



GEORGE WASHINGTON
A NATIONAL TREASURE

The Patriot Papers

PATRIOT n. [Fr patriote < LL. patriota, fellow countryman < Gr patriotes < patris, fatherland < pater, EATHER]

Special Edition on SLAVERY

Abolitionist John Brown to Hang, December 2, 1859 for Attack at Harpers Ferry

Following a week-long trial and a mere 45 minutes of deliberation, a jury found Brown and his codefendant Shields Green guilty of treason, murder, and inciting a slave insurrection. On October 16, 1859, Brown and his men seized the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry and held it for nearly two days. On the morning of October 18, a group of marines led by Robert E. Lee reclaimed the arsenal. In the ensuing raid, 13 men perished, seven escaped, and Brown and Green were captured. Of the seven escapees only two, including Brown's son Owen, remain unapprehended. A public hanging is scheduled for December 2, 1859, in the vicinity of the Harpers Ferry jail.

A lifelong abolitionist, Brown had cultivated his antislavery sentiments since childhood. His father, Owen Brown, was a deeply religious man who instilled in his children the belief that human bondage was a sin against God. When only 12 years of age, young Brown witnessed the brutal beating of a slave child. This memory haunted him for the rest of his life and fueled his antislavery crusades.

In 1837, Elijah Lovejoy was murdered by proslavery assassins for publishing an antislavery newspaper. At Lovejoy's memorial service, Brown publicly vowed vengeance and vehemently pledged himself to the abolition of slavery.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, authored by Senator Stephen Douglas (D.) from Illinois, added fuel to the fire. It guaranteed a "popular sovereignty" vote on the issue of slavery by new territories in the United States. This proposition nullified the Missouri Compromise that made slavery illegal in new states. This act created a climate of extremism in the new state of Kansas. Settlers from the North, including John



John Brown by Augustus Washington, daguerreotype, 1846-47, purchased with major acquisition funds and with funds donated by Betty Adler Schermer in honor of her great-grandfather, August M. Bondi

Brown and his family, were determined to make Kansas a free territory.

John Brown began his crusade in Lawrence, Kansas, on May 24, 1856. In retaliation for the sacking of a "free settlement" by a proslavery mob, Brown and his sons, under the cover of darkness, murdered five southern settlers at Pottawatomie Creek. Brown's son Frederick perished in the attack. This initial act of violence garnered the attention of antislavery activists in Boston who would ultimately become the "Secret Six," the financiers of Brown's siege of

"I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away, but with Blood."

the arsenal at Harpers Ferry. In 1858, Brown and his men attacked two slavery homesteads in Missouri, confiscating property and freeing 11 slaves. Brown would travel for 82 days, covering more than 1,000 miles to deliver these former slaves to their freedom in Canada.

In June of 1859, Brown rented the Kennedy Farm just five miles north of Harpers Ferry, on the Maryland side of the Potomac, under the alias "Isaac Smith." Here he began receiving boxes of rifles, pikes, and ammunition from John Kangi in boxes labeled "hardware and castings" and began studying marine manuals on guerrilla warfare. Brown assembled his small army of 21 men including his four sons: John Jr., Oliver, Owen, and Watson. This ramshackle group consisted of 16 whites and five blacks. Only three, including Brown, were over 30 years of age; the rest were under 30, and three, including one son, were not yet 21.

On August 16, Brown met with the famed antislavery orator and memoirist Frederick Douglass at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. Brown had written to Douglass requesting a meeting and any funds that he could gather for the cause. Wanted for arrest for crimes committed in Kansas, Brown met Douglass wearing a disguise. He divulged his plan to seize the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, believing this act would say to slaves in the South, "Friends are here," and would create a slave uprising.

Frederick Douglass recalls this meeting: "Brown embraced me . . . and said come with me Douglass, I will protect you with my life, . . . when I strike the bees will swarm." Douglass tried in vain to dissuade Brown, assuring him that his mission was doomed. Shields Green, a former slave from South Carolina who had traveled with Douglass, told him, "I think I'll go with the man," and joined Brown.

