

THE REVEREND DR. WILLIAM HENRY BRISBANE



1806

➡ October 12, Sunday: [William Henry Brisbane](#) was born in Beaufort County, South Carolina, a son of Adam Fowler Brisbane (1783-1830).

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

1 day 12 of 10 M / For the week past I have had but little strength or disposition to write, nor do I feel enough at this time scarcely to say that our forenoon meeting was silent, & in the afternoon O Williams was concern'd in a short but sweet testimony on the necessity of watchfulness

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

1821

➡ December 9, Sunday: William Brisbane, who owned a rice and cotton plantation called Milton Lodge on the Ashley River near Charleston, South Carolina, having no son who might inherit, had adopted [William Henry Brisbane](#), a son of his alcoholic brother Adam Fowler Brisbane (the family was calling William Henry by his middle name, Henry, to distinguish him from an elder brother also adopted and also named William). On this day when William Brisbane died, his adopted son William Henry Brisbane inherited a large number of slaves.

Friend [Stephen Wanton Gould](#) wrote in his journal:

1st day 9 of 12 M / Morning Meeting full & favord with solid quick & lively testimony from D Buffum & the London Epistle was read - Afternoon, Solid & quiet & tho' I labord was unable to




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*feel the circulating of that life in my own mind, which crowns
our Assemblies –*


RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

1825

 May 28, Saturday: [William Henry Brisbane](#) got married with his 1st cousin Glorianna Lawton (July 15, 1805-February 17, 1878). The union would produce Anna Cornelia Brisbane in 1827, Bentley Hasell Brisbane in 1829, Robert Willingham Brisbane in 1831, Benjamin Themosticles Lawton Dion Brisbane in 1834, William Henry Brisbane in 1838, Ph(o)ebe Adeline Brisbane in 1841, Mary Julia Brisbane in 1843 or 1844, John Edward Brisbane in 1847 (not all these would survive childhood).

The husband would be attending preparatory school in New Haven, Connecticut and then in 1826/1827 the American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy in Norwich, Vermont (I have no information as to whether the bride would accompany the bridegroom during this sojourn in the north).

1828


 In England at this point, the “[levelers](#)” and “nonconformists” and “dissenters” and “disestablishmentarians” and “latitudinarians,” non-[Catholic](#) groupings such as the [Quakers](#) and the [Unitarians](#) and the [Baptists](#) and the Methodists who were refusing to conform to the strictures of the Church of England, were beginning to be allowed to perform minor governmental functions — at least at the borough level. (They would not be able, however, to obtain an Oxford or Cambridge degree until the 1850s, and even into the 1860s they would be being forced to pay local church “rates” in support of the local Church of England’s parish parson.)

A year earlier Jemmy Butler had won a boxing match in Darlaston, England, after which the audience had carried him on their shoulders four miles to the nearest pub, where all that night he had been given drinks and adulation. This year in the prize-ring Jemmy was beaten to death.

In about this timeframe [William Henry Brisbane](#) was accepted as a new convert at the Pipe Creek [Baptist Church](#), and went off to study at the Furman Academy and Theological Institution in Edgefield, South Carolina. His church would ordain him as its pastor and, successively, he would become pastor at several planter churches in the low country of South Carolina.



1832

 [William Elliott](#) of South Carolina expressed his Unionist views in opposition to nullification in “Address to the People of St. Helena.” His opposition to secession was based on fears that the economy of the South would be inadequate to sustain a condition of independence. He was careful to point out that he was not in any way, shape, or manner opposed to race [slavery](#) — since that was an institution of society that was “sanctioned by religion, conducive to good morals, and useful, nay indispensable.”

Upon reaching the age of 25, [William Henry Brisbane](#) came into possession of the rice and cotton plantation called Milton Lodge on the Ashley River near Charleston, and came into ownership of its complement of 22 black field [slaves](#).



“It is simply crazy that there should ever have come into being a world with such a sin in it, in which a man is set apart because of his color – the superficial fact about a human being. Who could **want** such a world? For an American fighting for his love of country, that the last hope of earth should from its beginning have swallowed [slavery](#), is an irony so withering, a justice so intimate in its rebuke of pride, as to measure only with God.”



– Stanley Cavell, MUST WE MEAN WHAT WE SAY?
1976, page 141

1835

➡ One of Massachusetts’s senators, Peleg Sprague, was in this year arguing for slavery by invoking the authority of Jesus Christ. Jesus meek and mild, who “would not interfere with the administration of the laws, or abrogate their authority,” it seemed, could have been no abolitionist — or at least, not according to Senator Peleg Sprague!



“It is simply crazy that there should ever have come into being a world with such a sin in it, in which a man is set apart because of his color – the superficial fact about a human being. Who could want such a world? For an American fighting for his love of country, that the last hope of earth should from its beginning have swallowed slavery, is an irony so withering, a justice so intimate in its rebuke of pride, as to measure only with God.”



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The Reverend [William Henry Brisbane](#) published the first Baptist periodical to be produced outside Philadelphia, [The Southern Baptist and General Intelligencer](#) printed by James S. Burges of Charleston, South Carolina, the stated mission of which was to support slavery as a biblically mandated social and economic institution. The periodical would attempt to refute the antislavery writings in THE ELEMENTS OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY of the Reverend [Francis Wayland](#), President of [Brown University](#) in [Providence, Rhode Island](#).

The Baptist reverend was struggling against himself: “I am no abolitionist.” Oh, no, **he** was a regular guy, **he** could not be one of those detested, deluded people! (Three years later, however, this abolitionism would overcome him — and a local historian would eventually write of him, because he had [manumitted](#) his slaves, that “He became, to the white population, the most hated man in the Beaufort District.”)



1837

 In 1835 Francis Wayland had authored a textbook, ELEMENTS OF MORAL SCIENCE, that had adopted a stance that was clearly antislavery. This textbook had therefore been banned in the American South. A professor in Virginia had declared that “I dare not give up your minds to the dominion of Wayland’s Philosophy.” In this year a South Carolinian, Jasper Adams, produced a competing textbook, THE ELEMENTS OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY, that was sufficiently [proslavery](#) that it could be placed before the (white) students of the slaveholding Southern states for their moral edification.

The Reverend [William Henry Brisbane](#) attended lectures and received a Doctor of Medicine degree from the Medical College of South Carolina. He then relocated his household (the family and their house slaves) to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he became pastor of the First Baptist Church (he was accepting, as a condition of this employment, that there was to be no preaching whatever in regard to [slavery](#), either pro or con).



1838

One of the strange things about human [slavery](#) was how it related to Christian family values, and another of the strange things about human slavery was how it related to our capitalist economy. Here are some illustrations of this strangeness, in the Year of Our Lord 1838. In this year Matilda Lawrence, a slave who had escaped from her Missouri owner, was recaptured in Cincinnati, Ohio. She was brought before a court there, was tried, and was remanded back to Missouri and to her lawful owner. This all seems perfectly usual, but we are disregarding the racial fact that poor escaped and recaptured Matilda was only 1/8th black, and was 7/8ths white, and we are disregarding the Christian family values fact that she was the natural daughter of her owner — which is to say, she was being taken back to serve under enslavement to her own father. In this Year of our Lord 1838, also, a year of national economic depression, things were tough all over. For instance, a Southern plantation owner, the Reverend Doctor [William Henry Brisbane](#), a Baptist minister and a physician, was forced into bankruptcy and against his will and against his better judgment, had to sell off all 22 of his field slaves to a relative, temporarily retaining only his 3 house slaves. (This would eat at him and eventually he would buy them all back at a higher price and set them all free — impoverishing himself and his family for life and earning himself the long-term contempt of his community as a business ne'er-do-well and utterly destroying his credit standing— but for the time being human beings were merely an economic commodity — and this Capitalist economy had his hands tied.)

February: [William Henry Brisbane](#) became an abolitionist (his wife Anne Lawton Brisbane would never unite with him in such sentiment), would greatly regret having sold his 22 field [slaves](#) rather than freeing them, would vow to buy them back and [manumit](#) them, and would transform himself into “the most hated man [by the white people] in the Beaufort District.” He moved with his wife and their three sons to Ohio (eventually then to the West). His wife Anne Lawton Brisbane would be attempting to make ends meet for the family by taking in boarders for \$50 per month.¹ He attempted to care for his three slaves whom he manumitted, and went steadily down in the world. —A remark by one of his relatives, writing in a later timeframe: “His endeavour to support his Negroes after freeing them was philanthropic (and idiotic).”

1. I do not understand this figure. It was possible at that time to obtain room and board in American boarding houses for approximately \$1 per week. If Mrs. Brisbane charged each boarder \$5 per month, she would need to have ten boarders at a time to receive an income of \$50, and I think that most boarding houses could not service ten guests at a time. Mrs. Cynthia Thoreau, at her boarding house in Concord, Massachusetts, presumably never provided hospitality for this number of boarders despite the fact that she employed two helpers!



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1840

February: The abolitionists persuaded the Reverend Dr. [William Henry Brisbane](#), a [Baptist](#) and a former slaveholder in South Carolina, to speak before the Female Anti-Slavery Sewing Circle in Cincinnati, Ohio, and explained to them in detail just how it was that he had been brought to change his views on the subject of slavery. He was repurchasing the 22 black field [slaves](#) that he had sold in South Carolina, and paying for their passage north, and [manumitting](#) them, despite the fact that this effort was impoverishing his white family. His speech would be issued as a pamphlet, which would produce his termination at the 1st Baptist Church in Cincinnati, so he would found a 6th Baptist Church opposed to slavery.

