



Sand Lake Historical Society

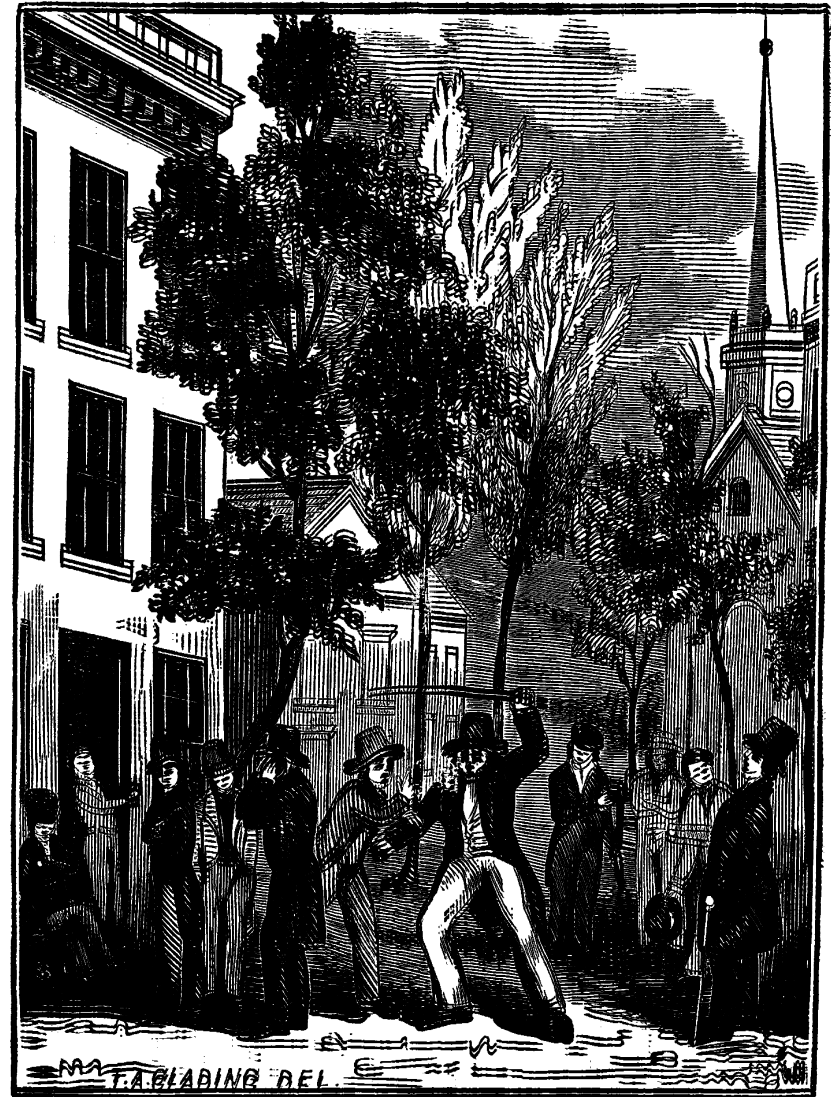
Abel Brown **Pastor, Abolitionist, Radical** **A Conversation**

Presented by Peter Finn

February 8, 2022

Rev. Abel Brown

- Temperance preacher
- Anti-slavery speaker
- Newspaper publisher
- Underground railroad activist
- Radical
- Militant
- Pastor of the Sand Lake Baptist Church



Assault on Abel Brown at Westfield, N. Y.—Page 72.

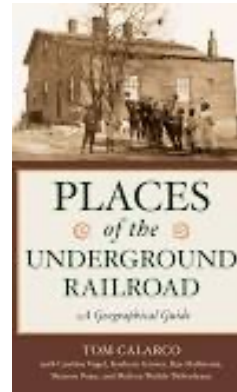
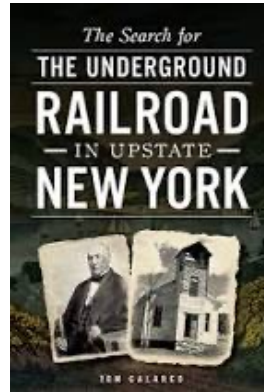
The Abel Brown “Fan Club”

Paul & Mary Liz Stewart

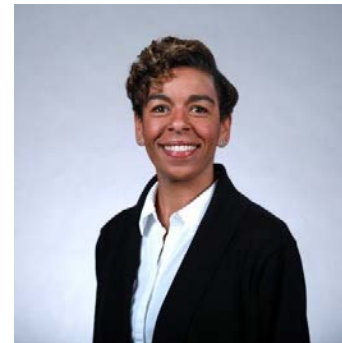
Underground Railroad Education Center



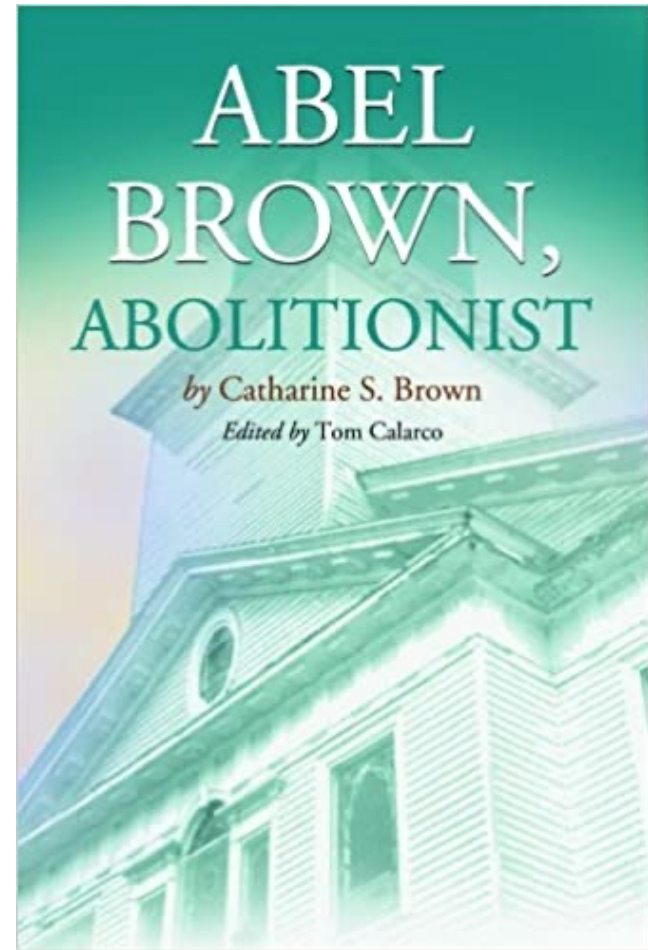
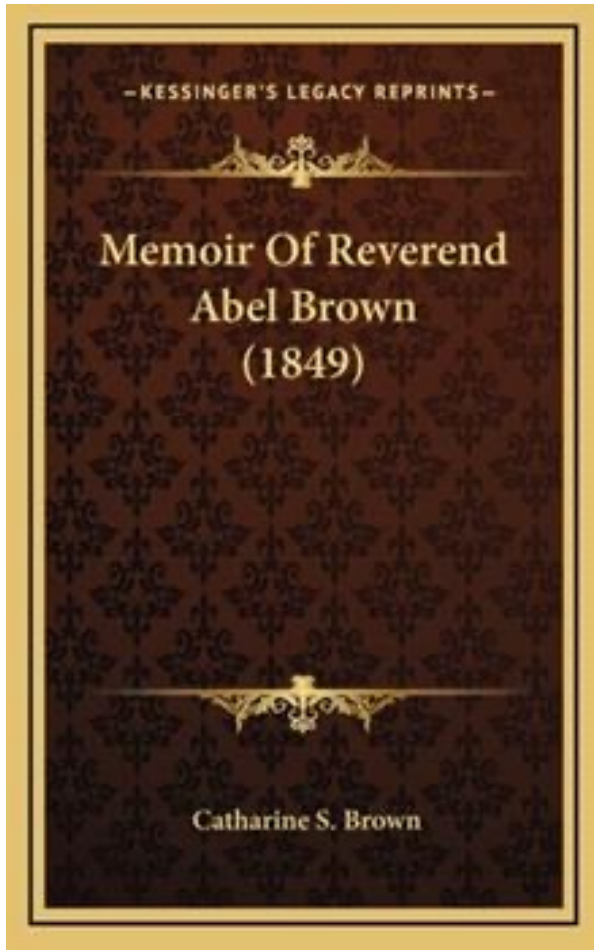
Tom Calarco
Author



