

THE ANTISLAVERY MOVEMENT
IN
MILWAUKEE AND VICINITY, 1842-1860

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School, Marquette University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Re-
quirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Milwaukee, Wisconsin
August, 1954

PREFACE

We have all heard of the famous abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and Theodore Weld. But few people know anything about the "little" men in the movement, those who did the actual work. The purpose of this paper is to show the role of these men, insignificant on the national scene, but very important on the local level. This is the story of the abolitionists in the Milwaukee area, though at times, for the sake of continuity, reference is made to state and national situations.

Many thanks to the Wisconsin State Historical Society for invaluable aid. The Society also microfilmed the Olin manuscript which is important in the study of the Wisconsin antislavery movement. This manuscript, hidden in the archives of the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland, Ohio, was brought to my attention by Dr. Frank Klement.

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CHAPTER I

GENESIS

The years before the Civil War were characterized by movements of reform. There were temperance societies, societies to establish women's rights, peace societies, movements for prison and Sabbath reform, improvement of education, and for the abolition of slavery. All of these efforts were clearcut attempts to apply Christianity to the American social order.

The abolition movement was at first merely one among many, but it soon rose to dominance. From its beginning the antislavery movement stemmed from two centers. One of these was the industrial area of New England. There the most important spokesman was William Lloyd Garrison, founder and editor of the Boston abolition newspaper, The Liberator. Garrison was a rabid opponent of slavery, and he denounced it as a damning crime to be destroyed immediately. The New England radicals did much to stir the North against the institution of slavery.

The second center of the antislavery movement was in upper New York and the upper Midwest. The crusade there was started by Benjamin Lundy and other Quaker leaders, but it was fully expressed only when Theodore Weld set about spreading it through the Midwest.

Weld sponsored a series of debates at Lane Theological

Seminary where he shaped the doctrine of gradual immediatism by which he insisted that gradual emancipation should begin at once. His ideas won a large number of followers, among them were James G. Birney, Josiah Giddings, and Edwin M. Stanton. To spread his abolition ideas, Weld adopted the revival technique and thus prepared the way for his crusade to become known in the Northwest.

The citizens of some states began to form antislavery societies. This was done with the calling to a mass convention so that the people might express their sentiments on the subject of slavery. At first these meetings were sparsely attended, but as time passed, more and more people began to take up the cause of the bonded black. Resolutions were brought forth at most of these meetings expressing sympathy for the Negro, and at a later date state legislatures enacted personal liberty laws to combat the evils of the Fugitive Act of 1850 and protect the runaway slave.

Wisconsin was not too active in the antislavery movement prior to 1842. The people of the region were more concerned with the settlement of the newly created territory. Wisconsinites did not vote in the election of 1842, so there is no record of how many votes the Liberty party and James G. Birney would have polled. Many of the early settlers of the area had been active in the Liberty party in the states from which they had come, and they quietly laid the foundations for the movement in Wisconsin.¹

¹ A. M. Thomson, Political History of Wisconsin (Milwaukee, 1900), 37. This material is available only in this work. Other authors do not treat the subject adequately.

The settlers of the eastern and southern portions of Wisconsin had come from the older Northern states and felt strongly against slavery. The old line Whigs and "Hunker" Democrats were among these, but yet they voted the regular party ticket because slavery was entrenched in the Constitution and they believed in obeying the law.²

But the people of the southwestern part of the territory, the region of the lead mines, were decidedly for slavery. Many of them had come from slave-holding states in the South and had seen the institution in operation. In fact a few of these settlers had either brought slaves with them to Wisconsin or imported them from the South so that they might work the lead mines.³

In the Milwaukee area, however, most of the people regardless of political affiliation were opposed to slavery many years before it became a national issue or a party question. The fact that a colored person, Solomon Juneau's cook, was allowed to vote in the first election in Milwaukee in 1835 seems to attest that the people were very liberal minded. But it appears that the move was made to secure a large number of votes, rather than as an indication of devotion to the principle of universal suffrage.

Milwaukee was a depot in the "underground railroad" in

² Ibid., 38.

³ For detailed accounts of the lead mining region in Wisconsin see Joseph Schafer, The Wisconsin Lead Region (Madison, Wis., 1932) and John A. Wilgus, "The Century Old Lead Region in Early Wisconsin" Wisconsin Magazine of History, V, (June, 1927).

the early 1840's. It was over this route that the unfortunate victims of the South's "peculiar institution" made their escape to freedom. Among those who helped the early escapees were Asahel Finch, Deacon Samuel Brown, C. C. Olin, and Edward D. Holton.⁴

The regions around Milwaukee were also known for their abolitionist ideas. Waukesha, known as Prairieville in the 1840's, was called the "abolitionist hole." It was here that runaway slaves were taken on the first lap of their journey from Milwaukee to Canada and freedom. Pewaukee was also a center of abolitionist activities. Many of the citizens of the surrounding countryside were sympathetic to the runaway and did all they could to aid him escape to Canada.

It was in 1842 that Milwaukee had its first case concerning a runaway slave. This event caused much excitement in the village when it was discovered by the populace what was happening. This was the case of Caroline Quarlls, a slave girl, who had run away from her master in St. Louis and who made her way to Milwaukee where she sought safe keeping. This case was considered by many local citizens to be one of the most important escapes ever accomplished via the underground railroad.

⁴ Howard L. Conrad, History of Milwaukee County (Chicago, n.d.), 89.

CHAPTER II

The Case of Caroline Quarllies

The first fugitive slave to reach Milwaukee via the underground railroad was Caroline Quarllies of St. Louis, Missouri. Caroline's mistress was Mrs. Charles B. Hall, her father's sister and her own aunt. As an octaroon "she had a straight nose, thin lips, skin not very dark, and a slender form of medium height. Although quite intelligent she could not read nor write." It was said that she "was only about sixteen years old when she came to Milwaukee."¹ Caroline was not too badly used while held in bondage, although she was occasionally whipped and sometimes deprived of complete freedom of action. Many times she could not attend church on Sunday, but she was locked in the house and made to "scrub paints" as she called it.²

Caroline's mother was dead, but she had a step-father who was not a slave and who made a pet of her. He was a blacksmith and earned a good deal of money at his work. He

¹ C. C. Olin, "A History of the Early Anti-Slavery Excitement in the State of Wisconsin From 1842 to 1860", MSS., Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio. (Microfilm copy, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin), 3-4. Hereafter cited as Olin MSS. C. C. Olin was one of the prime movers of the abolition movement in the Milwaukee area. He was one of the editors of the American Freeman, early abolition paper published in Waukesha.

² Lyman Goodnow, "First Underground Railroad", History of Waukesha County, Wisconsin (Chicago, 1880), 458. Hereafter cited as Goodnow. Lyman Goodnow, one of the prime movers of the early antislavery sentiment in Wisconsin, wrote this account of the Quarllies case as an actual participant in the escape. It is a important primary source for the study of the early abolition movement in Wisconsin.

also was a jeweler of sorts and made pretty jewelry which he gave to the girl.

Caroline wished to be free. She meditated upon the subject for a long time, always listening to the talk about the North. One day her mistress became angry with her and cut her hair which was long and beautiful. This action on the part of her mistress angered the girl and made her decide to run away at the first opportunity. She managed, somehow, to get one hundred dollars, most likely from her step-father, and made good her escape. She went to the Mississippi river and took a steamer to Alton, Illinois. When she arrived in Alton, she met a colored man who asked her if she was not a runaway slave. She denied this, but he told her he was a friend to the slaves and that she had better take a stage for Milwaukee at once. She took his advice and left immediately.³

When she arrived in Milwaukee she met an ex-slave by the name of Bob Titball. He professed warm sympathy for her and took her to his home where she stayed for several days.⁴ This pretender was but a renegade who hoped to collect a reward for returning her to her master.

The first hint that a runaway slave was in Milwaukee came about a week later when her master, Charles B. Hall, came from St. Louis to hunt for her in order to take her back

³ Olin MSS., 4-6.

⁴ Ibid., and Goodnow, 458.

to bondage. He also brought a St. Louis lawyer with him. The two southern gentlemen met Titball and asked him if he knew anything about a runaway slave named Caroline Quarllies. Titball told them she was at his house and that he would take them to her. The ex-slave hoped to get the reward, but he wished to get a larger sum than the slave catcher at first offered. Titball sent a colored boy to direct Caroline to a specified place, but the boy wrecked the plot by taking her to a place of his own choosing.⁵ One ex-slave thus worked to free Caroline, while another intended to help re-enslave her.

The lawyer from St. Louis, a Mr. Spencer, wanted to proceed in the case according to law, so he consulted with Mr. H. N. Wells, an antislavery Democrat. Mr. Wells would have nothing to do with the case. The St. Louis attorney then went to see Asshal Finch and William P. Lynde, but they, too, refused to be of service to him. Finch, solicitous about Caroline Quarllies' welfare, then sought out the girl and hid her until nightfall. Then he took her across the river and concealed her in a barrel which stood on the sidewalk between Grand Avenue and Kilbourn Town—in plain view of all who passed.⁶ That night Samuel Brown, one of the early antislavery agitators in the Milwaukee area, spirited Caroline to his farm a few miles west of the village. The next night he took her to the

⁵ Clin MSS., 6.

⁶ Goodnow, 459.

farm of Samuel Dougherty in the Town of Lisbon, about twenty miles from Milwaukee. There the frightened fugitive remained in hiding for about two weeks.⁷

In the meantime, Messrs. Spencer and Hall had secured the services of Jonathan E. Arnold, a young Milwaukee lawyer. These three men, accompanied by Alexander Pratt, combed the countryside, trying to find the fugitive slave girl. Lawyers Spencer and Arnold decided that they would sue the owners of the steamboat by which Caroline had traveled from St. Louis to Alton—they held them responsible for her escape. If Caroline Quarles was not recovered this company would be expected to pay Charles B. Hall, her St. Louis master, a sum equal to her money value.

The St. Louis attorney dared the Milwaukee abolitionists to keep Caroline in hiding. He claimed that the Fugitive Slave law was on the side of men who sought to return the girl to her rightful master. Jonathan E. Arnold, the Milwaukee lawyer cooperating with the St. Louis invaders, declared that the whole force of the United States Government would be used to recover the girl. But Caroline's champions did not return her, nor did they reveal that they knew anything about her whereabouts.⁸

An incident that occurred near Waukesha reflects the sentiment of some of the citizens for the Fugitive Slave law.

⁷ Olin MSS., 9.

⁸ Ibid., 10-11.

It seems that the slave-hunting trio, (Hall, Spencer, and Arnold,) approached Ezra Mendall, a deacon of the Congregational church, as he was hilling potatoes on his farm near the village. They asked his opinion on the harboring of a runaway slave in defiance of a rigid slave code and of federal law—then accused him of hiding Caroline. Deacon Mendall denied secreting the girl. He also answered that he thought a bad law was better broken than obeyed. The deacon ordered the slave-hunters off his property, informing them that if they would accompany him to Waukesha, he would see to it that they were tarred and feathered and ridden out of town on rails.⁹ Some of the people of Wisconsin felt as strongly about slavery and slave-hunters as some of the eastern abolitionists.

After the girl had been concealed in the Waukesha area for several weeks, the antislavery men thought it would be safe to send her to Canada. The first lap of this journey was carried out by Lyman Goodnow. He took her to Gardner's Prairie, Walworth County, which was located about thirty miles from Milwaukee. Mr. Goodnow made the journey to and from that village in one night so that no one would know he had left town nor suspect that Caroline had been moved. From Gardner's Prairie, Caroline was to be taken around Chicago, and then to Canada through Michigan. Lyman Goodnow volunteered to make this journey and guide the fugitive slave on her way

⁹ Ibid., 12.

to freedom. With eight dollars, in his pocket—collected from people friendly to the antislavery cause—he was about to set forth on his journey when Dr. E. P. Dyer of Burlington arrived to offer suggestions and aid. Dr. Dyer provided a supply of pies, cakes, cheese and crackers. Those provisions were inside a pillow case and were to be used in case of an emergency. The Burlington doctor also offered Lyman Goodnow twenty dollars which he had collected to defray the expenses of the escape. As a last service, Dr. E. P. Dyer gave Mr. Goodnow a letter of recommendation to show to "friends of freedom", in Illinois and Michigan in order to secure aid in Caroline Quarllles' flight to freedom and Canada. Goodnow and his charge made good their departure, they traveled only at night until they had skirted Chicago. The rest of the journey, totaling some six hundred miles, was made with relative ease. In Michigan they met some Quakers and Germans who helped direct them along the way. Eventually they reached Sandwich, Canada, and the Missouri slave girl claimed freedom.¹⁰

There was a sequel to the escape story. When Caroline had come to Milwaukee, she had given all of her money—some eighty dollars—to Bob Titball. When Goodnow tried to recover the money, the scoundrel denied having that amount—he claimed that she had given him only forty dollars. Goodnow sued him and succeeded in securing a judgment against

¹⁰ Goodnow, 461-463; Olin MSS., 19-21.

