



**TIMELINE OF ABOLITION AND  
THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD  
IN MARBLEHEAD**

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**Marblehead Museum**

**December 2021**

## **February 22, 1834**

*The Liberator* reports that the Salem Anti-Slavery Society has formed, and prints its constitution. Captain Benjamin Porter of Marblehead serves as its 4th Vice President, while E.F. Dearborn of Marblehead is named Counselor. A few months later, Porter would become a manager of the American Anti-Slavery Society, a post he held until 1837.<sup>1</sup>

## **June 11-12, 1834**

The Essex County Anti-Slavery Society forms in Salem during a two-day convention. Rev. Samuel J. May delivers a speech to honor the occasion. Dyer H. Sanborn of Marblehead is elected to the Board of Managers.<sup>2</sup>

## **January 14, 1835**

The American Union for the Relief and Improvement of the Colored Race forms in Boston, with William Reed of Marblehead as its President. The Union was formed by “gentlemen of Boston and vicinity who had regarded with disapprobation the movements of the Anti-Slavery Society, but who nevertheless were desirous to do all that could properly be done to ameliorate the condition of the colored population.”

The Society’s aim, as stated in the second article of its Constitution, is “to promote, in all suitable ways, the mental and moral elevation of the colored race; and by disseminating information and exerting a kind moral influence, to convince all American citizens that the system of slavery in this country is wrong.”

Several immediatists, including British abolitionist George Thompson, attempt to “embarrass the proceedings”, but they are stopped by William Reed.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adams, Rufus, “Salem Anti-Slavery Society”, *The Liberator*, February 22, 1834. The article includes the Society’s constitution. See also Porter’s entry at <http://www.americanabolitionists.com/abolitionists-and-anti-slavery-activists.html#A>

<sup>2</sup> Cross, Joseph Warren and Dyer H. Sanborn, “Essex County Anti-Slavery Convention in Salem”, *The Liberator*, June 14, 1834

<sup>3</sup> Chickering, Reverend J.W., “American Union for the Relief and Improvement of the Colored Race”, *The Liberator*, January 17, 1835. To the left of this article, William Lloyd Garrison penned an essay on why this organization was “Cold and Proud in its Spirit”, “Defective in its Organization”, “Corrupt in its Origin”, “Deceitful in its Object”, and “Exclusive in its Action.” William Reed, the Society’s president, had been a member of Congress from 1811 to 1815, and was involved in a short-lived plot to convince New Englanders to secede from the Union and form a Northeast Confederacy with Eastern Canada. See *The Marblehead Messenger*, October 17, 1968.

## May 25, 1835

Samuel Reed, Levi Reed, and Daniel Thomas of Marblehead are named as delegates to the New England Anti-Slavery Convention during an organizing meeting.<sup>4</sup>

## October 21, 1835

British abolitionist George Thompson is scheduled to speak at the first anniversary meeting of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society. After discovering threats of violence against him, Boston abolitionists sneak Thompson out of Boston and into a series of safehouses, including the Spencer home in Salem (where he was pursued by a mob), Isaac Minster's home in South Danvers, and Erastus Ware's Farm in Marblehead, where he stayed for a week before traveling to New York City and sailing to England.

William Lloyd Garrison, editor of *The Liberator*, volunteers to speak in Thompson's place at the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, but he is attacked by an anti-abolition mob before the speech and nearly killed.<sup>5</sup>

While Thompson stayed at the Ware Farm, Ware received an anonymous letter threatening that his house "would be burned over his head" if Thompson remained there. A party of men came to the house looking for Thompson, but he hid in the woods. When Thompson lectured later in Marblehead's Methodist Church, a mob attacked the building, smashing some windows. During Thompson's stay, William Lloyd Garrison visited him at the Ware Farm.<sup>6</sup>

## October 22, 1835

George Thompson writes a letter to William Lloyd Garrison while hiding in Marblehead, outlining some of his abolitionist beliefs. It is later published as the Letter from Marblehead in *Letters and Addresses by George Thompson During His Mission in the United States* (1837).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Barry, Charles C., "New England Anti-Slavery Convention," *The Liberator*, May 30, 1835.

<sup>5</sup> Mayer, Henry, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), 200-208; Simeon Dodge to Wilbur H. Siebert, January 29, 1894, Wilbur H. Siebert Underground Railroad Collection, <https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/16566/rec/3>

<sup>6</sup> "Benjamin P. Ware", *The Marblehead Messenger*, February 9, 1906.