Dr. Jennifer Thompson Burns
University at Albany



Elder Brown's "Biggest Fan"





Abel Brown challenges slavery

Three Questions for Today:

- 1. Who was Abel Brown?*
- 2. What in God's Name was he doing in Sand Lake?*
- 3. Why Have I Never Heard of Him?*

Abel Brown ...

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 assafoetida. Rev. Abel Brown will make no Abolitionists; not so those who oppose him after this fashion.

“The Forgotten Abolitionist”

-- Tom Calarco

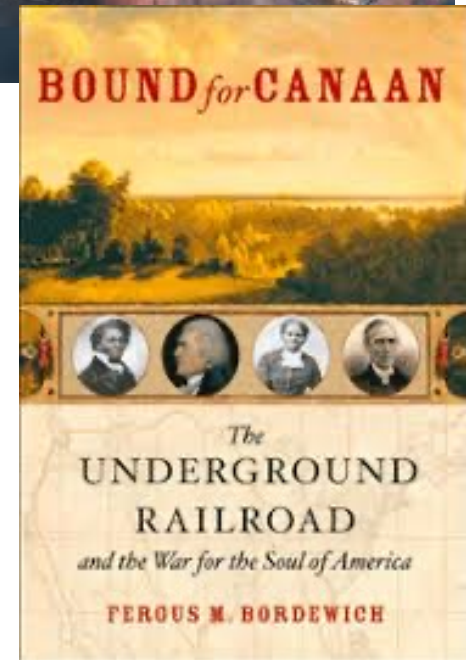
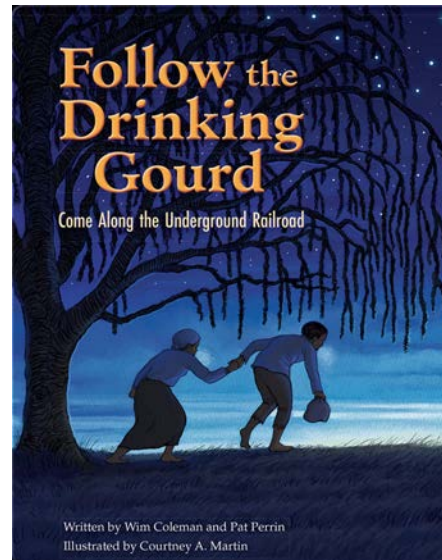
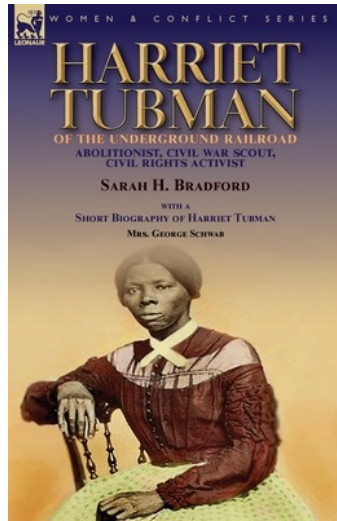
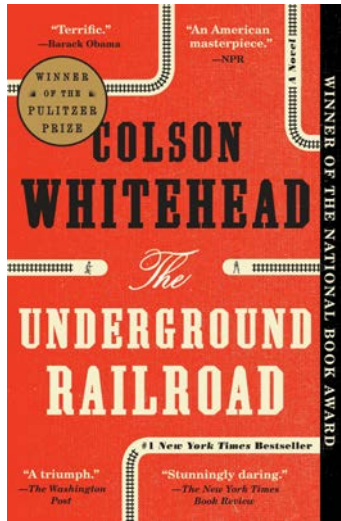
“The Unimpeachable Man”

-- Dr. Jennifer Burns

“John Brown Before John Brown Was”

-- Dr. Jennifer Burns

The Underground Railroad



The Underground Railroad...

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.

- ... was not a railroad
- ... was not underground (literally or figuratively)
- ... and was not about benevolent White people rescuing poor, defenseless Blacks

The Underground Railroad...

Roles (“conductors”, “station agents”, etc.)

Separating Fact From Myth:

- Stories, lore
- Known associates
- Documentary evidence



Abel Brown and Sand Lake – All of the Above!

First Question: Who Was Abel Brown?



Born in Hartford Connecticut,
November 9, 1810

Family moved to Eaton,
Madison Co., NY, 1821

Educated at Fredonia Academy
(founded in 1826), 1829

Theological Seminary at
Hamilton Institution

Completed studies 1833



Abel Brown ...