“WE ARE VERILY GUILTY CONCERNING OUR BROTHER”

BY the grace of God, having been fully convinced that slavery, perpetual, involuntary servitude, is a condition of wrong to man, and on the part of the master, of sin against God, I feel it a duty to myself as well as to society, to make known in a public manner, that I most heartily repent of all part that I have heretofore voluntarily taken in supporting this unholy system of wrong and oppression. Instructed from my earliest childhood, to regard as my inferiors, all who belong to the sable race of Africa, and being in bonds myself to that un-hallowed prejudice which presumes the black man was designed by God to be the white man's slave, it was not until the year 1833, (Nov. 8th, when I was 27 years of age, that my attention was drawn to the subject of American Slavery. A number of an Anti-slavery pamphlet was put into my hands; at first I threw it from me with disdain; but after a few hours, to gratify curiosity, I condescended to give it a perusal. The object of the pamphlet was to show that the doctrines of Mr. Calhoun applied to the colored people in bondage were of equal force as when brought in defence of the white man's rights. I had imbibed the political principles of this distinguished statesman; but I now felt the force of his arguments as applied where I had never anticipated their application. It was an entirely new thought to me, and feeling the religious obligation to have regard to the interests and rights of my fellow men, as well as my own, I trembled at the prospect of having to diminish my means of support by yielding to my convictions of duty. Yet I was on the point of proclaiming freedom at once to all on my plantation; but a second thought directed me to the Bible as the proper source from which to learn obligations and my duty. A few hours examination with my mind unconsciously warped by interest, and blinded by prejudice, brought me to the conclusion that the Bible taught that man has a right to hold his fellow man as property. It was easy for me in my circumstances to perceive that Canaan's curse was God's charter to Shem's and Japhat's posterity, to make Africans their slaves. It was easy to regard Abraham as the prototype of an American slaveholder. It was easy to understand the tenth commandment as a security to the slaveholder against the covetousness of his neighbor. It was easy to consider the servitude under the Mosaic law as strictly analogous to that in which I held my own slaves. It was easy to pervert the New



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Testament precepts to servants, of submission to wrong, and to masters, of regard for the interests of those servants, into a right on the part of the one to retain the other in bondage. In a word, it was easy for one who wished it so, to find in the Bible a sanction for American Slavery. And I became readily convinced that abolitionism was fanaticism, and that abolitionists were deserving the execration of the American people and the indignation of Almighty God. I wrote in vindication of slavery, to prove that the Bible sanctioned it. My essays were published in the Charleston Mercury, with commendation, and I rejoiced that the light of truth had fallen so brightly on my vision.

On the first of January 1835, I commenced editing a religious paper in Charleston, S. C. In this paper I honestly expressed my conviction in favor of slavery, and zealously defended the institution whenever I had a suitable opportunity, I read but little on the other side of the question, for it is regarded unsafe in that community to receive abolition documents, and in addition to this, as I myself conceived, necessary precaution, I felt so satisfied that my own views were incontrovertible, that I sought not for anti-slavery information. I thought I had light enough, and felt secure in my own interpretation of the Scriptures. Some few of the papers with which I exchanged did venture occasionally to call our attention to the subject, but without much attempt at argument or reason. Feeling themselves dependent upon patronage for support, they were cautious how they touched so delicate a subject, and I reflected with much quietude on the infallibility of my own conclusions. But in July of the same year, I received a paper containing Dr. Wayland's chapter on Personal Liberty, an extract from his Elements of Moral Science, just then published. This produced a powerful effect on my feelings, and I began to doubt the correctness of the views I had been entertaining. I thought, however, after reading the article a second time, that I detected its errors, and I sat down to write something in reply. After writing three pages on human rights, I found my own argument leading to such anti-republican conclusions as to startle myself. I then made a second effort at reply, but was, despite of myself, compelled to modify my views of slavery. I saw that I must either give up my republican principles, or admit that slavery in its origin was unjust, and that if freedom be a good, slavery is an evil. Yet I did not perceive how I could be blamed for the bondage of my slaves, inasmuch as they were slaves, before they came into my possession. I had an apprehension that those born on my place were made slaves by myself, but I was inclined to think that the responsibility could not rest on me, as I was only acting in agreement with the laws of the country. To my mind, too, the Bible seemed to justify the practice of slavery, although its principles must be opposed to the principle of slavery. I was greatly troubled - I read Dr. Wayland's treatise about seven times over. I found in Rees' Cyclopaedia some thoughts on the subject. I was anxious, exceedingly anxious, to have the subject fully before me; but I dared not have in my house any abolition publications, and so I had but a poor opportunity to find materials to work against my interest and my prejudices. With



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me, all was doubt. I could arrive at no definite conclusions. I saw clearly that slavery and republicanism were not consistent; but I thought slavery was justifiable on the ground of necessity. Our fathers had fixed it upon us. It was interwoven into the policy of the country, and a general emancipation, I feared, would be ruinous. Many would be reduced to poverty by it. It then occurred to me that, if necessity was the law by which it must be justified, that the law would not apply to myself, since I could grant freedom to those I had, and then not be reduced to want. On the whole, I was in such a state of doubt that I felt it my duty to choose the safe side, and since I had perfect right to liberate my slaves, but thought it at least possible that slavery was sinful, I made up my mind to offer to my slaves the liberty to go either to Liberia or any free state they might choose. I made them the proposal distinctly, fully, and honestly; but what could the poor creatures do? They had no knowledge of other countries, they knew not to what want they might be reduced in a strange land, and I could give them no satisfactory information, for I was not possessed of it myself. They had been accustomed to regard me as a kind master, and they preferred to be among the connections they had formed in the neighborhood. They therefore chose to remain where they were, and to work in my service. I dismissed my overseer, and left my plantation to their almost entire control, determined to supply them with what they needed, in proportion to the proceeds of the crops they made. No sooner did I take this step, than I became the object of calumny and abuse. Although I had broken no law of the State; had interfered with no man's privileges; had not urged my troubles upon any one; and was doing no more than a conscientious man was obliged to do; I was, nevertheless, so threatened and vilified; that it was a question whether I ought not at once to leave the country for my personal safety. That I was not an abolitionist was made evident, by the continued vindication of the system of slavery in the paper I was editing in Charleston; for although I had given up the defence of slavery in the abstract, yet I still apologized for it on the ground of necessity; and my course with regard to my slaves was my own private affair. But, "Millions of opening mouth to fame belong, And every mouth is furnished with a tongue, And round with listening ears the plague is hung." "Rumor was the messenger of defamation," and every thing was greatly exaggerated, as malice increased its publicity – yet even then, I had such an opinion of the abolitionists that I would rather have been called an assassin than an abolitionist. But suspicions were strong against me, and an effort was made by Christian people to take patronage from my paper, because I would no longer say that slavery was right in itself, and ought to be supported. A minister of the gospel, of my own denomination, and one of the most respected in that region of country, expressed it as his opinion that my paper ought not to be supported. He became so excited in conversation with me, that he was not in a state of mind to understand what my real sentiments were – yet this minister was my personal friend, for whom I still have the highest regard, and who, I am sure, did not feel conscious how he was affected by prejudice and self-interest. It became every



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where rumored that I was an abolitionist; it was reported that for my incendiary movements I was arrested and confined in Barnwell jail. Twice did I receive intelligence of a determination to tar and feather me. Members of churches would walk out as soon as I rose in the pulpit to preach. I was informed that in Barnwell District, it was a subject of agitation whether I should not be kept from their pulpits. Nor was the persecution confined to myself; my slaves were afraid to leave the plantation lest they might be abused – until as a question of humanity, I though I had better sell them than retain them in my possession. My own relatives would tell me of the impolicy of allowing my slaves so much more privilege and so much better fare, than other masters gave. Indeed, my regard, for them, my anxiety for my own family, my sympathy for my friends, the appeals to my feelings, the vituperation and abuse, and the threats of violence, all conspired to hinder me from coming to any definite conclusion with regard to the morality of slaveholding; and I began to think I must have been morbidly sensitive on a question that to other minds seemed so clear; that I had been in error in the course I had adopted with regard to my slaves; and I was forced by public sentiment to let the subject alone until I could regain my standing in the community. But I settled it in my own mind, that as soon as I could come away without being driven away and when my standing in my own denomination should be regained, and the way was clear before me, I would leave the jurisdiction of Lynch Law, and place myself in a condition to examine the subject, until my conscience could be fully satisfied either that slavery was or was not a wrong and a sin. I gave up my paper; I retired from all public associations, and kept as private as possible, until my persecutors were silenced and defamation had ceased. In the meantime I had nothing to read on the subject of slavery, and my mind tho' not satisfied, was quiet. Finally, the time came, when from my standing as a minister, and my position in my own denomination, I had the strongest personal inducements to remain at the South. It was then that I took the opportunity to come to this state. But before I came, the question must be settled, what shall I do with my slaves? I dared not attempt their freedom under the circumstances of the case. I could not with safety to themselves leave them without a protector; I was offered the market price for them in cash. This I refused, because I knew not where to go. I then proposed to my brother-in-law, to let him have them on a credit of seven years at somewhere about \$200 less each than I had been offered for them in cash. Had connexions among his slaves, and it suited them best to belong to him. I did this under the conscientious impression that it was the best plan which the circumstances of the case allowed me to adopt. And retaining three of my slaves, I came to this state. I came with my prejudices strong against the Abolition Society, and these prejudices were increased by the movements of a few unwise members of that Society, the temper and spirit of whose minds are enough to do injury to any cause. But, I determined to give the abolitionists a hearing; to investigate their principles, and to satisfy myself on the subject of slavery. I accordingly subscribed for the Philanthropist,