Upon hearing the news of Brown and Green's impending death, ailing Unitarian minister Reverend Theodore Parker, a reputed member of the "Secret Six," lamented, "The road to heaven is as short from the gallows as from the throne."

1929 Benét's Epic "Homeric" Poem "John Brown's Body" Captures America's Tragedy



John Brown by Ole Peter Hansen Balling, oil on canvas, 1873

Poet Stephen Vincent Benét captures the tragedy of the Civil War for all Americans in his soon-to-be-published poem "John Brown's Body." Simultaneously slated for publication by Rinehart and Co. in New York and by Clark, Irwin, and Co. in Toronto, this harrowing account eerily depicts the defeat at Harpers Ferry:

*. . . John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave
Already the corpse is changed under the stones
Cotton will grow next year in spite of the skull
Slaves will slave next year in spite of the bones
Nothing is changed John Brown, Nothing is changed.*

The effects of John Brown's raid would be felt in the years leading up to the first shots fired at Fort Sumter, marking the start of the Civil War in 1861. The South had feared a bloody uprising, and Brown would be the first of many to die for the North. Claiming the lives of more than

620,000 Americans, the Civil War's cost in American lives was as great as in all of the nation's other wars combined through Vietnam. The war's end in 1865 did bring an end to slavery through President Lincoln's signing of the 13th Amendment; four million slaves were liberated: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." But freedom came at a costly price, echoing Brown's prophetic last words, "I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away, but with Blood."

Sojourner Truth Ex-slave and Activist to Speak at Northhampton!!

SOJOURNER TRUTH IS SLATED TO JOIN Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison on an antislavery lecture circuit this fall. Truth began her diligent career in activism after her home state of New York passed legislation to emancipate slaves in that state in 1827. Her first crusade was to sue for the return of her son Peter, whose towering size garnered a high price in an illegal slave auction across New York state lines.

Religious fervor prompted the courageous Truth to change her name from Isabella Baumfree, the name given to her by a brutal Dutch master, and to begin speaking on behalf of black freedom, women's rights, and temperance. Her lectures often begin with the ominous instruction, "children, I speak to God, and God speaks to me."

The controversial Truth has both shocked and electrified audiences at recent abolitionist events in the Northeast. The statuesque Truth stands six feet tall, with a powerful frame. In response to the jeers of hecklers who protested that she was "too forceful to be a woman,"



Sojourner Truth by an unidentified artist, albumen silver print, 1864

Truth proudly bared her breasts, proving without a doubt that despite her brusque manner she certainly is a woman.

Truth has at times alienated both foes and friends of her cause. A loyal women's suffragist, Truth has been ostracized by some feminists who fear association with her would serve only to diminish their cause. However, at a national women's rights convention in New York, Truth's resounding speech silenced those misguided critics. The following excerpt from that speech stirred many in the audience and attests to her powerful influence: "No one ever helped me into carriages, over puddles and aren't I a woman? I could work as much, and eat as much (when I could get it) and aren't I a woman?"

Please join Truth in her crusade for human rights by attending her upcoming lectures on the "Freedom Riders" and their campaign to end segregation on streetcars in northern cities. We'll see you there.

*quotations taken from *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth*

Frederick Douglass — Knowledge, the Primary Emancipator

"There is no Negro problem. The problem is whether the American people have loyalty enough, honor enough, patriotism enough, to live up to their own constitution." —FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Frederick Douglass stood at the podium, trembling with nervousness. Before him sat abolitionists who had traveled to the Massachusetts island of Nantucket. Only 23 years old at the time, Douglass overcame his anxiety and gave a stirring, eloquent speech about his life as a slave. Douglass would continue to give speeches for the rest of his life and would become a leading spokesperson for the abolition of slavery and for racial equality.



Frederick Douglas by an unidentified artist, oil on canvas, c. 1844

to New York, a free state in September 1838; he was 20 years old.