Evangelical Christian – a man of God

Ecumenical (sort of)

Provocative

SMALL, ATHLETIC
“A GOOD DANCER”

*Organized – “a good
head for business”*

Nervous – impatient & energetic

*Gregarious
Charismatic*

Clever

Plain-spoken

*Uncompromising –
Fearless – Tireless*

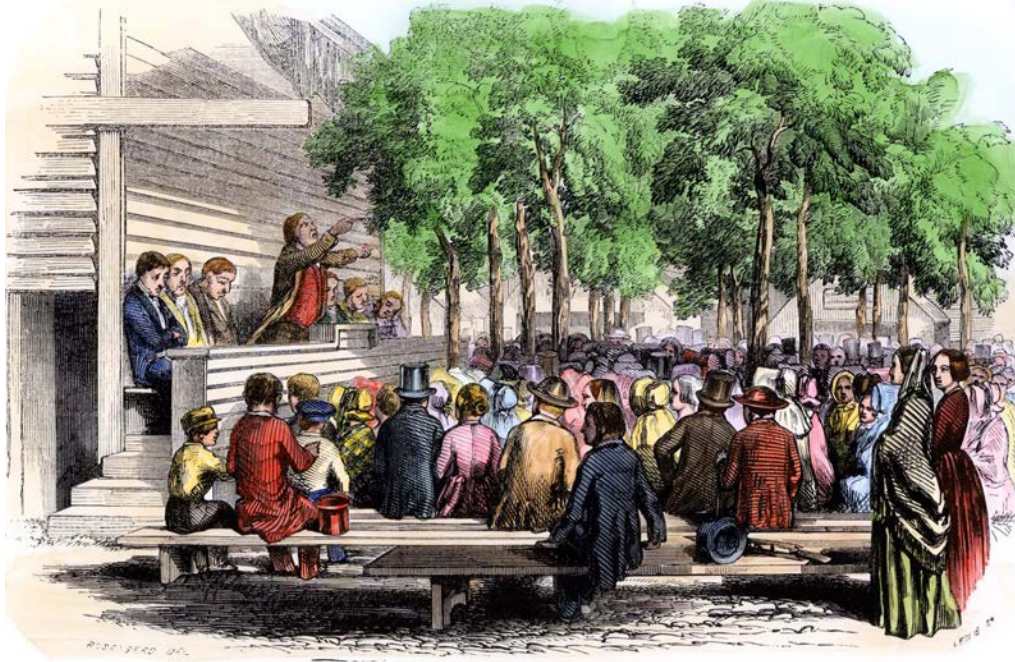
*Libeler – Brazen --
Stiffnecked PITA!*

EGALITARIAN



Rev. Abel Brown ... Evangelical Christian

“God’s laws are more important than man’s.”



“The only desire the Christian should have to stay in this world, should be to warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come.”

“We ought to be humble before God for permitting us to labor in his cause.”

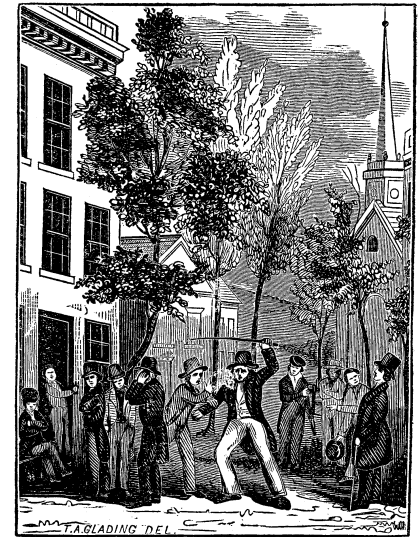
“We should be willing to stay here [in this mortal world] just as long as God would have us, and bear with patience all the afflictions he sends upon us; for we can never suffer as much as Jesus did.”

“Are you willing to live, labor and die, pointing sinners to the Lamb of God?”



Fall 1835, Auburn NY – assaulted, beaten in the street, pursued by a mob of 500

Fall 1836, Westfield NY – accosted on the street and whipped “30 or more times” with a rawhide



Assault on Abel Brown at Westfield, N. Y.—Page 72.

We expect the whigs will again resort to their violent acts at the coming election. Already, in fact, have they begun it. In Auburn, a few days since, they mobbed an Abolition clergyman, the Rev. Abel Brown, of Albany, because he told the people an unsavory truth, namely, that Henry Clay was the owner of thirty slaves. One prominent whig was heard to say, “he (Mr. B.) should not leave the house with a whole skin, if he did with his life.”—The mob followed him through the streets, shouting and cheering the name of Henry Clay. *This is their “decency,” their “order and law!”*
Seneca Falls Democrat.

Columbia Register, New Haven 10-15-1842

Rev. Abel Brown, anti-slavery lecturer was mobbed on the evening of the 6th ult. at Ballston, N. Y. while attempting to speak on the subject of slavery. We thought mobs were out of fashion, but the people of Ballston seem resolved to introduce them again.

Jamestown Jour 11-17-1843



To the Baptists in the United States...

You see by my letter of December, that your missionaries in Texas have become slave-owners, and are now engaged in building up a slaveholding Church in that land.

THE AMERICAN BAPTIST HOME MISSION SOCIETY
ARE GUILTY—

1st. Of sending missionaries to preach among slaveholders, with the express understanding that they are to neglect to rebuke slaveholding, and receive slaveholders into the church as worthy Christians.

2d. They send agents to slaveholding churches, and ask them to give them (the Board) a part of the money they have robbed from the slave, to aid in supporting missionaries who sanctify slavery.

3d. They instruct their missionaries (even in northern communities) to refrain from anti-slavery efforts, and not to introduce tests* that will exclude slaveholders, or give the influence of the Church against slavery.

4th. They sustain men who were active in getting up the mob that murdered Lovejoy, such as John A. Peck.

THE AMERICAN B. M. OF FOREIGN MISSIONS—

1st. Sustain missionaries who are known to be slaveholders, or upholders and sustainers of slavery.

2d. Their missionaries among the Indians, teach that slaveholding is consistent with church membership, and receive slaveholders into their missionary churches.

3d. The Board suppress letters received from their missionaries in Asia, remonstrating against being supported by money robbed from the slave, and thereby make the missionaries appear before mankind as accomplices in robbing the slave.

4th. One of their missionaries lately wrote to a friend saying, 'If the Board send me money collected of slaveholders, I will do it up in a bag and throw it into the sea.' And almost all the missionaries who have any knowledge of the courses of the Board, have expressed desires to be sustained by the products of free labor.

The American and Foreign Bible Society have lately sent one of their Secretaries, Dr. Babcock, to the South, and his great business no doubt is to collect money and apologise for slaveholders.

Yours, for the Truth,
Albany, Jan. 7, 1844. ABEL BROWN.

* The writer has a copy of a letter of instructions, to this effect, now in his possession.

Fall 1837 – Exhorts Hamilton seminary senior class to leave “immediately”

1842 - Sued for Libel by Henry Clay

ABEL BROWN.—We perceive that our whilom friend, Rev. Abel Brown, is getting into hot water at Albany. He has accused Henry Clay of adultery, gambling, robbery and various other like crimes; and the Clay club at Albany are disposed to give him an opportunity to prove his charges. They have got him indicted for a libel on the Western statesman. The Rev. gentleman may sustain himself as well as he did in making similar charges against Gen. Harrison.

December 1843 - Exposes Baptist slaveholders and Church Leadership (published in The Liberator)



AB “Trolled” Slave-holders and Their Supporters in Print

SOUTHERN MEANNESS.—The following letter and advertisement were received by mail, with a charge of 56 cents postage, a few days since :

\$100 REWARD.—Run away from the subscriber, in Baltimore city, on Thursday, 25th ult. a *Mulatto Man*, named *Robert Hill*. [We omit the description.]