Titball. In spite of the judgment he was never able to collect any of the money.¹¹

A few days after Caroline Quarlles had left Milwaukee for Canada, the Cream City abolitionists held a meeting in the Presbyterian Meeting House. They openly expressed their sentiments upon the fugitive slave question:

"We are opposed to slavery in every shape and in favor of free discussion; and we sincerely hope that our people will ever act as freemen in relation to the evils of slavery, and every other evil that exists in the land...."¹²

The Caroline Quarlles story had a happy ending. She married a fugitive slave who had escaped from his Virginia master. She appreciated what Milwaukeeans had done for her. Many years after the Civil War was over she wrote to Lyman Goodnow.

Sandwich, Canada
April 18, 1880

Dearest Friend

Pen and ink can hardly express my joy when I heard from you. I am living and have to work very hard, but I have never forgotten you and your kindness. I am still in Sandwich, the same place where you left me. Just as soon as the postmaster read the name to me---your name---my heart filled with joy and gladness, and I should like to see you once more before I die to return thanks for your kindness toward me. I would like to have you send one of the books you wrote me about--Dearest friend, you do not know how rejoiced I feel since I heard from you--

Answer this as soon as you can and let me know how you are and your address. Direct your letter to Carolin Watkins, Sandwich, Ontario, Canada.

Carolin Watkins¹³

¹¹ Goodnow, 465.

¹² Milwaukee Sentinel, April 12, 1842.

¹³ Olin MSS., 23-24; Goodnow, 465. The letter was not punctuated in either account. The letter was signed "Carolin Watkins". Later she spelled her name "Caroline".

Mr. Goodnow showed the letter to his Milwaukee friends. He answered the letter and included a series of questions to which the ex-slave replied as follows:

Dearest Friend

I received your letter and was glad you was well and doing well. It leaves me in not very good health. I did marry a man on Col. princess farm by the name of Watkins, but he was considerable older than I was and had children by his first wife as old as I was, but she was sold from her children in slavery and before she got to the end of her journey she killed herself. I learned to read and write in Canada. went to school the first year I came here to Askins. I was here nearly three years before I was married. My husbands occupation is a cook I got a pretty good living but by working pretty hard for it, but I am not very happy. I have heard from St. Louis several times since I came, by my cousin who served her time out and got free and came here. my old Mistress is dead and my Master is married again, that is Charles B. Wall. I knew about me having property left me before I came away. perhaps if I had of stayed until I became of age, I could have got it and perhaps not. there was but only two of us. I had one sister, but she died before I came away. I have forgotten how long I was going from Alton to Milwaukee by stage. Mr. Potts was the minister that my master and his wife went to and they were presbyterian. my husband was once a slave born in Richmond, Virginia. belonged to a man by the name of William Watkins. after he died he fell heir to a widow in Kentucky by the name of Nancy Cleveland and remained there until he came to Canada. I have six children, three boys and three girls, three married and three single. the youngest is, 16 a boy. my oldest boy is a farmer and my other boy is in Cincinnati. my youngest girl, 18, is at home and I am trying to educate her for a school teacher, only she had had quite a impediment in her speech. they have all very good educations---Mr Askill is dead. he moved away from here the second year after I came here. he was not the man he professed to be. he had some very dark traits about him. my grandfather and father was both born in Richmond, Virginia, then emigrated to St. Louis, my father was name Robert Quarles. I was born in St. Louis on the corner of pine and sixth streets. I got the box out of my masters storeroom and hid it in a cherry hedge. I left on the 4th of July.

my mistress folks treated me well enough for a slave. Yes i have been whipped. Yes, i had to do the housework, for i was kept for that purpose. I told my grandmother i was going to Canada but, i was so young that she did not pay any attention to me, nor any of the rest of them

I have answered all the questions you ask me. Until the next time, good bye.

Caroline Watkins¹⁴

The first abolitionist venture in Wisconsin was successful. The antislavery men now strived to bring their cause before the people. They revealed their presence in the area, telling the details of the Caroline Quarles story. They fanned the flames of emotion and helped rip the North and South apart. The antislavery agitators fittingly launched their movement in Wisconsin.

¹⁴ Olin MSS., 25-27; Goodnow, 466. This letter was not punctuated in either account, otherwise it is just as it appeared in original form.

CHAPTER III

EMERGENCE, 1842-1848

With the case of the first fugitive slave successfully closed, most Wisconsinites soon forgot the Quarles incident. But there were a few people who continued to agitate for the freedom of the slaves. Asahel Finch, William Lynde, Edward Holton, Samuel Brown, and Dr. E. P. Dyer, all of whom aided in the Quarles escape, were the leaders of this antislavery agitation.

In June, 1842, they underwrote a call for antislavery convention. They asked "friends of human liberty" and advocates of "the immediate emancipation of the oppressed in our land" to attend a meeting at Delavan in Walworth County "for the purpose of organizing a Territorial Anti-Slavery."¹ At that meeting, held on August 2, officers were elected and the antislavery movement formally launched.

The newly formed Wisconsin Territorial Anti-Slavery Society was more or less inactive during the first year of its existence. On February 7, 1843, the group held its first anniversary meeting at the Congregational Meeting House in Prairieville. At that time the members drafted a constitution, and openly embraced the principles of anti-slavery as they added their signatures to the document. They also adopted a series of resolutions—three of those read as

¹ Milwaukee Sentinel, July 23, 1842.

follows:

Resolved. 1st The U. S. Constitution does not recognize the right of others to hold others in bondage.

Though Wisconsin was not one of the states formed to secure the blessings of "Liberty" she is nevertheless interested in the same. It would not be proper for us to inform the General Government of its duty, it is right that we should petition for a redress of those grievances which a part of the people suffer; and particularly so, as those deeply oppressed fellow creatures and brethren are debarred from their right to make grievances known.

Resolved. 2nd That this body do respectively, but most earnestly petition the General Government, immediately to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, and also to abolish the domestic Slave trade between the States, Territories, and the District.....

Resolved. 4th We will strive to prevent the spread of slavery in our Wisconsin and will strive to prevent a slavery clause to be incorporated in the state constitution.²

In addition, the conventionites designated the third Sunday of April as the day on which the pastors of the various churches in the area would preach on the "true condition of slavery in the South" so that their congregations might fully understand the problem.³

It was not only the men who wanted slavery abolished. The American Freeman notes that on March 20, 1844, a group of ladies friendly to the antislavery cause met in the Baptist Hall in Milwaukee for the purpose of forming a society. They adopted the name Ladies' Milwaukee Antislavery Society, and they stated an intention to be an

² Ibid., March 1, 1843.

³ Ibid.

auxillary to the American Anti-Slavery Society. The objects of the women's society were:

"1st, To aid in the diffusion of correct information on the subject of slavery; 2nd, To promote the religious, moral, and intellectual improvement of the colored population; 3rd, to unite our efforts to induce and diffuse a correct state of Christian feeling towards this suffering and neglected class of our community, on broad principles laid down by our blessed Savior himself. 'In as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethern, ye have done it to me.'"⁴

With the beginning of its second year, the Wisconsin anti-slavery society had embraced the tenets of the nationally organized Liberty Party, and it campaigned for members and sympathy. The society designated the (Milwaukee) American Freeman, edited by Charles C. Sholes, as its official organ.⁵ It was this paper, dedicated to "the general interests of the Anti-Slavery cause, and to the advancement of the great principles which form the basis and action of the Liberty party," that kept the ideas of abolition alive in the territory.⁶ Charles C. Sholes had originally begun to publish his paper in Racine; later he moved it to Milwaukee and still later, in 1844, to Waukesha. The paper remained in Waukesha until 1848 when Sherman M. Booth returned the presses to Milwaukee.

⁴ (Milwaukee) American Freeman, March 27, 1844.

⁵ Charles Sholes was the brother of Christopher Latham Sholes, inventor of the typewriter, who later edited the Milwaukee News. "Christopher Latham Sholes" W.P.A. MSS (Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin), 6.

⁶ (Milwaukee) American Freeman, March 27, 1844.

All of the people of Wisconsin did not endorse the views of the American Freeman. Marshall M. Strong, editor of the Racine Advocate, expressed his views forcibly: "We are no apologists for slavery, but it is a southern institution, and the people of the free states cannot act politically upon the institutions of the slave states any more than upon England." Strong added that the only way to get rid of the evil was through the force of truth and public opinion.⁷

The American Freeman had financial difficulties because of a lack of subscribers. In June 1844, the members of the Liberty party who resided in Waukesha, Washington, and Milwaukee counties, held a meeting at Prairieville. One of their resolutions asked every "Liberty man" to take up a paying subscription to the American Freeman.⁸ But even this appeal did not alleviate the financial embarrassment of the paper. On June 15, the paper suspended publication temporarily, but on September 18 it again came off the presses. During that brief period the presses were moved to Prairieville. When the issue of September 18 appeared, it contained an announcement stating that the Liberty party had purchased the press from C. C. Sholes, but that the former owner would continue to be editor and publisher on condition that he "faithfully perform the duties incident to every department

⁷ (Racine) Advocate, April 9, 1844.

⁸ American Freeman, June 1, 1844.

of the said newspaper---edit the same according to the provisions and objects of the Articles of Association, and publish it regularly once a week."⁹ Thus the paper became the official organ of the Liberty party. This antislavery paper contained much Liberty party news, most of which the other papers did not bother to publish because it was relatively unimportant. Every issue also contained at least one antislavery tract. Its editorials denounced slavery with regular monotony. Gradually the paper deserted moderation and it became a radical abolitionist sheet.

Prior to the election of 1844, the Liberty party made a very poor showing in the number of ballots cast for its candidates. But this did not discourage the editor of the American Freeman. He stated that most people did not realize what results had been accomplished.

"If we look at the actual results of the action of the Liberty Party, we trust we shall never be ashamed or backward to compare them with the actual results of the action of the Whig and Democratic parties. Our underground railroad has accomplished more, within the last five years, for the real interests of humanity, than Whig or Democratic influence, as such, ever did accomplish, or ever will.... Young as we are in our political existence, and few as we are in numbers, and opposed and traduced as we are, by many who ought to be our friends and helpers, yet we are not and will not be behind the other parties in the accomplishment of actual good to our fellow men...."¹⁰

In the election of 1844, the Liberty party made a better showing, although it actually received only a small percentage of the votes cast. Editor C. C. Sholes, deceiving him-

⁹ (Waukesha) American Freeman, Sept. 18, 1844.

¹⁰ Ibid., Oct. 5, 1844.

self, wrote that the party had gone through a severe test, but had emerged unscathed; that it showed an increase of strength which indicated the zeal and unwavering fidelity of the Liberty men.¹¹ Sholes lived up to his agreement--the editorials supported the Liberty party, regardless of its failures or shortcomings.

In 1845 the Liberty party was accused of aiding in the annexation of Texas. This vast area would result in more slave territory because it was located south of the Missouri Compromise line. The Liberty men voted for their own presidential candidate in 1844. In New York state the vote given the Liberty party's candidate enabled Polk to be elected president. The Whigs accused the third party of defeating their candidate and in effect casting a pro-slavery vote. "The guilt of annexation, if it is accomplished, must rest on this self-styled Liberty party.....They could have cast their votes so as to prevent annexation (of Texas).....in the future let it be known by its true name, the Pro-Slavery Party." The editor bitterly denounced the Whigs and stated that the Sentinel, intended to support the "Locofocos", the straight forward advocates of Texas annexation.¹²

A group of Prairieville citizens, opponents of slavery, met to discuss the situation locally. William A. Barstow, a rising political figure and a governor-to-be, served as

¹¹ Ibid., Nov. 27, 1844.