<sup>7</sup> Thompson, George, "Letter From Marblehead" in *Letters and Addresses by George Thompson During His Mission in the United States* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1837), 106-116.

## October 31, 1835

In an article titled "George Thompson's Ubiquity", William Lloyd Garrison mocks the New York and Boston press for their varied and inaccurate reports of Thompson's whereabouts. One rumor describes Thompson "living at Marblehead in a house already *marked* and *noted* by the spies of the mobocracy."<sup>8</sup>

## May 14, 1836

The *Liberator* prints an invitation to delegates for the New England Anti-Slavery Convention, held in Boston on May 24. Thirty-three men from Marblehead are invited: Samuel Homan, Dan Weed, S.B. Russell, Thomas Wooldridge, Robert P. Stevens, Benjamin Shaw, Samuel Bowden III, Nathaniel Hervey, Benjamin Porter, Thomas Dinsmore, John Reynolds, E.B. Dearborn, T. Nicholson, Francis Dixon, Samuel Martin, Philip Holway, Dan Weed, Jr., John Shaw, William A. Richardson, Joseph Wilson, Nathan Bowen, Jr., Russell L. Hathaway, Benjamin Hawkes, Francis Parton, Ezekiel Russell, J.P. Cressy, Andrew Lackey, John D. Eastland, Thomas Gurney, Jr., George P. Hiller, Erastus Ware, and Moses Hill.

Delegates are instructed to report to the Anti-Slavery Office at 46 Washington Street upon their arrival in Boston.<sup>9</sup>

## April 1-2, 1837

Oliver Johnson, a Boston newspaper editor and abolitionist, delivers an address in Marblehead at the Methodist Society Meeting House. On April 2, he is joined by Amos Dresser, a bible salesman who had been publicly whipped in Nashville for possessing abolitionist literature.

In *The Liberator*, Johnson describes how on April 2nd "a lawless rabble manifested their attachment to the 'Union' by attempting to break up our meeting." Protestors outside attempted to empty the building by shouting "Fire!", but most of the crowd remained inside.

Dresser spoke for an hour, during which the protestors tossed stones through the windows, breaking a few panes of glass, in an attempt to intimidate those gathered inside. The audience remained until the meeting's conclusion at 10pm.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Garrison, William Lloyd, "George Thompson's Ubiquity", *The Liberator*, October 31, 1835

<sup>9</sup> Garrison, William Lloyd, "A Call to the New England Anti-Slavery Convention", *The Liberator*, May 14, 1836

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, Oliver, "Disturbance in Marblehead," *The Liberator*, April 7, 1837

## **June 20-23, 1837**

“Fishermen from Marblehead” are identified as some of the speakers at the New England Anti-Slavery Convention.<sup>11</sup>

## **October 4, 1837**

The Essex County Anti-Slavery Society holds its annual meeting in New Rowley. Thomas Wooldridge of Marblehead is named one of the Society’s managers.<sup>12</sup>

## **January 8, 1839**

Lecturer Joseph H. Prince delivers an address on slavery before the Columbian Society of Marblehead. The full text of the lecture is printed in *The Liberator* under the mocking title, “Modern Democracy!”

In the address, Prince states, “I am no advocate for slavery...but I would not disseminate the doctrines of imprescriptible rights, among a people who have known nothing, who have felt nothing, save servile bondage, for more than two centuries. I would not give immediate, unconditional emancipation to the slave, before he was capable of appreciating and using liberty, as connected with civil government, with laws, and with religion.

Nor do I believe, come emancipation when it may, that the two races will ever live in a state of equal freedom under the same government, so insurmountable are the barriers which nature, habit, and opinion have established between them.”<sup>13</sup>

## **October 31, 1839**

The Essex County Anti-Slavery Society holds a convention in Danvers New Mills. Notes sent to the *Liberator* described the “fishermen of Marblehead” among the 183 men present. Thomas Wooldridge, of Marblehead, is named to the society’s Business Committee.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Goodell, William, “The New England Anti-Slavery Convention,” *The Liberator*, June 23, 1837

<sup>12</sup> Ashby, William, “Essex County A.S. Society”, *The Liberator*, October 13, 1837.

