the New York Anti-Slavery Convention*, 13–48; *Speech of Mr. Gerrit Smith in the meeting of the New-York Anti-Slavery Society: held in Peterboro, October 22, 1835*, Gerrit Smith Collection, Syracuse University, <http://library.syr.edu/digital/collections/g/GerritSmith/404.htm>.

and politicians—“gentlemen of property and standing,” as Leonard Richards noted—let southerners know that New York State, too, had its proslavery advocates, so those who supported slavery need not fear to vote for Martin Van Buren for president.³⁸

Results of the Utica riot and the formation of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society cheered abolitionists everywhere. From 1836 until its demise in 1841, the New York State Anti-Slavery Society was at the cutting edge of abolitionist organizing in New York State, with a powerful influence across the nation. It published its own newspaper, the *Friend of Man*, edited by William Goodell, with William J. Savage as publishing agent. Printed by students at the Oneida Institute, its offices were at 177 Genesee Street in Utica and then at 56 Genesee Street, the same location as the New York State Anti-Slavery Society.

Leadership of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society was centered in Oneida County and remained relatively stable. In 1839–40, the Utica city directory listed its headquarters at 56 Genesee Street, with Gerrit Smith, President; William Chaplin as corresponding secretary and general agent; J. C. DeLong, chair of the executive committee; and Spencer Kellogg, treasurer. Alvan Stewart was another member of the core group.

The state society also began to organize local antislavery societies. By 1836, 103 antislavery societies had been organized in New York State, five times as many as the year before and one-fifth of the national total.³⁹

The remarkable Theodore Weld, whom historian John L. Myers called “the central figure in the antislavery agency system of the 1830’s,” was key to this explosion. Born in Connecticut, Weld was forced to withdraw from Hamilton College because of eye trouble. Converted by Charles Grandison Finney at the First Presbyterian Church in Utica, Weld entered the Oneida Institute under George Washington Gale in 1827, working part-time as a lecturer to raise money for the school and for temperance. He became Finney’s major assistant, helping with revivals in Rochester and elsewhere. Weld then helped establish Lane Seminary, a manual labor school in Cincinnati, and then became a student there himself. At Lane Seminary, he successfully organized an antislavery society and worked with local people of color against colonization. Dismissed for his abolitionist activity, Weld began to work as an agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society. In the winter of 1835–36, he organized antislavery societies in Oneida County and “achieved one of the most outstanding victories in the whole antislavery crusade.” Beginning in February in the Bleeker Street Presbyterian Church (the same church where organizers of the New York State Anti-Slavery

³⁸ Sevitch, “Well-Planned Riot,” 250–63; Howard Alexander Morrison, “Gentlemen of Proper Understanding: A Closer Look at Utica’s Anti-Abolitionist Mob,” *New York History* 63:1 (January 1981), 61–82; Leonard Richards, “Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America (New York: Oxford, 1970), 85–92.

³⁹ Alice Hatcher Henderson, “The History of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society,” unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1963; Elizur Wright Jr., “Auxiliaries to the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1836,” Wright Papers, Library of Congress.

Society had been forced to flee just three months before), Weld gave at least sixteen lectures. For lack of space, hundreds of people were turned away from his meetings. At least six hundred new members joined the Utica Anti-Slavery Society. The Utica Female Anti-Slavery Society, headed by Mrs. M. S. Savage, counted seventy-seven members.⁴⁰

So successful was the agency system in promoting abolitionism that both national and state antislavery societies made it a major focus. At their May 1836 meeting, members of the American Anti-Slavery Society decided to raise \$50,000 for abolitionist lecturers to support the formation of new antislavery societies. Under Weld’s training, “The Seventy” organized almost five hundred new societies throughout the northeast. By the end of 1836, the national society counted 1,006 local organizations, up from 527 the year before. New York State had 161 new societies, more than any other state and 27 percent of the nation’s total.⁴¹

To implement these goals, the New York State Anti-Slavery Society employed William L. Chaplin as its corresponding secretary. Born in Groton, Massachusetts, in 1796, Chaplin did a remarkable job in abolitionizing Oneida County through the agency system. His work in central New York would lead him to national prominence when he became the editor of *The Albany Patriot*, an abolitionist newspaper in Albany, New York, and then took him directly to Washington, DC, where he established an Underground Railroad network in the heart of the nation, in the 1840s.

Between them, the New York State Anti-Slavery Society and the American Anti-Slavery Society created antislavery societies in thirty-seven counties in New York State by September 1838. Oneida County was one of them. Beginning in September 1836, Methodist minister Rev. George Storrs worked in Oneida County, starting in Camden in September and preaching in Utica, New York Mills, and Westmoreland. Martha Storrs attended the first annual meeting of the national Women’s Anti-Slavery Society, held in New York City in May 1837. She also attended the second annual meeting, held in Philadelphia, when the brand new Liberty Hall was burned down around them.⁴²

Rev. Avelyn Sedgwick, pastor of the Congregational Church in Rome, began work as an agent on October 1, 1836. That fall, he preached in Rome, Black Creek, Verona, Lee, Vienna, Holland Patent, Trenton, and Madison. In January, he spoke in Camden, Deerfield, Augusta, and Verona (where a canal boat captain offered ten dollars to anyone who could

⁴⁰ John Myers, “The Beginnings of the Anti-Slavery Agencies in New York State, 1833–1836,” *New York History* 43:2 (April 1962), 150, 169–71; *Minutes*, American Anti-Slavery Society, November 1836.

⁴¹ John L. Myers, “The Major Effort of National Anti-Slavery Agents in New York State, 1836–1837,” *New York History* 46:2 (1965), 162–66.

⁴² Myers, “The Beginnings of the Anti-Slavery Agencies.”

drag Sedgwick from the Congregational Church). In February, he spoke in Floyd, Florence, Holland Patent. In March, he was in Cassville, Sangerfield, Western, and Remsen. Everywhere Storrs and Sedgwick spoke, they organized antislavery societies.⁴³

Rev. Sedgwick held one meeting in Deerfield on the last Monday in January 1837, in a church on the north end of town. After opening with a prayer, scripture reading, and hymn singing, the meeting was disrupted by a group of eight or ten people. Most of them were teenage boys, led by Hezekiah Cummings, an older man who distributed liquor liberally to his followers. They went into the church gallery “and made a great deal of noise, stamping, talking, wrestling, and laughing.” They finally left, but not before throwing wood against the door, “leaving marks or dents which will last as long as the door, as evidence of their impotent malice.” Local citizens had had enough. They pressed charges against Hezekiah Cummings, arguing that abolitionist meetings were religious meetings and therefore subject to legal protection. Two days of two jury trials in Vernon, New York, attended by about three hundred people, ended at 1:00 a.m. the first day and 2:00 a.m. on the second morning, a Saturday. Neither jury could agree. A third jury was called for Monday morning, but the defendant agreed to let the judge decide. After four days, the judge found Cummings guilty and fined him several dollars plus court costs. “A Spectator” wrote an account of these trials for the *Friend of Man*, concluding, “Thus, it is decided, that an abolition meeting is, as the abolitionists have ever contended, a religious meeting, and one which the law protects from insult, misrule and uproar.” The judge’s decision did not, however, deter future disruptions. Abolitionist meetings continued to be disturbed by local mobs into the early 1840s.⁴⁴

In July 1837, local abolitionists organized the Oneida County Anti-Slavery Society in Rome, New York. William L. Chaplin noted, “the ‘empire state’ will yet stand erect, . . . and she will shortly return to her good old ways of democratic honesty and freedom. *The people are coming*—there is no mistake.”⁴⁵

Outside agents were helpful, but their main goal was to recruit local abolitionists who would assume personal and individual responsibility for long-term work. Each town antislavery society should appoint two agents, a man and a woman, for each of the town’s school districts, directed the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. These local abolitionists should visit every family and talk to every person over eighteen years of age, selling them copies of the antislavery almanac. If they could not sell it, they should give it away. Agents should solicit signatures for antislavery petitions, raise money for antislavery societies, sell

⁴³ Myers, “The Beginnings of the Anti-Slavery Agencies.”

⁴⁴ A Spectator, “Abolition Law Decision,” *Friend of Man*, March 22, 1837.

⁴⁵ Myers, “Major Effort,” 173–5; W. L. Chaplin, “Oneida County Convention,” *Friend of Man*, July 26, 1837.

subscriptions to antislavery newspapers, hold monthly antislavery meetings, and put an antislavery lending library in each school district. “Local work everywhere existing, is the whole work we wish and need to have accomplished,” they asserted.⁴⁶

The agency system was spectacularly successful, as long as the American Anti-Slavery Society and the New York State Anti-Slavery Society had sufficient funds to hire organizers. The economic boom of 1835 and 1836 fueled this effort. The second annual meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, held in Utica on September 20, attracted a thousand people. It was, enthused the *Friend of Man*, “ONE OF THE LARGEST AND MOST IMPORTANT DELIBERATIVE CONVENTIONS EVER HELD, ON ANY SUBJECT, IN AMERICA.” “The meeting a year ago was quite encouraging, but the meeting last week astonished everyone, friend and foe.”⁴⁷

In addition to affirming their radical activism against slavery, the convention took a stand on behalf of free people of color within New York State. They appointed a committee to make a report about “the legal disabilities and inequalities which the constitution and laws of this state attach to people of color . . . so that the friends of human rights . . . may the more intelligently go to work to influence the public mind, and to petition the Legislature for their removal.”⁴⁸

Alvan Stewart presented a “constitutional opinion,” an outline of his developing argument that the US Constitution was an antislavery document. The convention also supported the case of Mrs. Culbert, who lived in Utica but whose two children remained in slavery.⁴⁹

In Utica, local African Americans began to organize community institutions. Black-owned businesses included several barbershops, farms, and taverns. The *Friend of Man* reported in January 1837 that a group of local Black women, “sensible that woman can be engaged in no undertaking more befitting her nature, adorning her character and enlarging her heart than benevolence and the promotion of morals,” had written a constitution and formed the Daughters of Zion of Utica. Mrs. Alice Jackson was First Directress; Mrs. Nancy Prince, Second Directress; Miss Anne Wells, Treasurer; and Miss D [?] Richard, Secretary.

⁴⁶ New York State Anti-Slavery Society, “Second Annual Report,” *Friend of Man*, September 27, 1837; Wellman, “The Burned-Over District Re-Visited,” PhD dissertation, University of Virginia, 1974, 287–88, 293.

⁴⁷ “Great Anti-Slavery Convention,” *Friend of Man*, September 27, 1837.

⁴⁸ “Great Anti-Slavery Convention,” *Friend of Man*, September 27, 1837.

⁴⁹ “Great Anti-Slavery Convention,” *Friend of Man*, September 27, 1837.

The Utica City Council gave \$50 for a school for African American children in the Fourth Ward in 1837. This may have the school kept by Jermain Loguen or perhaps one kept by Mrs. Maxon (who was presumably White). Students from this school held a public exhibition in the Bleecker Street Church in August 1837.⁵⁰

Storm clouds were on the horizon, however. Beginning in 1837, one of the country’s major depressions undercut the ability of people to support not only themselves and their families but to maintain institutions such as churches and antislavery societies. In this crisis, both the American Anti-Slavery Society and the New York State Anti-Slavery Society emphasized an extraordinarily effective—and coincidentally inexpensive—tactic: they expanded their antislavery petition campaign and sent petitions signed by thousands of people to Congress.

The petition campaign began in Oneida County in 1832, when young men at the Oneida Institute sent a petition to Congress. In December 1833, in the midst of debates over colonization, Utica voters, “in the most respectful manner,” signed petitions asking the “guardians of the prosperity and welfare of our beloved country” to “extend the shield of your protection over upwards of six thousand of our fellow citizens, who groan in the bondage of slavery in the District over which you especially preside.” “We believe the time has come when this Christian nation should wipe the foul blot of slavery from our national character; when, as a nation, we should be delivered from the reproach of upholding a system which tolerates the buying and selling of innocent men, women and children, born in our land.” Among those who signed these petitions were Alvan Stewart, Spencer Kellogg, and Oliver Wetmore (who would play leading roles in both the New York State Anti-Slavery Society and the Underground Railroad). Perhaps surprisingly, David Wager and E. A. Wetmore also signed petitions. In October 1835, they would be leaders of the committee of twenty-five that mobbed the organizational meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society.⁵¹

Some of these petitions were written by local people themselves. Most, however, were printed, clipped from pages of abolitionist newspapers such as the *Friend of Man* and signed locally. Petitioners were careful to ask only for actions that Congress could take under existing law: abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia and the territories, suppressing the interstate slave trade, preventing the addition of new slave states (including Texas) to the Union.

Petitions admirably carried out the philosophy of “moral suasion,” endorsed both by the American Anti-Slavery Society and the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. They appealed to the conscience of enslavers in a spirit of Christian brotherhood (and

⁵⁰ “Free People of Color,” *Friend of Man*, January 12, 1837; “Colored School in Utica,” *Friend of Man*, February 1, 1837; “Mrs. Maxon’s Colored School,” *Friend of Man*, July 1837 and August 23, 1837.

⁵¹ “New York. Petition for the abolition of slavery in the Dist. of Columbia, March 5, 1834, Refd to the Committee for the District of Columbia, Beardsley,” HR 23.A-G4.3, NARA.

sisterhood); they avoided any reference to formal politics. Eschewing the use of “carnal weapons,” they asserted that “truth and love are inscribed in our banners, and ‘by these we conquer.’”

Petitions were ideally suited to recruiting new abolitionists as well as to generating debate about abolitionism across the country. In Oneida County, abolitionists tried to make sure that no family escaped taking a stand. “Junior” urged that petitions be presented to every family and every freeman. “We will not be silent. We will say to the members of Congress, Our Government is a democracy. We, the farmers and mechanics, are the rulers. We are the governors—you, our servants.” “Liberty” urged “every minister, every Christian, every abolitionist, and every ‘friend of man’—men and women both—to circulate petitions in each town.” The Welsh congregation at Capel Ucha, in the Town of Steuben, asked every male abolitionist to commit in writing the number of days he was willing to spend in getting signatures to abolitionist petitions.⁵²

Women as well as men signed petitions. Although women could not vote, they exercised their moral influence by appealing to the conscience of Congressmen. Usually, women signed petitions separately from men, but it was not uncommon for men and women to sign the same petitions in separate columns. A few people of African descent also signed petitions, but since signatures were not labeled by race, we cannot identify them without further research.⁵³

Petitions from New York State exploded in size and number after formation of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. On March 21, 1836, Congress received ten petitions from five hundred “Ladies” and eleven petitions from six hundred “inhabitants” of Oneida County, asking for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia. Many women signed “as wives, as mothers, and as daughters,” appealing to the “Fathers and Rulers of our Country.” “We should be less than women,” they claimed, “if the nameless and unnumbered wrongs of which the slaves of our sex are made the defenceless victims, did not fill us with horror.” “Surely, then,” they stated, “as the representatives of a people professedly Christian, you will bear with us when we express our solemn apprehensions in the language of the patriotic Jefferson, ‘we tremble for our country when we remember that God is just, and that his justice cannot sleep forever.’ And when in obedience to a divine command ‘we remember them who are in bonds as bound with them.’”⁵⁴

⁵² *Friend of Man*, November 3, 1836; February 1, 1837; Pledges of Time to circulate petitions, petitions, in manuscript document from Leonard Wynne. Original owned by Michael Everett and family.

⁵³ Judith Wellman, “Women and Radical Reform in Antebellum Upstate New York: A Profile of Grassroots Female Abolitionists,” in *Clio was a Woman: Studies in the History of American Women*, ed. Mabel E. Deutrich and Virginia C. Purdy (Washington: Howard University Press, 1980), 113–27.

⁵⁴ See, for example, several “Fathers and Rulers” petitions signed by women from Oneida County, HR27.A–G22.4, NARA.

At least one of the petitions from “inhabitants” included names of both women and men. In Rome, Harriet M. Gillett along with twenty-five other women signed the same petition as her husband Moses Gillett, pastor of Rome’s First Presbyterian Church.⁵⁵

Some of these petitions also included names of African Americans. Without further research, we cannot know how many people of color signed petitions. We do know the name of at least one African American man, however. Charles Wills signed an antislavery petition to Congress in 1854. He had been a long-time supporter of organized abolitionism, supporting the New York State Anti-Slavery Society with financial contributions. His name appeared on the list “of friends who have paid the sums affixed to their names on the ‘dollar plan’ as suggested in a late number of the *Friend of Man*,” in the *Friend of Man*, August 10, 1841.⁵⁶

Petitions such as these convinced pro-southern Congressmen that debates over slavery should not disgrace the halls of Congress. In December 1835, Representative James Hammond of South Carolina introduced a resolution that any petition dealing with slavery should be immediately tabled without discussion. During the roll call vote on May 26, 1836, former US president John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts shouted, “I hold the resolution to be a direct violation of the Constitution of the United States.” Adams lost that vote, but he continued to fight vociferously for the right of petition. So did people in Oneida County.⁵⁷

This gag rule only convinced more northerners that proslavery forces were attacking the right of free northern men like themselves to free speech. They fought back by exercising that right. Oneida County led the way. On December 1, 1836, the *Friend of Man* published a petition drafted by the Society, “praying for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and the Territories, and for the suppression of the slave trade between the States.” Citizens in various townships—including women as well as men—signed these petitions. As late as 1842, they continued to send petitions advocating the right of petition. Acors Rathbun and 103 other citizens of Verona (all male) signed a petition in 1842, for example, opposing the adoption, “by either House of Congress, of any rule, order, resolution, law or usage, limiting or impairing the constitutional right of the people to petition

⁵⁵ “New York from Oneida County State of N. York 500 Ladies Petition to abolish slavery in District of Columbia, Eleven Petitions, March 21, 1836, Ref’d to the Select Com. On the subject,” National Archives and Records Administration, HR24A-G22.4; “New York Ten petitions from 600 inhabitants of Oneida County, N. Y., praying the abolition of slavery and slave trade in District of Columbia, March 21, 1836, Ref’d to the Com app’d on the subject,” National Archives and Records Administration, HR24A-G22.4.

⁵⁶ Petition to repeal The Missouri Compromise from citizens of New Hartford, Oneida County, New York State, National Archives, digital copies archived at Utica College, Utica, New York; *Friend of Man*, August 10, 1841; <http://www.newspapers.library.cornell.edu/collect/fom>.

⁵⁷ “The House ‘Gag Rule,’” *History, Art, and Archives: United States House of Representatives*, <https://history.house.gov/Historical-Highlights/1800–1850/The-House-of-Representatives-instituted-the-%E2%80%9Cgag-rule%E2%80%9D/>; Charles Hoffer, *John Quincy Adams and the Gag Rule, 1835–50* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017).

Congress for a removal of grievances; or in any way disparaging or stigmatizing petitions on the subject of slavery.” Adams finally garnered enough support to defeat the gag rule eight years later, in 1844. A similar rule existed in the US Senate until 1850.⁵⁸

In 1837, opposition to Texas annexation became a rallying cry for petitioners. In June, the *Friend of Man* pleaded for petitions against Texas. The stakes were high. Texas annexation would lead, they predicted, to “A MEXICAN WAR—the gigantic growth of the SLAVEHOLDING POWER—the speedy SUBJUGATION of the NORTH to the SOUTH, and the ultimate rupture and DISMEMBERMENT OF THE UNION . . . !!!”⁵⁹

Oneida County residents responded in force. Petitions to Congress against Texas annexation in 1837 came from citizens in towns all over the county, including Holland Patent, Florence, Kirkland, and Deerfield. Almost all of these were signed by women as well as men.⁶⁰

Another enormous petition went to Congress from Oneida County in 1839, signed by 1,170 men from various towns in Oneida County and one town in Herkimer County. “Slavery as it exists in America is a heinous sin against God,” they asserted, “and a flagrant violation of the rights of man, inconsistent with Christianity, with our national Declaration of Independence, and with our Republican Institutions, impeding the march of liberal principles abroad; and detrimental to the interests *and subversive of the laboring population of our republic*, at home; a reproach to us in the eyes of the world, a national crime, . . . perpetually tending to discord and disunion.” People from Whitestown, Westmoreland, Paris, Augusta, Bridgewater, Marshall, and at least six other towns in Oneida County signed petitions. Those sent from Augusta included columns for men, women, and “youth over ten years.”⁶¹

So effective were petitions at publicizing the threat to free speech in the North as well as slavery in the South, that, even as they began to emphasize not only moral suasion but also the power of the vote, . . . abolitionists continued to support petitions. In October 1841, the *Friend of Man*, by then an advocate of political power, urged abolitionists to petition their state and federal governments. “Petitioning stands among the first of antislavery instrumentalities,” they asserted. “True votes and right petitions go hand in hand.”⁶²

⁵⁸ “Acors Rathub & 103 others, the Remonstrance of 104 Legal Voters in Verona Oneida County N.Y. Against the adoption of any vote, rule, law, or usage, infringing the right of petition, April 11th 1842, Question of adoption laid on the table, J. G. Floyd,” HR27A-H1.7, NARA.

⁵⁹ *Friend of Man*, June 28, 1837.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., “Stewart, S. W. 58, Caroline B., 64, Kirkland, Oneida County, N.Y., Texas,” HR 25A-H1.1, and Florence, Oneida County, “Texas, to lie,” HR 25A-H1.1, NARA.

⁶¹ “New York. Various town [*sic*] in Oneida County & one town in Herkimer Country Slavery Dist Cola. Jan. 31, 1839, to lie—1170 names, Adams, to lie,” NARA.

⁶² *Friend of Man*, October 5, 1841.

In the 1840s, they began for the first time to add references to fugitives from slavery. One petition signed by sixty-seven men and forty-three women in January 1842 asked Congress “to abolish slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia, also abolish the internal slave trade between the states, prevent the admission of Florida or Texas, except as free States, into the Union, and abolish the Act by which the Southern slaveholder attempts to recapture his fugitive slaves in the Free States.”⁶³

In 1843, another petition focused specifically on fugitives from slavery. Cynthia DeLong and 843 other women of Oneida County sent a handwritten petition from the Utica City Female Anti-Slavery Society (Mrs. Mary Peckham, President) specifically asking Congress to repeal the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793,

by which we are compelled by the degrading and humiliating necessity of denying an asylum and comfort to the innocent, flying fugitive from heartless and cruel oppressors, that we may not be compelled to witness the crime of dragging [*sic*] from our soil innocent men, women, & children into hopeless Slavery and interminable misery, by which our Land is polluted [*sic*], our religion contaminated, and our humanity crushed.

We therefore pray to be relieved from this horrible and cruel obligation, by a repeal of the Law.⁶⁴

One of the last petitions from Oneida County came in 1844. Hughes Thomas and 1,111 other Welsh citizens of Oneida County, both women and men, sent a petition in Welsh, translated into English, asking Congress “to repeal all laws of Congress which have the effect of defending and cherishing slavery in our free country.” “As Welshmen,” they pleaded, “We love liberty. A sense of oppression and a desire for more enlarged freedom induced us or our ancestors to leave our country and emigrate to this. And what we seek after ourselves we can not but desire for all men.”⁶⁵

Nationally, so many abolitionists sent petitions to Congress that by 1838, they filled to the ceiling a room twenty feet wide by thirty feet long. Oneida County sent more than any other county in upstate New York. Of the more than four hundred extant petitions sent

⁶³ “New York, Petition of 67 men & 43 women of Oneida Co. NY, praying among other things that Congress would prevent the admission of Florida or Texas into the Union except as free states, Jany 20th, 2842, SA.M. Gates,” NARA.

⁶⁴ “New York Inhabt DeLong Cynthia, Enclosed is a petition to the House of Representatives of the United States to Repeal the Law passed in 1793 in relation to fugitive slaves—signed by Cynthia DeLong and 853 others of the citizens of the county of Oneida in the State of NY from the Utica City Female Anti-Slavery Society, Mrs. Mary Peckham President, Mary I. Donner, Secretary, Feby 22d 1943 Refd to Committee on the Judiciary, Adams,” HR27A-G10.7, NARA.

⁶⁵ “New York, 119. Hughes Thomas J and 1111 Citizens of Oneida Co. in the State of New York to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia & territories, Decr 20th 1844 Committee on the District of Columbia, Mr. Adams Dist Columbia,” HR28A-G5.2, NARA.

from upstate New York between 1836 and 1844, Oneida County residents sent 124. The Town of Paris, with seventeen extant petitions, sent more than any other township in upstate New York. Many came from the Congregational Church at Paris Hill.⁶⁶

Along with a focus on petitions, abolitionists affiliated with the New York State Anti-Slavery Society emphasized a concern for the rights of all African Americans. In 1837, for example, they compiled a list of legal disabilities that free people of color faced in New York State. They outlined their report in the *Friend of Man*, noting disabilities in terms of representation, voting, and laws that allowed enslaved people to be brought into New York State. “Naked rampant slavery on our soil,” they noted.⁶⁷

As early as 1837, abolitionists in Oneida and adjacent Oswego Counties initiated an entirely new approach, based not on the moral suasion of petitions but on political power. Why, they asked, should we vote for officeholders who opposed abolition? At its meeting in the fall, the New York State Anti-Slavery Society urged its members to vote only for anti-slavery candidates. They circulated a series of questions, asking each county antislavery society to submit them to all candidates and to publish answers in the *Friend of Man*. None of the answers were completely satisfactory to abolitionists. It was, however, a beginning.⁶⁸

By 1838, it was obvious that political abolitionism was on the rise. At its meeting in May 1838, the Oneida County Anti-Slavery Society gave its first official endorsement of political action. “The American ballot-box is a mighty instrument of moral, not less than political power,” they argued. They urged their members to “go like firm Christians to the polls, and vote for no one as a member of congress, who is not known to have been a firm and staunch abolitionist.” At their July meeting, they made it clear that they did not intend to form a separate abolitionist political party. But in August, they asked every Oneida County abolitionist voter to sign a pledge to vote only for candidates who espoused immediate emancipation. “We have started on the journey of emancipation,” they wrote. “We have reached the Red Sea. Shall we go forward, or shall we go back and enlist in Pharaoh’s army? Shall we present petitions by the thousands to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia and the slavetrade among the states, and then vote for a Congressman who will lay these petitions unread, unprinted, unREFERRED, undebated, and unconsidered on the table? Would not God desert us for such hypocrisy?”⁶⁹ By the end of October, 846 Oneida County voters had signed this petition.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ For number of petitions by 1838, see *New York American*, March 13, 1838, reprinted in *Friend of Man*, April 11, 1838. For further discussion of the petition campaign in New York State, see Wellman, *Grassroots Reform*.

⁶⁷ “Report on People of Color,” *Friend of Man*, September 27, 1837.

⁶⁸ *Friend of Man*, November 8, 1837.

⁶⁹ *Friend of Man*, March 28, 1838, July 11, 1838; August 8, 1838.

⁷⁰ *Friend of Man*, October 31, 1838.

Acting on this commitment to move forward, the Executive Committee of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society urged abolitionists in 1838 to quiz candidates on the right of petition, Texas annexation, the extension of US territories, the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, abolition of the slave trade between states, and most notably, jury trials for those accused of escaping from slavery, voting rights for African American men, and the abolition of the law that allowed enslavers to keep enslaved people legally in New York State for nine months. Neither Charles P. Kirkland nor Henry Fitzhugh, running for Congress and the New York State legislature on the Whig ticket, met abolitionist standards. Abolitionists also strongly opposed current Democratic Governor William L. Marcy, but they were not happy with the credentials of Whig candidate William Henry Seward, either. At the state level, the only candidate they endorsed without reservation was Luther Bradish, running for Lt. Governor on the Whig ticket, who spoke “nobly—explicitly—intelligently—heartily, in favor of the right and the true.” In the fall of 1838, William Chaplin, Henry B. Stanton, Gerrit Smith, and others stumped the Seventeenth Congressional District, speaking to thousands. Seward won 1,100 votes in Oneida County, but amid much abolitionist rejoicing, Bradish had 490 more. Governor Marcy carried Oneida County, but Seward and Bradish won the election, with 51.4 percent of the statewide vote.⁷¹

Splits among churches over abolitionism were also evident by 1838. In April 1838, Methodists in Sauquoit, Town of Paris, invited the new Oneida County Anti-Slavery Society to hold its meeting in their church. Trustees refused to give permission, so the meeting adjourned to the Sauquoit Presbyterian Church, where William Chaplin reported an “uncommonly interesting” meeting. Abolitionists met again in the Sauquoit Presbyterian Church on December 20, 1838, where thirty-three new members joined the abolitionist society. Four days later, December 24, 1838, they held a memorial service for Elijah Lovejoy, killed in defense of his press in Alton, Illinois. Free speech and a free press, they declared, were “the natural, inalienable, and constitutional rights of the humblest individual, without reference to the color of his skin.”

At their meeting in March 1839 at Paris Hill, Oneida County abolitionists reaffirmed their commitment to immediate emancipation and political action. In September, the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, under President Gerrit Smith, changed its constitution so that “no member of this society shall cast his vote for any candidate . . . who shall be reasonably suspected of being opposed to the repeal of any law which makes complexion a ground of disfranchisement [*sic*] or disability, to any law which denies to persons threatened with the loss of personal liberty the right of a trial by jury, or to any law which does in any wise, approvingly recognize the unnatural and sinful relation of slaveholders.”⁷²

⁷¹ James C. Jackson to Edwin W. Clarke, [November 1838], Oswego County Historical Society; *Friend of Man*, October 31, 1838; *Friend of Man*, November 29, 1838.

⁷² *Friend of Man*, September 25, 1839.

In its embrace of political abolitionism, the New York State Anti-Slavery Society and the Oneida County Anti-Slavery Society had done important and long-lasting work. After his election, Seward essentially embraced the main abolitionist demands for the rights of people of color in New York State.⁷³

Commitment to abolitionist politics on the part of both the Oneida County Anti-Slavery Society and the New York State Anti-Slavery Society led directly to the formation of an abolitionist third party. In Warsaw, New York, in the fall of 1839, abolitionists held a preliminary meeting of the new Liberty Party. At a convention on April 1, 1840, in Albany, they nominated James G. Birney, Alabama slaveholder turned abolitionist, for president; Thomas Earle, a Pennsylvania Quaker, for vice-president; and Alvan Stewart for governor of New York State. At their meeting in July 1840, Oneida County abolitionists wholeheartedly endorsed the new party and voted to send twenty-five delegates to the Freeman’s State Convention in Syracuse on August 5. In the November election, Oneida County abolitionists—reflecting Utica’s position as a center of statewide abolitionist leadership—recorded 351 votes for the Liberty Party, more than any other county in central New York.⁷⁴

Undergirding the rise of the Liberty Party was an intellectual debate about slavery and the US Constitution. William Lloyd Garrison and his followers argued that the Constitution was a proslavery document. They would burn a copy on the steps of the Massachusetts statehouse in 1843, arguing that it was “a covenant with death and an agreement with Hell.”⁷⁵

In Utica, however, lawyer and abolitionist Alvan Stewart was working on an alternative idea, that the Constitution was, in fact, antislavery. The Fifth Amendment, for example, noted, “nor shall any person be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law.” Persons, he claimed, included enslaved people.⁷⁶

Born near South Granville in eastern New York State in 1790, Stewart lived briefly in Canada before becoming a successful and well-respected lawyer in Cherry Valley, New York. He moved to Utica in 1832. Powerfully influenced by religious revivals, he began to

⁷³ Paul Finkelman, “The Protection of Black Rights in Seward’s New York,” *Civil War History* 34:3 (January 1988), 211–34.

⁷⁴ *Friend of Man*, November 25, 1840. For overviews of political abolitionism, see Douglas Strong, *Perfectionist Politics*, and Richard Sewall, *Ballots for Freedom*; Reinhard O. Johnson, *The Liberty Party, 1840–48: Antislavery Third-Party Politics in the United States* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009); Michael D. Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics* (Raleigh: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

⁷⁵ Phillips, *The Constitution A Pro-Slavery Compact; or, Selections from the Madison Papers*.

⁷⁶ Stewart, “A Constitutional Argument on the Subject of Slavery,” September 20, 1837, published in *Friend of Man*, October 1837, quoted in Blue, 31.

work not only as a lawyer but as an abolitionist organizer, lecturer, and author. His office still stands at 120 Genesee Street, only a block from the offices of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society and the *Friend of Man* (both now demolished).⁷⁷

Fellow abolitionists in Oneida County initially resisted Stewart’s argument. But he convinced Gerrit Smith and William Goodell, who helped bring others into the fold. When he presented his ideas to the American Anti-Slavery Society’s annual meeting in New York City in May 1838, however, he received strong censure, as Garrisonian leaders “came down upon me,” he wrote to his wife, “like a thunder shower.” Still he received forty-seven votes for his resolution that “the federal government had constitutional power to abolish slavery in the slave States,” with only thirty-seven against. It was not the two-thirds majority he needed to swing the Society to his side, but it laid the basis for abolitionist political action. By the fall of 1838, Stewart was convinced that a formal abolitionist third party was the only viable course. “One thing is certain,” he wrote, “if we ever abolish it [slavery] in this world, it will be done by political action, or else it will be accomplished by the slaves rising.”⁷⁸

Abolitionists in upstate New York had originally been wary of political abolitionism, especially of any talk of a third party. But the unresponsiveness of both Democratic and Whig politicians had convinced them otherwise. In so doing, they became national leaders in third-party abolitionism, as they had also been leaders of the petition movement. A month after the 1840 election, heady with their first taste of political organizing, Oneida County abolitionists adopted a new name, the Oneida County Moral and Political Anti-Slavery Society. Every abolitionist who could vote, they resolved, should “vote for every officer selected, from the President of the United States to path-master of a road-district, unless prevented by the providence of God. And furthermore, that we will vote for abolitionists, and for them only, to fill said offices.” When the *Friend of Man* ceased publication in January 1842, a new paper *The Liberty Press*, edited by Wesley Bailey, took its place as a voice for the new Liberty Party.⁷⁹

Besides political abolitionism, a second issue—the right of women abolitionists to take public action—made some Oneida County abolitionists uneasy. Charles Stuart, British-born principal of the Utica Academy who had worked as an abolitionist agent in Oneida County, wrote to Gerrit Smith on August 15, 1841, “I do fully believe, that I should

⁷⁷ For more on Alvan Stewart, see Milton Sernett, *North Star Country: Upstate New York and the Crusade for American Freedom* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001); Frederick J. Blue, “A Self-Sharpening Plough; Alvan Stewart’s Challenge to Slavery,” *No Taint of Compromise: Crusaders in Antislavery Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 15.

⁷⁸ Alvan Stewart to Webb, June 25, 1840, Alvan Stewart Papers, quoted in Blue, 26–27; Blue, 20–23; Luther R. Marsh, *Writings and Speeches of Alvan Stewart on Slavery* (New York: A. B. Burdick, 1860).

⁷⁹ *Friend of Man*, January 3, 1841.

transgress God’s clearly revealed will, . . . could I admit, in general terms, as you affirm it, the propriety of woman’s participating with men, in public debate; and I therefore could not assent to this proposition without trampling my conscience in the dust.”⁸⁰

By 1840, organized abolitionists nationally split into two main camps, divided over political abolitionism and women’s rights. At the annual May meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York City, radical Garrisonians—devoted both to non-violence and to women’s participation in abolitionism—nominated Abby Kelley to the executive committee. Unable to accept the participation of women in public roles and turning rapidly toward political organization, many abolitionists were appalled. The “old organizationists” kept the American Anti-Slavery Society, and political abolitionists organized a new society—the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.

Many Oneida County abolitionists, however, like those in much of central and western New York, were sympathetic both to political abolitionism and to women’s rights. Asked to choose between two national organizations, many of them chose neither. Instead, they developed a third way, endorsing both political abolitionism and women’s rights to participate publicly in the abolitionist movement. New Yorkers abandoned the old New York State Anti-Slavery Society to form a Western New York Anti-Slavery Society at Farmington, New York, near Rochester, in 1840 and an Eastern New York Anti-Slavery Society centered in the Albany-Troy area. The *Friend of Man* published its last issue in January 1842.

Although the New York State Anti-Slavery Society dissolved, Oneida County abolitionists, leaders in both the petition campaign and abolitionist political action, had done lasting work. One major impact was on statewide politics. Although abolitionists had not supported the election of William Henry Seward as governor in 1838, Seward surprised them in his two terms of office (January 1, 1839–December 31, 1842) by adopting most abolitionist demands. In 1840, he signed into law a bill that guaranteed a jury trial for anyone accused of being a fugitive from slavery. In 1841, he supported the repeal of the law that had allowed people from slave states to bring enslaved men and women into New York State legally for nine months. From 1841 on, any enslaved person who crossed the New York State boundary became instantly free. Suddenly, New York State became a haven for refugees from slavery. Word went out immediately to abolitionists all across New York State, who joyfully informed formerly enslaved people of their legal status as free people, protected by the State of New York.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Charles Stuart to Gerrit Smith, August 1, 1841, Gerrit Smith Papers, Syracuse University.

⁸¹ “An Act to extend the right of trial by jury,” Act of May 6, 1840, *Laws of New York, 1840*, 174; “An Act to amend the Revised Statutes in relation to persons held in slavery,” *Laws of New York, 1841*, May 25, 1841, 227, cited in Finkelman, “The Protection of Black Rights in Seward’s New York,” 212.

Equal voting rights for African American men, another abolitionist demand, would require an amendment to the state constitution, beyond Seward’s authority as governor. But Seward promoted two other laws that protected African American rights.

First, in 1840, he signed a bill that allowed New York State governors to appoint agents to help any New York State citizen of color who had been captured and sold into slavery. This law was most likely in response to the dramatic case of James Watkins Seward, born in Whitestown, Oneida County, in 1813. James Seward’s father immigrated from Philadelphia about 1810 and bought a farm in Whitestown. He died when James was only two. When he was about twelve years old, Seward moved with his mother Hannah to nearby Oswego County to live with his stepfather Amos Mason, a schoolteacher in Gilbert’s Mills. Well-educated in Whitestown schools, by his stepfather in Oswego County, and at a school kept by Gerrit Smith in Peterboro, Seward ended up living an adventurous life as a counterfeiter, traveling throughout New York State, Canada, and the Mississippi River valley. He was also a naïve young man. In 1840, Seward was captured and about to be sold into slavery in New Orleans when, with the help of abolitionists in New York City and central New York, he escaped back to freedom. Seward may also have been an Underground Railroad agent, perhaps the earliest abolitionist associated with Gerrit Smith who took direct action to bring enslaved people to freedom.

Seward did not learn his lesson in 1840. He ended up going south once more, operating a business with four other African Americans bringing foodstuffs from New Orleans for sale in St. Louis. Seward was arrested, tried, and executed in July 1841 for his involvement in the murder of two St. Louis bank clerks. This 1840 law, however, was instrumental in rescuing Saratoga resident Solomon Northrup from slavery in Louisiana in 1852.⁸²

William Henry Seward’s second major contribution to the rights of African Americans in New York State was his support for universal education for all children in New York State, regardless of race. Some districts in New York State established separate schools for children of color; others integrated their local schools.⁸³

⁸² Judith Wellman, “James Watkins Seward: Common Criminal or Hero of the Freedom Trail?” unpublished paper, National Council on Public History, April 12, 2002; Mike McAndrew, “James Watkins Seward: When Being Black Was Called a Crime,” *Post-Standard*, February 24, 2005; “An Act more effectually to protect the free citizens of this state from being kidnapped or reduced to slavery,” Act of May 14, 1840, *Laws of New York, 1840*, 319, cited in Finkelman, “The Protection of Black Rights in Seward’s New York,” 212. We know so much about James Watkins Seward because, before his death, he told his story to a local newspaper editor, who published a pamphlet to be sold the day he was hung. *Trials and Confessions of Madison Henderson, Alias Blanchard, Alfred Amos Warrick, James W. Seward, and Charles Brown, Murderers of Jesse Baker and Jacob Weaver, as Given by Themselves; and a Likeness of Each, Taken in Jail Shortly after Their Arrest*, edited by A. B. Chambers (Saint Louis: Chambers & Knapp, 1841).

⁸³ “An Act to amend the second Title of the fifteenth Chapter of the first Part of the Revised Statutes, relating to common schools,” Act of May 26, 1841, *New York Laws, 1841*, 236, cited in Finkelman, “The Protection of Black Rights in Seward’s New York,” 212–13.

As legal scholar Paul Finkelman noted, Seward’s actions from 1839–41 “gave blacks rights and protections they enjoyed in few other places.” These protections were a direct result of abolitionist agitation in Oneida County and central New York.⁸⁴

The Underground Railroad in Oneida County, 1830–1842

Abolitionists associated with the New York State Anti-Slavery Society also became a key part of an emerging Underground Railroad network. As early as 1838, William Chaplin invited friends of the cause to meet at the offices of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society to organize a local Vigilance Committee. Patterned after the New York City Vigilance committee organized by David Ruggles and others in 1836, this committee was designed to assist people escaping from slavery with money, aid, and counsel, “to afford all needed assistance to fugitives from the hand of *patriarchal whips, chains, and villains*.” “Cases proper for the action of a Vigilance Committee are occurring every week in the year in this city,” noted Chaplin.

⁸⁴ Finkelman, “The Protection of Black Rights in Seward’s New York,” 212.

For the Friend of Man. 6
VIGILANCE COMMITTEES.

Friend Goodell :—Allow me to call the attention of your readers to a subject of considerable interest and importance. I refer to the organization and duties of a Vigilance Committee. It is well known to you, that such a Committee was found absolutely indispensable in the city of New York and was accordingly instituted more than two years since. It is no less obvious, that a similar measure and for nearly as strong reasons is now demanded in all the cities and large towns of certain districts through the state.

It is understood to be the duty of a Vigilance Committee to afford all needed assistance to fugitives from the hand of *patriarchal whips, chains, and villains*—to direct their weary steps to a land, where "the law favors liberty," and "favoreth a man's person before his possessions." Considerable sums of money are frequently required as well as aid and counsel; and you and I know, that cases proper for the action of a Vigilance Committee are occurring every week in the year in this city. And what is true of this city in that respect, is also true of Albany, Syracuse, Oswego, Rochester, Lockport, Buffalo and Ogdensburg. Let these committees be organized immediately in all these and perhaps some other places, and open a correspondence with the committee in the city of New York. In addition to the good service which these committees might directly render to the cause of humanity, they would be able in the course of a year to furnish a long catalogue of the most stirring incidents peculiarly characteristic of the "patriarchal institution," which might be preserved in the annual report of the central com. at N. Y., for the inspection of the public eye, and for the instruction and amazement of posterity! To set the thing in motion, I propose, that you invite a meeting of friends to the object at the anti-slavery rooms, some evening this week, to deliberate and act in the premises.

"Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee."

Ever yours,

W. L. C.

Utica, April 16, 1838.

NOTICE.—In accordance with the above suggestion, the friends of human rights who are ready and willing to come up to the work, are respectfully invited to meet at the Anti-Slavery Office, for the purpose of consulting on the subject, on FRIDAY EVENING of this week, at 7 o'clock.

Figure 4.3. "Vigilance Committees," *Friend of Man*, April 18, 1838

A new biracial abolitionist partnership included lawyers of European descent (particularly Alvan Stewart) who mounted legal challenges to slavery, moral resistance by abolitionists of both European and African descent, and physical resistance, led by African Americans. The rescue of Harry Bird and George in December 1836 illustrated that partnership most dramatically. But the few documented other incidents hint also at the expanding work of the Underground Railroad. The presence of Mrs. Culbert at the 1837 New York State Anti-Slavery Convention suggests emerging support from abolitionists in general for people who had escaped from slavery. Although Mrs. Culbert lived in Utica, her two children remained enslaved.⁸⁵

In 1839, an enslaved man named Robert escaped from slavery in Maysville, Kentucky, to come through Utica. His story also illustrated strong local abolitionist support for refugees from slavery, as well as the way that Whites and Blacks cooperated in the effort to free him. As a person born in slavery, Robert served his enslaver Dudley as cook and coachman. He often met Henry Clay, who would run for President in 1840. One day, Clay asked him “if he would like to be free; he answered yes.”

What would you do if you were free?

Do as you do.

How is that?

O, you get a living somehow, and I would do the same.

Do you think you are a man?

Yes, what am I?

You are a *thing*.

A thing—I am no thing, &c.⁸⁶

Robert recalled how his enslaver’s demeanor changed immediately in New York. Robert was dressed in a ruffled shirt and an eight-dollar hat, invited to eat at the same table as Dudley and his wife, and given money to go to social affairs by himself. In Utica, Dudley left him in a charge of a barkeeper at a local hotel, while he went to a meeting of bankers in Albany. The rest of the story is best told in the words of a correspondent for the *Herald of Freedom*:

Alvan Stewart came in [the bar] and said, what are you doing here?

I’m with my master.

Master! you’ve got no master.

I have got a master.

Did you ever see your master?

Yes, I’ve seen my master.

Was you ever in heaven?

No, I never was in heaven.

⁸⁵ “Great Anti-Slavery Convention,” *Friend of Man*, September 27, 1837.

⁸⁶ “The Slave Robert,” *The Colored American*, June 1, 1839, reprinted from the *Herald of Freedom*.

Then you have not seen your master—you have no master but God. Would you like to be free?

Yes (it is believed) was the reply.

Will you go with me?

Here the bar-keeper interfered, and told Mr. Stewart not to talk so to that man—he was left in his care, and he wished he would leave the house. Mr. S. said it was a tavern, and he should stay as long as he pleased. Mr. S. then gave someone a dollar to go and ask Mr. Gerrit Smith, who was then in town, to come in. He soon came, and says, what are you doing here?—After having pretty much the same conversation with him that Mr. Stewart had had, they walked out.

Soon a colored man came in and invited the slave to take tea with him.—The bar-keeper said he might go—that was a clever fellow, he knew him, he lived near. When he got to the colored man’s house, behold! Mr. Stewart and Mr. Smith were there. They asked him if he wished to be free—he answered yes. They stripped off his fine clothes, gave them to the colored man, and put another suit on him. Mr. Smith gave him \$15, and sent him out to Peterboro, 25 miles.

Mrs. S. gave him a letter to the friends of humanity with whom he should meet, expressing her entire confidence in the truth of his story. She was well acquainted with many southern people of whom he spoke, and with one branch of his master’s family.—She then sent him on his way in her sleigh.

Mr. Smith gave him the name of John Taylor, and advised him . . . to go to Boston, to Mr. Garrison, thinking he might be protected there.⁸⁷

Henry Howard and Jane Howard also escaped from slavery to settle in Oneida County, in Clinton, sometime about 1840. Born about 1817 in slavery in Bel Air, Maryland, Henry Howard escaped slavery with his wife Jane Jackson, from Port Tobacco, Maryland, and four others. Henry Howard and Jane Jackson had married in the late 1830s. About 1840, they decided to “seek liberty or die in the attempt,” noted Howard’s obituary in 1897. With the help of Quakers, they took what was becoming a major Underground Railroad route from the eastern shore of Maryland to Philadelphia, New York City, and Albany. On the advice of people in Albany, perhaps Stephen or Harriet Myers or someone at the offices of the *Tocsin of Liberty* or the *Albany Patriot*, they decided to go to Utica. Although pursued and almost captured by their former enslavers, they made it to Oneida County, where they found shelter in the home of John Powell in Clinton. About 1851, Howard was spirited with several others to Kingston, Ontario, after an attempt to capture a fugitive from slavery at

⁸⁷ “The Slave Robert,” *The Colored American*, June 1, 1839, reprinted from the *Herald of Freedom*.

the Oneida County courthouse in Utica. After spending a brief time in Kingston, Ontario, Howard returned to Clinton, where he bought land. His son, also named Henry, told his father’s story into the 1930s.⁸⁸

Such experiences with real people who had escaped from slavery profoundly shaped the world view of local abolitionists, especially White abolitionists who otherwise had little personal experience with slavery. Harry Bird, George, Mrs. Culbert, Robert, Henry and Jane Howard, and we expect many others like them, honed a steely commitment on the part of abolitionists such as Gerrit Smith, Ann Smith, and Alvan Stewart to helping enslaved people escape. That commitment would last until slavery itself had died. It became a core value of political abolitionists in the 1840s, as Smith, Stewart, Goodell, Chaplin and the cohort of radical abolitionists in Oneida County took their Underground Railroad work to a national level and initiated, as historian Stanley Harrold suggested, a new phase of “aggressive abolitionism.”