¹² Milwaukee Sentinel, Feb. 26, 1845.

secretary of that meeting. Those assembled citizens condemned the abolitionists for the stand they had taken in the local elections of 1845, by voting for a third party candidate. They recognized "the workings of an enthusiastic 'zeal without knowledge' and of questionable integrity." But they were unwilling to overlook every interest which more immediately affected them, so that slavery may be destroyed by a means that afforded no certainty of success. They felt that the slaves in the South would be no nearer freedom through the election of an abolition candidate for county supervisor, justice of the peace, constable or other local officers. The two concluding resolutions aptly summarized their views concerning third-party abolitionists as well as slavery:

Resolved, That those intolerable abolitionists who charge dishonesty and corruption, upon all those who do not follow them in precept and practice, show little knowledge of human nature and a reckless and unchristian disregard for the rights of conscience.

Resolved, That in our view, slavery is wrong and ought to be so far and so fast abolished as conduce to the best interests of the blacks and safety of the whites; and that when we can discover any practicable means for abolishing it, consistent with the above principle, we will adopt them.¹³

But even in the face of such criticism the antislavery group persevered and gathered strength. In mid-March of 1846 a large number of Liberty party members assembled in Beloit. Milwaukeeans were numerous at that party mass meeting. Those attending discussed the proposed constitution for the Wisconsin Territory. The antislaveryites demanded that the constitution should secure liberty and equality to

¹³ Ibid., March 20, 1845.

all male citizens regardless of color or place of birth. The Liberty men advised every "friend of liberty" in Wisconsin to support constitutional delegates who favored the "rights of men."¹⁴

Various church groups began early to take a stand against slavery. Methodists, Baptists, Episcopaleans, and Presbyterians, in various meetings, drew up resolutions stating their position on the question of slavery. The articles adopted by the Waukesha Baptist Church illustrated the sentiment of scattered religious groups:

1. No one who held slaves was to be allowed in the church pulpit or at its communion tables.
2. Many members and the pastor belonged to antislavery societies; they encouraged antislavery discussions.
3. An antislavery tract was issued which said in effect— we are an antislavery church. Our constitution is antislavery. We deny all fellowship to slave holders in cases whatsoever.¹⁵

Some ministers preached bitterly against slavery, always pointing out its evils and emphasizing its inhuman aspects.

In July of 1846 the Wisconsin Liberty Association—the name by which the antislavery society was known at that time—again held its semi-annual meeting in Prairieville. Once again the group passed a series of resolutions expressing strong antislavery sentiments. In strong and plain language they expressed their views:

Resolved, That in view of the wrong and cruelty of American Slavery and its ruinous encroachments on

¹⁴ Ibid., March 17, 1846.

¹⁵ (Waukesha) American Freeman, Sept. 16, 1845.

on the rights and interests of freedom, we deem the disenthralment of the general government from the control of the slave power, and the abolition of slavery, subjects of paramount importance.

Resolved, That Anti-Slavery politics are necessarily a part of morality and religion, and he who claims to be an abolitionist and yet shuts this great subject from the pulpit, or he who votes for slave holders or other apologists to offices of trust is inconsistent and unworthy of the name he arrogates to himself.

Resolved, That it is the duty of every true friend of our country, of humanity and Christianity, to put forth his best effort for the immediate, the entire and final overthrow of American Slavery—treating all other political interests as of minor importance until that great subject is accomplished.

Resolved, That all civil distinctions founded on color, nation or property, are Anti-Republican and oppressive, and that we pledge ourselves in favor of a Constitution for the new State of Wisconsin which shall secure to every citizen the elective franchise, and to every individual those inalienable rights set forth in the Declaration of Independence.

Resolved, That we utterly repudiate, as unpatriotic and unchristian, the sentiment— "Our country—right or wrong"—believing that to support wrong is treason to the best interests of our country, and high treason to the government of God.

Resolved, That we regard the War with Mexico in which the Executive of our Country involved us, as iniquitous and cowardly, a ware of aggression and plunder, a ware of the strong against the weak, and crown the infamy of the thing, a ware for the exclusive benefit of the slave holders and the extension of their despotic powers.

Resolved, That the numerous recent opponents of annexation, who have more recently shown so much willingness to vote men and money to carry on the war, and even boast that they are foremost in the bloody conflict, have shown that their opposition was hollow and heartless.

Resolved, That we regard it of great importance to the Anti Slavery cause that one or more competent lecturers be employed to visit, as far as practicable, every portion of Wisconsin; and that the executive committee be requested to take measures accordingly, provided the requisite funds can be secured.

Resolved, That the friends of Liberty here in Wisconsin are hereby urged at an early period to nominate as Delegates to the convention in the cause

of human rights.¹⁶

The assembled abolitionists not only endorsed all of the resolutions but took steps to circulate them as they asked for attention and campaigned for new converts.

In an editorial the American Freeman strongly approved the resolutions, adding "the resolutions are of the right stamp, and breathe of the right spirit." The editor marvelled at the number in attendance because the time chosen for the meeting was "the busiest season of the year" for the farming population. This convention, the editorial stated, was- unlike its predecessors- a working rather than a "talking convention." The editor closed with words of praise and hope. "The results," he wrote, "all honor to the self-sacrificing spirits in attendance, cannot be but highly suspicious. Our cause will now be onward."¹⁷

Probably the main business of that Prairieville gathering was to adopt measures to continue the publication of the American Freeman. The paper, ever falling behind financially, had ceased publication with its issue of June 11. There was a large mortgage against the press at the time. But the Territorial Liberty Association made arrangements to secure, beyond question, the regular publication of the paper. C. C. Sholes resigned his position as editor and in his place the party named C. C. Olin and Thomas D. Plumb co-editors of the antislavery sheet. A joint stock association of the executive committee of the Territorial Liberty Association controlled the paper. That group promised the sum of two

¹⁶ (Waukesha) American Freeman, Aug. 4, 1846

¹⁷ Ibid.

thousand dollars for the weekly publication of the paper-- that amount to be made payable over a period of three years. The issue of August 4, 1846, was the first paper published under the new arrangement and by the new editors.¹⁸

For the next few years the abolitionist agitation seemed to simmer down considerably. Residents of Wisconsin Territory seemed more concerned with the attainment of statehood than with the abolition of slavery. Yet the champions of the Negro were not entirely idle. At the first constitutional convention they secured a referendum on the question of Negro suffrage. At the time of the convention there were about six hundred free Negroes in Wisconsin. During the territorial period no colored person could vote, but members of the Liberty party from the southeastern counties demanded equal rights for all men. It was a concession to this group that the referendum was allowed, but it was defeated along with the Constitution of 1846.¹⁹ Two years later a new constitutional committee did draft a document which won ratification and which resulted in admission of Wisconsin into the Union.

It appears that the formation of the new state so occupied the attention of the people and the press, that little notice was taken of the arrival of Sherman M. Booth in the area. Little did Booth's early acquaintances realize that

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ See William Francis Raney, Wisconsin, A Story of Progress (New York, 1940); Milo M. Quaife, ed., Constitution of 1846 (Madison, 1919); and Charles King, "Rufus King, Soldier, Editor and Statesman", Wisconsin Magazine of History, 4 (June, 1921), 371-381, for more detailed study of the problems facing the framers of the 1846 constitution.

the transplanted Yankee would one day become a national figure, bringing notoriety for himself and publicity to his adopted state.

Sherman M. Booth was born in Davenport, Delaware County, New York, September 25, 1812. He attended the local schools where he was an exceptionally fine student. When he was fifteen years old, he was permitted to teach in the local schools. Later he went to the Jefferson Academy where he took a complete course and became a qualified teacher.

In 1835 Booth, always somewhat radical in his thinking, became interested in the temperance movement. He attended a meeting in Albany where he was selected to make a lecture tour of eastern New York. He spent three years lecturing and writing for the temperance cause and became well known in the movement.

He always wanted more formal education, so he attended Yale University when he was twenty-six years old. A good student, he finished his course in three years instead of the usual four. While attending the university he was known as somewhat of an abolitionist. His graduating speech, which advocated the abolition of slavery, shocked the faculty of the school.

After his graduation from Yale, Booth set about organizing "freedom clubs" in every town. He addressed school meetings in every town, always speaking for the abolition of slavery. He was one of the prime movers of the organization of the Liberty party throughout the country. At

Waterville, Connecticut, Booth taught the Negroes who landed there after the "L' Amistad incident". The ship, L' Amistad, owned by a company of Cuban slave traders, was returning from Africa with a load of captive blacks. Just as the ship entered Havana harbor, the Negroes mutinied, took over the ship, and set it adrift because they had no knowledge of how to operate it. The ship drifted for thirty days, finally landing on Long Island. United States revenue officers impounded the ship; then both the Havana slave traders and the New York abolitionists wanted custody of the mutineers. After several court decisions, the anxious Negroes were set free. Louis Tappan, one of the celebrated Tappan brothers, secured refuge for them at Waterville.²⁰

In 1847 Sherman Booth came to Wisconsin where he served as a correspondent for the American Freeman. In May 1848, he moved to Waukesha to take over publication of the newspaper.²¹ It was Booth that renamed the paper the Wisconsin Free Democrat and made it the organ of the Free Soil Party.²² In the spring of 1849 Booth moved the printing presses of the paper from Waukesha to Milwaukee. Then, in the fall of 1850, he began to publish the Free Democrat as a daily. The

²⁰ Chicago Chronicle; Nov. 1, 1896. The Tappan brothers, Louis and Arthur, were philanthropists that aided early temperance and slavery reform. They helped William Lloyd Garrison in New York and gave Theodore Weld the funds to found Lane Theological Seminary.

²¹ "Sherman M. Booth", W.P.A. MSS. (Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin), 2.

²² Milwaukee Sentinel, May 16, 1848. In 1848 the Liberty Party was merged throughout the North with the larger Free Soil Party. (Raney, 146).

Milwaukee Sentinel welcomed the new paper with kind words. "Mr. Booth's new daily paper," stated the editor, "made its first appearance yesterday. It is a neat, spicy, readable little sheet, well worth patronizing. Brother Booth tells his readers that its principles will be 'human' and its course 'democratic'....We cordially wish the Daily Free Democrat every success.²³

Booth was also an active Free Soiler in Wisconsin. He was a member of the young party's State Central Committee, charged with the general duty of organizing the party for efficient action and to "do whatever can and ought to be done to promote the triumph of Free Democratic principles in Wisconsin."²⁴ In the autumn of 1851 he attended the national convention of the Free Democracy where he was elected one of the vice-presidents.²⁵

Under Booth's aggressive leadership the antislavery sentiment mushroomed. More and more people became interested in the plight of those who wore the chains of slavery. Eventually the whole Milwaukee area and the entire state were to become embroiled in the antislavery question. The kidnapping of a fugitive slave opened the new antislavery phase and Wisconsin catapulted into the national spotlight.

²³ Milwaukee Sentinel, Sept. 17, 1850.

²⁴ Ibid., Jan. 25, 1849.

²⁵ Ibid., Oct. 2, 1851.

CHAPTER IV

INTERLUDE

After Wisconsin became the thirtieth state in the Union, her residents turned their interests to national problems. The abolitionists in the Milwaukee area were not too active because they were too busy watching the national scene. The big problem facing the nation in the late 1840's and early 50's was the status of slavery in the territory acquired from Mexico. The North wanted the territory to be free, while the South naturally favored the expansion of its "peculiar institution" to the new region.

The legislature of the newly-created state of Wisconsin elected Henry Dodge and Isaac P. Walker to the United States Senate. Dodge represented the western counties of the state, and Walker the eastern counties. After the election of these two men, an antislavery sentiment prevailed in the state assembly. That body passed a resolution instructing "that the Senators use their influence to insert, in the organic act of the government to any new territory already acquired or to be acquired, that is now free, a clause forever prohibiting the introduction of slavery into said territory."¹ The

¹ State of Wisconsin, Assembly Journal, 1848 (Madison, 1849), 44. Prior to 1913, the legislature of each state, sitting in legislative caucus, elected the two men who were to represent the state in the U. S. Senate. After 1913, the people by virtue of the seventeenth amendment to the Constitution, elected the Senators by direct vote.