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although I almost felt like polluting my fingers whenever I touched it. Weld's Bible Argument I examined; it vexed me because its style seemed to be the language of bitter passions, and I lost the argument in my anger with the author. I seized my pen with the hope I could reply to it, and wrote six pages of objections to the author's introduction, but when I came to dispose his arguments, oh, my conscience; I found myself already convinced that he had the truth on his side, that slavery was wrong, however I might be scorched by the burning eloquence of the writer. I could cavil, but I could no longer say that the Bible sanctioned slavery, and I gave what I had written to the flames. I determined to emancipate fully the three slaves I had retained; although they were then worth not less than \$2200. Since that time, I have carefully investigated the proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Society; and the principles of their constitution, until I have become heartily sorry that I ever allowed the cry of "fanaticism" against them to hinder the truth from shining into my own mind, and my heart from sympathizing with them in the noble spirit of their philanthropic enterprise. I rejoice now that I am emancipated from that inglorious prejudice which enslaved me to error and to wrong, and by which even now, thousands of my fellow-citizens, even in the free states, are imprisoned and in darkness. Satisfied that slavery is a wrong to man and a sin against God, on my late visit to the South, I proposed to the gentleman to whom I sold out, to recant, but he declined it. (The sale amounted to about \$10,000.) After I returned, I wrote him a letter, of which the following is an exact copy.

CINCINNATI, OHIO: Jan. 4th 1840

DEAR EDWARD—

I have a proposition to make to you which I do not know how you, will receive. It is to get from you all the negroes I sold you and their issue, at the price you took them — or rather as many of them as I can secure freedom to. There may be some of them so situated as to refuse to come into a free state for their freedom. But what I wish of you is to let me have them all, if I can secure freedom to all, or as many of them as I can possibly succeed in emancipating. I feel that slavery is sinful, and that I was wrong to sell those I had. — I had no right from God to them, and thus convinced, I shall never be easy in mind until I can get them out of bondage fairly and honestly. I have thought about this matter from beginning to end, and as I love my Savior, I feel that I ought to clear my skirts entirely of the responsibility of slavery. If it must continue, let the responsibility rest upon those whose consciences allow them to uphold it. But I cannot stand my convictions on this subject any longer, and I now throw the responsibility entirely upon yourself, if those slaves I sold you be not emancipated. I make you the distinct offer to take them back. If you refuse, the account stands between you and God. I do my duty in making this appeal, and you must carry the matter to the judgement seat of Christ. But I beg you, Edward to ponder the subject well before you refuse. Remember that these are immortal souls whom you are to meet at the bar of God. Oh, let them not have to say, we were in prison and you comforted us not. I suppose it will be a



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struggle in your mind what to do; but, Edward, for the sake of making some of the sordid dust of the earth, let not your heart disregard the welfare of these poor slaves. I can get them here, and here provision can be made for them in one of the counties in this State, where they can have opportunity to rise in character as well as worldly prosperity. Let me know if you are willing to do it, and then I can adjust the matter for them. I will not occupy any part of this letter to prove to you that slavery is wrong, that it has no sanction in the word of God; but to show you what I think about it, I send you a little tract that has been one of the means of settling my mind. It may help to get your consent to let me have the negroes back. My love to Charlotte and the children.

Your affectionate brother, Wm. Henry BRISBANE - P. S. Let me know what you will take for June, and if I can get Jeffery, should you be willing to let me have their wives Diana and Daphne. W. H. B.

To Edward H. Peeples Lawtonville SC

My object in exhibiting this letter is, to show that I not only have the conviction that slavery is wrong, but that I am willing to make restitution for the wrong I did in selling those slaves that had a just right to demand of me their liberty, but whose ignorance and weakness, or Christian forbearance prevented their seeking that justice which by nature belongs to them. And now it will probably be asked, how I have arrived at the conclusion that slavery is a wrong to man and a sin against God. I will answer this first as a man, and then as a Christian. As a man, I honor the principles of our [Declaration of Independence](#). I believe that our noble fathers spoke, the truth when they declared "these truths to be self evident: - that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit, of happiness." There are some things so obvious, that their very simplicity makes it ridiculous to attempt to prove them. And hence it is, that our noble fathers made no attempt to prove that all men are created equal, that they have a natural right to liberty; they did not dream that their sons would be such simpletons as to require proof of this; and hence, instead of attempting to demonstrate it, they called it a self-evident truth. And there is not a man who has the spirit of a man, but feels he has as natural a right to freedom and independence as the proud monarch who sits upon a throne. And as a man, conscious of my own rights, and jealous of those rights, I feel that that man is degraded, who is so humbled as not to know he has a right to liberty and independence. As a Christian, he may submit to wrong, but as a man, he must feel that it is his tyrant's power alone that makes him a slave. What intelligent man is there who, when left to the impulses of his nature, uncontrolled by the grace of God, does not exclaim, "Give me liberty, or give me death." Yea, do not Christians themselves fight for freedom; and did not he who lives in the hearts of his countrymen as the Father of our Independence, fight for the liberty we enjoy; and was not Washington a Christian? I do not say that a Christian ought to fight even for liberty; but this I say that such is his consciousness of right



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to liberty, that it is hard to convince him that it is Christian forbearance to submit to slavery. It is a self-evident truth that man, immortal man, has the charter of freedom written in his heart, and nothing but injustice or want can make him a slave – and as I value my consistency, as I value my principles, those principles taught by Franklin, Jefferson and Washington, and into which I was indoctrinated by such men as Hamilton, Hayne and McDuffie, I will respect the rights of man, whatever be the color of his skin. And as I value justice, God forbid that I should dishonor humanity, by making even an ignorant African my slave. I may not indeed, be prepared to say with Cowper, "I had much rather be myself the slave;" but this I do say that if I will to own a slave, I deserve myself to be a slave. And now as a Christian, I will answer how I conclude that slavery is a wrong to man, and a sin against God. It is because slavery is a wrong to man, that it is a sin against God for God has said Love thy neighbor as thyself. Shall I teach you from the Bible that American slavery is a wrong to man? Is not the Bible itself given for the good of man, and does it not say to all, search the Scriptures? But do not the laws of slavery forbid man to read the chart that God has sent him to mark his way to Heaven? And is not this a wrong to man? Does not the Bible say, What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder? And do not the laws of slavery empower the wicked man to separate husbands and wives, and tear the infant from its mother's breast? And is this no wrong to man? Do not American laws declare that a colored man's word shall not be taken in a court of justice? And is he not refused a jury trial? And are these no wrong to man? Is it no wrong, no oppression, to keep a man in such a condition, that he must stand a cool spectator, to see his master abuse and chastise the partner of his honor, and to allow his own children to be scourged before his face? Is it no wrong to chain the immortal mind of man, and however noble and gifted the intellect which God has given him, to forbid the intellectual training of that immortal mind? Is it no oppression, to starve the soul, and prevent the growth of its moral powers? Is it no wrong, no oppression, when professing Christians will not allow their fellow Christians in the same church with them to enjoy equal church privileges with themselves, tho' God has enjoined them to have no respect of persons? Are all these things and vastly more that might be named, no wrong to man? I now know my Bible better than to believe it upholds a system like this. And you know that if the Bible did sanction such wrongs as these, you could not prevail upon men to believe the Bible to be the book of God. No – teach such a doctrine as this, and you dare not call the New Testament the glad tidings of salvation. The minister's voice would become powerless, and infidels would revel in triumph and victory. Does not the Bible teach us, that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men," that all men are our neighbors, and that we must love our neighbors as ourselves? Then do not belie the Bible by the assertion, that it sanctions such a system of legalized oppression as American slavery. But will it be said, that these oppressions are rather the abuse of slavery than slavery itself and tho' the Bible condemns these wrongs, it sanctions a condition of involuntary



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servitude? I answer that these things are the very essence of slavery; Teach the slave to read, and he will study your [Declaration of Independence](#) until it kindles in his bosom the free spirit of Patrick Henry. Teach him to read, and he will learn that his master is a tyrant and Christian forbearance alone will allow him to endure his bondage. Let the laws forbid the violent separation of husbands and wives and kindred; let the colored man be allowed to bear testimony in a court of justice; give him a right to jury trial; give him the right to defend his wife and children from abuse and wrong; repeal all laws that restrain his mental and his moral improvement; enact laws and enforce them, requiring masters to give to their servants wages, and whatever "is just and equal;" and let Christians give their colored brethren equality of church rights. Let these things be done, and the Abolition Society is dissolved instanter. These oppressions are not the mere abuse of slavery – they are the bone and sinew of involuntary servitude – without these slavery could not exist a day. And does the Bible uphold a system, which requires oppression to support its existence? Never, no, never. It is a calumny upon the Bible to say that it does. I look into the Old Testament, and there, when I am not blindfolded by my interests and my prejudices, I learn that slavery was regarded as a curse to be made use of as a punishment for crime; that it guarded against involuntary servitude by forbidding all covetousness; that it required that whoso stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death; that it provided for the freedom of those who by poverty and misfortune, might be brought into bondage, either at the expiration of six years, or of forty-nine years at most; that it secured the servant against cruel treatment, by demanding his freedom for the loss of even a tooth; that it required the master to give up his bondman whenever his kindred or himself could redeem him; that it forbid the restoration of one to slavery who ran away from his master. There too is the history of that people whom the Lord with a mighty hand delivered from Egyptian bondage, and whose masters he punished with tremendous plagues. I then looked into the New Testament, and I find Jesus standing up in the synagogue, and taking for his text that verse in Isaiah. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach, deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." I see that when he did lead captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men, that they who first imbibed the precious doctrines of his gospel, had all things common; and among them could therefore have been no distinction of master and slave. I see that this apostle preached that the law was made for men-stealers, and that tho' one who was bound should not seek to be loosed, yet if he could have his freedom, "use it rather" – and he taught masters to give unto their servants that which is just and equal – and to Philemon he wrote, that he had authority from Christ to enjoin it upon him to receive back Onesimus, not as a servant, but a brother beloved; tho' he would rather him do it willingly, than of necessity. And I read another Apostle saying, "Go to,