WALTER FERNANDIS.

The letter was addressed inside to “The Abolitionist Brown.”

REPLY.

MR. FERNANDIS—This is to inform you that the noble Robert Hill reached this city in safety, and was safely sent on his way rejoicing. We charge you \$25 for money paid him and services rendered, and 56 cents for the letter containing the advertisement. Please send a draft for the same.

ABEL BROWN,
Forwarding Merchant, Albany.

P. S.—The business is very good this year. Please inform the slaves that we are always on hand ready to receive them. A. B.

From the Vermont Freeman, July 1, 1843.

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 christian 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.

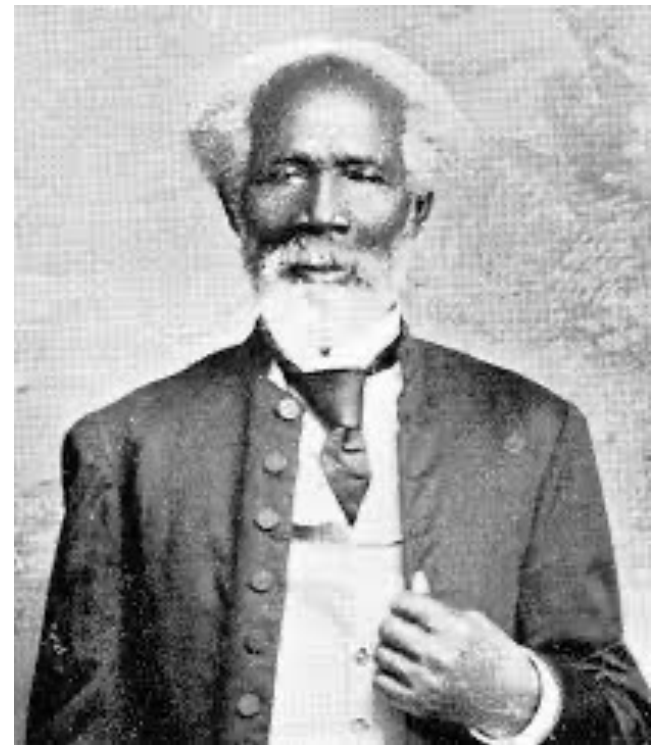


Egalitarian Abel Brown

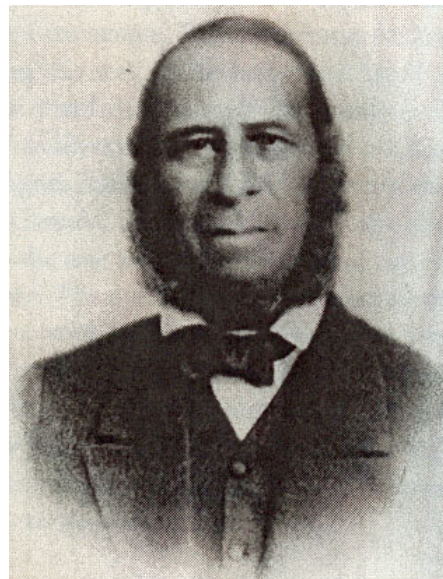
First wife Mary Ann Brigham
 Editor of the Golden Rule



Lewis Washington



Rev Charles B. Ray



Catharine Brown Spears



Fanatic to Radical...Abel Brown's Evolution

Career Tracking

- Ambition to be an overseas missionary
- Itinerant preacher: NY, MA, PA
- Sabbath School promoter
- Congregation-based minister
- Temperance speaker
- Abolitionist
- Underground Railroad advocate, participant, promoter, newspaper publisher, political advocate



Second Question: What in God's Name Was Abel Brown Doing in Sand Lake?

Rev. Abel Brown came to Sand Lake Baptist May
1841 – age 30 -- and dismissed from the pulpit
here, summer 1842