Senators and Representatives of Wisconsin were instructed to place the resolution before the United States Congress.

The Free Soilers of the state convened at Janesville in August, at which time they supported Martin Van Buren and Charles Adams as candidates for president and vice-president of the United States.² In January 1849, the Free Soil party perfected its organization. At that meeting the party issued its first formal indictment of slavery in the state. That indictment read:

Resolved, That there should be no more slave states admitted to the Union.

That in organizing governments for the territories of the United States, the existence of slavery in such territory should be prohibited.

That all national laws sustaining and recognizing slavery in the District of Columbia or elsewhere should be repealed.³

In February 1849, the people of Wisconsin instructed their Senators to oppose any act for the governing of New Mexico and California, or any other territory acquired by the United States, unless it prohibited slavery, to oppose the admission of any more slave states, and to use their influence to secure the repeal of all laws permitting slavery anywhere in the United States. Those instructions indicated that the antislavery movement in Wisconsin had

² Milwaukee Sentinel, Sept. 8, 1848.

³ Ibid., Jan. 16, 1849. For a more complete study of Wisconsin and the Compromise of 1850, see Mary Bell Mueller, "The Crystallization of the Antislavery Sentiment in Wisconsin and the Compromise of 1850" (M. A. thesis, MSS. Marquette University, 1954)

⁴ State of Wisconsin, Assembly Journal, 1849 (Madison, 1850), 40-41.

reach maturity—gathering strength like a rampaging flood.

When the Senate of the United States failed to pass the Douglas bill for the admission of California into the Union, Isaac Walker, who had been re-elected to the Senate in 1849, sponsored an amendment to a civil appropriations bill which extended the laws of the United States to the territory recently acquired from Mexico. Such an act would have rendered all the old Mexican laws which had prohibited slavery in that area both null and void.⁵ Some antislavery agitators in Wisconsin were shocked by such a movement on Walker's part. The assembly of the State Legislature immediately passed a resolution calling for Walker's resignation, claiming he had violated the legislative instructions in regard to the status of slavery in the territories.⁶ The Free Soilers, meeting at Racine, resolved that the conduct of Senator Walker in Congress, "had disgraced the State" and, they added, "we request him to resign from the office he holds, considering him dishonest, incapable, treacherous, and cowardly."⁷

The question of the disposition of the New Mexican Territory and California remained unsettled to 1849. The Wisconsin legislature passed a series of resolutions which expressed the sentiment of that group on the territorial status of those areas. The legislature felt Congress had no power to constitutionally abolish slavery in those states where it already

5 Congressional Globe, 30 Cong., 2 sess., 534-38.

6 State of Wisconsin, Assembly Journal, 1849, 840-41.

7 Milwaukee Sentinel, March 29, 1849.

existed by law, but it could "rightfully....prevent the extension of slavery in territories now free, and abolish slavery and the slave trade, wherever either exists under the exclusive jurisdiction of Congress." United States Senators Walker and Dodge were instructed to vote for the exclusion of slavery from the District of Columbia, for the suppression of the slave trade on the high seas, and wherever else Congress had power and "generally relieve the Federal Government from all responsibility for the existence, maintenance, or toleration of Slavery, or the traffic in Slaves." The Wisconsin legislature also asked that the Ordinance of 1787 be applied to all newly acquired territory, that all Senators and Representatives oppose the admission of new slave states into the Union, and that California be at once admitted.⁸

On January 29, 1850, Henry Clay appeared before the Senate in his last great effort to save the Union. He made several proposals which he hoped would end forever the talk of disunion. He proposed that California be admitted as a state without Congressional action on the slavery question, that a territorial government be set up in the remaining area acquired from Mexico without provision for either the introduction or exclusion of slavery, that restricted boundaries be drawn for Texas to exclude New Mexico, and that the slave trade be abolished in the District of Columbia. He also asked that a new and more effective fugitive slave law be passed and

⁸ Ibid., Jan. 31, 1850.

the principle that Congress had no power in the domestic slave trade be recognized. These measures, Clay was sure, would make the people of the nation unite forever.⁹

Congress debated Clay's omnibus bill and refused to accept his recommendations in entirety. However, five of Clay's recommendations (out of 9) did gain the force of law. Those five, making up the Compromise of 1850, included a more stringent fugitive law, the admission of California with a "free labor" constitution, the establishment of territorial government for New Mexico and Utah without the Wilmot Proviso, the settlements of the Texas boundary with government assumption of her debts, and the abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia.¹⁰

The Texas settlement and Fugitive Slave Act drew comment from a number of the Milwaukee editors. Sherman M. Booth, in the Wisconsin Free Democrat, asserted that "such a measure alone is sufficient to damn any administration to infamy. The only equivalent the North gets is a strip of the Great American Desert north of 36 deg. 30 min., which by the resolution of

⁹ Cong. Globe, 31 Cong., 1 sess., 244-47. Even if the slave trade was abolished in the District of Columbia, slavery was to be allowed to exist there as long as it continued to exist in Maryland, or until the people of Maryland or those of the District itself should accept compensation for abolition.

¹⁰ The Wilmot Proviso was introduced into the House by Representative David Wilmot of Pennsylvania and appended to the appropriation bill for the funds to purchase territory from Mexico. It provided that neither slavery nor involuntary servitude should never exist in the territory acquired from Mexico. For further study on the Compromise of 1850 see F. H. Hodder, "Authorship of the Compromise of 1850", Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXII, 525-536.

annexation was consecrated to freedom."¹¹ In regard to the Fugitive Slave Act, Booth also expressed his opposition openly. He paraphrased the measures embodied in the law as follows:

1. The U. S. District Judges are to appoint whom they choose commissioners to return fugitives.
2. The commissioners are to appoint one assistant in every county.
3. All the slave hunter has to do is swear a man, white or black, is a slave, and the man so claimed shall not have the right to testify. If a slave-catcher should make oath "before any magistrate, justice of the peace, U. S. Judge, commissioner or assistant," that the editor of this paper, or any one of its readers was a slave, he could not be allowed one word of defence.
4. If anyone feeds or gives a cent, or a ride in his wagon to a fugitive slave, he must on conviction be fined \$1000.
5. If any officer permits the escape of a slave while in his custody, he, or Uncle Sam must pay for him.

Having worked his temper to the bursting point Booth then added:

There! We will match this Senatorial edict against any damnable piece of diabolism ever enacted this side of the pit. If the House sanctions this bill, look out for the general emigration from this country to Austria, and the dominions of the Czar.¹²

Carl Schurz, remarked that the Fugitive Slave Act was an example of a mistake which can justly be described to amount to a crime in public policy- "the mistake not seldom committed by compromisers, of going so far as to offend and defy the moral sense and the legitimate self-respect of others."¹³

¹¹ (Milwaukee) Wisconsin Free Democrat, Aug. 21, 1850.

¹² Ibid., Sept. 4, 1850.

¹³ Carl Schurz, The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz, II (New York, 1907), 108.

The Compromise of 1850 was intended to end the slavery controversy forever. The leaders of the Whig and Democratic parties spoke of permanent peace, though many a Northerner found it hard to accept the principles of the new act in regard to fugitive slaves. Still, advocated the proponents of compromise, something had to be endured as a price for peace.

Whether due to the Compromise of 1850 or to the pressing need of local matters, the slavery question was not very prominent in Wisconsin politics between 1850 and 1854. By election time in 1852 most of the Free Soilers had returned to the Democratic party. The temperance issue, rather than slavery or free soil, dominated the election of 1853. The candidates for governor were a Democrat, an old line Whig, and a man supported by the Free Soilers and some discontented or reforming Whigs. The Free Soil candidate was an avowed temperance man, but the Democrat, William A. Barstow, was not. As a result the German element turned out in large numbers to elect Barstow. This election marked the end of the Whig party in Wisconsin.¹⁴

In 1854 the slavery question again loomed before the American public when Stephen A. Douglas proposed the Kansas-Nebreska bill. In the same year Wisconsin became even more aware of the Fugitive Slave Law. March 1854, saw the beginning of the Booth case which continued in the public spotlight

¹⁴ See William Francis Roney, Wisconsin, A Story of Progress (New York, 1940) and Reuben Gold Thwaites, The Story of Wisconsin (Boston, 1899) for more details on Wisconsin political history. For a study of the German element in Wisconsin politics see Joseph Schafer, The Yankee and Teuton in Wisconsin, Wisconsin Magazine of History, VI and VII 1922, 1923.

until the eve of Lincoln's innauguration. The year 1854 witnessed the end of the peace sought by the eminent compromisers.

CHAPTER V

THE KANSAS-NEBRASKA BILL

AND THE GROWTH OF REPUBLICANISM

As early as 1852 Senator Benton of Missouri had introduced a bill for the organization of a territorial government for Kansas. In February, 1853, a bill to organize the Nebraska Territory, in which slavery was not mentioned, was put before the House of Representatives by the House Committee on Territories. The members of the House passed the bill, every negative vote coming from the South, but in the Senate the bill was "laid upon the table."

In December of 1853, the Senator from Iowa, A. C. Dodge, introduced into the Senate a bill to organize the Nebraska Territory. After two readings the bill was referred to the Committee on Territories, of which Stephen A. Douglas was chairman. On January 23, 1854, Senator Douglas introduced into the Senate a bill for the organization of the territories of Kansas and Nebraska in which all questions pertaining to slavery in the new areas were left to the decision of the people residing in those states. Douglas also appended a clause which specifically declared the Missouri Compromise of 1820 inoperative and superseded by the Compromise of 1850.¹

¹ For extensive study of the Kansas-Nebraska Act see Frank Hodder, "Genesis of the Kansas-Nebraska Act." State Historical Society of Wisconsin Proceedings (1922), and his "The Railroad Background of the Kansas-Nebraska Act." Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XII, 3-22., George Fort Milton, Eye of Conflict (Boston, 1934), Avery Carver, The Coming of the Civil War (New York, 1950), and James Ford Rhodes, History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850, II, (New York, 1919).

Reaction to the Douglas proposals was violent. New Yorkers held mass protest meetings. Various state legislatures passed resolutions condemning the Kansas "iniquity." When the Rhode Island legislature passed such a resolution condemning the Douglas-advocated measure, the editors of the Milwaukee Sentinel gave full approval. "This is an example that Wisconsin should make haste to follow," stated the Milwaukee editorial writer. "Let our protest also be filed against the Slavery extension project."² When the members of the New York State legislature passed a number of similar resolutions, the editor of the Sentinel again added his endorsement writing, "now let Wisconsin speak....If the North is true to Freedom this infamous outrage will yet be prevented."³

In Milwaukee a group of citizens proposed a meeting of "all opposed to the Nebraska swindle of Douglas." Every "freeman" who hated slavery and loved "freedom" was invited to attend.⁴ At the meeting, attended by many, a committee on resolutions—composed of Sherman Booth, Rufus King, Herman Haertel and John Jennings—presented a series of statements to the convention. Those resolutions condemned the repeal of that section of the Missouri Compromise which prohibited slavery in the Louisiana Purchase north of the thirty-sixth parallel. Those protesters understood that the Missouri

² Milwaukee Sentinel, Feb. 3, 1854.

³ Ibid., Feb. 14, 1854.

⁴ Ibid.

Compromise was a compact to offset concessions made by the North to the slave holding South. The repeal of the Compromise of 1820, stated the resolutions, "would be dishonorable to the South and degrading to the North, and would destroy all confidence in, and all obligations to observe, any Compromise or compact made in behalf of slavery." The membership of the meeting called upon the Wisconsin State Legislature to instruct the Senators and Representatives in Congress to oppose any bill "providing directly or indirectly for the repeal of the Slavery restriction of the Missouri Compromise."⁵

In an editorial the editor of the Milwaukee Sentinel commented that the meeting to protest the Kansas affair was largely attended.⁶ In the Free Democrat, editor Sherman Booth, well pleased with the meeting and the measures adopted, commented, "the whole meeting was a triumphal evidence of the unalterable position of our people of all parties to any further encroachment of Slavery upon the Domain of Freedom."⁷

Milwaukee opponents of the Kansas-Nebraska bill prepared a "form letter" which they circulated to alert Wisconsin Congressmen to the anti-slavery views. That form letter read:

To the Senate and House of Representatives, in Congress Assembled:

The undersigned citizens of _____ in the State of Wisconsin earnestly remonstrate against the passage of any bill which shall permit the introduction of Slavery into any Territories of the United

5 (Milwaukee) Daily Free Democrat, Feb. 14, 1854.