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now ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries, that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." These things, yea, all the principles of the Christian religion teach me, that no man can be a slaveholder without trampling upon some of those principles; without neglecting the great law, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Think, not that modern abolitionists alone teach the doctrine that slavery is a sin. Some of you admire much the distinguished Methodist, Adam Clarke – and if I were to be the author of such language as he has used in his Commentary on this subject with regard to slaveholders, I know not whether tarring and feathering would be considered by some, mild enough for me. Hear what he thought of Christians owning slaves. He says, "In heathen countries, slavery was somewhat excusable: among Christians, it is an enormity and a crime, for which perdition has scarcely an adequate state of punishment." Nor was Adam Clarke the only Methodist who thought slavery a sin; John Wesley, the father of Methodism, declared, "Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air. And no human law can deprive him of that right which he derives from the law of nature." Nor did Methodists only thus testify to the sin of slavery. You who admire the eloquent Robert Hall hear what he said; "The claims of the planters to hold their negroes in perpetual bondage, is vitiated in its origin; and having commenced in an act of injustice, can never acquire the sanction, of right." If then, I have erred in my judgment of what the Scriptures teach in regard to such slavery as exists in these United States, there is some reason for my error when some of the most eminent ministers of the Gospel have erred before me. And I am sure, it must be time to suspect that slavery is a sin against God, when such men as Clarke, and Wesley, and Robert Hall, and Francis Wayland so regard it. Having thus satisfied myself that slavery is wrong, I forthwith abandon it. I shall no longer be responsible for its existence. Nor can I conceive of any middle ground between right and wrong. If slavery be wrong, it cannot be right. And as I prefer to be right, and as I reverence the principles of the Christian religion above all things else, I will endure poverty, yea, die in a hospital, before I will allow myself to be the instrument of aiding and abetting a system of wrong against my fellow man, and of sin against my God. Yes, Before I will practice contrary to the principles of the gospel I profess to love, I will "hate father and mother, and wife and children, and friends, and all things," and trust my God for that "peace which passeth all understanding, and which the world can neither give nor take away." If the Scriptures be rather dark on this subject, perhaps, they are so for the same reason that Jesus spake to the Jews in parables; "because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand; for this people's



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heart is waxed gross and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted." But to my mind the conviction has come, that the principles of the gospel are incompatible with American slavery, and acting upon that conviction, I separate myself from it, and leave it for those who have easier consciences, to maintain a system, which originated in breaches of the eighth and tenth commandments of God's Moral Law, and can only be supported by doing violence to the gospel of Jesus Christ. But it may be asked, how is it that so many wise and good men can continue in the practice of holding their fellow men in bondage, if it be indeed so opposed to the principles of the gospel? For an answer to this question I would refer you to the life of that eminently pious man, Rev. John Newton, who even after he became a Christian, and one too of no ordinary character for piety, continued to visit the coast of Africa, to obtain slaves for the West India market, and he says of himself, "During the time I was engaged in the slave trade, I never had the least scruple as to its lawfulness. I was, upon the whole, satisfied with it as the appointment Providence had marked out for me." And yet this good man, according to his own account, was in an employment that "was perpetually conversant with chains, bolts, and shackles." Now, if a pious Christian could go on without compunction of conscience in, such a piratical trade as this, surely we need not be surprised that men accustomed from their infancy to regard the colored man as designed by God to be the white man's slave, and whose interest and friendships are identified with the system, find it easy to convince themselves that what the Bible teaches in regard to the servant's duty to his master, and the master's obligations to his servant, is plain proof that it is not a Christian's duty to liberate his slaves. It does not follow, because a man is pious, his judgment is correct. The wisest of men have erred in judgment, and the best of men have sinned against God. I do not accuse my brethren of the South of a want of religious feeling. They are bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. It was with them I was taught the religion of Jesus. And would to God, I had the piety of many of my southern friends who by their daily walk and conversation give evidence that they are born of God, and whose works, and zeal, and labors of love, would put many an abolitionist to the blush. I know many, very many owners of slaves, who, I believe, will be brilliant gems in the crown of Jesus Christ; for Jesus has prayed for them, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And that mighty prayer will prevail, and not one of them whom the Father has given to Jesus will be lost. But oh! that they could see that they are doing injustice to their brethren whom they are to sit round the table of the Lord to drink the new wine in their Father's kingdom. Oh! spirit of free grace, open their eyes to see that the law of love requires that they "break every yoke and let the oppressed go free." But what is a Christian slaveholder to do, whose State laws forbid the emancipation of his slaves? I answer, that he who becomes convinced that slavery is a wrong to man and a sin against God, will soon find out how to get rid



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of it and clear himself of farther guilt in its participation. Whilst there are free states in this Union, there will be room enough for conscientious Christians to find a home where, with reasonable wages, their servants may still labor for their support. But if this cannot be done, then let them do what they can where they are towards ameliorating the condition of their slaves by paying them reasonable wages, and allowing them as much as possible the privileges of free men - and so leaving it in their wills that their heirs shall rather be the guardians than the masters of these slaves. Let them, too, use all their influence to have the law repealed that forbids manumission, and all other laws that allow one man to regard another as a chattel and a thing. Let no man plead necessity in excuse for slaveholding, so long as he has not made every effort to raise from the dust the poor slave whose rights he has so long been trampling beneath his feet. God does not require impossibilities, but he does require in full according to that which a man hath. And let no man console himself with the hope that because the laws of this State sustain oppression, he is not individually responsible for the support of those laws. In this country we are republicans, and not in the condition of those Christians who themselves being subject to the Roman powers, had no power to control the civil institutions of the Roman Empire. Every free citizen here is a part of the sovereignty of his State and his influence and his vote help to make and to repeal laws. And let Christians in the Southern States exert that influence against slavery which they now use in its favor, and the days of slavery are numbered. And that they be brought to use this influence, let Christians here in the free states do what in charity to their brethren they ought to do, towards convincing the South that slavery ought to be abolished. It is for these states themselves to legislate on this subject, and when the South becomes convinced that slavery ought to be abolished. They have wisdom enough to know how to accomplish it with the least disadvantage to their private interest and their political prosperity. In conclusion, let me say to the Anti-Slavery Society, God speed your efforts. Adhere strictly to the principles of your constitution; remember that it is by moral suasion and by peaceful measures, and not by resorting to physical force, that the rights of the oppressed ought to be vindicated. The slave is bound by the spirit of the gospel to submit patiently to his wrongs; but it is for those who can feel for other's pains, to remember them who are in bonds as bound with them, and by argument, by entreaty, by exhortation, by warning, persuade their master to manumit his slaves. It is to your efforts that I am principally indebted for that change of sentiments by which I am here pleading the cause of the oppressed, and although I am no great acquisition to your noble enterprise, yet since it has been the means of liberating at least two of the sons of Africa from slavery, and perhaps of twenty more, it is a success, small as it is, for which you may "thank God and take courage." Be not disheartened because you are weak, despised and abused: quail not before a vicious public sentiment; be prudent, be cautious, be wise, but never abandon the grand enterprise upon which you have entered, until the



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welkin rings with the joyous shouts of Africa's emancipated sons.

But finally, my respected audience allow me to say that it is by imbibing the spirit of the gospel we prepare ourselves for maintaining the principles of truth, and for doing justice to mankind. In a state of sin, we are ourselves slaves to our worst passions, and we need the blood of Jesus Christ to set our own souls at liberty from that hardest of all bondage in which Satan holds us as with an iron grasp. There is an awful bondage, who are held in everlasting chains under darkness unto the "judgment of the great day." Whilst then we seek the liberty of man from a temporal yoke, let us not be ourselves the servants of corruption; but rather stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ would make us free. "This is freedom such as angels use, And kindred to the liberty of God."

1841

April 24, Saturday: The Reverend Dr. [William Henry Brisbane](#) called at the home in Brooklyn to which the family of Lewis Tappan had moved, after they had been burnt out by the mob in Manhattan in 1834. (The abolitionist businessman, just at that point, was rejoicing at the January 1841 decision of the US Supreme Court in the *Amistad* case, and preparing to open his Mercantile Agency credit-verification office in July 1841.) The Reverend Brisbane wrote in his diary: "In N. York took tea at Lewis Tappan's."



April 24. Music is the sound of the circulation in nature's veins. It is the flux which melts nature. Men dance to it, glasses ring and vibrate, and the fields seem to undulate. The healthy ear always hears it, nearer or more remote.

It has been a cloudy, drizzling day, with occasional brightenings in the mist, when the trill of the tree sparrow seemed to be ushering in sunny hours.