<sup>13</sup> Garrison, William Lloyd, “Modern Democracy!”, *The Liberator*, April 12, 1839. An article in the *Marblehead Messenger*, dated January 27, 1882, identifies abolitionists Wendell Phillips, Theodore Parker, and Charles Sumner as former speakers at Lyceum Hall, but does not provide dates. According to the paper, “A great many of these lectures were given under the auspices of the Columbian Society.”

<sup>14</sup> Foster, George and Benjamin R. Downs, “Essex County Anti-Slavery Convention”, *The Liberator*, November 8, 1839.

## 1840

Simeon and Betsey Dodge begin to offer their house as a station on the Underground Railroad. In a letter to Underground Railroad scholar Wilbur H. Siebert, written in 1893, Dodge noted, "Marblehead being on the sea and off the road to Canada, my home was used, for secreting fugitives who were sent to me for temporary safety, and kept until danger was over."<sup>15</sup>

As Lord and Gamage describe in *The Spirit of '76 Lives Here*, "Marblehead's port was used on the inbound route from New York and New Bedford as a connection with Salem and Andover, [and] as an embarkation point where escapees could wipe out a trail by going to Newburyport, Portland or Halifax by water."<sup>16</sup>

## Undated

Meetings are held in the home of Dr. Samuel L. Young (more commonly called the Orne House) at what is now 18 Darling Street, to plan Underground Railroad activities in Marblehead. Fred L. Noyes writes, "One night, a runaway slave was brought from a ship into the house by persons unknown, and Mr. Young secreted and fed him. The next night the fugitive was taken to Salem in a carriage, whence he was passed on safely to Canada via the U.G.R.R."

Young also assisted an ex-slave trying to raise money to buy his mother's freedom: "He had learned through secret sources of communication that his mother was to be sold South. ...He told a Marblehead minister who sent him to Mr. Young. With the help of others, Mr. Young got the mother brought North."<sup>17</sup>

In another example of Orne House activity, Wilbur H. Siebert writes, "One of the slaves protected by [Dodge] had been put ashore before daylight at Chelsea from a brig, hidden by a woman, and towards night entrusted to a farmer on his way home to Danvers, with a load of onions. The slave was forwarded to Marblehead, where the Methodist preacher, Mr. Bailey, took him to the house of A. C. Orne. Soon Mr. Dodge transferred the runaway to his home and a few nights later he and Benjamin G. Hathaway, with a borrowed horse and wagon, escorted him to the house of John A. Innis, a little way out of Salem. The

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<sup>15</sup> Dodge, Simeon to Professor Wilbur H. Siebert, March 1893, Wilbur H. Siebert Underground Railroad Collection <https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/16724/rec/1>. The 1840 date is likely an estimate, as Dodge notes at the beginning of the letter that "I did not keep any records or dates of anti-slavery days, simply done what I considered to be my duty at the time."

<sup>16</sup> Lord, Priscilla Sawyer and Virginia Clegg Gamage, *Marblehead: The Spirit of '76 Lives Here* (Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company), 172.

<sup>17</sup> Lord, Priscilla Sawyer and Virginia Clegg Gamage, *Marblehead: The Spirit of '76 Lives Here* (Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company), 172; Noyes, Fred L., "Notes on Underground Railroad Stations", Wilbur H. Siebert Underground Railroad Collection, <https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/16346/rec/3>.

runaway took the fifteen-mile drive to Judge Howe's, at Georgetown, in Mr. Innis's carriage."<sup>18</sup>

### **May 12-15, 1840**

Robert P. Stevens and Dan Weed serve as Marblehead delegates to the annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, held at the Fourth Free Church in New York City.<sup>19</sup>

### **June 23-24, 1840**

At the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Essex County Anti-Slavery Society, held at Mechanics Hall in Salem, Thomas Wooldridge of Marblehead is elected one of the society's Vice Presidents.<sup>20</sup>

### **October 30-December 2, 1840**

In the Election of 1840, Samuel Goodwin, Ambrose Allen, Robert P. Stevens, George Pedrick, Thomas M. Goodwin, and John Dennis vote for the Liberty Party ticket of J. Gillespie Birney and Thomas Earle. The Liberty Party was an antislavery third party that fielded candidates in presidential elections from 1840-1860.<sup>21</sup>

### **February 1841**

Samuel Goodwin represents Marblehead at an Anti-Slavery Convention of the Liberty Party in Georgetown, Massachusetts. The convention's agenda included a discussion of efforts to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Siebert, Wilbur H., *The Underground Railroad in Massachusetts* (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1936), 56-57.