By the early 1840s, Oneida County abolitionists built on the foundation they had laid in the 1830s to promote abolitionism in both religious and political organizations statewide and nationally and to expand their support for the Underground Railroad, reaching from central New York into the upper South.

⁸⁸ *Clinton Signal*, February 21, 1851; Obituary for Henry Howard, *Clinton Courier*, March 24, 1897; *Clinton Courier*, September 24, 1936.

CHAPTER FIVE

“Forced Flight to Liberty”: Abolitionism and the Underground Railroad in Oneida County, 1842–1850¹

Historic Sites

A. Sites Associated with Freedom Seekers

1. Florence: Florence Farming and Lumber Association
2. Paris: Roberts-Thomas Home
3. Paris: Hillcrest Cemetery
4. Rome: Bowen-Stephenson Family Home
5. Rome: Site of Brown Family Home
6. Utica: Post Street

B. Sites Associated with Underground Railroad Helpers

1. Marshall: Site of Simmons Homes
2. New Hartford: Home of Wills Family
3. Paris: Jesse Thomson Store
4. Paris: Pierce Home
5. Paris: Site of Home of Henry Crane
6. Steuben: Capel Ucha
7. Steuben: Everett Home
8. Utica: Site of Offices of Wesley Bailey and *The Liberty Press*

C. Sites Related to Abolitionism

1. Camden: Wesleyan Methodist Church
2. Marshall: Hanover Church
3. Utica: Courthouse and Academy
4. Utica: Site of Home of Francis Wright and Paulina Kellogg Wright
5. Remsen: Bethel Church

¹ “Forced Flight to Liberty,” from Mary Everett, “An Historical Sketch of the First Welsh Congregational Church of Remsen, N.Y.,” 1914. Read at the dedication of the New Chapel, June 23, 1904.

On George Washington’s birthday, February 22, 1844, John Thomas was working in Baltimore, perhaps as a carpenter, when he was assaulted by a group of boys. Thomas had had enough. He was determined to live in peace with everyone, but he realized that he could not do so in slavery. In the fall of 1844, Thomas and a friend left slavery forever. They followed a well-known route through Philadelphia, New York City, and Albany. In two weeks, sometime in mid-December, they arrived in Utica, New York. There they stayed one night with a “colored barber named Johnson,” probably William Johnson on Post Street, before meeting Wesley Bailey, editor of *The Liberty Press*, whose offices were in the Devereux Block on Genesee Street. Bailey persuaded them to stay in the United States, rather than going on to Canada.

John Thomas went to Paris, New York, just south of Utica, where he found a network of committed abolitionists. Jesse Thomson found work for Thomas on the farms of J. M. Simmons and Val Pierce. Thomas spent Christmas dinner with John and Mary Roberts, who had earlier escaped from slavery in Maryland. In the spring of 1845, Thomas began work with Henry Crane, who owned a tavern in the nearby village of Sauquoit. He stayed there for four years. In 1848, Thomas married Sarah, born about 1805 in Ulster County, New York. By 1850, John and Sarah Thomas and John and Mary Roberts had purchased a house together just west of the village green in Paris. After the death of Sarah Thomas and John Roberts, John Thomas and Mary Roberts married. They lived in that house until their deaths.

John Thomas’s obituary in 1881 detailed the story of his life. John Thomas and his whole family were enslaved by Henry Pyles, a Catholic priest on the eastern shore of Maryland. They were willed to the priest’s sister, a Carmelite nun, in 1814, and moved to a monastery in Port Tobacco, Maryland. When the Carmelites moved to Baltimore, John went with them, separated from his family by sale. He lived and worked in and around Baltimore until he escaped to Utica in 1844. When John Thomas died, he was remembered as “ever courteous and dignified,” with “ease and grace of manner.” “This man is our friend, in the best and fullest sense of the word. He was kind and forgiving, and truly solicitous for the welfare of all.” “I believe that we all ought to rejoice that his guiding star led him here, for I am sure that we are better for his having lived among us.”²

John Thomas’s escape is a well-documented example of what were likely dozens—and maybe hundreds—of people who escaped from slavery to and through Oneida County in the 1840s. We know the names of several of them, including George French, who spoke in Steuben in 1842; J. D. Green, who was recaptured on Post Street in Utica about 1846; Jo Norton (likely a pseudonym for James Baker), who escaped from Washington, DC, and

² “The Late John Thomas,” *Clinton Courier*, April 14, 1881.

came through Utica in the mid-1840s; a family named Brown, who settled in Rome; and Walter Hawkins and others who lived in Florence in the late 1840s. Their stories are integrated into this narrative.

Refugees from slavery in the 1840s were aided by the 1841 New York State law guaranteeing freedom to anyone who crossed the line into New York State. They also benefitted from an expanding abolitionist network made up of people of both European and African descent in central New York. As freedom seekers began to appear at meetings of both the Central New York Anti-Slavery Society and the Liberty Party, they became some of the most powerful recruiters for the abolitionist cause. By sharing their stories, they transformed slavery from an abstract concept into a very personal experience. These personal connections forced many local citizens to take a stand. They led many Oneida County abolitionists to advocate not only for the abolition of slavery but for equal rights for all African Americans.

Abolitionism in Oneida County in the early 1840s was characterized by competitions between people affiliated with William Lloyd Garrison and the American Anti-Slavery Society and those who formed the new Liberty Party. In 1842 and 1843, moral suasionists associated with the American Anti-Slavery Society organized a campaign to create one hundred new antislavery societies. A special goal was to rebuild regional societies to replace the statewide societies that had collapsed after the national split in 1840. Abby Kelley (former Quaker and outspoken advocate for the rights of both African Americans and women) and Frederick Douglass (who had escaped from slavery in Maryland in 1838) took the lead. They planned a series of meetings in local villages all across central and western New York as a prelude to mammoth conventions in Rochester, Syracuse, and Utica.³

Abby Kelley’s message was one of “come-outerism.” Abolitionists should withdraw from every church and political institution that supported slavery, she declared. These were strong words, indeed. As a result, few churches allowed Kelly to speak. Many ministers refused even to announce her talks. But Kelley was impressed with upstate New York. “I have now been hastily over a large part of Western New York,” she wrote in September. “I think myself safe in saying, no part of the field in which it has fallen to my lot to labor will better pay the culture. Such frankness, such readiness to receive the truth and to follow it is rarely found.”⁴

³ Dorothy Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time: Abby Kelley and the Politics of Antislavery* (New York: Norton, 1994), Chapter 9, “Along the Psychic Highway.”

⁴ *Liberator*, September 30, 1842; Margaret Hope Bacon, *I Speak for my Slave Sister: The Life of Abby Kelley Foster* (Ty Crowell, 1974); Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 153.

Abby Kelley came to Utica in November 1842, urging abolitionists to come out of existing churches and political parties and to join the new Central New York Anti-Slavery Society. This group advocated nonviolence and the dissolution of the Union, based on the belief that the Constitution was a proslavery document.

In early November, Kelly spoke in Utica in the very courtroom that had expelled abolitionists who tried to meet there in 1835. As supporters of slavery, both church and state perpetrated “falsehood, theft, robbery, concubinage and murder,” she charged. The *Utica Daily Gazette* reported that no one could mistake her message: She was for total abolition, “immediate and unqualified, without reference to consequences or conditions . . . leaving them only to God.” These ideas, thought the reporter, were “absurd, visionary, and impracticable.” The meeting’s chair managed to gag any opposition speakers, thought the *Gazette*, while the few political abolitionists present, including Alvan Stewart, were “leered at and put by, by their more consistent moral suasion friends,” who made “sly and admonitory” remarks that the audience enjoyed and “thought them to be well deserved.”⁵

The *Utica Daily Times* presented a more positive view. While they criticized her message, they applauded her “impressive oratory, very correct and polished language, evident sincerity, set off by a graceful delivery, admirable gesticulation and expression of emotions on quite a fair, comely face.” “We have in by-gone days listened to John Randolph [and] Henry Clay,” they noted. “We are not alone in saying that in her line and in her way, no public speaker we have ever heard could have held his audience in fixed attention to an equal degree of absorption.” Audiences thronged to hear her, with “a perfect jam” at her third lecture and “crowded to suffocation” at her fourth. Her fourth lecture also brought resistance from a crowd of rowdies, “who set up a noise outside, and raised the cry of fire; but the audience had no connection with them, and they were immediately taken away by the watchmen.”⁶

Utica’s reaction to Kelley’s speeches, reported one observer, show that “Utica is *ashamed* of the mob of 1835, and ill-disposed to reproduce it. The press of that city generally treat Abby Kelley’s lectures very respectfully, and highly praise their earnest eloquence. . . . I know of no place where antislavery, or any other subject, can be discussed with greater latitude or freedom than here.”⁷

Kelley finished her lectures on Monday evening, reiterating her theme, “that the American Church was the main bulwark of American slavery.” Not surprisingly, every church in Utica refused her admission. With the exception of only a handful of people, “the entire mass of members of the principal churches in Utica, have not thought right or

⁵ “Notices. Conventions in Middle and Western New-York,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, October 27, 1842; “Anti-Slavery Convention, *Utica Daily Gazette*, December 17, 1842.

⁶ *Utica Daily Times*, quoted in *Liberator*, November 18, 1842; Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 153–54.

⁷ “Utica,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, November 17, 1842.

discreet, to venture within the sound of her voice,” reported the *Utica Daily Gazette*. Neither did political abolitionists come to Kelley’s lectures. As to those who objected to a woman speaking in public to “indiscriminate assemblies,” concluded the *Gazette*, “when our Maker has seen fit to endow any of his created objects with rare and effective tools, it would seem as if intended them to be put . . . to appropriate use.”⁸

Back in Utica for their “mammoth” convention on November 29, 1842, Kelley brought with her major leaders of the American Anti-Slavery Society. They included William Lloyd Garrison, editor of the *Liberator*; James C. Fuller, a wealthy abolitionist from Skaneateles, New York; Joseph C. Hathaway, organizer of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society; and the firebrand Stephen Foster, whose confrontational attacks regularly brought him close to mob violence—all people of European descent. Joseph C. Hathaway presided over the meeting. Stephen Foster introduced a resolution castigating the US government as “a wicked and nefarious conspiracy against the liberty of more than two million of our countrymen.” Anyone who supported that government was “the basest of slaves, the vilest of hypocrites and the most execrable of man-stealers, inasmuch as they voluntarily consent to be the watch-dogs of the plantation.” Speaking “as though my mother—my sister were now before me on the auction block,” Kelley followed with a ringing attack on churches, which she accused of complicity in a slave system.⁹

William Lloyd Garrison rose to say that he had come before the assembly “a detested man, obnoxious to the American people, with a price upon his head, and covered with the foulest epithets; but among them was not found slaveholder, or apologist for slavery.” Opponents of any reform, he noted, start by treating its proponents with contempt, move to espousing their principles but condemning their measures, and then to sowing discord among reformers themselves, attacking the character of reformers as infidels.¹⁰

On the very first day of the convention, they welcomed “another consignment of southern merchandise,” “three of our brethren from the southern prison-house.” The convention greeted them “with rapturous applause.” One of the three men told the story of how he had bid his master goodbye without his enslaver knowing it. When President Joseph C. Hathaway asked “Is there safety for these men in Utica? Would they protect them from the kidnappers?” the convention erupted in “a long, loud, deep-swelling aye!” “It was a thrilling scene,” reported the *Liberator*, and it helped focus the attention of Utica citizens on the Underground Railroad as part of the abolitionist movement.¹¹

⁸ *Utica Daily Gazette*, November 2, 1842, reprinted in *The Liberator*, November 18, 1842.

⁹ Debates in these meetings are covered extensively in the *Liberator*, December 22, 23, 30, 1842, and *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, December 15, 22, 1842. Lucretia Mott’s name appeared as one of the committee to prepare the convention’s business, but there is no indication that she spoke or even attended this convention.

¹⁰ *Liberator*, December 23, 1842.

¹¹ *Oneida Whig*, December 6, 1842; *Liberator*, December 22, 1842.

Extensive debates on the constitutionality of slavery occupied the convention. So did a proposed constitution for a new central New York antislavery society. It had a “bad odor,” said one speaker, and “smelled too strongly of Garrisonism, Kellyism, &c.” Alvan Stewart, a Liberty Party man, had no intention of joining the new society, but he defended their right to organize and “throw their banner to the breeze.” “To object to their organizing a society, because they don’t think as we do, is the very thing abolitionists have complained of in years past.” He hoped, he said, “our friends would have no obstacles thrown in their way, but that they go on and organize their society, and do all the good they can.” “As to the insanity of Mr. Foster,” Stewart concluded, “if he *were* crazy, but told us the truth, we were bound to receive it.”¹²

Although its “bad odor” repelled political abolitionists, the convention almost unanimously adopted a constitution for the new Central New-York State Society, auxiliary to the American Anti-Slavery Society. It outlined two purposes. First, they would work to abolish slavery immediately, and second, they would promote “the character and condition of the people of color, by encouraging their intellectual, moral, and religious improvement, and by removing public prejudice, that thus they may, according to their intellectual and moral worth, share an equality, with the whites, of civil and religious privileges.”¹³

The convention elected officers for the coming year, reflecting the society’s geographic breadth, from Herkimer County in the east to Onondaga County in the west. James C. Fuller was elected president, with one vice-president each from various central New York counties, including Abraham Van Epps from Oneida County. Notably, the executive committee included several women and at least one African American, William Johnson, a local barber. Paulina S. Wright was among them, along with her husband Francis Wright and Samuel Lightbody, Sarah Van Epps, George Peylar, William M. Tallman, William Johnson, Mary Springstead, Elizabeth Russell, Robert Paul, Nancy Bushnell, James Hallock, and Henry Newland, all of European descent.¹⁴

The issue of churches as pro-slavery arose once more. James C. Fuller, a Quaker, gave a speech showing the “intimate connection” between churches and slavery, beginning with Quakerism and continuing with Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches. William Paddings objected to his characterization of Baptist churches as pro-slavery. He noted that in 1841 about thirty Baptist churches had met in Vernon, Oneida County, and passed resolutions of a “genuine antislavery character.” Another group had met in Ontario County and another in Cassville, in the Town of Paris, Oneida County, and both had agreed to resolutions “of a high antislavery order.” Finally, a

¹² *Liberator*, December 22, 1842.

¹³ *Liberator*, December 22, 1842.

¹⁴ *Liberator*, December 22, 1842, “Proceedings Concluded,” *Liberator*, December 30, 1842.

statewide convention of about 150 churches had done the same. He reported this information, he said, “to encourage the hearts of abolitionists; and would bid them go on; it was a good cause; and all should be united in it.”¹⁵

When Fuller tried to reply, the “confusion became so great,” with “torpedoes, and other missile thrown about the house,” that he could not proceed. Horatio Seymour, then mayor of Utica and subsequently governor of New York State, took the floor. We disgrace ourselves by such conduct, he said. “This convention had a perfect right to assemble here, and discuss any subject they chose, without molestation; and he hoped that they would be permitted to proceed.” He had no authority, he said, except as a citizen of Utica. Rev. D. Plumb and Jacob Snyder disagreed. Both the mayor and the police were responsible for keeping the peace, they argued. Put on the spot, Seymour agreed “to prosecute every individual who was engaged in this disturbance, on their names being made known to him.” Immediately, all disturbances subsided.

Reverend Spencer had the last word. I wish it to be understood, he said, “that this was no mob!” “The meeting, it was true, had been disturbed by some boys, and others; but it was no mob! Those who called it so, did it from sinister motives, to publish in their papers, just for effect.” And so the meeting adjourned.¹⁶

The Executive Committee called its first regular meeting of the new Central New-York Anti-Slavery Society in Bridgewater. They may have chosen this location because the Town was full of church members potentially sympathetic to abolitionism. There were many Quakers in the village, as well as Universalists, Methodists, Baptists, and Episcopalians. Perhaps abolitionists met in the Bridgewater Congregational Church, built in 1834, whose pastor from June 1841 to May 1843 was Rev. Charles Machin (or Matchin). Reverend Machin took an active part in the proceedings, speaking in favor of a resolution “that Christianity must necessarily be aggressive upon the kingdom of Satan; and in so doing, must oppose the system of American slavery.”¹⁷

Bridging the divide between anti-political and political abolitionists, the convention adopted a resolution. . . . “That we exhort every American citizen to stand utterly aloof from these political organizations, and never cast his vote, nor in any way use his influence, for the elevation of any man to office in this republic, who is not an outspoken and outacting abolitionist.”

¹⁵ *Liberator*, December 22, 1842.

¹⁶ *Liberator*, December 22, 1842.

¹⁷ “Proceedings of an Anti-Slavery Convention, Held at Bridgewater, Oneida County, N.Y., February 1st and 2d, 1843,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 23, 1843; Durant, *History of Oneida County, New York*, 429; Congregational Church, Bridgewater, “An Inventory of Its Records, 1798–1940,” Special Collections, Syracuse University.

And finally, inspired by a speech from Abby Kelley, the convention also adopted unanimously a resolution against racial discrimination: “That the prejudices existing in this nation against our darker complexioned countrymen, arise, not from any crime or fault of theirs, or from anything peculiar to their organization; but is the result of the condition into which they have been thrown by their oppressors; in a word, it is the spirit of caste, and is, therefore, unnatural, cruel, and heaven-defying; and cannot be, knowingly, cherished by any Christian or philanthropist.”

By April, Abby Kelly herself had decided to stay in the Utica area to work as an agent for the new society. “The Empire State is in good condition,” she wrote on April 10. “The prejudices, formerly existing against us, are, in a good measure, dispelled.” The *Anti-Slavery Standard* recounted the story in Kelly’s own words, speaking of herself in the third person:

Whereas, a few months since, Abby Kelley was regarded as “half witch and half devil,” . . . this horrible monster in human shape is transformed into a very common-place woman, and receives innumerable invitations to lecture in places where, three months since, all doors were closely barred against each and every agent, or volunteer, of the American Society. . . . The Central New-York Society is preparing for a vigorous campaign. . . . My heart is quite bound to her, and it is my purpose . . . to pass the coming antislavery year with her children. Bigotry and sectarianism are not so deeply rooted here, as in New-England, but, party ties are stronger; and, for one, I choose to contend with the latter, rather than the former.¹⁸

In her capacity as agent, first of the American Anti-Slavery Society and then of the Central New-York Anti-Slavery Society, Kelley traversed central New York in the summer of 1843. She was in Vernon on July 12, 1843, where she wrote a public letter to Alvan Stewart, castigating him for advising abolitionists in central and western New York not to attend the conventions scheduled there, “since it is said certain no-human government men are about to hold in this State, opposed to the Liberty party, and *secretly* opposed to voting, or petitioning government to abolish slavery.” This from a man, she reminded her readers, who had attended the last Utica convention and warmly asked Kelley to return.¹⁹

The Central New York Anti-Slavery Society met at least twice more in 1843, once on July 19–21 and again in December, both times in Utica. In July, Charles Lenox Remond, a free person of color from Salem, Massachusetts, joined Abby Kelley as the main speakers. The audience of six to seven hundred people was moved to tears when five people—three women and two children—appeared. They had just escaped from slavery in Delaware and Maryland. William A. White, who wrote a report of the meeting, noted the “intense interest” aroused by these five refugees. What “astonishment” must have “filled their souls,” he

¹⁸ Abby Kelley to *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, April 10, 1843, published in *The Liberator*, May 5, 1843.

¹⁹ Kelley to *National Anti-Slavery Standard*.

reflected, “as they heard “one of their own blood” give such a “thrilling and soul-searching speech.” “What a change! a few days since they were where a dark skin was synonymous with degradation; and here they saw a great audience moved to the very soul by the eloquence of one of their own race.” Paulina Davis echoed his assessment. Remond’s “language fairly glowed,” she wrote, “and burned with the fire of indignant truth and freedom.”²⁰

As always, Abby Kelley spoke passionately against color prejudice. “I rejoice to be identified with the despised people of color,” she once said. “If they are to be despised, so ought their advocates to be.” She told the people of Utica “that she had been cautioned against walking with [Black abolitionist] C. L. Remond; that it was dangerous for her to do so in this city.” “Who would employ a colored lawyer, or doctor, or teacher, for their children? Who would receive a colored apprentice?” she asked. Not all in the audience were pleased. A “young colored man, assistant secretary of the meeting,” tried, “with considerable bombast,” to argue against her. The audience erupted with “clappings, hissings, cries of Sit down! Go on! for nearly three quarters of an hour; at the close of which, C. L. Remond rose, and the most perfect silence was instantly produced. He spoke in a strain of most scorching, withering rebuke, such as few can use, and to such good effect.”²¹

On December 19, 1843, the society met again. Little did they know that this would be their last meeting. This time the great orator Wendall Phillips took star billing, along with Abby Kelley and Stephen Foster. The society’s first annual report, written by Samuel Lightbody, former editor of the *Standard and Democrat*, highlighted the work of Abby Kelley, “this noble and highly gifted woman.” “From every place where she has lectured, the most thrilling reports of her effective labors are received.” The committee distributed antislavery tracts from an antislavery book depository in Francis Wright’s store on the corner of Genesee and Fayette Streets. “Thus the society, organized amid the violent opposition of open enemies, and the covert hostility of pretended friends on the one hand, and the chilling apathy of the community to the cause of bleeding humanity on the other; has struggled through the first year of its existence,” concluded Lightbody.

Officers for the coming year included several Oneida County residents. Notably, several of them were women. Abraham Van Epps from Vernon and Paulina Wright from Utica were elected vice-presidents. Francis Wright was corresponding secretary. Local executive committee members included Samuel Lightbody, chairman; Harriet Searls, W. C. Rogers, Sophia Luce, Andrew Hanna, and Mary Allen from Utica; Ralsaman Seymour, Paris; James Hallock, Vernon; and Jane E. Hitchcock, Vienna.²²

²⁰ “Auxiliary Society—Annual Meeting,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, January 4, 1844; W. A. White to *Liberator*, July 20, 1843, published August 4, 1843; Paulina S. Wright, “Utica Convention,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, August 3, 1843.

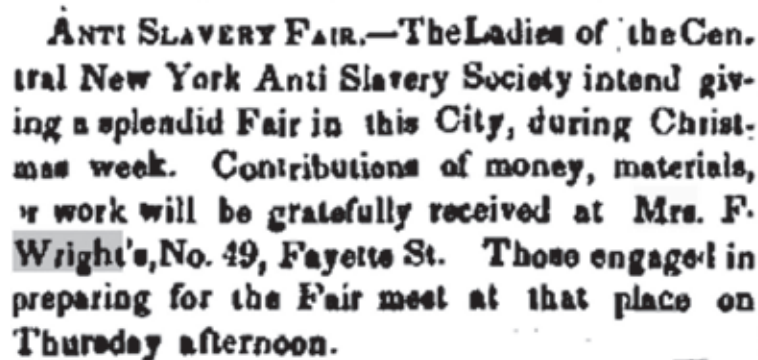
²¹ Paulina S. Wright, “Utica Convention,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, August 3, 1843.

²² “Auxiliary Society—Annual Meeting,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, January 4, 1844.

To make their antipolitical position absolutely clear, the convention introduced resolutions condemning the US Constitution as a pro-slavery document, since it required the return of fugitives from slavery, and urging disunion. “The true principle of practical abolition, is ‘abolition or disunion,’” asserted one resolution. Notably, these resolutions were laid on the table.

The meeting did not end with a speech by Abby Kelley, as planned. Instead, wrote Chairman Matthew Rider, “the sweet spirit of the Christianity of the land, which had been thus far . . . barely suppressed . . . broke forth in all its native loveliness, and MOBOCRACY *again triumphed!!* The “central city” was again honored in having a peaceful meeting of its citizens broken up by the unearthly yells, obscenity, and outrages of a lawless mob!! a mob in which were engaged the sons of some of our principal citizens! Utica, yes, our beloved Utica, has been outraged again by a MOB!”²³

Women in central New York received special attention as organizers of antislavery fairs, one in Syracuse on August 1 and another in Utica in December, during Christmas week. “They intend,” reported Kelley, that “these shall excel everything of the kind ever got up in this section. The towns in the surrounding country are all invited to bring in their offerings for the perishing slave’s sake, and several have already begun the good work.”²⁴



ANTI SLAVERY FAIR.—The Ladies of the Central New York Anti Slavery Society intend giving a splendid Fair in this City, during Christmas week. Contributions of money, materials, & work will be gratefully received at Mrs. F. Wright's, No. 49, Fayette St. Those engaged in preparing for the Fair meet at that place on Thursday afternoon.

Figure 5.1. “Anti Slavery Fair,” *Utica Daily Gazette*, December 12, 1843

When Abby Kelley and Stephen Foster stayed in Utica, Paulina and Francis Wright welcomed them to their home at 49 Fayette Street, just down the street from Francis Wright’s grocery and provision store at 160 Genesee Street in Franklin Square, Utica. In one memorable evening, Stephen Foster proposed marriage to Abby Kelley, and she accepted.²⁵

²³ “Auxiliary Society—Annual Meeting,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, January 4, 1844.

²⁴ Abby Kelley to *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, April 10, 1843, published May 5, 1843.

²⁵ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 242.

With its first annual meeting in December 1843, the Central New York Anti-Slavery Society reached its apex. Abby Kelley’s role as an engine of Garrisonian abolitionism in central New York came to an end. She left central New York to lecture in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and then in Ohio before her marriage to Stephen Foster on December 21, 1845. When their only child was born in 1847, they named her Paulina Wright Foster, after Abby’s Utica friend, Paulina Wright, who acted as midwife.²⁶

In 1844 and 1846, two other stalwart supporters of the Central New York Anti-Slavery Society—Francis Wright and Samuel Lightbody—died. When Francis Wright became ill in 1843, Paulina Wright took him to Philadelphia for medical care. He died there in January 1844. Paulina never returned to live in Utica. She devoted the rest of her life to women’s rights and women’s suffrage.²⁷

Samuel Lightbody had been a consistent supporter and frequent officer of the Central New York Anti-Slavery Society from its beginning. Born about 1798 in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, he had come to Utica in 1824. There he became a merchant and dealer in hides and leathers, with an office near the Erie Canal at 16 Genesee Street and a home nearby at 53 Elizabeth Street, just south of the courthouse. There, he and his wife Anna raised three children before Samuel’s untimely death on August 12, 1846. Anna Lightbody was resourceful and turned their large home into a boarding house, where she kept house for her own children plus twelve adults in their twenties and thirties and two small children of boarder Harriet Lumbert.²⁸

By the mid-1840s, Garrisonian influence had declined. Although it was virtually dead by 1844, the Central New York Anti-Slavery Society had generated reactions from both churches and political abolitionists. As Mary Hayes Gordon suggested, Oneida Churches ‘had congregants who supported slavery, congregants who opposed it, and congregants who would prefer not to enter into the argument.’

In the 1840s, political abolitionists became the major engine of abolitionism and the Underground Railroad in Oneida County and the nation. A cadre of Oneida County abolitionists helped organize the Liberty Party in 1840. Dedicated to the idea that the US Constitution was antislavery, they worked for abolitionism and equal rights for African Americans. They also helped organize the Underground Railroad. In particular, with the support of Gerrit Smith, William Chaplin (former corresponding secretary of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society) moved to Washington, DC, as editor for the *Albany Patriot* and as a major agent for channeling people escaping from slavery into central New York.

²⁶ Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time*, 242.

²⁷ Probate, Francis Wright Will, November 1, 1844, New York. Surrogate’s Court (Oneida County), *Will Books, 1798–1900 with Index, 1798–1909*, Ancestry.com.

²⁸ “Annual Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Afternoon Session,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 23, 1845; 10,000 Vital Records of Central New York, 1813–1850, Ancestry.com; 1850 US Census.

Abolitionists who wanted to remain part of a church community refused Abby Kelley’s challenge to come out of churches. Political abolitionists proposed an alternative. They urged abolitionists to stay within existing churches and to turn them into abolitionist organizations. Only if they could not convert existing churches would they be justified in seceding from them. At a meeting in Albany, New York, on July 31, 1839, political abolitionists—the majority of whom were church members—resolved to promote “Christian Anti-Slavery Conventions.” Oneida County was in the lead. As William Goodell noted, “even before this date, something of the kind had been done on a limited scale in the region of central New York, where “Anti-slavery Conferences and prayer meetings” had been frequently held, attended by abolitionists from a few adjoining towns.” Communities all across upstate New York held Christian antislavery conventions, attended, remembered Goodell, “by many of those who have been active in the Liberty Party—Smith, Birney, Stewart, Green, Chaplin, Torrey, Goodell, and others.” They were “among the largest and most interesting antislavery conventions ever held in the State.”²⁹

The new Christian Union movement tried to recreate the lives of early Christians, emphasizing equality, human rights, and the brotherhood (and we might say also the sisterhood) of all people. They held a convention in Syracuse in 1843. Its three named organizers were Gerrit Smith, Beriah Green, and William Goodell, all leaders of abolitionist organizing in Oneida County in the 1830s.

THE CHRISTIAN CONVENTION

At Syracuse, will commence its sittings on Wednesday the 20th inst., at 10 o'clock A. M. One prominent object of the Convention will be to discuss, ascertain and promulgate the true principles, and appropriate form and mode of Church organization, as taught in the New Testament, harmonizing with the great principles of human equality, common brotherhood, and inalienable human rights. This call is signed by Gerrit Smith, Beriah Green, William Goodell and 65 others from different parts of the State, who believe *Reform* is necessary and vitally important in the Church, and in the State.

Syracuse, December 15, 1843.

Figure 5.2. “The Christian Convention,” *Onondaga Standard*, December 20, 1843.
Courtesy of the Onondaga Historical Association.

²⁹ William Goodell, *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A History of the Great Struggle in Both Hemispheres* (New York: William Harnad, 1852), 488–89.

Just as the Liberty Party provided support for antislavery churches, so anti-slavery churches responded by supporting political abolitionism and the emerging Liberty Party. Notably, the call for the Christian Union Convention in 1843 had appealed to those “who believe *Reform* is necessary and vitally important in the Church, and in the State.” In contrast to those who espoused Abby Kelly’s message of come-outerism, political abolitionists aimed to transform both church and state into antislavery institutions. They formed the rising tide of antislavery activism, including Underground Railroad activism, in Oneida County and upstate New York generally.

“The half decade after 1840 was the high point of influence for church reform activity,” noted Douglas Strong, “when scores of new secessionist churches sprang up and flourished.” “By the mid-1840s,” he concluded, “there were over three hundred abolition churches in New York state alone,” including more than one hundred Wesleyan Methodist Congregations, at least forty-four Free Baptist churches, and more than one hundred Unionist/independent Congregational churches. Many of these were located in and around Oneida County. Gerrit Smith organized one in Peterboro in 1843. Many Congregational churches in Oneida County, such as the Hanover Society in the Town of Marshall, seem to have been influenced by the Christian Union movement, adopting strong antislavery resolutions in 1843 and 1844.³⁰

The Christian Union movement reflected churning change that had already been invading mainstream Protestant churches. Presbyterians split into Old School and New School branches, reflecting disagreements over issues relating to slavery, revivalism, and theology. As early as 1834, Presbyterians threw out an abolitionist minister from central New York. In Philadelphia in 1837, Calvinist Presbyterians (known as Old School) refused admission to delegates from Presbyterian churches in the Western Reserve of Ohio and the synods of Utica, Geneva, and Genesee (which included Oneida County) in upstate New York. Among other issues, Old School Presbyterians disagreed with the 1801 Plan of Union, by which churches could switch between Presbyterians, with hierarchical governance, and Congregationalists, who advocated local control. They also decried religious revivals that appealed for salvation based on individual choice. Excised from the national Presbyterian assembly, Presbyterians in central New York focused on their own egalitarian values. As historian Douglas M. Strong noted, “After the 1837 schism, then, there existed a conflation of interests among many independently minded New York Presbygationalists and, eventually, among their friends from other denominations: the advocacy of ultraist reforms such as abolition, the espousal of . . . evangelical perfectionism, and the promotion of democratic church reform.”³¹

³⁰ Douglas M. Strong, *Perfectionist Politics: Abolitionism and the Religious Tensions of American Democracy* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 114; Ralph Volney Harlow, “Gerrit Smith and the Free Church Movement,” *New York History* 18 (July 19?).

³¹ Strong, *Perfectionist Politics*, 52.

Many “Presbygational” churches in Oneida County took strong antislavery positions in the early 1840s. The Hanover Society in the Town of Marshall represents this response. As Mary Hayes Gordon noted, on November 28, 1843, members of the church called a special meeting to “consider what is its duty in regard to slavery in our country.” This meeting produced the following resolution that left no doubt of the church’s stance:

WHEREAS: There is existing in these United States a system of involuntary slavery. Slavery the vilest that ever saw the sun; a system that is diametrically opposed to the principles of the Gospel.

A system which seeks to degrade the image of the eternal God to a level with the brutes that perish; a system which denies to a great extent the means of moral and religious instructions; a system that would, if it could, blot out the soul of the slave,

And, whereas, this vile abomination is participated in, and its horrors continued by those who profess to be the followers of Him as a fundamental principle, who said that all things ye would have men do even so do to them; and that these brethren are members of the same church with us; and believing that the continuance of this system by those who are professed followers of Christ is a powerful obstacle to the spread of the Gospel at home and in other lands; therefore,

Resolved, That we have no fellowship with professing slave-holding Christians, or for those who are supporters of the system of slavery, and that we will not invite to our pulpit or communion any whom we have reason to believe are in fellowship with the system, and that we will in all laudable ways labor to suppress the evil and to promote its ultimate overthrow;

Resolved, in view of these considerations that we cannot fellowship as Christians with any who hold this relation while they continue it and that we cannot admit them to our communion.³²

Methodists also split apart. In 1838, two hundred antislavery Methodists from all over the Northeast met in Utica. Out of their commitment to abolitionism, they began to withdraw from organized Methodist churches. On May 31, 1843, about three thousand Methodists met at the Bleecker Street Church, Rev. Orange Scott presiding, to organize formally into the Wesleyan Methodist Church, based explicitly on antislavery principles. “It was the duty of all Christians to secede from the pro-slavery churches,” argued Reverend Scott. Abolitionists had tried to reform the church from within, he noted, but had been rebuffed at the last Methodist convention. They had no choice but to organize a new church, dedicated to carrying out Biblical ideals in all areas of life, including the abolition of slavery. Rev. Luther Lee, one of the most influential early Wesleyan ministers, argued that “the

³² Ada Marie Peck, *The Old Hanover Church* (Deansboro, New York: Berry Hill Press, 1995). Mary Hayes Gordon, “Oneida County Churches in the Abolition Era: Leaders in the Fight Against Slavery,” unpublished paper, 2012.

Gospel is so radically reformatory, that to preach it fully and clearly, is to attack and condemn all wrong, and to assert and defend all righteousness.” Frederick Douglass called Wesleyan Methodists “radically Antislavery.”³³

Wesleyan Methodist abolitionists left at least ten denominations, extending, said Reverend Scott, “from Maine to Michigan and from the Northern Lakes to Mason’s & Dixons Line,” counting six thousand members and publishing *The True Wesleyan* newspaper. In Oneida County, Wesleyan Methodist churches formed in Utica, Camden, Remsen (a Welsh Church), Rome, and elsewhere.³⁴

Baptists also split over slavery. In 1840, antislavery Baptists organized a Baptist Anti-slavery Convention. In 1843, when the American Baptist Missionary Society refused to condemn slaveholders and continued to allow them to work as missionaries, this group organized the American Baptist Free Mission Society. Cyrus Grosvernor organized a branch in Utica in 1844. In 1848, this organization sponsored the New-York Central College in McGrawville, New York, an antislavery school that welcomed both Blacks and Whites, men and women as students, and whose faculty included Black professors Charles L. Reason and William G. Allen. Baptist churches nationally unraveled into proslavery and antislavery groups in the 1840s.³⁵

Welsh immigrants had come to Oneida County in the early nineteenth century. By the 1840s, they had formed Congregational, Methodist, and Baptist churches in Utica and the rural towns of Remsen and Steuben. At least two of these, Capel Ucha in Steuben and Bethel Church in Remsen, organized by Rev. Robert Everett and Rev. Morris Roberts, became hotbeds of abolitionism and the Underground Railroad. Rev. Everett’s daughter Mary, who grew up in the Everett house, recalled that Capel Ucha’s congregation heard “the plaintive story of the fleeing bondman, who, when he had told his tale, was secretly hurried to the next station on the underground railroad, on his forced flight to liberty in the Queen’s dominions.” On January 6, 1842, George French, a freedom seeker from Tennessee, “gave a short sketch of his life, family, and escape from slavery,” at a meeting called for local people to pledge their time to circulate antislavery petitions. This meeting was almost certainly held in Capel Ucha.³⁶

³³ Lucius C. Matlock, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott: Compiled from His Personal Narrative* (New York: C. Prindle and L. C. Matlock, 1847), 212–15; Luther Lee, *Five Sermons*, Donald W. Dayton, ed. (Chicago, 1975), 11, quoted in Strong, *Perfectionist Politics*, 100; William Goodell, *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A History of the Great Struggle in Both Hemispheres* (New York: William Harnad, 1852), 489–90.

³⁴ Durant, 434, 509.

³⁵ Douglas Strong, *Perfectionist Politics*, 111; William Goodell, *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A History of the Great Struggle in Both Hemispheres* (New York: William Harnad, 1852), 493–508.

³⁶ Mary Everett, “An Historical Sketch of the First Welsh Congregational Church of Remsen, N.Y., 1914,” read at the dedication of the New Chapel, June 23, 1904, by Mary Everett, the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Everett; “Pledges of Time to Circulate Petitions,” original owned by Michael Everett and family.

Jan DeAmicis has noted that Robert Everett’s abolitionist initiative in Remsen and Steuben “faced mostly indifference, and a good bit of opposition,” but the influence of his publications (including his Welsh language antislavery newspapers and his Welsh translation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*) extended far beyond upstate New York to Welsh communities throughout North America, Great Britain, India, and elsewhere.

The names of Alvan Stewart, William Goodell, Beriah Green, Gerrit Smith, and William Chaplin were noticeable for their absence among supporters of the Garrisonian Central New York Anti-Slavery Society. Instead, in 1839 and 1840, they built on their work in Oneida, Oswego, and Madison Counties to help organize the new Liberty Party in 1839. They made New York State the strongest center of political abolitionism in the country. Centered in the northeast, especially in New York State, the Liberty Party ran national candidates in 1840 and 1844 and formed the basis of both the Free Soil Party and the Liberty League in 1848. Historian Gerald Sorin called Gerrit Smith, Beriah Green, James G. Birney, Alvan Stewart, and William Goodell, the five most important abolitionists in New York State from 1838 to 1845. All of them except James G. Birney had earned their abolitionist credentials in or near Oneida County. Wesley Bailey and William Chaplin were part of this core group but played different roles.³⁷

Alvan Stewart, born in South Granville, New York, in 1840, had been educated in schools in Vermont, arrested and held as a spy in Canada during the War of 1812, and then settled in Cherry Valley, New York, where he became known as a brilliant lawyer. In 1832, he and his family moved to Utica, New York, where he became an active organizer for temperance and antislavery. In 1835, he was one of the founders of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, where he gave his first published speech against slavery.³⁸

As a speaker, Stewart was known for his “vigorous and striking, if not always elegant, oratory,” beginning with “a quiet spark of mental electricity,” noted one listener, followed by “a beautiful play of intellectual fireworks.” As a theorist, he was best-known for his argument that the Constitution was an antislavery document. As historian Frederick Blue suggested, Stewart was among “the tiny advance group of political abolitionists who believed that slavery was vulnerable to an attack from within the political system.” Contrary to William Lloyd Garrison and his followers, Stewart argued that the US Constitution was an antislavery document and could be used as a “weapon against slavery.” The Fifth Amendment, Stewart argued, did not protect the property of slaveholders but the rights of enslaved people, who had been deprived of the ownership of their own bodies without due process of law. And the clause (Article I, Section 8) giving Congress the power

³⁷ Blue, *No Taint of Compromise*, 50–51; Goodell, *Slavery and Anti-Slavery*, Chapter 40, “Anti-Slavery Church Agitation: New Anti-Slavery Churches and Missionary Bodies,” 487.

³⁸ Milton C. Sernett, “Alvan Stewart,” *American National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.article.1500653>; “The Alvan Stewart Papers,” University of Miami Libraries, <http://scholar.library.miami.edu/stewart/biography.html>.

to “provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States” reinforced this interpretation. Stewart convinced allies in upstate New York, including William Goodell and Gerrit Smith, that the federal government had the constitutional right to abolish slavery wherever it existed. In so doing, he initiated “an entirely new phase of antislavery agitation.”³⁹

Stewart argued this case in 1838, at the annual convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society. He offered a resolution “to strike out that part of the Constitution of the Society which admits that Congress has no power to legislate upon slavery in the states.” Stewart defended his position “in a disconnected, but really eloquent manner,” noted one listener. “There were passages in this speech which, for pathos and power, I have rarely heard equaled.” Although Gerrit Smith supported Stewart, James G. Birney and many others did not. The resolution lost.⁴⁰

Stewart had better luck at a Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention, held in Utica on May 2–3, 1838. Two hundred people attended from conferences in New England, New York, Michigan, Ohio, Maryland, and Philadelphia. The convention unanimously adopted a resolution against prejudice based on color, as well as a resolution introduced by Alvan Stewart that it was “the Christian duty, and obligation, to exercise the elective franchise, so as to affect the emancipation of slaves.”⁴¹

Stewart wrote the famous address for the National Committee of Correspondence (composed of Stewart, Gerrit Smith, and William Goodell) of the Liberty Party convention in Albany in 1840. “The work of republican reformation is begun,” he proclaimed. “Humanity, a new element, has been found in the ballot-boxes of 1840. The voice of stern justice is beginning to speak from a new place. The power which will overthrow slavery has been discovered; it is the terse literature of the northern ballot-box.” Stewart asserted that the US Constitution did not support slavery, that the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act was unconstitutional, and that Congress had no power to control state responses in fugitive slave cases. Until his death in 1849, Stewart never wavered from his commitment to the total abolition of slavery through federal action.⁴²

³⁹ “Memoir of a Distinguished Jurist and Philanthropist,” *Utica Morning Herald*, August 18, 1859; Frederick J. Blue, “A Self-Sharpening Plough: Alvan Stewart’s Challenge to Slavery,” Chapter 2 in *No Taint of Compromise: Crusaders in Antislavery Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

⁴⁰ John G. Whittier, May 6, 1838, reprinted from the *Pennsylvania Freeman* in *The Colored American*, June 2, 1838.

⁴¹ “Methodist Anti-Slavery Convention,” *The Colored American*, June 2, 1838, reprinted from *Friend of Man*.

⁴² Alvan Stewart, “An Address, by the ‘National Committee of Correspondence,’ Appointed by the Convention Which Nominated James G. Birney for President, and Thomas Earle for Vice-President of the United States, in April, 1840, at the City of Albany,” in Luther Rawson Marsh, ed., *Writings and Speeches of Alvan Stewart on Slavery* (New York: A. B. Burdick, 1860), 234 ff. *Appleton’s Cyclopaedia*, VI:683, noted that Stewart wrote the Call for the organizing meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, but no other source mentioned this.

Three of Stewart’s converts to the idea that the Constitution was an antislavery document were William Goodell, Beriah Green, and Gerrit Smith. All were involved in the formation of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society in 1835. And all had crystallized their antislavery views in Oneida County in the 1830s.

William Goodell was born in 1792 in Coventry, New York. Like Stewart, he became an early advocate of the temperance movement. After the formation of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833, Goodell edited the Society’s newspaper, *The Emancipator*. After the organization of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society in 1835, Goodell became editor of its newspaper the *Friend of Man*, whose offices were just a block away from Stewart’s own law office. In 1840, he joined Stewart and Beriah Green and Gerrit Smith, among others, in helping to form the Liberty Party, writing the party platform and an address to the convention. By 1842, Goodell moved to Honeoye, New York, to become pastor of a Christian Union church and edited a Christian Union newspaper. Along with his Christian Union views, he also espoused Alvan Stewart’s constitutional arguments. In 1844, he published a pamphlet *Views of American Constitutional Law, in Its Bearing Upon American Slavery*. In 1845, Massachusetts attorney, Lysander Spooner, published *The Unconstitutionality of Slavery*, an expansion of Stewart’s and Goodell’s arguments.⁴³

Beriah Green, President of the Oneida Institute (of which Alvan Stewart and Gerrit Smith were both early trustees) had also helped organize the New York State Anti-Slavery Society in 1835 and became the first corresponding secretary. He joined the Liberty Party in 1840 and became one of the key advocates of the unconstitutionality of slavery.⁴⁴

The most famous of this quartet was Gerrit Smith. Converted to abolitionism after the 1835 New York State Anti-Slavery Society convention, Smith used his national contacts and considerable wealth on behalf of antislavery from then until the Civil War. In 1840, he became one of the founders of the Liberty Party. Smith’s brother-in-law, James G. Birney, ran for president on the Liberty Party ticket, nominated both at the Albany convention in 1840 and at a second convention held in Buffalo in 1843. A slaveholder from Kentucky, Birney had inherited enslaved people and freed them all to move to New York State, where he married Elizabeth Fitzhugh, sister of Ann Carol Fitzhugh, Gerrit Smith’s wife.⁴⁵

⁴³ “Goodell, William, Reverend,” *Anti-Slavery Activists: Conscience of the Nation*, <http://www.americanabolitionists.com/encyclopedia-of-slavery-and-abolition.html>; William Goodell, *Slavery and Anti-Slavery*, 2nd edition (New York: William Harnad, 1855), 476.

⁴⁴ New York State Anti-Slavery Society, *Proceedings* (1835), 15.

⁴⁵ Reinhard O. Johnson, *The Liberty Party, 1840–1848: Antislavery Third Party Politics in the United States* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009).

Smith likely supported the Liberty Party’s newspaper, *The Liberty Press*, published in Utica from 1842 to 1849. When the *Friend of Man*, edited by William Goodell for the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, ceased publication in January 1842, Wesley Bailey began editing *The Liberty Press* from his office in the Devereux Block on Genesee Street in Utica. Bailey named one of his sons Alvan Stewart Bailey, after his abolitionist friend.

