

We devoted this panel to Abel Brown, editor of the Tocsins of Liberty, a radical abolitionist during the period of the late 1830' and early 1840's. On this panel you will see Abel Brown's Biography. Also a letter written by Abel Brown to be carried by a fugitive as a introduction to other members of the Underground Railroad that he would need on his trip North. Abel Brown, was a very educated man, who believed as did many that "God's laws were more important than man's. Also on this panel is a editorial on letters, received by Abel Brown from Southern Slaveholders, asking for information on the whereabouts of fugitives. He published a newspaper called The Tocsin of Liberty in which he daringly not only published the first names of fugitives he helped, but also the names of their former slave masters. He was so provocative and helped so many that the slave owners sent arrest warrants from far away cities seeking his capture. Knowing that there were warrants out for his arrest, and a bounty on his head, we believe his facetious reply shows the enormous courage of the man. Many of the Abolitionists of the time did not need public fanfare on their good works. They continued their struggle without recognition, without compensation, with constant threats. They knew that their dream would be carried on by others, until The Brotherhood of Man was finally achieved.

Abel Brown, was noted as an uncompromising and provocative individual who went to great lengths for the cause of the abolition of slavery. Brown was born in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1810. He began a career as a Baptist Minister at the age of 22 as a temperance preacher. His provocative style provoked many enemies. He was driven out of Auburn for his temperance preaching early in his career by a mob.

"The Mob pursued me about eight miles," he wrote in his journal "I fled to the woods and was hunted... until ten o'clock at night." [a total of 11 hours] His crime had been "visiting about one hundred drunkards' families, and telling to the community their wretchedness."

Brown and Miss Mary Brigham of Massachusetts moved to Chautauqua County in southwestern New York State after they were wed in 1835. By 1836 Brown claimed to have become "an abolitionist in the full sense of the word." While lecturing for the American Anti-Slavery Society he became an agent for the Anti-Slavery Society of Western Pennsylvania. During his residence along the Ohio River, he is known to have assisted slaves in their quest for freedom. While there he attempted to open a school to train others in anti-slavery. The school was,

"to be established at some eligible point on the River Ohio ... to be instituted .. By a body of men actively engaged in purifying the church from the contaminating influence of Slavery."

His confrontational style offended many local clergy and the lack of success with the school resulted in his moved to Albany, New York. He also was disappointed in the refusal of many of his ministerial colleagues to condemn those who owned slaves. In April 1841 he became pastor at the Sand Lake Baptist Church. The Albany area was well suited for his antislavery work as it was, "a city which from its location on the banks of the Hudson, was a constant resort of fugitives slaves, when traveling in the direction of the North Star, to seek shelter under the wings of Queen Victoria's dominion, or happily perchance, to find an Asylum in the nominally free States", according to a biographical memoir published after his death in 18 by his second wife, Catherine. While in Albany he joined with a group of radical abolitionist who formed a local branch of the Liberty Party. He was active with the area "Vigilance Committee," a group of abolitionist who attempted to help and protect fugitives slaves. Brown began publishing the weekly newspaper, The Tocsin of Liberty, which openly reported accounts of fugitives slaves being aided by the Underground Operators. Brown wrote in the June 20, 1842 issue "The Vigilance Committee are up to their elbow in work, and are desirous to have you inform a few of those men who have lately lost property, consisting of articles of merchandise (falsely so called) in the shape, and having the minds and sympathies of human beings, that we are always on hand, and ready to ship cargoes on the shortest notice, and ensure a safe passage over the "Great Ontario.""

Brown's work was highly effective. So much so that a reward was offered Baltimore slaveholders to an Albany constable for the arrest of Brown and his cohorts, C. T. Torrey, Tocsin publisher and E. W. Goodwin, Tocsin Editor. is reported that he helped more than 350 fugitives in 1842 alone.