<sup>19</sup> Garrison, William Lloyd, "American Anti-Slavery Society: Roll of Members and Delegates," *The Liberator*, May 29, 1840.

<sup>20</sup> Black, James D., "Essex County A.S. Society," *The Liberator*, July 10, 1840.

<sup>21</sup> K.S.P., "An Old Anti-Slavery Man Gone to Rest," *Marblehead Messenger*, November 30, 1883

<sup>22</sup> Roads, Samuel Jr., *The History and Traditions of Marblehead* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1881), 268-69; K.S.P., "An Old Anti-Slavery Man Gone to Rest," *Marblehead Messenger*, November 30, 1883. Goodwin also provided funding for the transport, lodging or compensation of abolitionist lecturers to Marblehead throughout his lifetime, including Frederick Douglass, Charles Lenox Remond, and Henry "Box" Brown.

## **June 22, 1841**

At the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Essex County Anti-Slavery Society, held in Lynn, Thomas Wooldridge of Marblehead is elected one of the society's Vice Presidents.<sup>23</sup>

## **September 2, 1842**

In his *Herald of Freedom* newspaper, New Hampshire abolitionist Nathaniel P. Rogers describes a trip to Marblehead: "I was astonished to hear that the people were peculiarly pro-slavery. They are mostly Democrats, and are afraid probably of 3rd partyism. They must be shown that this is not abolitionism. We found but one abolitionist family there, Thomas Wooldridge's, a 'come-outer' Quaker. Garrison or Foster must go among them, and tell the bold 'fishermen of Marblehead' what anti-slavery means, and they will embrace it. They will be abolitionists fast enough, when they learn that anti-slavery is humanity, and not politics or sectarianism."<sup>24</sup>

## **June 30, 1843**

At the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Essex County Anti-Slavery Society, held in the Methodist Meeting House in East Bradford, Thomas Wooldridge of Marblehead is elected one of the society's Vice Presidents.<sup>25</sup>

## **January 5, 1844**

At a quarterly meeting of the Essex County Anti-Slavery Society, held in Dodge's Hall in Manchester, Thomas Wooldridge of Marblehead is named one of the society's agents.<sup>26</sup>

## **April 11-12, 1844**

P. Dixy, of Marblehead, attends an Anti-Slavery Convention held in Salem's Lyceum Hall. Abolitionists who spoke included S.S. Foster, Charles Lenox Remond, J.M. Spear, Frederick Douglass, and William Lloyd Garrison.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Black, James D. and James P. Boyce, "Essex County Anti-Slavery Society," *The Liberator*, July 2, 1841

<sup>24</sup> Rogers, Nathaniel Peabody, *A Collection from the Miscellaneous Writings of Nathaniel Peabody Rogers* (Boston: Benjamin B. Mussey and Company, 1849), 231-32.

<sup>25</sup> Kenny, Mary P., "Ninth Annual Meeting of the Essex County A.S. Society," *The Liberator*, July 14, 1843.

<sup>26</sup> Kenny, Mary P., "Essex County Anti-Slavery Society", *The Liberator*, January 19, 1844.

<sup>27</sup> Kenny, Mary P. and Henry Clapp Jr., "Anti-Slavery Convention at Salem," *The Liberator*, April 19, 1844; *Salem Register*, April 11, 1844.



## **April 22, 1844**

An Anti-Slavery Convention is held in Beverly. Speakers included Frederick Douglass, Charles L. Remond, Stephen S. Foster and J.N. Buffum.

However, the delegates are met “with a rather cool reception” during the morning, which the *Salem Register* attributes to political interference and a lack of support among local churches. As the *Register* reported, “They were somewhat uneasy when the truth came --- when their rotten churches were ripped up, and their political dishonesty exposed, but considering there is so much ‘religion’ in the town, the audience behaved very decently.”

Owing to the town’s lack of interest, the cost of renting Beverly Town Hall, and the fact that “the churches are shut against anti-slavery”, the convention organizers decide to adjourn to Marblehead. However, they meet a similarly skeptical crowd. According to the *Register*, “The main impediments to the progress of Anti-Slavery in Marblehead appear to be politics, false religion and ignorance. Especially the latter, which is the natural result of the two former.”

