

William Lloyd Garrison

William Lloyd Garrison was born December 10, 1805, in Newburyport, Massachusetts. Indentured at the age of 14 to the owner of the Newburyport Herald, he became an expert printer. The struggles of oppressed peoples for freedom engaged his sympathies in his youth. In articles written anonymously or under the pseudonym Aristides, in the Herald and other newspapers, he attempted to arouse Northerners from their apathy on the question of slavery in the U.S. Garrison at first was a gradual abolitionist, but soon became convinced that immediate and complete emancipation was necessary.

In 1829 in Baltimore, Maryland, Garrison entered into partnership with another abolitionist, to publish a monthly periodical, the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*. One of the regular features that Garrison introduced during his time at the *Genius* was "The Black List," a column devoted to printing short reports of "the barbarities of slavery — kidnappings, whippings, murders." One of Garrison's "Black List" columns reported that a shipper from Garrison's home town of Newburyport, Massachusetts—one Francis Todd—was involved in the slave trade, and that he had recently had slaves shipped from Baltimore to New Orleans on his ship *Francis*. Todd filed a suit for libel against Garrison, filing in Maryland in order to secure the favor of pro-slavery courts. The state of Maryland also brought criminal charges against Garrison, quickly finding him guilty and ordering him to pay a fine of \$50 and court costs. Garrison was unable to pay the fine and was sentenced to a jail term of six months. He was released after seven weeks when the antislavery philanthropist Arthur Tappan donated the money for the fine, but Garrison had decided to leave Baltimore and return to New England. Garrison began publishing a weekly abolitionist newspaper called *The Liberator* in 1831.

In 1833 Garrison brought together Quaker abolitionists, evangelical abolitionists, and his New England associates to form the American Anti-Slavery Society. It aimed at immediate, uncompensated emancipation and equal rights for blacks. Among early leaders of the Society were white abolitionists such as Arthur and Lewis Tappan, Lucretia Coffin Mott, Theodore Weld, and Lydia Maria Child, and black abolitionists such as James Forten and Robert Purvis.

The Anti-Slavery Society spread rapidly across the North. By 1838 the society claimed 1,350 affiliates and 250,000 members (not bad when you realize that there were only 9.3 million residents listed in the free states, in the 1840 census). It employed speakers, sent petitions to the U.S. Congress, and mailed abolitionist propaganda into the South.

Garrison was also a pacifist and involved in other reform movements. He was deeply convinced that slavery had to be abolished by moral force. He appealed through The

Liberator and through his speeches, especially those to the clergy, for a practical application of Christianity in demanding freedom for the slaves. His campaign aroused great opposition. The state of Georgia offered (1831) a reward of \$5000 for his arrest and conviction under Georgia law, and he received hundreds of abusive letters, many of which threatened him with assassination.

By the late 1830s, the Society also faced internal division. One cause of dissension was Garrison's advocacy of equal rights for women generally and especially within the abolitionist movement. He intended that the Anti-Slavery Society should not align itself with any political party and that women should be allowed full participation in society activities. Garrison was influenced by the ideas of Susan Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone and other feminists who joined the society.

The cleavage was still further increased when Garrison later became convinced that the slavery clauses of the U.S. Constitution were immoral and that, consequently, it was equally immoral to take an oath in support of the Constitution. In 1840 he publicly burned a copy of the federal Constitution and denounced it as "a covenant with Death and an agreement with Hell"; he chose as his motto "No union with slaveholders" and, still true to his pacifist beliefs, advocated peaceful separation of the free states from the slave states.

These positions were seen as controversial by the majority of Society members and there was a major rift in the Society. While the Garrisonians retained control of a much-reduced version of that organization, two new groups emerged. In 1840 Lewis Tappan led evangelical abolitionists of both races in forming the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society to foster abolitionism in the nation's churches. In 1839, two brothers, Arthur Tappan and Lewis Tappan, left and formed a rival organization, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society which did not admit women. The same year, other non-Garrisonians formed the Liberty Party to nominate abolitionist candidates for public office.

