

A “Forwarding Agent,” “Libeler,” and an
“Unimpeachable” Man: The Abolition
Movement Told Through the Life of
Rev. Abel Brown

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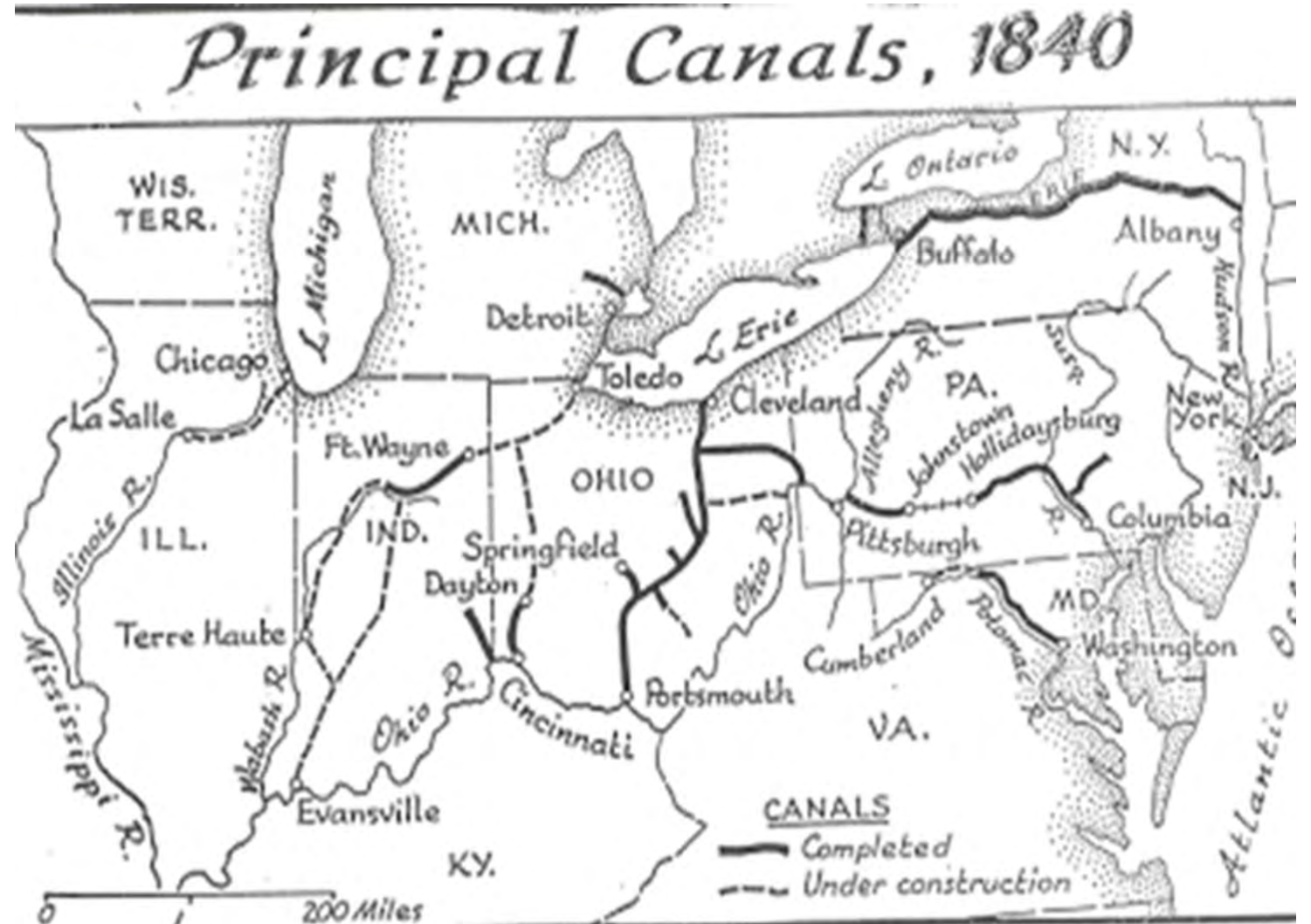
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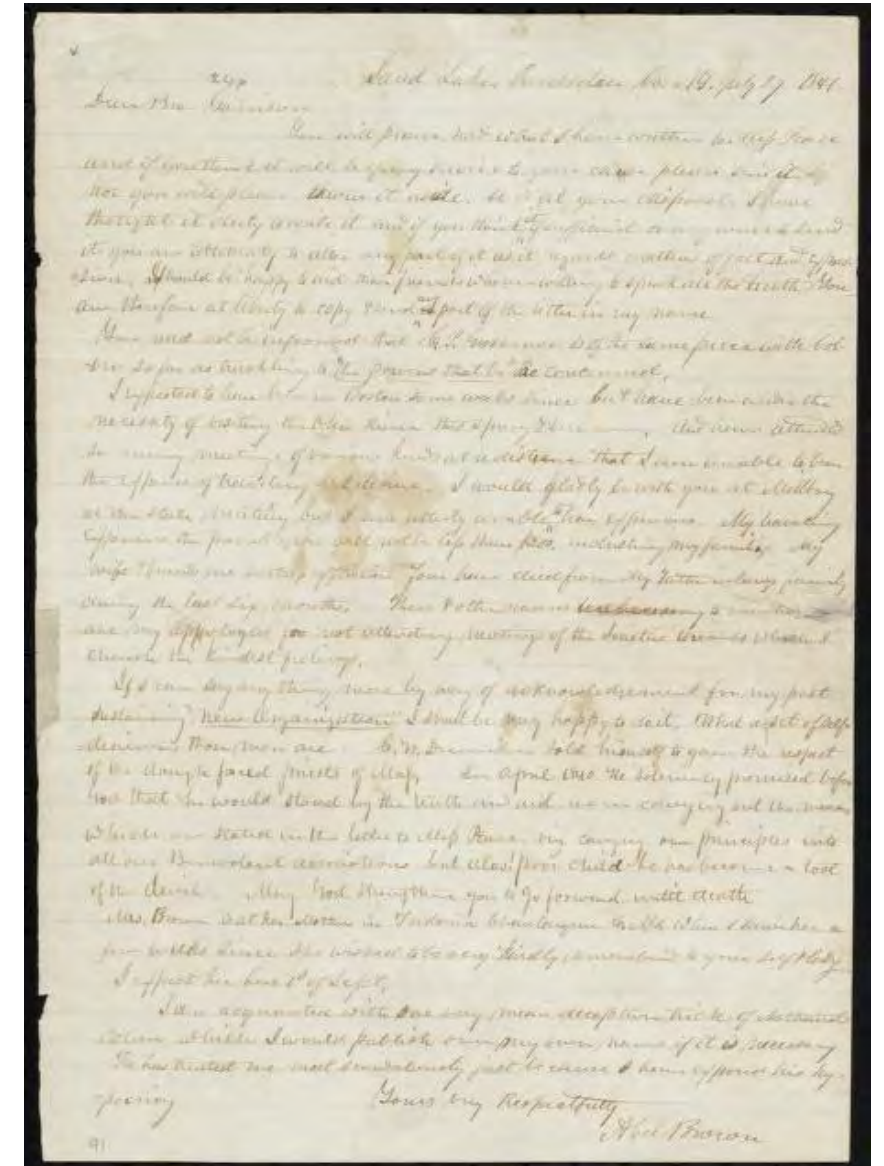
AASS Geo-political Landscape