During the convention, the *Register* reported, “‘The Marblehead nerve’ quivered some, however, at the mention of the Church --- and when Moses Stuart was proven to be a pro-slavery wretch, as much worse than a hen-stealer as a human being is of more value than a hen, there was quite an excitement; and as the waters of truth fell on the hearts that were hot with the searing iron of iniquity, it was not odd that it produced an occasional hiss.”<sup>28</sup>

## **June 28, 1844**

At the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Essex County Anti-Slavery Society, held in the Universalist Meeting House in Methuen, Thomas Wooldridge of Marblehead is elected one of the society’s Vice Presidents.<sup>29</sup>

## **November 1-December 4, 1844**

In the Election of 1844, Samuel Goodwin and 15 other Marbleheaders vote for the Liberty Party ticket of J. Gillespie Birney and Thomas Morris.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *The Salem Register*, April 22, 1844.

<sup>29</sup> Kenny, Mary P., “Essex County Anti-Slavery Society,” *The Liberator*, July 12, 1844.

<sup>30</sup> K.S.P., “An Old Anti-Slavery Man Gone to Rest,” *Marblehead Messenger*, November 30, 1883.

## November 4-5, 1844

The quarterly meeting of the Essex County Anti-Slavery Society is held in Marblehead at Lyceum Hall. Charles Lenox Remond, Frederick Douglass, Henry Clapp, Jr., and Loring Moody are present.

Ten days before the meeting, the *Liberator* printed a letter from Remond in which he wrote, "few places have given a more general and generous ear, during the past year, than Marblehead."<sup>31</sup>

During the meeting, J. Turner(?), an African American from Connecticut, described his escape from slavery. Frederick Douglass and Loring Moody also told the story of Captain Jonathan Walker, a Cape Cod mariner who smuggled escaped slaves to the British West Indies. When Walker was caught, his hand was branded with the letters S.S. for "Slave Stealer."<sup>32</sup>

In a reminiscence published in the *Marblehead Messenger* in 1895, a Marbleheader described the scene: "It was in the Lyceum Hall that I first heard 'Fred Douglass', as he was familiarly called. Memory's picture of that night time has not dimmed. I can see his tall, erect figure on the speaker's stand, his kinky hair parted on the right, 'sticking out' on the left far beyond his forehead, his arm extended in gesticulation as he pled the case of Johnathan Walker...and hear his voice ring through the hall as he said, 'Johnathan Walker, one of your own countrymen, Johnathan Walker, one of your own color.' As has been said, he was endowed with genius."<sup>33</sup>

The *Liberator* reported that "the meeting passed off with the greatest enthusiasm and tremendous cheering, and will undoubtedly produce a lasting effect."<sup>34</sup>

## August 22, 1845

Captain Jonathan Walker and Loring Moody speak in Marblehead. The *Liberator* requests that all Marbleheaders "[use] what personal influence is necessary to draw out all sects, parties, classes, and conditions to hear the experience of a Massachusetts man of the evils of slavery."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Remond, Charles Lenox, "Essex County A.S. Society," *The Liberator*, October 25, 1844

<sup>32</sup> Garrison, William Lloyd, "County Meeting at Marblehead", *The Liberator*, November 29, 1844

<sup>33</sup> M.G.B., "Distinguished Orators at the Old Lyceum," *The Marblehead Messenger*, March 8, 1895

<sup>34</sup> Garrison, William Lloyd, "County Meeting at Marblehead", *The Liberator*, November 29, 1844

<sup>35</sup> Whipple, Charles H., "Walker and Moody", *The Liberator*, August 8, 1845

## **February 17, 1846**

Parker Pillsbury speaks in Marblehead, as an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>36</sup>

## **June 19, 1846**

At the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Essex County Anti-Slavery Society, Thomas Wooldridge of Marblehead is elected one of the society's Vice Presidents.<sup>37</sup>

## **November 27, 1846**

At a meeting of the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society, James Buffum of Boston claims that the Marblehead Baptist Church sells pews "on condition that they should be rented to no one but 'reputable white persons', thus excluding sinners and colored people."<sup>38</sup>

## **December 30, 1847**

Frederick Douglass speaks at the Lyceum Hall. The Marblehead Mercury printed a letter from a reader identified as "B", who reported, "Mr. Douglass took up the subject in a most able manner, touching upon it with a moral, political, and religious point of view, occasionally with bursts of eloquence of which the most refined minds might be justly proud. His natural powers of intelligence must be very great, when we consider him as being self taught, and all within the space of six years. ...He made in the course of his remarks, while advocating the relationship existing between the Negro and the white man, created by the God of Nature, some very happy allusions to the Bible testimony, which gave a finish to his argument, carrying with it a deeper conviction of its truth.

