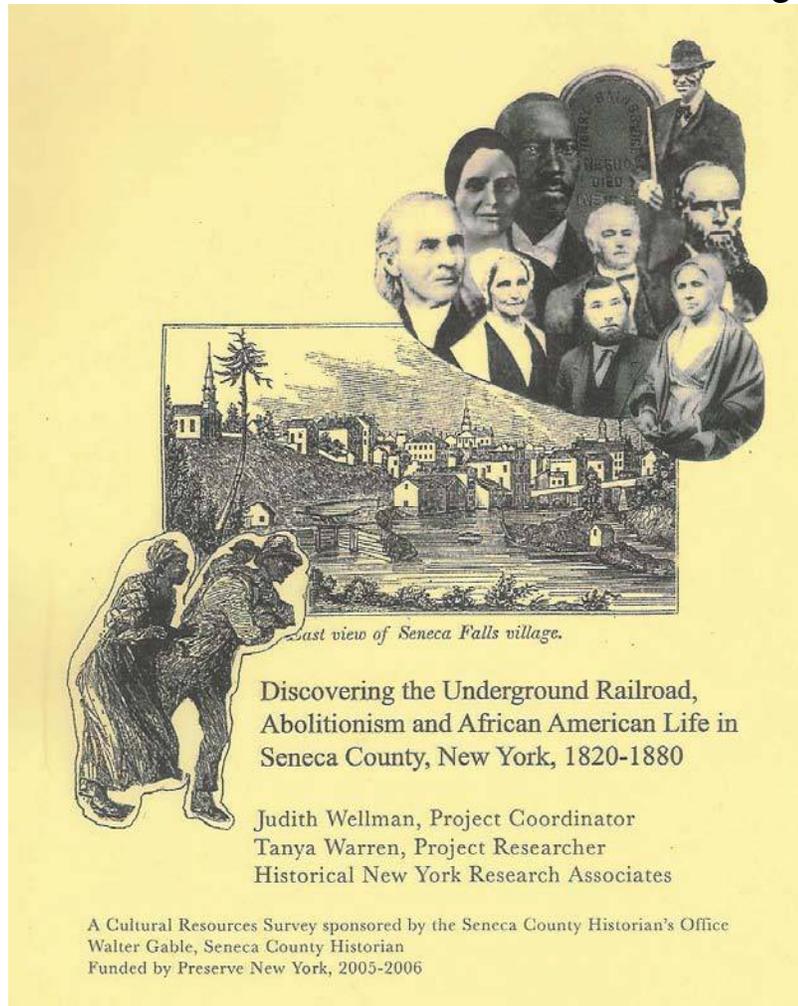


# Women in the Abolitionist Movement in Seneca County



**A Compilation of Stories of Some of the  
Ladies Discussed in This Sites Survey  
Completed in Fall 2006**

# Introduction

In the fall of 2006 a study entitled “The Underground Railroad, Abolitionism and African American Life in Seneca County, 1820-1880,” was completed. It was funded by a Preserve New York grant from the Preservation League of New York State and the New York State Council on the Arts. The lead consultant for the project was Dr. Judith Wellman of Historical New York Research Associates. Her final project report entitled *Discovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism and African American Life in Seneca County, New York, 1820-1880* tells about several sites and people within Seneca County. The stories of the ladies told in this collection “Women in the Abolitionist Movement in Seneca County” are based directly upon the wording of Dr. Wellman in her final project report. These stories give us wonderful insight into what these ladies were doing in terms of abolitionism, and, in some cases, we see clearly the immense interweaving of abolitionist reform with other reforms, especially women’s rights.

Seneca County may well be a nearly unique county in terms of the intricate blending of both abolitionism and women’s rights in these years. This is strongly suggested in the project report when Dr. Wellman states,

Abolitionists in Seneca County were women and men of many ethnic backgrounds—including African Americans; people born in New England, eastern New York, southeastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey; and immigrants from England and Ireland. They were nationally important for their connections to the American Anti-Slavery Society and the free Soil Party, and they provided the essential supportive context for the Underground Railroad work. They also sustained the woman’s rights movement. Without them, there would have been no woman’s rights convention.<sup>1</sup>

These stories should also help to underscore a common misconception about the abolitionist movement, especially in terms of how the Underground Railroad operated in the North. That misconception is that the abolitionist movement was a male movement. Not true! Typically it was, indeed, the lady of the safe house, that was responsible for providing the food and lodging for the freedom seekers passing through. Dr. Wellman in the Preface to the project report states, “But the Underground Railroad and abolitionism were also family activities. As this report shows, many women were involved in the Underground Railroad and abolitionism in Seneca County, either as freedom seekers, helpers, or abolitionists.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Wellman, *Discovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism and African American Life in Seneca County, New York, 1820-1880*, pp 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> p ii

## Table of Contents

<b><u>Pages</u></b>	<b><u>Title of Article</u></b>
<b>4-5</b>	<b>Elizabeth Cady Stanton—Not Just a Woman’s Rights Reformer</b>
<b>6-8</b>	<b>The M’Clintock Ladies</b>
<b>9-10</b>	<b>The Last Two Wives of Richard P. Hunt</b>
<b>11-12</b>	<b>Charlotte Jackson</b>
<b>13-15</b>	<b>Abby Kelley in Seneca County: Inspiring Women to Get Involved</b>
<b>16-17</b>	<b>Abby Gomar</b>
<b>18-20</b>	<b>Maria Jackson</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>Margaret Pryor</b>

## Elizabeth Cady Stanton— Not Just a Woman’s Rights Reformer



Shown is the Seneca Falls home of Elizabeth Cady Stanton who is well-known as a major organizer of the first woman’s rights convention, but not as well known for her antislavery activism.