August: The Reverend Dr. [William Henry Brisbane](#) signed the requisite [manumission](#) documents to free the 3 house slaves his family had brought to Cincinnati from South Carolina, and the documents were witnessed by his friend who had prepared them for him, Salmon Portland Chase.²

2. The employment situation for the freed blacks was so dire that they would need to remain with the family as unpaid domestic servants. His wife would become so resentful of the manner in which her husband's obsession was impoverishing the family, that she would refuse him the marriage bed (the couple's track record in making babies would indicate that this "refusal of the marriage bed" thingie could not have endured more than a couple of years at the most).



1844

To ease the homesickness of Mrs. Anne Lawton Brisbane in Ohio, her brother Willy Lawton came from South Carolina to reside with the family, and the Reverend Dr. [William Henry Brisbane](#) set him up to manage his apothecary shop in Cincinnati, Ohio. The Reverend Dr. Brisbane began an abolitionist gazette, The Crisis, and was nominated to run for Congress on the Liberty Party slate, but declined this nomination — because he scrupled that it would be inappropriate for a minister, a man of the cloth, to engage in politics.

May: Lewis Tappan's Mercantile Agency took note of the fact that Dr. [William Henry Brisbane](#) was running an apothecary shop in Cincinnati, Ohio and that he averred his assets to include two mortgaged houses, two government bonds, and real estate in Ohio and in Kentucky, amounting in sum to more than \$22,000 worth of free and clear assets. In addition he owned 100 acres in Pennsylvania.

November 6, Wednesday: The Liberty Party did not do well at the polls, and the apothecary shop of Dr. [William Henry Brisbane](#) in Cincinnati, Ohio was not succeeding. He wrote in his diary "It seems to me that nothing prospers that I engage in. What is the design of Providence in all this?" He further commented that what he would need to do would be to "trust in him & be prepared to die though I know not how to make a living."

1846

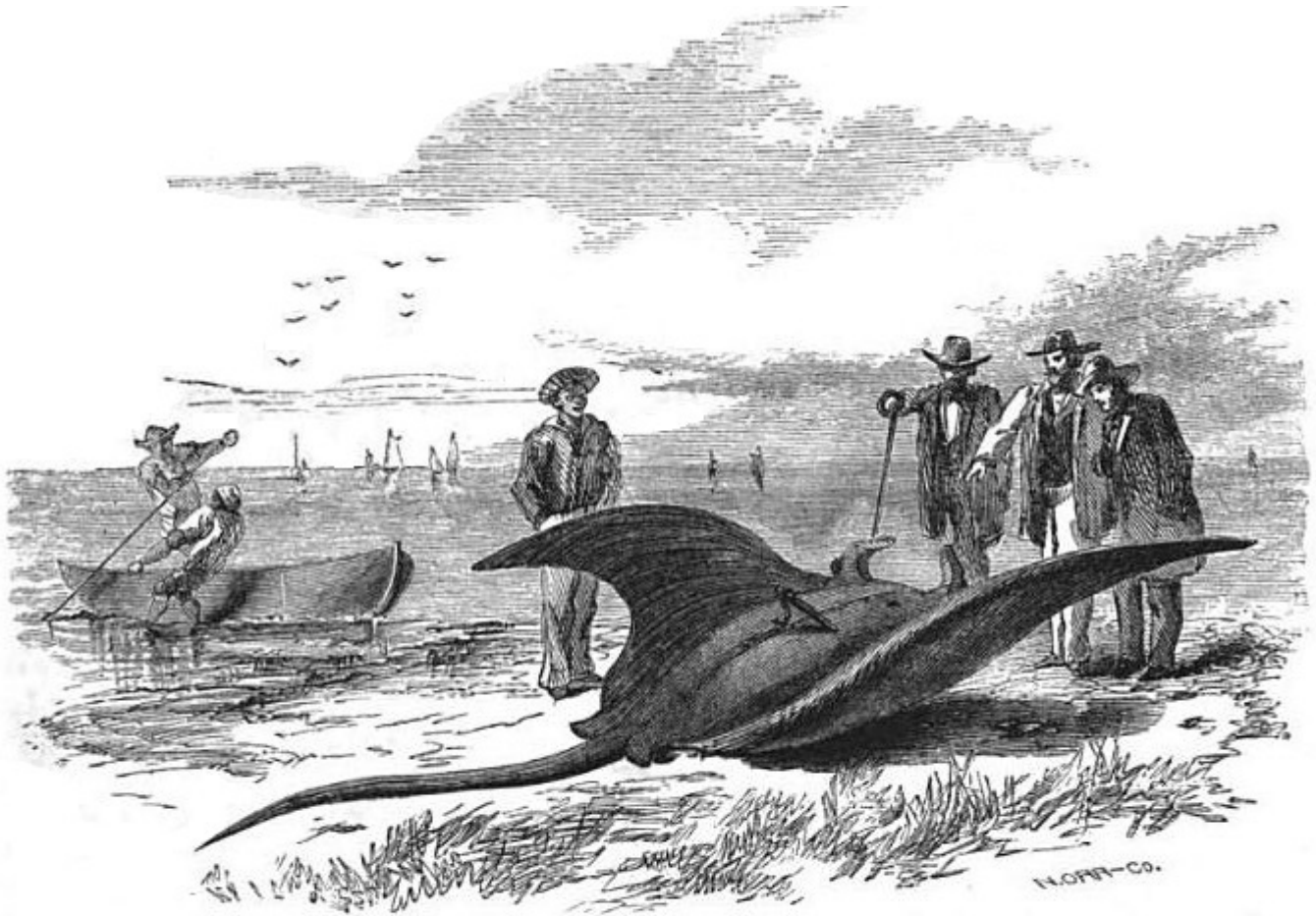
The family of the Reverend Dr. [William Henry Brisbane](#) relocated from Cincinnati, Ohio to [Brook Farm](#) outside [Boston](#), Massachusetts. Here the Reverend would write a novel of race [slavery](#), and a Biblical exegesis in regard to abolitionism.

[William Elliott](#)'s CAROLINA SPORTS BY LAND AND WATER: INCLUDING DEVIL-FISHING, WILD-CAT, DEER AND BEAR HUNTING, &C (Burgess and James), a collection of articles written for a local newspaper under the pen names "Piscator" and "Venator." This volume would be available to Henry Thoreau in Stacy's Circulating Library of Concord, Massachusetts.

CAROLINA SPORTS



"Then commences the serious conflict. . . . He flounders and lashes the waves with his immense wings or plunges desperately for the bottom I have been carried twenty-five miles in the course of a few hours, by two of these fish, with three boats in train."—PAGE 77.



“Do you know, gentle reader, what a Devil-Fish is? . . . Imagine a monster measuring from sixteen to twenty feet across the back, full three feet in depth, having powerful flaps or wings, with which he drives himself furiously through the water, or vaults high in the air, his horns projecting several feet beyond his mouth,” etc.—
PAGE 18.

April: A note sent to Lewis Tappan’s Mercantile Agency from Ohio described [William Henry Brisbane](#) as “an honorable high mind[e]d man & generous South Car[olina]n, who inher[ite]d \$100[,000] & has run thro[ugh] with all of it but \$20[,000] in R[eal] E[state].” The note described him as: “Has been a planter, preacher, publisher, physician, & farmer but has never succeed[e]d at any[thin]g & probably never will.” The informant opinioned that this person “w[oul]d pay his last cent to Cr[editor]s & trust to Provid[ence] to keep him[s]el[f] & fam[ily] f[r]om starvation.”



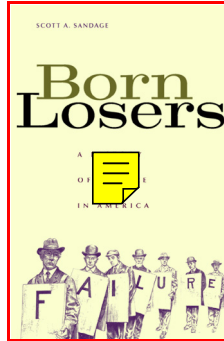
In a nation beginning to doubt the rightness of slavery, the



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antislavery Tappan devised a new way to calculate human value.



1847

The rotary, or “lightning” printing press was patented by Richard March Hoe (1812-1886). It would be first used by the Philadelphia Public Ledger.

SLAVEHOLDING EXAMINED IN THE LIGHT OF THE HOLY BIBLE, BY [WILLIAM HENRY BRISBANE](#), A SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST (Stereotyped by S. Douglas Wyeth at No. 7 Pear St., Philadelphia).

SLAVEHOLDING EXAMINED

February: A note sent to Lewis Tappan’s Mercantile Agency from Ohio described the [Reverend Dr. William Henry Brisbane](#), pharmacist, as “Out of bus[iness] — Moved to Phil[adelphia].”



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1848

The last of Connecticut's [slaves](#), Onesimus Brown, who had refused [manumission](#), died. (Although this state had passed a law abolishing slavery in 1788, and although that law had specified that newborns would be free and all others were to be freed when they reached the age of 25 — in fact Connecticut's gradualism had been so utterly gradualistic that it had never emancipated any females who had been over 21 years of age at the time of its passage, or males who had been over 25.)

The city of Savannah, Georgia, to discourage freed rural black Americans from moving into the urban center, was attempting to impose a \$100-per-person-per-year tax upon any such relocations.

The Reverend Dr. [William Henry Brisbane](#) took his wife Glorianna Lawton Brisbane back to South Carolina for a visit and engaged not to conduct any abolitionist activities while there, or even speak of [slavery](#). He would, however, be coaxed into such discussions, and after she retired for the night, would sit up for hours arguing with friends about the ethics of slavery. In the middle of one night a relative would wake the family to warn that an angry mob was on its way to tar-and-feather this traitor — the Brisbanes would be forced into hastily flight.

The Reverend Dr. [Brisbane](#) was asked to fill a [Baptist](#) pulpit in Camden, New Jersey.

1849

The Reverend Dr. [William Henry Brisbane](#) resigned from his [Baptist](#) pulpit in Camden, New Jersey and returned to Cincinnati, [Ohio](#). He began to again put out his abolitionist gazette, [The Crisis](#).