This map shows the areas Abel Brown travelled to attend college and establish Sabbath Schools in western New York and northwestern Pennsylvania. In addition, as an itinerant Baptist minister and American Anti-Slavery Society traveling agent he traveled, overland and by boat, to Michigan, Ohio, and Canada to visit family and fellow activists and deliver anti-slavery and Liberty Party lectures on the abolition circuit until he died in 1844.



Fanatic to Radical Abolitionist

Rev. Abel Brown's respect and partnership with William Lloyd Garrison was not solely based on the abolition cause. Like Brown, Garrison's commitment to the First Amendment, freedom of speech and freedom of the press, was a common value that sustained their friendship after Brown became a political abolitionist. In 1839, Brown lamented that there was "a determination on the part of *many* in this (N.Y.) State, to keep all *Anti-Slavery Papers*" away; and "Some men go on as if determined to die opposing the cause of Emancipation."*



Letter to Garrison from Sand Lake 1841

Northampton, Hampshire County, MA corruption

Hampshire County. No. 2.
NORTHAMPTON, Feb. 8, 1841.

DEAR BRO. GARRISON:

On the 27th ult. was held the annual meeting of the Hampshire County Abolition Society. A short account of its proceedings may not be uninteresting to your readers.

The attendance was very small. The Executive Committee (who, as you learned from my last letter, have been doing little more than retarding the cause during the past year,) were permitted to pass without even presenting a report of their doings, and some of them were reappointed.

There were no resolutions respecting the duty of the church, no rebuking of the pro-slavery clergy of this County, and no efforts made to increase the funds of the Society. The great object of the Society, as it appeared in the meeting, was to sympathize with that class of men who have acted during the past year with the pro-slavery parties and churches; and to denounce those abolitionists, who, like yourself, tell the truth plainly. The Society is under the direct influence of the whig party and the Congregational churches; and will not advance any farther than will secure their approbation. Even the following resolution was rejected by the business committee, and afterwards by the Society.

Resolved, That the base subserviency of the two great political parties in the Union to the slave interests at the south, is disgusting to the philanthropist and patriot, and deserving the unqualified condemnation of every Christian and friend of human rights in New-England.

The only objections urged against the passage of this resolution were, that the language of it was harsh, and that it censured our brethren who belonged to those parties.

I ought in justice to say, that a respectable minority opposed the cringing policy of the Society.

ought in justice to say, that a respectable minority opposed the cringing policy of the Society. Every reader of the Liberator, so far as I am acquainted, was found in the minority.