From 1847 to 1862, Elizabeth, her husband, Henry Brewster Stanton, and their children lived in this house. Daniel Cady had acquired this house and deeded it to his daughter Elizabeth on June 22, 1847, “in consideration of the love and affection which I have for my daughter.” He also gave his daughter a check to fix up her new dwelling, noting that she believed in “woman’s capacity to do and dare; now go ahead and put your place in order.” In her autobiography, Stanton wrote that she consulted with “one or two sons of Adam,” bought “brick, timber, and paint,” “set the carpenters, painters, paperhangers, and gardeners at work, built a new kitchen and wood house, and in one month took possession.” While living in this house, the Stantons had several more children and Susan B. Anthony often visited, as these two ladies worked on their women’s rights efforts.

Henry B. Stanton had acquired a national reputation as an abolitionist orator, editor, politician, and lobbyist. Elizabeth Cady Stanton once called him “the most eloquent and impassioned orator on the anti-slavery platform.” Elizabeth and Henry had married on May 1, 1840. They traveled on their honeymoon to attend the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, England, at which Henry was a delegate from the American Anti-Slavery Society. At the proceedings, Elizabeth met Lucretia Mott, William Lloyd Garrison, Elizabeth Pease and other noted abolitionists from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Henry had been an organizer of the national Liberty Party in 1840. In the summer of 1848, he was one of the creators of the new Free Soil Party, traveling throughout New York State. He urged people to vote for the Free Soil ticket, with Martin Van Buren for President. His name appeared in all five Free Soil articles in Seneca Falls newspapers. On June 22, Henry met with the radical wing of the Democratic Party—the Barnburners—at their state convention in Utica. These Barnburners nominated Martin Van Buren for President and proclaimed that slavery was “a great moral, social and political evil—a relic of barbarism which must necessarily be swept away in the progress of Christian civilization.” While Elizabeth was organizing what would become the first woman’s rights convention in Seneca Falls, Henry spoke with “great power and eloquence” before 2,000 people at a Free Soil meeting in Warsaw, New York, on July 12. A few days later, he spoke in Canandaigua. On August 3, he and neighbor Ansel Bascom spoke in Seneca Falls. The following week, he lectured to huge audiences all along the Hudson Valley.

Elizabeth was an ardent abolitionist herself. She had become an abolitionist in October 1839, when she was twenty-five years old. The event happened while visiting her cousin Gerrit Smith at his house in Peterboro, New York, when she saw her first Underground Railroad passenger. Harriet Powell, an eighteen-year-old female, had escaped from the Syracuse House in

Syracuse and was hiding on the third floor of the Smith mansion. Harriet Powell told Elizabeth and some other guests the story of her life. Elizabeth's remembrance of her conversion was simply stated in her autobiography as follows: "We needed no further education to make us earnest abolitionists." Elizabeth Cady Stanton had grown up in a household with three African American men, enslaved. She taught a Sunday school class of African American children in Johnstown, New York, in the early 1840s, but we have no indication that she played any role in the Underground Railroad prior to her arrival in Seneca Falls in spring 1847.

While she was in Seneca Falls, Elizabeth Cady Stanton had regular contact with the small African American community in the village. She regularly attended the Episcopal Church with Abby Gay (Gomar), whom she used as an example in *History of Woman Suffrage* of an African American who could not vote even though she paid taxes on a considerable amount of real estate. She hired African Americans to work for her, noting once that "a white man is blackening my stove, while a black man is whitewashing my woodshed." In 1852, while experimenting with the Bloomer costume or the "short dress," she had "James the barber" cut her hair. Along with several other Seneca Falls women, she paid Thomas James a shilling (about twenty-five cents) for a shampoo and haircut. Although she didn't make it clear in her autobiography, we know that this Thomas James was a freedom seeker barber in Seneca Falls.



Although Stanton regularly attended Trinity Episcopal Church in Seneca Falls, she never joined this church. By the early 1850s, she counted herself a member of the Congregational Friends of Waterloo. When Martha Wright reported a rumor that Stanton had become an Episcopalian, Stanton was indignant. "I am a member of Junius meeting and not of the Episcopal Church," she retorted. "I have heard that infamous report and feel about it very much as if I had been accused of petty larceny. . . .If my theology could not keep me out of any church my deep and abiding reverence for the dignity of womanhood would be all sufficient."

Local tradition tied Stanton to an Underground Railroad network connected to the Tear family, beginning in 1857, operating an Underground Railroad line between Seneca Falls and Orange County, Virginia. No evidence has been found to substantiate this claim.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton learned much from her involvement in abolitionism. "The anti-slavery platform was the best school the American people ever had on which to learn republican principles and ethics," she wrote in her autobiography. She would draw upon those learning experiences and the people she had met in her organizing of the first woman's rights convention in July 1848 and her subsequent lifetime efforts to promote woman's rights.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Judith Wellman, *Discovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism and African American Life in Seneca County, New York, 1820-1880*, pp 217-221.