1853

American ruthlessness in this year: “He who does not go ahead is run over and trodden down.” (Unfortunately, there was no great profit to be derived as yet from firing off declarations of this caliber — fortune cookies not having as yet been invented.)

An American success manual reassured its perusers that there was precious little more involved in the task of becoming a decent human being —which is to say, in Morality— than straightforward economic prudence:

[A] right measure and manner in getting, saving, spending, giving, taking, lending, borrowing, and bequeathing, would almost argue a perfect man.



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The family of the financially failing, trodden down [Reverend Dr. William Henry Brisbane](#) journeyed from Cincinnati, Ohio to the new settlement of Arena, Wisconsin. His Daguerreotype was made (it is now at the Wisconsin Historical Society). He obtained the ferrying rights on the Wisconsin River, but this venture would amount to “a dead loss.” Unable to make a living as a physician, the Reverend Dr. Brisbane tried being a tavernkeeper — and failed even at that. He became pastor of Madison’s First [Baptist](#) Church. Eventually he would secure an income of sorts as a local tax assessor and as a clerk for the Wisconsin state senate, and would invest his surplus in federal land patents and eventually accumulate enough property to constitute a 600-acre farm (the Stone House Farm at which he would die, and where at least initially his body would be interred).

1861

March 3: At the outbreak of the Civil War, the Reverend [William Henry Brisbane](#) preached an incendiary message, “Duty of the Northern States in Relation to the Future of Slavery.” He might have gotten by with it if he had only preached the sermon, but many in the state legislature were in attendance (the church being on Capitol Square) and petitioned him to publish his sermon for wider circulation. As a result, he lost yet another church. He would enlist in the 2d Wisconsin Cavalry as its chaplain (two of his sons also enlisted in this unit).

US CIVIL WAR

DOCTOR BRISBANE**REVEREND BRISBANE****1862**

Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase appointed the abolitionist Reverend Dr. [William Henry Brisbane](#) who had manumitted his many slaves, despite the fact that he was a former repeat business failure, as the Union tax commissioner for occupied Beaufort, South Carolina. The Reverend would oversee the auctioning of confiscated slave plantations.



Nonvoting Americans on a Beaufort, South Carolina plantation
(each person worth 5/8ths of a federal vote, to the local white men of property)

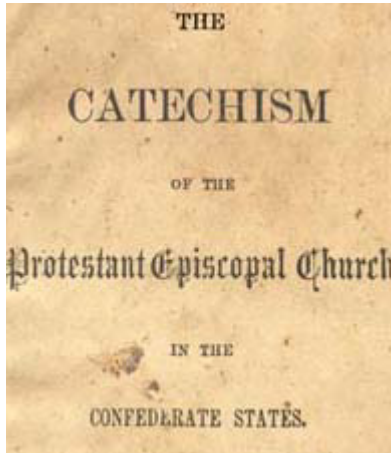
[Stephen Elliott](#) became the first and only Presiding Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States of America, while his friend Bishop John Henry Hopkins of Vermont would be the



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equivalent for the northern-states portion of the church.³



1863

January 1: The Reverend [William Rounseville Alger](#) delivered the annual election sermon before the Massachusetts Legislature.

Major General John B. Magruder, who had become the Confederate commander of military forces in Texas on November 29, 1862, gave the recapture of Galveston top priority. At 3AM four Confederate gunboats appeared, coming down the bay toward Galveston. Soon afterward, the Rebels commenced a land attack. The Union forces in Galveston were three companies of the 42d Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment under the command of Colonel Isaac S. Burrell. The Confederates captured or killed all of them except for the regiment's adjutant. They also took the *Harriet Lane*, by boarding her, and two barks and a schooner. Commander W.B. Renshaw's flagship, the USS *Westfield*, ran aground when trying to help the *Harriet Lane* and, at 10AM, she was blown up to prevent her capture. Galveston was in Confederate hands again although the Union blockade would limit commerce in and out of the harbor. Soon afterward, the Rebels would be commencing a land attack upon the port city.

Congress had enacted in 1861 that all slaves employed against the Union were to be considered free, and in 1862 that all slaves of men who supported the Confederacy were to be considered free. At this point President Abraham Lincoln, who had been dragging his feet, more or less got on board this onrushing train. Having made a preliminary proclamation on September 22, 1862  that [emancipation](#) from [slavery](#) would become effective, at the turn of the year, in those states which had not renounced their rebelliousness, at this point he made good on his threat by issuing a proclamation of emancipation that had been drafted by a bunch of Washington lawyers.

[READ THE FULL TEXT](#)

A devout man, Secretary of the Treasury Salmon Portland Chase read the BIBLE daily and sought comfort in God for the loss of so many of his wives and so many of his children. When Chase had called to the President's

3. This is not the Professor [Stephen Elliott](#) of South Carolina whose botany textbook Henry Thoreau consulted, but his son.

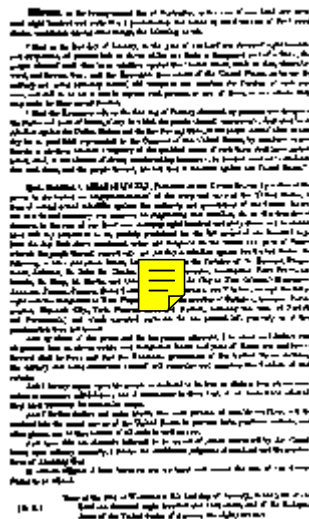


attention that there was no mention of the Deity in the draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln had allowed as a new last line “And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of all mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.”

SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

At the clock tick which began this year he, as a martial law measure, offered to “emancipate” all those slaves he did not have the power physically to touch, without offering anything at all to any slave whom he did have the power physically to touch. It was a neat trick, especially since we have no reason to suspect that he would have been willing to touch any black person whom he did have the power physically to touch. Although to all appearances he grandly was declaring to be free all slaves residing in territories in rebellion against the federal government, his “Emancipation Proclamation,” so called, would turn out to be actually only a temporary martial-law proclamation, which in accordance with the deliberate intention of its careful drafters would free precious few. (I don’t know that a head count has ever been conducted, and here suggest that such a count would prove to be alarming if not nauseating.) The proclamation explicitly stated that it did not apply at all to any of the slaves in border states fighting on the Union side; nor would it be of any applicability to slaves in southern areas already under Union control; nor would it be of any use to any other slaves, since, naturally, the states in rebellion would take no action on Lincoln’s order.⁴ To avail themselves of this opportunity, slaves would have to vote with their feet. At great risk they would need to make their way across the battle lines into the Northern-controlled territories, where they would need to volunteer for war labor and get their names registered in the emancipation program. Pacifists and noneffectives need not apply.

Emancipation



Abraham Lincoln had been quite reluctant to see affairs come even to such a straited pass as this. A believer in white supremacy, he never viewed the war in any other manner than in terms of preserving the Union and his own control as President over the entirety of it. The simple fact was that, as pressure for abolition mounted in Congress and the country, as a practical politician similar to President Richard Milhouse Nixon (who would espouse and finance the Head Start program because of its political popularity although he believed the money was being wasted on children who, because they were black, would be incapable of profiting from the attention and the expenditure), Lincoln was willing to cave in and make himself more responsive. Thus it had come about that:

4. The hypocrisy of this was being well commented on in French newspapers at that time. For a review of this French commentary on the American white hypocrisy, refer to Blackburn, George M. FRENCH NEWSPAPER OPINION ON THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR. Contributions in American History No. 171. Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1997.



A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS on the 22nd day of September, A.D. 1862, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

That on the 1st day of January, A.D. 1863, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

That the executive will on the 1st day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State or the people thereof shall on that day be in good faith represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such States shall have participated shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State and the people thereof are not then in rebellion against the United States.

Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-In-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual arm rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing [*sic??*] said rebellion, do, on this 1st day of January, A.D. 1863, and in accordance with purpose so to do, publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days from the first day above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof, respectively are this day in rebellion against the United States the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana (except the parishes of St. Bernard, Palquemes, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terrebone, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the city of New Orleans), Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomac, Morthampton [*sic??*], Elizabeth City, York, Princess Anne, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth), and which excepted parts are for the present left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States and parts of States are, and henceforward shall be, free; and that Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all case when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.



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The federal government's temporary instrument of war allowed that, while human slavery would continue to be tolerated everywhere within its sphere of influence, it would no longer tolerate this practice in any area **not** within said sphere of influence.

Nevertheless, before a black audience in Tremont Temple in Boston, this governmental declaration was read aloud and Frederick Douglass led in the singing of the hymn "Blow ye the trumpet, blow!" [William Cooper Nell](#), President of the sponsoring Union Progressive Association, addressed the group. For this occasion [Waldo Emerson](#) composed "Boston Hymn," a poem in which he neatly cut the Gordian Knot of compensation:

**Pay ransom to the owner
And fill the bag to the brim.
Who is the owner? The slave is the owner,
And ever was. Pay him.**

We may imagine that on this occasion hands were shaken all around, with no distinction of color. Imagine then, if you will, the author of this Emancipation Proclamation, President Abraham Lincoln, during one of his many electoral campaigns, reaching down from the stump and grasping the hand of a black man. Do you fancy that this ever happened?

The word "[emancipation](#)," after all, comes to us from the Latin *manus*, meaning "hand," and *capio*, meaning "take." When a Roman purchased something, it was considered that the act of purchasing was not complete, either conventionally or legally, until he had grasped it with his hand. If he was purchasing land, he picked up a handful of soil and thereby took title. If he was purchasing a slave, he took hold of the slave and thereby took title.