With the outbreak of the American Civil War, he predicted the victory of the North and the end of slavery, and he ceased to advocate disunion. Promulgation (1863) of the Emancipation Proclamation by Abraham Lincoln removed the last difference between Garrison and Lincoln, and Lincoln paid public tribute to Garrison's long and uncompromising struggle to abolish slavery. In 1865, after the de facto abolition of slavery, Garrison discontinued *The Liberator* and advocated dissolution of the antislavery societies.

He then became prominent in campaigns by reformers to promote free trade and abolish customhouses on a world scale; to achieve suffrage for American women and justice for Native Americans; and to establish Prohibition and eliminate the consumption of tobacco in the U.S. He died in New York City on May 24, 1879.

The Underground Railroad

The Underground Railroad was the collective name for a variety of regional semisecret networks that helped slaves escape into the North and Canada. Many blacks and whites joined in such work, among the more famous were Harriet Tubman, a former slave who led bands of escapees northward from Maryland, and William Still, who helped runaway slaves escape, sometimes by hiding them in his home.

The Underground Railroad, a vast network of people who helped fugitive slaves escape to the North and to Canada, was not run by any single organization or person. Rather, it consisted of many individuals -- many whites but predominantly black -- who knew only of the local efforts to aid fugitives and not of the overall operation. Still, it effectively moved hundreds of slaves northward each year -- according to one estimate, the South lost between 30,000 and 50,000 slaves between 1810 and 1850.

An organized system to assist runaway slaves seems to have begun towards the end of the 18th century. In 1786 George Washington complained about how one of his runaway slaves was helped by a "society of Quakers, formed for such purposes." The system grew, and around 1831 it was dubbed "The Underground Railroad," after the then emerging steam railroads. The system even used terms used in railroading: the homes and businesses where fugitives would rest and eat were called "stations" and "depots" and were run by "stationmasters," those who contributed money or goods were "stockholders," and the "conductor" was responsible for moving fugitives from one station to the next.

For the slave, running away to the North was anything but easy. The first step was to escape from the slaveholder. For many slaves, this meant relying on his or her own resources. Sometimes a "conductor," posing as a slave, would enter a plantation and then guide the runaways northward. The fugitives would move at night. They would generally travel between 10 and 20 miles to the next station, where they would rest and eat, hiding in barns and other out-of-the-way places. While they waited, a message would be sent to the next station to alert its stationmaster.

The fugitives would also travel by train and boat -- conveyances that sometimes had to be paid for. Money was also needed to improve the appearance of the runaways -- a black man, woman, or child in tattered clothes would invariably attract suspicious eyes. This money was donated by individuals and also raised by various groups, The Underground Railroad had many notable participants, including John Fairfield in Ohio, the son of a slaveholding family, who made many daring rescues, Levi Coffin, a Quaker who assisted more than 3,000 slaves, and Harriet Tubman, who made 19 trips into the South and escorted over 300 slaves to freedom.

Escape was only the first step in the journey to freedom, however. You have to keep in mind that almost all slaves were illiterate, and that trying to move into strange territory wasn't easy at all. In fact, most slaves who escaped through the Underground Railroad lived within a 100 miles of free territory. One historian has estimated that only one out of every two thousand slaves escaped permanently. Taking the figure of 4 million slaves (the slave population of the US in 1860) as the baseline, that would mean that some 2,000 of those alive at the time, would have escaped permanently.

The Underground Railroad probably aided around 1,000 slaves per year in escaping. Its success helped raise awareness in the North about slavery and pushed supporters of slavery into defensive measures that contributed to worsening relations between North and South. One of these measures was the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, which made it a crime to help slaves escape and made it easier for masters to reclaim escapees.

William Still helped hundreds of slaves to escape (as many as 60 a month). He kept careful records, including short biographies of the people, that contained frequent railway metaphors. He maintained correspondence with many of them, often acting as a middleman in communications between escaped slaves and those left behind. He published these accounts in the book *The Underground Railroad* in 1872.