Brown came to Sand Lake
from Northampton, MA

“Hired” by Deacons A.R.
Fox and Dr. C.H. Gregory



The Travels of Abel Brown

Eaton / Morrisville

Hartford

Fredonia

Hamilton College

Homer / Cortland

Auburn

Northeast PA

Baltimore

Central NY

Finger Lakes

Beaver Co. PA

Northampton MA

Sand Lake - Bennington

Albany

Troy

Vermont

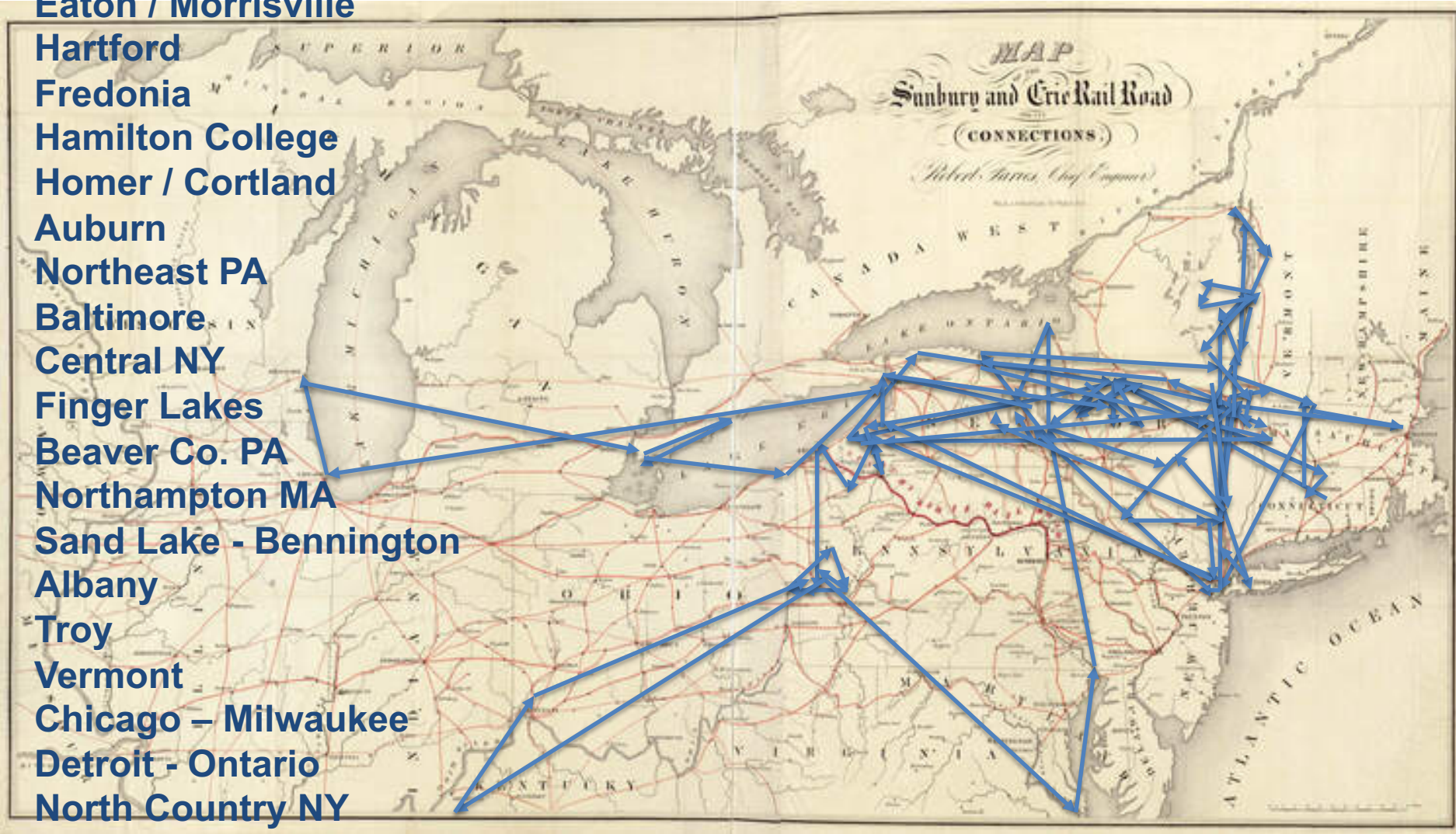
Chicago - Milwaukee

Detroit - Ontario

North Country NY

Canandaigua

And elsewhere!