So far as new organization sympathizes with the slave, it has my sympathy; but I am compelled to say that the new organization of Hampshire County, judging from its proceeding for the past year, is a disgrace to the cause of abolition. The evidences daily coming before me are fast convincing me that new organization never will do any thing to 'break up the unholy harmony of the Congregational church and clergy.'

My letter of the 7th of Jan. is making a little stir among certain men in this community, and I hope it may continue until the clergymen will have sufficient reverence for God to 'open their mouths for the dumb'—to plead the cause of such as are appointed unto destruction.

The following extract from a sermon preached before the First Church and the Edwards Church, Northampton, and published by the author, Rev. John Mitchell, pastor of the Edwards Church, with a few comments, may give you some idea of the manner that abolition is treated by one clergyman at least. Speaking of those who desired to lecture for the slave, and other subjects of oppression, the author says, (p. 30.)—

'In some instances, they (the lecturers) have wished to occupy the Sabbath—often, and indeed commonly, on Sabbath evenings. In one or two instances, we have been obliged to suspend our stated prayer-meetings for them; and in other instances should have done so, if a good deal of impertinence had been suffered to carry the point with us.'

The instances in which he broke over the general rule were not for the accommodation of abolition agents.

The only comment I have to make is to state a single fact.

One of the churches, before whom that sermon was preached, has been accustomed annually for the Sabbath evening before election to suspend their conference and prayer-meeting, and make way for a whig caucus, and leading and influential members of both churches have attended, and taken part in those caucuses. In one instance, if not more, a celebrated deacon of the first church presided in the meeting. And this Rev. pastor has never published a manifesto against Sabbath evening whig caucuses; yet he is horror-struck at the thought of adjourning a conference meeting for the accommodation of a friend of the slave!

Your brother in Christ,
ABEL BROWN.

P. S. The editor of the Massachusetts Abolitionist is mistaken if, in his reply to or notice of my letter, he intends to say that more than half of the delegates from the Hampshire County Abolition Society to the Albany Convention, were in favor of the third party. My statement was correct. I was not mistaken.
A. B.

Liberator, February 19, 1841

Rev. Abel Brown was stationed by the Baptist Church in Northampton in the late 1830s before becoming a paid traveling Agent for the AASS. In Northampton, Brown lamented that corruption was deeply embedded in the anti-slavery movement in western Massachusetts.

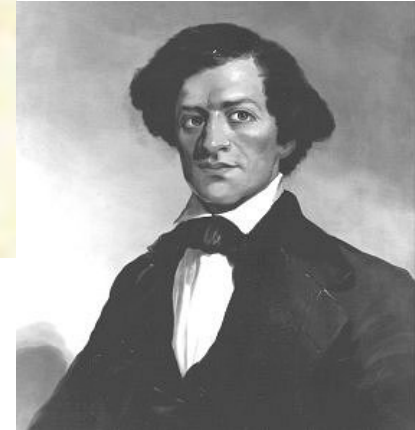
Northampton, MA



Lydia Maria Child



David Ruggles



Despite the corruption within some anti-slavery circles in the western Massachusetts there were some abolitionists deeply committed to the cause. Around the same time that Brown removed to West Sand Lake, NY, Child departed for NYC. (But Child's husband, David Lee Child, remained in the area.) Prior to her departure she had communicated with David Ruggles, a prominent black abolitionist who had lived in NYC and helped Frederick Douglass escape bondage through that city in 1838. In 1842, David Ruggles moved to Bensonville (a village outside Northampton) and began to work with the Northampton Association of Education and Industry (1841-1846) and operated an Underground Railroad station there.*

New York City & New York Statewide Connections



Joshua Leavitt



Rev. Charles B. Ray



Rev. Samuel Cornish



Isaac Hopper

In addition to the men pictured above, Brown also had abolition connections with the Tappan brothers and Gerrit Smith that spanned from NYC to western New York. The men above were critical because they were heavily involved in the abolition press, like Garrison, printing and reprinted letters, stories, and events that assisted black and white abolitionists coordinate their efforts.

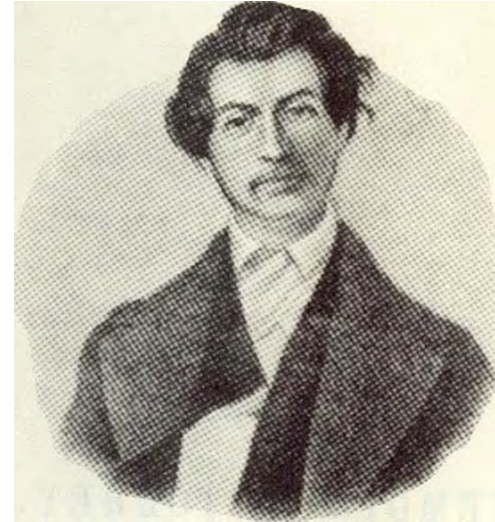
Eastern NY Anti-Slavery Society & Local Abolition