According to Still, messages were often encoded so that messages could be understood only by those active in the railroad. For example, the following message, "I have sent via at two o'clock four large hams and two small hams", indicated that four adults and two children were sent by train from Harrisburg to Philadelphia. However, the additional word *via* indicated that the "passengers" were not sent on the usual train, but rather via Reading, Pennsylvania. In this case, the authorities were tricked into going to the regular train station in an attempt to intercept the runaways, while Still was able to meet them at the correct station and guide them to safety, where they eventually escaped either to the North or to British North America, where slavery had been abolished during the 1830s.

Some have held that runaway slaves and their conductors used quilts as maps, that guided them to safety in the North. This is a very recent claim, and Giles Wright, Director of the Afro-American History Program at the state Historical Commission in Trenton and author of the book *Afro-Americans in New Jersey*, said that this is a myth. A recent book that made this claim, was based on the statements of one person, and is not supported by documentary evidence, such as slave memoirs, Works Progress Administration oral history interviews of escaped slaves, or abolitionist accounts of the Underground Railroad.

Charles Finney, Revivalist

Finney was born in Western, Connecticut on August 29, 1792. His family then moved to Oneida County, New York in 1794. Here Finney has his first encounter with a traveling minister in the itinerate preachers that visited their town. This began the diverse and sporadic experiences that Charles has with religion throughout his youth. In October of 1821, Charles Finney stepped beyond merely attending church and listening to sermons. Earlier that summer revival came to the town in New York where he worked in a law office (studying to become a lawyer), and continued through the fall. On a Sunday evening Charles decided to "settle the question of my soul's salvation at once." He spent the next several days anxiously reading the Bible and in prayer. Finally on Wednesday he heard an "inward voice" say "'will you accept it now today?' And he answered: 'Yes; I will accept it to-day, or I will die in the attempt.'" He then walked into the woods where he anguished some more, unable to pray and then finally cried out "Lord, I take thee at thy Word." That day in the woods he was changed and was never the same again. He quit his job to devote himself full-time to revivals.

The primary reason for Finney's lasting fame is his massively successful revivals in upstate New York, along the Erie Canal, and extended campaigns in Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, and England. He is known for the using his "new measures" which included: asking people to make an immediate response for Christ, the use of the "anxious bench" (a bench in the front of the service for people who wanted to be prayed over), using colloquial language in preaching, and allowing women to lead in prayer. Finney did hold a number of pastorates, two short-term in New York City and one in Oberlin (a city in Ohio, some 20 miles south of Lake Erie) for thirty-five years. In addition to evangelist and pastor Finney was also a professor of Theology and eventually president of Oberlin College.

The religious revivals which were to spread from the frontier to all of American society in the nineteenth century were a peculiarly American approach to Christianity. If it is found in operation hereafter anywhere else in the world than in the United States, one can be certain that an American missionary has been in the vicinity.

In a religious revival, an individual could take cognizance of his sinfulness while, at the same time, the form of the revival provided a means for him to come forth "to be saved." At a revival meeting, a sinful American could find Christ within and would vow to be good and to do good thereafter. He would do this publicly during the revival, and the repentant sinner thus came out of the meeting as a new individual. It was an emotional and an uplifting experience.

More than any other individual of his day he succeeded in joining evangelical religion to social reform. He had a two pronged approach to evangelism that sought

not only the instantaneous conversions he also sought to bring about long-term change of the social issues and conditions of the community he was to minister to. Christians in the community, often women, would either begin or intensify on going campaigns for temperance, sabbatarianism (restrictions against working on Sunday), etc... As more and more people were converted they were also drafted, per se into the temperance movement which was used to wield pressure on any business that promote the sell of liquor, demanding that they stop selling in and instituting boycotts against those who resisted. Soon the city or town was free of spirits. As a part founder, professor and later president of Oberlin College, Finney played a large role in creating the first college with co-education and racial integration. Finney was also an abolitionist, a stand he promoted through his pastorates in New York and by means of Oberlin College.