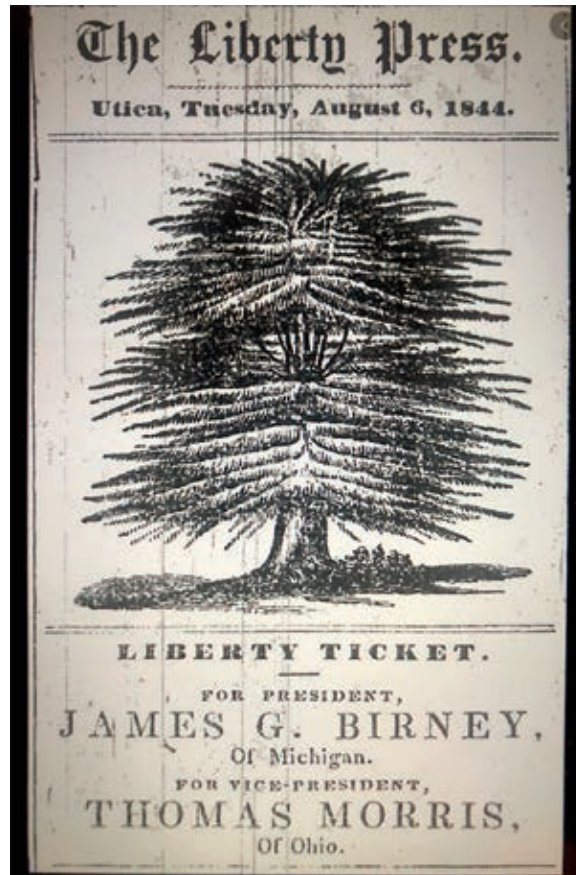


Figure 5.3. “The Liberty Press,” *The Liberty Press*, August 6, 1844

From the very beginning, Liberty Party leaders allied themselves both with the Underground Railroad and the cause of equal rights for African Americans. Birney himself had been indicted for protecting a fugitive from slavery. Shortly after the 1840 election, the Party published an address to the oppressed in the United States, urging them to have hope that political action would lead to the abolition of slavery. Its author was none other than Utica lawyer Alvan Stewart.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Henry Wilson, *History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America*, Vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1872), 545–55.

Although the Liberty Party gained only 7,000 votes out of the 2.5 million cast nationally in the 1840 presidential election, its organizers were encouraged. As the Garrisonian Central New York Anti-Slavery Society was faltering, political abolitionists associated with the Liberty Party took the lead in central New York. From 1840 to 1847, the Liberty Party openly appealed to African Americans. Arguing that the Constitution was an antislavery document, they supported equal rights for African Americans. James G. Birney wrote to Lewis Tappan on February 5, 1841, advocating that New Yorkers start with themselves in working for respect for people of color. “When this state shall have disencumbered itself of the nine months’ law [by which enslaved people could be brought into New York State for nine months] and shall have done away with color as a test of civil or political privileges, she will then be ready indeed for exterior action.” As part of their attack on slavery, Liberty Party advocates also supported the Underground Railroad as an organized network that reached into the South itself.⁴⁷

In January 1842, Gerrit Smith organized a Liberty Party convention in Peterboro. There he emphasized all three of these goals—political organization, an appeal to African American supporters, and an endorsement of the Underground Railroad. As Stanley Harrold noted in *The Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism*, Smith’s 1842 appeal to African Americans was one of the earliest speeches addressed to enslaved people themselves. Although Smith urged nonviolence and prayers for enslavers, he encouraged enslaved people to seek liberty through flight, and he assured them that abolitionists would be delighted to help carry them to Canada. He also supported the rights of enslaved people to learn to read. The slave who learned to read, he said, “has already conquered half the difficulty in getting to Canada, and the slave who has learned to read the Bible has learned the way to heaven.” Smith remembered later that “the Address bade them, to regard themselves as men, and exercise the rights of men. Among other things, it bade them take the horse, the boat, the food, the clothing, necessary to help themselves out of slavery—and not so much, as pause to enquire, who owned the property they were taking.” As Smith recalled in 1848, “the Address was, of course, very offensive, not to say horrifying to the people at large.” Even Liberty Party members were at first “astonished at this new and strange antislavery pleasure.” Very soon, however, it became Liberty Party policy.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ For the perspective of contemporaries, see William Goodell, *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A History of the Great Struggle in Both Hemispheres*, 3rd edition (New York: William Goodell, 1855), Chapter 39, “Organized Political Action—Liberty League—Liberty Party—Free Soil Party,” 468–86, and Henry Wilson, *History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America*, Vol. I. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1872), 545–55; Charles H. Wesley, “The Negroes of New York in the Emancipation Movement,” *Journal of Negro History* 24 (January 1939), 41.

⁴⁸ Stanley Harrold, *The Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism: Addresses to the Slaves* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004); *Proceedings*, “Speech of Gerrit Smith,” 45; “Lewis and Milton Clark: A Bit of History,” *Geneva Times* [Geneva Ashtabula, Ohio], September 14, 1893, reprinted from a scrapbook, found in Wilbur H. Siebert Underground Railroad Collection, Ohio History Center.

To put their words into practice, abolitionists in Oneida County continued to invite freedom seekers to speak. Lewis and Milton Clark, brothers, fled to Oberlin, Ohio, after they escaped from slavery in Kentucky in 1842. Milton was recaptured and taken before a judge. His kidnappers were tried for assault and battery, and Milton was released. In 1843, the brothers came to Utica. *The Liberty Press* reported that the brothers, known as the “white fugitive slaves,”

are doing nobly for the slave in Central New York. They are attracting good assemblies, and doing much to convert their hearts and votes to the cause of their suffering brethren. They are men of good common sense, 7 men of discretion and economy, and by exhibiting what they have seen and *felt* of slavery, they are doing a work that scarcely any others can do. They are industrious, and constantly on the move, and on the move where they have work to do, and where their services are wanted. “They can take care of themselves”; their Kentucky masters who used to be so “careful” about them, need have no fears on that score.

In August 1843, the Liberty Party convention in Buffalo attracted a thousand delegates from every free state but New Hampshire. Stephen Foster, although opposed to political abolitionism, attended and characterized the meeting as “the most earnest; devoted, patriotic, and practically intelligent political body which has ever met on this continent.” This convention was, noted historian Charles H. Wesley, “the most significant convention in the history of the Negro’s political life in the United States prior to the Civil War,” “the first time in American history that Negro citizens were actively in the leadership of a political convention.”⁴⁹

The convention took a strong stand for political equality for African Americans as free citizens. “Resolved,” read one resolution, “that this convention recommend to the friends of Liberty in all those free States where any inequality of rights and privileges exist on account of color, to employ their utmost energies to remove all such remnants and effects of the slave system.” They also for the first time welcomed African Americans into a predominantly European American political party, resolving “that we cordially welcome our colored fellow citizens to fraternity with us in the Liberty Party, in its great contest to secure the rights of mankind and the religion of our common country.”⁵⁰

In addition to welcoming African American men as political colleagues, they also endorsed the right of enslaved people to escape. Poet John Pierpont introduced a resolution “to regard and treat the third clause of the Constitution, whenever applied to the case of a fugitive slave, as utterly null and void; and consequently as forming no part of the

⁴⁹ Wesley, “Negroes of New York,” 44–45.

⁵⁰ Wesley, “Negroes of New York,” 45.

Constitution of the United States whenever we are called upon or sworn to support it.” “Shall we obey the dead fathers or the living God?” he asked. By a large majority, the convention voted in favor of the living God.⁵¹

The powerful antislavery pro-Black stance of the 1843 Liberty Party convention convinced many African American abolitionists to support it. Meeting in Buffalo in 1843, a national Black convention took a strong stand on behalf of the Liberty Party. Henry Highland Garnet called himself “the first colored man” to support the Liberty Party. Samuel R. Ward, John Zuille, Theodore S. Wright, and Charles B. Ray all participated in the 1843 meeting. Samuel R. Ward had voted the Liberty Party ticket in 1840. Jermain Loguen lectured for the Liberty Party in the 1840s and succeeded, thought historian Charles H. Wesley, “in doubling the Liberty Party votes there.” Henry Highland Garnet served as a vice-president of the Party at its 1848 convention, where Frederick Douglass also spoke. Samuel R. Ward received twelve votes as a candidate for vice-president of the United States at the same convention. Presbyterian minister Theodore Wright in New York City was another political abolitionist. Other lesser-known African Americans also took part in Liberty Party conventions. Cyrus Clarke and Lewis Clarke, both refugees from slavery, attended the National Liberty Party convention in Buffalo in 1848, for example. In the 1850s, Frederick Douglass, James McCune Smith, and Samuel Ringgold Ward were all nominated for statewide office.⁵²

Black abolitionist support for the Liberty Party was enhanced by national and statewide Black conventions. Black conventions met nationally from 1830 to 1835 and from 1840 until after the Civil War. Beginning in 1840, African Americans in New York State also organized statewide conventions. These conventions became one of the most important and powerful connections among African American activists across New York State. A survey of all New York State conventions listed in the Colored Convention Project’s Digital Records (<https://omeka.coloredconventions.org/>) revealed that that several Oneida County people took part in these conventions in the early 1840s. In 1840, for example, four delegates (Benjamin Anderson, George C. Brown, Jermanus [*sic*] Loguen, and Joseph C. Pankes [*sic*]) from Utica attended the convention in Albany. No one from Oneida County was listed in the Troy convention in 1841, but B. S. Anderson, James Fountain, and Tucker Woodson all attended the famous 1843 convention in Buffalo. A man named Lewis Putnam

⁵¹ For an overview of Liberty Party organization, see Reinhard O. Johnson, *The Liberty Party, 1840–48: Antislavery Third-Party Politics in the United States* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009).

⁵² Manisha Sinha, *The Slave’s Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 418, 468; *Proceedings of the National Liberty Convention, held at Buffalo, N.Y., June 14th and 15th, 1848* (Utica: S. W. Green, 1848), 3; Strong, *Perfectionist Politics*, 162; *Black Abolitionist Papers*, 413; Garnet, Ward, and Douglass quoted in Charles H. Wesley, “The Participation of Negroes in Anti-Slavery Political Parties,” *Journal of Negro History* 29:1 (January 1944), 39–40, 44; Reinhard O. Johnson, “African Americans and the Liberty Party,” Chapter 9 in *The Liberty Party, 1840–1848: Anti-Slavery Third Party Politics in the United States* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009); Charles H. Wesley, “The Negroes of New York in the Emancipation Movement,” *Journal of Negro History* 24 (January 1939), 96.

sent a letter to the 1847 convention, but otherwise, no names from Oneida County appear in convention minutes until 1853, when R. D. Wills attended the meeting in Rochester. In 1855, Peter Hornbeck and George Brown went to the Troy convention from Utica.⁵³

As Cheryl LaRoche has noted, of the sixty extant minutes of these Black conventions before the Civil War, none mentioned the Underground Railroad by name. This is consistent with minutes from conventions dominated by European Americans. In part, this reflected the use of different terms—such as “fugitive”—for the Underground Railroad network. In part, too, as LaRoche argues, these “loud absences” reflected the two worlds that Black activists (and their allies) navigated: one world of public platforms and a second world of hidden networks that supported the escape of enslaved people. In many cases, however, these agendas were not hidden but very open, as when Mrs. Culbert appeared at the 1837 meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, pleading for help to rescue her two children from slavery.⁵⁴

By the mid-1840s, the Underground Railroad was in regular operation through Oneida County. About 1846, J. D. Green escaped from New Orleans on a ship bound for New York City. This was his second of several escapes from slavery. He ended up on Post Street in Utica before he was recaptured and sent South into slavery once more. William Chaplin worked in Washington, DC, to bring Mary and her four-year-old son to meet husband Jo Norton in Utica in 1845.

With James G. Birney as their candidate for president and Thomas Morris of Ohio as vice-president, Liberty Party supporters organized heavily in central New York in 1843. In November 1843, Gerrit Smith employed seven agents in Madison County, with forty-three political abolitionist meetings.⁵⁵

Such saturation paid off. In 1843, the Liberty Party won almost ten times as many votes nationally as they had garnered four years before. That included 15,800 votes from New York State, enough to swing New York State’s electoral college from Henry Clay, the Whig candidate, to James K. Polk, Democrat. Abolitionists could rejoice when the House of Representatives repealed the gag rule (which had automatically tabled antislavery petitions) in 1844. But they lost a major battle when Congress approved the annexation of Texas as a slave state on December 29, 1845, leading the country directly into the Mexican War.

⁵³ Digital Records, Colored Conventions Project, <https://omeka.coloredconventions.org/>; Philip Foner and George Walker, eds., *Proceedings of the Black State Convention, 1840–1865* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979).

⁵⁴ Cheryl LaRoche, “Secrets Well Kept: Colored Conventioneers and Underground Railroad Activism,” in P. Gabrielle Foreman, Jim Casey, and Sarah Lynn Patterson, eds., *The Colored Conventions Movement* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 246 ff.

⁵⁵ Norman K. Dann, *Practical Dreamer: Gerrit Smith and the Crusade for Social Reform* (Hamilton, NY: Log Cabin Books, 2009).

Black state conventions and European American allies had agitated for equal suffrage for African American males since at least the 1820s. The 1821 New York State constitution had abolished property restrictions for males over twenty-one of European descent but retained the requirement that African American men had to own a freehold worth at least \$250. Beginning in the 1830s, African Americans and their supporters worked to change this.

In 1846, the issue generated considerable debate when it came again before the New York State constitutional convention. Pro-suffrage delegates rooted their arguments in the context of the Declaration of Independence. “We think it our place here to declare that we hold all distinctions between native born citizens growing out of complexion, as unjust,” they declared.

We merely put forth our appeal for a republican birth-right. We fully believe in the fundamental doctrines set forth in the Declaration of Independence. We acquiesce in the sentiment that ‘governments derive their just power from the consent of the governed.’ And we say it is injustice of the most aggrieved character, . . . to deprive us of a just and legitimate participation in the rights of the state.⁵⁶

Many European American citizens agreed. Among them was Horace Greeley, influential editor of the *New York Tribune*. “So far as we have any partialities,” he concluded, “we are of course against the African blood and hue. But reared in and devoted to Republican principles, how *can* we say that they should not enjoy the sacred right of Self Government the same as other men?”⁵⁷

As in the 1821 convention, delegates debated black suffrage in the context of the Declaration of Independence. Led by Ansel Bascom from Seneca Falls, Levi S. Chatfield from Otsego County, George A. S. Crooker from Cattaraugus County (all lawyers), author A. W. Young from Wyoming County, farmer Benjamin Bruce from Madison County, and others, proponents argued, “All men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, *without regard to color*, among them are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”⁵⁸

George Crooker, waving the Declaration of Independence, declared that blacks were

born and bred upon our soil. And here in the house of their birth we dare to deny them the sacred right of suffrage on account of the shade or color of the skin. . . . I confess I was not prepared to hear it declared in this hall, that the

⁵⁶ “Address of the New York State Convention of Colored Citizens, to the People of the State,” in Philip S. Foner and George E. Walker, eds., *Proceedings of the Black State Conventions, 1840–1865*, Vol. I (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), 22–23.

⁵⁷ *New York Tribune*, July 21, 1846.

⁵⁸ William G. Bishop and William H. Attree, *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of New York, 1846* (New York: Albany, 1846), 539–40.

principles of the declaration of independence are mere abstractions. If we have indeed come to this . . . we have very far departed from the “faith once delivered to the saints.” We have lost sight of the principle of equal rights, and our government is indeed a despotism.⁵⁹

Dominated by Democrats who feared that African American voters would promote Whig victories, the convention voted against black suffrage by 42 to 19. In a referendum, voters also overwhelmingly rejected equal suffrage in 1846 and again in 1860 and 1869.⁶⁰

In this context, Gerrit Smith and Stephen Myers initiated a radically new effort to expand the number of African American male voters in New York State. From his vast land holdings, mostly in the Adirondack Mountains, Smith decided to give land grants to African American men in New York State. He enlisted help from key abolitionists, who recommended the names of about sixty African American men in each county. Most of this land was agriculturally poor, not able to sustain settlement. But ownership would give voting rights to its recipients. Doubtless, Smith hoped that many of these new voters would also vote the Liberty Party ticket. Many recipients lost their land because they failed to pay taxes on it. But, in two cases, Timbuctoo in Franklin County and the Florence Farming and Lumber Association in Oneida County, African American settlers created communities that lasted from 1848 into the late 1850s.

In cooperation with Stephen Myers (African American abolitionist, editor, and Underground Railroad agent in Albany, New York), Smith set up the Florence Farming and Lumber Association by September 1846. Stephen Myers reported to Frederick Douglass that “Florence was a heavily timbered country, stony soil, good oats and corn, and also good grazing land.” By 1850, Florence had attracted fifty-two settlers. Based on census records that listed place of birth in a southern state or foreign country, at least seventeen Florence residents in eleven families included people who had escaped from slavery. Five of these listed themselves in census records in Florence for two or more years. The seven members of the McCoy family were all from Washington, DC. Mary Brown and Lydia Benton listed birthplaces as Nova Scotia and Canada. Prince Lax, 115 years old, said that he was born in Africa. The settlement eventually attracted a small group of African Americans, many of whom, based on place of birth in DC, Maryland, Canada, North Carolina, and the West Indies, had escaped from slavery. By 1870, the census listed only eleven African Americans in the Town of Florence, centered around the Simmons, Brown, and Lawrence families.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Bishop and Attree, *Report*, 540–41.

⁶⁰ Phyllis Field, *Politics of Race: The Struggle for Black Suffrage in the Civil War Era* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), 43–53; Arthur Ekirch, “Democracy and Laissez-Faire: The New York State Constitution of 1846,” *Journal of Libertarian Studies*, 1:4 (1977), 319–27; Judith Wellman, “Women’s Rights, Republicanism, and Revolutionary Rhetoric in New York State,” *New York History* 69 (July 1988), 353–84; Judith Wellman, *Road to Seneca Falls* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 151.

⁶¹ Gerrit Smith made a list in his own hand of all of these names, Gerrit Smith Papers, Syracuse University.

Walter Hawkins was the most famous member of the Florence community. He escaped from Washington, DC He moved first to Buffalo, New York; then to New Bedford, Massachusetts; and then, in 1849, to the Florence settlement. Escaping to Canada with his family after the Fugitive Slave Act, he became a bishop in the British Methodist Episcopal Church. He told his life story to S. J. Celestine Edwards in 1891, including details of his life in slavery and in freedom in Florence.⁶²

While many people came through Oneida County on the Underground Railroad in the 1840s, several families settled there. One of those was a freedom seeker named Brown, who settled in Rome sometime during the 1840s. As Underground Railroad supporter Colonel Arden Seymour remembered:

Another man by the name of Brown, a joiner by trade, and an excellent workman, was employed by Bradford Dean, a master builder. Brown married, and built a nice cottage on a lot he had bought. The house is on Dominick street, the first house west of the bridge over the Mohawk River, on the south side of the street. After the Fugitive Slave Law went into operation, his wife would give him no peace until he sold his house for what he could get for it and fled to Canada.⁶³

Nationally, war with Mexico ignited over the question of the annexation of Texas. All abolitionists opposed the Mexican War, but they chose different paths to counter it. By 1847, it was clear that the Liberty Party coalition was beginning to dissolve. At its convention in Buffalo on October 20–21, 1847, Gerrit Smith proposed a resolution that “slavery, whether in the District of Columbia, or in any other part of the Nation, is clearly and utterly unconstitutional.” Delegates defeated the resolution, 195–137. Instead, led by Senator Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, they nominated John P. Hale for president. Hale, they believed, was someone who could attract antislavery votes—including Whig and Democratic supporters—from around the free states, based not on the view that the federal government could abolish slavery everywhere but on the more limited argument that it could abolish the slave trade and slavery in both the territories and the District of Columbia.

By 1848, it was clear that hope for the Liberty Party as a separate entity was doomed. The end of the Mexican War in 1848 left antislavery advocates with a new pressing question: How could they keep slavery out of the vast territory that the US had acquired from Mexico in the southwest? Compromise seemed the only realistic option. At a Buffalo convention held on August 9, 1848, Liberty Party advocates helped create a new coalition. Called the Free Soil Party, its central principle was not abolitionism but the refusal to extend slavery into the territories, especially those acquired from Mexico at the end of the

⁶² S. J. Celestine Edwards, *From Slavery to a Bishopric: or the Life of Bishop Walter Hawkins of the British Methodist Episcopal* (London: John Kensit, 1891), 113–14.

⁶³ Col. A. Seymour, “The Underground Railroad for Fugitive Slaves,” *Roman Citizen*, February 23, 1872. Found by Maryellen Urtz.

Mexican War in May 1848. Acceding to demands of antislavery Democrats (called Barnburners), the convention nominated former President Martin Van Buren—whose antislavery credentials were less than stellar—for president. “The liberty party is not dead but translated,” rationalized abolitionist poet John G. Whittier. Notably, the Free Soil platform—unlike earlier Liberty Party commitments—did not support either the Underground Railroad or equality for African Americans.⁶⁴

Refusing to give up their goals of total abolition, equality for African Americans, and support for refugees from slavery, Gerrit Smith, Beriah Green, and Alvan Stewart recruited radical abolitionists—many of them centered in Oneida County and in Quaker communities of Farmington and Macedon, New York—to form two new political parties, the Liberty League and its clone the National Liberty Party. Both parties espoused the idea that “the Federal Government has power, under its Constitution, to abolish every part of American slavery; and is supremely guilty for refusing to exercise it.”⁶⁵

The Liberty League, “a pure abolitionist party,” noted historian Frederick Blue, first met in Macedon, New York, on June 8–10, 1847. They nominated Gerrit Smith for president and proposed a platform of nineteen points, including the total abolition of slavery and voting rights not only for African Americans but also for women. Their goal was to create a just government that would pursue “stedfastly and undeviatingly, wherever they are revealed to us, the TRUE and the RIGHT” and “THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS” They promoted the rights of “ALL MEN,” both Black and White.⁶⁶

On June 14–15, 1848, a group that called itself the National Liberty Convention, with Henry Highland Garnet as vice-president, met in Buffalo to adopt Liberty League proposals, nominating Gerrit Smith as president and C. C. Foote as vice-president. For Liberty League advocates, “men” also included women. Their platform advocated “universal suffrage in its broadest sense, females as well as males being entitled to vote.” Several convention members immediately acted on that conviction, casting votes for both African Americans and women. Frederick Douglass received one vote for president and one vote

⁶⁴ Blue, *No Taint of Compromise*, 54–55.

⁶⁵ *Proceedings*, 15–17. “The Liberty Party of the United States to the People of the United States,” *Proceedings*, 13–45, includes a detailed discussion of the argument that the Constitution was an antislavery document, as well as a discussion of other points in the Liberty Party platform.

⁶⁶ Blue, *No Taint of Compromise*, 101; Goodell, “Address of the Macedon Convention,” and Gerrit Smith, *Letters of Gerrit Smith* (Albany: S. W. Green, 1847); *National Era*, June 24, 1847.

for vice-president. Twelve people voted for Samuel R. Ward as vice-president. Lucretia Mott received five votes for vice-president, the first known time in the new Republic—outside Indigenous societies—that anyone ever voted for a woman for formal political office.⁶⁷

Gerrit Smith was Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s cousin. It is likely that Gerrit Smith stopped at the Stanton house in Seneca Falls on his way to Buffalo. It would be surprising if they did not discuss women’s right to vote around the Stanton dinner table. On July 19–20, a month after the Liberty League convention, Elizabeth Cady Stanton introduced women’s suffrage at her own convention for women’s rights in Seneca Falls.⁶⁸

The convention centered around the phalanx that had originated a decade earlier in Oneida County. Beriah Green published a letter, as did Gerrit Smith. William Goodell wrote an address “To the People of the United States.” *The Albany Patriot*, edited by William Chaplin, became the official newspaper of the Liberty Party. Liberty Leaguers never numbered more than 20 percent of former Liberty Party voters, estimated historian Reinhard O. Johnson, and they never gained traction outside central New York. But their absolute commitment to racial and gender equality, forged in central New York, made their voices ring through the ages.⁶⁹

When the National Liberty Party nominated Gerrit Smith for president at its June 1848 convention, Smith used his platform to highlight the importance of assisting people to escape from slavery. “The men, who, under God, are to carry forward the antislavery cause to its triumph, are men, who identify themselves with the slaves, and are willing to be hated and despised for that identification. They must not be ashamed to be called slave-stealers. . . . As I live, and as God lives,” shouted Smith, “there is not on earth a more honorable employment. There is not, in all the world, a more honorable tomb stone than that, on which the slaveholder would inscribe ‘Here lies a slave-stealer.’”⁷⁰

Smith’s speech was not simply rhetorical. In his speech, he made several references to seventy-seven people who had escaped from slavery in April. Smith was one of those who supported this effort. William Chaplin, once corresponding secretary for the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, had arranged for all of these enslaved men and women to escape to freedom from Washington, DC, on a ship called the *Pearl*. Becalmed, the ship was

⁶⁷ *Proceedings of the National Liberty Convention, Held at Buffalo, N.Y., June 14th & 15th, 1848; Including the Resolutions and Addresses Adopted by that Body, and Speeches of Beriah Green and Gerrit Smith on that Occasion* (Utica: S. W. Green, 1848), 4–6, 14; “The Liberty League Convention,” *The Liberator*, June 23, 1848, reprinted from *New York Commercial Advertiser*. “Dissolution of the Liberty Party,” *National Anti-slavery Standard*, September 21, 1848, noted that the Liberty Party formally dissolved at a meeting in Utica on September 13, 1848.

⁶⁸ Judith Wellman, *Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman’s Rights Convention* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 343–52, outlines this story in the context of the Seneca Falls women’s rights convention.

⁶⁹ Reinhard O. Johnson, *The Liberty Party, 1840–48*, Kindle location 3144.

⁷⁰ *Proceedings*, “Speech of Gerrit Smith,” 45; quote from 49–50.

overtaken by slave catchers, who towed it back to Washington, where all seventy-seven refugees were put on the auction block. This incident created huge consternation across the country.⁷¹

The *Pearl* affair was but the latest manifestation of an aggressive Underground Railroad initiative that Smith and others in upstate New York had been promoting since the early 1840s. Eber Pettit, Underground Railroad agent from Chautauqua County, identified this network in his 1879 memoir, *Sketches in the History of the Underground Railroad*. “The first well established line of the U. G. R. R,” he wrote, “had its southern terminus in Washington, D. C., and extended in a pretty direct route to Albany, N. Y., thence radiating in all directions to all the New England States, and to many parts of this State.” “Some of the best men in the nation were stockholders,” he asserted, “men of wealth and influence, men in office, State and national,—men, women and children identified themselves with its affairs.”⁷²

Gerrit Smith and other radical abolitionists associated with the Liberty Party supported a group of Black and White abolitionists in Washington, DC, creating what historian Stanley Harrold called “a southern outpost of northern abolitionism” with ties to upstate New York. Charles Torrey came to Washington, DC, 1842, representing a variety of antislavery newspapers. There he lived in Ann Sprigg’s boarding house with several anti-slavery Congressmen and lobbyists, including Seth M. Gates, Joshua R. Giddings, Joshua Leavitt, and antislavery activist Theodore Weld from central New York. Weld called their abode the Abolition House. All had come together with John Quincy Adams in opposition to the gag rule that automatically tabled antislavery petitions sent to Congress.⁷³

Charles Torrey worked closely with this group and also with local African Americans, especially Thomas and Elizabeth Smallwood. Thomas Smallwood was born in slavery in Prince George’s County, Maryland, in 1801. Freed at the age of thirty, he worked in the Washington Navy Yard and taught Sunday School in the Ebenezer Wesleyan Methodist Church. This group worked with other men and women, both Black and White. “While the men recruited and guided, the women harbored,” suggested Harrold. Led by Torrey and Smallwood, this group created an organized Underground Railroad network.

⁷¹ Stanley Harrold, *The Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism: Addresses to the Slaves* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004); Mary Kay Ricks, *Escape on the Pearl: The Heroic Bid for Freedom on the Underground Railroad* (New York: William Morrow, 2007).

⁷² Eber Pettit, *Sketches in the History of the Underground Railroad* (Fredonia, NY: Willard McKinstry, 1879), 30. Pettit first published these recollections, serialized in the local newspaper, beginning in 1868.

⁷³ Stanley Harrold, *Subversives: Antislavery Community in Washington, D.C., 1828–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 62, 66.

Credited with the escape of about four hundred people between August 1842 and Torrey’s arrest in December 1844, Smallwood remembered that, of the scores of people who came to him for help in escaping from slavery, he was able to help all but seven.⁷⁴

In August 1842, Torrey had sent his first major group of refugees—fifteen men, women, and children—to Troy, New York. Congressman Joshua Giddings described this escape in a letter to his son: “Some swear that there is a *Subterranean rail road* by which they travel underground. Men, women & children all go. Whole families disappear like the baseless fabric of a vision and leave not a wink behind.”⁷⁵

Smallwood remained in Washington, DC, where he organized underground rail-road escapes and reported about them in letters to the *Albany Patriot*, signed with the pseudonym Samuel Welliver Jr. By the summer of 1843, fearful of exposure, Smallwood left Washington to settle his family in Toronto.⁷⁶

In the fall of 1842, Torrey moved to Albany, New York, to become editor of the newspaper of the Eastern New York Anti-Slavery Society, the *Tocsin of Liberty*, later called the *Albany Patriot*. He later moved to Philadelphia and expanded his Underground Railroad work. Between December 1843 and June 1844, he made several trips into Maryland and Virginia, waging with his coworkers what Harrold called “guerrilla warfare” against slavery in the DC area. Torrey paid for his Underground Railroad with his life. Arrested in December 1844 for helping enslaved people escape, he was sentenced to six years in the Maryland Penitentiary. He died of tuberculosis while still in prison on May 9, 1846.⁷⁷

One of those that Torrey assisted in the mid-1840s may have been a young man known as Jo Norton. Eber Pettit described his escape from slavery under “Colonel H.” in Washington, DC, in detail. One of the keys to Norton’s success was a ruse designed by the *Albany Patriot*. The *Patriot* would publish news articles with minute details of escapes from Washington, DC, reporting that people had safely reached freedom in the North. Enslavers, reading this article, would give up their chase. And only then would freedom seekers actually leave Washington. Jo Norton and his four companions benefitted from this trickery. They did not leave their hiding places until Colonel H. had abandoned his pursuit,

⁷⁴ Harrold, *Subversives*, 78–85, 93; Thomas Smallwood, *A Narrative of Thomas Smallwood (Coloured Man)* (Toronto: James Stephenson, 1851), 13, 17.

⁷⁵ Harrold, *Subversives*, 81.

⁷⁶ Harrold, *Subversives*, 82–84.

⁷⁷ Harrold, *Subversives*, 64, 86–93.

“having learned by the aforesaid paper, what he took as positive proof, that they were beyond his reach.” This plan was kept secret and used many times, reported Pettit, helping “great numbers” to escape from Washington, DC, to New York State.⁷⁸

With help from William Chaplin, Jo Norton located his wife Mary, still living in Washington, DC, with their four-year-old son. Her enslaver agreed to sell them both to Norton for \$300. Norton gave talks in local communities all over western New York to raise the money. Chaplin wrote to Eber Pettit, saying that Mary and her son had come with Chaplin to Utica. Although it was already sunset, and Norton had walked the twenty-seven miles from Buffalo to Fredonia that day, he immediately walked back to Buffalo, where he took a train for Utica early the next morning and joyfully greeted Mary and his son, now in freedom.⁷⁹

With roots in Utica, William Chaplin was “the unofficial representative in Washington of New York’s radical political abolitionists,” noted Stanley Harrold. Born in Groton, Massachusetts, in 1796, Chaplin was educated at Harvard as a lawyer. He gave up his law practice in 1836 to become an antislavery agent. In 1837, the New York State Anti-Slavery Society hired him as its corresponding secretary. He was by all accounts a charming and effective communicator. His coworker Joseph C. Hathaway described him as “serene, dignified, cheerful, loving, brave and gentlemanly.” Like Gerrit Smith and Alvan Stewart, he helped organize the Liberty Party in 1840. Also like them, he advocated radical abolitionism, including political action and the Underground Railroad.⁸⁰

In December 1844, Chaplin arrived in Washington, DC, to take over Torrey’s role as a reporter for the *Albany Patriot*. Following the example of Gerrit Smith, who had purchased the Russell family, enslaved by his wife’s family, Chaplin established a “Bureau of Humanity” to raise money to purchase people from slavery. He was strongly influenced by the sheer desperation that enslaved families felt by forced separation. He also realized that publicizing these stories could bring more northern support for the antislavery cause. In 1845, Chaplin purchased the wife and child of James Baker, who had earlier escaped to become an antislavery lecturer in upstate New York. When Congress adjourned in March 1845, Chaplin returned north with Mary and her child, reuniting them with husband James

⁷⁸ Pettit, *Sketches in the History of the Underground Railroad*, 30–47. Although Pettit dated Jo Norton’s escape to 1839, he also connected it to the *Albany Patriot*, when it was operated by James Caleb Jackson and Abel Brown from 1844 to 1847. I have told the story here as part of the Underground Railroad in the 1840s. Joe Norton may well have been a pseudonym for James Baker, as noted below.

⁷⁹ Pettit, *Sketches in the History of the Underground Railroad*, 39.

⁸⁰ Harrold, *Subversives*, 97–98.

Baker in Utica. James Baker later was one of those who formed a committee of fugitives at the Cazenovia Convention in August 1850. He also joined the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Syracuse until he left for Canada after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act.⁸¹

Back in Washington in December 1845, Chaplin helped purchase Sarah Carter from slavery, backed by assurances that Gerrit Smith would make good the debt. By June 1846, Chaplin returned to Albany to take over editorship of the *Albany Patriot* from James C. Jackson. Purchasing enslaved people and helping them escape from Washington fell to Bigelow, Gamaliel and Margaret Bailey, Joshua Giddings, John and Peggy Eaton, and many unnamed people of color. When Chaplin returned to Washington in December 1847, he reported, “a score of these distressed people draw upon my time and sympathy day after day, and week after week.” But abolition in DC, was crucial, thought Chaplin, because it would lead to “a mightier and more decisive conflict,” ending slavery forever.⁸²

This, then, was the context for the attempted escape of seventy-seven enslaved people on the *Pearl*. Daniel Bell, a free man who wanted to free his wife Mary and their eight enslaved children, was one of the main organizers. But clearly Chaplin was the mastermind. He wrote to Gerrit Smith on March 25 that he had found someone in Philadelphia to charter for him “a vessel” that could carry a large number of people. “The number of persons here, who are anxious to imigrate [sic],” he wrote, “is increasing on my hands daily. I believe there are no less than 75 now importunate for a passage.” Chaplin saw the *Pearl* on its way and then confidentially informed other abolitionists in Washington, DC.⁸³

Becalmed in Chesapeake Bay, the *Pearl* and all its passengers were captured. News of the *Pearl* affair hit the national press immediately. It brought both abolitionist sympathizers and proslavery defenders into further conflict. As for the refugees themselves, all were sold, most of them to notorious slave trader Hope Slatter, who in turn sold them to buyers in the Deep South.⁸⁴

Of the hundreds of people that Torrey, Smallwood, Chaplin, and their coworkers helped escape from Washington, DC, from 1842 to 1848, we know the general northern destinations of people in three cases. In August 1842, Torrey accompanied fifteen men, women, and children to Troy, New York. He reported to Thomas Smallwood that “I have arrived at Troy safe, with the chattels, and am now shipping them on board of a canal boat for Canada.” Whether the canal boat went north on the Champlain Canal or west on the Erie Canal through Utica and Rome, we do not know. In the second case, William Chaplin

⁸¹ Harrold, *Subversives*, 100–101. James Baker may have been the real name of the freedom seeker that Eber Pettit referred to as Jo Norton. Their stories are remarkably similar. For further references to Baker, see “Wesleyan Chapel,” *Uncovering the Freedom Trail in Syracuse and Onondaga County*, https://pacny.net/freedom_trail.

⁸² Harrold, *Subversives*, 111–12.

⁸³ Chaplin to Gerrit Smith, March 25, 1848, Gerrit Smith Papers, quoted in Harrold, 128–29.

⁸⁴ Harrold, *Subversives*, 132–33.

took Mary Davis and her child in March 1845 to Utica, where they joined James Davis, their husband and father. The third case involved Mary and Emily Edmondson, two teenaged girls captured on the *Pearl*. After being sent to New Orleans, they were returned to Richmond, Virginia, where William Chaplin purchased them for \$2,200, with money collected by their father and by Chaplin himself from northern abolitionists. They went immediately to Farmington and Macedon, New York, where they stayed in the home of William R. and Eliza Smith, radical abolitionist Quakers and supporters of Gerrit Smith’s Liberty League.⁸⁵

We do not know how many refugees from the Washington, DC, area may have come to or through Oneida County as a result of Torrey, Smallwood, and Chaplin’s efforts in the 1840s. One family’s story, however, offers tantalizing suggestions that the Underground Railroad network in Washington, DC, reached directly into Oneida County. When the 1850 US census was taken on July 20, 1850, it recorded the presence in Rome of a family of ten people, headed in census records by thirty-five-year-old Alfred Stevenson, a brick molder born in Maryland. The real head of the family, however, may have been a sixty-year-old woman, Henrietta Bowen, born in Maryland. Sarah Stevenson, age thirty-five, was Alfred’s wife and a daughter of Henrietta Bowen. Mary F. Boin (Bowen), who lived with them, was also one of Henrietta’s daughters. Alfred and Sarah’s six children, ranging from thirteen-year-old Mariah to one-year-old Samuel. Alfred Stevenson and Henrietta Bowen were from Maryland. All the others, except the youngest Samuel, born in New York State, had been born in Washington, DC.⁸⁶

They settled next to the canal in Rome, New York. According to authors George Reasons and Sam Patrick, Alfred’s wife Sarah (also called Sally) Stevenson was the sister of Anthony Bowen, in Washington, DC. Henrietta Bowen was likely Anthony’s mother. Reasons and Patrick suggest that the whole Bowen-Stevenson family had settled in Rome to create a northern outpost, right on the banks of the Erie Canal, for people that Anthony Bowen helped to escape from Washington, DC. Formerly enslaved in Maryland, Bowen had purchased his freedom at the age of thirty-five. He moved to Washington, DC, where he helped form Black churches (including both the Wesley African Methodist Episcopal Church and St. Paul’s AME Church), schools, and the first YMCA for people of color. He was the first person of color to be hired in the US Patent Office. He was also reputedly part of the radical Underground Railroad network in Washington, DC.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Judith Wellman, “William R. and Eliza Smith,” *Uncovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Wayne County, New York, 1820–1880* (Lyons, New York: Wayne County Historian’s Office, 2010), 157–84, <https://web.co.wayne.ny.us/index.php/office-of-the-county-historian/uncovering-the-underground-railroad-abolitionism-and-african-american-life-in-wayne-county-new-york-1820-1880>.

⁸⁶ US Census, 1850.

⁸⁷ Jane Ailes has suggested that we “take a look at 1830 DC census, Ward 5, stamped page 19 for H. Bowen, a free woman of color with 1 free male under 10 years, and 4 slaves: 3 female and 1 male under 10. Is this Henny Bowen with her children and/or relatives?”

No primary sources have confirmed this connection, but two bits of circumstantial evidence lend credence to it. First, Anthony Bowen helped found the Wesley African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, DC. Thomas Smallwood may have been a member of this church. About the time that the Stephenson-Bowen family settled in Rome, African Americans in Rome organized their own African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

Second, Anthony Bowen and many members of his family had been enslaved in Maryland by William A. Bradley. Bradley became president of the Patriotic Bank and mayor of Washington, DC, from 1834 to 1836. During his term, he dealt with riots in the District of Columbia, popularly called the Snow riots, after free Black tavern keeper Beverly Snow. One of the issues that sparked these riots was a trial of Arthur Bowen for the supposed attempted murder of his mistress. Was Arthur Bowen related to Anthony, Sally, and Henrietta Bowen?⁸⁸

William A. Bradley publicly espoused colonization, not abolitionism, but he frequented Snow’s tavern and became an important friend to Washington’s people of color. Anthony Bowen bought his freedom from Bradley in 1830. Bradley later manumitted several other members of the Bowen family, perhaps, as historian Jane Ailes has suggested, to settle his father’s estate. Manumissions included Fielder Bowen, son of Henny, perhaps Henrietta, Bowen. Oddly, he officially manumitted Sally Bowen Stevenson and her family, including Samuel, born in freedom in New York State, in 1858, eight years after they had moved to Rome, New York.⁸⁹

Did the Bowen-Stevenson family settle in Rome to create a northern safe house for people on their way to freedom from Washington, DC? That remains unproven but intriguing. It would have been in keeping with the work that William Chaplin, Thomas Smallwood, Gerrit Smith, and other radical abolitionists were doing to combat slavery directly through strengthening the Underground Railroad.

In August 1850, a month after the census taker took down names of the Bowen-Stevenson family in Rome, William Chaplin became the focus of a dramatic attempt to rescue two more people from slavery. Chaplin failed miserably, but in his failure, he illustrated the powerful link between Washington, DC, and upstate New York, and the importance of the Underground Railroad as a means to abolish slavery.

⁸⁸ Jefferson Morley, *Snow-Storm in August* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2012).

⁸⁹ Thanks to Jane Ailes, Marie Tyler-McGraw, and Karolyn Smardz Frost for extremely helpful comments, and a special thanks to Jane Ailes for her amazing research in records relating to Washington, DC.

CHAPTER SIX

“A Well Perfected Organization”: The High Point of the Underground Railroad, 1850–1861¹

Historic Sites

- A. Sites Associated with Freedom Seekers
 - 1. Rome: Railroad Station
 - 2. Rome: Site of African Methodist Episcopal Church
 - 3. Utica: Site of Dove Home
 - 4. Utica: Site of Munn Home
 - 5. Utica: Railroad Station
 - 6. Utica: Mechanics’ Hall
- B. Sites Associated with Underground Railroad Helpers
 - 1. Rome: Site of Store and Home of Col. Arden Seymour
 - 2. Rome: Site of Stanwix Hotel
 - 3. Utica: Site of DeLong Home
 - 4. Utica: New York State Insane Asylum
 - 5. Utica: Post Street
- C. Sites Related to Abolitionism
 - 1. Rome: Site of Spencer Hall
 - 2. Utica: Mechanics’ Hall
 - 3. Utica: Site of Freeman Home

On August 8, 1850, shortly after the Stephenson family had moved from Washington, DC, to Rome, New York, William L. Chaplin was traveling in a hired carriage along the Brookeville Pike in Silver Spring, Maryland. Two men of color, Garland White and Allen, traveled with him. The driver urged the horses along quickly, for

¹ “A well perfected organization,” *Utica Telegraph*, quoted in *Syracuse Daily Standard*, June 1, 1854.

both White and Allen were escaping to freedom. All three men were headed to a Fugitive Slave Convention organized by Gerrit Smith of Peterboro and Charles B. Ray, from the New York City Vigilance Committee. They intended to protest the proposed Fugitive Slave Law by honoring people who had escaped from slavery. The highlight of the meeting was to be a triumphant celebration of White and Allen’s escape from the very heart of the American republic.

White and Allen were not selected randomly. They were enslaved by two prominent Georgia senators, Alexander Hamilton Stephens and Robert Toombs. Stephens and Toombs were outspoken supporters of the Fugitive Slave Law and Compromise of 1850, viewing them as the best hope of preserving the Union. Stephens was a major philanthropist, defending both Blacks and Whites in court and sending more than one hundred poor students of both races to school. Toombs was probably personally known to central New Yorkers, since he had graduated from Union College in Schenectady, New York, in 1828. Both men helped draft the Georgia platform, organizing Unionists throughout the South.²

The plan for Allen’s and White’s escape ended in disaster. Suddenly, a posse of six heavily armed men surrounded their carriage. Their pursuers jammed a fence rail through the spokes of the carriage wheels and shot directly into the carriage. At least one of the freedom seekers fired back. Both Allen and White were slightly wounded. Allen was returned to Senator Stephens. White escaped but turned himself in three days later. Chaplin, unarmed, was dragged from the vehicle and beaten severely before being taken back to Washington, where he was jailed for six weeks with a \$6,000 bail. He was then taken to Maryland and jailed for thirteen weeks, with bail set at \$19,000.

² William C. Davis, *The Union that Shaped the Confederacy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001).

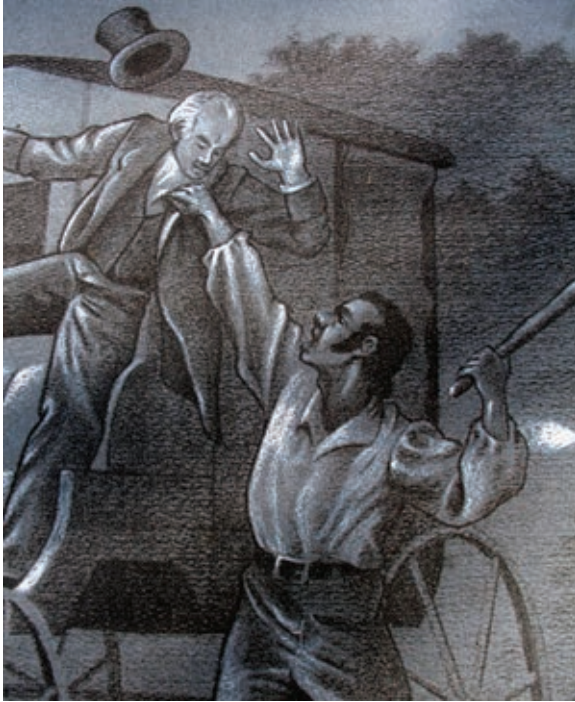


Figure 6.1. “William Chaplin Arrested!” Marker erected by National Park Service’s Network to Freedom, Silver Spring, Maryland, <http://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=3969>.

Chaplin’s friends immediately rallied to his support. Theodosia Gilbert, Chaplin’s fiancée, went with Joseph C. Hathaway of Farmington, New York, to visit Chaplin in his Maryland jail. When they returned, they went immediately to the Cazenovia Fugitive Slave Convention. Instead of welcoming Garland and Allen, the convention became a call to action. Aggressive abolitionism, in historian Stanley Harrold’s words, had come directly home to central New York.

Frederick Douglass chaired the meeting. Jermain Loguen, the Edmondson sisters, and Gerrit Smith played leading roles, attracting “the most diverse group of people” ever assembled in an abolitionist meeting, noted Harrold. Two to three thousand abolitionists—Black and White, women and men, including Jermain Loguen and thirty to fifty people who had escaped from slavery themselves—resoundingly opposed the Fugitive Slave Bill and gave a ringing endorsement of the Underground Railroad.³

A famous daguerreotype of the convention, taken by Ezra Greenleaf Weld, brother of abolitionist Theodore Weld, captured one of the few contemporary images of these reformers. Hugh Humphreys has identified the figures in this photo. Among them are J. C.

³ *North Star*, September 5, 1850; Stanley Harrold, *Subversives: Antislavery Community in Washington, DC, 1828–65*, 146–73; Stanley Harrold, *The Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism: Addresses to the Slaves* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004).