Gerrit Smith



Mr. Stephen Myers



Rev. Charles T. Torrey



Rev. Henry Highland Garnet

Rev. Brown helped co-found the Eastern NY Anti-Slavery Society with Gerrit Smith and Rev. Fayette Shipherd (located in Troy, NY at that time) and left the pulpit to become a full-time activist. With the men pictured above and Shipherd, Brown served as the Corresponding Secretary and Traveling Agent for the ENYSAAS and worked with community leaders in the Vigilance Committees in Albany and Troy. In Albany, Brown and Torrey began publishing the abolition newspaper *Tocsin of Liberty* (later renamed the *Albany Patriot*). Brown also played a role in the Underground Railroad operations transferring freedom seekers from the Washington, DC and Baltimore, MD to Canada, byway of Albany and Troy and Vermont.*

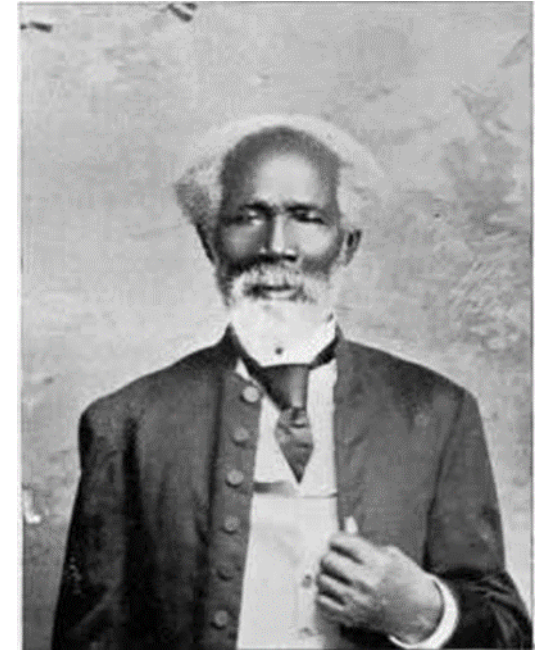
Forwarding Agent

Abolition Riot.—A disgraceful riot occurred at Northampton last week. The occasion was a lecture by Rev. **Abel Brown** and an African, once a slave, who accompanies him. The first evening the disturbance was great, but the second it was disgraceful. After Mr. Brown had read a chapter in the bible and offered up a prayer to the throne of grace, the negro commenced to speak. He complained of the disturbance the night before, whereat, says the democrat, "a villanous compound of rancorous smell as ever offended nostril," ascended from the red hot stove in a fume of assafœtida and pepper. At the same time, the eyes were inflamed (as if king alcohol had been burning them up for ten years) by the finest particles of snuff and pepper, waited about the hall by letting fly a couple of doves, whose wings and feathers were saturated with those irritable powders. This caused a general scream among the women, and a scuffle among the constables and rioters. The passage way to the door was completely blocked up, and "confusion worse confounded" reigned triumphant, amid songs and shouts, and taunts at each other. The windows were finally opened, and all breathed more freely again—the doves flew out—the children jumped out, and the lights were put out. The hall was cleared, and with much difficulty the Rev. Mr. Brown and the negro escaped with their lives, and thus ended the second night of the abolition lecture, which we hope and trust will be the last.—*Hampden Post*.

Mississippi Free Trader (Natchez, Miss.), April 6, 1843

☞ There has been a riot in a church at Northampton, Mass. consequent on Rev. **Abel Brown** and a black man attempting to lecture there against Slavery. When the black man got up to speak, the audience was driven out of the house by the fumes of burning assafœtida. Rev. **Abel Brown** will make no Abolitionists; not so those who oppose him after this fashion.

New York Tribune, March 20, 1843



Mr. Lewis Washington

Mr. Lewis Washington was a freedom seeker from Maryland who made his way to Troy (most likely with the assistance of Charles Torrey) where he became close friends with Rev. Brown. Brown and Washington traveled together on the abolition lecture circuit in the early 1840s and frequently experienced mob attacks. In addition, they worked with the ENYASS and Underground Railroad network in Albany and Troy to collect supplies for freedom seekers. After Brown's death, Washington lived in Troy for several years before becoming a grantee on the Smith's lands. He later relocated to Nebraska.*

Albany, New York,
Sep. 29, 1843. §

Mr. Wm. Howard, Ocracoke, N. C.

Dear Sir:—It gives me great pleasure to inform you that the four noble men who sailed away in a boat from your town, are safe, and well satisfied with their situation. They passed thro' this city last week, on their way to Canada, and before this are safely lodged in that home of the oppressed. The friends in this and other places, aided them in their escape from your fangs, for which the men were very thankful, and bid me draw on you for the money advanced to them. The whole expense will not be less than thirty dollars, which you will please forward, "post paid," to the subscriber. The back of one was most cruelly scarred; all had been beaten severely. The scars on the heads of two of them, which you made with a cane, were quite visible, and indicate a savageness of temper which ill becomes a gentleman. I sincerely hope that you may repent of your wickedness, and liberate the wife of each of them, and forward them to me that I may send them to their husbands, who spoke of them with deep interest. The boat can be found on the beach, somewhere between your town and New York City. They regret that they have not been paid for their services for the past years, but appeared encouraged in prospect of receiving wages in future.