## The M'Clintock Ladies

The Quakers Thomas and Mary Ann M'Clintock and their four daughters and one son<sup>4</sup> moved from Philadelphia to Waterloo, New York, sometime late in 1836. They settled in a house that had recently been built by Richard P. Hunt, one of Waterloo's richest landowners and also a



prominent Quaker, soon to marry Thomas M'Clintock's ward, Sarah. (This house facing Williams Street is shown in the picture at left.) While the M'Clintock family lived in Waterloo (1836-56), Thomas and Mary Ann M'Clintock and their two oldest daughters, Elizabeth and Mary Ann, were active Quaker abolitionists and supporters of the Underground Railroad. They were also major organizers of the first woman's rights convention in Seneca Falls, NY, in July 1848. As abolitionists, they signed antislavery petitions; served as officers in local, regional, and national antislavery societies; wrote letters to

national antislavery newspapers; organized antislavery fairs; hosted major antislavery lectures; and used their home as a stop on the Underground Railroad.<sup>5</sup>

Much of the reforming work on the M'Clintocks took place in the M'Clintock Drugstore which was located starting in 1839 in No. 1 Hunt Block. The M'Clintocks' home on Williams Street was just north of their drugstore on Main Street. (The picture at right shows their drugstore—at the very right end of the block of stores—as it looked in July 2006.) In their drugstore, the family sold only products “free from the labor of slaves.” The M'Clintock daughters worked as clerks in the store. In the early years of antislavery organizing, it was one of the few places that reformers could meet in the village. In the room above their store, Elizabeth M'Clintock opened a select school for girls. Each student paid \$3 to \$5 for a twelve-week session of chemistry, philosophy, botany, geography, grammar, astronomy, reading, writing, and arithmetic, taught by Elizabeth M'Clintock and fellow teacher Ruth Southwick. Then the M'Clintocks opened up this room for temperance and abolitionist meetings. There were meetings of the Waterloo Female Temperance Society. Several dozen local women belonged, including the African Americans Maria Jackson and her oldest daughter Mary. Abolitionists used this room, also.<sup>6</sup>



Waterloo sent more antislavery petitions to Congress than all but one other township in upstate New York, and the M'Clintocks participated fully in this campaign by encouraging

<sup>4</sup> Charles is the son. The daughters are Elizabeth W., Mary Ann, Sarah, and Julia.

<sup>5</sup> Judith Wellman, *Discovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism and African American Life in Seneca County, New York, 1820-1880*, pp 317-18

<sup>6</sup> pp 322-23

customers in their drugstore to sign a petition. In 1839, for example, Waterloo sent twelve antislavery petitions, and the M'Clintocks generated two of them. Mary Ann M'Clintock and Elizabeth W. M'Clintock signed first. Farther down the list daughters Mary Ann and Sarah M'Clintock signed, noting their ages (sixteen and fourteen).



The M'Clintock ladies were extensively involved in other antislavery activities. In the fall of 1842, for example, Thomas and Mary Ann M'Clintock and their daughter Mary Ann attended the meeting at which the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society was organized. In November 1842, five Quaker women, including Mary Ann M'Clintock, organized an antislavery fair. The M'Clintocks organized antislavery fairs for many years. It was this group that helped to convince Frederick Douglass to move to Rochester in 1847 to publish the *North Star*.<sup>7</sup> (Shown is a picture of Mary M'Clintock.)

Perhaps because of the presence of the M'Clintocks and other sympathetic Quaker families, the town of Waterloo attracted a significant population of African Americans, many of them probably freedom seekers themselves. According to the 1850 federal census, the M'Clintock household included two African Americans, eight-year-old S.L. Freeman and seventeen-year-old Mary Jackson. Mary Jackson was most likely the daughter of Thomas Jackson—most likely a freedom seeker from Maryland—and Maria Jackson of Waterloo. In 1850, 6 of the 63 African Americans in Waterloo may have been formerly enslaved, based on census listing of their birthplaces as Maryland, Virginia, or unknown. Almost one-third of Waterloo's African Americans were directly connected with these possible fugitives. It is easy to surmise the role that the M'Clintock ladies—mother Mary Ann and her daughters—contributed to this accepting climate for African Americans in Waterloo.

The M'Clintock house became a regional center of abolitionism, woman's rights, and spiritualism, hosting reformers such as William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, William C. Nell, James C. Jackson, Jermain Loguen, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Former critic Thomas Mumford, born into a slave-owning Episcopalian family in Beaufort, North Carolina, recalled that

once admitted to the privileges of such a refined and cordial home, there was no possibility of giving them up. Nowhere else could we find such fresh literature, or such intelligent interest in vital questions of the day.... That house was our gateway into the widest realms of thought and the richest fields of duty. The family were the teachers to whom we owe the best part of our education....Such hospitality is seldom witnessed. There was seldom an empty bed, or a vacant seat at the table. Famous and friendless guests often sat together there, and colors and creeds were alike forgotten.

Certainly Mrs. M'Clintock and her four daughters were responsible for much of the housework that made this entertaining possible.

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<sup>7</sup> pp 319-20

In terms of the July 1848, Seneca Falls woman's rights convention, the M'Clintock ladies were actively involved. Mrs. Mary Ann M'Clintock was one of the four ladies who gathered in the home of Jane and Richard P. Hunt on July 9<sup>th</sup> and decided to call this first woman's rights convention. As none of these five ladies had organized a full convention before, they had to draw upon their prior individual experiences. Mary Ann M'Clintock and her husband Thomas had organized Quaker meetings and antislavery conventions and fairs, so the M'Clintock ladies' organizational skills would be utilized for the woman's rights convention. It was to the M'Clintock house that Elizabeth Cady Stanton came on July 16<sup>th</sup> with her draft declaration for the convention so that the M'Clintocks, especially Elizabeth (then the 27-year-old daughter of Thomas and Mary) could review it. At this same gathering, the group would write appropriate resolutions and consider topics for speeches.<sup>8</sup>

At the Seneca Falls woman's rights convention, Mary Ann M'Clintock served as the secretary. She took clear notes for both days of this convention. The M'Clintock daughter Mary Ann spoke at the evening session of the second day. Five ladies—including Mary Ann M'Clintock and daughter Elizabeth—were appointed to prepare the proceedings of the Convention for publication. Signers of the Declaration of Sentiments included Mary M'Clintock and daughters Elizabeth W. and Mary Ann.<sup>9</sup>

It would be hard to imagine what the antislavery movement in Waterloo and the first woman's rights convention in Seneca Falls would have been like without the M'Clintock ladies. Guided by their Quaker ideals of equality and activism, they made significant contributions to these reform movements. While they were doing the household tasks expected of the female sex when it came to entertaining guests in your home, they were doing that and a great deal more.