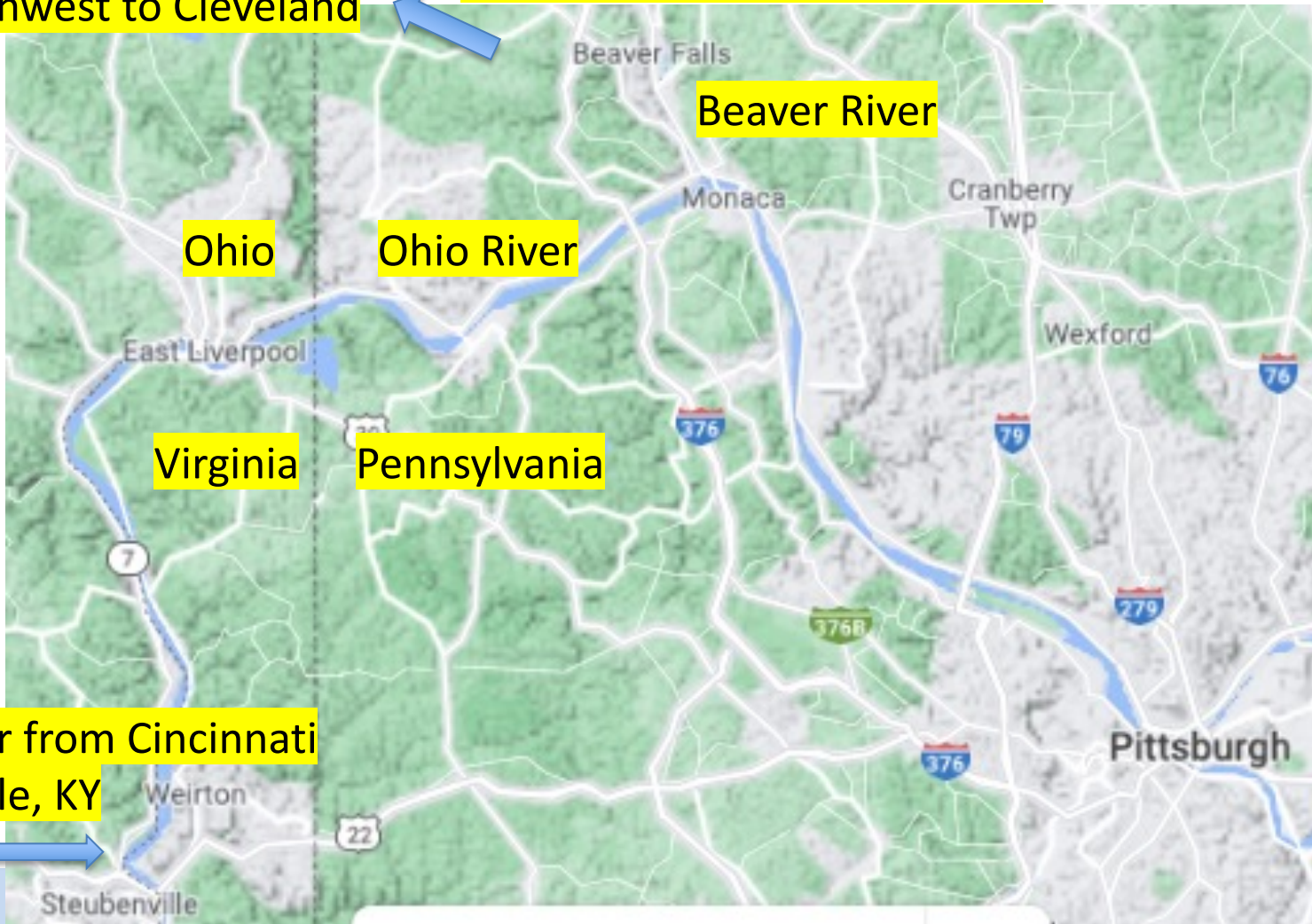


Abel Brown in Western Pennsylvania

North to Erie PA, Fredonia NY, Buffalo

Beaver Co. / New Brighton PA

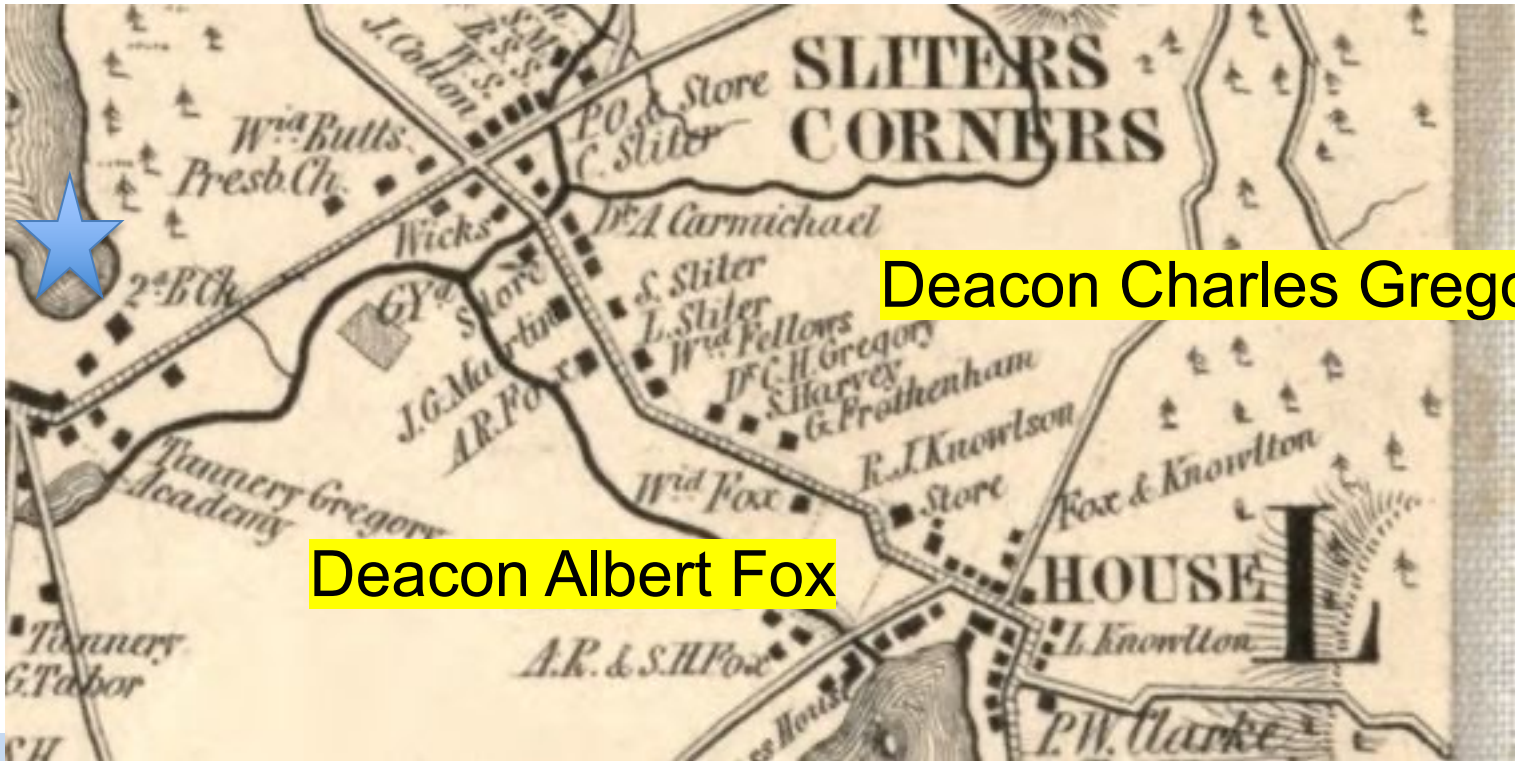
Northwest to Cleveland



Ohio River from Cincinnati & Louisville, KY



Sand Lake Baptist Church



Deacon Charles Gregory

Deacon Albert Fox

Why Sand Lake (Cont'd)

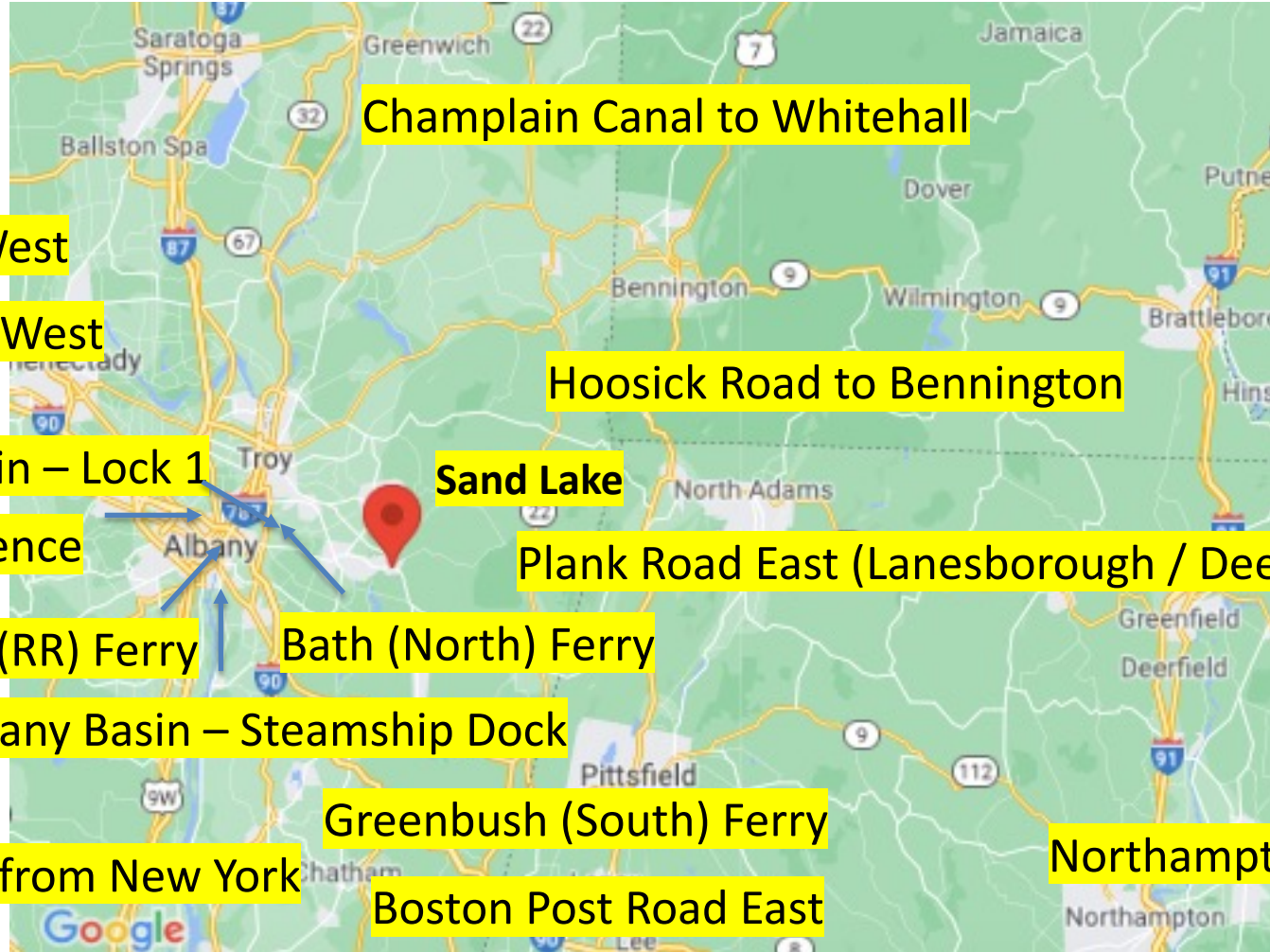
- AB in Trouble – Again!
- Frankean Synod Lutherans in WSL (“hotbed” town)
- Albany! (Troy, too)



Abel Brown & Sand Lake



TO CANADA



Champlain Canal to Whitehall

Railroad West

Erie Canal West

Hoosick Road to Bennington

Erie Canal Basin – Lock 1

Sand Lake

Myers Residence

Plank Road East (Lanesborough / Deerfield)

Maiden Lane (RR) Ferry

Bath (North) Ferry

Albany Basin – Steamship Dock

Greenbush (South) Ferry

Train from New York

Boston Post Road East

Northampton



Pastor at Sand Lake May 1841 – July 1842

... and Corr Sec'y Eastern NY Anti-Slavery Society,
wrote for Tocsin of Liberty newspaper, and ...