He was also one of the founders of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society in April 1835. Other organizers of the society were Quakers from the area near Mount Pleasant, Ohio. The people at this meeting based their organization on the American Anti-Slavery Society, which had been founded in 1833.

The Ohio Anti-Slavery Society employed lecturers to travel across the state. They hoped the speakers would convince Ohioans to join the abolitionist movement. The Ohio Anti-Slavery Society did experience some initial success. In 1836, the organization grew from twenty chapters to one hundred and twenty in every part of the state. Its membership numbered approximately ten thousand people by the end of the year.

As an example of the preaching against slavery in this Second Great Awakening, read the following, preached on 14 May 1841:

As the very basis of the Revolution, they publicly declared, that "ALL MEN were born free and equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights--among which are life, LIBERTY, and the pursuit of happiness." Now, at the very time at which this declaration was made--the very men who made it--and the nation that proclaimed these truths, as an excuse for revolution and war, stood with their unsanctified feet upon the necks of the prostrate slaves! And from that day to this, this nation as such has continued, publicly and practically, when these wrongs were held up to view, to deny the principles upon which the Revolution was based; while, at the same time, she has, in view of the wrongs received from the mother country, strenuously maintained them--thus at the same time both maintaining and denying these great truths--when herself oppressed, maintaining them and fighting in defense of them--when accused of oppression, denying them, and ready to fight in support of the opposite doctrine.

Liberty and Free Soil Parties

The Liberty Party was the first antislavery political party in the United States. It was formed in 1839 by a group of individuals who broke away from the radical American Anti-Slavery Society. The party was organized at Warsaw, New York. Five months later, at Albany, New York, the abolitionist leader James Gillespie Birney (a former slaveowner) was nominated as a candidate for the U.S. presidency. In the election of 1840, Birney received 7069 votes. In 1844, when Birney was again the presidential candidate of the Liberty Party, he received 62,300 votes. This relatively small vote drew enough support away from Henry Clay, the antislavery Whig candidate, to ensure the election of James K. Polk, the proslavery Democratic candidate. If the abolitionist voters in New York alone had given their votes to Clay (the candidate less committed to slavery than Polk), Clay would have won New York's electoral votes, which would have given Clay the election. As it is, Polk took New York, and the majority of electoral votes as well. The party continued to grow, and its candidates polled more than 74,000 votes in the congressional elections of 1846. In the following year the party nominated the abolitionist John Parker Hale for the presidency. Hale withdrew his candidacy in 1848 when the party merged with the antislavery Democrats and Whigs to form the Free-Soil Party.

As the major instrument of antislavery sentiment, the Liberty organization was more than a political party and included not only eligible voters but also disfranchised African Americans and women. Most party members held evangelical beliefs, and as Johnson relates, an intense religiosity permeated most of the group's activities. At least eight U.S. senators, eighteen members of the House of Representatives, five state governors, and two justices of the Supreme Court were among the many Liberty Party members with distinguished careers in the public and private sectors. Though most early Liberty supporters came from the Whig Party, an increasing number of former Democrats joined the party as it matured. The Liberty Party platform of 1843 resolved "to regard and to treat" the fugitive slave clause of the U. S. constitution "as utterly null and void, and consequently forming no part of the Constitution of the United States."

By 1848, political events brought about the possibility of forming a much larger and more influential political grouping devoted to anti-slavery goals—but not all of whom considered themselves to be primarily abolitionists as such, or were willing to work under the Liberty Party name. The growing conflict between proslavery and antislavery forces in the United States was intensified by the acquisition of new territories from Mexico and the ensuing argument over whether or not slavery

would be permitted in those territories. The defeat of the Wilmot Proviso, which was intended to prevent the extension of slavery, and the struggle over it in Congress brought the conflict to a head; the refusal of both the Whig and Democratic parties to endorse the principles of the proviso convinced opposition groups of the need for a new party. The major groups involved in the organization of the Free-Soil Party at a convention in Buffalo, New York, in 1848 were the abolitionist Liberty Party, the antislavery Whigs, and a radical faction of the New York Democrats, the Barnburners, who had broken with the state party when it came under control of Democrats who were not opposed to slavery (or at least, who refused to make it a political issue).