Hathaway, seated to the left at the table; Gerrit Smith, standing in the center; the Edmondson sisters, in plaid on either side of Smith; and Theodosia Gilbert and Frederick Douglass, seated in front of Smith.⁴

Jermain W. Loguen, James Baker, and E. L. Platt were appointed a committee to prepare a “Letter to the American Slaves from those who have fled from American Slavery.” They were very clear: “When the insurrection of the Southern slaves shall take place . . . , the great majority of the colored men of the North . . . will be found by your side, with deep-stored and long-accumulated revenge in their hearts, and with death-dealing weapons in their hands.” The Liberty Party, the Vigilance Committee of New York City, and people all over the country “are doing all they can . . . to afford you a safe and a cheap passage from slavery to liberty.” They did so at the risk of life and liberty, as evidenced by the capture of William Chaplin, who was “a willing martyr for the poor, despised, forgotten slave’s sake.”⁵

Not only did leaders encourage people to escape from slavery; they also organized a campaign to raise money for William Chaplin’s bail. Chaplin had many friends in central New York, Gerrit Smith among them. Others championed Chaplin from his days in Utica as the main agent for the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. After the meeting, the Edmondson sisters accompanied White and Black abolitionists who went from church to church, collecting money. Women collected dimes from other women to honor Chaplin with a silver chalice. Gerrit Smith ultimately provided the bulk of the funds. But others also contributed considerable sums. According to Josiah Henson, model for Uncle Tom in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (whose brother Chaplin was attempting to rescue), William R. Smith and Asa B. Smith, two Quakers from Farmington, New York, mortgaged their farm for Chaplin’s bail. William R. Smith also wrote a lengthy description and defense of Chaplin’s work, published in 1851 by the Chaplin committee.⁶

Although we have no list of the people who attended the Cazenovia convention, many of them were almost certainly from Oneida County. Cazenovia was forty-three miles west of Utica and only twenty-five miles from the Oneida County border. Chaplin had many friends both Black and White in Oneida County, as did Jermain Loguen and Gerrit

⁴ Hugh C. Humphreys, “*Agitate! Agitate! Agitate! The Great Fugitive Slave Law Convention and Its Rare Daguerreotype* (Oneida, NY: Madison County Historical Society, 1994). For another view of the radical political abolitionists, see John Stauffer, *Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁵ “Cazenovia Fugitive Slave Law Convention, August 21–22, 1850,” reprinted in Philip S. Foner and George E. Walker, eds., *Back Proceedings of the Black State Conventions, 1840–1865*, Vol. I (1979), 43–51.

⁶ *North Star*, September 5, 1850; Josiah Henson, *Uncle Tom’s Story of His Life. An Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson, From 1789 to 1876*, ed. John Lobb (London: Christian Age: 1876), 152–53, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/henson/henson.html>. Ralph Volney Harlow, *Gerrit Smith, Philanthropist and Reformer* (New York: Henry Holt, 1939), 290–95; William R. Smith, *The Case of William L. Chaplin: being an appeal to all respecters of law and justice, against the cruel and oppressive treatment to which, under color ... of Columbia and the state of Maryland* (1851), reprint (Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2008).

Smith. Some freedom seekers in Oneida County may even have known Chaplin from his years in Washington, DC. In 1859, seven of them in Oneida County listed their birthplaces as Washington, DC. Walter Hawkins and six members of the McCoy family all lived in Florence, and they may well have known Chaplin personally from his work in the District. Quite likely, so did the nine members of the Boin (Bowen)-Stevenson (Stephenson) family in Rome. Eight of these listed their birthplaces in different census records as Delaware/Washington, DC. One (Mary Boin/Bowen) listed her birthplace as “unknown.” But the family had been enslaved in the District of Columbia.

In 1850, these sixteen people from Washington, DC, and Delaware were part of the 561 African American population of Oneida County, as counted by the US census. Forty-eight of these (8.6 percent) listed their birthplaces as a southern state, a foreign country, or “unknown,” suggesting that they had once been enslaved. Most of the forty-eight (37, or 77 percent) came from the upper South (Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, or Washington, DC). In addition to Walter Hawkins, the McCoy family, and the Boin-Stephenson family from Washington, DC, fourteen more came from Virginia (two of whom lived in Rome and the rest in Utica). Eight came from Maryland.

In addition, Mary Boin (or Bowen), Nancy Teabot, and Stephen Thompson, all from Rome, listed their birthplaces as unknown. Five people listed their place of birth as a foreign country (three from Canada, including one from Nova Scotia; one—Prince Lax, age 115, living in Florence—born in Africa; and William Johnson, a fifty-two-year-old barber, living in Rome, who listed his birthplace as Georgia). Southern-born people included one each from Georgia (William Johnson, a forty-four-year-old barber who lived in Boonville); Florida (Samuel Edmond, fourteen years old, living in Whitestown); and Mississippi (Francis Wills from New Hartford).

Unmoved by appeals from Cazenovia or anywhere else, President Millard Fillmore, a lawyer and politician from Buffalo, signed the Fugitive Slave Law into law on September 18, 1850. This law imposed severe penalties (up to a \$1,000 fine and six months in jail) on anyone who helped an enslaved person escape. Accused people were not allowed to testify on their own behalf. Federal commissioners received a fee of ten dollars for every person they returned to slavery and only five dollars for those they allowed to remain free. Abolitionists called this a bribe. And it was.

By 1860, Frederick Douglass concluded, “Twenty years ago, Slavery did really seem to be rapidly hastening to its fall, but ten years ago, the Fugitive Slave Bill, and the efforts to enforce it, changed the whole appearance of the struggle. Anti-slavery in an abolition sense, has been ever since battling against heavy odds, both in Church and State.”⁷

⁷ Frederick Douglass, quoted in William Still, *The Underground Railroad* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1872), 270–71.

If southerners hoped that the Fugitive Slave Law would undermine the Underground Railroad, they drastically miscalculated. Abolitionists of both African and European descent made clear their defiance. Protest meetings in Oswego, Syracuse, Rochester, Syracuse, and Buffalo were typical. On October 2, Gerrit Smith addressed a meeting at Oswego. “We may all, in less than a year,” he said, “be in a dungeon for assisting a fugitive slave. I for one am ready to go. . . . Let the end be what may, I am ready to meet it.” In Syracuse, more than six hundred people signed a call for a meeting in City Hall on May 16, chaired by Democratic Mayor Alfred H. Hovey. Participants sent a petition to Congress, supporting unequivocally the admission of California as a free state and opposing any fugitive slave law.⁸

The Fugitive Slave precipitated a flood of refugees from slavery. Traffic on the Underground Railroad increased immediately. Now fearing capture by federal officials as well as slavecatchers hired for profit, many people who had escaped from slavery to settle in northern free states also began to leave for Canada. Frederick Douglass noted that “fugitive slaves who had lived for many years safely and securely in western New York and elsewhere, some of whom had by industry and economy saved money and bought little homes for themselves and their children, were suddenly alarmed and compelled to flee to Canada for safety as from an enemy’s land—a doomed city—and take up a dismal march to a new abode, empty-handed, among strangers.”⁹

Utica saw its share of refugees. Many of the earliest used the Erie Canal. In October 1850, one Utica newspaper noted, “Sixteen fugitive slaves on a boat for Canada passed through this city yesterday. They were well armed and determined to fight to the last.”¹⁰

About the same time, one attempt to escape to freedom ended in tragedy. In October 1850, a canal boat crew (including Captain Harwell Webster and crew members Silas H. Cowell and Jeremiah Cluney) cruelly tormented the Harris family—William, Caroline, and their toddler daughter—when they tried to escape to Canada on the Erie Canal.

Born in slavery in South Carolina, William Harris moved to Philadelphia and married Caroline about 1843. When the Fugitive Slave Act threatened their lives as free people, they left Philadelphia for New York City. There they purchased tickets for Rochester, where they intended to take a lake ship to Canada. In Albany, their tickets were stolen and destroyed by people who forced them to purchase tickets on a canal boat. The crew awakened William that night and told him that his master was aboard and that he

⁸ “Cazenovia Convention,” *The Liberator*, August 30, 1850; “Abolition Convention at Oswego,” *State Gazette*, Trenton, New Jersey, October 4, 1850.

⁹ Douglass, *Life and Times*, 279; Fred Landon, “The Negro Migration to Canada after the Passing of the Fugitive Slave Act,” *Journal of Negro History* 5 (January 1920): 22–36. Thanks to Milton Sernett for finding these references.

¹⁰ “Slave Catching in New York—First Case Under the Law,” *The Liberator*, Oct. 4, 1850, quoted in Tom Calarco, “Underground Railroad in Vermont,” *The Fresh Air of Freedom: The Underground Railroad in Vermont*.

would be returned to slavery. After three days of “threats and brutal conduct,” including their trip through Oneida County, Caroline jumped overboard, taking their daughter with her. Passengers rescued Caroline, but their daughter drowned, and the boat did not stop to save her. Threatened with death, William cut his own throat and lay for hours while the crew played cards nearby. Finally allowed to leave the boat, William Harris walked along the canal, following his wife who was still on board, for twenty miles until he fainted. Rescued by Captain Ogden, another canal boat captain, William was taken to abolitionist Dr. Hiram Hoyt in Syracuse, who treated his wounds. Reverend Lisle, African American minister from Syracuse, found Caroline Harris west of Syracuse, still on board the canal boat. The crew were arrested in Rochester and returned to Syracuse, where they were jailed and then fined. William and Caroline Harris eventually found their way to Canada but without their little daughter.¹¹

The Harris family received national attention. On October 26, 1850, the *New York Tribune* called this “one of the grossest and most inhuman outrages that has ever come to our notice.” The crew were “human fiends,” and this “outrageous affair” illustrated the worst effects of the “bill of abominations.” Newspapers such as the Louisville [Kentucky] *Daily Journal* also carried the story.¹²

So great was increased traffic on the Underground Railroad after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act that in November 1851, Henry Bibb reported from Canada in *The Voice of the Fugitive*, “the road is doing better business this fall than usual. The Fugitive Slave Law has given it more vitality, more activity, more passengers and more opposition which invariably accelerates business.”¹³

In 1851, the federal government made a deliberate effort to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act. In upstate New York State, federal officials captured three people who had escaped from slavery: Daniel Davis in Buffalo; Harrison Williams in Busti, and William “Jerry” Henry in Syracuse. Of these, all were befriended by local abolitionists; only Williams was returned to slavery. Two more cases involved prisoners. James Snowden was released from Sing Sing in 1852 and George Washington from Auburn Prison the same year. Both were rescued by vigilance committees. A handful of other cases came before judges in the 1850s, but no one except Harrison Williams was ever returned to slavery from

¹¹ Elinore T. Horning, “The Harris Harassment,” *York State Tradition* 26:4 (Fall 1972), 26–28; *Syracuse Daily Standard*, October 28, 1850; October 26[?], 1850.

¹² *New York Tribune*, October 26, 1850, reprinted from *Syracuse State Journal* and printed in Erie Canal Museum Newsletter, Fall 2001; *Louisville Daily Journal*, November 6, 1850, Filson Library, found by Pen Bogert and Christopher Densmore.

¹³ *The Voice of the Fugitive*, November 5, 1851.

upstate New York. John Thomas in Syracuse was so encouraged by these rescues that he wrote enthusiastically to Frederick Douglass that fugitives from slavery were “perfectly safe at every point between Buffalo and Albany.”¹⁴

We do not have details about any specific rescue cases in Oneida County in the 1850s, but we know that everyone who traveled on the Erie Canal or the New York Central Railroad came through Oneida County. Increasingly, organized Underground Railroad activity through upstate New York reflected a reliance on an emerging national and international network of above-ground railroads. The first railroads had come through central New York in the 1830s. The Utica and Schenectady Railroad connected Utica with points east in 1837. Two years later, the Syracuse and Utica Railroad opened travel through Rome and west. In 1853, the New York Central Railroad consolidated these with several other short lines, creating one long railroad that ran all the way from New York City north along the Hudson River to Albany and then west from Albany through Utica, Rome, Syracuse, and Rochester, all the way to Niagara Falls, New York. Josiah Allen, an Underground Railroad operative in Syracuse from 1842 to 1860, remembered that fugitives who came through Syracuse were often “smuggled over the Syracuse and Utica R.R., now part of the New York Central.” From Niagara Falls, the train ran directly across the Niagara River to Upper Canada on the new Suspension Bridge, finished for rail traffic in 1855.¹⁵



Southern view of Rome.

Figure 6.2. The Utica and Syracuse Railroad with the Erie Canal in the background.

From John Barber and Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of the State of New York* (New York: S. Tuttle, 1846), 367.

¹⁴ R. J. M. Blackett, *The Captive's Quest for Freedom: Fugitive Slaves, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, and the Politics of Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 218), 361–62; John Thomas to Frederick Douglass, *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, August 1, 1852, quoted in Blackett, 368–70.

¹⁵ Josiah Allen to *Wilbur Siebert*, August 10, 1896, in *Wilbur H. Siebert Underground Railroad Collection*, Ohio Historical Society.



Figure 6.3. The City of Utica, 1855. Courtesy of Granger Academic.com, image 0088298.

The New York Central linked Oneida County with the emerging international railroad system. It also led to a dramatic increase in population. The State of New York grew by 77 percent from 1820 to 1840, but areas along the canal and railroad routes outpaced statewide growth. Oneida County’s population almost doubled from 1820 to 1850, growing from 50,620 to 98,894 to 107,749 in 1855. Rome’s population more than doubled, from 3569 in 1820 to 7918 in 1850 to 10,720 in 1855. Utica grew from 10,183 in 1835 to 17,565 in 1850 to 22,169 in 1855.¹⁶

Railroads strengthened the existing distribution of people across Oneida County territory, concentrated in two major cities. Utica and Rome became anchors on the railroad as they had been on canals. In 1855, Utica had 12,704 in 1855 (11.8 percent of the county’s population), and Rome had 7,150 (6.7 percent). Most townships ranged from 2,000 to 3,000 residents. Three of the most populous townships remained those settled by New Englanders in the 1790s just south and west of Utica. Whitestown counted 3,322 people in 1855; New Hartford, 3,076; and Paris, 3,026. Boonville, a major stop from Rome to the St. Lawrence River on the Black River Canal, counted 3,824 people. Verona. Ava, on the northern border, had the fewest residents of any town in the county, with only 955 people. Floyd in the east-central area counted only 1,103, while Bridgewater in the south had 1016.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Census of the State of New York* (Albany: Charles Van Benthuyzen, 1857); Alex Thomas, “Oneida County Population Census Figures,” *Encyclopedia of New York State*, 1141.

¹⁷ *Census of the State of New York* (Albany: Charles Van Benthuyzen, 1857).

Most county residents, whether born in the US or another country, were people of European descent. The 1855 New York State census provides our best snapshot of places of origin for Oneida County residents. By far the largest number (63 percent, 68,302 of 107,749) had been born in New York State. Many of these were of English, Dutch, or German background, whose families had immigrated to New York State during the seven-teenth or eighteenth centuries.¹⁸

Increasingly, residents would hear foreign languages and accents on village streets and rural roads in Oneida County. In 1820, Oneida County’s foreign-born residents formed 1.9 percent of its population. In 1850, that number rose to 23 percent. By 1855, most of those born outside the United States came from western Europe, especially Great Britain (20,939, 19.4 percent), with 11,145 coming from Ireland, 5,599 from England, and 4,195 from Wales. Germany provided 6,302 (5.8 percent), with a few more from France (928).¹⁹

A few of these settlers were people of color. Although the percentage of people of color in Oneida County remained relatively stable (between 0.6 and 0.8 percent), the number of Oneida County’s African American residents grew, from 123 in 1800 (0.6 percent) to 672 in 1850 (0.7 percent). By 1855, 615 African Americans lived in Oneida County, .6 percent of the total of 107,749. Rome was home to 159 of these, while 170 lived in Utica (97 of them in Ward 4).²⁰

Based on census databases compiled by Jan DeAmicis, the population of African Americans in Oneida County dropped by more than 20 percent from 561 in 1850 to 446 in 1855 (a decline of 20.5 percent). That decline may have resulted from people fleeing to Canada after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850. The number rose by 39 percent from 446 in 1855 to 620 in 1860, perhaps as people felt safer in the North by the mid-1850s. Census records for 1865 for a few Oneida County towns (including Rome) are missing, so total population figures for that year are not available. During the decade that encompassed the Civil War, the number of people of color in Oneida County dropped only slightly, from 620 in 1860 to 579 in 1870. Consistently, about half or more of this population lived in either Rome or Utica.

In Utica, many people of African descent lived on Post Street, a multiethnic neighborhood in Utica that would from the 1820s through the 1920s become the home of many people of African descent, including those who had escaped from slavery. By the late nineteenth century, newspapers referred to Post Street as “the Colored Colony.”

¹⁸ *Census of the State of New York* (Albany: Charles Van Benthuyzen, 1857), 112–19.

¹⁹ Thomas, “Oneida County Population Census Figures,” *Encyclopedia of New York State*, 1141.

²⁰ Thomas, “Oneida County Population Census Figures,” *Encyclopedia of New York State*, 1141.

Other African Americans lived on Hope Street, where several people of color purchased property in the 1820s. Several other African Americans lived along West Street, on land purchased from A. B. Johnson, real estate developer, banker, and former enslaver.²¹

Of particular interest are those African Americans who listed their birthplace as unknown, a southern state, or a foreign country. These may well have been free people of color, but they may also have been freedom seekers. Most likely, this group was undercounted, as many people who escaped from slavery likely did not reveal their real place of birth to a census taker, a federal official, particularly after the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. Many people also listed a birthplace as New York State, perhaps as a means of protecting themselves from pursuit.

Four hundred and three African Americans were listed in two or more census records. These might be considered a relatively stable core population. Of these 403, 39 (9.7 percent) listed their birthplaces in at least one census as a southern state, Canada, or unknown, suggesting they may have escaped from slavery. Names of people in this group by place of residence were:

Augusta

Jacob Jacobs, born 1825–30, lived in the Town of Augusta in 1850 and 1855, listing his birthplace as New York in 1850 and Columbia (Washington, DC) in 1855.

Camden

Christina Simpson, born about 1815, lived in Utica in 1850. She listed her birthplace as New York, but in 1855 and 1865, she lived in Camden and listed her birthplace as Columbia (Washington, DC).

Florence

Lydia Benton, born about 1800, lived in Florence in 1850 and Camden in 1855, listing her birthplace as Canada in 1850 and Connecticut in 1855.

Nathaniel Lawrence, born 1800–10, lived in Florence in 1850 and 1860, with a birthplace listed as New Hampshire in 1850 and Canada in 1860.

Annabelle Lawrence, Nathaniel’s wife, born about 1815, listed her birthplace in 1850 as New York and in 1860 as Canada.

Mary Simmons, born about 1833–36, lived in Florence in 1860, 1865, and 1870, listing her birthplace as New York in 1860 and Washington, DC, in 1865 and 1870.

Joseph Young, born about 1787–90, a resident of Florence in 1850 and 1860, listed his birthplace as both France and the West Indies.

²¹ *Utica Daily Press*, August 11, 1892.

Kirkland

Jane Howard, born c. 1820–25, living in the Town of Kirkland, listed her birthplace in 1860 and 1865 as Maryland.

Henry Howard, born about 1821, listed his birthplace in 1860 and 1870 as Maryland.

James Lewis, born about 1817–25, a laborer in the Town of Kirkland in 1860 and 1865, listed birthplaces first as Maryland and then as Virginia.

Marshall

Mary Ann Ebo, born about 1815, was listed in census records for Marshall in both 1850 and 1865, with a birthplace of New York in 1850 and Columbia in 1865.

Harriet Charles, born about 1843, was a domestic servant in the Town of Marshall. She listed her birthplace in 1865 as Columbia and in 1870 as New York State.

Sarah Collins, born about 1835–41, living in the Town of Marshall, noted her birthplace in 1860 as New York and in 1865 as Columbia.

Paris

Mary Adams, born about 1845–47, lived in Paris in 1855 and listed her birthplace as Maryland. By 1860, she had moved to Utica and listed her birthplace as Massachusetts.

John Roberts, born about 1783–89, listed himself in the Town of Paris in 1860 and 1865 as born in Maryland.

Mary Roberts, born c. 1795–1812, married John Thomas after her first husband's death. She was listed in all five census records from 1850 to 1870 in the Town of Paris, with a birthplace consistently noted as Maryland.

John Thomas, born 1800–1810, was listed in all five census records in the Town of Paris, with a Maryland birthplace.

Sarah Thomas, John Thomas's first wife, was born about 1815 and listed in census records from 1850 to 1865. In 1850 and 1865, she listed her birthplace as Maryland. In 1855, she said she was born in Ulster County, New York. And in 1860, she counted herself born in New York State.

Rome

A. B. Williams, born in North Carolina about 1810, listed in the 1855 and 1860 census records as a pastor and laborer in Rome.

Stephen Thompson, born about 1815, was a barber in Rome in 1850, when he listed his birthplace as unknown, and in 1860, when he said his birthplace was Maryland.

Alfred Stevenson, born about 1815, lived in Rome from 1850 through the early 1860s, listing his birthplace as Maryland in 1850 and Washington, DC, in 1855 and 1860.

Sarah Stevenson, born about 1825, lived in Rome from 1850 through the early 1860s. She listed her birthplace in 1850 as Delaware and as Washington, DC, in 1855 and 1860.

Mariah (born about 1840), **Edward** (born about 1845), **John** (born about 1840–45), and **Samuel** (born about 1849), all children of Alfred and Sarah Stevenson, listed their birthplaces as both Delaware and Washington, DC. The youngest child, **Hannibal**, was born in Rome around 1854.

Sangerfield

Diana Vanderpool, born about 1805–1810, was listed in census records for the Town of Sangerfield in 1855 and 1870, with a birthplace in Columbia in 1855 and New York in 1870.

Philip Vanderpool, born about 1848, son of Diana Vanderpool, was listed in census records for the Town of Sangerfield in 1855 and 1870, with a birthplace in Columbia in 1855 and New York in 1870.

Utica

Samuel Dove, born about 1810–20, listed in census records in Utica for 1850, 1860, and 1870, noted his birthplace in 1860 as Vermont and otherwise Virginia.

Rev. James Fountain, born about 1787, lived in Utica in 1850 and 1855 and listed his birthplace first as Virginia and then as Herkimer County, New York. In 1864, he enlisted in the 54th Massachusetts Regiment of Colored Troops, listing his birthplace as Winchester, Virginia.

Edward Fountain, born about 1835, was a son of the widowed James Fountain, who listed his birthplace as Virginia in 1850 and Oneida in 1855.

George Fountain, born 1830–35, was a son of the widowed James Fountain, who listed his birthplace as Virginia in 1850 and Oneida in 1855.

Mary Fountain, born about 1840, was the daughter of the widowed James Fountain, who listed her birthplace as Virginia in 1850 and Oneida in 1855.

Mary Ann Hawkins, born about 1819–26, lived in Utica and listed her birthplace as Canada in both the 1855 and 1860 census records.

Catherine Henry, born about 1805, lived in Utica in 1855, 1860, and 1865, listing her birthplace in 1860 and New York and the other two years as Canada.

George Johnson, born about 1830–35, lived in Utica in 1860 and 1865, listing his birthplace first as New York and then as Delaware.

Mary Russell, born c. 1805–8, kept a candy shop in Utica and appeared in census records for 1860, 1865, and 1870 as born in Maryland.

James Washington, born about 1830, a steel polisher in Utica, listed his birthplace as Maryland in 1865 and South Carolina in 1870.

Whitestown

Cyrus Young, born about 1842–43 in Virginia, was a farmer in Whitestown in 1865 and 1870.

Upper South—32 (82 percent)

Delaware/Washington—6

Maryland—10

Maryland/Virginia—1

Maryland/Washington—1

Maryland/Unknown—1

Virginia—6

Washington, DC—7

Lower South—1 (North Carolina) (2.6 percent)

Foreign country—6 (15.4 percent)

Canada—5

France/West Indies—1

It is highly unlikely that everyone accurately reported their place of birth to census takers. After all, federal employees took this census. They represented a government that passed the Fugitive Slave Law on September 18, 1850. While the federal census was in the summer of 1850, people were certainly aware of its likely passage, and all subsequent census records reflected the presence of this law. If a federal official knocked on your door to ask where you were born, would you, as a freedom seeker, have responded honestly?

Confirmation for this hypothesis comes from census records themselves. Fifteen of those (39.5 percent) who listed birthplaces in a southern state in one census also reported their birth in another census as a northern state. At least thirteen others (34.2 percent) listed different states in the South, unknown, or a foreign county. This group made up 73.7 percent of the total. The pattern was so pervasive that it seems to have been a clear and deliberate strategy for eluding pursuit. All four members of the Fountain family (father and three children), for example, reported their birthplaces as Virginia on August 3, 1850, and as New York State (Herkimer County for James and Oneida County for the children) on June 15, 1855. In some cases, freedom seekers seemed to deliberately flaunt birthplace information. In Florence, for example, Joseph Young reported his birthplace in different years as France and the West Indies.

More than half of freedom seekers who settled in Oneida County were concentrated in Utica and Rome (twenty of the thirty-nine, or 51.3 percent), but the others were distributed widely throughout Oneida County. Eleven of them settled in Utica; nine in

Rome (including six members of the Stevenson family); five in Paris; four in Florence; three in Kirkland; two each in Marshall and Sangerfield; and one each in the Towns of Augusta, Camden, and Whitestown.

What proportion of those who sought freedom in central New York listed themselves as women? In *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*, John Hope Franklin and Loren Schwinenger used ads for people escaping from slavery to argue that 81 percent of those who ran away were young men. Only 19 percent were women.²²

Freedom seekers who settled in upstate New York had a different gender pattern. Twenty-one of the thirty-seven possible freedom seekers (56.8 percent) who lived in Oneida County through at least two census years were men; sixteen were women (43.2 percent). This is consistent with the gender distribution of possible freedom seekers who settled in Cayuga, Onondaga, and Seneca Counties. Between 28 and 42 percent of possible freedom seekers in these areas were women.²³

Almost a quarter of this group (nine of thirty-nine) were children, born in 1840 or later. Seven of them lived in two nuclear families, three in the family headed by Rev. James Fountain, widower, and four more living with parents Alfred and Sally Stevenson.

Of those whose occupations were listed, two (clergymen) were professionals or white-collar workers; seven were listed as laborers in at least two census records; six had skilled labor positions in at least one census. They included barbers (Edward Fountain in Utica and Stephen Thompson in Rome), shoemakers (James Fountain and George Fountain, both in Utica), a carpenter (John Thomas in Paris, also listed as a farmer), a brick molder (Alfred Stevenson, also listed as a laborer and stove store porter in Rome), a steel polisher (James Washington in Utica), and a railroad machine shop worker (Samuel Dove in Utica). Several were listed as farmers in one or more census records. Often, occupations shifted from one census to the next (laborer to farmer, for example). Occupations for women were available only for the 1855 census, in which one woman (Harriet Charles) was listed as a domestic servant, one simply as “servant,” one as keeper of a candy shop, and four as “keeping house.”

Of the 1,533 African Americans who were listed in only one census year in Oneida County, 187 may have escaped from slavery, as defined by birthplaces in a southern state, Canada, or unknown. In terms of percentage, this was slightly more than those listed in two or more census records (12.2 percent versus 9.6 percent), suggesting that many freedom seekers were relatively transient.

²² John Hope Franklin and Loren Schwinenger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²³ Judith Wellman, “‘She Has Bid Adieu Forever to the Land of Oppression’: Women on the Underground Railroad in Central New York,” unpublished presentation, Underground Railroad Conference of the Capital Region, February 23, 2007.

By far the largest number of these (129, or 69 percent) listed a birthplace in the Chesapeake area:

Delaware—6
Maryland—29
Virginia—59
Washington, DC—35

Thirty (16 percent) came from the lower South:

Alabama—1
Florida—4
Georgia—5
Louisiana—3
Mississippi—3
North Carolina—5
South Carolina—9

Twelve (6.4 percent) came from Canada (including one that listed Nova Scotia). Four (2.1 percent) came from the West Indies (listed as the Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, or the West Indies). One each was born in Africa, Alabama, Germany, and Kentucky. Seven (3.7 percent) listed “unknown” as a birthplace.

The New York Central Railroad not only led to an explosion of population in Oneida County, of people of both European and African descent. It also vastly increased the use of the above-ground railroad to supplement reliance on roads and canals for Underground Railroad escape routes.²⁴

Once freedom seekers reached Philadelphia, they were regularly put on one of two main rail routes. The first sent them to New York City and the New York Central Railroad north and west through Oneida County. From Oneida County, they would go west to Syracuse and then to Oswego or Rochester (where they would take a steamboat to Canada) or all the way to Niagara Falls, where they would cross on the new Suspension Bridge directly to Ontario. By 1856, an alternate route led from Philadelphia to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to Elmira, New York, where it connected with the Niagara Falls-Canandaigua Railroad. Nicknamed “the Lightning Train,” this route was also part of the New York Central Railroad, taking people directly to Niagara Falls. Some of those who came through Elmira went north to Syracuse and then east through Oneida County and north to Canada.²⁵

²⁴ Richard R. M. Blackett, *The Captive's Quest for Freedom: Fugitive Slaves, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, and the Politics of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), Chapter 9, 357–95, contains a thorough overview of Underground Railroad cases in New York State in the 1850s.

²⁵ Joseph C. Bustill to William Still, May 26, 1856, noted, “the Lightening Train was put on the Road on last Monday, and as the traveling season has commenced and this is the Southern route for Niagara Falls, I have concluded not to send by way of Auburn, except in cases of great danger, but hereafter we wil use the Lightning Train.” William Still, *The Underground Railroad* (Philadelphia, 1872), 142.

Aided by the New York Central, the Underground Railroad in Oneida County, as in central New York and the country, reached a new pinnacle of organization in the 1850s. It was no longer a series of isolated incidents but an efficient network. In 1854, the *Utica Daily Telegraph* reported that several “fugitive slaves” had passed through that Utica, heading North. “We have been surprised to learn recently that a well perfected organization for the transportation of fugitive slaves exists in this city,” they noted, “in connection with other organizations throughout the State.” The *Syracuse Daily Standard* scoffed, suggesting that that “the *Telegraph* is a little behind the times in relation to ‘underground railroad’ operations.” “The depot was publicly announced in this city [Syracuse] some time since,” noted the *Standard*, “and all the operations of the road generally understood. In fact, some of the bitterest hunkers (Democrats) in this city contribute liberally to help along the fugitives.”²⁶

One of those unheralded local people who helped make the Underground Railroad run so smoothly through Utica was a man named Morrison, “an amiable and benevolent fellow citizen,” who helped freedom seekers by organizing “a sort of depot for clothing” in a room he accessed from his workroom “by removing a board.” This is the only reference to a possible hidden room that we were able to document.²⁷

Traffic continued through the 1850s. Newspapers sporadically reported specific cases. In 1855, for example, one family from Kentucky came on the Underground Railroad, staying briefly on Post Street in Utica:

Fugitive Slaves in Utica.—A fine looking negro, aged about 40 years, with his wife and several of his children, spent yesterday at the residence of a colored friend on Post-street. They arrived in this city by the ‘Underground’ on Saturday night. The ‘Committee of Safety’ visited them during the day. They were to have been sent to Canada to-day. This family were recently sold in Kentucky to go further south, but seem to have preferred a more northern country. Nobody feels very sorry that this family are ‘redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled,’ but if the ‘Committee of Safety’ would occasionally appropriate some of their funds for the purpose of feeding, clothing and educating the wretched people, white and black, of Post-street, they would do a much needed work. Charity used to begin at home.—*Utica Telegraph*.²⁸

On October 19, 1858, the *Utica Morning Herald* noted: “Underground Railroad.—A chattel aged about twenty, from Virginia, passed through Utica on the Underground Railroad yesterday. He was helped on towards the star of freedom.”²⁹

²⁶ *Utica Telegraph*, quoted in *Syracuse Daily Standard*, June 1, 1854.

²⁷ *Utica Daily Gazette*, March 27, 1852.

²⁸ *Utica Telegraph* via the *New York Times*, August 30, 1855.

²⁹ “Underground Railroad,” *Utica Morning Herald*, October 19, 1858

By the mid-1850s, all along the New York Central route, a network of Underground Railroad supporters included people of both African and European descent. In New York City, Sydney Howard Gay, Isaac T. Hopper, and others (White), and Louis Napoleon, Charles B. Ray, David Ruggles, Theodore Wright (all Black) did much of the Underground Railroad work. Stephen and Harriet Myers (Black) and the Mott sisters (White) in Albany, Henry Highland Garnet in Troy, and others helped freedom seekers, as did Elias Clizbe in Amsterdam. In Syracuse, Jermain and Caroline Loguen worked with William Abbott, Samuel J. May, Ira Cobb, and others, adding an apartment to the Loguen house in order to make space for people on their way to freedom. Frederick Douglass, J. P. Morris, and Amy Post kept safe houses in Rochester. In Niagara Falls, waiters of African descent at the Cataract House rowed people across the Niagara River. By the mid-1850s, many freedom seekers went directly across the Suspension Bridge without ever leaving the train. At every port on Lake Ontario, freedom seekers found steamboats or smaller vessels to carry them to Canada.³⁰

Charles B. Ray, Congregational minister and mainstay of the Vigilance Committee in New York City, listed Utica as one of the main stops on the Underground Railroad through New York State. “This road had its regular lines all the way from Washington,” his daughters Florence and Cordelia noted in their biography of Ray, “between Washington and Baltimore, a kind of branch. It had its depots in Philadelphia, New York, Albany, Troy, Utica, Syracuse, Oswego and Niagara Falls.” Lucy M. Davis, a young mother in Syracuse, outlined a similar route in a letter in the 1890s to Wilbur Siebert. “The route of the Underground Railroad,” she recalled, “seemed quite direct from Philadelphia to Syracuse via, New York, Albany, Utica, etc., etc.”³¹

Ray’s and Davis’s inclusion of Utica as a major Underground Railroad depot was not echoed by everyone. Although freedom seekers by the 1850s traveled directly through Oneida County on their way west, neither Utica nor Rome seemed to be a major stop for many of those sent directly from New York City. Comments in the Syracuse *Standard* had hinted that people in Oneida County were less visible than those in Syracuse. Contemporaries reinforced that idea. Sydney Howard Gay and Louis Napoleon regularly sent freedom seekers directly to Syracuse from the Vigilance Committee in the offices of the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, for example. Gay kept minutes of this work for the New York

³⁰ Tom Calarco and Don Papsen, *Secret Lives of the Underground Railroad in New York City: Sydney Howard Gay, Louis Napoleon, and the Record of Fugitives* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015); Eric Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2015); Judith Wellman and Kelly Yacobucci Farquhar, *Uncovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Montgomery County, New York, 1820–1890* (Montgomery County Historian’s Office, 2011); Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself* (Boston: DeWolfe & Fiske, 1892), 329–30.

³¹ Florence T. Ray and H. Cordelia Ray, *Sketch of the Life of Rev. Charles B. Ray* (New York: J. J. Little, 1887), 35; and letter to Wilbur Siebert, September 26, 1894, *Wilbur H. Siebert Underground Railroad Collection*, Ohio Historical Society; Davis to Siebert, August 13, 1896, *Wilbur H. Siebert Underground Railroad Collection*, Ohio Historical Society.

City Vigilance Committee in 1855–56. His notes contain reference after reference to “sent to Syracuse,” “sent them through to Syracuse,” “forwarded to Syracuse,” “sent them to Loguen at Syracuse,” with no mention of Utica, Rome, or Oneida County. Gay included a list of “Agents of the U.G.R.R.” in his 1855 Book I of these minutes. This list did not include anyone in Oneida County.³²

Frederick Douglass also omitted Oneida County from his list of main stations. He noted in his 1892 autobiography, for example, “The underground railroad had many branches; but that one with which I was connected had its main stations in Baltimore, Wilmington, Philadelphia, New York, Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, and St. Catharines (Canada).”

William Still, primary keeper of the Vigilance Committee safe house in Philadelphia in the mid-1850s, sent many—perhaps most—freedom seekers who came through his office either to New York or Elmira, where they were passed on through New York Central Railroad lines to upstate New York and Canada. But Still’s journals from 1855–56, edited and printed in 1872, contain no mention of Oneida County, Utica, or Rome; nor did he mention any local agents in Oneida County.

The core abolitionist-Underground Railroad network created through the New York State Anti-Slavery Society in the 1830s (Alvan Stewart, Samuel Lightbody, Francis Wright, Spencer Kellogg William Chaplin, Gerrit Smith, Beriah Green, and James C. DeLong) broke apart by the late 1840s. Three of these men had died, Lightbody and Wright in the mid-1840s and Alvan Stewart in 1849. Spencer Kellogg supported the Whig Party by 1840, became mayor of Utica, and so separated from the radical political abolitionists who formed the Liberty Party. Of the four who remained active as aggressive abolitionists, William Chaplin moved to Washington, DC, to work on organizing Underground Railroad activities there, probably sending many people to Oneida County. Gerrit Smith became a member of Congress in 1852, continuing to support both abolitionism and the Underground Railroad, including John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry in 1859. Beriah Green remained locally in Whitesboro. Disillusioned, he died in 1874 while giving a temperance lecture. The Oneida Institute, an anchor of abolitionism and the Underground Railroad, closed in 1843. Its students seeded new abolitionist colleges in the West: Lane Seminary, Western Reserve College, Oberlin, and Knox College.

³² Sidney Howard Gay, “Record of Fugitives,” Sydney Howard Gay Papers, Box 75, Columbia University. Gay included a list of “Agents of the U.G.R.R.” in his 1855 minutes of the New York City Vigilance Committee: “[S]amuel. J. May, J[ermaine]. W. Loguen; James Fuller; Ira H. Cobb; Granger’s Block. All of Syracuse, NY (J. W.L.), 293 E. Genessee St.); Rev. J. B. Smith, No. 55 King St. west end of Bay St. Northside, upstairs. Toronto, C. W.; Stephen Myers, 168 Third St. [crossed out]. Albany. 198 Lumber St.; Wm. E. Abbott, No. 4 Franklin Buildings. Genessee St., Syracuse; Josephus Silliman, 27 Phoenix Buildings, N. Haven; John Murdock, 57 Montgomery St. (care of) S. Myers + B. Elkins-; J[acob]. Bigelow Esq. Washington, DC Sidney Howard Gay Papers, Book I, Box 75, Columbia University.

Although no one person in Oneida County stood out in the 1850s as the anchor of the Underground Railroad in Oneida County, many people were certainly involved. Of the powerful 1830s core group of European Americans, only James C. DeLong and Cynthia DeLong remained in Utica by the 1850s. They were at the center of a network comprised of both Black and White men, women, and children, centered in Utica and Rome with links to other communities both inside Oneida County and beyond it. The DeLongs apparently also worked with members of the Thompson family, who lived across from them on John Street.

Many people who had escaped from slavery and settled in Utica were almost certainly part of this network. Samuel Dove was one of these. A fellow member with the DeLongs of the biracial Bleecker Street Methodist Church, Dove was a well-respected member of Utica’s African American community. Once enslaved in Mississippi, he came to Utica with the Munn family. When the Munns offered him an opportunity to return to Mississippi to supervise plantation work there, Dove decided to stay in Utica in freedom, where he worked to earn money to buy freedom for his son. He was employed by the New York Central Railroad and likely helped freedom seekers on this route.

The Munn family held another person, Rina, virtually in slavery in Utica. William Allen, Utica’s city attorney, and Rev. James Fountain, pastor of an African American church on Post Street, tried to convince Rina to leave service with the Munn family. “A mob of white, black and mixed, of all ages and sexes,” accompanied them on their visit. In spite of the support of a local judge, Rina refused, and she returned to Mississippi with the Munns.³³

In Rome, too, African Americans who had escaped from slavery and settled in Oneida County likely provided help to other freedom seekers. They included William Johnson, a barber at the Stanwix Hotel, and several people associated with the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

In Rome, the Bowen-Stephenson family, enslaved by the mayor of Washington, DC, arrived directly from Washington in early 1850. They lived right beside the canal and a block from the New York Central Railroad, quite possibly providing aid for freedom seekers who came through Rome. They were likely part of a biracial network that included local residents of European descent: Marcus Kenyon, Arden and Sally Seymour, and Arba and Wealthy Blair. Kenyon owned both canal boats and stagecoach lines not only locally but across the country and as far south as the Isthmus of Panama. From his headquarters in the Stanwix Hotel, he sent people north to Oswego via stagecoach (and perhaps also on the canal) on the Underground Railroad. Colonel Arden Seymour, merchant, hosted freedom seekers at his store near the canal. Rev. Arba Blair and Wealthy Blair kept people overnight in their home.

³³ *Utica Daily Gazette*, July 16, 1845.

Freedom seekers, like other travelers, continued to rely on the New York Central Railroad, riding by train from New York City across New York State to the Suspension Bridge and Ontario, Canada. Even if they did not stop for long, everyone who took this route west came through Oneida County. We know the names of many of them through lists kept by William Still, who ran the Vigilance Committee office in Philadelphia, and Sydney Howard Gay in the office of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, a major Underground Railroad anchor in New York City.

Of the hundreds of people who traveled this route, three of the most famous were sixteen-year-old Ann Maria Weems, who escaped in 1855; Frank Wanzer and four others, who came in late December 1855 and early January 1856; and Harriet Tubman, who used this route many times.

Ann Maria was “owned” by slave-trader Charles Price and lived in his house in Rockville, Montgomery County, Maryland. Her freeborn father raised enough money to buy her mother and sister out of slavery. Her brothers, however, were all sold South, and Price refused an offer of \$700 for Ann Maria. Since Ann Maria slept in the same room with Price and his wife, the situation seemed hopeless. James Bigelow, a lawyer and Underground Railroad agent in Washington, DC, refused to give up. After three years, he finally managed to bring her to Washington, DC. Supporters dubbed her “Joe Wright” and dressed her in male attire. A local doctor met her in front of the White House with his carriage. Joe jumped into the driver’s seat “with the fleetness of a young deer,” while the doctor sat composedly inside, riding though Maryland to William Still’s office in Philadelphia, where she arrived on Thanksgiving Day.³⁴



MARIA WEEMS ESCAPING IN MALE ATTIRE.

Figure 6.4. “Maria Weems escaping in male attire.” From William Still, *The Underground Railroad* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1872), after page 182.

³⁴ National Park Service, “Rockville, MD, Ann Maria Weems,” http://www.nps.gov/subjects/ugrr/discover_history/vignette_details.htm?ID=11017.

From Philadelphia, Weems (still in male attire) went to New York City, at the expense of abolitionist merchant Lewis Tappan. She stayed for several days with Rev. A. N. Freeman, African American minister in Brooklyn, and then Freeman accompanied her on the train, headed toward the home of relatives in Buxton, Ontario. They traveled through Albany, Utica, and Syracuse. By the time they reached Rochester, Freeman was worried, wondering both if the train went across the Suspension Bridge and if slave catchers would descend upon them, eager for the \$500 reward. But his fears were groundless. When they reached the Suspension Bridge in Niagara Falls, the conductor told them, “Sit still; this car goes across.” “You may judge of my joy and relief of mind,” wrote Freeman, “when I looked out and was sure that we were over! Thank God, I exclaimed, we are safe in Canada!” Freeman delivered her safely to her Uncle Brown in Buxton, Ontario, Canada.³⁵

One famous group of freedom seekers included six people, four men and two women, who escaped from Oak Hill plantation in Loudon County, Virginia, on Christmas Eve, 1855. Chased by armed slave catchers, the Wanzer party confronted their pursuers with guns. They abandoned their carriage and lost two men, but Frank Wanzer, Barnabas Grigby, his wife Mary Elizabeth Grigby, and Mary Elizabeth’s sister Emily Foster raced through Maryland to Pennsylvania and freedom. William Still recorded their arrival on January 16, 1856. From Philadelphia, they traveled on the railroad to New York City, where Sydney Howard Gay welcomed them, and then to Syracuse, where Rev. Jermain Loguen officiated at the marriage of Frank Wanzer and Emily Foster. The Wanzers went on to live in Toronto, where they became members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Frank Wanzer returned to Virginia in July 1856 to rescue his infant daughter. Unsuccessful, he brought three others with him when he returned North.³⁶

³⁵ William Still, *The Underground Railroad* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1872), 686.

³⁶ William Still, *The Underground Railroad* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1872); Sydney Howard Gay, “Record of Fugitives,” Book I, 35–39, and Book II, 33, Box 75, Columbia University; *New York Tribune*, January 22 1856, reprinted from *Syracuse Chronicle*, January 19, 1856. Wanzer family members carry on these traditions into the present. Family tradition shared by Allan Uzike Nelson and Winona Nelson, descendants.



A BOLD STROKE FOR FREEDOM.

Figure 6.5. “A Bold Stroke for Freedom,” the Wanzer Party. From William Still, *The Underground Railroad* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coats, 1872) after page 124.

Harriet Tubman was the most famous person to travel from slavery to freedom on the New York Central Railroad through Oneida County to the Suspension Bridge. Her trips included one in with twenty-eight-year-old Joe Bailey, his brother William Bailey, Eliza Manokey, and Peter Pennington. All escaped from slavery on Maryland’s eastern shore in November 1856.³⁷

Supporters along their route hide the five—three men and two women—in a variety of safe places, including potato holes in the field. Even so, it took them two weeks instead of the usual three days to reach Wilmington, Delaware, smuggled over the river by Black bricklayers, who hid them in their wagon under a load of bricks. On November 26, they

³⁷ Sarah Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (Auburn: W. J. Moses, 1869), 27–35; Kate Clifford Larson, *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004), 133–36; 159. William Still, *The Underground Railroad* (Philadelphia, 1872); manuscript records of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committees, and notes from the Syracuse Vigilance Committee and the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society. Kate Larson, *Bound for the Promised Land*, put this story together carefully, and this account draws on all these sources.

reached William Still’s office in Philadelphia. Still sent them to New York City the next day, where Oliver Johnson sent them on to Albany and then Syracuse. There is no mention of a stop in Utica before they went on to Syracuse.

This was only Tubman’s second trip to Syracuse, where Rev. Jermain Loguen kept the main safe house, with the help of a well-organized support network. W. E. Abbott, treasurer of the Syracuse society, sent them to Maria G. Porter, treasurer of the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society. This group sent them across the Suspension Bridge.

When Joe Bailey realized that advertisements for his capture had reached as far as New York City and that they still had over three hundred miles to go before reaching Canada, he grew depressed. “From that time Joe was silent,” said Harriet; “he sang no more, he talked no more; he sat with his head on his hand, and nobody could amuse him or make him take any interest in anything.” That would have been his position as they rode through Utica. Even when they reached the Suspension Bridge, Joe refused to take heart.

“Joe, come look at de Falls! Joe, you fool you, come see de Falls! It’s your last chance.” But Joe sat still and never raised his head. At length Harriet knew by the rise in the center of the bridge, and the descent on the other side, that they had crossed “the line.”

“Joe, you’re free!” shouted Harriet. Then Joe’s head went up, he raised his hands on high, and his face, streaming with tears, to heaven, and broke out in loud and thrilling tones:

“Glory to God and Jesus too,
One more soul is safe!
Oh, go and carry de news,
One more soul got safe.”

. . . tears like rain ran down Joe’s sable cheeks. A lady reached over her fine cambric handkerchief to him. Joe wiped his face, and then he spoke.

“Oh! if I’d felt like dis down South, it would hab taken nine men to take me; only one more journey for me now, and dat is to Hebben!”

“Well, you ole fool you,” said Harriet, . . . “you might a’ looked at de Falls fust, and den gone to Hebben afterwards.”³⁸

The whole group went to St. Catharine’s, where Rev. Hiram Wilson operated a fugitive aid society. Wilson reported that Tubman was “a remarkable colored heroine,” “unusually intelligent and fine appearing,” and the men she brought were “of fine appearance and noble bearing.”³⁹

When they reached Canada, many freedom seekers were welcomed by friends or family who had gone before. But beginning in the 1830s, US abolitionists also sponsored agencies to offer assistance. From 1836 to the Civil War, Rev. Hiram Wilson operated

³⁸ Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*, 27–35.