6 Milwaukee Sentinel, Feb. 14, 1854.

7 Daily Free Democrat, Feb. 14, 1854.

States to which the provisions of the Missouri Compromise extend, to wit: all north of the line 36 degrees, 30 minutes. They cannot but feel that any such bill would be a violation of the objects which should be sacred---a violation of a contract which the Free States have religiously obeyed. And your petitioners, as in duty bound to themselves and their country, will ever pray.⁸

The editor of the Milwaukee Sentinel encouraged every citizen of Milwaukee to send one of the petitions to Washington so that "the voice of Wisconsin may be heard there speedily."⁹ Booth stated the case simply: "Now let every man who values Freedom for himself and his children sign it."¹⁰ Wisconsin Badgers rapidly joined the antislavery ranks in the cause of freedom for Kansas.

After much delay on the part of a small minority who opposed them, the members of the state assembly at Madison adopted a series of resolutions on the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. They felt that any "alteration, modification, or repeal of the Missouri Compromise would be unjust" and not at all in the best interests of the people. The Kansas-Nebraska bill was "calculated to weaken and impair the fabric of our Government, by a fresh renewal of those agitations which in times past have threatened a dissolution of the Union."¹¹ The

⁸ Milwaukee Sentinel, Feb. 24, 1854.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Wisconsin Free Democrat, Feb. 24, 1854. A remark in the Sentinel showed the success of the undertaking. Nine hundred eighty signatures were sent to Washington one, with more to go the next. "Everybody signs them almost with the exception of the office holders." Milwaukee Sentinel, Feb. 27, 1854.

¹¹ Milwaukee Sentinel, Feb. 28, 1854.

resolution, passed in the lower house, developed more opposition in the state senate. After much debate and haggling, it was "indefinitely postponed", and shelved for the session.¹²

Several of the surrounding communities also held meetings to protest against the action of the U. S. Senate on the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. Citizens of cities such as Port Washington and Kenosha urged the defeat of the bill. The people of Janesville proclaimed their "disapproval of the so called 'Nebraska Bill', as reported by Stephen A. Douglas in the Senate of the United States."¹³ The people of the villages of Hartland and Pewaukee assembled to draw up protests. Pewaukee citizens resolved that the people of the nation should rise up "at every hazard, and not only check the usurpation of the ... slave holders, but extinguish their power, as in itself not only inconsistent with, but actually hostile to and submissive of Republican Liberty."¹⁴

At Ripon, the citizens declared that if the Kansas-Nebraska Bill should pass the Senate, the old party organization in Ripon should be cast off, and a new party, to be called the Republican, formed on the sole issue of opposition to slavery extension.¹⁵ But the United States Senate seemed to be indifferent to the scattered protests registered throughout the North and passed the bill on March 3, 1854.

12 Ibid., March 10, 1854.

13 Daily Free Democrat, Feb. 24, 1854.

14 Milwaukee Sentinel, March 24, 1854.

15 Daily Free Democrat, March 24, 1854.

On March 24, a second meeting was held at Ripon. Men represented various political parties held together by the common bond of opposition to slavery in the territories. They voted to dissolve the Whig and Free Soil Parties and appointed a committee of five - three Whigs, one Democrat, and one Free Soiler - to organize a new party. The promoters of those two meetings, directed by Allen E. Bovay started the earliest systematic work to bring about a coalition of the enemies of slavery.¹⁶ Meanwhile, on May 22, 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Bill passed the House of Representatives and assumed the form of law.

The editor of the Milwaukee Sentinel expressed his dissenting views, writing "it will be seen that the iniquity has been consummated! Threats and promises, unblushing bribery and corruption, the personal solicitations of the President, and the unwarranted use of power, have again triumphed, and the North is again betrayed." The editor feared that the bill would pass the Senate a second time. "Slavery", wrote the indignant editor, "has again won a victory over Freedom - has added another wreath to its crown of laurels, for triumphs gained by the miserable trucklings of demagogues who are supposed to represent the interests of the Free States and of a free People in Congress." Sensing that the Kansas-Nebraska

¹⁶ The history of the Republican party can be more fully studied in Francis P. Curtis, The Republican Party (New York, 1904), Andrew W. Crandall, The Early History of the Republican Party (Boston, 1930, and James L. Sellers, "Republicanism and States Rights in Wisconsin", Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVII (Sept. 1930), 213-229.

bill was widely opposed in the North, the editor believed righteous indignation would sweep that section and demand repeal of the infamous bill. "We have full faith", he wrote, "that there will be a North at last."¹⁷

Sherman M. Booth, in the Free Democrat, violently denounced the Congress for allowing the bill to pass. He worded his protest in strong language.

By our telegraphic report from Washington it will be perceived that the Nebraska Bill has passed the House of Representatives -- clift of the Clayton amendment--by a vote of 113 to 100. At 11 o'clock, on the night of the 22nd day of May 1854, this stupendous fraud--the vilest and most insulting outrage ever conceived by Congress or attempted to be perpetuated upon a free people- was consummated. The deed was done in the dark, almost midnight, a fitting time for the assassins to execute their fiendish purposes. Party discipline and party patronage, combined with the rankest corruption and grossest villainy, have done the work. This perfidious deed, the crowning work of infamy, is at last accomplished and the present Administration have done it. The hour of its passage will not soon be forgotten. We are not disappointed at the result for we were aware of the base means to which the administration has resorted to carry this iniquity."¹⁸

But not all of the editors of the other Milwaukee papers agreed with Booth of the Free Democrat and Rufus King of the Sentinel on the Nebraska question. The Democratic editors could not see how the Kansas-Nebraska Bill could effect the status of slavery in new territory. The editor of the Milwaukee News thought that Messrs. Booth and King were more interested in agitation than the issues. "Now that the anti-

¹⁷ Milwaukee Sentinel, May 24, 1854.

¹⁸ Daily Free Democrat, May 24, 1854.

Nebraska journals can make nothing more out of their opposition to the Nebraska Bill", wrote the editor, "they are beginning to admit that slavery can never go to the new territories." Truly, that editor felt that the spread of slavery was the "only point of practical importance in the controversy" about which the "masses" cared "a fig."¹⁹ According to the new congressional act, the Kansas-Nebraska Territory was opened to slavery; freedom depended upon the wishes of its settlers.

The opponents of the Kansas-Nebraska act took steps to organize a new political party. An announcement, signed by many citizens, appeared in some Milwaukee newspapers. It called upon "all men opposed to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, the Extension of Slavery, and the Rule of Slave Power," to convene in Madison on July 13. "We must unite and be free", read the call of the organizing committee, "or divide and be enslaved by the praetorian bands of slave holders and their Nebraska Allies."²⁰ As an inducement to encourage people to attend the meeting in Madison, the management of the Milwaukee & Madison Railroad offered to carry delegates at half-fare.²¹ Thus, the people of Wisconsin had a chance to express their sentiments on the slavery question, and to make their stand against the institution they considered infamous and degrading.

¹⁹ Milwaukee News, June 3, 1854.

²⁰ Milwaukee Sentinel, June 10, 1854; Daily Free Democrat, June 10, 1854.

²¹ Milwaukee Sentinel, June 10, 1854.

Excitement mounted as the date of the Madison meeting neared. Just a few days earlier, on July 6, a group of citizens of Jackson, Michigan, had convened at a mass meeting and adopted the name "Republican" for their newly organized "anti-Nebraska" party. People flocked to Madison to attend the meeting thus dispelling the fears of many antislaveryrites, who thought there would be a small group because the time was inconvenient for the farmers. Almost five hundred people gathered in the state's capital city to draw up resolutions against the Kansas-Nebraska act. The most important business conducted by the convention was the adoption of a series of resolutions whereby the delegates decided that they would accept the alternative of freedom or slavery as a political issue.

Resolved, That we accept this issue, forced upon us by the slave power, and in the defense of freedom we will cooperate and be known as Republicans, pledged to the accomplishment of the following purposes:

- To bring the administration of the government back to the control of first principles.
- To restore Nebraska and Kansas to the position of free territories.
- To the repeal of the entire abrogation of the Fugitive Slave Act.
- To restrict slavery to the States in which it now exists.
- To prohibit the admission of any more Slave States to the Union.
- To exclude Slavery from all the Territories over which the General Government has exclusive jurisdiction. And to resist the acquisition of any more Territory, unless the prohibition of slavery therein shall at first have been provided for.²²

22 Daily Free Democrat, July 14, 1854.

Many Badgers were jubilant. Their state had made a stand against slavery in the cause of freedom! "Hallelujah!", wrote Sherman Booth at the close of his account of the now famous convention.²³ Most of the people did not realize the importance of the meeting. Newspaper editors made little comment of it, except to report the resolutions adopted there. Unbeknown to many, the people of Wisconsin had taken the lead in the shaping of a new political party. They had helped to form a new party which was to defy the slave holding South and grow from a little acorn into a giant oak.

The arrival of Bernard Domschke, another notable "48er", in Milwaukee was a boom to the newly-formed Republican party. He was destined to lead many of the Milwaukee Germans into the ranks of the new party. His background of training and experience qualified him for leadership. Born near Dresden, he had prepared for the ministry, but then joined the free-thinkers instead and organized several "free congregations". His ability as a music critic and his interest in the theatre gave him social standing. In May 1849, he took part in the revolution in Dresden, but when it collapsed he joined the wave of refugees fleeing to the United States. In July 1851, he landed in New York, where he tried to make a living as a teacher in Brooklyn, and where he organized a "free congregation." The following year he went to Boston to serve as speaker for a group of freethinkers. In Boston he became

²³ Ibid.

the assistant editor of the New England Zeitung, a paper of radical leanings. Then he moved to Louisville where he assisted with the publication of the Louisville Herold des Westens. In the summer of 1854 he moved to Milwaukee.²⁴

Mr. Domschke was a newspaper man and an "anti-Nebraska" man. Since the three German-language newspapers in Milwaukee were Democratic organs, there was a need of a German paper to oppose them to express the anti-Nebraska and Republican views. With his newspaper experience, Domschke knew how to advertize his first public address in Milwaukee. The subject of the address, according to Koss, was the "The 'Democratic Church', and New Political Trend of the Times."²⁵ It appears that the "Democratic Church" was Domschke's way of referring to the Democratic party. That party - afflicted by heresies - had, he said, become unserviceable, and ready for condemnation. The editor of the dissenting Democratic minded Banner disagreed with Domschke's views and he went on to express his belief that nothing could ever make the German people in America be disloyal to the tenets of the Democratic party.²⁶

Some Republican leaders felt that in Domschke they had

²⁴ For an excellent work on Bernhard Domschke see J. J. Schlicher, "Bernhard Domschke", Wisconsin Magazine of History XXIX (Mar. 1946), 319-42. For further information on the "Forty-Eighters" see A. E. Zucker, The Forty-Eighters (New York, 1950) and Carl Wittke, Refugees of Revolution (Philadelphia, 1952).

²⁵ Rudolph H. Koss, Milwaukee (Milwaukee, 1871), 449. The German title of Domschke's speech was "Die 'demokratische Kirche' und die neue politische Zeitstroemung." Rudolph H. Koss was a contemporary of Mr. Domschke. This book, which relates the history of Milwaukee from its first explanative until 1854, is written in German and is of primary importance.