Addressed to: Charles Hicks
Hinsdaleville
Bennington town
Vermont

Dear Sir

Please receive the Bearer
as a friend who needs your aid
and direct him on his way if
you cannot give him work
he come to us well recommended
was a slave a few weeks since

Yours tl

Abel Brown
cor Secy of
Eastern N.Y. Aslavery
Socy.

Albany 9th June
1842



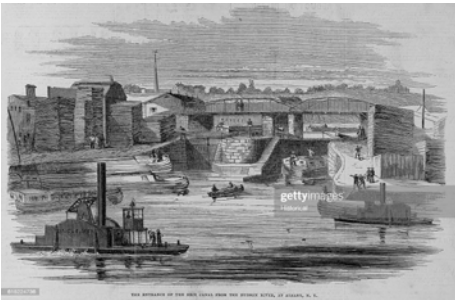
DISMISSAL!

Sand Lake, June 13th, 1842

DEAR BROTHER BROWN: - I feel as if I could weep tears of blood over the apparent desolating prospects of Zion...I feel as though we are called upon to contend inch by inch with the adversary of all good, for the right of our master's territory...The cloven hoof never appeared to me more apparent, and more deformed, than it did yesterday, in the determination of our Deacons, that they would do what they could to prevent your going as a delegate from this church, to the Association at Poughkeepsie. The main objection of Dea. Fox was, that you would agitate on the subject of slavery, and it struck him forcibly, that you had neglected to take a letter of dismissal from this church, purposely so that you might get the delegation; and this he thought very mysterious. Dea. Gregory had objections, but he did not make them known, and although it was voted that you should go as a delegate, yet that vote was afterwards rescinded.

I hope that the Lord will direct you in the way he would have you go, and if it is his will that you should, that all the causes of discouragement will not prevent your being present at the Association. Trust in God - he will sustain you. If means are wanting, I will bear a part of the expense. Yours as ever,

C. H. Gregory



Albany!

- Agent & Corr Sec'y Eastern NY Anti-Slavery Society*
 - * CH Gregory, Exec Committee!
- Traveling Speaker
- Publisher *Tocsin of Liberty*
- Underground RR Operative
- Secretary NY Liberty Party

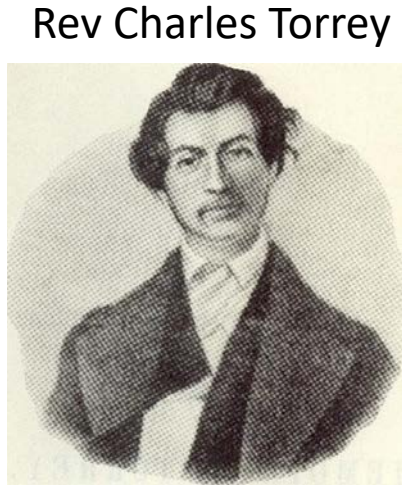
The Tocsin of Liberty,
Published Weekly, at Albany, N. Y.
BY ELDER ABEL BROWN,
Under the special patronage of the
ALBANY LIBERTY ASSOCIATION.
At \$1.50 per annum to Companies of 10,
Or \$2.00 the single copy, per mail,
ALWAYS IN ADVANCE.
Devoted to Freedom—Equality—Temperance—Virtue
—Agriculture—Commerce—Legislative Proceedings—
The News of the Day, Foreign and Domestic—The Arts
and Sciences—Trades—Select Miscellany, &c.
OFFICE No. 56 (UP STAIRS,) STATE-STREET.
Ministers of the Gospel, Lecturing Agents, and
others, are requested to act as Agents.
Clergymen who obtain for us two subscribers and send
us FOUR DOLLARS in advance, free of postage, or SIX DOL-
LARS and Four subscribers, will receive our paper a
year gratis.
* * A liberal commission to travelling agents. Ad-
dress the publisher, Albany, N. Y. Jan. 4, 1842.
Those editors who will insert the above, shall have
a like favor from us.



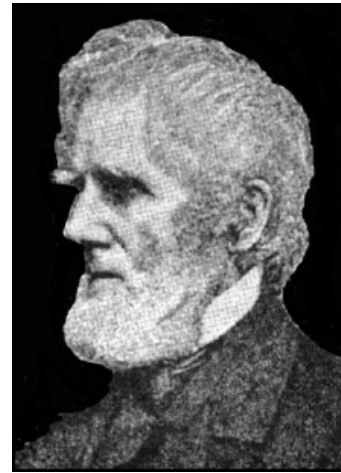
Full Time Activist



Gerrit Smith



Rev Charles Torrey



William Jay

Arthur Tappan



Stephen Myers

Rev Henry Highland Garnet



Rev Charles B. Ray



Rev Fayette Shipherd

**Fugitives. 'The cry is still they come.' – Two
yesterday morning, and two this morning...**

Abel Brown, 1843

...Mr. Moses Roper...
...Mr. Walter Freeman...
...Mr. Jeremiah Snowden...
...Mary Anne...
...Mr. William Johnson...
...Mr. Fester Dixon...
...Mr. Henry Terry...
...Eliza Wilson...

The vigilance committee are up
their elbows in work, and are desirous
to have you inform a few of those men
who have lately lost *property*...that we
are always on hand, and ready to ship
cargoes on the shortest notice, and en-
sure safe passage over the 'Great Ontario'

PURSUIT OF LIBERTY'

The Albany Tocsin of Liberty is delightful. The last number has a long communication from "Sam Weller," in answer to some dozen advertisements in the Washington papers of chattels that have run away. We extract the following notice of a

GREAT INCREASE OF BUSINESS AT ALBANY.

Ye who love the slave, take notice.

During an absence of 12 days from this city, no less than 26 fugitives from oppression, were forwarded by the "Vigilance Committee" of Albany, to Canada. They are now we trust, safe from Va. and Md. robbers.

This is to ask the friends of the oppressed, every where, to send us money for this object. Do not fail we entreat, for we cannot send them unless we have money to do it with.— As you value your own liberty, we beg you to aid in securing it to others.

Please address the subscriber, No. 8 South Pearl Street.

In behalf of the Vigilance Com.

ABEL BROWN.

Albany, Aug. 22, 1842.

We also learn of the flight of several other fugitives, by other routes. Eight passed down through Ohio to the lake in a body, the other day; and it so happened that the masters in pursuit, took passage in the same boat with four of them down the lake, but occupied a different apartment. The slaves were the *cabin* passengers, that time.

Abel Brown is arrested for a libel on Henry Clay! That will be a funny trial. Abel means to prove the facts in extenuation.