³⁹ Larson, *Bound for the Promised Land*, 136.

perhaps the largest of these. At his center in St. Catherine’s, Ontario, fugitives could find help to make the transition to homes, families, and work as free people. Much of Wilson’s support came from abolitionists in New York State. Harriet Tubman created another refugee aid society in St. Catherine’s. The Anti-Slavery Society of Canada and the Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society in Toronto also provided “food, clothing, tools, or whatever they required,” usually for a period of six days or less.⁴⁰

Others who crossed the Niagara River headed for a house kept by Rev. Simeon Hutchinson, a Baptist minister who had escaped from slavery himself. Established by Rev. Jermain Loguen in 1856, this home provided food and shelter to people until they found work and homes of their own.⁴¹

Other freedom seekers chose to go north from Utica through Rome to Oswego, New York, the largest US port of trade with Canada. James C. DeLong’s obituary noted these two routes north: “Some of the negroes who reached the Utica station were sent west to Syracuse on to Rochester, and thence across the lake, while others, some of whom were afraid to go by cars, struck across from here north, and were sometimes aided at Watertown They would have to walk the whole distance to the Canadian line.”⁴²

Not everyone walked, however. In January 1855, Jim Anderson had escaped with a cousin from a plantation that produced sweet potatoes and tobacco near Annapolis, Maryland. Their route to freedom went through Harper’s Ferry, Virginia; Harrisburgh, Philadelphia, and perhaps Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; then to Elmira, Syracuse, Oneida, Rome, and Watertown, New York. In Oneida, Jim lost his cousin. In Watertown, rather than cross into Canada, Jim decided to return to look for him. He boarded a train headed south for Rome, hiding under mail bags in the baggage car. There, Jim told his story in detail to a sympathetic passenger, who reported it in the local newspaper. Probably Jim Anderson disembarked at the railroad station in Rome. Whether he ever found his cousin and whether either of them reached Canada is not known.⁴³

In the 1850s, James and Cynthia DeLong’s son Martin took over much of the transportation of people who traveled north. An article written at the time of his death in 1908 noted that he “told Utica associates frequently of his adventures while showing fugitive slaves along the route to the border by way of Deerfield and Rome. . . . They

⁴⁰ “The Canada Mission,” *Friend of Man*, March 16, 1841; Larson, *Bound for the Promised Land*; “Fugitive Slaves in Canada,” *Provincial Freeman*, April 22, 1854; Carol M. Hunter, *To Set the Captives Free: Reverend Jermain Wesley Loguen and the Struggle for Freedom in Central New York 1835–1872* (New York and London: Garland, 1993), 163.

⁴¹ *Syracuse Journal*, July 18, 1856; August 15, 1856; August 16, 1856, quoted in Hunter, *To Set the Captives Free*, 163.

⁴² “Death of James B. DeLong,” *Utica Herald*, April 16, 1883.

⁴³ “A Fugitive Slave—An Adventure,” *The Daily Sentinel*, January 23, 1855.

crossed the river bridge at the foot of Genesee Street and went through to Deerfield Corners. They traveled on the north side of the Mohawk River because it was less frequented and return was made . . . at nightfall along the same lonely route.”⁴⁴

When they reached Rome, they often went to the Stanwix Hotel, standing directly across the road from the Erie Canal, near the junction with the Black River Canal and the New York Central Railroad. Before 1850, an African American barber named Johnson kept a shop in the basement of this hotel. Johnson had escaped from slavery and opened a barbershop in Little Falls. One day, his former enslaver walked in. Johnson introduced himself and received congratulations for owning such a prosperous business. Johnson then moved to Rome, where his “gentlemanly deportment,” noted Col. Arden Seymour, earned him respect from “citizens of all parties.” After the Fugitive Slave Law passed in 1850, however, Johnson left Rome for Canada.⁴⁵

From 1849 to his death in 1862, Marcus Kenyon owned the Stanwix Hotel. He kept a livery stable in the rear to service his Rome-Oswego stage line. Although a Democrat in politics, he strongly opposed the Fugitive Slave Law and always made his stage line available to people escaping from slavery. Col. Arden Seymour recalled the story of a man hiding the swamp near the Erie Canal for three days to elude his pursuers. He finally sought refuge with Seymour, who took him to the home of Rev. Arba Blair and Wealthy Blair, where he stayed for two days before “that noble-hearted man” Kenyon took him by stage to Oswego. “The drivers of his stages dare not violate the trust he put in them to thus deliver them,” Seymour recalled.⁴⁶

Kenyon’s entrepreneurial spirit led him to develop business far outside Oneida County. In 1852, with John Butterfield, owner of a stage line in Utica (and in 1869 if the famed Butterfield House), he gained exclusive rights to take passengers by stage across the Isthmus of Panama to ships bound for California. In 1857, the two won the Overland Mail contract, beating out the “fire-eaters of the South” to transport mail by the Pony Express from St. Louis, Missouri, to San Francisco, California.⁴⁷

The Underground Railroad in Oneida County in the 1850s worked in the context of expanded local African American institutions. Two church groups, one in Utica and one in Rome, remained at the core. In Utica (with help from Rev. Jermain Loguen, then a student at the Oneida Institute), African Americans had organized a church group by 1840. They

⁴⁴ “Death of James B. DeLong,” *Utica Herald*, April 16, 1883.

⁴⁵ Col. A. Seymour, “The Underground Railroad for Fugitive Slaves,” *Roman Citizen*, January 23, 1872.

⁴⁶ Seymour, “The Underground Railroad for Fugitive Slaves,” January 23, 1872.

⁴⁷ “The Overland Mail Contract Awarded,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, September 24, 1857; “Passengers Arrive,” *New York Times*, November 19, 1858, noted that M. L. Kenyon arrived in the steamship *Illinois* from Aspinwall. “Death of M. L. Kinyon,” *Roman Citizen*, April 4, 1862.

likely continued to meet through the 1850s as “Zion Church” before the formal organization of Hope Chapel in 1866, first as a union church and then as an African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in 1866.

In Rome, an African American congregation met in the 1840s in a local schoolhouse. On August 13, 1849, they organized the African Methodist Episcopal Church and Society of Rome. Under Rev. L. Tilmon, they dedicated a new African Methodist Episcopal Church in June 1850. The builder was Samuel Gibbs, a person of color. Like Hope Chapel in Syracuse, Rome’s African Methodist Episcopal Church became the center of community life for Rome’s Black residents and a haven for formerly enslaved people. On May 10, 1853, they hosted a convention for people from upstate New York to protest a revived effort to send African Americans from the US to Liberia.

The call was directed “to the Colored inhabitants of the Counties of Oneida, Herkimer, Madison and Onondaga”:

You are invited to meet in Convention at Rome on Tuesday the tenth day of May next, for the purpose of making an effort once more for the union of our race. The Colonization Scheme is aroused again for your final extermination from this the land that gave you birth. Come, then, be up and at work before it is too late. Put your shoulder to the wheel and stay the further progress of that infernal scheme, which has become the text of every sermon which is preached from our pulpits. Put your trust in God. Come out boldly. Show the world that you are endowed with certain inalienable rights, among which are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. Come one! Come all! Able speakers will be on hand to charge home on our enemies!

Wm. A Griffin,
Wm. Johnson,
A Stephenson,
Thos. Johnson,
H. Gilbert.⁴⁸

Rev. Jermain Loguen, by then the pastor of Syracuse’s African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, was a featured speaker.

By the early 1850s, Congress became not a place for solving problems but a battleground. National events propelled the country toward further conflict. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 allowed settlers in those territories to decide whether or not to allow slavery within their new states. It effectively abolished the line drawn by the Missouri Compromise of 1850, forbidding slavery north of the Missouri state line. Kansas erupted in violence. When settlers formed a state government in 1856, northerners sent guns, bullets, and vigilante fighters, including John Brown, to what became known as “Bloody Kansas.”

⁴⁸ “To the Colored inhabitants of the Counties of Oneida, Herkimer, Madison, and Onondaga,” *Frederick Douglass Paper*, April 122, 1853.

In 1857, the Supreme Court dealt a crushing blow to free as well as enslaved people when it ruled in *Dred Scott v. Sanford* that African Americans were “so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” Constitutional historians have called this the worst Supreme Court opinion ever.

Even in the context of the Dred Scott decision, some people who had escaped from slavery felt so sure of protection in Oneida County that they gave well-advertised public lectures. On May 13, 1857, for example, the *Oneida Whig* advertised: “Free lecture— Charles Travellar, twenty-three years a slave, and just from slavery, will lecture this evening at Mechanics’ Hall on the subject of his new system of improving the condition of emancipated slaves. He will also sing a song at the close. Lecture will commence at 7 ½ o’clock. Mr. Travellar has considerable fluency of speech, and is a living answer to the old charge that slaves cannot take care of themselves, and to the newer doctrine that negroes ought not to be citizens.”⁴⁹ Travellar’s “new system” consisted of urging people of color to set up settlements in Iowa, where they could own land and control their own destinies.

In November 1859, Oneida County, like the rest of the country, was shocked to learn that John Brown—then living in Essex County in the Adirondacks—had attacked Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, intending to recruit enslaved people for a vast exodus to freedom. Brown became a martyr for abolitionism when Virginia hanged him and all of his compatriots.

Gerrit Smith had met with John Brown many times. Brown had purchased land from Smith in North Elba, in the middle of the Adirondack Mountains. Brown and his family had moved there in 1849 to assist African American settlers on land Smith donated for a settlement that became known as Timbuctoo. In 1859, Smith was one of the “Secret Six” who had helped fund Brown’s Harper’s Ferry raid.⁵⁰

The extent of Smith’s prior knowledge about Brown’s raid has long been debated. Although Smith denied knowing details, it seems clear that he understood that Brown’s intent was to give guns to enslaved people for self-defense. So upset was Gerrit Smith about Brown’s capture that he checked himself into the New York State Insane Asylum in Utica, where he was treated for delusions.⁵¹

In the late 1850s, Garrisonian abolitionists organized in opposition to the new Republican Party. Under the banner “No Union with Slaveholders,” agents traveled across the North. Among them were European Americans such as Susan B. Anthony and African

⁴⁹ *Utica Daily Observer*, May 13 and May 14, 1857.

⁵⁰ Martin Magnussen, “‘No Rights Which the White Man was Bound to Respect’: The Dred Scott Decision,” *ExpertForum*, *American Constitution Society*, March 19, 2007, <https://www.acslaw.org/expertforum/no-rights-which-the-white-man-was-bound-to-respect>.

⁵¹ Octavius Brooks Frothingham, *Gerrit Smith: A Biography* (New York, 1878); Charles A. Hammond, *Gerrit Smith: The Story of a Noble Man’s Life* (Geneva, N.Y.: W. F. Humphrey, 1900); John Stauffer, *Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Norman Dann, *Practical Dreamer: Gerrit Smith and the Crusade for Social Reform* (Log Cabin Books, 2009).

Americans such as Charles Lenox Remond and Sarah Remond. In Rome, they spoke in Spencer Hall in January 1857. In September 1857, Frederick Douglass spoke in Spencer Hall in opposition to the Dred Scott decision. In January 1861, Anthony and her fellow speakers Stephen Foster and Aaron Powell were mobbed in Spencer Hall when they tried to speak in opposition to Lincoln’s efforts to save the Union.

In Utica, reformers used Mechanics’ Hall. In 1853, Susan B. Anthony and Rev. Antoinette Brown spoke there on temperance and women’s rights. In the mid-1850s, other famous and not-so-famous abolitionist speakers also appeared in Mechanics’ Hall, including Solomon Northrup, Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, and William Lloyd Garrison. When Anthony tried to speak in Mechanics’ Hall in 1861, however, a mob prevented the meeting.

The Underground Railroad led thousands of people, perhaps as many as 100,000, out of slavery. It also led the whole country into an incredibly violent Civil War. Contemporaries recognized that slavery was its primary cause.

In 1850, William Chaplin had tried to liberate Garland White from enslavement. Although Chaplin failed, Garland White went on to become a licensed minister in Washington, Georgia in 1859. In 1860, he was still enslaved by Robert Toombs. He lived in the Toombs household in Washington, DC, two doors away from William Henry Seward, then New York State Senator from Auburn. Shortly after, White escaped to Canada, where he became a missionary for the British Methodist Episcopal Church. When the Civil War broke out, White returned to the United States, contacted Seward, and began to recruit men for the 28th Regiment of US Colored Troops. On October 25, 1864, when Garland was thirty-five years old, he was appointed chaplain for this regiment.⁵²

In 1861, Alexander Stephens became vice-president of the new Confederate States of America. While he retained his pro-Union sympathies, he still got along well with Confederate President Jefferson Davis. He continued, however, to enslave thirty-five people. He also told the raw truth about secession. On March 21, at the Atheneum in Savannah, Georgia, he gave his famous Cornerstone speech. “The immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution,” he asserted, was “African slavery as it exists among us—the proper status of the negro in our form of civilization.” The cornerstone of the new Confederacy “rests upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery—subordination to the superior race—is his natural and normal condition.”⁵³

⁵² Budge Weidman, “Black Soldiers in the Civil War: Preserving the Legacy of the United States Colored Troops,” National Archives and Records Administration, <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/blacks-civil-war/article.html>.

⁵³ Randy Dotinga, “The Famous 1861 ‘Cornerstone Speech’ That Aimed for Hard Truths about the Confederate Battle Flag,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 8, 2015, based on Thomas E. Schott, *Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia: A Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, rev. 1996); Keith Hebert, *Cornerstone of the Confederacy: Alexander Stephens and the Speech that Defined the Lost Cause* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 2021).

“A Well Perfected Organization”

Many people in Oneida County, whether White or Black, did not agree. They would be among the first and most active supporters of the Union. And the Union itself would, at last, become the biggest promoter of a newly energized Underground Railroad.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“The True Completion of the American Revolution”: The Civil War and Beyond¹

Historic Sites

Sites Associated with Freedom Seekers

1. Kirkland: Howard Home
2. Lee: Frank Family Farms
3. Paris: Roberts-Thomas Home
4. Paris: Hillcrest Cemetery
5. Rome: Wilson-Van Deusen
6. Rome: Bowen-Stephenson Home
7. Utica: Hope Chapel, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
8. Utica: Samuel and Mary Dove Home
9. Utica: Post Street

Robert Wilson sat in a jail cell, living on only bread and half a pint of water a day. He had been captured as he tried to escape from his work as a wagon driver for the Confederate Army. Albert Tutt, who had enslaved Wilson, retrieved him from jail, and brought him back to his plantation in Culpeper Court House, Virginia, where Wilson had been born about 1843.

Imagine Wilson’s relief when Union troops from the 117th New York Volunteer Infantry, made up mostly of men from Oneida County, appeared. They were part of the Battle of Culpeper Court House on September 13, 1863. They captured the plantation and freed all the enslaved people, perhaps a dozen, including Wilson and his parents, as contraband of war. Wearing a Union Army uniform, Wilson went to Tutt’s house with ten Union soldiers. There they found Tutt on the porch with a gun, arrested him, and marched him to jail.

¹ “The True Completion of the American Revolution,” Parker Pillsbury, quoted in Gordon S. Barker, *Fugitive Slaves and the Unfinished American Revolution: Eight Cases, 1848–1856* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013), 18.

Robert Wilson stayed with the 117th Regiment, as an aide first to Capt. William J. Hunt and then to Col. Rufus Daggett, from Utica. Wilson accompanied them through all remaining campaigns of the 117th, including an engagement at Darbytown, as well as the lengthy and dramatic siege of Petersburg, Virginia, in which Captain Hunt was killed.

Wilson moved to Rome, New York, after the war, working as a coachman and horse trainer. Eventually, he became a barber and settled at 508 Roberts Street. He married Christina Van Deusen, a descendant of enslaved people from the Mohawk Valley, and became “one of Rome’s most popular colored residents.” His pipe and drum band played regularly in local parades. For the rest of his life, he continued to attend reunions of the 117th and the Grand Army of the Republic.²

On April 15, 1861, Lincoln issued his first call for 75,000 troops to enlist for the Union Army. That very day, the Utica Citizen’s Corps, an independent militia—voted to sign up. They became Company A of the Fourteenth Infantry, joined immediately by White men from Utica, Rome, Vernon, and Westmoreland in the 26th, 97th, 117th, and 146th Infantries. On April 20, only five days after Lincoln’s call to arms, local residents pledged \$15,000 to help care for the families of those who enlisted. By June, the 26th and 45th regiments were defending the capital in Washington, DC, while the Third Infantry saw fire at Fortress Monroe. On May 3, Oneida County women organized to provide support for soldiers. They maintained this group, one of many organized across the North as the US Sanitary Commission, until the very end of the war.³

None of these first volunteers were men of color. At the beginning of the war, African Americans were not allowed to enlist in the Union Army, although they did volunteer in several state regiments. Not until September 1862 did President Lincoln issue the Emancipation Proclamation, announcing that all enslaved people in states still in rebellion against the US would be freed as of January 1, 1863. Five months later, on May 22, 1863, the US War Department created the Bureau of Colored Troops and began to aggressively recruit African Americans. Ultimately, about one-tenth of all Union troops, 180,000 men, were people of color, including African Americans, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Asian Americans. Among them were 4,125 African Americans from New York State.

As early as the 1830s, even as they worked through non-violent and political means, abolitionists had recognized the possibility of civil war. Inspired in part by their direct contact with freedom seekers, many White as well as Black abolitionists began by the 1850s to recognize violence as a viable and perhaps necessary means of ending slavery. Parker Pillsbury called for “the true completion of the American Revolution.” “The time for

² Don Wisnowski, *The Opportunity Is at Hand: Oneida County, New York, Colored Soldiers in the Civil War* (Lynchburg, VA: Schroeder, 2003).

³ *Third Annual Report of the Bureau of Military Statistics of the State of New York* (Albany, 1866), from New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center, <https://museum.dmna.ny.gov/unit-history/conflict/us-civil-war-1861-1865/counties-state-new-york-during-war-rebellion/oneida-county-new-york-civil-war>; Samuel Durant, *History of Oneida County*, excerpts, <http://oneida.nygenweb.net/military/regiments.html>.

ballots has passed,” he shouted, “the time for bullets has come.” In October 1851, the capture in Syracuse of William “Jerry” Henry, who had escaped from slavery in Missouri, led Rev. Samuel Joseph May to conclude that “it was necessary to bring the people into direct conflict with the Government,” to do anything “necessary to fight for the rescue of any black man from the horrors of a return to slavery.”⁴

Many African American as well as European American men signed up from Oneida County to serve in the Civil War. Donald M. Wisnowski has identified at least sixty-two men of color who served in Union forces, both army and navy, in at least eighteen different Civil War regiments. These included John Lippins, the first man to enlist, who joined the navy on November 4, 1861. Three sons of Joseph and Margaret Pell—James, Prince Albert, and John—joined from Post Street in Utica. So did Arlington Denike, who became first-class petty officer on board the USS *Vermont* and *Preston*.⁵

Henry Howard, who had escaped from slavery to settled in the village of Clinton (Town of Kirkland) served for three years in the Union Army, enlisting on October 15, 1863, as a private in Company F, 14th Rhode Island Regiment, Heavy Artillery. He served much of his time at Cape Parapet, near New Orleans. He mustered out on October 2, 1865, with a bounty of \$100. He signed his mustering-out papers with his mark.⁶

The outbreak of military war transformed the federal government into the most powerful Underground Railroad network ever conceived. Freedom for enslaved people became an accepted military measure, a powerful means of fighting the war itself. The policy began in May 1861, when Benjamin Butler, Union major at Ft. Monroe in Hampton, Virginia, refused to return three men to slavery, declaring for the first time that they were “contraband of war.” Just as federal troops confiscated Confederate land, food, and weapons, so the Union seized and free human beings held as property, he argued. In August 1861, the federal government adopted Butler’s ideas. In March 1862, the House of Representatives passed by a vote of 83 to 42 a bill relating to fugitives from slavery, “prohibiting officers in the army and navy of the United States from arresting fugitive slaves for the

⁴ Quoted in Gordon S. Barker, *Fugitive Slaves and the Unfinished American Revolution: Eight Cases, 1848–1856* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013), 18.

⁵ Don Wisnowski, *The Opportunity Is at Hand: Oneida County, New York, Colored Soldiers in the Civil War* (Lynchburg, VA: Schroeder, 2003), v. For general context about Black soldiers from New York State, see Anthony F. Gero, *Black Soldiers of New York State: A Proud Legacy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009).

⁶ *Clinton Courier*, March 24, 1897; Don Wisnowski, *The Opportunity Is at Hand: Oneida County, New York, Colored Soldiers in the Civil War* (Lynchburg, VA: Schroeder, 2003), 24; New York, “Registers of Officers and Enlisted Men Mustered into Federal Service, 1861–65,” and “US Colored Troops Military Service Records, 1863–65,” Ancestry.com.

purpose of returning them to slavery.” In July 1862, Congress passed the Second Confiscation Act, authorizing universal emancipation as a war measure. Robert Wilson was one of the thousands of beneficiaries of this act.⁷

Whether people were of African or European descent, the war changed life in significant ways. Just as it had for African Americans in the Revolutionary War, military service brought citizenship to some African American men. As Frederick Douglass asserted in 1863, “Never since the world began was a better chance offered to a long enslaved and oppressed people. The opportunity is given, us to be men. With one courageous resolution we may blot out the hand-writing of ages against us. Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letter, US, let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on earth that can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship.”⁸

Douglass was at least partially correct. With the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution in 1865, the war brought freedom to formerly enslaved people. The Fourteenth Amendment in 1868 brought citizenship. And the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 brought voting rights for African American men but not for women. For the very first time in New York State as across the nation, men of African descent could vote equally with men of European descent.

For many people of color in Oneida County, the future seemed brighter than the past. African American families in Oneida County met this new era in different ways. After the war, some who had escaped from slavery returned to their southern homelands. Among them was the Stevenson-Bowen family. They remained in Rome at least until 1862, when Alfred Stevenson was listed in the city directory as a porter. He also worked for the Presbyterian Church, who paid him \$108.72 in June 1862. But the 1870 census showed them back in Washington, DC, where Alfred Stevenson, driving a cart for a living, owned \$1500 worth of real property and \$150 of personal property.

Other African Americans who had escaped from slavery remained in Oneida County. Robert Wilson was one of those. He lived in Rome until his death. Henry Howard, Jane Howard, and their two surviving children William H. Howard and Mary E. Howard also stayed in Oneida County. They continued to live in the village of Clinton in a house on Mulberry Street. Mary E. Howard died there in 1918 at age seventy-two. After the war, Howard joined the Hinckley Post of the Grand Army of the Republic. The whole family

⁷ Don Wisnowski, *The Opportunity Is at Hand: Oneida County, New York, Colored Soldiers in the Civil War* (Lynchburg, VA: Schroeder, 2003), 19–20; James Oakes, *The Scorpion's Sting: Antislavery and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), explores the emergence of the idea of emancipation as a war measure, a departure from creating a cordon of antislavery states around the South. “Living Contraband—Former Slaves in the Nation’s Capital During the Civil War,” National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/living-contraband-former-slaves-in-the-nation-s-capital-during-the-civil-war.htm>. *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, March 15, 1862, quoted in American Antiquarian Society, “Northern Visions of Race, Region, and Reform,” <https://www.americanantiquarian.org/Freedmen/Intros/contrabands.html>.

⁸ Frederick Douglass, “Enlistment of Colored Men,” *Douglass’ Monthly*, August 1863.

were stalwart members of the Methodist Church. Son William Henry Howard became one of three African American printers in New York State. He joined Hiram Masonic Lodge, attended Hope Chapel in Utica, and became a chef in the Society House at Hamilton College. He died in the 1930s.

John and Sarah Thomas and John and Mary Roberts—all freedom seekers from Maryland—continued to share their house on Paris Hill. In 1865, both men worked as farmers. Sometime between 1865 and 1870, both Sarah Thomas and John Roberts died. Their surviving spouses John Thomas and Mary Roberts married and continued to live in Paris until their deaths. John Thomas died in 1881. His obituary honored him profusely: “This man is our friend, in the best and fullest sense of the word. He was kind and forgiving, and truly solicitous for the welfare of all.” “Aunt Mary Roberts,” survived both husbands. When her husband died, she was ninety years old, “a Christian woman, a faithful wife and friend.” All the Roberts-Thomas family was buried in Hillcrest Cemetery. The inscription on their stone reads:

“IN MEMORY OF JOHN ROBERTS, MARY HIS WIFE AND FIVE FRIENDS.
BORN IN SLAVERY FOUND HOME AND FREEDOM AT PARIS BETWEEN
1846 AND 1881.”

Individual freedom seekers and their descendants blended into the larger communities of free people of color after the Civil War. The African Methodist Episcopal Church in Rome, organized in 1849, disbanded about 1869. In Utica, African Americans formed two major institutions: Hope Chapel and Hiram Lodge. A local African American church congregation had organized in Utica at least as early as the 1840s, when Jermain Loguen (freedom seeker from Tennessee and student at the Oneida Academy) started a school and church in Utica. In 1866, Hope Chapel was organized as a mission church, under the auspices of the First Presbyterian Church in Utica, with support from benefactor Theodore Faxton. Hope Chapel was first a Union Church, combining people from several different religious traditions. It later affiliated with the African Methodist Episcopal Zion denomination, known as “the freedom church,” for its activism on behalf of African American rights.

Hope Chapel’s AME Zion congregation contained many people who had escaped from slavery. Of the first three elders, two (Samuel Dove and John Coleman) had been born in slavery in Virginia, and one (Prince Albert Pell) was the son of a man enslaved in Whitestown. Moses Hopkins, an early African American pastor and the first African American graduate of Auburn Theological Seminary, had been born enslaved in Virginia. Evangelist and social worker Elizabeth Lavender had been born in slavery in Georgia. Rev. John C. Temple, who served Hope Chapel in the 1890s, had been born enslaved in Kentucky. John Dining was born in Virginia.

In a period of rapid change, beginning with Reconstruction and continuing into the Jim Crow era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Hope Chapel became a center of acculturation for people who had escaped from slavery and a place of organized

resistance to increasing discrimination. As a religious, social, and educational institution, Hope Chapel became the basis for promoting civil, social, and political rights in the larger world. It also created a space for independent African American action. In 1868 for example, it became the center for a colored state convention, with noted national leader Henry Highland Garnet as a speaker. In 1880, Hope Lodge of Good Templars was organized in the church. So was Hiram Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons.

Between 1866 and 1869, Hope Chapel built a new building at 23 Elizabeth Street. In 1916, they moved to 425 Catherine Street. And in 1965, the congregation moved to its current location at 751 South Street.

African Americans who stayed in Oneida County passed their legacy of freedom and self-sufficiency on to their children. In 1879, Helen Virginia, for example, became the first African American to graduate from Rome Free Academy. By 1900, she had become a teacher.

Freedom seekers who had settled in Oneida County died off by the 1930s. Among the last to go were John Dining and Elizabeth Lavender, both affiliated with Hope Chapel and Bob Wilson in Rome. But the story of African Americans in Oneida County continued. Their numbers were bolstered by people who came from the South in the Great Migration of the early twentieth century and then by others who came for work on Oneida County during World War II. As Jan DeAmicis has noted in his study of Black families in Oneida County, 1850–1920, “Oneida’s black families maintained a strong commitment to family integrity and male-headed households throughout these years.”⁹

In 1974, the Town of Bridgewater elected Everett Holmes as mayor. A farmer and carpenter, father of ten children, a resident of Bridgewater for fifty-two years, Holmes was also the great-great-grandson of enslaved people and the first known Black mayor ever elected in a New York State village. He served three terms. His obituary asserted that “he was not elected because of or in spite of the fact he was black.” He was elected because he was “one of the great guys that ever was,” said a neighbor, with a public-spirited attitude that he passed on to his children. He built a local war memorial at his own expense, personally laid out village sidewalks, gave parades for children, and saved the Town Hall. “He left an indelible mark on local and state history,” noted the *Utica Daily Observer Dispatch*. “He showed not only a community, but a state and nation how a community caring for each other and working together to get a job done finds no time for racism.”¹⁰

⁹ Jan DeAmicis, “‘To Them That Has Brot Me Up’: Black Oneidans and Their Families, 1850 to 1920,” *Afro-Americans in New York Life & History* 21:2 (July 1997), 19–38.

¹⁰ “Holmes May Be First Black Mayor in State,” *Utica Daily Observer Dispatch*, March 22, 1974; “Everett T. Holmes,” *Utica Daily Observer Dispatch*, June 3, 1982; “Man from Bridgewater Devoted His Life to Helping Others,” *Utica Daily Observer Dispatch*, February 24, 1985.

By the early twenty-first century, only one known family—the Frank family—represented a direct line of descendants from the earliest African American families in Oneida County. Lansom (Alanson Frank) had been enslaved by William Floyd, signer of the Declaration of Independence, in the Town of Western, until New York State ended slavery in 1827. By 1840, Alanson Frank, Robert Frank, and Simeon Frank all lived on farms in Western. In 1850, Alanson Frank and Robert Frank owned farms in the Town of Lee, next door to Western. Frank families continued to own farms in Oneida County until the early twentieth century. Myron Frank, for example, was listed as a truck farmer in the 1910 census. Although they left farming by 1920, Frank family descendants continued to live in Oneida County—living reminders of the vibrant and sustaining African American presence in Oneida County from the American Revolution to the present day.¹¹

¹¹ Thanks to Jan DeAmicis for research on the Frank family.

Epilogue

Echoes of slavery and the Underground Railroad haunt us still. The Declaration of Independence, this country's founding document, asserted, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men [and women] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." We continue to face the challenge of implementing that ideal for all people. We confront in our own lives the systemic racism embodied once in legal slavery and now crystallized in institutions.

We recognize that democracy is fragile. Making it work demands constant vigilance. But the Underground Railroad reminds us that, just as oppression exists, so too do visions of equality and justice. In this report, we have attempted to be true to the evidence, to reflect the meaning of freedom for those who escaped from slavery and those who helped them. We send this report into the world with the hope that readers will also ask what freedom means to us in the twenty-first century. We believe that understanding our past will give us vision and strength, kindness and compassion, courage and resilience for creating a future of equal rights, respect, and responsibility for all people.

Recommendations for Further Research

This report is but one step in an ongoing process. It draws together as much information as could be found about the Underground Railroad in Oneida County with current time and resources. It forms the basis for Ft. Stanwix and other local, state, and national groups to develop programs that will promote widespread public understanding of why the Underground Railroad was important and how it operated in Oneida County and beyond. And it lays the basis for connecting past and present themes of justice, freedom, and systemic social change in the United States, through alliances between African Americans and their allies.

Here are suggestions for moving forward with:

- 1) further research, sources, and topics;
 - 2) interpretive programs for a wide variety of audiences; and
 - 3) nominations to key national and statewide organizations (William G. Pomeroy Foundation, Network to Freedom, National Register of Historic Places, Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State's International Underground Railroad Freedom Trail).
- 1) Further research. Research on the Underground Railroad is always unfolding, as new sources become available. Sources worth exploring further include:
 - a. Newspapers. As more newspapers appear online, it will be helpful to check them for names and places. In particular, the *Tocsin of Liberty* (1841–42), which became the *Albany Weekly Patriot* (1843–44), then the *Albany Patriot* (1844–48) (edited by James C. Jackson, Charles Torrey, and William Chaplin) would be very useful. No complete run of this paper exists, but various repositories hold scattered copies (<https://www.loc.gov/item/sn83030818/>; <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030817/>). The *Madison and Onondaga Abolitionist* (edited by Luther Myrick, 1841–42) would also be important. The best collection of this newspaper is at the Onondaga Historical Association.
 - b. Census records. Much more could be done, in terms of analyzing the population of African Americans who settled in Oneida County, as listed in US and New York State census records. This report does very little with gender, family structure, age, or occupation.
 - c. Manuscript church records. We made no attempt to use manuscript church records for this survey. These will, however, be very informative in terms of expanding knowledge of both churches and people involved in the Underground Railroad. Many churches, for example, passed resolutions of

support for abolitionism and the Underground Railroad, as part of the church union movement of the early 1840s. Membership, baptism, marriage, and death records will reveal church affiliations of abolitionists and Underground Railroad supporters, both White and Black. In particular, using names we have identified from this survey, membership records will help to identify biracial congregations.

Several topics merit further exploration:

- a. We have traced several known freedom seekers in Oneida County back to their origins in the South. Much remains to be done. The connection between Underground Railroad destinations in Oneida County and organized Underground Railroad routes from Washington, DC, is of particular interest.
- b. Many churches in Oneida County were active supporters of abolitionism and the Underground Railroad. We have made no effort to explore manuscript church records for racial identity of members and commitment to abolitionism and the Underground Railroad. Much more could be done with these topics.
- c. More work could be done on the presence of African Americans in this area during the Revolutionary War, as well as the role of Native Americans (including Oneida, Brotherton, and Stockbridge people) in sheltering African Americans.
- d. Freedom seekers who settled in Oneida County and fought both in the War of 1812 and the Civil War merit further study, especially as many pension records are now available through such sources as Fold3. We made no systematic effort to check these names.
- e. Many Oneida County anti-slavery petitions, copied from the National Archives by Jan DeAmicis, are online through Utica College. We have others copied by Judith Wellman. These could be checked to be sure that we have a complete collection. Names on these petitions could also be added to an Excel database for further analysis.
- f. The Florence Farming and Lumbering Association deserves extensive support for interpretive materials and further archeological work.
- g. The Frank family represents local continuity from slavery to freedom. Genealogical work on this family would illustrate this powerful local theme.
- h. Many people, both Black and White, related to this story are buried in local cemeteries. The largest number are in Rome Cemetery and Utica's Forest Hill Cemetery. A listing of relevant graves, with potential markers, would be very useful.
- i. We found shadows of Underground Railroad networks locally that seem to have been connected to Underground Railroad operatives throughout the upper South and West. The Wills and Storum families—both African American families in New Hartford—had connections with relatives in key Underground Railroad locations in western and northern New York. The Bowen-Stephenson family in Rome was related to key Black and White families in Washington, DC.

The Miller family, of European descent in Boonville, was connected with key people on the route north to Canada. Tudor E. Grant, barber, had connections in Utica, Oswego, Lyons, and Watertown. Marcus Kenyon of Rome ran stagecoaches north to Oswego and also won lucrative contracts for travel to California across both the Isthmus of Panama and the western territories via the pony express. Students and teachers who had formed their world view at the Oneida Institute in Whitestown and the Ladies' Domestic Seminary in Clinton moved west to influence Western Reserve College, Lane Seminary, Knox College, and Oberlin College. Some also went South to start Freedmen's Schools after the Civil War.

- j. We were unable to confirm several local oral traditions that linked families and sites to the Underground Railroad. Names that need verifications include William Tallman (Rome), Oliver Beale Peirce (Rome), Wells family (Utica), Abdellah's Farm (New Hartford), Eames House (Oxford Road), Ft. Schuyler Club (Utica), and the Guido house on Roberts Road (Paris). Building on the research of town historian James Pitcher, the Underground Railroad network centered on the Miller family in Boonville (with connections to the Wells family in Utica, the Davis family in Steuben, and others in villages farther north such as Leyden, Turin, and Houseville) also deserves further study, as do the Prescott house, Cone house, and Hunt house in Boonville.
 - k. We found names of many people associated with the Underground Railroad for whom we were not able to locate sites, including Samuel Lightbody; Rev. John Cross, William A. Savage; William Chaplin, general agent of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society; Ira Pettibone, Christian Convention, 1842; R. G. Williams, general financial agent and Assistant Treasurer, New York State Anti-Slavery Society; George and Martha Storrs, minister and women's rights abolitionist; and J. N. T. Tucker, agent, New York State Anti-Slavery Society, who became editor of the *Albany Patriot*.
 - l. Several people who attended the October 21, 1835, organizing convention for the New York State Anti-Slavery Society in Utica were attacked when they stopped overnight in Vernon on their way to Peterboro. Details of this attack are provided in Chapter 4, but we were unable to locate specific sites.
- 2) Interpretive programs for a wide variety of audiences. Locally, a variety of groups may wish to develop programs (in person or online), tours, curriculum units, and websites based on this study. Such groups include the Oneida County Freedom Trail Commission, the Oneida County History Center, the Rome Historical Society, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Landmarks Society of Greater Utica, Utica's Scenic and Historic Preservation Commission, Oneida County Tourism, Ft. Stanwix National Monument, the National Park Service's Network to Freedom, Welsh associations, various local churches, and public historians for Oneida County and each of Oneida County's towns.

At its meeting on March 18, 2021, the Advisory Committee for this project brainstormed the following ideas for presenting findings from this report to a wide

Recommendations for Further Research

variety of public audiences, including teachers and students, out-of-school adult audiences, tourists, and recent immigrants.

- Give talks to history teachers, including at the New York State Council for Social Studies—March conference and the Central NY Council for the Social Studies—October conference.
- Use primary sources to create Document Based Questions, used in statewide exams.
- Create short videos/movies for YouTube about the Underground Railroad in Oneida County.
 - * High school students
 - * College students. Newhouse School at Syracuse University, as well as other colleges
 - * Hire a production company to make a professional video presentation, perhaps someone such as Shakoure Charpentier—Transcendence Media, who creates 3-D Spatial capture for interiors. (Could 3-D be employed with a map of Utica, using multimedia circles to highlight places/stories? Matterport platform. Music, voiceover, interactive elements. Gamify experience—a scavenger hunt. Make it easy to share across platforms.)
- Drone class at Camden H.S. could partner with history class.
- Develop exhibits/presentations for Juneteenth, sponsored by NAACP and Oneida History Center.
- NAACP in both Utica and Rome as an important audience for our report.
- Present panel at New York State History Conference, Albany, November.
- Work with Utica School system, public access system.
- Work with Spectrum TV for television coverage.
- Nominate eligible sites for the National Register of Historic Places.
- Nominate eligible sites to the National Park Service’s Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.
- Identify appropriate sites for William G. Pomeroy Foundation historic markers.
- Develop cemetery tours of burial sites related to Underground Railroad people.
- Work with Oneida County Tourism Office: Kelly Blazowski to develop brochures for driving/walking tours.
- Organize bus tours, walking tours, driving tours, virtual tours.
- Create Underground Railroad Map using Orbitz, on model of Chautauqua County.

3) Nominations to key national and statewide organizations. Many of these sites can be nominated to the William G. Pomeroy Foundation for historic markers, the National Park Service's Network to Freedom, and the National Register of Historic Places. They can also be listed on the International Underground Railroad Trail promoted by the Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State.

a) William G. Pomeroy Foundation (<https://www.wgpfoundation.org/>). From its beginning in 2006 to 2021, the Pomeroy Foundation funded more than 700 historic markers across New York State, for historic sites dating between 1740 and 1921. All 501(c)(3) organizations; not-for-profit academic institutions; and local, state, or federal government agencies may apply. The application process begins with an online letter of intent. All applications must be supported by appropriate primary sources (<https://www.wgpfoundation.org/history/nys-historic-markers/>) and have a letter of permission from the site owner.

Of the sites identified in this report, only the Florence Farming and Lumber Association currently has a historic marker from the Pomeroy Foundation. All of the other sixty-eight sites for which we have developed essays may be eligible for Pomeroy markers.

b) National Park Service's Network to Freedom (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1205/index.htm>). Established by Congress in 1998, the Network to Freedom lists documented historic sites, programs, or research facilities related to the Underground Railroad. As of 2021, the Network to Freedom had 680 listings, of which sixty-six were in New York State. Listings included historic sites related to escapes, travel, destination, and settlement of people who escaped from slavery, as well as sites related to Underground Railroad helpers both Black and White.

Of the sites identified in this report, only one (Hayden Block in Utica) is currently listed in the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. As many as forty potential historic Network to Freedom site nominations (not including programs or research facilities) were identified as part of this survey.

The project advisory committee began discussions with Network to Freedom staff to develop priorities for this program based on the following list:

1. Deerfield. Coventry Home. Site of escape of James (Jacobus), 1818.
2. Erie Canal. Discussion of African Americans, including freedom seekers, who were affiliated with canals in Oneida County.
3. Kirkland, Clinton—Young Ladies Domestic Seminary, Rev. H. H. Kellogg. School that included freedom seekers.
4. Kirkland, Clinton—Home of Charles Rogers. Safe house. Need deed search.
5. Kirkland, Clinton—Home of Henry and Howard, freedom seekers. Need deed search.
6. Kirkland, Village of Clinton. Escape site for Jack, 1827.

Recommendations for Further Research

7. Kirkland, Methodist Church, 9 East Park Row, Clinton. Church that Howard family attended.
8. Marshall—site of Brothertown Indian settlement, where freedom seekers found refuge.
9. Marshall. Site of homes of J. M. Simmons and Carlos Simmons, abolitionists and helpers of freedom seeker John Thomas.
10. New Hartford—Willis home. Possible safe house kept by African American family.
11. Paris—Hillcrest Cemetery—graves of freedom seekers (John and Mary Roberts and five more).
12. Paris—Home of freedom seekers John Thomas and John Roberts, David Roberts, and Mary Roberts. Need deed search.
13. Paris—Val Pierce Home on the Cassville Road. Safe house.
14. Paris—Site of Henry Crane home—employed freedom seeker John Thomas for four years. Need deed search.
15. Paris—first settler, African American who presumably escaped from slavery. Need deed search.
16. Rome—Site of Ft. Wood Creek/Ft. Bull—Oneida Carry. Black soldiers in Revolutionary War passed this place and may have camped here, 1783.
17. Rome—Ft. Stanwix.—Black soldiers in Revolutionary War passed this place and may have camped here, 1783.
18. Rome—Railroad station. Site of travel for freedom seeker.
19. Rome—Site of home of Arba and Wealthy Blair, 70 N. Washington. Safe house.
20. Rome—Site of Stanwix Hotel. Site of freedom seeker's barbershop and stagecoach company of Marcus Kenyon, who sent freedom seekers to Oswego.
21. Rome—Wilson-Van Deusen home. Robert Wilson escaped from slavery in Virginia to Union Army.
22. Rome—Sally Stephenson and Henrietta Bowen, 1850–1860. Enslaved by William Bradley in Washington, DC. Need deed search.
23. Rome—Site of store of Arden Seymour, corner Dominick and St. George. Safe house.
24. Rome—Site of home of freedom seeker Brown, a joiner, house on Dominick street, first house west of the bridge over the Mohawk River, south side of street. Left after Fugitive Slave Law.
25. Rome—Site of AME Church. Lawrence & DePeyster. African American convention, 1853. Need deed search. Freedom seekers affiliated with this church.

Recommendations for Further Research

26. Steuben—Welsh church, Capel Ucha. George French, fugitive from Tennessee, spoke here.
27. Steuben—Home of Rev. Robert Everett, Elizabeth Everett, and family. Safe house.
28. Utica—Office of Alvan Stewart. Gave legal aid to Harry Bird and George, 1836.
29. Utica—Site of home of James and Cynthia DeLong. Safe house.
30. Utica—Site of Utica Riot, Bleecker Street Presbyterian Church. Has a marker.
31. Utica—Site of Joshua Howe’s home, now Valley View Golf Course.
32. Utica—Hope Street. Need deed search.
33. Utica—Hope Chapel—751 South Street since 1965—<https://www.uticaod.com/article/20100305/NEWS/303059907>.
Hope Chapel, 1866–1916. Built 1866, Elizabeth Street, across from Court House. Torn down in 1916 when “present structure” built on Catharine Street, parsonage 407 Park Avenue.
Hope Chapel, 1916–1965. Began on Charlotte Street, “moved to a small building Elizabeth Street across from the Court House and in 1916 the present chapel at 425 Catherine Street was built.”
34. Utica—West Street. Home of Samuel and Mercy Dove, 83 West Street.
35. Utica. John and Mary Munn, One Rutger Place. Samuel and Mary Dove lived there. Samuel decided to remain in Utica rather than return to Mississippi.
36. Utica—Post Street. Center of African American settlement. Freedom seeker J. D. Green (DocSouth) and others.
37. Utica—Site of railroad station. Baggs Square East Historic District in Utica contains the site of the original New York Central Railroad station, associated with the Underground Railroad. Union Station (1912–14) placed on National Register, 1975.
38. Utica—Site of Spencer Kellogg’s store. Utica Rescue, December 29, 1836.
39. Utica—Devereux Block, Genesee Street. Wesley Bailey, editor of “The Liberty Press,” harbored John Thomas and one other fugitive in 1844.
40. Utica. Site of William and Jane Blaikie’s drugstore, 202 Genesee St. Safe house.
41. Whitestown—Oneida Institute (1827–43—Main Street and Mohawk River and Ellis and Ablett Avenues. Abolitionist biracial school. *Friend of Man* published here briefly.
42. Whitestown—Home of Beriah Green. Need deed search.

- c) National Register of Historic Places (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm>). In 2021, there were eighty-six listings in Oneida County on the National Register of Historic Places, including fifteen historic districts with several individual buildings in them and seven National Historic Landmarks.¹

National Register listing depends both on the integrity of the resource and its significance. National Register guidelines suggest:

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.²

By 2021, twelve of the sites discussed in this survey were listed on the National Register for reasons other than their connection with the Underground Railroad:

1. Utica—Baggs Square East Historic District in Utica contains the site of the original New York Central Railroad station, associated with the Underground Railroad. Union Station (1912–14) was also placed individually on the National Register in 1975.
2. Utica—Judge Hayden’s law office, 96–98 Genesee Street. Site of the legal hearing for Harry Bird and George, December 29, 1836, who had escaped from the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Part of the Lower Genesee Street Historic District placed on the National Register in 1982.
3. Site of Spencer Kellogg’s store. Kellogg alerted abolitionists to the plight of Harry Bird and George. Part of the Lower Genesee Street Historic District placed on the National Register in 1982.
4. Utica—Office of Alvan Stewart, gave legal counsel to Harry Bird and George. Law office now part of the Lower Genesee Street Historic District, listed on the National Register, 1982.

¹ “National Register of Historic Places Listings in Oneida County, N.Y.,” *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Register_of_Historic_Places_listings_in_Oneida_County,_New_York.

² “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation” (Washington, DC, US Department of the Interior, rev. for the internet, 1995), <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/publications.htm>.

Recommendations for Further Research

5. Utica—Mechanics' Hall. Colored Convention held here. Attempted meeting with Susan B. Anthony at the time of Lincoln's election. part of the Lower Genesee Street Historic District, listed on the National Register, 1982.
6. Utica—Home of John and Mary Munn, One Rutger Place. Samuel and Mary Dove lived there. Samuel decided to remain in Utica rather than return to Mississippi. Part of Rutger-Steuben Park Historic District, placed on National Register, 1973.
7. Utica—Insane Asylum, where Gerrit Smith went after John Brown's raid, 1859. Listed on National Register, 1971.
8. Rome—Site of Ft. Wood Creek/Ft. Bull—Oneida Carry. Listed on National Register, 2019.
9. Rome—Ft. Stanwix. Listed on National Register, 1966.
10. Kirkland, Village of Clinton—Nathaniel Griffin Home, 10 East Park Row. Site of escape of Jack, 1827. Advertised that Jack had run away, 1827. Home of at least four enslaved people. Listed on National Register as part of Clinton Village Historic District, 1982.
11. Kirkland, Village of Clinton—Methodist Church, 9 East Park Row. Church that freedom seeker Henry Howard attended. Now Kirkland Art Center. Listed on National Register as part of Clinton Village Historic District, 1982.
12. Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Designated a National Historic Landmark in 2014.
13. Western—Home of William Floyd and seven enslaved people. National Register, 1971.
14. First Baptist Church of Deerfield, 1811. Herkimer Road, NR, 1985. Possible site of anti-slavery riot.
15. First Congregational Free Church, Oriskany Falls, 177 North Main Street, NR, 1979. Possible site of Free Democracy meeting, 1852.