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<sup>8</sup> Judith Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman's Rights Convention*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004, p 193.

<sup>9</sup> pp 193-207

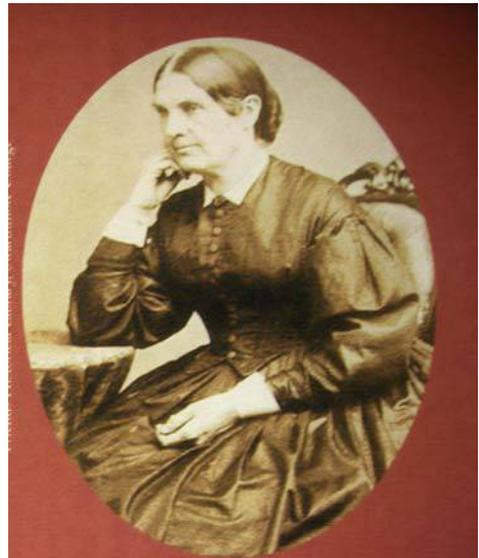
## The Last Two Wives of Richard P. Hunt

Many Seneca County residents recognize the house shown at right as the Hunt House, site of the July 9, 1848, “tea” at which five ladies decided to call the first woman’s rights convention in Seneca Falls. What most people don’t know is that this house was also very important to the Underground Railroad and abolitionist movement in Seneca County. The house had been built in 1829 by the Quaker businessman named Richard P. Hunt. He had come to Waterloo from Pelham in Westchester County, New York, in 1821. He had invested in land, commercial properties, and—with the Waterloo Woolen Mill—industrial assets. By mid-century, he was the richest man in Waterloo. At the time of his death in 1856, Dun and Bradstreet credit ratings listed his worth as \$100,000.



Richard P. Hunt had married four times. His third wife, Sarah M’Clintock, and his fourth wife, Jane Master, linked him to the network of Quaker abolitionists in Philadelphia. Sarah M’Clintock had married Richard in September 1837. When she died in 1842, she explicitly requested that her body not be wrapped in slave-grown cotton but in “tow cloth” (i.e., linen). In November 1845, Richard Hunt married Jane Clothier Master from Philadelphia. With Sarah and Jane, Richard and his wives became a key part of the knot of local Quaker families affiliated with the Junius Monthly Meeting of Friends in Waterloo. Elizabeth Cady Stanton remembered the Hunts, the Thomas M’Clintocks, and the

Henry Bonnells as the trio of families that “were the life” of the annual meetings of the Congregational Friends (also known as the Friends of Human Progress). Sarah and Richard P. Hunt attended the Anti-Slavery convention of Western New York, held in Penn Yan in 1839. Jane Hunt, with her strong Philadelphia ties, did a great deal more than simply carry on what Sarah Hunt had been doing.



Local tradition, recounted by John E. Becker in his 1949 *History of Waterloo*, maintained that the Hunt family used the carriage house attached to the back of their home as a stop on the Underground Railroad. This is what Becker said in his book:

The upper floor of his carriage house, which was attached to his residence, was fitted up with beds, “for needy persons journeying along the road.” When the Abolitionist cause became developed and runaway slaves were being helped north into Canada, Mr. Hunt turned his carriage house into a station of the underground railroad and gave safety and a comfortable lodging place to many a colored person and to groups of them who were being helped under cover of darkness to freedom a few miles to the north.

Of course, it would be the lady of the Hunt house who would be primarily responsible for overseeing the food and lodging needed for these freedom seekers.<sup>10</sup>

Being the wife of one of the wealthiest persons in Waterloo meant that the wife had important social standing and responsibilities. Given the Quaker beliefs and abolitionist sentiments of both husband and wife, we undoubtedly have in at least the last two of Richard P. Hunt’s wives—Sarah M’Clintock Hunt and Jane Clothier Master Hunt—doing virtually everything they could to aid the abolitionist efforts in Waterloo. We also have activists for reform within the Junius Monthly Meeting of Quakers and, of course, the woman’s rights movement. As a result, it is not at all surprising that the Hunt House at 401 East Main Street in Waterloo is currently owned by the Women’s Rights National Historical Park, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the National Park Service’s Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

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<sup>10</sup> Judith Wellman, *Discovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism and African American Life in Seneca County, New York, 1820-1880*, pp 296-299.

## Charlotte Jackson



The Charlotte Jackson house at 2101 Seneca Street in Ovid is a remarkable example of the home of a freed person of color, who survived slavery to live the rest of her life in freedom in Ovid, as a literate, property-owning woman, who also took a public stand as an abolitionist.

Charlotte Jackson was born in slavery in New Jersey and came to New York State enslaved by William Godley. Her name does not appear in a Seneca County census until 1870 when she was listed as 55 years old, keeping house, and owning property worth \$300.

In January 1849, Charlotte Jackson was the only known African American woman to sign a woman's antislavery petition sent by 86 women from Seneca County. This petition was from "Women of America," and was similar to others circulated throughout the north, addressed to Congress "on behalf of the claims of a million and a half of their sex, who are afforded no legal protection for a heart's dearest ties, a Woman's 'Sacred honor,' but with her husband, sons & brothers are the doomed victims that dwarfs the intellect, degrades the morals & debases the entire being."

Charlotte Jackson died October 14, 1885, when she was at least 72 years old and perhaps much older. In 1874 she had made out a will, directing that her property be sold to pay her debts and to buy a monument to be erected over her grave and that of her adopted son, James (or Jerome) Jackson, who had predeceased her, in the new cemetery in Ovid.