If you, Sir, ever travel this way, please call at our office, and we will use every christiana means to convince you of the injustice of slaveholding, and the perfect propriety of emancipation.

I shall publish this letter in our city paper, and forward it to your son, who, I am informed, is Post Master at your place, and a worthy citizen.

The men were all well, and happy as circumstances would permit.

Respectfully yours,
Abel Brown,

Gen. Ag't for the Albany
Forwarding Company.

Vermont Union Whig, February 15, 1844

Forwarding Agent

Grand Shipment of Humanity.—Not many days ago we had the comfort of assisting in shipping towards the North pole, sixteen bales of colored humanity all in one lot, and two in another, the day before, well labelled by the hand of their Maker, all impressed with his own image on their souls. Among them was a mother with four children—all girls; one grown up, and the others quite small. Where are those that should fill up the chasm—where her husband:—torn from her by the peculiar institution, to be seen no more this side of eternity!! This woman (the Lord only knows how she did it) effected her escape, to avoid the fate of being put up with her little ones and her grown up daughter, and sold with the other property (such as hogs, cattle, &c.) of a bankrupt owner. —Albany Tocsin.

Liberator, September 9 1842

Rev. Brown frequently informed bounty hunters and slave owners that he assisted freedom seekers. On several occasions, Brown played on the language of "property in man" by writing that he was the "General Agent for the Albany Forwarding Company" involved in a "Grand Shipment of Humanity." Together with Washington and Charles T. Torrey, and Stephen Myers (Albany) and William Rich (Troy), freedom seeking men, women, and children made their way through the Capital Region to Rochester, Syracuse, and across the boarder to Canada.*

500 PAIRS WOOLLEN SOCKS WANTED! The Ex. Com. of the East. New York A. S. Society have made arrangements so that they can dispose of Woollen Socks, at seven and a half cents, for a good common acct. We hope our sisters in the country who know how to make them will furnish us 500 pairs within eight weeks.

The proceeds of them will be applied to supply the Cor. Sec'y. and Mr. Lewis Washington, the excellent colored lecturer, and to aid fugitive slaves.

Let one and all send immediately to
ABEL BROWN,
 Cor. Sec'y of the E. N. Y. A. S. Society
 Albany, Jan. 1st 1844.
 Will the Liberty Press and Country please insert, once or twice.

From Washington, DC to Canada

In 1845, James Baker, a freedom seeker living in Canada, was reunited with his wife and son after the abolition network through the Capital Region purchased their freedom. A few years earlier, that same network of black men and women and Rev. Brown, in Troy and Albany, NY, along with Torrey, in Washington, DC, and Brown's friends in Canandaigua had made Baker's arrival to Canada possible via the Underground Railroad.

In 1844, Charles T. Torrey was convicted for his participation in the Underground Railroad and sentenced to six years in the Maryland Penitentiary. In 1846, he died in prison due to tuberculosis.

From the **Albany Patriot**
DEAR JACKSON.—I mentioned the case a few weeks since to your readers of James Baker, a man who some two years and a half since escaped from slavery in the District of Columbia. James left his wife Mary, and little boy, who he expected would follow him within a few weeks. Unluckily, in making the attempt to escape, with others, Mary was detected and kept still in slavery. James had not heard a word from her afterwards, and supposed she was sold down the "river," and bewailed her as a lost wife, I understand. A number of the company recaptured with her were actually sold South to return no more; but happily for her, she had a master who is naturally kind, and was inclined to believe her expressions of regret, that she had foolishly been induced to attempt an escape, and to confide in her fair promises never to repeat the offence!
Our generous and self-denying friends in Cattaraugus and Chautauque, who assisted James so promptly to procure the means for his wife's release, will rejoice greatly to learn, that I was able to complete the negotiation with her master that secures her freedom, and that she with the boy has arrived here safely.
Mr A., her master, speaks in high terms in Mary's praise. He says she is a *first best girl*—her only fault is, when not exactly pleased, she is slightly inclined to be a little *SOLKY!* That is bad, certainly; but whether James is much worse off in this respect than divers other husbands, they know better far than I can pretend to! James, Mr A. says, is a most remarkably fine fellow. His master put unlimited confidence in him, and intended *some time to free him, if he had not fool-*

tracts of appropriate passages from the O. I. and New Testaments, and a long array of specific confessions and promises. Having but a minute, however, to draw up the deed, I made it as simple and concise as possible, by saying, that upon considerations of good-will, justice, and humanity, and the further one of three hundred dollars in hand paid, &c. &c. The deed is on record at the Clerk's office in the city of Washington, and free papers certified by the Clerk are in Mary's possession. That's the way we republicans do this business of buying wives! The old Patriarchs used to buy wives, I think. James Baker is in a right line from them, and only revives an ancient custom!—There are people not slaves, I know of, who would be glad to get wives by purchase, even at a high price!
The New York Observer, I suppose, will now be troubled that we have changed our policy from *stealing to buying slaves!* I confess I would rather have brought Mary and little Jimmy off without paying for them, if it had been perfectly convenient to do so, and saved the three hundred dollars in the hands of the noble-hearted donors for some other work of charity and mercy!