Other sites uncovered by this survey may be considered for National Register listing under Criterion A, with the theme of the Underground Railroad, abolitionism, and African American life as significant in US history. Some of these no longer have original buildings but should be evaluated under Criterion D as sites that may yield important historic information. Possibilities for National Register nomination include:

1. Camden—Camden Wesleyan Methodist Church. Established by Elijah Gaylord, a staunch abolitionist, with sixteen members as an abolitionist church. Abolitionist site.
2. Deerfield—Alexander Coventry home, Cosby Manor Road. Site of home of enslaved people (Cuff et al). Need deed search. Site of enslavement.
3. Florence—Florence Farming and Lumber Association. Criterion D, archeological site. Underground Railroad site.

Recommendations for Further Research

4. Kirkland, Village of Clinton—Young Ladies Domestic Seminary. Rev. H. H. Kellogg admitted students of color, some of whom had escaped from slavery. Underground Railroad site.
5. Kirkland, Village of Clinton—Home of Charles Rogers, Underground Railroad safe house. Need deed search. Underground Railroad site.
6. Kirkland, Village of Clinton—Home of Henry and Jane Howard, who escaped from Maryland about 1840. “My father was one of the first colored taxpayers in Oneida County.” *Observer Dispatch*, May 29, 1936. Underground Railroad site.
7. Marshall—Hanover church, supporters of abolition, now only a cemetery remaining. Abolitionist site.
8. Marshall—site of Brothertown Indian settlement, where freedom seekers sought a haven. Underground Railroad site.
9. Marshall. Site of homes of J. M. Simmons and Carlos Simmons, abolitionists and helpers of John Thomas, freedom seeker. The J. M. Simmons buildings are now gone. Underground Railroad site.
10. New Hartford. Home of Charles Storum family, part of an abolitionist network that included Caroline Storum Loguen and Rev. Jerman Loguen. Deed search. Abolitionist site.
11. New Hartford—Willis home. African American family who most likely kept an Underground Railroad safe house. African American site.
12. Paris—Hillcrest Cemetery—graves of freedom seekers (John and Mary Roberts and five more). Underground Railroad site.
13. Home of freedom seekers John Thomas and John Roberts, David Roberts, and Mary Roberts. Need deed search. Underground Railroad site.
14. Paris—Val Pierce Home on the Cassville Road. Underground Railroad site.
15. Paris—Site of first post-Oneida settler, African American who had likely escaped from Revolutionary War officer. Need deed search. Criteria A and D. Underground Railroad site.
16. Paris Green—Congregational church. Abolitionist site.
17. Paris—Sauquoit Presbyterian Church. Abolitionist site.
18. Remsen—Bethel Church. Abolitionist site.
19. Rome—First Presbyterian Church. Abolitionist site.
20. Site of Second Presbyterian Church, Rev. Avelyn Sedgwick. Abolitionist site. Criterion A and D.
21. Rome—Railroad station. Underground Railroad site.
22. Rome—Site of home of Arba and Wealthy Blair. Underground Railroad site. Criteria A and D.
23. Rome—Wilson-Van Deusen home. Underground Railroad site.

Recommendations for Further Research

24. Rome—Alfred and Sally Stevenson, 1850–1860. Underground Railroad site. Need deed search.
 25. Site of AME Church. Lawrence & DePeyster. African American convention, 1853. Need deed search.
 26. Steuben—Welsh church, Capel Ucha. Underground Railroad site.
 27. Steuben—Home of Rev. Robert Everett, Elizabeth Everett, and family. Underground Railroad site.
 28. Utica—Hope Street. Site of homes purchased by African Americans for African Americans. Need deed search.
 29. Utica—Publius V. Rogers, cashier, First National Bank. Patty, freed by Rogers in 1846, lived on Plant Street. Need deed search.
 30. Whitestown—Oneida Institute (1827–1843)—Main Street and Mohawk River and Ellis and Ablett Avenues. Abolitionist biracial school. Underground Railroad site. Criteria A and D.
 31. Whitestown—home of Beriah Green.
- d) Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State (<http://www.urnys.org>). Recognizing that the Underground Railroad from its beginning was an international network, the Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State established in 2020 the International Underground Freedom Trail of New York State. This Trail links sites across New York State and Canada that were “way stations or areas of transit for Freedom Seekers on their way north, sometimes to points within New York State, often to destinations of freedom in Canada, particularly along the Niagara River region.” Many sites uncovered by this survey will be eligible for listing on this Trail.

Bibliography

I. Secondary Sources

A. Underground Railroad and Reform Movements

- Aboard the Underground Railroad: A National Register Travel Itinerary.*
<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/underground>.
- Atkins, Barton. *Modern Antiquities: Sketches of Early Buffalo*. Buffalo: Courier Company, 1898.
- Bacon, Margaret Hope. *I Speak for My Slave Sister: The Life of Abby Kelley Foster*. New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1974.
- Barker, Gordon S. *Fugitive Slaves and the Unfinished American Revolution: Eight Cases, 1848–1856*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013.
- Barkun, Michael. *Crucible of the Millennium: The Burned-Over District of New York State in the 1840s*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986.
- Berlin, Ira, and Leslie Harris, eds. *Slavery in New York*. New York: The New Press, 2005.
- Blackett, R. J. M. *The Captive's Quest for Freedom: Fugitive Slaves, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, and the Politics of Slavery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Blight, David W. *Passages to Freedom: The Underground Railroad in History and Memory*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001.
- Blue, Frederick J. *No Taint of Compromise: Crusaders in Antislavery Politics*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005.
- Bordewich, Fergus. *Bound for Canaan: The Epic Story of the Underground Railroad, America's First Civil Rights Movement*. New York: Amistad, 2006.
- Burin, Eric. *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society*. Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 2008.
- Calarco, Tom. *The Fresh Air of Freedom: The Underground Railroad in Vermont*. n.p.
- . *The Search for the Underground Railroad in Upstate New York*. West Columbia, SC: The History Press, 2014.
- . *The Underground Railroad Conductor: A Guide to Underground Railroad Sites in Eastern New York and a Companion to the Underground Railroad in the Adirondacks*. 2003.

Bibliography

- . *The Underground Railroad in the Adirondack Region*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011.
- Campbell, Stanley W. *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850–1860*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968.
- Circle Association's African American History of Western New York State, 1770 to 1830*.
- Cross, Whitney. *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950.
- Dann, Norman K. *Practical Dreamer: Gerrit Smith and the Crusade for Social Reform*. Hamilton, New York: Log Cabin Books, 2009.
- Davis, William C. *The Union That Shaped the Confederacy*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001.
- DeAmicis, Jan. "“For Sale, A Young Black Woman”: Slavery in Oneida County, New York,” *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*, 27:2 (July 2003), 69–134.
- . “Looking for Joshua Howe,” PowerPoint presentation, 2019.
- . “To Them That Has Brot Me Up: Black Oneidans and Their Families, 1850–1920,” *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*, 21:2 (1997), 19–38.
- Duling, Gretchen, and Dennis. *One More River to Cross: The Underground Railroad at Youngstown, N.Y.* Buffalo, NY: New Idea Press, 2017.
- Erie Canalway Heritage Area. “Map of Underground Railroad Sites in New York State,” National Park Service, <https://www.jimapco.com/eriecanalway/ugrr>.
- Exploring a Common Past: Researching and Interpreting the Underground Railroad*. Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1998. http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/ugrr/exuggr1.htm.
- Falk, Cynthia. “Forts, Rum, Slaves, and the Herkimers’ Rise to Power in the Mohawk Valley,” *New York History* 89:3 (Summer 2008), 221–34.
- Farley, Ena. “The African American Presence in the History of Western New York,” *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 14:1 (January 1990).
- Field, Phyllis. *Politics of Race: The Struggle for Black Suffrage in the Civil War Era*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982.
- Finkelman, Paul. “The Protection of Black Rights in Seward’s New York,” *Civil War History* 34:3 (January 1988), 211–34.
- Foner, Eric. *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad*. W. W. Norton and Co., 2015.

Bibliography

- Foner, Philip, and George Walker, eds. *Proceedings of the Black State Convention, 1840–1865*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979.
- Foreman, P. Gabriel, Jim Casey, and Sarah Lynn Patterson, eds. *The Colored Conventions*. Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2021.
- Franklin, John Hope, and Loren Schweninger. *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Frost, Karolyn Smardz. *I've Got a Home in Glory Land: A Lost Tale of the Underground Railroad*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008.
- Frothingham, Octavius Brooks. *Gerrit Smith: A Biography*. New York, 1878.
- Gara, Larry. *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961.
- Gordon, Mary Hayes. "Oneida County Churches in the Abolition Era: Leaders in the Fight against Slavery," unpublished paper, May 2012.
- Griffin, Clyde. *Ferment of Reform, 1830–1860*. New York: Routledge, 1969.
- Groth, Michael E. *Slavery and Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017.
- Hammond, Charles. *Gerrit Smith: The Story of a Noble Man's Life*. Geneva, NY: W. F. Humphrey, 1900.
- Harlow, Ralph Volney. *Gerrit Smith, Philanthropist and Reformer*. 1939. Repr. New York: Russell and Russell, 1972.
- Harrold, Stanley. "The Pearl Affair: The Washington Riot of 1848," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.* Vol. 50, The Fiftieth Volume (1980), pp. 140–60.
- . *The Rise of Aggressive Abolitionism: Addresses to the Slaves*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004.
- . *Subversives: Antislavery Community in Washington, DC, 1828–1865*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003.
- Hebert, Keith. *Cornerstone of the Confederacy: Alexander Stephens and the Speech That Defined the Lost Cause*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2021.
- Henderson. Alice Hatcher. "The History of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society," unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1963.
- Hill, Marvin S. "Rise of Mormonism in the Burned-Over District: Another View," *New York History* 61:4 (October 1980), 411–30.
- Hodges, Graham Russell. *David Ruggles: A Radical Black Abolitionist and the Underground Railroad in New York City*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

Bibliography

- . “The Pastor and the Prostitute: Sexual Power among African Americans and Germans in Colonial New York,” in Martha Hodes, ed., *Sex, Love and Race*. New York: New York University Press, 1999.
- Hoffer, Charles. *John Quincy Adams and the Gag Rule, 1835–50*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017.
- Horning, Elinore T. “The Harris Harassment,” *York State Tradition* 26:4 (Fall 1972), 26–28.
- Horton, James Oliver, and Lois E. *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700–1860*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Hudson, J. Blaine. *Fugitive Slaves and the Underground Railroad in the Kentucky Borderland*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland Press, 2002.
- Humphries, Hugh C. *Agitate! Agitate! Agitate! The Great Fugitive Slave Law Convention and Its Rare Daguerreotype*. Oneida, NY: Madison County Historical Society, 1994.
- Hunter, Carol M. *To Set the Captives Free: Reverend Jermain Wesley Loguen and the Struggle for Freedom in Central New York 1835–1872*. New York and London: Garland, 1993.
- Johnson, Reinhard O. *The Liberty Party, 1840–48: Antislavery Third-Party Politics in the United States*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009.
- Jones, Martha. *Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Kaye, Anthony E. “Neighborhoods and Nat Turner: The Making of a Slave Rebel and the Unmaking of a Slave Rebellion,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 27:4 (2007), 705–20.
- Landon, Fred. “The Negro Migration to Canada after the Passing of the Fugitive Slave Act,” *Journal of Negro History* 5 (January 1920).
- LaRoche, Cheryl Janifer. *Geography of Resistance: Free Black Communities and the Underground Railroad*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014.
- . “Secrets Well Kept: Colored Conventioneers and Underground Railroad Activism,” in P. Gabrielle Foreman, Jim Casey, and Sarah Lynn Patterson, eds., *The Colored Conventions Movement* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2021).
- Larson, Kate Clifford Larson. *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2004.
- . “List of People That Tubman Helped Escape,” <http://www.harriettubmanbiography.com/TubmansUGRR.html>.
- . “Racing for Freedom: Harriet Tubman’s Underground Railroad Network through New York,” *Afro-Americans in New York Life & History* 36:1 (January 2012), 7–33.

Bibliography

- Mapping the African American Past*. Columbia University,
<http://maap.columbia.edu/index.html>.
- McGraw, Marie Tyler, and Kira A. Badamo. *Underground Railroad Resources in the United States: Theme Study*. Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 1998.
- Martin, John H. "Charles Grandison Finney: Religion on the Frontier of Western New York," *Saints, Sinners, and Reformers: The Burned-Over District Re-visited*, from *Crooked Lake Review* (Fall 2005).
- Midtroed, Tom Arne. "The Flemish Bastard and the Former Indians: Métis and Identity in Seventeenth-Century New York," *American Indian Quarterly* 34:1 (Winter 2010), 83–108.
- Mitchell, Rev. W. M. *The Underground Railroad*. Birmingham: Hudson and Son, 1860.
- Morley, Jefferson. *Snow-Storm in August*. New York: Knopf, 2012.
- Morrison, Howard Alexander. "Gentlemen of Proper Understanding: A Closer Look at Utica's Anti-Abolitionist Mob," *New York History* 63:1 (January 1981), 61–82.
- Muelder, Owen. *Theodore Dwight Weld and the American Anti-Slavery Society*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011.
- Myers, John L. "The Beginning of Anti-Slavery Agencies in New York State, 1833–1836," *New York History* 43:2 (April 1962), 149–81,
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23158611?seq=1>.
- Myers, John L. "The Major Effort of National Anti-Slavery Agents in New York State, 1836–1837," *New York History* 46:2 (April 1965), 162–86.
- National Park Service, *Underground Railroad Network to Freedom*,
<http://www.nps.gov/history/ugrr>.
- National Register of Historic Places, <http://www.nps.gov/nr>.
- New York Slavery Records Index: Records of Enslaved Persons and Slave Holders in New York from 1525 through the Civil War*. John Jay College of Criminal Justice.
<https://nyslavery.commons.gc.cuny.edu>.
- New York State Office of Historic Preservation. "Underground Railroad Trail,"
<https://parks.ny.gov/historic-preservation/heritage-trails/default.aspx>.
- Oakes, James. *The Scorpion's Sting: Antislavery and the Coming of the Civil War*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2014.
- Oates, Stephen B. *Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion*. New York: Harper, 1975, reprint 2016.
- Our Shared History: African American Heritage*,
<http://www.nps.gov/history/aahistory/ugrr/ugrr.htm>.

Bibliography

- Papson, Don, with Tom Calarco. *Secret Lives of the Underground Railroad in New York City: Sydney Howard Gay, Louis Napoleon, and the Record of Fugitives*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015.
- Pathways to Freedom: Maryland & the Underground Railroad*.
https://pathways.thinkport.org/flash_home.cfm.
- Peck, Ada Marie. *The Old Hanover Church*. Deansboro, NY: Berry Hill Press, 1995.
- Perciaccante, Marianne. *Calling Down Fire: Charles Grandison Finney and Revivalism in Jefferson County, New York, 1800–1841*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012.
- Punchard, George. *History of Congregationalism*, Vol. V. Boston, 1881.
- Pierson, Michael D. *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics*. Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Porter, Kenneth W. "Relations between Negroes and Indians: Contacts as Allies," *Journal of Negro History* 17:3 (July 1932).
- Pula, James S., and Cheryl A., eds. *"With Courage and Honor": Oneida County's Role in the Civil War*. Utica: Utica College Ethnic Heritage Studies Center, 2010.
- Richards, Leonard. *"Gentlemen of Property and Standing:" Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America*. New York: Oxford, 1970.
- Ricks, Mary Kay. *Escape on the Pearl: The Heroic Bid for Freedom on the Underground Railroad*. New York: William Morrow, 2007.
- Schott, Thomas E. *Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia: A Biography*, rev. ed. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996.
- Sernett, Milton C. *Abolition's Axe: Beriah Green, the Oneida Institute, and the Black Freedom Struggle*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986.
- . "Alvan Stewart," *American National Biography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- . "Common Cause: The Anti-Slavery Alliance of Gerrit Smith and Beriah Green," *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier* 21:2 (Fall 1986), <http://www.nyhistory.com/gerritsmith/bgreen.htm>.
- . *North Star Country: Upstate New York and the Crusade for African American Freedom*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000.
- . "On Freedom's Threshold: The African American Presence in Central New York, 1760–1940," *Afro-Americans in New York History and Life* 19 (1995), 43–49.
- . "'On Freedom's Trail': Researching the Underground Railroad in New York State," *Afro-Americans in New York History and Life* 25:1 (January 2001), 7.

Bibliography

- Sernett, Milton C., and Judith Wellman. "The Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African Life in Central New York," Unpublished manuscript.
- Sevitch, Benjamin. "The Well-Planned Riot of October 21, 1835: Utica's Answer to Abolitionism," *New York History*, 50:3 (July 1969), 250–63.
- Sewall, Richard. *Ballots for Freedom: Antislavery Politics in the United States, 1837–1860*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1980.
- Siebert, Wilbur. *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*. New York: Russell and Russell, 1898.
- Sinha, Manisha. *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.
- Sinnott, Deirdre. "Utica: Hotbed of Abolition," Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State, <https://www.urcnys.org/webinars>.
- Sorin, Gerald. *New York Abolitionists*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971.
- Stauffer, John. *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Sterling, Dorothy. *Ahead of Her Time: Abby Kelley and the Politics of Antislavery*. New York: Norton, 1994.
- Still, William. *The Underground Railroad*. Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1872.
- Strong, Douglas. *Perfectionist Politics: Abolitionism and the Religious Tensions of American Democracy*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999.
- Taylor, Alan. *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772–1832*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2013.
- Underground Railroad History Project, <https://undergroundrailroadhistory.org>.
- Underground Railroad Resources in the United States: Theme Study, National Park Service. Underground Railroad: Official National Park Handbook*. Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 1998.
- Weaver, Daniel. "The Willigee Negroes": Sir William Johnson, Sir Peter Warren, and an 18th Century Free Black Community in the Mohawk Valley. Amsterdam, NY: Lock 11 Media, 2019.
- Wellman, Judith. "'Born a Slave, Lived a Freeman, Died in the Lord': Discovering the Underground Railroad in New York," unpublished essay for New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Underground Railroad Heritage Trail.
- . "Crossing Over Cross: Whitney Cross's Burned-Over District as Social History," *Reviews in American History* 17 (March 1989), 159–74.

Bibliography

- . “Discovering the Underground Railroad in Upstate New York: People, Places, and Stories,” *Newsletter*, Central New York Genealogical Society (Summer 2012).
- . “Documenting the Underground Railroad in New York State,” *Cross Ties* (Summer 2008).
- . “James Watkins Seward: Common Criminal or Hero of the Freedom Trail?” unpublished paper, National Council on Public History, April 12, 2002.
- . “The Freedom Trail in Central New York: A Research Guide,” 1998.
- . *Grassroots Reform in the Burned-Over District of Upstate New York: Religion, Abolitionism and Democracy*. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000, and Routledge, 2011. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Grassroots_Reform_in_the_Burned_over_Dis/7oKrAgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=ransom+goss+williams&pg=PT190&printsec=frontcover.
- . “Larry Gara’s Legend of the Underground Railroad: A New Look,” *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 25:1 (2001), 33–55.
- . *Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman’s Rights Convention*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005.
- . “‘She Has Bid Adieu Forever to the Land of Oppression’: Women on the Underground Railroad in Central New York,” unpublished presentation, Underground Railroad Conference of the Capital Region, February 23, 2007.
- . “This Side of the Border: Fugitives from Slavery in Three Central New York Communities,” *New York History* 79:4 (October 1998), 359–92.
- . *Surveys of Sites Relating to the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in New York State: Cayuga County*. <http://www.co.cayuga.ny.us/history/ugrr/report/index.html/www.auburncayugafreedomtrail.com>.
- . *Uncovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Montgomery County, New York, 1820–1890*. With Kelly Farquhar Canajoharie: Montgomery County Historian’s Office, 2011. <https://www.co.montgomery.ny.us/web/sites/departments/historian/undergroundrr.asp>.
- . Niagara County. <http://www.niagarafallsundergroundrailroad.org>. See Appendix C of the Heritage Area Management Plan.
- . Onondaga County. http://www.pacny.net/freedom_trail Oswego County. No longer available online.
- . Seneca County, including curriculum unit on Thomas James. http://www.co.seneca.ny.us/history/ugrr/discovering_ugrr.pdf www.co.seneca.ny.us/history/ugrr/stories_from_discovering_ugrr.pdf www.co.seneca.ny.us/history/ugrr/Curriculum_Unit_Thomas_James.pdf.

Bibliography

- . Wayne County. <https://web.co.wayne.ny.us/index.php/office-of-the-county-historian/uncovering-the-underground-railroad-abolitionism-and-african-american-life-in-wayne-county-new-york-1820-1880>.
- . “The Underground Railroad and the National Register of Historic Places: Historical Importance vs. Architectural Integrity,” *Public Historian* 24:1 (Winter 2002), 11–29.
- . “Underground Railroad in New York State,” Peter Eisenstadt, ed., *Encyclopedia of New York State*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005.
- . “Women and Radical Reform in Antebellum Upstate New York: A Profile of Grassroots Female Abolitionists,” in *Clio was a Woman: Studies in the History of American Women*, ed. Mabel E. Deutrich and Virginia C. Purdy (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1980), 113–27.
- . “Women’s Rights, Republicanism, and Revolutionary Rhetoric in New York State,” *New York History* 69 (July 1988), 353–84.
- Wesley, Charles H. “The Negroes of New York in the Emancipation Movement,” *Journal of Negro History* 24 (January 1939), 65–103.
- . “The Participation of Negroes in Anti-Slavery Political Parties,” *Journal of Negro History* 29:1 (January 1944), 132–74.
- Wilson, Joseph T. *The Black Phalanx, A History of the Negro Soldiers of the United States in the Wars of 1775–1812, 1861–1865*. New York: Arno Press, 1968. Reprint; originally published in Boston by Robert F. Walcutt, 1885.
- Wyatt-Brown, Bertram. “The Abolitionists’ Postal Campaign of 1835,” *Journal of Negro History* L:4 (October 1965), 227–38.
- Zwirecki, Paul. “Fighting ‘A Spirit of Fanaticism:’ Antirevivalism in Antebellum America,” PhD dissertation, University of Buffalo, 2014.

B. Rome, Oneida County, and Upstate New York

- Andrist, Ralph K. *The Erie Canal*. New Word City, 2016.
- Bagg, Moses, ed. *Memorial History of Utica, N.Y.* Syracuse: D. Mason, 1892.
- Barkun, Michael. *Crucible of the Millennium: The Burned-Over District of New York in the 1840s*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986.
- Berleth, Richard. *Bloody Mohawk: The French and Indian War & American Revolution on New York’s Frontier*. Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 2010.
- Bernstein, Peter L. *Wedding of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2006.

Bibliography

- Berry, A. J., and James F. Morrison. *Marinus Willett, Saviour of the Mohawk Valley*. Amazon Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2014.
- Boehlert, Paul. *The Battle of Oriskany and General Nicholas Herkimer: Revolution in the Mohawk Valley*. West Columbia, SC: History Press, 2013.
- Bottini, Joseph P. *Oneida County: An Illustrated History*. San Antonio, TX: HPN Books, 2015.
- Burke, Thomas E., Jr., "A Sad and Deplorable Massacre," in *Mohawk Frontier: The Dutch Community of Schenectady, New York, 1661–1710*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.
- Caldwell, Mike. "The Fort Stanwix Administrative History: A Superintendent's Perspective," *The Public Historian* 31:2, 66–70, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/tph.2009.31.2.66?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.
- Campbell, William J. *Negotiating at the Oneida Carry: Fort Stanwix National Monument Historic Resource Study*. Organization of American Historians and National Park Service, 2017.
- Campbell, William W. *Annals of Tryon County*. n.p., 1831.
- Cipolla, Craig N. *Become Brothertown: Native American Ethnogenesis and Endurance in the Modern World*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013.
- Cookinham, Henry J. *History of Oneida County*. n.p., 1912.
- Crouse, Nellis M. "Forts and Blockhouses in the Mohawk Valley," *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association* 14 (1915), 75–90.
- Durant, Samuel. *History of Oneida County, New York*. Philadelphia: Everts & Fariss, 1878.
- Dwight, Timothy. *The Northern Traveler: Containing the Routes to Niagara, Quebec, and the Springs, with Descriptions of the Principal Scenes, and Useful Hints to Strangers*. New York: Wilder & Campbell, 1825.
- Eisenstadt, Peter, ed. *The Encyclopedia of New York State*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005.
- Ellis, David Maldwyn. "Whitestown: From Yankee Outpost to Cradle of Reform," *New York History* 65:1 (January 1984), 32–59.
- Evans, Paul Demund. *The Welsh in Oneida County, New York*. MA thesis, Cornell University, 1914.
- Falk, Cynthia. "Forts, Rum, Slaves, and the Herkimer's Rise to Power in the Mohawk Valley," *New York History*, 89 (Summer 2008), 221–34.
- Fort Stanwix: History, Historic Furnishings, and Historic Structures Reports*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1976.

Bibliography

- Fowler, P. H. *Historical Sketch of Presbyterianism within the Bounds of the Synod of Central New York*. Utica, 1877.
- Frederic, Harold. "The Mohawk Valley During the Revolution," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. LV (June–November 1877), https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Mohawk_Valley_During_the_Revolution.
- Geake, Robert, and Loren Spears. *From Slaves to Soldiers: The 1st Rhode Island Regiment in the American Revolution*. Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2016.
- Gehring, Charles T., Charles T., William A. Starna, and Gunther Michelson, eds. *A Journey into Mohawk and Oneida Country 1634–1635: The Journal of Harmen Meyndertsz Van Den Bogaert*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013.
- Gero, Anthony F. *Black Soldiers of New York State: A Proud Legacy*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009.
- Gilbert, Alan. *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.
- Glattner, Joseph T., and James Kirby Martin. *Forgotten Allies: The Oneida Indians and the American Revolution*. Hill and Wang, 2007.
- Greene, Nelson. *The Mohawk Valley: Gateway to the West*. 4 vols. Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1925.
- Gridley, A. D. *History of the Town of Kirkland*. n.p., 1874.
- Hanson, Lee, and Dick Ping Hsu. *Casemates and Cannonballs: Archaeological Investigations at Fort Stanwix National Monument*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1975.
- Hauptman, Laurence, and L. Gordon McLester, III, eds. *The Oneida Indian Journey from New York to Wisconsin, 1784–1860*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999.
- History of the Presbyterian Church of Sauquoit, New York, Read in the Church, July 9th, 1876*. n.p., n.d.
- Hulbert, Archer Butler. *Historic Highways of America: The Great American Canals*. Vol. 2, *The Erie Canal*. Cleveland: A. H. Clark, 1904.
- . *Historic Highways of America: Pioneer Roads and Experiences of Travelers*. Cleveland: A. H. Clark, 1904.
- Hungerford, Edward. *Men and Iron: History of the New York Central Railroad*. New York: Thomas Crowell, 1938.
- Jacobs, Japp. *New Netherland: A Dutch Colony in Seventeenth-Century America*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Jones, Pomeroy. *Annals and Recollections of Oneida County*. Rome, 1851.

Bibliography

- Kelly, Jack. *Heaven's Ditch: God, Gold, and Murder on the Erie Canal*. New York: St. Martin's, 2017.
- Kelsey, Isabel Thompson. *Joseph Brant, 1743–1807: Man of Two Worlds*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984.
- Klein, Milton. *The Empire State: A History of New York*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.
- Kohn, Solomon Joshua. *The Jewish Community of Utica, N.Y., 1847–1948*. New York: American Jewish Historical Society, 1959.
- Kusch, Michael. “75 Years—Thank You to the People Who Refused to Forget: 1935–2010,” Fort Stanwix National Monument, <https://www.nps.gov/fost/learn/historyculture/thank-you-to-the-people-who-refused-to-forget.htm>.
- Lanning, Michael Lee. *African Americans and the Revolutionary War*. New York: Kensington, 2000.
- Lawson, Dorris Moore. *Nathan Roberts: Erie Canal Engineer*. Utica: North Country Books, 1998.
- Leete, William. *Life of Joseph Brant-Thayendanega*. 2 vols, repr. Sydney: Wentworth Press, 2019.
- Leonard, Peter M. *Rome Revisited*. Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2007.
- Loin, Virginia. *Deerfield, N.Y.: A Glimpse into the Past*. Utica, NY: Pine Tree Press, 1998.
- Lossing, Benson J. *Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*. New York: Harper Brothers, 1850.
- Lowenthal, Larry. *Marinus Willett, Defender of the Northern Frontier*. Bovina Center, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 2000.
- Luzader, John F. *Fort Stanwix: Construction and Military History*. Eastern National Parks, 1999 (revised from 1969 report).
- Luzader, John F., Louis Torres, and Orville W. Carroll. *Fort Stanwix: History, Historic Furnishing, and Historic Structure Report*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1976.
- McManus, Edgar J. *A History of Negro Slavery in New York*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966.
- Morganstein, Martin, and Joan H. Cregg. *Erie Canal: Images of America*. Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Press, 2001.
- Nell, William C. *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution*. Boston: Robert F. Wallcut, 1855.

Bibliography

- Otterness, Philip. *Becoming German: The 1709 Palatine Migration to New York*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Palmer, Richard. "The Cherry Valley Turnpike," *The Crooked Lake Review* (Spring 2005).
- Peck, George. *Early Methodism Within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference*. New York, 1860.
- Quarles, Benjamin. *The Negro in the American Revolution*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961.
- Rees, John U. "They Were Good Soldiers," *African-Americans Serving in the Continental Army, 1775-1783*. Warwick: Helian and Co., 2019.
- Rogers, Henry C. *History of the Town of Paris and the Valley of the Sauquoit*. Utica: White and Floyd, 1881.
- Ryan, Mary P. *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, N.Y., 1790-1865*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- . "The Power of Women's Networks: A Case Study of Female More Reform in Antebellum," *Feminist Studies* 5:1 (Spring 1979), 66-85.
- Selig, Robert A. "The Revolution's Black Soldiers," <https://www.americanrevolution.org/blk.php>.
- Shaw, Ronald. *Erie Water West: A History of the Erie Canal, 1792-1854*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990.
- Sheriff, Carol. *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress, 1817-1862*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1997.
- Silverman, David J. *Red Brethren: The Brothertown and Stockbridge Indians and the Problem of Race in Early America*, reprint. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015.
- Singer, Alan J. *New York and Slavery: Time to Teach the Truth*. Albany: State University of New York, Excelsior, 2008.
- Snow, Dean, Charles T. Gehring, and William A. Starna. *In Mohawk Country: Early Narratives of a Native People*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996.
- Thomas, Howard. *Marinus Willett, Soldier-Patriot, 1740-1830*. New York: Prospect Books, 1954.
- . "The Welsh Came to Remsen," *New York History*. 30:1 (January 1949), 33-42.
- Thompson, John. *Geography of New York State*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966.
- Tiro, Karim M. *The People of the Standing Stone: The Oneida Nation from the Revolution through the Era of Removal*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011.

Bibliography

- Van Buskirk, Judith. *Standing in Their Own Light: African American Patriots in the American Revolution*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018.
- Vescio, Portia. *Rome*. Rome, NY, Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2004.
- Wager, Daniel E. *Col. Marinus Willett: The Hero of the Mohawk Valley*. Utica, NY: Oneida Historical Society, 1891.
- . *Our City and Its People: A Descriptive Work on the City of Rome*. n.p., 1896.
- . *Our County and Its People: A Descriptive Work on Oneida County*. Boston, 1896.
- Wallace, Anthony F. C. *Tuscarora: A History*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013.
- Watt, Gavin K. *Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley: The St. Leger Expedition of 1777*. Toronto: Dundrun, 2002.
- Weidsensaul, Scott. *The First Frontier: The Forgotten History of Struggle, Savagery, and Endurance in Early America*. New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Harcourt, 2012.
- Wilson, Joseph Thomas. *The Black Phalanx: A History of the Negro Soldiers of the United States in the War of 1775–1812, 1861–’65*. Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1888.
- Wisnowski, Don. *The Opportunity Is at Hand: Oneida County, New York, Colored Soldiers in the Civil War* (Lynchburg, VA: Schroeder, 2003).
- Zenzen, Joan. *Reconstructing the Past, Partnering for the Future: An Administrative History of Fort Stanwix National Monument* (2009), <http://npshistory.com/publications/fost/adhi.pdf>.

II. Primary Sources

A. General Printed Material

- Census of the State of New-York for 1855*. Albany: Charles Van Benthuyzen, 1857.
- Circular of the Executive Committee of the Whitestown and Oneida Institute Anti-Slavery Societies*. Utica: William Williams, n.d.
- Erie & Junction Canal Directory: Containing a List of the Principal Places on Said Canals*. Little Falls: Griffing's Press, 1828.
- Garrison, William Lloyd. *Thoughts on African Colonization: or An Impartial Exhibition of the Doctrines, Principles and Purposes of the American Colonization Society, Together with the Resolutions, Addresses and Remonstrances of the Free People of Color*. Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832.

Bibliography

- Green, Beriah. *The Chattel Principle the Abhorrence of Jesus Christ and the Apostles, Or, No Refuge for American Slavery in the New Testament*. 1839. Boston: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839.
- . *Four Sermons Preached in the Chapel of the Western Reserve College: On Lord's Days, November 18th and 25th, and December 2nd and 9th, 1832*. Cleveland: Office of the Herald, 1833.
- . *The Martyr: A Discourse, in Commemoration of the Martyrdom of the Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy: Delivered in Broadway Tabernacle, New York, and in the Bleecker Street Church, Utica, 1838*. New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1838.
- . *Sermons and Other Discourses, with Brief Biographical Hints*. New York: S. W. Green, 1860.
- . *Things for Northern Men to Do: A Discourse Delivered Lord's Day Evening, July 17, 1836, in the Presbyterian Church, Whitesboro, N.Y.* 1836. Reprint 2019.
- The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610–1791*. Cleveland: Burrows, 1899.
- Johnson, Alexander B. "Autobiography of Alexander B. Johnson," 1867, unpublished typescript. Johnson family papers, 1776–1937. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
- Kent, James, and William Lacy. *Commentaries on American Law 2*. Blackstone Publishing Company, 1889.
- Marsh, Luther R. *Writings and Speeches of Alvan Stewart on Slavery*. New York: A. B. Burdick, 1860.
- New York State Anti-Slavery Society. *Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, Convened at Utica, October 19, 1836*. Utica, 1836.
- . *Proceedings of the New York Anti-Slavery Convention Held at Utica, October 21, and New York Anti-Slavery State Society Held at Peterboro, October 22, 1835*. Utica, 1835.
- O'Callahan, E. B., and Berthold Fernow, eds. *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*. 15 vols. 1856–87. <http://slavenorth.com/newyork.htm>.
- Oneida Baptist Association. *Minutes, 1821–44*.
- Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention, assembled at Philadelphia, December 4, 5, and 6, 1833*. New York: Dorr & Butterfield, 1833.
- Proceedings of the National Liberty Convention, held at Buffalo, N.Y., June 14th and 15th, 1848*. Utica: S. W. Green, 1848.

Bibliography

Proceedings of the National Liberty Convention, Held at Buffalo, N.Y., June 14th & 15th, 1848; Including the Resolutions and Addresses Adopted by that Body, and Speeches of Beriah Green and Gerrit Smith on that Occasion. Utica: S. W. Green, 1848.

Proceedings of the New York Anti-Slavery Convention, Held at Utica, October 21, and the New York Anti-Slavery Society, Held at Peterboro, October 22, 1835. Utica: Standard and Democrat, 1835.

Smith, William R. *The Case of William L. Chaplin: Being an Appeal to All Respecters of Law and Justice, against the Cruel and Oppressive Treatment to Which, under Color . . . of Columbia and the State of Maryland* (1851), reprint. Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2008.

Still, William. *The Underground Railroad.* Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1872.

Tracy, Charles. *Historical Discourse, Delivered at the Whitestown Centennial Celebration.* Utica, 1885.

Watson, William C. *Men and times of the Revolution; Or, Memoirs of Elkanah Watson, Including Journals of Travels in Europe and America, from 1777 to 1842.* New York: Dana and Company, 1856.

Western Female Missionary Society. *Annual Reports of the Trustees of the Female Missionary Society of the Western District.* Nos I–XV. Utica, 1818–32.

Willett, William M. *A Narrative of the Military Actions of Colonel Marinus Willett, Taken Chiefly from His Own Manuscript.* New York: G. & C. & H. Carville, 1831.

Wilson, Hiram. *History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America*, Vol. I. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1872.

B. Gazetteers

Barber, John W., and Henry Howe. *Historical Collections of the State of New York.* New York, 1842 and 1846.

Disturnell, John. *A Gazetteer of the State of New York.* Albany, 1842.

French, John Homer. *Historical and Statistical Gazetteer of New York State.* Syracuse: R. Pearsall Smith, 1860.

Gordon, Thomas. *Gazetteer of the State of New York.* Philadelphia: T. K. and P. G. Collins, 1836.

Spafford, J. H. *Gazetteer of the State of New York.* n.p., 1813 and 1821.

C. Memoirs

- American Slave Narratives: Alphabetical Bibliography*, edited by William L. Andrews, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bibliography.html>.
- Bradford, Sarah. *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (Auburn: W. J. Moses, 1869).
- Chambers, A. B., ed. *Trials and Confessions of Madison Henderson, Alias Blanchard, Alfred Amos Warrick, James W. Seward, and Charles Brown, Murderers of Jesse Baker and Jacob Weaver, as Given by Themselves; and a Likeness of Each, Taken in Jail Shortly after Their Arrest*. Saint Louis: Chambers & Knapp, 1841.
- Documenting the American South*. <https://docsouth.unc.edu>.
- Douglass, Frederick. *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Boston: DeWolfe and Fiske, 1892.
- Drew, Benjamin. *Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*. Boston: Jewett, 1856.
- Edwards, S. J. Celestine. *From Slavery to a Bishopric, Or, The Life of Bishop Walter Hawkins of the British Methodist Episcopal Church Canada*. London: Kensit, 1891.
- Everett, Mary. "An Historical Sketch of the First Welsh Congregational Church of Remsen, N.Y.,/ 1914."
- Finney, Charles Grandison. *Memoirs of Charles Grandison Finney*, ed. Garth M. Rosell and Richard A. G. Dupuis. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989.
- Goodell, William. *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A History of the Great Struggle in Both Hemispheres*. New York: William Harnad, 1852.
- Green, J. D., *Narrative of the Life of J. D. Green, a Runaway Slave, from Kentucky, Containing an Account of His Three Escapes, in 1839, 1846, and 1848* (Huddersfield: Henry Fielding, 1864).
- Green, J. D., Walter Hawkins, Daniel H. Peterson. *The Looking-Glass: Being a True Report and Narrative of the Life, Travels, and Labors of the Rev. Daniel H. Peterson, a Colored Clergyman*. New York: Wright, 1854.
- Henson, Josiah. *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life. An Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson, from 1789 to 1876*, ed. John Lobb. London: Christian Age: 1876.
- James, Thomas. *Life of Rev. Thomas James, by Himself*. Rochester, 1886.
- Lee, Luther. *Five Sermons*, ed. Donald W. Dayton. Chicago: Holrad House, 1975.
- Loguen, Jermain W. *The Rev. J. W. Loguen, as a Slave and as a Free Man: A Narrative of Real Life*. Syracuse: J. G. K. Truair, 1859.
- Matlock, Lucius C., comp. *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott: Compiled from His Personal Narrative*. New York: C. Prindle and L. C. Matlock, 1847.

Bibliography

- Peterson, Daniel H. *The Looking-Glass: Being a True Report and Narrative of the Life, Travels, and Labors of the Rev. Daniel H. Peterson, a Colored Clergyman*. New York: Wright, 1854.
- Pettit, Eber. *Sketches in the History of the Underground Railroad*. Fredonia, NY: Willard McKinstry, 1879.
- Ray, Florence T., and H. Cordelia Ray. *Sketch of the Life of Rev. Charles B. Ray*. New York: J. J. Little, 1887. Wibur Siebert Collection.
- Roper, Moses. *Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper, from American Slavery*. Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, Printers, 1838.
- Smallwood, Thomas. *A Narrative of Thomas Smallwood (Coloured Man)*. Toronto: James Stephens, 1851.
- Smith, Gerrit. *Letters of Gerrit Smith*. Albany: S. W. Green, 1847.
- Stewart, Alvan. *Writing and Speeches of Alvan Stewart, on Slavery*. 3 vols. 1860. Reprint, 2013.
- Tilmon, Levin. *A Brief Miscellaneous Narrative of the More Early Part of the Life of L. Tilmon: Pastor of a Colored Methodist Congregational Church in the City of New York*. Jersey City: W. W. & L. A. Pratt, 1853.
- Tubman, Harriet. *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*, ed. Sarah Bradley. Auburn: W. J. Moses, 1869. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bradford>.
- Ward, Samuel. *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro*. London: Snow, 1855.
- Wilkerson, Major James. *Wilkerson's History of His Travels and Labors*. Columbus, 1861. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/wilkerson/wilkerson.html>.
- Willett, William M. *A Narrative of the Military Actions of Colonel Marinus Willett, Taken Chiefly from His Own Manuscript*. New York: G. & C. & H. Carvill, 1831.

D. Manuscripts

- Anti-slavery petitions sent from Oneida County. National Archives. Collected by Jan DeAmicis and Judith Wellman.
- Bakeman, Henry. Revolutionary War Pension, National Archives and Records Administration.
- Census records. Federal census, 1850, 1860, 1870. New York State census, 1855, 1865. Canadian census, 1851, 1861, 1871. Ancestry.com.
- Congregational Church, Bridgewater, "An Inventory of Its Records, 1798–1940," Special Collections, Syracuse University.

Bibliography

Deeds. Oneida County Clerk's Office and Oswego County Clerk's Office.

Find-a-Grave Indexes. www.find-a-grave.com.

Fold3: Military Records. https://www.fold3.com/?xid=2044&slid=&pgrid=5617006621&ptaid=aud-63817767061:kwd-831163203&s_kwid=fold%203&gclid=CjwKCAiAqqTuBRBAEiwA7B66hVhGtDAFy3ipgKNVYa8G-Iq4QcUexrLFIFHfv600zUM9Z4qHn5dWuhoCivwQAvD_BwE&pcrid=160191094261&pkw=fold+3&mkwid=s_dc&pmt=e.

Freeman, Mary. *Slavery and Emancipation in New York*. Columbia University, History in Action. <http://historyinaction.columbia.edu/field-notes/slavery-and-emancipation-new-york>.

Gay, Sydney Howard. "Record of Fugitives," Columbia University. <https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/fugitives>.

Gerrit Smith Papers, Syracuse University.

May, Samuel J. *Some Recollections of the Anti-Slavery Conflict*. Boston, 1869.

New York Slavery Records Index: Records of Enslaved Persons and Slave Holders in New York from 1525 through the Civil War. <https://nyslavery.commons.gc.cuny.edu>.

Samuel J. May Collection, Cornell University.

Siebert, Wilbur. "Wilbur H. Siebert Underground Railroad Collection," Ohio Historical Society.

Still, William. Journal C of Station No. 2, 1852–57. William Still Papers. Historical Society of Pennsylvania. <https://hsp.org/history-online/digital-history-projects/pennsylvania-abolition-society-papers/journal-c-of-station-no-2-william-still-1852-1857-0>.

Town of Granby. "Assessment Roll, 1822, 1823, 1824," Granby Town Supervisor's Office.

———. "Minutes," Board of Supervisors, June 1820. Found by John Snow, Granby Town Supervisor.

Vosburgh, Royden Woodward, ed. "Records of the Paris Religious Society (a Congregational Church) in the Town of Paris, Oneida County." Transcribed by the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 1921. Typescript. Paris Congregational Church.

Wright, Elizur. "Auxiliaries to the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1836," Wright Papers, Library of Congress.

E. Newspapers

Colored American. Accessible Archives.

Evangelist.

Freedom's Journal. Accessible Archives.

Friend of Man, 1836–42. Cornell University, <http://newspapers.library.cornell.edu/FOM>;
<http://newspapers.library.cornell.edu/collect/FOM/index.php>.

Liberator. Accessible Archives.

National Anti-Slavery Standard. Accessible Archives.

National Era. Accessible Archives.

North Star and Frederick Douglass' Paper. Accessible Archives.

True Wesleyan.

F. Oneida County Maps

1758. *Map of the Frontiers of the Northern Colonies: With the Boundary Lines Established between Them and the Indians at the Treaty Held by S. Will Johnson at Ft. Stanwix in Novr. 1768*. Albany: John Gavit, [1850].

1758. *Topographical Map of the Country between the Mohawk River and Wood Creek, from an Actual Survey Taken in November 1758*. Albany: R. H. Pease, [1859].
<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/19b8b130-bd61-0133-11b5--0505686d14e>.

1825. "Map and Profile of the Erie Canal," Originally published in *Laws of the State of New York in Relation to the Erie and Champlain Canals*. Albany: Secretary of State; E. and E. Hosford, 1825. <http://www.eriecanal.org/maps.html>.

1829. David Burr. *Map of the County of Niagara*. New York: D. H. Burr, 1829.

1838. David Burr. Gordon, *Gazetteer*. 1838.
<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47db-13f4-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

1839. L. W. Devereux. *History Map of Utica in 1839* (Utica: Bank of Utica, 1939). Published to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Savings Bank of Utica, 1939. Oneida County Historical Society.

1841. David Burr. *Map of the County of Oneida*. Republished by Stone and Stewart. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-f284-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

1851. *Erie Canal Enlargement, Middle Division, Extending from Oneida-Lake Canal to East Boundary of Wayne County*. Albany, 1851. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/5ebbc1c0-d336-0133-7134-00505686a51c>.

Bibliography

1852. Jacob Abbott. "Map of the Canal, and Profile of the Canal." *Marco Paul's Voyages & Travels, Erie Canal*. New York: Harper & Brothers, c. 1852. <http://www.eriecanal.org/maps.html>.
1852. Robert Pearsall Smith. *Map of Oneida County, New York, from Actual Surveys*. Philadelphia: Newell S. Brown, 1852.
1858. French, John Homer. *Gillette's Map of Oneida County, New York*. Philadelphia: John E. Gillette, 1858.
1874. *Atlas of Oneida County*. New York: D. G. Beers, 1874.
1875. *Map of the Reservoirs, Feeders and Sources of Water Supply for the Middle Division of the Erie Canal*. Albany, 1875.
<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/60372db0-e86f-0133-da24-00505686a51c>
- Maps of the Erie Canal*. <http://www.eriecanal.org/maps.html>.

Appendix A

List of Historic Sites Related to the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life Outside Oneida County

This list includes historic sites in upstate New York and Ontario, Canada, that help tell the story of those who came to and through Oneida County.