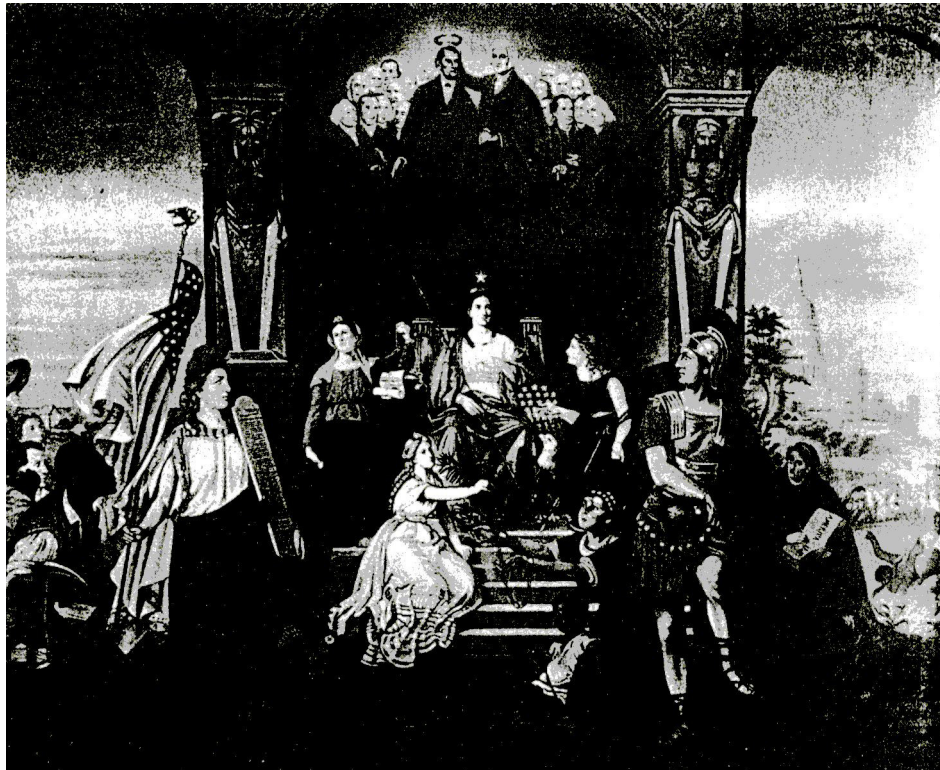
The power of this *paterfamilias* over his son was, in fact, the same as the power of this man over his slave –

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he could execute either one— but there was a legal ceremony by which, when his son became of age, his son could be set free to form his own *familias*. In that ceremony the father took the son by the hand, as if he were taking possession of a slave, but then dropped his son's hand. After he had done this three times in succession, his son was *emancipio*. Emancipation, therefore, had a lot to do with shaking hands. Except during the US Civil War.

I am leading up to saying that Abraham Lincoln “emancipated” all those slaves he did not have the power physically to touch, but did not emancipate any slave he did have the power physically to touch. It was a neat trick. Here, in this painting, we can see how it was done:



The Emancipation Proclamation was an offer to place names on a list, which persons, should they fulfil the preconditions, would, at the end of the period of hostilities, be granted papers of [manumission](#) by the Federal Government. This was a very formal matter. It required prior registration. Whose names were actually so registered? Who actually received such papers of manumission? There should be such a list somewhere, if anyone did initiate or complete this process and if anyone did actually get freedom through this vehicle. Where is that list? How long is it? Does it exist? No, my friend, you've been conned. After a long and bloody civil war which was fought over whether we were going to be one nation state or two rather than over racial issues, we got ourselves out of this holiday from the Commandments in part by a carefully worded temporary martial law measure denominated the Emancipation Proclamation, which had been created by a team of white Washington DC lawyers. Under the terms of that martial law measure, which lapsed as soon as martial law lapsed, if a Southern slave could make it across the battle lines intact, and then perform labor for the Northern armies, and if that Southern slave could arrange to have his or her name recorded as part of the indicated program, as one of its beneficiaries, **then**, and **only** then, could he or she hope that at the successful conclusion of the war he or she would receive freebie manumission papers from the federal government. Read the fine print, and weep. I don't know how few people managed to avail themselves of this very restricted opportunity,

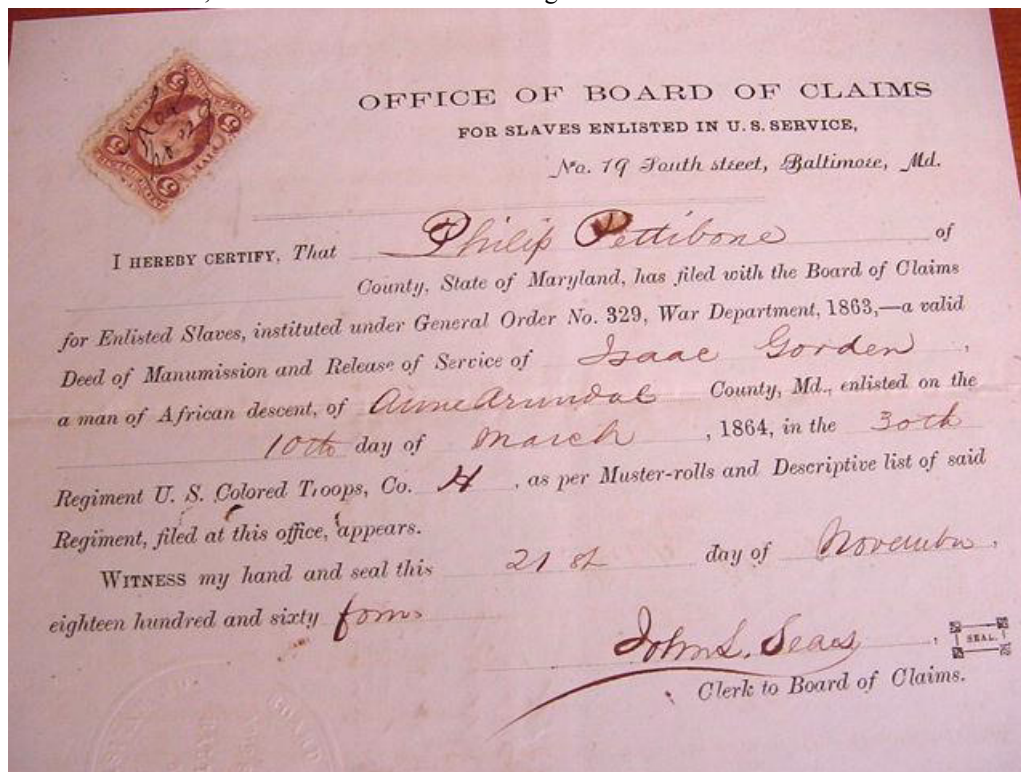


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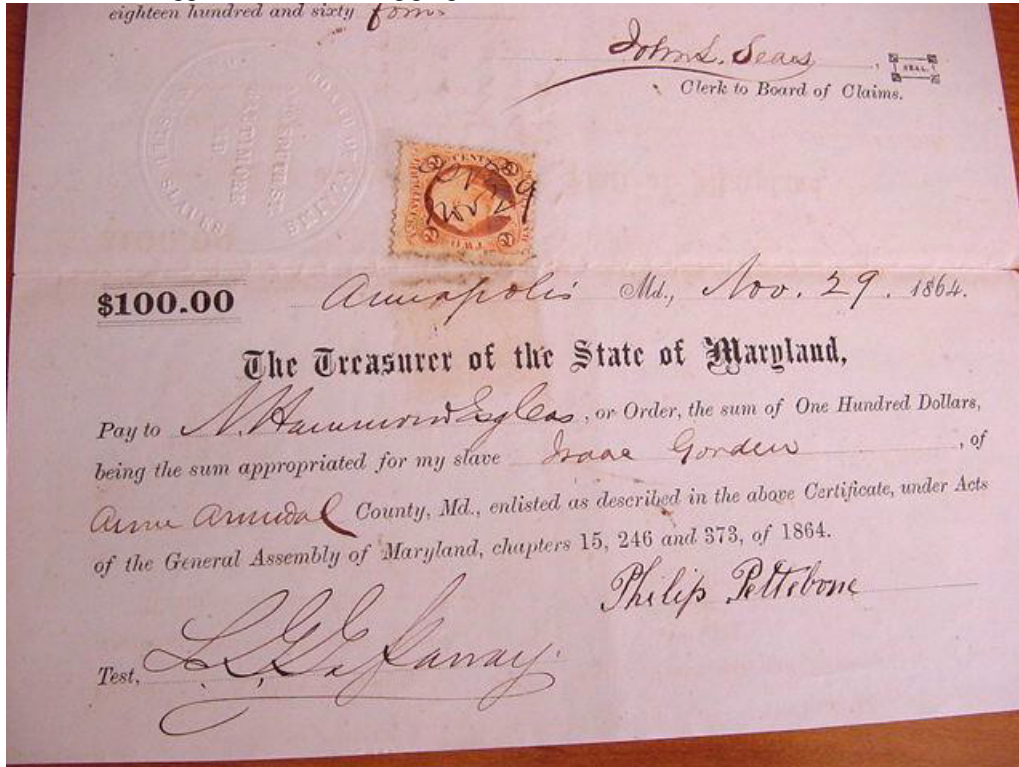
but I do know it must have been very few, and I suspect in fact that it was zero. Perhaps one reason why we don't have a list of the names of people who obtained freedom in this way is embarrassment, at how short or null such a list would prove to be. We don't want to know about such things.