Instead of listening to the hypocritical *cant* about Texas annexation and the like, remember, friends, the slaves around our own national capitol who brush the boots, sweep the chambers, and cook the dinners of your own Congressmen, unpaid, un-pitied, and unrelieved by the agents your *votes* have created and clothed with the amplest authority to open wide to them the passage into freedom. W. L. C.
Albany, March 13, 1845.

NOTICE TO MR TORREY'S FRIENDS.—When I visited Baltimore on my way home, I obtained information concerning the condition and prospects of our imprisoned brother, some of which is published and the remainder is in possession of his friends here, which it is not at present expedient to make public. I have the means of knowing that, so late as the 9th instant, he was quite well, and was receiving from the warden all the kindness compatible with his situation. For reasons not necessary to mention, it is proper to state that no person has been authorized to solicit funds on his behalf since he was sent to the penitentiary.—For the prevention of errors in this matter, Mr Torrey wishes it understood, that all contributions for his benefit should be made through Mrs Torrey, or the Boston committee, or Leavitt & Alden. If any sums have been contributed on the solicitation of unauthorized persons, it is requested that information be given as above. J. L.
Emancipator.

Vermont Union Whig, March 27, 1845 (Voice of Freedom)

Libertyite

Rev. Brown became a political abolitionist supporting the Liberty Party. In the early 1840s, the Liberty Party was founded at a convention in Albany, NY. Liberty party members included, Salmon Chase (Ohio), men of the ENYASS, and other abolitionists in the free states. James Birney (Ohio) and Gerrit Smith were nominated by the Liberty Party in the United States Presidential elections in 1840 and 1844. Brown campaigned across New York state for the party and often faced violent mob attacks when doing so.*

FROM THE BOSTON PORT.
Gen. Harrison's Tampering with Northern Abolitionists, through Mr. Evans, of Maine, and Mr. Calhoun, of Mass.

We have endeavored to expose to honest men of all parties, and especially to our brethren of the South, the despicable and dishonest conduct of Gen. Harrison and his managers, in their double dealing with the people upon the vital question of abolition. The part of this game played at the South, by private letters under injunctions of secrecy, has been fully exposed. We now have positive proof on the other side, of the imposture practised at the North. The extent to which this base hypocrisy has been carried is not yet fully developed, but enough is now proved to establish the fact beyond the possibility of doubt or denial.

On the 25th of May, we published the statement made by Rev. **Asah Brown** in an Abolition Convention in this city, that he had seen a letter from William B. Calhoun, member of Congress, assuring the abolitionists that they might rely on Gen. Harrison and inviting their support.

This statement William B. Calhoun, in a letter of June 12, pronounced to be "totally and unequivocally false!" The dilemma in which that jesuitical gentleman has involved himself, in his shuffling attempt to pacify southern whigs and at the same time not offend northern abolitionists, on whom he depends for his only hope

You must be aware that the fact of my answering the letter of a prominent democrat, with a knowledge that it may be published, will be held up by the whig party as an evidence of my secretly being engaged in plotting to aid the re-election of Mr. Van Buren. I ought therefore to state, that I never did vote, and unless I am very much deceived, never shall vote for him for the first office in this nation. On the contrary, in 1836, I voted for Wm. H. Harrison for President. At this time I am opposed to the election of either him or Mr. Van Buren.

I should readily have answered the inquiries you propound had they been made by a whig, but the whig editors, so far as I have seen, have thought proper to assume the authenticity of the statements published as mine in the Boston democratic papers, and have charged me with falsehood without once inquiring if my remarks were correctly reported. I am thus forced to conclude, that they wish the matter to rest where it is.

I have carefully examined the report of my remarks made at the late Abolition Convention in your city, as given in your letter before me, and unhesitatingly say that your report is substantially correct. I may not have used the exact expressions which are attributed to me in your letter; neither do I suppose that any one in the convention understood me as using the exact words of Mr. Calhoun's letter; but I did intend to give the sentiments of the letter, and of his confidential friend, Judge Morris. Your report, as given in the letter before me, does express the sentiments which I intended to utter, and which I have no doubt I did utter on that occasion.

Permit me, in addition, to state a few facts respecting that mysterious letter.

1. The reasons why the letter was written—The Hampden County Abolition Society, at its annual meeting, on the 24th January, 1840, passed a resolution declaring
"That no abolitionist can give his vote for either of these men for the office of President of the United States, without a good evidence of a fundamental change in their former views and practices on this subject."