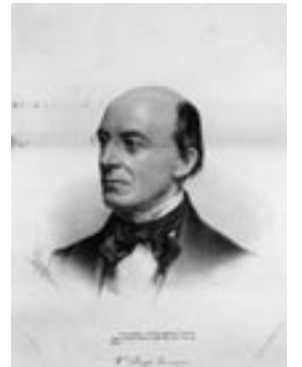
Just two years later, in 1841, Douglass addressed the Anti-Slavery Society. In 1845, he published his autobiography despite apprehension that the information might endanger his freedom. He later settled in Rochester, New York, and published an abolitionist newspaper, *The North Star*. In 1850, he became strongly involved in the Underground Railroad. His home in Rochester, close to the Canadian border, became an important station on the route north. He often found runaways sitting

on the steps of his newspaper office. At times, as many as 11 fugitives were hiding in his home.

Though Douglass regarded William Lloyd Garrison as his true mentor, in time, Douglass found it increasingly more difficult to adhere to Garrison's belief that all resistance to slavery be nonviolent. Ten years later, Douglass would completely abandon all hope that the slave issue could be resolved peacefully: "I prefer to be true to myself, even at the hazard of incurring the ridicule of others, rather than to be false, and incur my own abhorrence."

1831 GARRISON PUBLISHES First Edition of *The Liberator*

William Lloyd Garrison is considered by many to be the most adamant and radical abolitionist in history. His staunch adherence to the maxim "the pen is mightier than the sword" fueled his approach of nonviolence and passive resistance to slavery.



William Lloyd Garrison by Leopold Grozelier, lithograph, 1854

from *The Liberator* (Boston), January 1, 1831:

I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or to speak, or to write, with moderation. No! no! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen;—but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD. The apathy of the people is enough to make every statue leap from its pedestal, and to hasten the resurrection of the dead.



AFRICAN AMERICAN FIRSTS



1787: In New York, the Abolitionists Society created the African Free School, the first public school for African American children.

1810: In Philadelphia, the first insurance company owned and operated by and for blacks guaranteed African Americans a proper burial.

1823: Lucius Twilight became the first African American college graduate at Middlebury College in Vermont.

1835: A group of ship caulkers created the first African American labor union.



1841: W. A. Liedesdorff sailed from the Virgin Islands to the port of San Francisco, created a public school, built steamboats and hotels, and became the nation's first black millionaire.

Early 1900s: Madame C. J. Walker (Sarah Breedlove), who developed a line of hair conditioners and cosmetics for African Americans, became the first African American female millionaire.

“A CERTAIN SPECIES OF PROPERTY”: WASHINGTON AND SLAVERY

In view of Washington's many attributes and accomplishments, it is difficult to acknowledge his role as slave owner. One historian shares his perspective:

—SIDNEY HART, *Historian, Editor of the Charles Willson Peale Family Papers*

ON APRIL 12, 1786, a year before he was to preside over the Constitutional Convention, Washington wrote his friend and political ally Robert Morris, “there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of [slavery].” On September 9, 1786, he wrote another associate that he never meant “to possess another slave by purchase, it being among my first wishes to see some plan adopted by the legislature, by which slavery in this country may be abolished.” Washington, however, did little in a public capacity to oppose slavery.

If Washington felt so strongly about slavery, why didn't he use his immense public stature and influence to end it? As commander of the Continental army, he took only tentative steps during the American Revolution, urging desegregation for the large number of free blacks fighting in the New England armies and the Rhode Island militia and proposing that slaves in the South be enlisted with the promise of freedom at the war's end. Nothing came of these efforts. At the Constitutional Convention, where he presided, and where slavery could have been abolished, he did not speak out or act. Since Washington did by his last will and testament free his own slaves, we know he was sincere about his views on slavery, but he avoided taking a public stand on the issue. For instance, when Washington left the presidency he allowed several of his slaves to slip into freedom simply by allowing them to remain in Philadelphia. Writing to the British agricultural reformer Arthur Young, he disclosed his secret plan to rent out most of his Mount Vernon plantation to expert English farmers, who would in turn hire his slaves. But he was never able to implement this plan.