Charlotte Jackson died without heirs. Because she had worked for many years as a domestic for Belle Ayres, she directed that Belle Ayres be the executrix of her estate. Belle Ayres testified that the value of Charlotte Jackson's home did not exceed \$100, nor was her personal estate worth more than \$5.00. Her real property consisted "of a small village lot with a dilapidated shanty thereon, and said personal property only of old clothing and personal effects of little or no value." Belle Ayres also noted that "Said decedent was a colored woman who had been formerly a slave,...and had been a domestic and employed in the family of your petitioner...."<sup>11</sup>

These are most of the details of Charlotte Jackson's story as we know it from this recently completed study "The Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Seneca County, 1820-1880" What is the historical significance of her story? To begin to

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<sup>11</sup> Judith Wellman, *Discovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism and African American Life in Seneca County, New York, 1820-1880*, pp 59-60

answer that question, early in our year-long study, we were told of reports that there had been several cabins just outside the village which were the homes for several different African American families. In our year of research we have not been able to document any such cabins, but we have documented that Charlotte Jackson and two other African American families—the Bryant family and the Van Horn family—lived for many years on Seneca Street in Ovid. (The details of the Bryant and Van Horn families are discussed in the Final Report of our year-long study.) This fact leads us to conclude that probably the Ovid village community provided an accepting neighborhood for these three African American families as well as job opportunities. While the bulk of the anti-slavery activity in Seneca County was taking place in the greater Seneca Falls-Waterloo communities, other parts of the county—such as Ovid—were also historically significant.

That she came to Seneca County as a slave underscores the fact that several African Americans who settled in this county came here as slaves or were descendents of those brought here as slaves. While many may see the focus of our year-long study as simply the Underground Railroad in which many freedom seekers passed through this county with some to settle here, it is a fact that many of the African Americans living in Seneca County did not come here as part of the Underground Railroad itself. Some of the others who settled in the southern parts of Seneca County and brought slaves with them include Silas Halsey, and Robert Selden Rose.

Another very interesting thing to note about the Charlotte Jackson story is that this information came from certain kinds of sources: census records, deeds research, probated wills. Although the Underground Railroad operated primarily in secrecy because it was an illegal activity, it is those kinds of sources mentioned, along with newspaper articles and personal diaries and letters, that enable us today to gain much reliable insight into the actual activities of various individuals of all social classes. Charlotte Jackson was clearly not one of the wealthiest individuals living in Ovid, but she personally experienced slavery and the adjustment to life as a free person. Though we do not know what year she actually received her freedom from slavery, we know that as early as 1849 she was an “activist” in the antislavery cause. Her actions may not receive as much attention as those of a Harriet Tubman or a Lucretia Mott, but she also had the courage and determination to do what she could.

## Abby Kelley in Seneca County: Inspiring Women to Get Involved

Abby Kelley, a most outspoken abolitionist speaker, spoke on different occasions in Seneca County. Her actions demonstrate the prominent role that a female could play in the abolitionist movement and also served to motivate still more females to become more involved.



Her first speaking in Seneca County came about in 1842. In the spring of that year, William Lloyd Garrison and the American Anti-Slavery Society, faced with the threat of the political abolitionist factions, decided to send twenty agents into the field, eight of them to upstate New York. Abby Kelley was one of these agents, and she was described as “a very intelligent looking person; [with] a clear blue eye, a delicate complexion, fair hair, and a lady-like hand.” Probably because of her Quaker background, she was simple in dress. Unlike her simple dress, however, she was fiery in her expression. “Of one thing rest assured,” she confided to fellow Garrisonian Maria Weston Chapman, “I never make compromises.” In this 1842 speaking tour she traveled with Frederick Douglass, who had escaped from slavery in Maryland just four years before, as well as with Thomas M’Clintock and George and Margaret Pryor, members of Junius Friends Meeting in Waterloo. Because she traveled with men, she wrote, people hissed with “the forked tongue of slander.” “Tis enough to know of her that she accompanies a pack of men about the country.” “Even Aunt Margaret Prior’s Quaker bonnet and honest, almost angel face was not sufficient to shield us,” noted Kelley. “We were sometimes called a ‘traveling seraglio.’”

In August and September, Abby Kelley spoke in Seneca Falls and Waterloo, although we do not know whether it was in the courthouse or a church. “Unflagging in her speech and . . . enthusiastic in her zeal,” she addressed a large audience of both men and women in Waterloo. Everyone was impressed with “her eloquence, her good looks, her full mellow voice, and her evident sincerity,” but many people still wondered why “a lady with such advantages of person and talent” would not “have found a more appropriate sphere of action--one better befitting her sex?”

In November 1842, William Lloyd Garrison himself, along with Abby Kelley and agents John Collins and Jacob Ferris, spoke at the Seneca County Courthouse in Waterloo, “I occupying the greater part of the time,” he noted, “in blowing up the priesthood, church, worship, Sabbath, &c.,” Garrison wrote his wife from the M’Clintock home.<sup>12</sup>

The 1842 speaking tour throughout upstate New York contributed directly to a newly organized Western New York Anti-Slavery Society. Three of its thirty-four officers (Margaret

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<sup>12</sup> Judith Wellman, *Discovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism and African American Life in Seneca County, New York, 1820-1880*, pp 19-20.