...Phillip & Benjamin
...Rev James Beulah
...Mr. Joseph Rogers
...Elizabeth Castle
...Levi
...Mr. Isaac Hinson
...Miss Sarah Smith

Certain gentlemen, who take such a deep interest in the welfare of Miss Leah Brown, lately held in servile Bondage by Mrs. McDonald, are hereby informed that Leah...is beyond the reach of those men who have lately offered one hundred dollars for her delivery.



Third Question: Why Have I Never Heard of Him?

Died November 8th, 1844, in
Canandaigua, NY

ABEL BROWN

A faithful minister of him who
proclaimed Liberty to the captive.

A Hero, in the fearless advocacy of truth,
and in vindication of the oppressed.

A Martyr, in his devotion and self-sacrifice to
the calls of bleeding humanity.

His memory lies embalmed in the heart of many a fugitive,
and on the leaves of Immortality his deeds are inscribed.

Rev. Abel Brown was born at Springfield, Mass., Nov. 9, 1810.

Died Nov. 8, 1844 at Canandaigua, N.Y.

The Free Church of Canandaigua, and other friends
of the slave, erect this monument, as a record
of his resting place, and a tribute to his worth.



Death of Abel Brown.

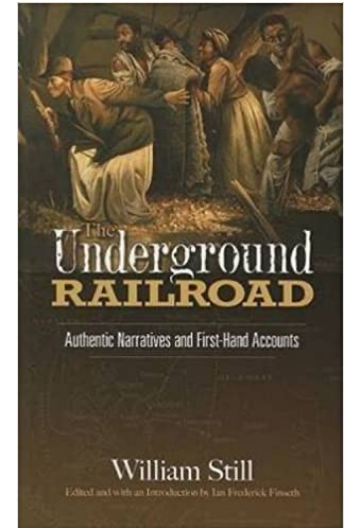
At a meeting of the colored citizens of Canandaigua, held at the colored schoolhouse, on Monday evening, Nov. 11th, 1844, for the purpose of expressing their sorrow at the decease of the late Rev. ABEL BROWN, and also to sympathize with the friends of impartial Liberty on account of the loss of so able and efficient an advocate of the cause of the down-trodden and oppressed colored man, on motion, G. W. Tucker of Detroit, Michigan, was called to the Chair, and H. W. Johnson appointed Secretary—Prayer by B. H. Sims. On motion of Austin Seward, a committee of three were appointed to draught resolutions expressive of the feelings of the meeting. On motion, A Seward, R. Valentine, and D. H. Ray, were appointed to act as such committee. The committee then retired, and returned in a few minutes and reported through their chairman, the following preamble and resolutions which were accepted and laid upon the table for further consideration.

We, the colored citizens of Canandaigua here assembled, feeling profound respect and love for the late Rev. Abel Brown, and deep and pungent grief for the loss we, the slaves and the friends of humanity have sustained, by the death of this, our distinguished and devoted friend. By his zeal and indefatigable perseverance, and the energy of his labors in the cause of human liberty, and by his exposures and fatigue while travelling to promote the cause he loved, he has been early called from this, into a world of spirits, and we trust, is now reaping the reward of his labors, and has entered into that rest prepared for all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and their fellow men, of whatever color or clime.

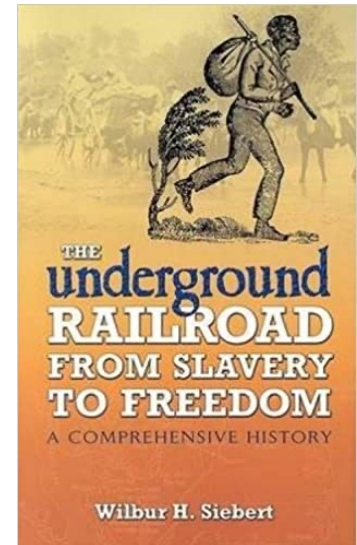
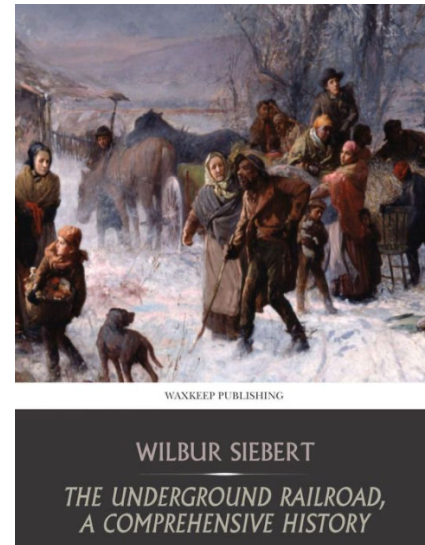
Report of Abel Brown's funeral in *The Albany Patriot*, Nov. 27, 1844.



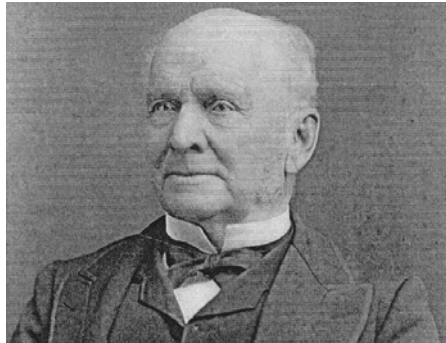
William Still: *Underground Railroad – Authentic Narratives and First Person Accounts* (1872)



Wilbur H. Siebert: *The Underground Railroad, A Comprehensive History* (1898)



And Here in Sand Lake ...



“... In 1841, Elder Abel Brown from Northampton, became pastor for one year. Twelve were added by baptism. After him came ... -- page 5



Rev. Abel Brown's Legacy

1. *“assisting ...not less than one-thousand...”*
- *From Rev. Abel Brown obituary*

2. Abolition of Slavery in the United States

3. Ongoing Example to
Believers and Activists



More Information

*Underground Railroad Education Center
Myers Residence
194 Livingston Ave, Albany*



*Gerrit Smith Farm & National Abolition
Hall of Fame, Peterboro, NY*



*Harriet Beecher Stowe Home, Hartford
Ruggles Center for History & Education
Northampton (Florence) MA*



Rokeby, Ferrisburgh Vermont

John Brown Farm SHS, Lake Placid

Harriet Tubman NHP, Auburn



Abel Brown
Pastor, Abolitionist, Radical

Conversation
Questions & Comments?

Contact info:

sandlakehistory@aol.com

pcf159@hotmail.com



Bonus Question!

Rev. Abel Brown was a “social justice warrior”, born in 1810, who lived in Sand Lake in the 1840s. He fought for the oppressed, broke the law and was arrested, and became a political activist for the cause.

Another “social justice warrior”, born in 1810, lived nearby at the time. He also fought for the oppressed, broke the law and was arrested, and became a political activist for the cause.



They lived less than five miles apart.

How did they not know each other?