The republican ideology of the American Revolution, which justified a colonial defense of American liberties, did impact Washington. In 1774, he wrote that if Americans accepted British encroachments, “custom and use shall make us as tame and abject slaves as the blacks we rule over with such arbitrary sway.” With this awareness came Washington's conviction that African Americans were not “tame” and “abject,” and thus fit for slavery—as southern planters such as Jefferson believed—but

behaved as they did because they were denied their liberty. Many slave owners who were Washington's compatriots came to believe that slavery should be ended, even if they were unsure how the South would survive such a massive economic and social transformation. For Washington in particular, slaves were his largest and most negotiable financial asset. Nevertheless, during the

Washington confided that he had a powerful desire “to liberate a certain species of property which I possess very repugnantly to my feelings, but which . . . necessity compels.”

—DECEMBER 12, 1793

different from that in which they were born.”

Washington envisioned slavery's extinction but probably not in his lifetime. He surely knew in 1787 that it would have been a deal-breaker at the Constitutional Convention; it was the one polarizing issue that would have prevented agreement among the delegates. Washington placed establishing the republic ahead of abolishing slavery. He became angry at the Quakers when they attempted to intervene between Virginia slaves and their masters. Although no southern state had shown any indication of abolishing slavery, Washington hoped the state legislatures would free slaves. The ban on the importation of slaves after 1808 in the Constitution was the only concession the southern states would make. During his second term as President, when he faced bitter political factionalism, the unforeseen development of political parties, and acrimonious debate over the ratification of the Jay Treaty, he was in no position to reopen the debate on slavery. The nation during Washington's two terms as President was still very much a fragile entity; no one could be sure that independence would be preserved and that the nation would succeed.

Washington's position on slavery, based partly on what we know about Washington and partly on conjecture, is rooted in his deep belief in the role of Providence in history. By this term he meant that God determined events, with men as His instruments. This did not mean on most levels a fatalistic acceptance of the world. Washington's sense of duty, his participation in

the public sphere, his activism, and his energy precluded such an outlook. Washington viewed the United States as having been blessed by God to become a republican exemplar for other nations. If a large nation such as the United States could establish a republican government, it would stand as a model for the other large and powerful nations in which popular sovereignty did not exist. This theme of America's destiny has continued to the present time. It was a viewpoint enunciated strongly by Abraham Lincoln when he spoke of the United States as “the last, best hope of earth.”

It was Lincoln, not Washington, who best understood and explained to the people of his generation the vision of the founding fathers and how it related to “Providence” and slavery. In his Second Inaugural Address, Lincoln turned the nation's view back to the birth of our nation, and placed America's mission, slavery, and the Civil War within the Revolutionary generation's providential view of history. The war had been going on for three terrible years, and there had been hundreds of thousands of casualties—God's calling for a national sacrifice for the nation's sins. Lincoln would look to Washington and the other founders to create a new birth of freedom. He first reiterated that slavery need not have caused disunion or a civil war. When war did occur, however, “all knew” that slavery was the cause. Lincoln was struck by the fact that both sides in the conflict “read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other.” But in Lincoln's almost Calvinist view, God's purposes were not determined by man's prayers. And it was God's design that man would commit offenses that God would deal with in His own time. Lincoln's concept of God's *own time* was key to his meaning of “providential.” If American slavery was “one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come,” and “having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove,” God would now give this war to both North and South. As many of the founding fathers feared, God in His time, would bring on a great conflagration to wipe clean America's offense. Abraham Lincoln, who came to realize that it was his generation who must complete the unfinished task of abolishing slavery, nonetheless was not critical of the founding fathers and viewed their creation of the nation as the beginning of a sacred *errand*. Four-score-and-seven years after the Declaration of Independence, Lincoln would travel to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, to consecrate ground on which stood a cemetery, containing the bodies of the soldiers who had given their lives in battle to continue the *errand*, so that a “government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

1772 COURT QUESTIONS VALIDITY OF YOUNG SLAVE'S POETRY



SOMETIME BEFORE OCTOBER 8, 1772, Phillis Wheatley, a young African published poet, met with 18 of the most influential thinkers and politicians of the Massachusetts Colony. The panel had been assembled to verify the authorship of her poems and to answer a much larger question: Was a young Negro girl capable of producing literature?