Pryor, Richard P. Hunt, and Thomas M'Clintock) were from Waterloo. At least twenty of the thirty-four were Quakers. At least nine of the thirty-four officers were women. The first concrete result was an antislavery fair, held in Rochester on Washington's Birthday in February 1843. This fair was organized by five women, including Mary Ann M'Clintock of Waterloo, Amy Post and Sarah A Burtis of Rochester, Phebe Hathaway of Farmington, and Abby Kelly from Lynn, Massachusetts.<sup>13</sup>

Abby Kelley was coming to Seneca Falls again in August 1843 to speak. In her speaking tour that year, she had repeatedly said that as long as American churches allowed slave-owners as members, they were pro-slavery. Anyone who belonged to such a church promoted slavery. So radical was this come-outer message that none of the churches would let her use their buildings. (The newly-organized Wesleyan Church in Seneca Falls would not complete the building of its new chapel until September of that year.) Ansel and Eliza Bascom invited her to speak in their apple orchard at 5:00 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon. The meeting opened with a reading from the book of Isaiah, an antislavery hymn (led by Jabez Matthews, a member of the Seneca Falls Presbyterian Church), and "a season of silence," requested by Abby Kelley, as befitted her Quaker background. Abby Kelley's speech fulfilled expectations. As nearly as we can reconstruct it, here is what she said:

This nation is guilty of slavery. It is a sin. Your churches are connected with slavery, and they are guilty of that sin. They are not Christians if they are slaveholders, if they steal and sell men, women and children, if they rob cradles. Northern churches were as guilty, in fact, as southern slaveholders, since northerners had the majority population and could make things right. That includes your Presbyterian Church, she went on. I happen to know something of your Mr. Bogue, the pastor of that church. Where is your Bogue today? Is he not connected with the South? Is he not in full fellowship with proslavery churchmen? These proslavery persecutions today follow the same spirit of persecution that existed in former ages. Mr. Bogue would see me burn at the stake, if he had it in his power, or murdered as abolitionists had been at the south.

Jonathan Metcalf, in the audience, said that "she bore pretty hard & severe on the northern churches."<sup>14</sup>

The Mr. Bogue referred to in the quote above was the Rev. Horace P. Bogue, the minister of the Presbyterian Church in Seneca Falls. He personally spoke in favor of colonization—freeing the African American slaves and sending them to Liberia in Africa. This positions him directly at odds with Abby Kelley and most abolitionists and to most African Americans. Rhoda Bement, a member of this Presbyterian Church in Seneca Falls, had attended Abby Kelley's talk in August 1842 in Seneca Falls. Rhoda Bement accused the Rev. Bogue of not reading an abolitionist announcement of the antislavery fair that she and Elizabeth M'Clintock had organized. Bogue denied that he had seen any notices and accused Bement of being "very unchristian, very impolite and very much out of place to pounce upon me in this manner." The Rev. Bogue had other grievances against Rhoda Bement. These included that she did not attend meetings when the Rev. Bogue officiated and that she did not take communion wine. Rhoda

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<sup>13</sup> p 20

<sup>14</sup> p 136

Bement spiritedly defended herself and abolitionism in a trial that last two months. The Presbyterians found her guilty of “disorderly and unchristian conduct.” Because of this trial, the Presbyterian Church lost several members, including D.W. Forman, Sally Freeland Pitcher, and Harriet Freeland Lindsley, all of whom joined the new Wesleyan Methodist church. The Bements moved to Buffalo.<sup>15</sup>

Abby Kelley’s influences in Seneca County are great. Her outspoken abolitionist comments stirred up abolitionist sentiments among many Seneca County residents. Her 1842 speaking tour led directly to a newly revised Western New York Anti-Slavery Society with many women as officers. Her comments inspired women to organize antislavery fairs. Abby Kelley’s speaking in Seneca Falls contributed directly to the Rhoda Bement trial within the Seneca Falls Presbyterian Church. More and more Seneca County residents were becoming more active abolitionists because of Abby Kelley.

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<sup>15</sup> pp 21-22

## Abby Gomar

Abby Gomar (Gay) was a free person of color who was a well-known woman's rights advocate. She was born in slavery about 1820 and came to New York State from Pennsylvania with Abram Westbrook and lived in Tyre before coming to Seneca Falls.

According to the 1850, 1860, and 1870 census records, Abby Gomar lived with the



Richard and Sarah Maria Gay family at 61 Cayuga Street, where she worked as a domestic. (The picture at left shows what is believed to be the Richard and Sarah Maria Bennett Gay House at 61 Cayuga Street, as it looks today. It was probably built in the Italianate style, and remodeled in the late nineteenth century.) In 1870, she was listed as "Abby Gay." The 1880 census listed her as living alone as "Abigail Gilmore, black, age 60." Although she did not appear in the 1880-81 directory, she did not die until 1884.

Abby Gomar regularly attended the Trinity Episcopal Church and, along with fellow attendee Elizabeth Cady Stanton, advocated woman's rights. Stephen Monroe recalled that "Abby Gay, a few shades darker than sunburn and with more true love in her heart than a hundred valentines could express, scorned tight lacing and a trailing skirt that would carry the dust of the street through the portals of Trinity Church." Another resident recalled that

I can see her in my mind's eye as she walked down the street to market of a spring day, attired in bright print dress, white apron and neckerchief, and a gay turban around her head. She always carried a large willow basket and it was filled with provisions as she returned up the street. She was stout and squarely built and never seemed to change in general appearance. In the winter she wore a red woolen hood trimmed with swansdown, instead of the turban, when she went to town or church. Abby was an ardent Episcopalian and attended services at old Trinity Church on Bayard Street. Mr. Gay died in the 1870's and then Abby lived alone somewhere in the village. She herself died in the 1880's and left quite a little property."

Abby Gomar also accumulated considerable wealth. In *History of Woman Suffrage*, Stanton used Abby Gomar as an example of how African American women as well as European American women were forced to pay taxes, even though they could not vote.