Judge Morris attended that meeting, made two or three speeches in favor of Gen. Harrison, manifested great indignation that ministers of the Gospel should venture to interfere with

“Unimpeachable Man”

Rev. Brown repeatedly challenged the Baptist Church and Baptist ministers for allowing slaveholding Baptists into the churches set up in the South by the Baptist Free Mission Society. He also caused a ruckus by requesting that if the Baptist church's American and Foreign Bible Society planned to distribute Bibles then the enslaved be provided with the good book, too.

Rev. Brown's commitment to the First Amendment and his devout behavior earned him a reputation as an “unimpeachable man”.

Letter from Abel Brown
ALBANY, May 8, 1841.

DEAR BRO. GARRISON :

I take pleasure in thinking that the Liberator and the Massachusetts and American A. S. Societies are open to the pointed rebuke of any and all who sustain that 'sum of all villainies,' American slavery. After about two years of experience in connection with the Massachusetts Abolition Society, I am compelled to come to the old pioneer Society and paper, or neglect to reprove those who chiefly support slavery.

When I engaged to labor as an agent for the Massachusetts Abolition Society, I received the most solemn assurances that, so far as rebuking slavery was concerned, the new organization would never be found behind the old society; but I have been wofully deceived. There are, doubtless, many connected with it, who are ready to come up fully to the work; but I will state a few facts, that will enable yourself and readers to judge of some of its most efficient agents and committee men.

You have, doubtless, heard Rev. Messrs. N. Colver and C. W. Denison tell of the awful sinfulness of slaveholders, and their abettors. You have heard them denounce them beyond description. You, doubtless, heard bro. Colver's strong speeches in England, where he again and again declared that he had denied all christian fellowship to slaveholders, &c. &c. You know that both of these brethren have publicly declared, that they could not, for conscience' sake, work in the same Anti-Slavery Society with William Lloyd Garrison, Lucretia Mott, and others, on account of certain differences of sentiment and practice; and have, therefore, after many public rebukes, left the old society. After all this utter abhorrence and cleansing of their skirts from the least smell of old organization, these brethren have attended the Baptist anniversaries in Baltimore, where they have engaged in numerous, and, as they say, *delightful* meetings with BAPTIST SLAVEHOLDERS, who have negroes raised upon their plantations as the New-England farmers raise Berkshire pigs, and who make God—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—the author and sustainer of such heaven-daring iniquity. These brethren report that they had many *private* talks with the slaveholders at Baltimore, but that they did not think best to say any thing in the public meetings; although they had an undoubted right to speak upon

have been glad to take refuge under the 'hot shot' of the Liberator.

I am sorry to say that circumstances, beyond my control, deprive me of the privilege of meeting you in New-York at the annual meeting of the American A. S. Society. Go on, my brother, until every man is esteemed a brother, or you rest with your 'Elder Brother' in heaven!

I have been severely reprov'd for calling you a brother in Christ; but, still, I venture to say, I remain, .

Your still more affectionate brother in the bonds of Jesus Christ our Saviour,

ABEL BROWN.

MR. COLLINS IN SCOTLAND. We have given the proceedings in full of a very large and spirited meeting of the Glasgow Emancipation Society, held for the purpose of giving the right hand of fellowship to the American Anti-Slavery Society, and Mr. Collins as its representative. We have chosen not to mutilate them through any affectation of delicacy on account of the complimentary allusions to ourself, because it is fair and proper that the opinions of our faithful Scottish coadjutors, in regard to our own course individually, and also to that of old organized anti-slavery, should be correctly known on this side of the Atlantic. The Address of the Workingmen of Glasgow to Mr. Collins is admirable in its spirit and conception, and will be heartily responded to by all who stand on the old anti-slavery platform in this country.

NEW-YORK ANNIVERSARY. We have copied from the Standard the official account of the proceedings of the American A. S. Society at its recent anniversary in New-York. We are proud of them as an abolitionist, and have room to add, merely, that the business meetings were the most spirited of any that we have ever attended in that city. The hearts of all who were present were cheered beyond measure.

COLONIZATION. The old dragon is still as ferocious and diabolical in spirit as ever, though crippled in strength. Read the speeches, on our first page, of the Reverend Doctor Milnor, Professor HoldCob, and Rev. Mr. Eddy, before the New-York Colonization Society, and say whether they are not inhuman and impious in a high degree.

GENIUS. The spirited

“Unimpeachable Man”

To Rev. **Ahal Brown**
NORTHAMPTON, MASS.

DEAR BROTHER IN CHRIST:
You are mistaken. I have not 'bowed down to the dark spirit of slavery.'
But I have taken what I believe to be a wise and judicious course respecting the **Baptist** Triennial Convention, which meets next week in Baltimore.
A few plain facts will show where I stand. I trust they will dispel every doubt, and relieve a mind which I regret to learn is 'exceedingly pained' on my account.