THE VERDICT FROM THE COURT TRIAL WE whose Names are under-written, do assure the World, that the Poems specified in the following Page, were (as we verily believe) written by Phillis, a young Negro Girl, who was but a few Years since, brought an uncultivated Barbarian from Africa, and has ever since been, and is, under the Disadvantage of serving as a Slave in a Family in this Town. She has been examined by some of the best Judges, and is thought qualified to write them.

“To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth”

—by Phillis Wheatley

I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate
Was snatch'd from Afric's fancy'd happy seat:
What pangs excruciating must molest,
What sorrows labour in my parent's breast?
Steel'd was that soul and by no misery mov'd
That from a father seiz'd his babe below'd:
Such, such my case. And can I then but pray
Others may never feel tyrannic sway?



Phillis Wheatley by an unidentified artist, engraving, 1773

1869

A Chat with Harriet

—a Patriot Papers exclusive
by Sarah H. Bradford



Harriet Tubman by Robert Savon Pious, oil on canvas, 1951, gift of the Harmon Foundation

“Oh Lord, how long ... let my people go”

During the 1800s, more than 100,000 enslaved fugitives sought freedom through the Underground Railroad. “Underground Railroad” is the symbolic term given to the routes enslaved black Americans took to gain their freedom as they traveled, often as far as Canada and Mexico. Free blacks, whites, Native Americans, and former slaves acted as conductors by aiding fugitive slaves to their freedom. Harriet Tubman played a significant role.

I am lucky to have had a wonderful opportunity to sit down with the indomitable Harriet Tubman at her home in New York. The following transcripts lend insight into the harrowing tale of one patriot whose will to help free her people from the chains of slavery changed the face of the nation.

S.B.: When did you begin planning your break from slavery?

H.T.: Every slave dreams of their freedom. At age 13 a brutal “master” hit me so hard with a heavy weight that it cracked my skull. To this day, I am prone to spells of slipping off to sleep (narcolepsy) even while standing, or speaking. I have seen men flogged until bleeding and exhausted, women raped, children abused, and my brothers and sisters sold off to chain gangs. Was this not enough to inspire a plan?

S.B.: You have earned the moniker “the Moses of her people.” How does that make you feel?

H.T.: My parents were both deeply religious people, and they too raised their children to be so. On those cold nights escaping to my freedom, “I talked with God as a man talketh to his friend” an’ on to freedom he helped me.

S.B.: Did your family know that you intended to escape that night?

H.T.: In those days, slaves were not even supposed to speak to one another. The ole masters thought too much talking would lead to conspiring on slave uprisings. On the night that I left that plantation, I walked through the slave quarters singing the hymn: “I’m boun’ to de promise land, frien’s I hate to leave you, farewell, I’ll meet you in de’ mornin’.”

S.B.: Did you go alone on your initial escape?

H.T.: No, I did not. Two of my brothers slipped away with me under the cover of darkness, but as we walked on they

became scared and returned without me. I told them, “I have a right to liberty or to death. If I can not have one, I will have the other. No man shall take me alive.”

S.B.: Did you have a plan for what you would do once you got away?

H.T.: Well, I knew that New York had emancipated the slaves in that state in 1827. All I had to do was make it there and I was free. This was in 1848, two years before the government instituted the Fugitive Slave Law that required folks to report fugitive slaves. That is something I dealt with later. In the meantime, I worked for a nice family and saved every penny I earned.

S.B.: Why did you decide to return to the South?

H.T.: One day “I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person, now that I was free” and I knew “if I was free, they should be free also.” So, I returned the way I came; traveling at night, hiding by day, scaling mountains, and crossing streams until I made it back to those slave quarters, singing: “Go down Moses . . . let my people go.”

S.B.: How many trips did you make back and forth, North to South?

H.T.: In all, I believe it was 19 trips both ways. There were many miles to cover and each of them supplied its own terror. By this time, there was a \$40,000 reward for my capture, dead or alive. We were forced into hiding for days at a time, surviving without food or water, hiding in ditches and trees, drugging babies with paragoric [an opiate] to keep their cries from getting us discovered. But we had some help along the way.