²⁶ Milwaukee Banner, Aug. 9, 1854.

found the right man to conduct a German-language paper in their behalf. They secured an office in Milwaukee for him, and in October of 1854, the first issue of a new weekly, Der Corsar (The Corsair) appeared. A contemporary, sympathetic to Domschke and his views, later wrote:

The Corsair was written with great talent and resourcefulness, and presented a truly liberal conception of American politics. But under the circumstances then existing it was given the recognition which it deserved only by a very few, and even by these less for the political opinions it presented than for its excellent reviews of the performances in the theatre and the Musical Society.²⁷

Bernhard Domschke did win many friends, not only among the German people, but among the native Americans. Sherman M. Booth, whose antislavery views paralleled Domschke's, endorsed The Corsair in the columns of the Free Democrat:

Der Corsar, A German Republican paper, edited and published by Bernhard Domschke, is a very able paper, which ought to be in the hands of 5,000 German voters of this state, and we want to say an earnest word in its behalf, to such of our readers as are interested in the Republican cause. Mr. Domschke is really a very able writer, who understands the genius and spirit of the American government. He has toiled earnestly and hopefully and stood manfully by the right notwithstanding the great pressure of social, political and pecuniary temptations, and we regard him among the tried and true friends of Liberty. He has maintained his paper for a year by unwearied industry and by the aid of a few friends, who have been willing to make sacrifices for a good cause, till it has attained an honorable reputation for character and ability among the German papers of the country. It has gained steadily in circulation and influence....Let us hold up the hands of our noble co-worker, Mr. Domschke...²⁸

²⁷ Koss, 451.

²⁸ Daily Free Democrat, Sept. 18, 1855.

Rufus King, editor of the Milwaukee Sentinel added his endorsement of Domschke's work to that of Booth.²⁹

The Republican movement was on its way in Milwaukee. With three newspapers preaching the doctrines of the Republican party and the antislavery movement the new political party grew in size and strength. King and Booth wrote for the English-speaking residents. Domschke tried to win converts among the German element.

Enraged Americans throughout the nation formed Emigrant Aid Societies to combat the Kansas-Nebraska legislation. A meeting was called in Milwaukee to "express the popular sentiment of our city for 'Freedom for Kansas'", as well as to "raise men and means to help our brethern in the Territory."³⁰ In an editorial the Sentinel approved of the action of the meeting and hoped "that every man who prizes the Free Institutions of Wisconsin and desires to see the like blessing secured in Kansas, we will aid with heart and hand, in the good work."³¹

At the meeting which convened at Young's Hall, Edward D. Holton served as the presiding officer. Milwaukee citizens, who attended, proposed several resolutions, one of which made provision for the creation of a Kansas Emigration Aid Society. A call for volunteers to settle in Kansas closed the meeting.³²

²⁹ Milwaukee Sentinel, Sept. 20, 1855.

³⁰ Milwaukee Sentinel, Feb. 27, 1856.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., March 7, 1856.

The fruits of the agitation were evident a short time later, for on May 19, 1856, a six-wagon caravan left Milwaukee carrying settlers for Kansas. A member of this group was E. G. Ross, later Senator from Kansas whose vote prevented President Johnson from being impeached by the United States Senate in 1867. The journey took three months of continuous travel, all of it under great difficulty.

But Milwaukee in 1854 witnessed an event that was to occupy the attention of the state for several years to come. The Glover Rescue Case overshadowed every event in the city, even the birth of the Republican party. The Fugitive Slave Law was put to the test in Wisconsin.

CHAPTER VI

"FREEMEN, TO THE RESCUE"

In the spring of the year 1852, a Negro slave named Joshua Glover ran away from his master, Bennami S. Garland, who resided near St. Louis. Glover journeyed to Racine, Wisconsin, and found employment in a saw mill. The runaway lived in a small shack about four miles north of Racine, always fearing recapture by his master.

On the night of March 10, 1854, Joshua Glover's shanty was entered by four men, who after a scuffle, succeeded in shackling the fugitive. The invaders took the slave to Milwaukee where he was thrown in the county jail. In an account of the arrest, a Racine writer treated the event dramatically:

On Friday night some Southerners, who had been prowling about the city, as it appears for a day or two, assisted by John Kearney, the United States Deputy Marshal, and one Daniel Houghton, and one Hunker Democrat, from the town of Dover, Racine County, procured teams from Armour's Livery Stable and left the city about 7 o'clock. They proceeded to the house of the man Glover, near the Saw Mill of Messrs. Sinclair and Rice. They had previously sent on a Negro by the name of Turner who acted as a decoy. Knocking at the door, where Glover, Ellis, and Turner, three colored men, were engaged in playing cards, Ellis told them "not to open the door, until they knew who it was." Turner jumps up immediately and opens the door, when in rushes John Kearney and others, and takes a club, and stuns Glover with a blow, cutting his head horribly, and discoloring the floor with blood. They then handcuffed him, put him in a wagon and drove away. Driving in a southerly direction for a while to mislead those who were on the

track, the wagon with the Negro turns off and goes to Milwaukee. Turner returned to the city and reported that he had been captured and made his escape. Previous to this however, Messrs. Rice and Sinclair, the owners of the mill, had footed to town, and the citizens, to the number of many hundreds, had gathered on the public Square, consulting what was to be done. In a few minutes Kearney and Houghton drove up to the stable with the team they had started with. The crowd pressed around them, to whom they denied knowing anything about the matter. Kearney, although Deputy Marshal, said he had no papers, nor had he served any since he had been in office. Houghton sneaked away so he could not be found. On Saturday morning, they were both arrested for aiding and abetting in kidnapping, and are now out of custody on bail of \$1000 each. They will be tried for kidnapping, and afterwards for assault and battery.¹

The people of Racine were infuriated that slave catchers should come to their city and arrest a peaceable citizen. At a mass meeting the residents of that city adopted several resolutions to express their sentiments about the arrest of Glover. The protestors felt that Glover had been kidnapped and resolved to "look upon the arrest of said Glover as an outrage upon the peaceful rights of this community." Those arresting the slave had no warrant for his capture. By an organized protest the citizens of Racine demanded that Glover receive a fair and impartial trial by jury in the city where he was arrested. Their protest read, "we will attend in person and aid him by all honorable means, to secure his unconditional release, adopting as our motto the Golden Rule."²

The next morning, March 11 at 9:00 a.m., Mr. Sherman M.

¹ Milwaukee Sentinel, March 13, 1854.

² (Milwaukee) Daily Free Democrat, March 11, 1854, Milwaukee Sentinel, March 13, 1854.

Booth, editor of the Free Democrat, received a telegram from the mayor of Racine. The telegram informed Booth of the kidnapping incident and asked him to determine whether a warrant had been issued in Milwaukee for the slave's arrest. Booth went to see Deputy United States Marshal Charles C. Cotton, who denied any knowledge of the matter. But Judge Andrew J. Miller, a "pro-slavery" United States Judge, said a warrant had been issued and that the case, no doubt, would be brought before him. Judge Miller also spoke of the liability of the United States Marshal should the slave escape. He hoped there would be no excitement in Milwaukee because of the presence of the slave in the city. This was the first clue, secured by Booth and his friends, that Glover was held in Milwaukee. Sherman Booth immediately informed Judge Miller that Milwaukeeans demanded that "a fair and open trial for this fugitive slave." Booth also insisted that Glover "be permitted to have counsel."³

As soon as the people of Milwaukee learned of Glover's incarceration in the county jail, they became excited. Hundreds flocked to the jail, declaring that Glover should not be secretly removed from the jail. Some Milwaukee lawyers spent the day reviewing the provisions of the Fugitive Slave Act, while other lawyers investigated the possibilities of securing Glover's release on a writ of habeas corpus.⁴

³ C. C. Olin, "The Glover Rescue and Its Results", MSS., Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio. (Microfilm copy, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin), 3-4. Hereafter cited as Glover Rescue MSS.

⁴ Milwaukee Sentinel, March 13, 1854.

Judge Jenkins issued a writ of habeas corpus for the release of Glover, but the Sheriff of Milwaukee County refused to obey it because the fugitive was a federal prisoner. Glover was in the custody of Deputy Marshal Cotton, under a warrant from Judge Miller of the United States Court. G. K. Watkins, the counsel for Glover, obtained another writ and gave it to Sheriff Page, who in turn was requested to give it to Deputy Marshal Cotton.⁵

Mr. Booth was very much excited over the presence of the fugitive slave in Milwaukee. He mounted a horse and rode through the main streets of Milwaukee, calling the people to a mass meeting at the court house at 2 o'clock that afternoon.⁶

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Mr. Booth was supposed to have shouted "Freemen, to the rescue!" but he always denied the statement. Many years later he said: "I did not cry, as was reported and sworn to, 'Freemen, to the rescue!' A forcible rescue was never my purpose. I aimed simply to secure for Glover a fair trial and competent counsel. In calling the meeting I used two forms of speech - namely, 'All freemen, or all free citizens, who are opposed to being made slaves or slave catchers, turn out to a meeting in the court house square at 2 o'clock.' - the only variation being that I sometimes used the word 'men' and sometimes the word 'citizens'. I counseled against violence, publically and privately. Yet in all the histories of the case - in newspapers, pamphlets, and books - I am represented as riding through the streets of Milwaukee shouting, 'Freemen, to the rescue!' I respectfully decline the honor of a deed which I never performed. The only responsibility attaching to me for the rescue of Glover is that I helped create a strong public sentiment against the Fugitive Slave Act and called the meeting to protest the legal rights of Glover and secure for him a fair trial. If, when assembled for peaceful and lawful purposes, the course of the judge and his bailiffs excited the people to take Glover out of jail against my advice, I was guiltless of the rescue..."
Chicago Chronicle, May 2, 1897, in "Booth Scrapbook", Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

About five thousand people assembled at the court house that afternoon. The excitement was intense. The crowd was called to order by Joseph Paine, a prominent Milwaukee attorney. General E. B. Wolcott was chosen president of the meeting, and A. Henry Bielfeld, secretary. Sherman M. Booth, Joseph Paine, John Furlong, William Whitnall, and Dr. E. Wunderly made up a committee to draw up resolutions indicating the sentiment of the people of Milwaukee on the Glover affair. After several speeches by various citizens, the committee on resolutions reported that since a writ of habeas corpus had been issued (by Judge Jenkins in the name of the state of Wisconsin) that Glover should be brought forth and cause shown why the prisoner should not be released. The resolutions read:

Resolved, as the citizens of Milwaukee, That every person has an indefeasable right to a fair and impartial trial by jury on all questions involving personal liberty.

Resolved, That the Writ of Habeas Corpus is the great defense of Freedom, and that we demand for this prisoner, as well as for our own protection, that this Sacred Writ shall be obeyed.

Resolved, That we pledge ourselves to stand by the prisoner, and do our utmost to secure for him a fair and impartial trial.⁷

President E. B. Wolcott appointed a vigilance committee to watch the jail so that the slave was not removed secretly. If an attempt was made to do so, the men were instructed to ring the bells of the city to enlist the aid of fellow citizens to prevent such a removal.⁸

⁷ Milwaukee Sentinel, March 13, 1854.

⁸ Ibid.

About 5 o'clock that afternoon a group of men arrived from Racine by boat. The men marched in a solid column to the jail where the arrested fugitive remained in charge of two deputies employed by the United States Marshal. A crowd gathered at the court house square and demanded the release of Glover. Mr. Booth explained to the delegates from Racine what had been done by Milwaukeeans to secure the Negro's release, denounced the Fugitive Slave Act, but advised the people against violence.⁹

G. K. Watkins, the slave's counsel, then reported that Judge Miller had decided that he would not obey the writ of habeas corpus, and that no power on earth would take Glover from jail until Monday. Mr. Watkins claimed that such action was an outrage. Glover should not be kept in jail over the Sabbath "without medical aid as he had been badly assaulted, maimed, and was covered with blood by the cruel treatment of Garland and the United States Marshal Cotton." Continuing, the lawyer declared that there were times when the people had to take the law into their own hands, although he was uncertain whether the situation was "one of those times." That, he added, the people had to judge from themselves.¹⁰

The vigilance committee and the Racine delegates conferred a few moments and then decided to go to the American House to determine what course should be taken to secure Glo-

⁹ Glover Rescue MSS., 6-7; Milwaukee Sentinel, March 13, 1854.

¹⁰ Glover Rescue MSS., 7-8.

ver's release.¹¹ Scarcely had the meeting adjourned "when the crowd made a rush for the jail" and "demanded" the keys of the jail from Undersheriff S. S. Conover. The undersheriff denied the request. Then about twenty strong men "seized a large stick of timber [C. C. Olin was one of these] some 8 or 10 inches square and some twenty feet long" and began hammering at the jail door. A participant later described the scene vividly.