We regretted, however, to have our instructive entertainment disturbed by his sarcastic allusions to religionists, asserting 'there is too much religion' and endeavoring to sustain his argument by proving the inconsistency of its professors. He pursued the course of the advocates of abolitionism which is invariably marked by their radical and extravagant views losing sight of the indisputable truth, that in order to remedy an evil, wisdom teaches us not to create a multitude of them."<sup>39</sup>

In the next issue, a correspondent identified as "E.B.N." responded to the editorial: "Religion is the minds of many synonymous with Christianity, and therefore...it would be inferred that Mr. Douglass was opposed to Christianity, which is untrue, if we may judge

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<sup>36</sup> Moody, Loring, "Parker Pillsbury," *The Liberator*, February 6, 1846

<sup>37</sup> Kenny, Mary P., "Essex County A.S. Society," *The Liberator*, June 26, 1846

<sup>38</sup> Burleigh, C.M., "For the Liberator: Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society," *The Liberator*, November 27, 1846

<sup>39</sup> "B.", *The Marblehead Mercury*, January 1, 1848.

by his words or deeds. He said at that time that Christianity taught glory to god...while the religion of the present day was too apt to teach the glorification to God, forgetting or taking no notice of the remainder of the text. [He read] in proof of his position, extracts from a sermon in favor of slavery by a bishop of some note in Virginia, and stating also the facts, the slaves of this country are asking their liberty at the hands of the religionists and receiving instead the Bible.

I do not mean to charge your correspondent with intentionally misrepresenting Mr. Douglass, but...if he will take the trouble of reading Douglass's narrative, he will admit that a man experiencing such treatment as he has at the hands of those professing religion, has a perfect right to make such a distinction."<sup>40</sup>

### **January 22-23, 1848**

William Wells Brown, an escaped slave, speaks in Marblehead as an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Five years later, he would write *Clotel, or The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*, the first published novel by an African American.<sup>41</sup>

### **March 9, 1848**

*Liberator* editor William Lloyd Garrison speaks at the Lyceum Hall. The *Mercury* reported, "the talented lecturer did ample justice to the great subject, and the audience were highly gratified. A few more such lectures would wake up our citizens to a sense of their duty with regard to the 'great abomination.'"<sup>42</sup>

### **May 15, 1849**

The Marblehead Sewing Circle contributes \$8 to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> "E.B.N.," *The Marblehead Mercury*, January 8, 1848.

<sup>41</sup> Garrison, William Lloyd, "William W. Brown," *The Liberator*, January 21, 1848

<sup>42</sup> Garrison, William Lloyd, "Lecture at Marblehead," *The Liberator*, March 3, 1848; *The Marblehead Mercury*, March 11, 1848.

<sup>43</sup> Philbrick, S., "Treasurer's Report of Receipts from May 1 to June 1, 1849," *The Liberator*, June 15, 1849

## 1850

William and Ellen Craft, former slaves from Macon, Georgia who escaped to Boston, are transported to Marblehead via the Underground Railroad by members of the Boston Vigilance Committee.

They are brought to Marblehead after two slave catchers traveled from Georgia to recapture them. The Crafts stayed in the home of Simeon and Betsey Dodge, at what is now 236 Washington Street. Dodge estimates that the Crafts stayed in his home for “approximately one week” while some of his associates, like David Mead, claim the Crafts stayed for “a considerable time.” Later, the Crafts escape to England via Portland, Maine, and Halifax, Nova Scotia.<sup>44</sup>

The Dodges worked with Boston abolitionists William Wells Brown and John A. Purvis as their primary contact for receiving freedom seekers. According to David Mead, “Their home during the darkest days of anti-slavery times was the shelter of the fugitives who were sent from Boston for safety. A very large number found shelter, food, and clothing there, and were concealed for days and weeks together, while pro-slavery spies were constantly watching around the premises.”