1. In attending the Convention as a delegate, I do not thereby endorse the *christian character* of any of its members. I meet them, just as you would meet them, in a promiscuous meeting. If I were called to commune with them at the Lord's table, the case would be entirely different.
2. I expect to rebuke the sin of slavery there, as I did publicly and privately when I labored in Wilmington, in Baltimore, and on the Delaware peninsula, for several years. But as I am alone responsible to God for my conduct there, and elsewhere, I shall use my own judgment as to the best course to be pursued respecting that momentous concern.

Sincerely thanking you for your 'godly jealousy' over me, I remain, as ever,
Your friend and brother,
C. W. DENISON.

Boston, April 19, 1841.

An “Unimpeachable Man” Remembered



Catherine Swan Brown Spear



Frederick Douglass



Rev. Henry Highland Garnet

In November 1844, Rev. Abel Brown died of “brain disease” in the home of the Mosher family in Canandaigua, NY while traveling on the Libertyite and abolition lecture circuits. Rev. Henry Highland Garnet delivered a moving eulogy for his friend. Mrs. Catherine Swan Brown, Brown’s second wife, was a member of the ENYASS, traveled with Brown and Washington, and published *Memoir of Rev. Abel Brown by His Companion* in 1849, noted Garnet’s words. In 1853, three years after the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act was signed, Frederick Douglass spoke in Canandaigua and printed in his paper that Canandaigua was the headquarters of Silver Gray pro-slavery conservatism in western New York. He also paid homage to Abel Brown and suggested something more sinister might explain Brown’s sudden death, writing “It was here that that true friend of the American bondman, Rev. Abel Brown, was shamelessly mobbed, if not killed, a few years ago by the respectability and piety of the place.” Indeed, memory of Brown’s commitment to enslaved men and women continued in the 1850s when Brown’s question concerning the distribution of Bibles to the enslaved masses by the American and Foreign Bible Society was continually recorded in the minutes of abolition and American Bible Society meetings and reprinted in newspapers.*

*Sources

- All newspaper images can be found at either *Newspapers.com*, or the Black Abolitionists Database.
- For information about Garrison's commitment to exercise the First Amendment, see Denis Brennan, *The Making of an Abolitionist: William Lloyd's Garrison's Path to Publishing the Liberator* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2014); Quote can be found in C.S. Brown, *Memoir of Abel Brown by His Companion*, 91.
- For information on the Northampton community and David Ruggles, see Graham Russell Gao Hodges, *David Ruggles: A Radical Black Abolitionist and the underground Railroad in New York City* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2010), and the davidrugglescenter.org.
- For information on the ENYASS & Local Abolition slide: For Troy connections, see Jennifer Thompson Burn, dissertation, *Black Trojans: The Grassroots Abolition Campaign by the Free Black Community in Troy, NY before 1861* (2019); For Torrey information, see E. Fuller Torrey, *The Martyrdom of Abolitionist Charles Torrey* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), and Stanley Harrold, "On the Borders of Slavery and Rae: Charles T. Torrey and the Underground Railroad" (2000); For Albany connections, see Underground Railroad History Project, <https://undergroundrailroadhistory.org/mission/>, and the works by Tom Calarco, Don Papson, Charles Blockson, Eric Foner, Switala; Lewis Washington would later move to Nebraska, for information on Lewis Washington, Gerrit Smith's land grants, and the Underground Railroad, see North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association, <https://www.northcountryundergroundrailroad.com/lake-champlain.php?page=5>, and Chauncey C. Olin, "Reminiscences of the Busy Life of Chauncey C. Olin" in: *A Complete Record of the John Olin Family ...* (Indianapolis: Baker-Randolph Co., 1893), <http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/ref/collection/tp/id/57929>, and *Essex County Times*, January 31, 1844. Two excellent histories of the abolition movement, see Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), and Merton Dillon, *Slavery Attacked: Southern Slaves and Their Allies, 1691-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).
- For information on the Libertyite slide: Jennifer Thompson Burns dissertation, *Black Trojans: The Grassroots Abolition Campaign by the Free Black Community in Troy, NY before 1861* (2019); Corey M. Brooks, *Liberty Power: Antislavery Third Parties and the Transformation of American Party Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Richard O. Johnson, *The Liberty Party, 1840-1840: Antislavery Third-Party Politics in the United States* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009); Eric Foner, *The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); For early article that captures Brown's budding political involvement in the early 1840s, see *The Charleston Mercury*, July 09, 1840.
- For information on "Unimpeachable Man" slides, see Letter Abel Brown to William Lloyd Garrison. July 27, 1841 in Anti-Slavery Collection at Boston Public Library Rare Books Department. <https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/6h441h69d>; C.S. Brown, *Memoir*; For Frederick Douglass's thoughts about Brown, see *Frederick Douglass Paper*, January 14, 1853; For information on Brown's challenges to the Baptist church, see *Liberator*, March 22, 1839, May 18, 1841, February 16, 19, March 1, 1844, February 4, 1853, May 18, 1855; For Rev. HH Garnet's eulogy, see Brown, *Memoir*, 212.