Is it too much to ask the men of New York, either to enfranchise women of wealth and education, or else release them from taxation? If we cannot be represented as individuals, we should not be taxed as individuals. If the "white male" will do all the voting, let him pay all the taxes. . . . In Art. 2, Sec. 1, you say, "And no person of color shall be subject to direct taxation, unless he shall be seized and possessed of such real estate as aforesaid,

"referring to the \$250 qualification . . . . Is it on the ground of color or sex, that the black man finds greater favor in the eyes of the law than the daughters of the State? In order fully to understand this partiality, I have inquired into your practice with regard to women of color. I find that in Seneca Falls there lives a highly estimable colored woman, by the name of Abby Gomore, who owns property to the amount of a thousand dollars, in village lots. She now pays, and always has paid, from the time she invested her first hundred dollars, the same taxes as any other citizen — just in proportion to the value of her property, or as it is assessed.

Stanton may have exaggerated Abby Gomar's property holdings. At her death on 6 December 1884, when she was about 65 years old, Abby Gomar was indeed a relatively wealthy woman. She left an estate of \$1967.18. It was, however, entirely in savings accounts, notes due, and home furnishings. Her inventory, as included in her will, listed:

1 cupboard, 1 washstand, 1 bureau, 1 box of clothing, 1 stone, 1 cupboard, 5 cane chairs, 2 chairs, 1 rocker, 1 Benton rocker, 1 what-not, 1 stained table, 2 umbrellas, 1 clock, 1 porcelain kettle, 1 kettle, 1 sugar pail, 4 cans of fruit, 1 stand, 1 lot of tin ware, crock and spiders, 1 ash dining table, 2 lamps, 3 flat irons, 1 trunk, 1 chopping block, 1 ironing board, 1 bread board, 1 oil cloth, 1 tick, crockery in trunk, 1 clothes bar, 1 basket, a tub, 1 wash stand, 1 mirror, 1 Lord's Prayer, 1 comfort, 1 oil can, 1 jug, 1 brooch, 1 handkerchief.

In Savings Bank: \$205.68; in Partridge Bank, \$1000.00; 2 trade dollars; Bond of T. Miller, Jr. balance due March 14 1885 for \$322.94; Note of J. Swaby balance due March 14 1885 for \$200.31; 1 note of Julia Armstrong balance due March 14 1885 for \$161.26; 1 note of Julia Armstrong balance due March 14 1885 for \$41.80.

Total value of inventory \$1967.18.

In her will, Abby Gomar gave \$100 each to Swaby Sutterby of Tyre; Mildred Quennell and Lillie Quennell of Seneca Falls; Emma White Thomas, daughter of John Thomas (perhaps the abolitionist publisher from Syracuse); Sarah Madge of Seneca Falls; and Edith May Wetmore of Seneca Falls. She left everything else to Trinity Church, directing that "the vestrymen of said church keep said fund invested and use the interest on the same for the benefit of the Poor and indigent of the Parish."

Richard Gay attended at least two Free Soil meetings in the summer of 1848. He was a bachelor for a long time before his marriage to Sarah Maria Bennet of Auburn in 1842. She died about 1850, without any children. Gay's widowed sister, Clarissa Noyes, lived with him. According to his obituary, he was a wonderful man, a great friend, and an interested student of history.<sup>16</sup>

In Abby Gomar we have an example of a former slave who becomes a free person, accumulates some personal wealth, and was a woman's rights advocate.

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<sup>16</sup> Judith Wellman, *Discovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism and African American Life in Seneca County, New York, 1820-1880*, pp 166-168.

# Maria Jackson

In 1843, Thomas M'Clintock, one of the leading Quaker abolitionists in Waterloo, characterized the African American community in Waterloo as "there were some smart men here." He may well have been thinking of Thomas and Maria Jackson, who represented one of the major African American families in Waterloo. Thomas Jackson was most likely a freedom seeker. Maria Jackson consistently listed her birthplace as New York State in census records. As a native-born New Yorker, she was not a freedom seeker, and thus not subject to potential capture and return to slavery under the terms of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. So, it is not surprising, that when the Jackson family purchased their house at 19 Seneca Street in 1857, they put the deed in Maria Jackson's name. Like other families with similar situations, they were hoping to protect their assets under the Married Woman's Property Act of 1848, which allowed married women in New York State to hold property separately from their husbands.

Thomas Jackson had arrived in Waterloo sometime before 1834. The proof for this is that in that year he brought a lawsuit against Benjamin Dey. Thomas Jackson was an abolitionist, active in the organized African American community in New York State. We believe he is one of three delegates from Seneca County to the convention of Colored Inhabitants of the State of New York, held in Troy in August 1841. He also signed an antislavery petition sent to Congress in 1850. He is probably the Thomas Jackson that subscribed to *Frederick Douglass' Paper* in 1852.

Both Thomas and Maria Jackson were anchors of the biracial Disciples of Christ church, organized in Waterloo on April 1, 1853. This church met first at the county courthouse, and later in the so-called Hunt's Hall above the M'Clintocks' drugstore. Of the seventeen members of this church, four belonged to the Jackson family: Thomas and Maria Jackson and daughters Mary and Cornelia.

Maria Jackson and her daughter Mary also joined the Waterloo Female Temperance Society. Their names appeared along with that of Quaker abolitionist Elizabeth M'Clintock on a long list of members in 1841.