1. Canada, Ontario—St. Catharine’s, Salem Chapel, BME Church associated with Harriet Tubman and other freedom seekers.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Methodist_Episcopal_Church,_Salem_Chapel
2. Albany County—Albany Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence.
<https://undergroundrailroadhistory.org/residence>.
3. Cayuga County—Auburn, Harriet Tubman Home.
<http://www.harriet-tubman.org/house>.
4. Fulton County—Johnson Hall, Johnstown—Sir William Johnson, Molly Brant, John Johnson’s home. <https://parks.ny.gov/historic-sites/johnsonhall/details.aspx>.
5. Madison County—Cazenovia, Site of Cazenovia Convention.
<https://freethought-trail.org/trail-map/location:fugitive-slave-law-convention-of-1850>.
6. Madison County—Peterboro, Gerrit Smith Estate.
<https://www.gerritsmith.org>. National Historic Landmark.
7. Monroe County—Rochester, Kelsey’s Landing.
<https://lowerfallsfdn.org/frederick-douglass-kelseys-landing>. Network to Freedom.
8. Monroe County, Rochester—4 Alexander Street. Site of Douglass Family Home, 1848–51, <https://www.wgpfoundation.org/historic-markers/douglass-home>.
9. Monroe County, Rochester—99 South Street, Site of Douglass Family Home, 1852–72.
<https://freethought-trail.org/trail-map/location:frederick-douglass-surviving-urban-homesite>.
10. Monroe County, Rochester—Hamilton and Bond Street, Douglass-owned home, 1855 ff. <https://rochistory.wordpress.com/2020/02/13/still-standing-honoring-a-lesser-known-historic-site>.
11. Montgomery County—Ft. Johnson—Sir William Johnson, Molly Brant, John Johnson’s home. <https://www.oldfortjohnson.org>.
12. Montgomery County—Indian Castle Church—New York State Route 5S, near Danube/Canajoharie. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Castle_Church.
13. Montgomery County—Herkimer House—General Nicholas Herkimer owned people in slavery. <https://parks.ny.gov/historic-sites/herkimerhome/details.aspx>.

14. Niagara County—Niagara Falls, Suspension Bridge.
<https://www.niagarafallsundergroundrailroad.org>.
15. Onondaga County—Syracuse—Site of Loguen house, Genesee and Pine.
<https://mycentralnewyork.blogspot.com/2012/02/syracuse-freedom-trail.html>;
https://pacny.net/freedom_trail/Loguen.htm.
16. Oswego County, Mexico—Starr Clark Tinshop.
https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/starr_clark_tinshop.html.
17. Oswego County, Oswego—Tudor E. Grant’s barbershop, corner West First and Bridge.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckhout%E2%80%93Jones_Building;
<https://www.rbhousemuseum.org/education/tudor-grant>.
18. Oswego County, Oswego—Bristol Hill Congregational Church.
https://www.syracuse.com/news/2005/02/church_beckoned_to_both_blacks.html.

Museums with Exhibits on the Underground Railroad

1. Chautauqua County—Fenton History Center. <https://fentonhistorycenter.org>.
2. Monroe County—Rochester Museum and Science Center. <https://rmsc.org>.
3. Niagara County—Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center.
<https://www.niagarafallsundergroundrailroad.org>.
4. Onondaga County, Syracuse—Onondaga Historical Association.
<https://www.cnyhistory.org>.

Appendix B

List of Known African Americans in Slavery and Freedom in Oneida County before 1820

Adapted from Jan DeAmicis, "Slavery in Oneida County, New York," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 27:2 (July 2003).

1. Ann: Daughter of Betty, Cuff's wife, sister of Jean; enslaved by Alexander Coventry.
2. Bateman, Peter: Husband of fugitive Susan Bateman; owner unknown.
3. Bateman, Susan: Wife of Peter Bateman, fugitive enslaved by Jonathan Hedges, Utica.
4. Betty: Wife of Cuff, mother of Ann and Jean; purchased by Alexander Coventry with her two children Ann and Jean, for 52 pounds.
5. Bill: enslaved by William Floyd, Western.
6. Bush, Peter: Emancipated by Nathaniel Griffin
7. Cook, Dinah: Ran away from slavery from C. W. Heist, Utica.
8. Cuff: Husband of Betty and her two children Ann and Jean, purchased by Alexander Coventry from Van Curen in 1789 for 77 pounds.
9. Diana: Died 1817, no relatives or owner identified.
10. Dina: Enslaved by Peter P. Van Slyck, Vernon.
11. Dublin, Morris: Ran away from enslavement by Roger Maddock of Whitestown. 1 year later Maddock advertised for Morris, a 19 year old fugitive, probably the same person.
12. Flora: Mother of Harry and George, wife of Mike, enslaved Calvin Young, Vernon.
13. Frank: Husband of Till, father of Margere, enslaved by Abram Van Eps, Merchant, Vernon.
14. Frank: Enslaved by Alexander Bryan Johnson, Utica
15. Frank: Ran away from slavery of David Hasbrouck and/or Amos G. Hull, Utica.
16. Frank, Lansom: Enslaved by William Floyd, Western. He appears as Alanson Frank, farmer, in Lee in 1840 and is related to the Oneida County Frank family today.
17. George: Son of Mike and Flora, enslaved by Calvin Young, Vernon.
18. Hester: Mother of Jude, enslaved by Bryan Johnson, Oneida County.
19. Harry: Son of Mike and Flora, enslaved by Calvin Young, Vernon.
20. Howard, Harry: Fugitive enslaved by William Floyd, Western.
21. Howe, Joshua: Enslaved by one of three men: Benjamin Walker, Norton of New Hartford, and a Revolutionary War officer named Howe.
22. Jake: Fugitive enslaved by Oliver Sandford, Whitestown.

Appendix B

23. James, aka Jacobus or Cobus: Enslaved by Jacob Nellis, Palatine; later enslaved by Alexander Coventry, Whitestown.
24. Jamima: Enslaved by William Floyd, Western, bequeathed to his wife in his will.
25. Jean: Daughter of Betty and Cuff, sister of Ann, enslaved by Alexander Coventry, Whitestown.
26. Jinny: "Colored slave servant" buried in Graham Cemetery, Deerfield.
27. Jude: Daughter of Hester, enslaved by William Bryan Johnson, Utica.
28. Kate, aka Old Kate: Emancipated from slavery by Nathaniel Griffin, Whitestown.
29. Lid: Escaped from slavery of Ava Woodruff, Clinton.
30. Margere: Daughter of Till and Frank, enslaved by merchant Abram Van Eps, Vernon.
31. Mike: Son of Mike and Flora, enslaved by merchant Calvin Young, Vernon.
32. Nicholson, Catherine: Mother of John Nicholson, enslaved by Samuel Gay, Vernon.
33. Nicholson, John: Son of Catherine Nicholson, enslaved by Samuel Gay, Vernon.
34. Phyllis: Enslaved by William Floyd, Western, bequeathed to his wife in his will.
35. Pomp: Enslaved by William Floyd, Western.
36. Post, James: Emancipated from slavery by Adrian Vanderkemp, Barneveld.
37. Sharp, Jack: Escaped from slavery of David Hasbrouck and/or Amos G. Hull, Utica.
38. Till: Wife of Frank, mother of Margere, enslaved by merchant Abram Van Eps, Vernon.
39. Tom: enslaved by William Floyd, Western.
40. Tompkins, Nan: Mother of Robert Tompkins, enslaved by Thomas Williams, Vernon.
41. Tompkins, Robert: Son of Nan Tompkins, enslaved by Thomas Williams, Vernon. Formerly enslaved by Peter Van Slyke.

Appendix C

Brief Biographies of Select People Who Attended the Organizational Meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, October 21–22, 1835

DEIRDRE SINNOTT

.....

A. African American Organizers

B. European American Organizers

C. Members of the Committee of Twenty-Five

.....

A. African Americans Who Attended the October 21–22, 1835, Meeting of New York State Anti-Slavery Society.

1. Students at Gerrit Smith’s Manual Labor School.

Gerrit Smith opened a manual labor school for African American young men on May 1, 1834. Smith hoped that the students there would go on to educate other African Americans in both the United States and Africa. It could be that the students only attended the second day of the disrupted Anti-Slavery Society meeting which occurred in Peterboro after Smith’s invitation. The school closed in 1836.¹

a. **H. Berrien (African American).**

b. **James Gloucester (African American).** Gloucester was a student at Gerrit Smith’s Peterboro Manual Labor School. I believe he could be the James Newton Gloucester who founded Brooklyn’s Siloam Presbyterian Church in 1849. In 1848 or 1849, Frederick Douglass spoke at his church. No fee was charged for doing so.² Rev. Amos Noe Freeman served at that church for decades. Referred to as Dr. J. N. Gloucester, he is described by Dr. Norm Dann in his book, *Practical Dreamer: Gerrit Smith and the Crusade for Social Reform*, as

¹ Milton C. Sernett, *Come to Peterboro! Commemorating the 175th Anniversary of the Founding of the New York Anti-Slavery Society*, October 21–22, 1835 (Cazenovia, NY: July 2010); Norman K. Dann, *Practical Dreamer: Gerrit Smith and the Crusade for Social Reform* (Hamilton, NY: Log Cabin Books, 2009).

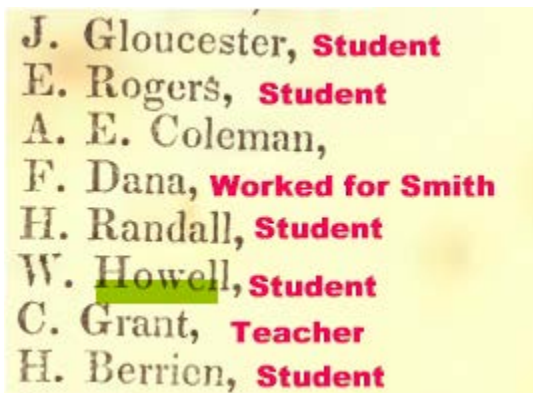
² Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969; Da Capo, 1991).

a living in New York City and supporting John Brown along with Jermain Loguen of Syracuse when Frederick Douglass would not. This gave Brown some of the Black support he needed to raise funds for his plan to attack Harper's Ferry and raise an insurrection of enslaved people. When services were held at the Siloam church for Brown, Gloucester defended the use of arms.

c. **W. Howell** (African American).

d. **H. Randall** (African American).

e. **Elymas P. Rogers** (February 10, 1815–January 20, 1861) (African American). He was a student at Gerrit Smith's Peterboro Manual Labor School before moving to the Oneida Institute. In a reference from Thomas H. Gallaudet, Rogers was described as "a pious & unceasingly well-behaved young man,' of about 20 years of age who had 'a good mind and [was] very anxious to improve.'"³ In 1848 or 1849, Rogers also allowed Frederick Douglass to speak his church for no fee. He got involved with the African Civilization Society, which was founded in 1858 and led by Henry Highland Garnet (1815–82). "Rogers led an AfCS-sponsored expedition to West Africa to survey possible locations for the Yoruban settlement. The mission was cut short by Rogers' death from malaria shortly after his arrival in Liberia."⁴ Garnet, a fellow student at Oneida Institute, delivered his eulogy.



This is a clip of part of the list of people who were either at Utica on the first day of the founding meeting on October 21 or attending the second day on October 22 in Peterboro, or possibly both.

Because of the proximity of this group of five students, one teacher, and Federal Dana, a long-time worker for Gerrit Smith, it would seem that the list was printed in the order in which people entered the building, or it was taken when they were seated by passing it down the row for each to sign his own name.

2. Other African American Participants of the October 21–22, 1835, Meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society.

a. **Rev. Amos Gerry Beman** (1812–74) (African American). Beman is one of the African American students from Oneida Institute, arriving in 1835 and leaving in 1837.⁵ Previous to his welcome there, he attempted to attend Wesleyan University in Connecticut, but was driven away by threats of

³ Milton C. Sernett, *Abolition's Axe: Beriah Green, Oneida Institute, and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986).

⁴ Encyclopedia of African American Culture and History, <https://epdf.pub/encyclopedia-of-african-american-culture-and-history-the-black-experience-in-the899bc0e34803615158e5ce54c81c3a2599323.html>.

⁵ Milton C. Sernett, *Abolition's Axe: Beriah Green, Oneida Institute, and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986).

violence.⁶ He was the son of abolitionist Rev. Jehiel C. Beman and Fanney Condol Beman. In May 1841, he and his father were two of the founders of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. He was the assistant secretary at the convention. Became the pastor at the New Haven Temple Street Church. One of the founders of the Union Missionary Society came together as one of the organizations to offer continued support the captives of the slave ship *The Amistad* after they won their freedom.⁷ That organization was absorbed into the American Missionary Association and Beman was one of the “home missionaries” expected to raise support in the United States. He also was a Temperance man and served as secretary of the Home Temperance Society, which had been organized by his father in Middletown, Connecticut, in 1833. His scrapbooks are at Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale College. He would have been twenty-three years old at the time of the Utica Anti-Abolition Riot. http://research.udmercy.edu/find/special_collections/digital/baa/index.php?collectionCode=baa&field=DC_creator&term=“Beman%2C+Amos+Gerry%2C+1812-1874.” Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amos_Beman.

b. Rev. Amos Noe Freeman (1809–93) (African American). Student at the Oneida Institute. He came from New Jersey by way of New York City. Though he was orphaned he came to be mentored by the African American abolitionist Theodore Sedgewick Wright. He arrived in Oneida County in the early 1830s and spent three years as a student in Whitesboro.⁸ After graduating from the Oneida Institute, he began teaching in the African American public schools of New Brunswick and Newark, New Jersey. He was active in the State Convention of Abolitionists in New Jersey and attended their 1839 initial meeting. In the 1840s, he was the minister of the Abyssinian Congregation Church in Portland, Maine, having been recommended by Rev. Beman. Freeman and his wife, Christiana Taylor Williams (1812–1903), ran a safe house in Portland for freedom seekers.⁹

In 1852, Rev. Freeman became the pastor of Siloam Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, New York, founded in 1849. He served there from 1852 to 1860. . . . While Rev. Freeman lived in Brooklyn in the mid-1850s, he secretly sheltered and aided Anna Maria Weems, a young fugitive slave, on her journey to freedom in Canada. Jacob Bigelow, a Washington, DC lawyer, disguised her as a boy. They met Dr. Ellwood Harvey of Philadelphia in front of the White House in November 1855, and Weems pretended to be a male buggy driver. She drove

⁶ Robert A. Warner, “Amos Gerry Beman: 1812–1874, a Memoir on a Forgotten Leader,” *Journal of Negro History*, 22:2 (April, 1937), 200–221.

⁷ Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969; Da Capo, 1991).

⁸ Milton C. Sernett, *Abolition's Axe: Beriah Green, Oneida Institute, and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 53–54.

⁹ William Fischer Jr., “Home of Amos Noë and Christiana Williams Freeman Marker.” The Historical Market Database. December 12, 2011. (Found on the <http://www.coloredconventions.org> website in a bio written by Victoria Walker.)

Harvey from Washington to Philadelphia, where Harvey took her to the house of another abolitionist, William Still, for Thanksgiving. The next day Dr. Harvey took Weems across the river to Camden, New Jersey and on to New York City. In Brooklyn he took her to Rev. Charles Ray's house. Ray took her to the home of Lewis Tappan, where the only photo of Weems was taken in her "boy disguise." Rev. Freeman accompanied Weems from there by train to Canada, where she reached safety at her uncle and aunt's house in Ontario.¹⁰

c. James W. Higgins (African American). New York City, New York County, NY. A grocer from New York City who accompanied David Ruggles to the convention. He went on to help Ruggles organize the New York Committee of Vigilance. He was one of the executive committee members. The Committee was deeply involved with aiding freedom seekers in New York City. Higgins was listed as a member of the New-York Anti-Slavery Society in the 1836 report. At that meeting he donated \$100.¹¹ He organized many donations to the American Anti-Slavery Society. He was recorded as pledging on "behalf of the colored people of Dey Street Church"—which was a presbyterian church whose pastor was Rev. Joel Parker. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joel_Parker_\(clergyman\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joel_Parker_(clergyman)).

d. Richard Jackson (?-June, 1849) (African American). Utica, Oneida County, NY. Jackson seems to have arrived in Utica around 1831 or 1832. He was a young man, perhaps only in his teens at the time. According to the 1840 Census, he was the head of a household with six other people living on Post Street. When he first arrived he boarded at Jesse Jackson's house at 22 Post Street. He was a musician who occasionally made money as a barber. He was close enough to William Jackson, either by blood or friendship, to direct potential dancing students to inquire about his services at William's place of business in the Exchange Building. He organized a Cotillion band that could "Furnish any number of players from private or public parties." They played the latest dances like the "Gallopades, Polkas and Waltzes."¹²

In 1834, seven years after the official New York State emancipation of the enslaved people, he helped organize a celebration. It was described as such:

The assembled at the Inn of Mr. C. Chatfield, in this city, and started at from there in nine carriages for a ride to Oriskany, where they stopped at the house kept by Mr. H. Chatfield.—Tea being called for, and furnished them in a very short time, they sat down and participated in the pleasure of a social 'Tea party.' Their behavior was so respectable, that the citizens of Oriskany saluted them with ten rounds from a small cannon which they procured in that place. These Gentlemen of color feel solicitous to publish their sincere thanks to Mr. and Mrs. H

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amos_No%C3%AB_Freeman.

¹¹ *The Quarterly Anti-Slavery Magazine*, United States American Anti-Slavery Society, 1836, 22.

¹² Cotillion Band, *Oneida Morning Herald*, December 27, 1848.

Chatfield, of Oriskany, and Mr. and Mrs. H. Chatfield of the city of Utica, for their attention to them on their riding excursion. Managers Jasper Jackson, John Peterson, Richard Jackson, Thomas Jackson.¹³

Richard Jackson died of a “fit” in a stable on Post Street an area he had lived in for many years. He was buried at Potter’s Cemetery.¹⁴

e. Thomas James (Black) Utica, Oneida County, NY. Listed in *Gentlemen of Property & Standing*.¹⁵ Named in the original announcement.¹⁶

f. David Ruggles (March 15, 1810–December 16, 1849) (African American). New York City, New York County, NY. Ruggles was twenty-five years old in 1835, but he was already an organizer and understood the dangers of speaking out against slavery. His store had been attacked during the 1834 anti-abolition riots in New York City. One month after the disruption at the New York State Anti-Slavery Society’s meeting, he founded the New York Committee of Vigilance, which over its first four months was said to have helped more than a thousand people in various states of oppression and danger from slavery (running, captured or held over nine months after being brought into the state). They also won public acceptance that people said to be slaves needed a trial by jury to determine if they were or were not—a change in practice and one that had the potential to slow kidnappings.¹⁷ He owned one of the first (if not the first) Black-owned bookstores in New York City. For a while, he was the agent for both *The Liberator* and *The Emancipator*, but in 1838 he began his own newspaper *The Mirror of Liberty*.¹⁸

He is named on New York’s 100 Most Prominent Abolitionist Leaders list.¹⁹ Ruggles was a writer and an Underground Railroad conductor before the term was invented. He found Frederick Douglas on the docks in New York City, took him in, and helped him on his way. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Ruggles.

g. Rev. William Yates (1767–1857) (African American). Troy, Rensselaer County, NY. Was formerly enslaved in the South, secretary of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society. Wrote “*Slavery and the Colored People in Delaware*.” “They are truly neither slaves nor free,” Yates argued, “being subjected to the disabilities and disadvantages of both conditions; and

¹³ African Celebration, *Utica Observer*, July 8, 1834.

¹⁴ Coroner’s Inquire, *Utica Daily Observer*, June 30, 1849.

¹⁵ Leonard L. Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press: 1970).

¹⁶ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

¹⁷ Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969; Da Capo, 1991).

¹⁸ Yale University Library Collections, *Mirror of Liberty*, <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/10267803>.

¹⁹ Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), 135–36.

enjoying few of the benefits of either.” Yates wrote a pamphlet on civil rights as well as a report on the condition of African Americans in Delaware, which he found depressing. “The Negroes there were undervalued,” he wrote, “their virtues being disregarded and the degradation magnified.” Yates also produced a survey of the “Negros on Long Island.” He also attended the fourth annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society as a delegate from Troy, New York.²⁰

B. European Americans Who Attended the October 21–22, 1835, Meeting of New York State Anti-Slavery Society.

1. Josiah M. Andrews (White). Village of Perry, of Genesee now Wyoming County, New York. He was part of a group of abolitionists who operated a route of the Underground Railroad that was noted in Wilbur H. Siebert.²¹ His name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.²² He is named on New York’s 100 Most Prominent Abolitionist Leaders list.²³

2. Rev. William Arthur (1796–1875) (White). Perry, Genesee County, NY.²⁴ Arthur was born in Dreen, Cullybackey, County Antrim, Ireland. Originally a Presbyterian, he became a Free Will Baptist²⁵ in part because of his ardent abolitionism. His son, Chester A. Arthur, became the twenty-first president of the United States in 1881. Reverend Arthur’s name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.²⁶

3. Dr. Arba Blair (July 9, 1781–June 20, 1863) (White). Rome, Oneida County, NY. He was elected to the Executive Committee of the newly formed New York State Anti-Slavery Society at their meeting on October 21 and 22 in Utica and Peterboro. After the riot, he and others were attacked as they traveled to Peterboro. His name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society. Nominated at the 1840 State

²⁰ *The Colored American* (New York), August 12, 1837; Peter T. Dalleo, *The Growth of Delaware’s Antebellum Free African American Community* (Wilmington: US Courthouse, 1997); “William Yates’s Letter of 1837: Slavery and Colored People in Delaware,” *Delaware History*, 14 (April 1971), 205–10; Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969; Da Capo, 1991).

²¹ Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Macmillan, 1898), 415.

²² *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

²³ Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), 135–36.

²⁴ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/39/chester-alan-arthur>.

²⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chester_A._Arthur.

²⁶ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

Abolition Convention as a candidate for congress for the Freeman's Party. Historian Gerald Sorin listed him as one of New York State's 100 most important abolitionist leaders.²⁷

4. Judge Henry Brewster (June 28, 1774–March 7, 1858) (White). Riga, Monroe County, NY. Brewster was one of the early residents of the Town of Riga, moving there in 1807, where he became a farmer.²⁸ He appears to have been active in LeRoy, New York, at the same time.

In August 1835, the Presbyterian Church was the site of an anti-slavery meeting [in LeRoy], but abolition was not popular with many people. At that time there were four avowed abolitionists in LeRoy: Seth Gates, Samuel Grannis, Deacon Comstock and Judge Brewster. They organized the meeting at the Presbyterian Church and advertised that an escaped slave would address the crowd. Dr. Reed, a physician from Rochester, and the Rev. A. A. Phelps of Massachusetts addressed the crowd. The room was filled to capacity. A large crowd gathered outside and began to shout obscenities. Windows were smashed and wood and stones were hurled at the speaker's platform. Judge Hascall tried to break up the crowd and was stoned for his efforts. The windows in the home of Seth Gates were smashed and his wife and children had to take refuge in an inner room.²⁹

During the founding meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, he was elected vice-president. He "sat in the chair of the convention" when the meeting was disrupted.³⁰ Listed as a Manager in the report of the fourth annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1837. Was an organizer of a Liberty Party Convention in Perry, Wyoming County, on January 9, 1844.³¹ He is listed in Siebert's book on the Underground Railroad as a conductor in Genesee County, New York.

5. Charles P. Bush (March 18, 1809–57) (White). Whitesboro, Oneida County, NY. Bush is listed as one of the Lane Seminary Rebels.³² He was among Juniors from the Oneida Institute who exhibited a variety of performances at the Presbyterian Church in the town of Whitesboro in October 1836. His talk was titled "The Political Responsibilities of Christians." He came from Rochester,

²⁷ Jan DeAmicis, "Abolitionism Has Deep Local Roots," *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, May 1, 2011; *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835; *The Campaign* (Frankfort, Kentucky: Brown & Hodges, September 3, 1840). Pg. 318 from *Niles Register*, August 15, 1840; Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), 135–36.

²⁸ <http://mcnygenealogy.com/bios/biographies015.htm>.

²⁹ *The Underground Railroad in LeRoy*, LeRoy Historical Society Pamphlet. <http://www.leroyhistoricalsociety.org/assets/the-underground-railroad--leroy,-ny.pdf>.

³⁰ William "Defensor" Thomas, *The Enemies of the Constitution Discovered: Or, An Inquiry into the Origin and Tendency of Popular Violence . . .* (Utica, NY: Leavitt & Lord & Co. and G. Tracy, 1835), 79.

³¹ Letter to Hon. Judge Foote from Judge Henry Brewster, December 21, 1844. <https://orbitist.space/ugrr/content/brewster>.

³² *A Statement of the Reasons Which Induced the Students of Lane Seminary to Dissolve Their Connection with the Institution* (Cincinnati, 1834).

New York.³³ He may have been elected to the Michigan House of Representatives in 1840. Bush is one of the signers of an 1836 antislavery petition from Whitestown, demanding slavery be abolished in Washington, DC.³⁴

6. Silas D. Childs (May 22, 1794–July 11, 1866) (White) Utica, Oneida County, NY. In 1816, Childs became the bookkeeper for Mr. Parker, who ran a transportation business. Childs worked at Parker’s with Theodore S. Faxton,³⁵ who went on to become a fundraiser for the African American congregation of Hope Chapel. In the mid-1840s, when formally enslaved Utican Samuel Dove needed advice about dealing with John Munn, his former enslaver, he sought help from both Parker and Childs. In 1837, Childs went before the Common Council seeking funds to establish a “the school for colored children . . . By Committee on Common Schools in favor of appropriating 50 dollars to aid of the school for colored children in the Fourth Ward.” George L. Brown, a Black hairdresser who ran a shaving salon and perfumery, was appropriated the money.³⁶ He and “Old Mr. Parker” advised Samuel Dove about matters pertaining to John Munn.³⁷ <https://www.dreamstime.com/utica-new-york-mar-building-silas-d-childs-memorial-chapel-erected-restored-located-inside-forest-hill-cemetery-image141729038>.

7. Dr. Welcome A. Clark (White). Whitesboro, Oneida County, NY. Clark was elected to the Executive Committee of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. His name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.³⁸ Participated in the first annual meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, held in Utica at the Bleecker Street Church, on October 19, 1836. This was the same church from which the founding meeting had been routed the year before. He was elected as part of the Executive Committee as a representative from Whitesboro.³⁹

8. A. Frissett: Most likely Amasa Cogswell Frissell (1816–94) (White). Born in Massachusetts. Listed as a Lane Seminary Rebel. “Amasa Cogswell Frissell, became a Congregational clergyman, afterward affiliating with the Presbyterian

³³ “Oneida Institute–Junior Exhibition,” *Friend of Man*, October 6, 1836.

³⁴ Collection of the National Archives.

³⁵ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

³⁶ Proceedings of the Common Council, *Oneida Whig*, March 7, 1837.

³⁷ For further details, see Deirdre Sinnott, “Samuel Dove Story.”

³⁸ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

³⁹ Annual Meeting of the State Society, *Friend of Man*, Utica, October 27, 1836.

church, and was a friend of Rev. Dr. Lyman Beecher. He was a secretary of the American Tract Society, and active in divinity school work. He married Lavina Barker, granddaughter of Captain William Barker, a soldier of the revolution.”⁴⁰

9. Rev. John Frost (1788–1842) (White). Whitesboro, Oneida County, NY.

Rev. John Frost was a Presbyterian minister, trustee of the Oneida Institute, and abolitionist agent who served at several places in Oneida County, including Whitesboro (1813–33) and Waterville, as well as in Elmira, New York (1836). Frost was also part of the faculty of Berea College. He attended the meeting at Clarke’s Temperance House on October 21 after the New York Anti-Slavery Convention was adjourned by the disruption. He was stationed at Waterville when, in 1841, it became known that James Richards, the president of the Auburn Theological Seminary, owned an elderly woman who had asked to be purchased by him. Reverend Frost went to Richards, who confirmed the relationship. This incident fell squarely into the controversy in the Presbyterian Church regarding slavery and how slave owners should be judged. Calls went out for “right-minded Christians to leave Presbyterianism’s ranks.”⁴¹

10. Rev. Elon B. Galusha (June 18, 1790–January 6, 1856) (White).

Rochester, Monroe County NY. Before his move to Rochester, Rev. Galusha was in Whitesboro and Utica as a Baptist pastor. He helped run the *Baptist Register* newspaper, printed at the *Utica Observer* from about 1824 to 1825. On May 1, 1834, he moved from the Broad Street Baptist Church of Utica to the Second Baptist Church of Rochester. After three years he resigned to become the financial officer of Brockport College. At the time of the Founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society, Reverend Galusha appears to have been pastor at the Second Baptist Church in Rochester and a member of the Monroe County Anti-Slavery Society. In an 1836 article titled “Radicalism—In Reply to the Literary and Theological Review,” Rev. Beriah Green included Rev. Galusha in a list of well-known luminaries in the abolition movement. At the Third Anniversary meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, in May 1836 in New York City, Galusha spoke saying that “slavery was in direct contradiction to the spirit of the gospel.” Slavery, he said,

Disannulled all rights and authorized one man to trample with ruthless cruelty on the most sacred and inalienable rights of another. Slavery dubbed the master both pope and king It placed upon his brow both the mitre and the crown and made him a despotic lord over all the rights civil moral and religious of his unhappy slave. The rights of personal liberty of property of conscience and of the pursuit of

⁴⁰ *A Statement of the Reasons Which Induced the Students of Lane Seminary to Dissolve Their Connection with the Institution* (Cincinnati, 1834); *Encyclopedia of Virginia*, volume 5 (August 28, 2018).

⁴¹ Milton C. Sernett, *Abolition’s Axe: Beriah Green, Oneida Institute, and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 53–54.

happiness were all inherent immutable and eternal. They were based on the nature of our being and were the rich endowments of our Creator. But Slavery declared the whole of them to be absolute nonentities.

He joined the Millerite movement and ultimately withdrew from the Baptist Church. He was by that time located in Lockport, New York, and held abolitionist meetings at his church there. Named as a Manager in the fourth annual report from the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1837. “The Baptist preacher Elon Galusha preached abolitionism throughout his travels in western New York.” Wilbur Siebert listed him as one of fifteen Underground Railroad stationmasters in Wyoming County, New York. Gerald Sorin named him as one of New York’s hundred most prominent abolitionists.⁴²

11. Rev. Beriah Green (March 27, 1795–May 4, 1874) (White). Whitesboro, Oneida County, NY. President of the Oneida institute of Science and Industry, 1833–43. The school became one of the first colleges in the nation to admit Blacks and denounce slavery and slave owners. In 1844, it became the Whitestown Seminary. He was one of the main initiators of the founding meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society and had an active role in the convention. He is the Subject of Milton Sernett’s book *Abolition’s Axe*. Like several others, he attended the meeting at Clarke’s Temperance House on the 21st after the convention was adjourned by the disruption. Was chosen as part of a committee to “determine the time and place of meeting for business.”⁴³ He was a member of the Colonization Society in 1833. He debated with Rev. J. N. Danforth, one of the main traveling agents of the American Colonization Society. The debate/meeting lasted from December 31, 1833, to January 14, 1834. His name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.⁴⁴ He is named on New York’s 100 Most Prominent Abolitionist Leaders list.⁴⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beriah_Green.

12. William R. Green (Jr.) (White). New York City, New York County, NY. Attended the New York Anti-Slavery Society, Utica and Peterboro, October 21 and 22, 1835. Green was a real estate speculator originally from Connecticut. He became an active abolitionist in New York City as early as 1833, when he helped organize the October 2, 1833, the New York City Anti-Slavery Society.

⁴² Charles M. Williams, *Historical Address of the Second Baptist Church, Rochester NY* (March 1909); *The Quarterly Anti-Slavery Magazine*, United States American Anti-Slavery Society, 1836; *The Third Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society* (New York: William Dorr, 1836); William J. Switala, *Underground Railroad in New York and New Jersey* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2006), 80; Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), 135–36.

⁴³ *Proceedings of the New York Anti-Slavery Convention, Held at Utica, October 21, and at Peterboro, October 22, 1835* (Utica: Standard & Democrat, 1835), 8–9.

⁴⁴ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

⁴⁵ Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), 135–36.

This meeting was the target of a mob organized by the American Colonization Society. Green was at the first annual meeting on the New York Anti-Slavery Society, Utica, October 19, 1836, and was also one of the leaders of the American Anti-Slavery Society. He was named in a flyer from New York City, October 2, 1833, calling:

“To all persons from the South. All persons interested in the subject of the meeting called by: J. Leavitt, W. Goodell, W. Green, J. Rankin, Lewis Tappan, At Clinton hall, this evening at 7 o’clock, are requested to attend at the same hour and place. MANY SOUTHERNERS. New York October 2nd, 1833. . . . All citizens who may feel disposed to manifest the true feeling of the State on this subject, are requested to attend.”

This led to an incident where the crowd went to Clinton Hall, found it empty, and then went onto Tammany Hall. There they held some kind of business meeting. Word came that the abolitionists were meeting at the Chatham Street Chapel. When the mob arrived, they found it empty. They grabbed an African-American man and made him the “chairman” of the assembly. Derisive laughter filled the hall and the incident ended. Gerald Sorin listed him as one of New York’s hundred most prominent abolitionists.⁴⁶

13. Joseph C. Hathaway (April 20, 1810–September 21, 1873) (White). Farmington, Ontario County, NY. Quaker whose name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.⁴⁷ Also at the convention was S. R. Hathaway, also from Farmington-Macedon and also named in the original announcement.⁴⁸

14. Rev. J. Ingersoll (July 5, 1792–May 1, 1859) (White). Town of Marshall, Oneida County. Most likely John Ingersoll was the reverend of the church of the Hanover Society in the Town of Marshall from 1831 to June 1833. He came into the county in 1831. An engaging speaker, he addressed the congregation with “such a flood of fiery eloquence, taking for his theme ‘Divine sovereignty and love,’ that the almost empty ‘anxious seat’ was crowded with repentant sinners with pale faces and tearful eyes.”⁴⁹ He was the father of Col. Robert Green Ingersoll, who served in the Civil War.⁵⁰ The Colonel was a well-known agnostic, writer, and orator⁵¹ whose middle name was given to him to honor Beriah Green.

⁴⁶ Bertram Wyatt Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War against Slavery* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1969); Annual Meeting of the State Society, *Friend of Man*, October 27, 1836; Joel Tyler Headley, *The Great Riots of New York: 1712–1873* (Cosimo Classics, August 1, 2009), 52; Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), 135–36.

⁴⁷ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

⁴⁸ http://mdhistory.net/macedon_ny/wellman/wellman_etal.pdf.

⁴⁹ Ada Marie Peck, *History of the Hanover Society* (Deansboro: Berry Hill Press, 1995), 191.

⁵⁰ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/2668/robert-green-ingersoll>.

⁵¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_G._Ingersoll.

15. James Caleb Jackson (March 28, 1811–July 11, 1895) (White). Oswego area, Oswego County, NY. He attended the founding meeting in Utica and wrote a personal account of the events. As he was making his way to Utica, he ran into Gerrit Smith on an Erie Canal Boat. Beriah Green happened to join the two and they discussed abolitionism. He went on to live in “Peterboro and become a close friend of Smith.”⁵² After the disruption, he traveled to Peterboro Wm. M Clark of Syracuse. Jackson appears in the Cazenovia Convention photo of Gerrit Smith, Frederick Douglass, Edmonson sisters, etc. He is named on New York’s 100 Most Prominent Abolitionist Leaders list.⁵³ He had been sickly and was forced to give up his work with the abolition paper the *Albany Patriot*, a paper he bought in 1844. He invented granola and became a writer of books on health. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Caleb_Jackson.

16. Judge William Jay (June 16, 1789–October 14, 1858) (White). Bedford, Westchester County, NY. Though he was unable to attend the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society, he sent a letter that was entered into the record. It stated in part: “Having no object whatever but to persuade our fellow citizens of the north and of the south, that the black man is equally with the white, entitled by his creator to be treated with justice and humanity.” Though he did not attend, he was named president.⁵⁴ Was an important figure in the issue of the constitution and slavery. Worked with the Tappans.⁵⁵ Wrote *An Inquiry into the American Colonization and American Anti-Slavery Societies*, 1835. He was named on New York’s 100 Most Prominent Abolitionist Leaders list.⁵⁶

17. Spencer Kellogg (September 10, 1786–December 31, 1871) (White). Utica, Oneida County, NY. Kellogg was deeply involved in the organization of the New York Anti-Slavery Society’s founding meeting. He was the first vice-president of the Utica Anti-Slavery Society.⁵⁷ He was one of the members of the Common Council who voted to allow the Convention to happen in the Court Room.⁵⁸ According to Alvan Stewart: “Alderman Kellogg—a man of great

⁵² Norman K. Dann, *Practical Dreamer; Gerrit Smith and the Crusade for Social Reform* (Hamilton, NY: Log Cabin Books, 2009), 416.

⁵³ Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), 135–36.

⁵⁴ *Proceedings of the New York Anti-Slavery Convention, Held at Utica, October 21, and at Peterboro, October 22, 1835* (Utica: Standard & Democrat, 1835).

⁵⁵ Bertram Wyatt Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War against Slavery* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1969).

⁵⁶ Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), 135–36.

⁵⁷ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

⁵⁸ Minutes of the Common Council, *Oneida Whig*, October 16, 1835.

personal strength—was seized, struck, and his coat torn to pieces.”⁵⁹ He became the Treasurer for the founding meeting. He attended the meeting at Clarke’s Temperance House on the 21st after the convention was adjourned by the disruption and was chosen as part of a committee to “determine the time and place of meeting for business.”⁶⁰ He was named the first vice-president of the NY Anti-Slavery Society.⁶¹ Was involved in the rescue of two people from slave catchers in Utica in 1836. Became mayor of Utica in 1841 as a Whig. Kellogg was Dean of the First Presbyterian Church that excommunicated Alexander B. Johnson. His name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society.⁶² He is named on New York’s 100 Most Prominent Abolitionist Leaders list.⁶³

18. Rev. Hiram H. Kellogg (February 1803–81) (White). Paris & Clinton, Oneida County, NY. He founded the interracial Young Ladies Domestic Seminary in Clinton NY in the late 1830s. Was active in Paris at the Hanover Society Church. See UGRR Ft. Stanwix Report on the Young Ladies Domestic Seminary.

19. Lewis Lawrence (December 21, 1806–September 8, 1886) (White). Utica, Oneida County, NY. Lawrence moved from Franklin, Delaware County, to Utica in “April, 1828, without acquaintance and with only \$3 in his pocket. He found himself in the midst of a rapidly growing community, recognized his opportunity, and seized upon it.” At the time of the Utica riot, he was a lumber dealer and a builder. Business took him into the board rooms of the railroads, and he was instrumental in their development in the region. He was a staunch abolitionist and eventually a Republican.⁶⁴ He played an important part in the Utica Rescue when he stopped to chat with Spencer Kellogg outside of Kellogg’s store on Genesee Street. The two saw two African American men being taken into Judge Chester Hayden’s office. Lawrence went to see what it was all about, and that action was the beginning of the unraveling of the slave catcher’s plan to keep the arrest of Harry Bird and George quiet.⁶⁵ In a memorial book of Lawrence’s life, his politics are described this way:

⁵⁹ *Writings and Speeches of Alvan Stewart on Slavery* (New York, Haskell House, 1970; first published 1860).

⁶⁰ *Proceedings of the New York Anti-Slavery Convention, Held at Utica, October 21, and at Peterboro, October 22, 1835* (Utica: Standard & Democrat, 1835), 8–9.

⁶¹ Oliver Wetmore Letter, *The Emancipator*, June 17, 1834.

⁶² *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

⁶³ Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), 135–36.

⁶⁴ M. M. Bagg, M.D., *Memorial History of Utica, N.Y.: From Its Settlement to the Present Time* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1892).

⁶⁵ Kidnapping in Utica, *Friend of Man*, January 6, 1837.

His first part in political life was taken on behalf of the slave. He was an Abolitionist. To right the wrong of American slavery by means of a political party was what he sought, for the casting of his first vote until that end was secured. He was in the thick of the fight, never lacked the courage of his convictions, and gave and received heavy blows. More than once he and his associates were the victims of the violence of mobs who disturbed their meetings, assaulted their persons and imperiled their lives. Yet he never became bitter or censorious.

One clear example was that of the rescue of Harry Bird and George. After their arrest, he and others, their names not yet uncovered, apparently were part of the fight to free the men from Judge Hayden's chambers. "Mr. Lewis Lawrence, one of the gentlemen charged with assisting in the rescue, was brought before Judge [James] Dean on Thursday morning last, [January 5, 1837], who, after hearing the testimony in the case, discharged the suit on the ground that there was no cause of action."⁶⁶ Judge Dean was said, in his later years, to be a free soiler and "a zealous foe of slave-hunters."⁶⁷

In a letter to the publishers of the memorial volume for Lawrence, Roscoe Conklin wrote the following:

The generation in which he thus stood was conservatively vengeful against agitation—especially against anti-slavery agitation. Policy, ease, advantage, were all on one side—the side of anger and denunciation against Abolitionists. This made no difference with the conviction or the action of Lewis Lawrence. No shadow of turning came from what men nowadays call 'pressure.' Under the strain of a hazardous business, to which he devoted hours which most men give to rest, he turned aside, never without peril, whenever a fleeing slave could be helped to Canada, or secreted from his pursuers. Well knowing the risks he ran, he faced them all with a determination which never faltered for a moment, and with a hand ever open to charity till its pulses ceased to beat."

After his wife, Ann Gertrude Skinner Lawrence, died in 1868 at the age of sixty-seven, he began extensive travel at the age of sixty-five. In late 1871 or 1872, he came to Florida. He was fascinated with the orange groves and bought eight acres on Lake Maitland and planted a grove. The following year he expanded his planting by one hundred trees of what was the then new variety of "navel" oranges. A couple of years later, he worked in earnest, doing some of the manual labor with the local men of color. He helped fund a library for the Sunday School and stacked it with books. In 1881, with the advice of J. E. Clark, an African American man employed by Capt. J. C. Eaton, Lawrence bought twenty acres from Eaton.

⁶⁶ The Riot, *Oneida Whig*, January 10, 1837.

⁶⁷ Death of Hon. John Dean, *Clinton Courier*, October 20, 1863.

He had noticed the averseness of most people, Northern as much as Southern, to allowing the colored hands to acquire land and a home in anything like the proximity of white settlements. As he expressed it, most people wanted their hands to ride up out of the earth in the morning and when their daily work was done would have them vanish like ghosts out into the thin air.” Lawrence divided the land into “small lots; built a neat church with a steeple and a bell (the first in a wide area); put up a few model but cheap cottages exposed to sold at cheap rates on long time.

Lawrence built himself a home there and lived there during the winters. The town of Eatonville, Florida, exists to this day.

20. George Lawson (1794–June 9, 1876) (White). Utica, Oneida County, NY.

“George Lawson a native of Lancashire England had settled in Utica as early as 1832 gaining his livelihood as a tanner. After remaining some years he went to Rome to live. Returning about 1853 he became superintendent of the city water works and was thus employed until a short time before his death June 8, 1876. Mr. Lawson was a man of marked mental and moral characteristics. He was eminently honest truthful and pure and always had the courage of his convictions. He was a Puritan of the strongest type an ardent lover of free institutions a stern hater of all tyranny and oppression and a strong anti-slavery man. The ruggedness which some perhaps might deem the sternness of belief never affected the true kindness of his nature and the benignity of his manners.”⁶⁸ In 1838, Lawson was hired to be one of seven new lecturing agents by the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. His territory was to be Lewis County.⁶⁹ In 1838 Lawson collected \$21.50 from the supporters of abolition on Paris Hill.⁷⁰ Lawson was deeply involved in promoting the book by William Goodell “View of American Constitutional Law” that argued there was no constitutional support of slavery. He also worked closely with William Chaplin.⁷¹ In a second letter dated November 17, 1846, to Judge Elial Todd Foote of Jamestown, New York, George Lawson signed “as the corresponding secretary of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. Lawson asked Foote to obtain a \$5 donation from each of 100 ‘friends of the slave.’”⁷² He is named on New York’s 100 Most Prominent Abolitionist Leaders list.⁷³

⁶⁸ M. M. Bagg, M.D., *Memorial History of Utica, N.Y.: From Its Settlement to the Present Time* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1892).

⁶⁹ Alice Hatcher Henderson, *The History of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society*, dissertation for the University of Michigan, 1963.

⁷⁰ Judith Wellman, *Grass Roots Reform in the Burned-Over District of Upstate New York: Religion, Abolitionism, and Democracy* (New York: Routledge: 2000).

⁷¹ George Lawson letter to Judge Elial Todd Foote, Utica, November 14, 1844.

⁷² Underground Railroad and Anti-Slavery Activists. <https://orbitist.space/ugrr/content/foote>.

⁷³ Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), 135–36.

21. Samuel Lightbody (circa 1798–July 3, 1846 [or, August 3, 1846]) (White). Utica, Oneida County, NY. Born in Great Barrington, MA. “It was announced in May 1824, that ‘A. & S. Lightbody had established a store in Utica for the sale of leather, and that one- of the parties would reside there.’ This was Samuel, who remained until his death. His store was a blue-fronted one, on the east side of Genesee, about three doors below the corner of Broad. Thence he removed to the west side of Bagg’s square, where the express office now is. Mr. Lightbody was a quiet, amiable and pious man, of refined appearance. He left a widow, one son and one daughter.”⁷⁴ Lightbody owned several pieces of property in Utica. It appears that he leased them to other businesses. He was the manager of the Utica Anti-Slavery Society.⁷⁵ Named in original announcement for the October 21, 1835, founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.⁷⁶ Attended the meeting at Clarke’s Temperance House on the 21st after the convention was adjourned by the disruption. Was chosen as part of a committee to “determine the time and place of meeting for business.”⁷⁷ In 1836, he was made a vice-president of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. On March 31, 1837, a great fire “broke out at about 2 o’clock in the second story of a frame building owned by Samuel Lightbody, on the corner of Genesee and Broad streets, occupied by W. Johnson grocer, R. Huntington, Silversmith, and C. V. Brooks, Jewelry.” The fire spread east driven by wind, consuming many wood and a few brick buildings in its path. “Everything on the east side of Genesee Street, from Broad to Main, as well as everything on the west side from T. F. Tracy’s store to Whitesborough Street, and then along Whitesborough Street to H. K Sanger’s brick dwelling, including many buildings in the interior of the block, was completely laid in ruins.” According to early reports, there were at least \$15,000 of damages to buildings and stock. A day or two after the fire, four boys were crushed under a falling brick wall. One did not survive.⁷⁸

22. Rev. Lewis H. Loss (White), from New York Mills and Whitestown, Oneida County, NY. Named on the Executive Committee of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society’s founding meeting. Also listed as Secretary in the Circular of the Executive Committee of Whitestown and Oneida Institute Anti-Slavery Societies, 1833. His name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.⁷⁹ Was at the

⁷⁴ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

⁷⁵ Oliver Wetmore Letter, *The Emancipator*, June 17, 1834.

⁷⁶ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

⁷⁷ *Proceedings of the New York Anti-Slavery Convention, Held at Utica, October 21, and at Peterboro, October 22, 1835* (Utica: Standard & Democrat, 1835), 8–9.

⁷⁸ Great Fire, *Utica Observer*, April 4, 1837.