Bomb. Bomb. Bomb. And down came the jail door and out came Glover. And about that time the Sheriff and U. S. Marshal made their appearance upon the scene and a rescue was attempted from those that had Glover in their possession. And for some 20 minutes to a half hour the d---l was to pay. Glover was well kept in hand by his rescuers from the jail to Wisconsin St. and about 1000 people following in the wake. Sometimes it seemed as though the Marshal's and Sheriff's posse would rearrest him from the angry populace. On they went from Wis. to E. Water St. and down East Water to what was then called Walker's Point bridge. While the crowd was constantly increasing, but victory was for the rescuers. On arriving at the bridge John A. Messenger, a Democrat, came along and wanted to know what was up....After being told he put the man in his buggy and way he went with the whole posse of the U. S. government in his wake.¹²

Glover, thus, successfully escaped from Milwaukee. Mr. Messenger journeyed with his charge until he came to Waukesha. Arriving there late at night, he went directly to the home of D. Brown, a known abolitionist. It was arranged that Glover was to be kept in hiding in the Waukesha area until it would be safe to move him further on his journey to Canada.

¹¹ Milwaukee Sentinel, March 13, 1854.

¹² Glover Rescue MSS., 8-9. Mr. Olin seldom used the first names of the people participating in the movement when he wrote his account. It has been impossible to discover what these names were, so only the initials are used.

A few days later he was moved to Racine. C. C. Olin was responsible for returning the Negro to Racine and hiding him with friends. A short time later, Glover made good his escape "to the land of freedom, never more to be a slave or recaptured."¹³

The Racine county sheriff had brought a warrant for the arrest of Garland, the slave owner, and others for assault and battery (on Glover). Garland was taken to Johnathan E. Arnold, his counsel, and the same man who had helped Charles Hall search for Carroline Quarlles in 1842. Judge Miller issued a writ of habeas corpus for Garland's release, and he was scheduled to appear before Judge Miller's court on Monday morning.¹⁴

In commenting on the Glover case the editor of the Free Democrat said that Mr. Garland should be arrested at once for assault and battery. Slave catchers should be taught better than to come to Wisconsin, "knock down, cut and gash the heads of our peaceable citizens." Booth said there was no law to authorize such brutallity.¹⁵ Booth also denounced Judge Miller's decision not to obey the writ of habeas corpus issued by Judge Jenkins.

Judge Miller has decided that any slave claimant, with or without a warrant, can knock down and abuse this alledged slave or commit any crime he pleases, and the State Courts cannot reach him until he has got his slave home - his slave being a licensing angel, authorizing him to play the devil with impunity - and when once the U. S. Court gets posses-

¹³ Glover Rescue MSS., 9-15.

¹⁴ Milwaukee Sentinel, March 13, 1854

¹⁵ Daily Free Democrat, March 11, 1854.

sion of a man, no writ of Habeas Corpus from a state court can reach him....This is the most damnable decision ever uttered by any court in any civilized country. It strikes down the rights of every free citizen in Wisconsin. The Slave-catchers under this decision, may pounce upon me, and Judge Miller will protect him against the whole force of the State, in using any amount of violence till he has reduced me to Slavery. Slave-catching is the only divinity, Slavery is the only supreme law. The code of Draco is reenacted..."¹⁶

On March 15, Sherman Booth was arrested on a charge of "aiding and abetting" the escape of Joshua Glover. The warrant was issued by United States Commissioner, Winfield Smith.¹⁷ Booth's hearing began on March 21. The crux of the case was how much influence Mr. Booth had over the crowd during the Glover escape. The court tried to prove that Booth was responsible for the release of the Negro and intended to prosecute him under the Fugitive Slave Act.

Charles Cotton, Deputy U. S. Marshal, stated at the trial that he had seen Mr. Booth several times on the day of March 11. He saw him riding up and down East Water Street calling people to meet at the court house, but he could not remember his exact words.¹⁸ Some witnesses testified that Sherman Booth shouted "Freemen, to the rescue!" as he rode in the streets of Milwaukee, but others stated Mr. Booth did not use those words, but just called people to attend the meeting at the courthouse.¹⁹

Sherman M. Booth took the stand and addressed the court

¹⁶ Ibid., March 13, 1854.

¹⁷ Milwaukee Sentinel, March 16, 1854.

¹⁸ Ibid., March 22, 1854.

¹⁹ Daily Free Democrat, March 23, 1854.

in his own behalf:

I do not propose to reply to the counsel of the slave-catcher.... My answer to the charge is, that it is not true. The only aid I gave was what law permitted and Christian Religion demanded....I ought to blame myself for not having done more.... But I am frank to say - and the prosecution may make the most of it - that I sympathize with the rescuers of Glover and rejoice at his escape....And I am bold to say, that, rather than have the great constitutional rights and safeguards of the people - the writ of Habeas Corpus and the right of trial by jury stricken down by the Fugitive law, I would prefer to see every Federal Officer in Wisconsin hanged on a gallows fifty cubits higher than Haman's....I have done nothing in this case, which living, I could wish to forget, or, dying, I would wish to blot out of the memory of mankind.²⁰

On the third day the judge hearing the case decided that no evidence had been offered that Glover was a fugitive, or that he owed labor or service to Bennami Garland. Such a decision should have freed Booth, but he was ordered to appear before the United States District Court in July. Bail for Booth, which was set at \$2000, was paid by Dr. Charles E. Wunderly so that the fiery editor of the Free Democrat could be free.²¹

In April a group of Milwaukeeans met at Young's Hall to express the sentiments of the public relative to the Glover case. They adopted many resolutions stating that since an attempt had been made on the part of public officers "to deprive a man of his liberty without a jury trial, "and since prosecution had been started against various Milwaukeeans for alleged violation of the Fugitive Slave Law," that it was

²⁰ Milwaukee Sentinel, March 24, 1854.

²¹ Ibid., March 25, 1854.

dangerous for the federal government to exercise doubtful unconstitutional powers. They felt that the Constitution did not give Congress the power to make laws to reclaim fugitive slaves, nor was such legislation necessary. They added that the act of Congress of 1850, commonly called the Fugitive Slave Law, was "unconstitutional and void," and that all power to legislate on the status of fugitive slaves belonged to the states. They believed the Fugitive Act "dangerous to the liberties of the people, and destructive to the sovereignty of the States, "therefore, it was the duty of the State Governments...to protect...the liberties of the citizens from all encroachments by virtue of said act."²²

At this same meeting the sponsors drew up a "Declaration of Sentiments" which they hoped would be adopted by the citizens of the entire state of Wisconsin. Their declaration read:

All persons in the State of Wisconsin, irrespective of birth, condition, or color are presumed to be free. No person can be deprived of liberty but by due process of law, in open court by judgment of his peers.

The right of trial by jury should be sacredly maintained in all cases involving personal liberty.

All persons are entitled to the writ of habeas corpus on a proper application by any State or United States Judge.

The powers of Congress are limited to the express grants in the Constitution of the United States, and to such legislation as is necessary and proper to carry these grants into execution.

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 is unconstitutional and void because:

1st, Congress has no power to legislate on the subject.

²² Ibid., April 14, 1854.

2nd, This act annuls the writ of habeas corpus.
 3rd, It also abrogates the right of trial by jury.

The refusal of Judge Miller to allow the writ of habeas corpus in favor of Glover to be obeyed by the officers under his control, and his abuse of that writ in discharging Garland from arrest under process from a state court for assault and battery, on the ground that Garland, by virtue of an affidavit that any person was his slave, had a right, with or without process, to seize such a person, and use any amount of evidence necessary to subdue him, and make him his slave - furnish just cause of alarm to the people of this State and deserves their condemnation. The encroachments upon the sovereignty of the States, and the rights and liberties of the peoples by this Fugitive Slave Act and the execution of it by Federal Officers in the State should be opposed by all peaceful, legal, and constitutional means.

The course of those who are persecuted for alledged violation of the Fugitive Slave Act, is the cause of liberty against despotism, and of the people against the agents and tools of the slave power, and we pledge ourselves to stand by them in this controversy and sustain them by our sympathy, our prayers, and by all necessary material aid.²³

The way was opened for a test of the "odious" Fugitive Slave Act. Public sentiment, forming behind Booth, supported his cause. Yet on May 26, 1854, Sherman M. Booth was surrendered to the U. S. Marshal and placed in jail. The next day he applied to Judge Abram D. Smith, Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, for a writ of habeas corpus. Booth was released and his trial was slated for the next Monday. Byron Paine and Charles K. Watkins represented Mr. Booth, whereas the district attorney of Milwaukee County, Mr. Sharpstein, represented the United States.²⁴

At the trial, Attorney Paine raised three points in his

²³ Daily Free Democrat, April 14, 1854.

²⁴ Milwaukee Sentinel, May 29, 1854.

defense of Sherman Booth. First he claimed Congress had no power, constitutionally, to legislate for the recapture of runaway slaves. The clause in the Constitution relating to slavery, he said, was "a mere article of compact between the states depending for its observance entirely on their integrity and good faith." Second, he said, even if Congress did have power to legislate on slavery, the law was still unconstitutional because it provided that any person "claimed as a fugitive" could be "reduced to a state of slavery without a trial by jury." In his third argument, Mr. Paine said the Fugitive Slave Law was unconstitutional because it gave judicial power to United States Court Commissioners who were dependent officers. This was contrary to the Constitution of the United States which provided that

The judicial power of the United States shall be vested in the Supreme Court, and such inferior courts as Congress may from time to time ordain and establish. The Judges of both the Supreme Court and the inferior Courts, shall hold these offices during good behavior; and shall at stated times, receive for their services a compensation, which shall not be diminished during their continuation in office, (Sect. 1, Art. 3, Constitution of the United States)²⁵

Judge Abram D. Smith, in a long opinion freeing Booth from custody, said he would not directly rule of the Fugitive Slave Act, but that the act of 1850 was unconstitutional in that it violated the principles which prohibited persons from being deprived of liberty without "due process of law."²⁶

²⁵ Ibid., June 8, 1854.

²⁶ Wisconsin Supreme Court Reports, III (Chicago, 1875), 20-21; Milwaukee Sentinel, June 8, 1854; Daily Free Democrat, June 8, 1854.