S.B.: It has been said that Susan B. Anthony, Frederick Douglass, and Henry David Thoreau were among those who worked “stations” along the Underground Railroad. Is there truth to those statements?

H.T.: Many people black and white helped supply food, clothes, and their homes to us. Of course, none of these kept any written record of their involvement so if a trial ensued there would be no proof. One man, a Mr. Thomas Garrett, a Quaker in Wilmington, was indispensable to the railroad. He helped to free hundreds and hundreds of slaves. Mr. Garrett owned a large shoe factory and put shoes on us every one. God knows we needed shoes, walking the rough terrain South to North. Twice he was tried for aiding fugitives, and twice they took everything he owned, but he believed in our freedom as much as we did.

S.B.: Why did you begin taking the slaves to Canada?

H.T.: Again, in 1850 the government passed the Fugitive Slave Law. I decided, “I can’t trust Uncle Sam with my people no more.” By that time Joe, a very valuable slave, was with us and he had a \$10,000 price on his head. Sam Green, a free Negro in Maryland, had been sentenced to 10 years in prison for owning a copy of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and the pursuit of fugitive slaves was intensifying. But, did you know not a single slave who I helped to freedom was ever returned to slavery? Amen!

S.B.: You have done so much for our country. What did you do following the Underground Railroad?

H.T.: I am still working on building a home for the elderly and infirm people of color. The first of which is being constructed here in Auburn, New York, where I now reside. In 1861, after the first shots of the Civil War were fired at Fort Sumter, Governor Andrews of Massachusetts appealed for my help as a guide and spy for the Union army. Many times

have I sheltered and collaborated with the fierce abolitionist John Brown and his men at my home in Canada.

S.B.: Were you not also a nurse for the Union army?

H.T.: Yes, I was. I freely gave my services however needed. I prepared roots to fight dysentery in the soldiers, I nursed those with smallpox and fevers, I cooked, and I cleaned wounds, but not once did I ever suffer an illness myself.

S.B.: Ms. Tubman, if I may reiterate the wise words of New York’s Governor Seward: “I have never known a nobler, higher spirit or truer seldom dwells in human form. The cause of freedom owes her much; the country owes her much.”

*Quotations are from *The Moses of Her People* by Sarah H. Bradford, 1886

1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe Publishes *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*

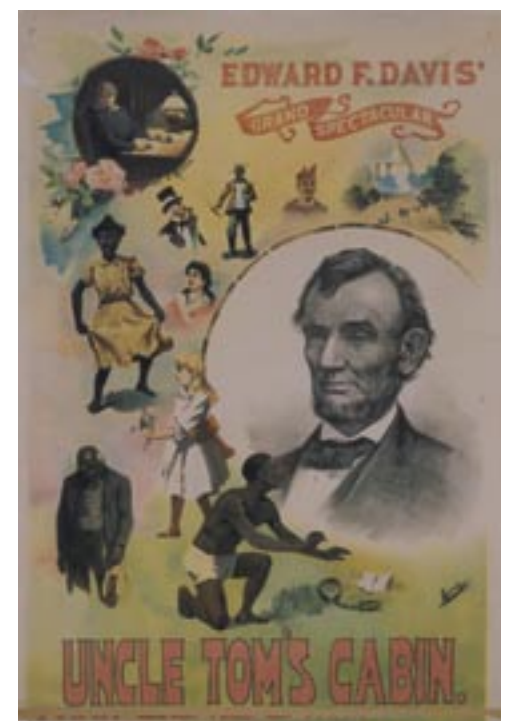
Controversial antislavery novel is bestseller, cause for concern



Harriet Beecher Stowe by Alanson Fisher, oil on canvas, 1853

First published in weekly installments from June 5, 1851, to April 1852 in the journal *National Era*, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel about the horrors of slavery sold 300,000 copies within a year of publication. It caused such controversy that

when she was introduced to President Abraham Lincoln in 1862, he is said to have greeted her with the words: “So you are the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war!”



Uncle Tom’s Cabin by Erie Lithography Company, color lithographic poster, 1890, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leslie J. Schreyer

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