⁷⁹ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

Madison County Anti-Slavery Society meeting.⁸⁰ Was an agent of the American Sunday School Union and hired to work in central New York, “a Presbyterian minister and a man of rare Qualities.” Loss resigned in 1833.⁸¹

23. Joseph T. Lyman (White). Utica, Oneida County, NY. Lawyer. Listed as on the Executive Committee of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society’s 1835 Report. Editor of the *Standard and Democrat* newspaper, which had been purchased by Alvan Stewart and became a quasi-abolitionist newspaper. As local historian Pomroy Jones noted in 1851, “In the fall of 1835, after changes in owners and editors, it became obnoxious for its advocacy of abolitionism, or doctrines and measures akin to it, in relation to slavery and the holding of the first anti-slavery state convention in Utica, although it still kept the names of Van Buren and Johnson at its head; and on the evening of the 21st of October, the printing office was entered by a mob and part of the type, etc., thrown into the street.” The office was at No. 6, Whitesboro Street, Utica. Very few issues survived; however, some of its content can be extracted from the various newspapers that quoted it. After the founding of the State Society, the paper was succeeded by the *Friend of Man* and edited by William Goodell of New York City.⁸²

24. General Joseph A. Northrup Jr. (October 6, 1784–July 26, 1870) (White). Lowville, Lewis County, NY. Vice-president of the October 21 and 22 founding meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. He is buried in the Lowville Cemetery and was a General in the War of 1812. He was an abolitionist and one of the “academy trustees” of the Lowville Academy in Lewis County and a Presbyterian. The academy was formed in 1808 as a private school and co-ed. It ranked third in the state for much of the nineteenth century.⁸³

25. Rev. Amos Augustus Phelps (1805–47) (White). Boston, Suffolk County, MA. Drafted resolutions expressive of the sense of this society. In 1834, he became the first full-time field agent for the American Anti-Slavery Society.⁸⁴ Wrote to his wife saying, “Lest you should hear some frightful stories from Utica, I just drop you a line to say that nobody was hurt . . . when we adjourned + met the next day at Peterboro + had a quick + delightful meeting. The convention was probably the largest ever held on any subject in America. We got the names (notwithstanding the confusion) of more than 500.”

⁸⁰ Madison County Convention, *Friend of Man*, February 8, 1837.

⁸¹ Judith Wellman, *Grass Roots Reform in the Burned-Over District of Upstate New York: Religion, Abolitionism, and Democracy* (New York: Routledge: 2000), 76.

⁸² Pomeroy Jones, *Annals and Recollections of Oneida County* (Rome, NY, 1851), 631.

⁸³ Lewis County Historical Society, email April 19, 2016, and November 10, 2018, Deirdre Sinnott Collection.

⁸⁴ Bertram Wyatt Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War against Slavery* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1969) Pg. 113.

Phelps ran afoul of William Lloyd Garrison, complaining in a letter dated March 9, 1840, that Garrison “could not or would not see anything but sinister motive in the action of those who differed with him.”

At its May 29, 1835 meeting, the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society, recommissioned Amos A. Phelps, its first permanent lecturer, for one year, beginning May 17, with western New York as his field of labor. Phelps was born in Farmington, Connecticut, on November 11, 1804. He attended Yale as an undergraduate and the Andover and Yale Theological seminaries, being graduated from the latter in 1830. Ordained that same year, he served as Congregational pastor at Hopkinton, Massachusetts from 1830 to 1832 and at the Pine Street Church in Boston, 1832–34. Initially a Colonizationist, Phelps dramatized his advocacy of anti-slavery principles by associating himself with the meeting of the New England Anti-Slavery Society in the spring of 1833. He became a frequent public speaker. During the summer and autumn of 1833 he secured a list of ministers willing publicly to declare themselves against slavery, which was printed with his “Lectures on Slavery and Its Remedy.”⁸⁵

26. Rev. Rufus Pratt (April 23, 1798–January 26, 1888) (White). Town of Marshall, Oneida County, NY. His name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.⁸⁶ Was pastor of the Hanover Society church in Marshall from May 1, 1835, to 1838.

27. Pelatiah Rawson (November 9, 1789–August 24, 1847) (White). Whitestown, Oneida County, NY. Rawson was a graduate of the 1812 class at Hamilton College.⁸⁷ He was listed as a manager in the Circular of the Executive Committee of Whitestown and Oneida Institute Anti-Slavery Societies, 1833. He and others from the Oneida Institute signed an 1836 petition to end slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia. He was named as P. Rawson in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.⁸⁸ Listed as the secretary of the Oneida County Anti-Slavery Society, from the second Annual Convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1835. He was a strong supporter of Rev. Beriah Green, weighing in on a controversy swirling around the First Presbyterian Church in Whitesboro on the issue of suppression of the discussion of slavery and abolition. “Eventually, seventy-one communicant members, including most of the elders, left the First

⁸⁵ John L. Myers, “The Beginning of Anti-Slavery Agencies in New York State,” *New York History*, 43:2 (1962), 149–81.

⁸⁶ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

⁸⁷ Triennial catalogue of the Union Society of Hamilton College (Clinton, October 1835).

⁸⁸ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

Presbyterian Church and put themselves under the leadership of Reverent Beriah Green.” The group went on to establish an independent Congregational Church.⁸⁹

28. Seth B. Roberts (December 18, 1789–October 1, 1870) (White), Rome, Oneida County, NY. Lawyer/judge. Was an agent for the *Standard & Democrat* in Rome.⁹⁰ His name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.⁹¹ Was one of the attendees of the October 21st meeting who was attacked in Vernon as they were trying to get to Peterboro. The men had to seek safety with the Stockbridge Indians.⁹²

29. Rev. Amos Savage (June 10, 1796–November 15, 1858) (White). Utica, Oneida County, NY. Was on the Executive Committee of the founding meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. He appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.⁹³ He preached at the Bleecker Street Church on December 10, 1835.⁹⁴ His wife (married in 1835) was Mrs. Marietta Sherwood Savage (October 26, 1805–September 28, 1887), Secretary, Female Anti-Slavery Society, Utica, which had seventy members according to the fourth annual report from the convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1837. Reverend Savage read select scriptures at the first annual convention of the NY Anti-Slavery Society. He, Alvan Stewart, and William Goodell were appointed secretaries.⁹⁵ He wrote to Amos Augustus Phelps in June of 1839, wishing to have a different field of work. Phelps had apparently just formed the Massachusetts Abolition Society. Savage hoped to secure a job in a Massachusetts school.⁹⁶ He and his wife moved to Hartford, Connecticut, and are both buried there.⁹⁷

30. James Sayre (January 25, 1799–April 22, 1877) (White). Utica, Oneida County, NY. “Came to Utica in 1818. He founded the hardware business carried on by himself and afterward by his two sons for more than sixty years. . . . He married Amelia Van Ranst of New York city, daughter of Cornelius Willett and Ann White Van Ranst.”⁹⁸ He is listed in the 1834 Utica Directory as

⁸⁹ Milton C. Sernett, *North Star County, Upstate New York and the Crusade for African American Freedom* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002).

⁹⁰ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, November 12, 1835.

⁹¹ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

⁹² Ride to Peterboro, *Roman Citizen*, January 26, 1872.

⁹³ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

⁹⁴ Rev. Amos Savage, *National Sins, the Cause of National Judgements* (Utica: Standard and Democrat at the request of the Young Men’s Anti-Slavery Society, 1835).

⁹⁵ *Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the NY ASS* (Utica: Standard and Democrat, October 19, 1836).

⁹⁶ <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:m900qj137>.

⁹⁷ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/152416573/amos-savage>.

⁹⁸ http://www.schenectadyhistory.org/resources/mvgw/bios/sayre_family.html.

an assistant for the Bible class at the Second Presbyterian Church on Bleeker Street the site of the Convention. “He was conscientious and upright in his dealings, and through his long life his integrity grew to be recognized and honored by all. He was sincere and earnest in his convictions, with a sunny temperament and an affectionate disposition. His judgments of men were dictated by a nice sense of justice, and mellowed by a kindness that was broad and generous.”⁹⁹ He was one of the individuals who had a meeting (including many mechanics) on October 20, 1835, to say that the abolitionists had a right to meet.¹⁰⁰ Manager of the Utica Anti-Slavery Society. His name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.

31. Rev. Avelyn Sedgwick (1793–May 21, 1868) (White). Rome, Oneida County, NY. Sedgwick was a pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Rome, which became a “come-outer” (abolitionist) church under his leadership. He was one of seventy specially trained speakers for the Anti-Slavery Society.¹⁰¹ His name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society. He was lecturing in Waterville when there was some kind of disturbance. Apparently, there was an account in the April 19, 1837, *Friend of Man* and the May 20, 1837, *Friend of Man*, as well as the *Utica Observer*.

32. Gerrit Smith (March 6, 1797–December 28, 1874) (White). Peterboro, Madison County, NY. Smith began his day as a leading member of the American Colonization Society who attended the Utica convention out of curiosity. Because of the disruption of the proceedings, he invited the delegates to his home in Peterboro to finish their deliberations in peace. Attended the meeting at Clarke’s Temperance House on the 21st after the convention was adjourned by the disruption. Was chosen as part of a committee to “determine the time and place of meeting for business.”¹⁰² His name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.¹⁰³ He is named on New York’s 100 Most Prominent Abolitionist Leaders list.¹⁰⁴ His house was a major depot on the Underground Railroad used by many, including Harriet Tubman. More has been written about Smith elsewhere in this report. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerrit_Smith.

⁹⁹ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

¹⁰⁰ William “Defensor” Thomas, *The Enemies of the Constitution Discovered: Or, An Inquiry into the Origin and Tendency of Popular Violence ...* (Utica, NY: Leavitt & Lord & Co. and G. Tracy, 1835), 79.

¹⁰¹ Trail to Freedom pamphlet, <http://www.OneidaCountyFreedomTrail.com>.

¹⁰² *Proceedings of the New York Anti-Slavery Convention, Held at Utica, October 21, and at Peterboro, October 22, 1835* (Utica: Standard & Democrat, 1835), 8–9.

¹⁰³ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

¹⁰⁴ Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), 135–36.

33. Jacob Snyder (circa 1782–?) (White). Utica, Oneida County, NY. His brother, Rudolph, was an anti-abolitionist. During the riot, Jacob was covered “with the filth of misbegotten fowls.” He was a member of the Utica Wilberforce Society, auxiliary to the American Colonization Society, which was formed March 21, 1829. According to local historian M. M. Bagg in 1892, Jacob Snyder was a local chairmaker, as well as a Methodist leader and abolitionist:

With a voice like rolling thunder he exercised it often it exhortation and the prayer, wherein his language was choice and script or Eolis scriptural. Temperance and anti-slavery were reforms which were near to his heart and formed themes his tongue and his pen.

“Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” noted Bagg, was “the only novel he ever looked into.” Snyder served as second vice-president of the Utica Anti-Slavery Society and attended the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society. He was part of “members and friends of the Methodist Episcopal Church” who put together a report on the actions of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Cincinnati, protesting the instruction for all members “to abstain from ALL abolition movements and Associations and to refrain from patronizing any of their publications.” Gerald Sorin named him one of New York’s hundred most prominent abolitionists.¹⁰⁵

34. Alvan Stewart (September 1, 1790–May 1, 1849) (White). Lawyer from Utica, Oneida County, NY. “Early in 1833 he disposed of his interests in Cherry Valley and removed to Utica where he resumed his practice but confined himself wholly to business in the courts. In his capacity as counsel his business extended over a large part of Central New York and even into distant counties meeting in antagonism the ablest lawyers of the State. Luther R Marsh son in law of Mr. Stewart thus speaks of him. ‘He was one of the most formidable adversaries that ever stood before a jury. You could do nothing with him nor make any calculations upon him. It was impossible to tell where the blows would fall or where the point of attack would be or what scheme of defense he would adopt. His peculiar and overflowing humor strange conceptions and original manner united with sturdy common sense seemed to carry the jury irrepressibly with him and submerge the sober arguments of his opponent in a sea of laughter.’ For several years prior to 1830 the era of the establishment of the Liberator by William Lloyd Garrison the anti slavery agitation attracted Mr. Stewart’s attention and he at length came to consider what he called the mighty question of human liberty as paramount to all others and entered the crusade

¹⁰⁵ Leonard L. Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); *Utica City Directory*, 1829, p. 19; M. M. Bagg, MD, *Memorial History of Utica, N.Y.: From Its Settlement to the Present Time* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1892); M. M. Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica, NY: Curtiss & Childs, 1877); Letter from Oliver Wetmore, *The Emancipator*, June 12, 1834; *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835; *Friend of Man*, July 28, 1836; Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), 135–36.

against slavery with all his mind and ability. Whatever were his faults extravagances or fanaticism the heroic self denial with which he gave himself to the cause the splendid and lofty eloquence with which he maintained his position won the warmest sympathy and commendation.”¹⁰⁶ Spoke at January 1834 Colonization/Abolition debates.¹⁰⁷ Was a target of the subsequent riot. His effigy and that of Beriah Green were hung and burned and paraded around the street of Utica.

He was one of the initiators of the founding meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society and served on the Executive Committee. Attended the meeting at Clarke’s Temperance House on the 21st after the convention was adjourned by the disruption. Was chosen as part of a committee to “determine the time and place of meeting for business.”¹⁰⁸ His name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.¹⁰⁹ Was involved in the rescue of two people from slave catchers in Utica. He is named on New York’s 100 Most Prominent Abolitionist Leaders list.¹¹⁰ Was a founder of the Liberty Party.

35. Rev. George Storrs (December 13, 1796–1879) (White). Concord, Merrimack County, NH. Lectured widely on abolition. Lived in Utica for a time. While he was lecturing, he met with Harry Bird and George, the freedom seekers who were rescued in Utica in December 1836. Letters from him about the encounter in Mexico, New York, appeared in *Friend of Man* on February 2nd and 8th, 1837. Listed at the Utica representative at the fourth annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1837 (from their report). His wife, Martha Waterman Storrs, went to the Women’s Anti-Slavery convention in Philadelphia in 1837 as a delegate from Utica. That meeting was attacked and the brand new Pennsylvania Hall was burned. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Storrs.

36. Charles Stuart (1783–May 26, 1865) (White). Utica, Oneida County, NY. Born in Scotland and spoke widely on the abolition cause. He was the principal of Utica Academy. “In 1840 he attended the World Anti-Slavery Convention in June. One hundred and thirty of the more notable delegates were included in a large commemorative painting by Benjamin Haydon.”

¹⁰⁶ M. M. Bagg, M.D., *Memorial History of Utica, N.Y.: From Its Settlement to the Present Time* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1892).

¹⁰⁷ Debate at Utica, *The Liberator*, January 25, 1834.

¹⁰⁸ *Proceedings of the New York Anti-Slavery Convention, Held at Utica, October 21, and at Peterboro, October 22, 1835* (Utica: Standard & Democrat, 1835).

¹⁰⁹ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

¹¹⁰ Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), 135–36.

Captain Stuart joined himself to every good work in the town. In the Sunday school he assisted the superintendent, and was most impressive when he talked to the children of the moral wastes of the East, and explained to them the rites of the Hindus. Commissioned, at his own request, by the Bible Society of Oneida, he traversed the county on foot and at his own expense, and ascertained the number of families in every one of its towns who were destitute of the Holy Scriptures and desirous of being furnished with them. Mr. Stuart remained some three years in Utica. He became a minister; was for some years engaged in missionary enterprises, connected with the questions of slavery and temperance, married late, and finally retired into Canada, where he died, about the year 1864. His interest in anti-slavery brought him as a delegate to the noted convention of the early adherents of that cause, held in Utica, in 1835. And when the assembly was dissolved by the ruthless prejudices of the people among whom it was convened, and its members took their way to Peterboro, in such conveyances as they could procure, Mr. Stuart, in accordance with his early habits, trudged on afoot through mud and rain. Resting over night at Vernon, he was aroused from his sleep by the landlord, with the information that a mob was at the door, threatening violence to him and the other guests from the convention, and that he must arise and arm himself for defense. His reply, so truly characteristic, was simply an assurance to the “brethren” that if they would wait until the morning, he would meet them without fail; and then he composed himself again to sleep.¹¹¹

See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Stuart_\(abolitionist\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Stuart_(abolitionist)); http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=4732.

37. Lewis Tappan (May 23, 1788–June 21, 1873) (White). New York City, New York County, NY. Rich silk manufacturer with his brother Arthur. Was listed as calling the October 2, 1833, meeting of the initial meeting of the New York City Anti-Slavery Society. This meeting was the subject of a mob organized by the American Colonization Society with the help of the influential NYC paper *Courier and Enquirer*. The meeting was moved when the abolitionists got wind of the protest. Garrison, who was to speak, was not informed of the move. He was one of the leaders of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Was at the first annual meeting on the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, Utica, October 19, 1836.¹¹² “[From the *Louisiana Journal*] The following has been handed to us by the Committee of Vigilance of the parish of East Feliciana for publication. Fifty Thousand Dollars Reward. The above reward will be given on the delivery to the Committee of Vigilance for the parish of East Feliciana, LA of the notorious Abolitionist Arthur Tappan, of New York. Papers opposed to Abolition

¹¹¹ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica, NY: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

¹¹² Annual Meeting of the State Society, *Friend of Man*, October 27, 1836.

throughout the United States are requested to give publicity to the above.”¹¹³ Attended the meeting at Clarke’s Temperance House on the 21st after the convention was adjourned by the disruption. Was chosen as part of a committee to “determine the time and place of meeting for business.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_Tappan.

38. Giles Waldo, White. Probably of the Whitestown Petition. Says on Mass Historical Society Portrait that he was a teacher at the Lane Seminary, 1834. Could be he taught at the Oneida Institute. It lists him as from Windham, Connecticut. He might have been one of the Lane Seminary Rebels.¹¹⁴ He and others from the Oneida Institute signed an 1836 petition to end slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia.

39. Rev. Samuel Wells (White). Whitesboro, Oneida County, NY. His name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.¹¹⁵ He is named on New York’s 100 Most Prominent Abolitionist Leaders list. Listed as manager, from 1839 to 1840, of the American Anti-Slavery Society.¹¹⁶ Listed as one of the Lane Seminary Rebels.¹¹⁷

40. Rev. Oliver Wetmore (December 15, 1774–January 1, 1852) (White).¹¹⁸ A war veteran. He was the Recording Secretary for the founding meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. His son Edmund A. Wetmore was an anti-abolitionist and the future mayor of Utica. Reverend Wetmore was the person who asked the Common Council to allow the New York Anti-Slavery Convention to meet at the Court House.¹¹⁹ “For the following biographical notice we are to the Rev. PH Fowler, DD of Utica NY. The Rev Oliver Wetmore was a lineal descendant of Elder Brewster, so conspicuous among the Mayflower, and a great grandson of the Rev. Timothy Edwards, the father of Pres. Jonathan Edwards. His early life was spent in his native place enjoyment of its literary advantages and in pursuits” (more in the book on Google Books titled *The Wetmore Family in America*, pp. 335–36). “Rev. Oliver Wetmore, a conscientious, uncompromising and honored minister of the Presbyterian Church, a Puritan of the strictest type, in whose veins were mingled the blood

¹¹³ William “Defensor” Thomas, *The Enemies of the Constitution Discovered: Or, An Inquiry into the Origin and Tendency of Popular Violence ...* (Utica, NY: Leavitt & Lord & Co. and G. Tracy, 1835).

¹¹⁴ *A Statement of the Reasons Which Induced the Students of Lane Seminary to Dissolve Their Connection with the Institution*, Cincinnati, 1834.

¹¹⁵ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

¹¹⁶ Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), 135–36.

¹¹⁷ *A Statement of the Reasons Which Induced the Students of Lane Seminary to Dissolve Their Connection with the Institution* (Cincinnati, 1834).

¹¹⁸ James Carnahan Wetmore, *The Wetmore Family of America, and Its Collateral Branches: With Genealogical, Biographical, and Historical Notices* (Munsell & Rowland, 1861).

¹¹⁹ Minutes of the Common Council, *Oneida Whig*, October 16, 1835.

of Elder Brewster of the Mayflower, and of Edwards, the divine. Rev. Mr. Wetmore was settled in Holland Patent, in 1805 or 1806, when his son was still a child, and subsequently held a pastorate in Trenton, whence he moved to Utica, in his declining years, and died in 1852.¹²⁰ Officer (corresponding Secretary) of the Utica Anti-Slavery Society.¹²¹ During the attack on the meeting, Wetmore struggled with Rutger B. Miller over the notes and minutes of the convention. His son came over to entreat his father to let them go, lest he be injured. Finally the elder Wetmore was relieved of the papers. His name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.¹²² Opened the fourth annual convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society according to their report, 1837. He is named on New York's 100 Most Prominent Abolitionist Leaders list.¹²³

41. Francis Wright (?–1845) (White). Utica, Oneida County, New York. Was listed as on the Executive Committee of the founding meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society and Manager of the Utica Anti-Slavery Society.¹²⁴ His name appeared in the original announcement of the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society.¹²⁵ Francis was married to Paulina Kellogg (August 7, 1813–August 24, 1876). “The two were active and enthusiastic supporters of temperance, abolition, women’s rights, and other reforms. They helped organize an antislavery convention held in Utica, New York, in October 1835 and endured mob violence for their pains.”¹²⁶ He was a merchant at 102 Fayette Street. His house was at Fay above Columbia.¹²⁷ In 1842, when the antislavery activist Abby Kelley was their guest, they organized meetings around Utica and served on the executive committee of the Central New York Anti-Slavery Society. <http://www.anb.org/articles/15/15--00166.html>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paulina_Kellogg_Wright_Davis.

42. Elizur Wright Jr. (February 12, 1804–November 22, 1885) (White). New York, New York County, NY. Secretary of the American Anti-Slavery Society. “Drafted Resolutions expressive of the sense of this society” at the founding meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. Was a primary organizer in New York of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Was an instructor at Oneida

¹²⁰ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

¹²¹ Oliver Wetmore Letter, *The Emancipator*, June 17, 1834.

¹²² *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

¹²³ James Carnahan Wetmore, *Wetmore Family in America* (Albany: Munsel’s & Rowland, 1861), 335–36; Gerald Sorin, *The New York Abolitionists: A Case Study of Political Radicalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971), 135–36.

¹²⁴ Oliver Wetmore Letter, *The Emancipator*, June 17, 1834.

¹²⁵ *Standard and Democrat*, Utica, September 25, 1835, reprinted in *The Liberator*, October 3, 1835.

¹²⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Paulina-Kellogg-Wright-Davis>.

¹²⁷ Utica Directory, 1834.

Institute and lost his job because of his abolitionism. He became Arthur Tappan's secretary after that.¹²⁸ In 1834, he published a series called "Chronicles of Kidnapping in New York."¹²⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizur_Wright.

.....

C. Members of the Committee of Twenty-Five.¹³⁰

1. Benjamin Ballou Jr. (circa 1770–November 18th, 1840). Committee of Twenty-Five. Arrived in Utica with his parents and siblings in 1790. His father had a "lease from the Bleecker family in 1797 of one hundred and twenty-six acres of lot No. 92, and occupied a house east of the Big Basin, near the site of the boat yard." That area came to be called Ballou Basin.¹³¹ Benjamin Jr. was a blacksmith and "carried on a saw mill on the Starch Factory creek, where it is crossed by the Minden or Burlington road." In 1831, he was an "assessor of the village [of Utica]."¹³² Benjamin Ballou Jr. served as a Captain in the 134th Regiment of the Utica Independent Infantry company. That regiment was called into active service in September 1814. Ballou served in a different unit than most of the others in that company.¹³³

2. Harvey Barnard (d. October 30, 1962). Committee of Twenty-Five. "Harvey Barnard, a native of Hartford, Conn., but who had learned his trade in Albany, in 1824 established himself as a paper hanger and dealer in wall paper. And having soon after married a daughter of Ara Broadwell, whose acquaintance he had made before coming, he was joined by her in the store, she dealing in articles of millinery. The store was at first nearly opposite Liberty street, but has been for many years located on the spot where the sons, Charles E., Harvey and Henry, now continue the business" (85 Genesee Street, 1835 Utica

¹²⁸ Bertram Wyatt Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War against Slavery* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1969).

¹²⁹ <https://aha.confex.com/aha/2017/webprogram/Paper21496.html>.

¹³⁰ Leonard L. Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Samuel Durant, *History of Oneida County*, 295–96.

¹³¹ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica, NY: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

¹³² Moses Meer Bagg, *Memorial History of Utica: From Its Settlement to the Present Time* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1892).

¹³³ Walter Sherman Cookinham, *Utica Citizens Corps, Utica, New York* (1938).

Directory). “Mr. Barnard was industrious, fair dealing and prosperous, and he won a prominent place among the business men of the town. He served it as alderman and in other capacities.”¹³⁴

3. Samuel Beardsley: (February 6, 1790–May 6, 1860), The leader of the Committee of Twenty-Five. Beardsley moved to Utica in 1823. He had been in the New York State Senate and at the time of the riot was serving as a member of the 24th Congress in the US House of Representatives, where he served several terms served from 1830 to 1836 and again for two years from 1842 to 1844. Judge in the Court of Appeals. Chief of the Supreme Court of the State of New York. Volunteered in 1813, to defend Sacketts Harbor. Served as Oneida County district attorney from 1821 to 1825. Was appointed United States Attorney for the Northern District of New York. A staunch Democrat, he was elected to the House of Representatives, and “in all the exciting questions that were agitated during the administration of General Jackson, he was the uncompromising friend of the President, and enjoyed his intimate confidence, as he was also the recognized leader of the Democratic party in the delegation from New York.”¹³⁵ Listed as a pew holder in 1835 at Trinity Church.¹³⁶ Lived at 241 Genesee Street (1834 Utica Directory). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Beardsley.

4. Alvin Blakesly: (circa 1795–circa 1859). Committee of Twenty-Five. Was a dentist living in Utica from at least 1828—when he is listed as working out of the Manson House—until about 1859 when he died. He moved his office numerous times and had various partners in his practice. The 1840 US Census indicates that he was between forty and forty-nine, with three young daughters and a wife between thirty and thirty-nine (1853–54 Utica Directory).

5. Benjamin Franklin Cooper (April 1801–May 4, 1864). Committee of Twenty-Five. Lawyer. After leaving Utica and living for a time in warmer climates, came back to Utica in 1832. In 1846, he was a Whig member of the New York State Assembly representing Oneida County. He met with Rev. J. N. Danforth, traveling agent for the American Colonization Society, and others at the Dutch Reformed Church on Broad Street on the evening of December 21st, 1834. Several meetings were held between this date and January 10, 1834. He spoke at the January 1834 “Colonization vs. Abolition” debates.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica, NY: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

¹³⁵ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica, NY: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

¹³⁶ Blandina Dudley Miller, *A Sketch of Old Utica* (Albany: Joel Munsell’s & Sons, 1895), 61–62.

¹³⁷ Colonization Society, *Utica Sentinel & Gazette*, January 7, 1834.

6. Augustin Dauby (December 17, 1795–November 27, 1876). Committee of Twenty-Five. Dauby began as a publisher in 1816 when he established the *Rochester Gazette* the city’s first newspaper. In 1823, he began managing the *Utica Observer*, a paper in which Samuel Beardsley had a pecuniary and political interest.¹³⁸ He went on to run the *Baptist Register*, *Utica Magazine*, and the *Evangelical Magazine*.¹³⁹ As the date of the founding meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society approached, he declared at the October 17, 1835, meeting in the courtroom: “For one Mr. President I will prevent their [the abolitionists] coming peaceably, if I can, forcibly if I must.” Dauby was postmaster for Utica from 1829 to 1849. “I formed that a fellow of intemperate habits and very low character best known by the name of Bill Dick is one of his [Dauby’s] particular friends and confidants and that he is allowed to have daily access to the letters in the Post office.”¹⁴⁰ Listed as a pew holder in 1835 at Trinity Church.¹⁴¹

7. Ezra Dean (1780–February 9, 1842). Committee of Twenty-Five. An early resident of Utica, Dean and his brothers were in the city as early as 1828. He ran a dry goods store on Genesee Street. He was among citizens described in an *Observer* article as “distinguished for their learning, or for the exalted offices they have filled with honor and usefulness in the service of the Republic” and “highly respected citizens.”¹⁴² In the 1840 US Census, Dean’s wife, Clarissa, was listed as being in her forties. She survived him by twenty years.¹⁴³ There were three women living with them, all between the ages of twenty and thirty, but only one daughter is mentioned in his will—Clarissa Dean, who had been adopted. He inherited land in New Hartford from Erastus Dean, his brother.¹⁴⁴ The family lived at 255 Genesee Street, at the corner of Hopper.¹⁴⁵ Dean was a member of the Common Council when they voted to allow the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Convention¹⁴⁶ to occur in the courtroom¹⁴⁷ and then, after pressure, changed his vote to be against it.

¹³⁸ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica, NY: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

¹³⁹ George Taenzer, *History of Printing in Rochester, 1816–1834: In Memory of Augustine G. Dauby, Rochester’s First Printer*. (Rochester Club of Printing House Craftsmen, January 1986).

¹⁴⁰ William “Defensor” Thomas, *The Enemies of the Constitution Discovered: Or, An Inquiry into the Origin and Tendency of Popular Violence ...* (Utica, NY, Leavitt & Lord & Co. and G. Tracy, 1835), 66.

¹⁴¹ Blandina Dudley Miller, *A Sketch of Old Utica* (Albany: Joel Munsell’s & Sons, 1895).

¹⁴² “Our Fathers were are they—do they live forever!,” *Oneida Morning Herald*, January 12, 1849.

¹⁴³ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/92688612/ezra-dean>.

¹⁴⁴ “Default,” *Oneida Whig*, September 4, 1838.

¹⁴⁵ *Utica City Directory*, 1834.

¹⁴⁶ Abstracts of will of Oneida County, NY, from 1840–1843 (vol. 4, p. 36). Ancestry.com.

¹⁴⁷ Minutes of the Common Council, *Oneida Whig*, October 16, 1835.

8. John Corish Devereux (August 5, 1774–December 11, 1848). Committee of Twenty-Five. Devereux was born in Wexford Ireland of a rich family which was ruined by the Irish Rebellion of 1798 and whose inheritance was confiscated. He opened a dry goods store in Utica in 1802. By 1830, he was well established and was named president of the Utica branch of the United States Bank. He became the first elected rather than appointed mayor of Utica in 1840. Eventually, he and his brothers founded the Savings Bank of Utica. He and his brother purchased land just south of the Erie Canal, which became known as the Devereux Block. He was active in organizing against the founding meeting of the New York Anti-Slavery Society, attending meetings and acting as secretary on occasion. A zealous adherent of the Roman Catholic Church. He was interred in the grounds of the Sisters of Charity, in the rear of St. John’s Church.¹⁴⁸

9. Joseph H. Dwight (September 13, 1795–August 4, 1845). Committee of Twenty-Five. Born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, Dwight lived in various places in central New York. He joined the military, eventually rising from ensign to captain. “During the war he was engaged for the most time in active service on the frontier, and toward the close as quartermaster to the 13th Reg’t of Infantry.”¹⁴⁹ He lived in Utica from about 1834 to 1840. By that time, he was already in business with the Clarke family. He married Catherine Clarke, who died in 1840. They had an infant son who also died. While in Utica, he and John Devereux were active in St. John’s Catholic Church. He was on the Common Council and voted against allowing the abolition convention to meet in the courtroom.¹⁵⁰ He died near Oxford after being thrown from an out-of-control wagon.

10. Thomas M. Francis (1795–November 1866). Committee of Twenty-Five. Thomas M. Francis was born in Wales.¹⁵¹ He moved to Utica in about 1814. With his wife Elizabeth, he fathered six girls and four boys—all born in Utica beginning around 1820 and ending around 1842. His firstborn boy, John, died of “dropsy in the chest” at about ten years old.¹⁵² He “was successively deputy scribe in the office of the county clerk, book-keeper, canal collector and receiver at the office of the Central Railroad; and was industrious and faithful; a quiet little man, and an unwavering Democrat. He lived, for the most part, at No. 42 Catherine Street.”¹⁵³ Francis was active in the Democratic Party and was

¹⁴⁸ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica, NY: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/138392250/joseph-hawley-dwight>.

¹⁵⁰ Minutes of the Common Council, *Oneida Whig*, October 16, 1835.

¹⁵¹ New York State 1855 Census, First Ward of Utica, Oneida County, pp. 14–15.

¹⁵² Died, *The Mechanics’ Press*, March 27, 1830.

¹⁵³ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica, NY: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

nominated to a local party convention in 1858.¹⁵⁴ At the anti-abolition meeting at Miller Hall on October 8, 1835, he was appointed on a committee of five to put together a list of “suitable persons to be appointed the offices of the meeting. An assignment that they carried through faithfully appointing Hon. Joseph Kirkland, mayor, as President; the Hon. Chester Hayden, John C. Devereux, Thomas H. Hubbard, and Kellogg Hulburt as vice-presidents, and A. G. Dauby and John H. Ostrum, Secretaries.”¹⁵⁵

11. Theodore Sedgwick Gold (July 22, 1796–October 23, 1863). Committee of Twenty-Five. Gold was born in Whitesboro. His father, Thomas Ruggles Gold, was a US Congressman as a Federalist from 1809 to 1813 and again from 1815 to 1817. Theodore graduated from Hamilton College in 1816 and was described as “gentlemanly in manners and deportment” with an aversion to mathematics and a wide-ranging interest in books.¹⁵⁶ He was connecting to Whig politics and early on connected to the newspaper *The Oneida Whig*. He served as mayor of Utica in 1837. He was a member of the secret “Hunter Society,” which supported Canadian rebels’ attempt to break away from British control. About his role in the disruption of the 1835 founding meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society little is known. He was known as charming and, by all accounts, a popular man. He died at the home of his son-in-law, Andrew Dexter, on October 23, 1863.^{157,158}

12. Burton Hawley, Committee of Twenty-Five. Nothing is known so far about Burton Hawley.

13. Chester Hayden (October 8, 1789–February 6, 1863). Leader of the Committee of Twenty-Five. At the time of the founding meeting of the NY Anti-Slavery Society, Chester Hayden was the first judge of Common Pleas of Oneida County. Became a Judge on January 15, 1830.¹⁵⁹ A member of the First Presbyterian Church.¹⁶⁰ Hayden wrote several books dealing with practical matters of the court, including *A Practical Analytical Digest of the Code of Procedure of the State of New York: With Suggestions and Remarks and an Appendix, Together with a Collection of Practical Forms, Adapted to the New Practice*, published in 1848 by W. C. Little & Company.

¹⁵⁴ Pro-Slavery Assembly Convention, *Oneida Weekly Herald*, October 10, 1858.

¹⁵⁵ The Training of the Mob, Act I, *The Philanthropist*, January 8, 1836.

¹⁵⁶ Fifty Years Ago, *Clinton Courier*, July 19, 1866.

¹⁵⁷ Hamilton College Alumni, Class of 1816, *Utica Morning Herald*, July 21, 1865.

¹⁵⁸ Necrology of Hamilton College, 1863–64, Class of 1816, *Clinton Courier*, July 21, 1864.

¹⁵⁹ Pomeroy Jones, *Annals and Recollections of Oneida County* (Rome, NY, 1851).

¹⁶⁰ *Friend of Man*, January 25, 1837.

Hayden, as one of the leaders of the opposition to the abolitionists, was present at the September 2nd or 3rd meeting at the courthouse to pass a resolution against the Convention.¹⁶¹ He also spoke out at the meeting at Miller's Hall. There he explained his position on enslavement. "We admit that originally it was wrong to reduce men to slavery, but when we have them in our midst, incompetent to the right of citizens, should we discharge them from our care and let them perish through their inability to provide for themselves? If we must provide for them, is it better for them, and us, that they should be provided for in the relations in which they now stand."¹⁶²

The Utica Rescue, Judge Hayden's Office

On Dec 29, 1836, county constables brought two African American men, Harry Bird and George, to the Utica Law Offices of Oneida County Judge Chester Hayden. Hayden was about to release them to two Virginia slave-catchers, but white abolitionists Spencer Kellogg and Alvan Stewart argued that the captives deserved a legal hearing. Judge Hayden reluctantly agreed and ordered the slave-catchers and the fugitives to remain in a back room. The time was set to resume the hearing at 6:30 p.m. During Hayden's absence from his office, a crowd gathered around the building, many of whom were African Americans, broke into the office and freed the two men.¹⁶³

Judge Hayden's Obituary

Judge Chester Hayden, formerly a well-known citizen of Western New-York, died in Cleveland, Ohio, on February 6. He studied law in Rome, removed to Pulaski in 1817, and afterwards took up his residence in Oswego. In 1855, after he moved from Utica he went to and founded the Ohio State and Union Law College in Poland, OH, 'by the law firm of Judge Chester Hayden, Marcus King, and M. D. Leggett.' It was known as the Poland Law College. Became President of State & Union Law School.¹⁶⁴ He held various positions of public trust, representing his district in the Legislature for several years. He resided in Utica for some time, and was at the head of a law school in Saratoga.¹⁶⁵

14. Augustus Hickox, Committee of Twenty-Five. "An humble mechanic of the year, but who manifested habits of activity and industry and of zeal for the public weal that in time brought him to the front, was Augustus Hickox. In 1804 he was tinman, coppersmith and nailer in company with David Stafford. Before the war he built for himself a store a short distance below Bagg's. During and after the war (August, 1815), he was in a general hardware trade ; and at the same time he had become president of the village. He remained in business as

¹⁶¹ *Albany Argus*, September 11, 1835.

¹⁶² Miller Hall, *Standard and Democrat*, November 13, 1835.

¹⁶³ <http://www.oneidacountyfreedomtrail.com/Abolitionism/UticaRescue.htm>.

¹⁶⁴ <http://ech.case.edu/ech-cgi/article.pl?id=OSAULC>.

¹⁶⁵ Obituaries, *New York Times*, March 1, 1863.

late, at least, as 1832, his partner at that time being Enos Brown, but finally removed to Michigan. As a public spirited and stirring man Mr. Hickox was much esteemed.”¹⁶⁶

15. George W. Hubbard, Committee of Twenty-Five. Member of Common Council. Voted against allowing the Convention to happen in the Court Room.¹⁶⁷

16. Joseph Kirkland (January 18, 1770–January 26, 1844). Not on the Committee of Twenty-Five. Mayor of Utica at the time, opposed the convention, but made an excuse so that he was “out of town” on the day the riot happened. Mentioned as having attended a September 2nd or 3rd meeting at the courthouse to pass a resolution against abolition. Identified as a member of the Reformed Dutch Church in Utica from its early days.¹⁶⁸

17. John D. Leland: Committee of Twenty-Five. Member of Common Council. Voted against allowing the Convention to happen in the Court Room.¹⁶⁹

18. Oramus B. Matteson (August 28, 1805–87). Committee of Twenty-Five. “Matteson was the son of an early settler of Oneida County. When about nineteen years of age he came to Utica and entered the law office of Bronson & Beardsley. He remained with them several years as their chief clerk and became a partner of Mr. Beardsley after the removal of Judge Bronson. In 1830 he was admitted to the bar In 1834 he was attorney of the city and again in 1836. For a number of years he was Supreme Court commissioner. It was however in the arena of politics that Mr. Matteson chiefly figured and he was an important factor therein from 1846 to 1856. He was a Whig but not of the then conservative party. Imbibing anti-slavery ideas and forming a friendship with William A Seward, he accepted all of his teachings and was bold and positive in the advocacy of them. About the time when he became a candidate for Congress the use of money at elections received an impetus in this county, For this evil he was only in part responsible; but it cannot be denied that he fell in with it.”¹⁷⁰ Became a Republican Congressman in 1849–51. Matteson voted against the Fugitive Slave Law.¹⁷¹

19. Rutger Bleecker Miller (July 28, 1805–November 12, 1877). Committee of Twenty-Five. Member of the Utica Wilberforce Society, auxiliary to the American Colonization Society, formed March 21, 1829. As William “Defensor”

¹⁶⁶ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica, NY: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

¹⁶⁷ Minutes of the Common Council, *Oneida Whig*, October 16, 1835.

¹⁶⁸ Blandina Dudley Miller, *A Sketch of Old Utica* (Albany: Joel Munsell’s & Sons, 1895).

¹⁶⁹ Minutes of the Common Council, *Oneida Whig*, October 16, 1835.

¹⁷⁰ M. M. Bagg, M.D., *Memorial History of Utica, N.Y.: From Its Settlement to the Present Time* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1892).

¹⁷¹ *Oneida Chief*, November 3, 1854.

Thomas noted in his account of the organizational meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society, “RB Miller, the District Clerk, who afterward acted such a conspicuous part among the mob had the audacity to appear at the meeting [in the Bleecker St. Church] although they well knew that they had no right there, and that one of the principal objects of the meeting was to counter-act as much as possible the evil consequences which were likely to result from their previous conduct. . . . During the riot Miller said to the Secretary [Rev. Oliver Wetmore] of the meeting, ‘I will be damned if I don’t have the papers if I have to knock you down to get them!’”¹⁷²

20. Jesse Newell (?–April 19, 1843). Committee of Twenty-Five. “There came in the year 1800, from Coleraine, Mass., a young man who opened a department of business which is still prosecuted by later members of the family, and which is doubtless the oldest establishment of any kind in Utica. This was Jesse Newell. He had been brought up a tailor, but on his arrival set up as a painter and glazier, taking as a partner George Macomber, eldest son of Captain Macomber before noticed. As Macomber & Newell they began the practice of their art, to which was added the sale of materials pertaining thereto, and ere long the manufacture of brushes. The place of business of this long-lived firm, at first on the corner of Broad and Genesee, was many years since removed to its present site, just above Catherine, and there it was continued by Mr. Newell, after the retirement of his partner, in company with his son Norman C. Newell, and until his own death.”¹⁷³

21. Horatio Seymour (May 31, 1810–February 12, 1886). Not on the Committee of Twenty-Five. Mentioned as having attended a September 2nd or 3rd meeting at the courthouse to pass a resolution against the Abolition Convention that was scheduled for October 21, 1835, in Utica. Future mayor of Utica and then Governor of New York State in 1853. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horatio_Seymour.

22. Julius A. Spencer, Committee of Twenty-Five. Mentioned as having attended a September 2nd or 3rd meeting at the courthouse to pass a resolution against the Abolition Convention that was scheduled for October 21, 1835, in Utica. He was a law clerk.¹⁷⁴ He spoke at the September 3, 1835, meeting at the courthouse.¹⁷⁵ Mentioned in relation to the trial of Spencer Kellogg about a sum of \$10,000.¹⁷⁶ Worked at J. Murdock & Co., watchmakers, silversmiths, and

¹⁷² As *The Enemies of the Constitution Discovered: Or, An Inquiry into the Origin and Tendency of Popular Violence ...* (Utica, NY: Leavitt & Lord & Co. and G. Tracy, 1835).

¹⁷³ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

¹⁷⁴ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

¹⁷⁵ *Oneida Whig*, September 8, 1835.

¹⁷⁶ A. B. Johnson autobiography, chapter 8, p. 93.

jewelers, 115 Genesee with James Murdock and Elon. His brother, Joshua A. Spencer, was a lawyer and did not participate in the disruption of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. However, he was hired by the slave catchers from Woodstock, Shenandoah County, Virginia, to represent them in Judge Chester Hayden's court after they arrested freedom seekers Harry Bird and George in late December 1836 in an attempt to remove them back to Virginia.

23. Isaiah Tiffany, Committee of Twenty-Five. "Under the auspices of H. & E. Phinney, of Cooperstown, a long established publishing house of that place, a new bookstore was now opened in Utica, by Isaiah Tiffany, a valued citizen who has but recently gone from the city. He is the son of Colonel Isaiah Tiffany, of West Stockbridge, Mass., a soldier of the Revolution and in the opinion of Baron Steuben, one of the best soldiers of his brigade. He was born in Greenbush, in April 1801, and removed with his mother to Cooperstown in 1817. There he became a clerk with the Messrs. Phinney, with whom he was related by ties of remote consanguinity and by the marriage of one of the firm with Mr. Tiffany's sister. Furnished by them with a supply of books, he set up a store, which 'was continued with a fair amount of success down to the year 1868. At that time he removed to Clifton Springs, where he has since made his home with his daughter, who is the wife of Dr. Foster, proprietor and physician of the water cure of that place. Mr. Tiffany's wife, who was a daughter of Colonel Metcalf of Cooperstown, died before his removal."¹⁷⁷ He was a signer of a letter urging Johnson to publish the correspondence with the minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Akien, about Johnson's being barred from receiving communion for urging the postmaster in Albany to have mail conveyed to New York on Sunday.¹⁷⁸ Listed as a pew holder in 1835 at Trinity Church.¹⁷⁹

24. William Tracy (?–December 1881). Committee of Twenty-Five. Listed as Secretary of the Colonization Society of Oneida County in Utica, 1839. Was a member of the Colonization Society in 1833. Met with Rev. J. N. Danforth and people at the Dutch Reformed Church on Broad Street on the evening of December 21. Several meetings were held between this date and January 10, 1834, and speeches were made to the following resolution: "Resolved, That this meeting deeply deplores the unfortunate condition of the colored population of this country and commends to the zealous support of the philanthropist and the Christian the American Colonization Society, as the instrument under Providence which is best calculated to alleviate the condition of the free negro and secure the ultimate emancipation of the slave." "William Tracy was the son of William G. Tracy, an early merchant of Whitesboro, where he was born June 16, 1805. He studied law with Henry R. Storrs, came to Utica in 1827, and

¹⁷⁷ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

¹⁷⁸ A. B. Johnson autobiography, chapter 7, 72, letter dated December 19, 1834.

¹⁷⁹ Blandina Dudley Miller, *A Sketch of Old Utica* (Joel Munsell's & Sons, Albany: 1895).

opened an office in the following year. In 1833 he was associated in practice with John G. Floyd and the following year with William C. Noyes, the husband of his sister. In 1837 his own brother, Charles, became his partner and they remained some years together. . . . He took much deeper interest in the Society for the Colonization of the Negroes of Liberia than he did in that which agitated the country for the immediate abolition of slavery.”¹⁸⁰ On the Common Council and voted for allowing the convention to meet in the courthouse.¹⁸¹

25. David Wager (March 17, 1804–July 26, 1870). Committee of Twenty-Five. Mentioned as having attended a September 2nd or 3rd meeting at the courthouse to pass a resolution against the Abolition Convention that was scheduled for October 21, 1835, in Utica. Served on the New York State Senate and Assembly. He was a signer of a letter urging Johnson to publish the correspondence with the minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Aiken, about Johnson’s being barred from receiving communion for urging the postmaster in Albany to have mail conveyed to New York on Sunday.¹⁸² Most likely spoke at January 1834 debates. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Wager.

26. Edmund A. Wetmore (August 6 1798–?). Committee of Twenty-Five. His father, Rev. Oliver Wetmore was a veteran abolitionist, secretary of the founding meeting of the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. He was inside the church that morning when the mob attacked. Edmund graduated from Hamilton College in 1817 and entered the law office of Gold and Sill, at Whitesboro, where he completed his studies. He was at one time mayor of Utica. He was admitted to the bar in October 1820. Wrote an obituary of Alexander Bryan Johnson.¹⁸³

27. Abraham B. Williams, Committee of Twenty-Five.

28. J. Watson Williams, Committee of Twenty-Five. He was mayor of Utica at one time and the “Williams” in Munson Williams Proctor Institute, a present-day lovely museum in Utica. Wrote an obit for Alexander Bryan Johnson.¹⁸⁴ He was a signer of a letter urging Johnson to publish the correspondence with the minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Aiken, about Johnson’s being barred from receiving communion for urging the postmaster in Albany to have mail conveyed to New York on Sunday.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

¹⁸¹ “Minutes of the Common Council,” *Oneida Whig*, October 16, 1835.

¹⁸² A. B. Johnson autobiography, chapter 7, 72, letter dated December 19, 1834.

¹⁸³ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

¹⁸⁴ Moses Meer Bagg, *The Pioneers of Utica: Being Sketches of Its Inhabitants and Its Institutions, from the Earliest Settlement to the Year 1825, the Era of the Opening of the Erie Canal* (Utica: Curtiss & Childs, 1877).

¹⁸⁵ A. B. Johnson autobiography, chapter 7, 72, letter dated December 19, 1834.