To protect freedom seekers from these spies, Simeon Dodge created a secret trap door in the floor for them to escape through in case the house was raided. When freedom seekers were ready to be moved, Dodge conveyed them in a covered wagon to John A. Innis in Salem.<sup>45</sup>

## September 18, 1850

Congress passes The Fugitive Slave Act, part of the Compromise of 1850. The act authorized Southern slave hunters to deputize Northern citizens to assist them in capturing runaway slaves. If citizens refused, they could be fined one thousand dollars.

Under the law, fugitive slaves were denied a trial by jury and could not testify on their own behalf before judges, as they were not American citizens. Judges received ten dollars if they ruled in favor of slavecatchers, but only five dollars if they ruled for the freedom seeker.

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<sup>44</sup> Simeon Dodge to William Siebert, January 29, 1894, Wilbur H. Siebert Underground Railroad Collection, <https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/16564/rec/3>; Simeon Dodge to William Siebert, March 20, 1898, Wilbur H. Siebert Underground Railroad Collection <https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/16569/rec/4>; Holmes, Marian Smith, “The Great Escape from Slavery of William and Ellen Craft,” *Smithsonian*, June 16, 2010; Booth, Robert, *The Women of Marblehead* (Marblehead: Marblehead Female Humane Society, 2016), 113; David Mead to William Siebert, undated., Wilbur H. Siebert Underground Railroad Collection, <https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/15457/rec/2>

<sup>45</sup> David Mead to Wilbur H. Siebert, undated. Wilbur H. Siebert Underground Railroad Collection, <https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/15457/rec/2>; George W. Putnam to William Siebert, November 5, 1893, Wilbur H. Siebert Underground Railroad Collection, <https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/siebert/id/16771/rec/8>

The Fugitive Slave Act spurred Northerners into action, resulting in increased activity on the Underground Railroad.<sup>46</sup>

### **February 4, 1851**

A series of petitions are presented to the U.S. House of Representatives, calling for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law. Marblehead contributes one petition, organized by Rev. C. Thurston and signed by 308 Marbleheaders.<sup>47</sup>

### **March 20, 1852**

Harriet Beecher Stowe's antislavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is published by John P. Jewett and Company in Boston. It had previously appeared as a serialized novel in *The National Era* newspaper. It sold 300,000 copies in its first three months, and remains one of 19th Century America's most culturally significant novels.<sup>48</sup>

### **July 10, 1853**

Parker Pillsbury, an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society, speaks in Marblehead.<sup>49</sup>

### **1854**

The Boston Anti Man-Hunting League forms, after fugitive slave Anthony Burns is forcibly returned to the South. Towns throughout the state established affiliate leagues thereafter.<sup>50</sup> Dr. Samuel Young was President of the Marblehead Branch, and Simeon Dodge was the Secretary. Other members included Benjamin G. Hathaway, Samuel Goodwin, A.C. Orne, Hooper R. Goodwin, and John Goodwin. According to Samuel Goodwin, their Society had a cipher they used to carry out secret communications with the Boston League.<sup>51</sup>

The purpose of the various leagues was to attack and subdue slave hunters who traveled North to reclaim escaped slaves.<sup>52</sup> The Leagues practiced drills, including one where a

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<sup>46</sup> Paul, Catherine A., "Fugitive Slave Act of 1850," VCU Libraries Social Welfare History Project, <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/federal/fugitive-slave-act-of-1850/>

<sup>47</sup> Garrison, William Lloyd, "House of Representatives, February 4," *The Liberator*, February 14, 1851.

<sup>48</sup> Winship, Michael, "Uncle Tom's Cabin: History of the Book in the 19th Century United States,"

<sup>49</sup> Garrison, William Lloyd, "Parker Pillsbury", *The Liberator*, July 8, 1853.

<sup>50</sup> "The Boston Anti-Man-Hunting League", Boston African American National Historic Site, National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/boston-anti-man-hunting-league.htm>

<sup>51</sup> Simeon Dodge to Professor Wilbur H. Siebert, March 1893.

<sup>52</sup> Lord, Priscilla Sawyer and Virginia Clegg Gamage, *Marblehead: The Spirit of '76 Lives Here* (Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company), 173.

member assumed the role of a slave catcher while the others accosted him, each taking a separate limb and subduing the struggling culprit.