In an editorial commending Booth's discharge, Rufus King of the Sentinel said that Judge Smith's opinion was "certainly a very able one handed on reason and justice." He recommended that the people support the decision and stated that it was unnecessary, without examination, to uphold every act of the federal government for the aid and comfort of slavery.²⁷

The case of Sherman M. Booth was appealed to the full bench of the Wisconsin Supreme Court. There Justice Smith's opinion was upheld. Justice Edward Whiton prepared the opinion of the court. He presented the opinion on two grounds, the insufficiency of the commitment, and the unconstitutionality of the Fugitive Slave Act in delegating to the court commissioners the power to hear and rule in cases arising under the act. Justice Samuel Crawford agreed with his colleagues on the discharge of Mr. Booth, but dissented from the view of the unconstitutionality of the Fugitive Act.²⁸

In the meantime the United States District Court was in session and a bill of indictment - (Booth vs. Garland) was issued against S. M. Booth and others. Mr. Booth was arrested and put in jail. He offered Dr. Wunderly as bail, but the judge refused to accept him on the grounds that the doctor had been "bail" before, had surrendered him, and had been discharged.²⁹

Mr. Booth declined to offer another person as bail and

27 Milwaukee Sentinel, June 8, 1854.

28 Wisconsin Supreme Court Reports, 3:59-64.

29 Glover Rescue MSS., 18.

stayed in jail. He again applied to the Supreme Court for a writ of habeas corpus, but his request was refused on the ground that the United States Court had already claimed jurisdiction, so the state declined to interfere.³⁰

The people of Milwaukee were very aroused by the refusal of the court to issue the writ. They tried to raid the jail to free Sherman Booth, but were thwarted in the attempt. United States Marshal Ableman went to Booth, who was still in jail, and offered to accept Dr. Wunderly as bail. Mr. Booth, with great reluctance, finally consented to accept him, and was released.³¹

At a special term of the United States District Court held in November, the defendants of the Glover rescue case were tried. Mr. Booth could not be present because of an attack of typhoid fever, so his case was postponed until the January term of court.³² The Court convicted John Rycraft, who was indicted with Booth on the charge of "aiding and abetting" a fugitive to escape.³³

In January, 1855, the Booth case came before the United States District Court at Madison. The charge was still the same, that of helping a fugitive slave to escape. The jury found Sherman Booth guilty. The judge fined him \$1000 and

30 Milwaukee Sentinel, July 26, 1854.

31 Glover Rescue MSS., 19.

32 Ibid., 20.

33 Milwaukee Sentinel, Nov. 21, 1854.

sentenced him to one month in jail. John Rycraft, who had been convicted the previous November, was fined \$200 and sentenced to ten days in jail.³⁴

The public became aroused. In an editorial the editor of the Sentinel expressed the view that the public was surprised by the verdict of guilty, because the belief had been widespread that the jury would disagree. The editor felt the trial was unfair. It was because of the Fugitive Slave Act, he said, that the Glover rescue was considered a crime. "The law is a tyrannical one, and must be tyrannically enforced.... The Free North will not longer tolerate its infamous mockery of Justice."³⁵

On another date, the Sentinel editor felt that "something more than sympathy is due to Messrs. Booth and Rycraft from those, at least of their fellow men, who think as they do of the infamous Fugitive Slave Law." He suggested that the people organize and contribute the means to pay the fines and costs already incurred by the defendents. "Let every man who loves freedom and loathes the Fugitive Slave Act, cast his mite into the fund."³⁶

Immediately after his conviction, Mr. Booth made application to the Wisconsin Supreme Court for a writ of habeas corpus. On January 29, the writ was sent from Madison directly

34 Ibid., Jan. 22, 1855.
 35 Ibid., Jan. 16, 1855.
 36 Ibid., Jan. 24, 1855.

to the sheriff of Milwaukee county and the Marshal of the United States District Court. It instructed them to bring Messrs. Booth and Rycraft before the state supreme court at Madison.³⁷ That verdict once again nullified the action of the federal courts.

The people of Milwaukee were jubilant. The antislavery crusaders published handbills calling all freemen to assemble at the county jail on Monday morning to escort Sherman Booth and John Rycraft, liberated on a writ of habeas corpus, to the railroad depot.³⁸ The people flocked in great numbers to see the two men on their way to Madison. A band played, a cannon boomed in the distance, and church bells rang out as the parade formed in the court house square. At the depot Booth and Rycraft stood on the top of the coaches to receive great ovations from the crowd.³⁹

The Supreme Court of Wisconsin unanimously discharged Booth and Rycraft of the indictment. Justice Whiton and Justice Smith upheld their former opinion that the Fugitive Slave Law was unconstitutional and void.⁴⁰ The decision was highly acclaimed throughout the entire state, even though Wisconsin was as guilty of nullifying federal law as South Carolina had been twenty years earlier.

37 Daily Free Democrat, Jan. 29, 1855.

38 Ibid.

39 Milwaukee Sentinel, Jan. 30, 1855; Glover Rescue MSS., 25.

40 Glover Rescue MSS., 26.

On February 9, a large crowd gathered at Young's Hall with the avowed purpose of finding ways and means to raise money to defray the expenses of Booth and Rycraft in the trials already held and in those trials due to come. The irate group drew up a number of resolutions. They thanked the state supreme court for releasing Booth and Rycraft from the "pain and penalties of an illegal conviction under an unjust, inhuman, and unconstitutional law." They asked all who aided Joshua Glover to escape in any way to carry the burden and to contribute to the fund to be raised. The group also appointed a committee to determine the costs already incurred and estimate the expenses which might come up. They called "upon the lovers of Justice and Liberty" to contribute to the fund. Sherman M. Booth then spoke to the assembled Milwaukeeans at great length on the "all grasping, all prevailing spirit of slavery, the infernal machinery of the Fugitive Slave Act, and the urgent necessity of all free men to resist the further encroachments of the slave power."⁴¹

In July, Booth was found guilty in the case of Garland vs. Booth, which had commenced some months earlier. Booth was required to pay \$1000, the supposed value of Joshua Glover, to Bennami Garland. The editor of the Sentinel wrote that "this is the first pro-slavery triumph ever won in Wisconsin, and it promised to be a barren triumph. The slave hunter has not obtained his \$1000. He has his verdict under an unconstitutional law. This is a thing essentially different

⁴¹ Milwaukee Sentinel, Feb. 12, 1855.

from the cool cash in one's pocket."⁴²

Subsequently, the case of Sherman Booth was taken to the United States Supreme Court. The Wisconsin Court had instructed its clerk to deny the federal district court the right to review its decision in the Booth case. The state court also refused to send the records of the Booth case to the U. S. Supreme Court on a writ of error, claiming that the state court had final jurisdiction in the case. As long as the Wisconsin court did not respond, the national court hesitated to consider the case.⁴³ Finally in January of 1859, the case was tried by the federal court.

In the meantime the people of Wisconsin did not stop condemning the Fugitive Slave Law. The Republican legislature of the state nominated Judge James R. Doolittle for United States Senator in 1857, and at the same time adopted strong "states rights" resolutions proclaiming the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions of 1789, and concluding:

Resolved, That in the application of these principles we hold it an important duty to stand firmly by the Supreme Court in asserting the rights of the State tribunals to pronounce final judgment in all cases involving the reserved rights of the State in declaring the Fugitive Slave Law unconstitutional and in shielding all the inhabitants of the State from the execution of unconstitutional enactments without right of review of a Federal Court.⁴⁴

In January 1859, the case of Ableman vs. Booth appeared on the docket of the United States Supreme Court. The fed-

⁴² Ibid., July 11, 1855.

⁴³ Glover Rescue MSS., 27.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 29-30.

eral court somehow procured a copy of the record of the case. The attorney for the federal government was Jeremiah S. Black, Attorney General of the United States. Mr. Booth refused to appear or to send counsel to the trial. Instead he sent a copy of the pamphlet containing Byron Paine's argument on his behalf in the Wisconsin courts along with copies of the opinions of the Supreme Court of Wisconsin in the case. The case ended with a reversal of the state court decision on March 7, 1859, by Justice Roger B. Taney.⁴⁵ The case was then legally over. Booth was thrown into a specially constructed cell in the Federal Building in Milwaukee to serve out his original sentence.

But the Wisconsin abolitionists did not forget the case. In the judicial election of 1859, Byron Paine, Booth's counsel in the earlier trials, was opposed by William P. Lynde. Mr. Paine was supported by all the antislaveryites in the state and was elected to the state supreme court by an overwhelming majority. "States rights and Byron Paine have triumphed," said the editor of the Waukesha Freeman.

The influence of the victory, however, will not be confined to the present. Wisconsin has again asserted in thunder tones her adherence to the great principles of the Republican party. The triumph will give us renewed confidence and strength in all future contests, while it will weaken and discourage the enemy.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ For a study of the legal aspects of the Booth case see Vroman Mason, "History of the Fugitive Slave Law in Wisconsin," Wisconsin Historical Society Proceedings (1895), 117-144; United States Supreme Court Reports, XVI (Rochester, N. Y., 1860), 175-176.

⁴⁶ Waukesha Freeman, April 12, 1859.

Garland's judgment against him for \$1000 to cover the cost of Joshua Glover, caused Booth to go into bankruptcy. His presses were sold and when he could pay no more, he was arrested and placed in the Customs House in Milwaukee and denied a writ of habeas corpus.

While Mr. Booth was in jail, Edward Daniels of Ripon made plans to release the prisoner. Along with a Mr. La Grange, Mr. Daniels went to Milwaukee for the avowed purpose of rescuing Sherman Booth and fleeing with him into the country. On August 1, 1860, at noon, Messrs. Daniels and LaGrange entered the Customs House, and forced the guard to free Mr. Booth. They fled with him to Ripon. While in the vicinity of Ripon, Sherman Booth made several speeches in behalf of his own cause.⁴⁷

On October 8, Sherman Booth was rearrested on the streets of Berlin, Wisconsin, and returned to the Customs House in Milwaukee. But in 1860, upon request from Mr. Booth, President James Buchanan issued a pardon for the "slave catcher." Mr. Booth's appeal to the president was as follows:

To the President of the United States:

Sir: The undersigned respectively presents that on the 23rd of Jany. 1855, he was sentenced by the U. S. District Court of Wis. to one month's imprisonment and to pay a fine of \$1000 and costs taxed at \$461.01 and to be imprisoned till the fine and cost were paid for an alledged violation of the Fugitive Act of 1850. That I was discharged from the Judgment of said District Court in a writ

⁴⁷ Glover Rescue MSS., 35-37. For an account of Mr. Booth's activities in Ripon see George W. Carter, "The Booth War in Ripon," Wisconsin State Historical Society Proceedings (1902), 161-172.

of habeas corpus on the 3rd day of Feb. 1855 by the Supreme Court of the State of Wisconsin on two grounds; 1st, That the Fugitive Slave Act was unconstitutional and 2nd, That the indictment under which I was convicted was fallibly defective. Justice Crawford while affirming the constitutional ity of the act holding with other members of the court that the indictment charged me with on offense against the act. That on the 1st day of March 1860, more than 5 years after this discharge and after the Supreme Court of this State had refused to reverse and had thereby reaffirmed its former judgment discharging me from imprisonment and after the Legislature of this State had passed formal resolutions which were approved by the Governor sustaining the decision of the State Court, I was rearrested and reimprisoned on the old conviction on a warrant from the U. S. District Court for this District and am still in prison.

That I regard my conviction and sentence as unjust and illegal and my imprisonment as an outrage on my rights and the rights of a sovereign state. That I am not able to pay my fines and costs nor do I believe that a prolongation of my imprisonment will enable or dispose me to pay them. That the object of the Government in imprisoning me was to vindicate an obnoxious statute that was done long ago, as it could be by my perpetual imprisonment. But if its object was to compel me to acknowledge the Fugitive Slave Act as a Constitutional law, that it is not the provision of the government to control mens opinions and that no length of imprisonment can change my belief. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 is a violation of the fundamental law of the land.

....That I do not act for money but for the recognition and restoration of my rights, and though the Government can never undo the wrong it has done me. Just as a peaceable and law abiding citizen, I had a right to demand that it shall cease to oppress me and that you as the Chief Executive will do me the partial justice of discharging me from this unjust judgment and order my release from imprisonment. The above statement, designed without disrespect, places my position before the Government. It is true to the best of my knowledge.

Sherman M. Booth⁴⁸

Mr. Booth finally received his pardon from the president, probably on the recommendation of Attorney General Black. "The pardon undid the whole affair which had occupied the attention of the people, press, and courts for a period of seven years. Soon after Mr. Booth left Milwaukee, financially ruined."⁴⁹

49 Ibid., 46.

CONCLUSION

By 1860 the antislavery sentiment in Wisconsin had reached its climax. Most of the citizens of the state were behind the movement to wipe the South's "peculiar institution" from the American scene. It had taken many years for Wisconsinites to join the ranks of the abolitionists.

In 1842 a handful of men successfully aided a fugitive slave girl to escape. For many years this group of antislavery men agitated for the abolition of slavery, making little headway. In 1850 and 1854 they grew stronger in numbers as more people backed their movement. Antislavery societies were becoming popular in the state. The people registered strong protests against the Kansas-Nebraska Act and even went so far as to support a movement to settle the area with emigrants so that it might remain free of slaves.

In 1854 the antislavery movement came to the fore in Wisconsin when some Milwaukeeans succeeded in setting free a fugitive slave. The Glover rescue case occupied the attention of the state for a number of years. By 1860, when Sherman Booth was finally pardoned, most Badgers were confirmed antislaveryites, following the tenets of Republicanism and advocating freedom for the slaves.

Newspapers such as the Milwaukee Sentinel whose editor had been lukewarm to the abolition cause, became staunch

supporters of antislavery and of the Republican party. The efforts of fiery editors such as Bernhard Domschke, Sherman M. Booth, and Rufus King did not go unrewarded. Wisconsin's Badgers were in the antislavery ring by 1860.

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