Beginning in 1837, Thomas and Maria Jackson began to buy and sell several lots on William Street, Seneca Street, and along the Seneca Turnpike and towpath in Waterloo. From 1837 to 1882, they had at least 16 deed transactions, all of them signed with their mark, not their signatures. On April 20, 1848, they purchased village lot 718 from Abby G. Williams of New York for \$100. Here they most likely built the small frame house (shown in the picture to the right as it looked in 2006 at 50 North Walnut Street) They lived in this small frame house for the next eight years. The 1850 census data gives us some interesting insight into the Jacksons and their neighbors. Thomas Jackson was 44 years old and listed his occupation as a whitewasher. Maria was 38. They had 3 children at home: M.E., age 16; James



A., 14, and Cornelia, 12, all born in New York State. (A fourth child, Mary Jackson, age 17, was living on Virginia Street with Quaker abolitionists Thomas and Mary Ann M'Clintock.) Their neighbors were almost all European Americans—a painter, carpenter, furnace man, moulder, tanner, machinist, laborer, or fancy dyer by trade. Five doors away lived two more African American families: Eben and Ann Hazard, and Minerva Brown. The Jacksons sold their Walnut Street property on March 3, 1856, to Timothy Morso of Waterloo for \$300. Other African American families were living on Walnut Street. These included George and Sarah Jackson (55 North Walnut St.), with George having likely been a freedom seeker. The Webb family also lived nearby.



On October 8, 1857, Maria Jackson purchased a larger brick house on Seneca Street from Horatio and Mary Warner for \$800. (This house at 19 Seneca Street as it looked in 2006 is shown in the picture to the left.) The Seneca Street neighborhood was inhabited by laborers or skilled craftspeople, all of them European Americans, most born in New York State or Ireland. Many of the Jacksons' neighbors were abolitionists. Both Ezra Stebbins and his wife had signed antislavery petitions sent from Waterloo in the late 1830s. Seven doors south lived Gratius

Deyoe who signed antislavery petitions from 1838-1850. He also attended a Liberty Party convention in Seneca Falls in 1852 where he had been chosen a delegate to a regional Liberty Party convention in Canastota. Gratius' brother Jacob Deyoe, at the end of the block, had also been an outspoken antislavery advocate before he moved to Michigan.

On October 26, 1865, Maria Jackson sold this house at 19 Seneca Street to Lucretia M. Andrews for \$1000, in a deed signed with her mark. According to the 1870 census, Maria was living on John Street in Waterloo with her daughter Cornelia. Maria died April 4, 1874 and was buried in Maple Grove Cemetery, lot 70. Thomas Jackson married a woman named Nellie as his second wife. He died April 6, 1887, in Waterloo. He was first buried in the Alms House Cemetery and late in Maple Grove Cemetery with the Jackson family.

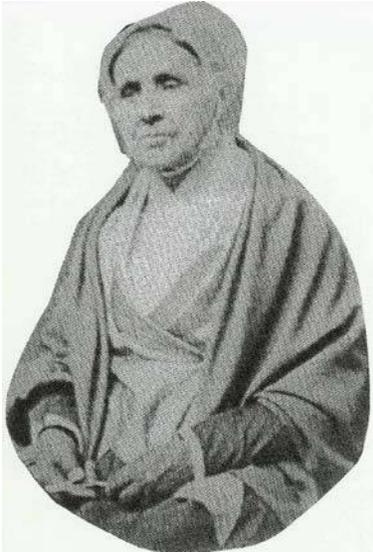
Of the Jackson children, daughter Mary E. Jackson carried on her mother's model of property ownership. She purchased a home in Seneca Falls in her own name before marrying barber Joshua W. Wright in 1863 as his second wife and moving to Syracuse shortly before 1870. She died June 2, 1892, and was buried with her family in the Maple Grove Cemetery. Cornelia F. Jackson was living in Syracuse with her sister Mary and brother-in-law Joshua W. Wright, working as a hairdresser, before her death in 1882. She, too, was buried in Maple Grove Cemetery. James A. Jackson died February 2, 1872, and was buried in Maple Grove Cemetery.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Judith Wellman, *Discovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism and African American Life in Seneca County, New York, 1820-1880*, pp 301-06.

So, what real significance is to be drawn to this information? First, we see clearly the common characteristic of listing property in the name of the African American wife, especially when the husband is likely a freedom seeker. Second, we see the opportunities for economic advancement—in this case, buying and selling property—that existed in Waterloo during these years. Isn't this still what we call "living the American Dream"? One could only speculate how much higher they might have risen in economic status if they had been literate. Second, we also see how Thomas and Maria Jackson and their children were doing what they could to promote a biracial community setting. They were members of a biracial church, and they lived in a biracial neighborhood. Lastly, we see that Maria and her daughter were activists in temperance reform, not limiting themselves simply to abolitionist causes. This was very typical of activists in both Seneca Falls and Waterloo at this time.

# Margaret Pryor



Margaret Pryor (1785-?) is a good example of a Seneca County female who was a Quaker, abolitionist and woman's rights activist. Margaret lived in Waterloo with her husband George. She was the half-sister of Mary Ann M'Clintock.<sup>18</sup>

She and her husband George accompanied Abby Kelley, an organizer for the American Anti-Slavery Society, and Frederick Douglass, on their speaking tour of upstate New York in 1843. They hosted Abby Kelley in their home. Margaret Pryor frequently went with Kelley as a traveling companion and bookkeeper.

Margaret Pryor lived in the Skaneateles Fourierist community in 1843. She and her husband became active in the Western New York Antislavery Society.

Margaret Pryor was among a group of Hicksite Quakers who formed the new Progressive Friends or Friends of Human Progress in October 1848. Others in this group included the M'Clintocks, the Hunts, and Isaac and Amy Post.

Margaret Pryor attended the Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention in July 1848 with her son George W. Pryor. Both she and her son signed the Declaration of Sentiments.<sup>19</sup>

In 1850, Margaret and George Pryor were keeping a boarding house, and a 17-year-old African American woman named Matilda Rany lived with them.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Judith Wellman, *Discovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism and African American Life in Seneca County, New York, 1820-1880*, key to images on title page.

<sup>19</sup> "Margaret Pryor," <http://www.nps.gov/wori/historyculture/margaret-pryor.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Wellman