However, the Leagues had little opportunity to put their plans into action. As the National Park Service explains, "Public opinion and a stringent new Personal Liberties Law ensured that no other freedom seeker would be returned from Massachusetts." Nathaniel Bowditch, leader of the Boston League, mused, "Burns's rendition produced so much excitement North and South that no Southerner or slave driver wished to come to Boston, for fear of something worse, perhaps, happening to him."<sup>53</sup>

### **September 2, 1855**

William Wells Brown, an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society, speaks in Marblehead.<sup>54</sup>

### **July 20, 1856**

"Considerable excitement" occurs in Marblehead during a Sunday sermon by the local Methodist minister, who "expressed the opinion that it is a time of national mourning, not rejoicing --- that our liberties had been cloven down; and went generally into the slavery question, and rebuked the town authorities for allowing the sale of spirituous liquors on that day."

In response, the church choir deserted their seats, and leading members of the church condemned the minister after the service.<sup>55</sup>

### **October 26, 1856**

Charles Lenox Remond, an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society, speaks in Marblehead.<sup>56</sup>

### **November 21, 1858**

Parker Pillsbury and Charles Lenox Remond, agents of the American Anti-Slavery Society, speak in Marblehead.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> "The Boston Anti-Man-Hunting League", Boston African American National Historic Site, National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/boston-anti-man-hunting-league.htm>

<sup>54</sup> Garrison, William Lloyd, "Wm. Wells Brown," *The Liberator*, August 24, 1855.

<sup>55</sup> Garrison, William Lloyd, "Afraid of the Truth," *The Liberator*, July 25, 1856.

<sup>56</sup> Garrison, William Lloyd, "Marblehead," *The Liberator*, October 24, 1856.

<sup>57</sup> Garrison, William Lloyd, "Marblehead," *The Liberator*, November 19, 1858.

### **October 30-31, 1875**

Henry "Box" Brown, a slave who gained nationwide fame for his daring escape from the South inside a shipping crate, delivers a lecture and performs a magic show at Lyceum Hall.

The *Marblehead Messenger* reported, "On Sunday evening, he delivered a lecture on his experience while in slavery, and his wife, who is a white lady, recited an essay on the subject, written by an English clergyman. The entertainment given on Wednesday evening was very interesting, Mr. Brown proving himself quite an expert in sleight of hand tricks, among which was tying a little girl in a bag by persons in the audience, then placing her in a box from which she appeared with the bag in her hand with the knots tied as before, and with apparently no way of escape there not being a seam or hole of any kind about it. It was really one of the most clever deceptions it has been our pleasure to witness."<sup>58</sup>

### **September 7, 1881**

Anthony & Ellis' Ideal Uncle Tom's Cabin Company opened the performance season at Abbot Hall. As the *Marblehead Messenger* reported, "This company has performed the famous drama to over a million people, and in all our large cities last season people were turned away from the doors. This season the enterprising managers offer fresh attractions, making the presentation more magnificent than ever. The company is a strong one, and Miss Minnie Foster, as Topsy, with songs, dances, and banjo solos, is a marvelous impersonation. The finest colored singers in the world, the famous Memphis University students, will add reality to the plantation scenes, and the Siberian bloodhounds and the trained donkey, Dixie, are features which call forth great applause."<sup>59</sup>

However, the production featured several racially caricatured characters, like Topsy. Her image appeared on a poster, where she declares, "Golly I's so wicked."

### **January 29, 1894**

In a letter written in response to a UGRR Circular, Simeon Dodge identifies Marbleheaders who he considered abolitionists: Thomas Wooldridge and his wife, Lord Harris, Ambrose Allen, William Stanley, Benjamin G. Hathaway, Samuel Goodwin,

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<sup>58</sup> "Entertainment", *The Marblehead Messenger*, November 6, 1875.

<sup>59</sup> "Uncle Tom's Cabin," *The Marblehead Messenger*, September 2, 1881. Two other companies performed versions of Uncle Tom's Cabin at Abbot Hall: Abbey's Uncle Tom's Cabin Company on May 27, 1885 (*Marblehead Messenger*, June 25, 1886) and C.H. Smith's Double Company on October 27, 1885 (*Marblehead Messenger*, October 30, 1885).



Thomas M. Goodwin, Hooper R. Goodwin, A.C. Cone, Dr. L.L. Young, Rev. George Patch, and John Goodwin.

He humbly judges his Underground Railroad work to be “of very little consequence...when I think of the work of Harriet Tubman, Lewis Hayden, and others in the business, I feel ashamed that I have done so little.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Simeon Dodge to Wilbur H. Siebert, January 29, 1894.