And so the newly-created Free Soil Party was opposed to slavery, although it was not strictly speaking abolitionist—it was simply opposed to the extension of slavery (as opposed to the abolition of slavery throughout the entire country).

The Free-Soil convention nominated Martin Van Buren and Charles Francis Adams as candidates for president and vice president, respectively, and adopted a platform opposed to the extension of slavery and calling also for a homestead law and a tariff for revenue only. The slogan of the party was "free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men." The party polled 291,263 votes in the election of 1848; it carried no states. The party also elected 2 U.S. senators and 14 representatives. Even though it started losing members after the Compromise of 1850, the Free-Soil Party continued to function; in 1852, even though it polled fewer votes than four years previously, it increased its representation in Congress. The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 caused the final breaking of the old party lines and resulted in the formation of the Republican Party, into which the Free-Soil Party was absorbed.

The Seneca Falls Convention and Declaration

The seed for the first Woman's Rights Convention was planted in 1840, when Elizabeth Cady Stanton met Lucretia Mott at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, the conference that refused to seat Mott and other women delegates from America because of their sex. Stanton, the young bride of an antislavery agent, and Mott, a Quaker preacher and veteran of reform, talked then of calling a convention to address the condition of women. Eight years later, it came about as a spontaneous event.

In July 1848, Mott was visiting her sister, Martha C. Wright, in Waterloo, New York. Stanton, now the restless mother of three small sons, was living in nearby Seneca Falls. A social visit brought together Mott, Stanton, Wright, Mary Ann McClintock, and Jane Hunt. All except Stanton were Quakers, a sect that afforded women some measure of equality, and all five were well acquainted with antislavery and temperance meetings. Fresh in their minds was the April passage of the long-deliberated New York Married Woman's Property Rights Act, a significant but far from comprehensive piece of legislation. The time had come, Stanton argued, for women's wrongs to be laid before the public, and women themselves must shoulder the responsibility. Before the afternoon was out, the women decided on a call for a convention "to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of woman."

To Stanton fell the task of drawing up the Declaration of Sentiments that would define the meeting. Taking the Declaration of Independence as her guide, Stanton submitted that "all men and women had been created equal" and went on to list eighteen "injuries and usurpations"--the same number of charges leveled against the King of England--"on the part of man toward woman." Stanton also drafted eleven resolutions, making the argument that women had a natural right to equality in all spheres.

The convention, to take place in five days' time, on July 19 and 20 at the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Seneca Falls, was publicized only by a small, unsigned notice placed in the Seneca County Courier. "The convention will not be so large as it otherwise might be, owing to the busy time with the farmers," Mott told Stanton, "but it will be a beginning."

A crowd of about three hundred people, including forty men, came from five miles round. No woman felt capable of presiding; the task was undertaken by Lucretia's husband, James Mott. All of the resolutions were passed unanimously except for woman suffrage, a strange idea and scarcely a concept designed to appeal to the predominantly Quaker audience, whose male contingent commonly declined to vote. The eloquent Frederick Douglass, a former slave and now editor of the Rochester North Star, however, swayed the gathering into agreeing to the

resolution.... One hundred women and men signed the Seneca Falls Declaration-although subsequent criticism caused some of them to remove their names....

When national victory came in 1920, seventy-two years after the first organized demand in 1848, only one signer of the Seneca Falls Declaration-Charlotte Woodward, a young worker in a glove manufactory -had lived long enough to cast her ballot.

Seneca Falls Declaration

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

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; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they were accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men--both natives and foreigners.

Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.

He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming to all intents and purposes, her master--the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes, and in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given, as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women--the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of man, and giving all power into his hands.

After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single, and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration. He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her.

He allows her in Church, as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church.

He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated, but deemed of little account in man....

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation--in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.