I have come across one such actual named military emancipation from this period. This emancipation did not, however, relate in any way to the Emancipation Proclamation. It related, instead, to a military Board of Claims for Enlisted Slaves which was instituted under General Order No. 329 of the War Department during 1863. Here is the original certification of manumission document, from this Office of the Board of Claims, and it seems to be based on military service that had been rendered by the slave Isaac Gorden as a member of H Company, 30th Regiment. of the U.S. Colored Troops. It includes an order to reimburse the owner of this soldier Isaac Gordon, a man named N. Hammond Esgless. The document reads as follows: "OFFICE OF



BOARD OF CLAIMS for slaves enlisted in U.S. Service, No. 19 South Street, Baltimore, [Maryland](#). I HEREBY CERTIFY, That Philip Pettibone of [blank] county, State of Maryland, has filed with the Board of Claims for Enlisted Slaves, instituted under General Order No. 329, War Department, 1863, - a valid Deed of Manumission and Release of service of Isaac Gorden a man of African decent, of Anne Arundel county, Md., enlisted on the 10th day of March, 1864, in the 30th Regiment U.S. Colored Troops, Co. H, as per Muster-rolls and descriptive list of said Regiment, filed at this office, appears. Witness my hand and seal this 21st. day of November, eighteen hundred and sixty four [signed] John S. Sears, Clerk to Board of Claims.” There is an impress seal that says: Board of Claims for Enlisted Slaves No. 19 South St. Baltimore, Md. At the bottom of the document the following appears: “\$100.00 Annapolis Md. Nov. 29, 1864. The Treasurer of the State of Maryland, Pay to N. Hammond Esgless, or Order, the sum of One Hundred Dollars, being the sum appropriated for my slave Isaac Gorden, of Anne arundel County, Md. enlisted as described in the above Certificate, under Acts of the General Assembly of Maryland, chapter 15, 246 and 373, of 1864. [signed] Philip Pettibone Test, [signature illegible]” There are two Revenue stamps, a 5-cent and 2-cent, attached to the document and they are dated “Nov 29.” The document has two folds. There is writing on the back of the

document which appears to be for filing purposes.



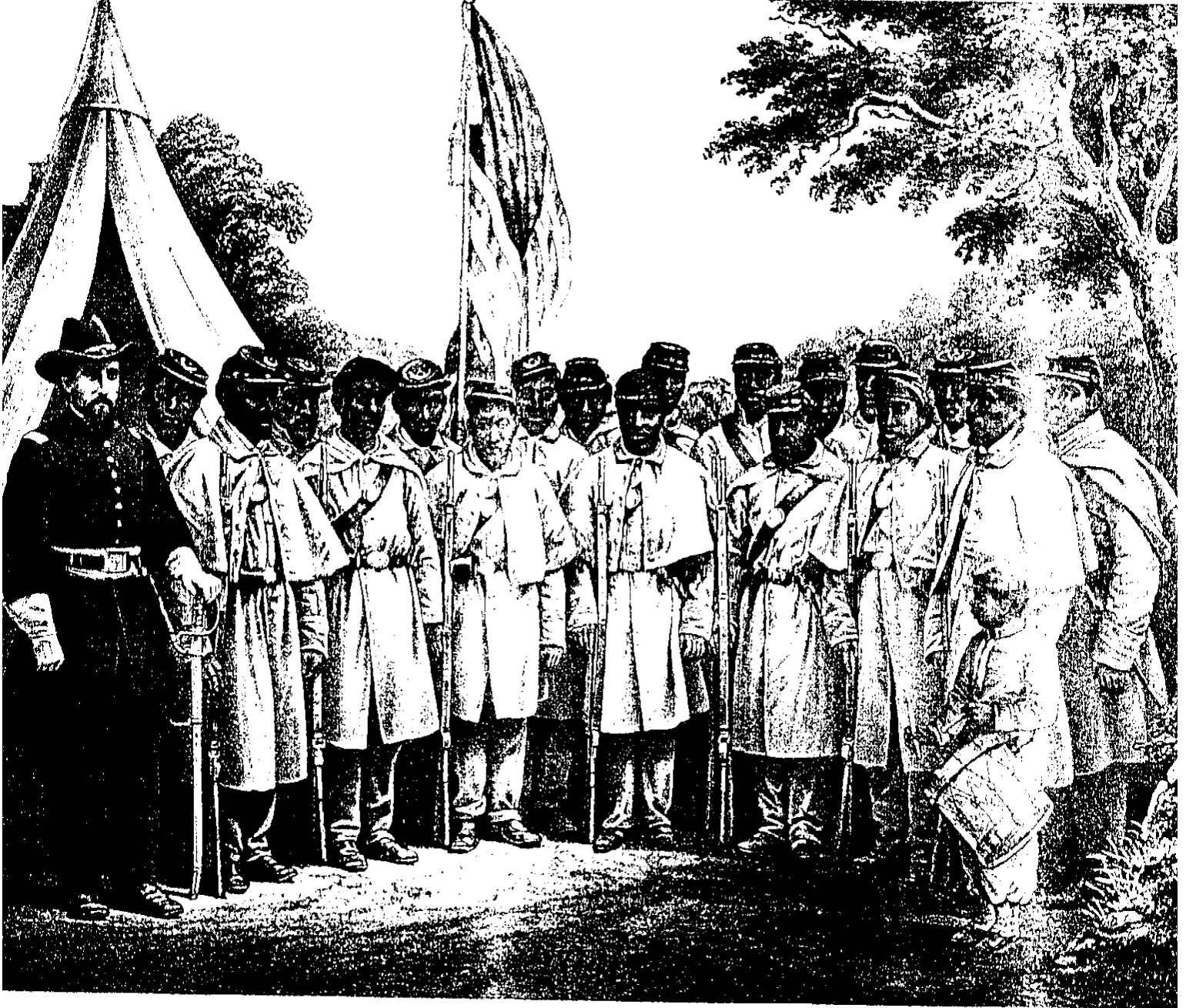
After the Emancipation Proclamation, however, Headman Seattle (See-Ahth of the Susquamish) of the Susquamish, the same “Chief Seattle” who is famous for an environmentalist speech in the manner in which we all should be famous for our environmental speeches, that is, famous for an environmental speech which in fact wasn’t made (his actual speech seems to have been about the deep spiritual differences between peoples of widely differing cultures), **did** free his eight Native American slaves. 

In this year, the Union army would begin to enlist black soldiers, to serve of course under white officers, of course at a lower rate of pay than white soldiers. Notice this unit’s drummer, who was paid at a lower rate still,

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paid less for being not only black but also, indeed, only a little boy. A quite emancipated little boy.



COME AND JOIN US BROTHERS.

PUBLISHED BY THE SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE FOR RECRUITING COLORED REGIMENTS
1210 CHESTNUT ST. PHILADELPHIA.

The lithograph which pictured this little drummer was based on a daguerreotype made indoors, next door to

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“Roadside”, the country home of Friends [James](#) and [Lucretia Mott](#) near Philadelphia.



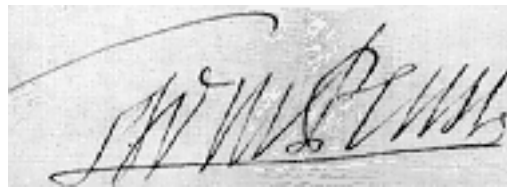
This was a military training camp, on which people were preparing for the task of killing other people, and it was named “Camp [William Penn](#),” after a [Quaker](#) pacifist who was being alleged to have given up the wearing

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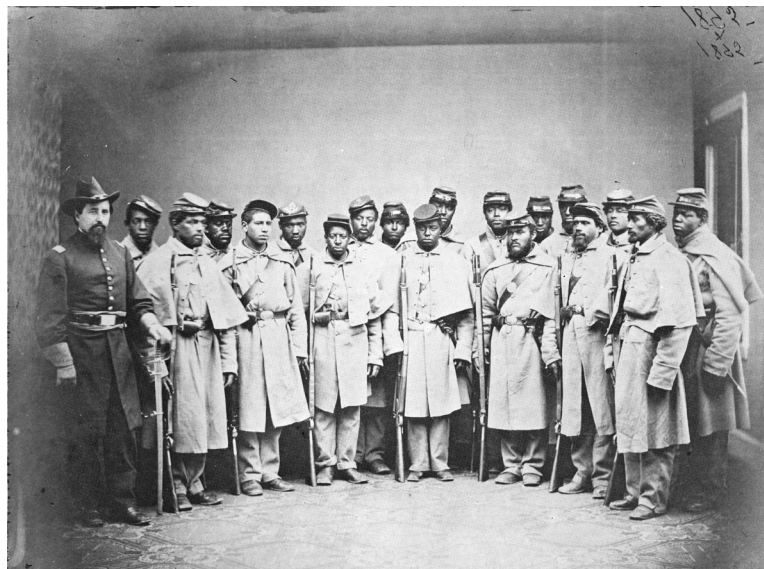
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of the sword of nobility, whose favorite punch line went:

It is not our ends that justify our means.



The image is a fraud. In the original, there is no flag waving bravely in the background. There is no tent. There is no greenery. There is no little drummer boy flanking to the right. Looking carefully at the fraud, we can see that the countenances of the black men have been sketched on, exaggerating their negroid features in such manner as to emphasize, that the important thing which we are to grasp about these Union soldiers, is their ethnicity.

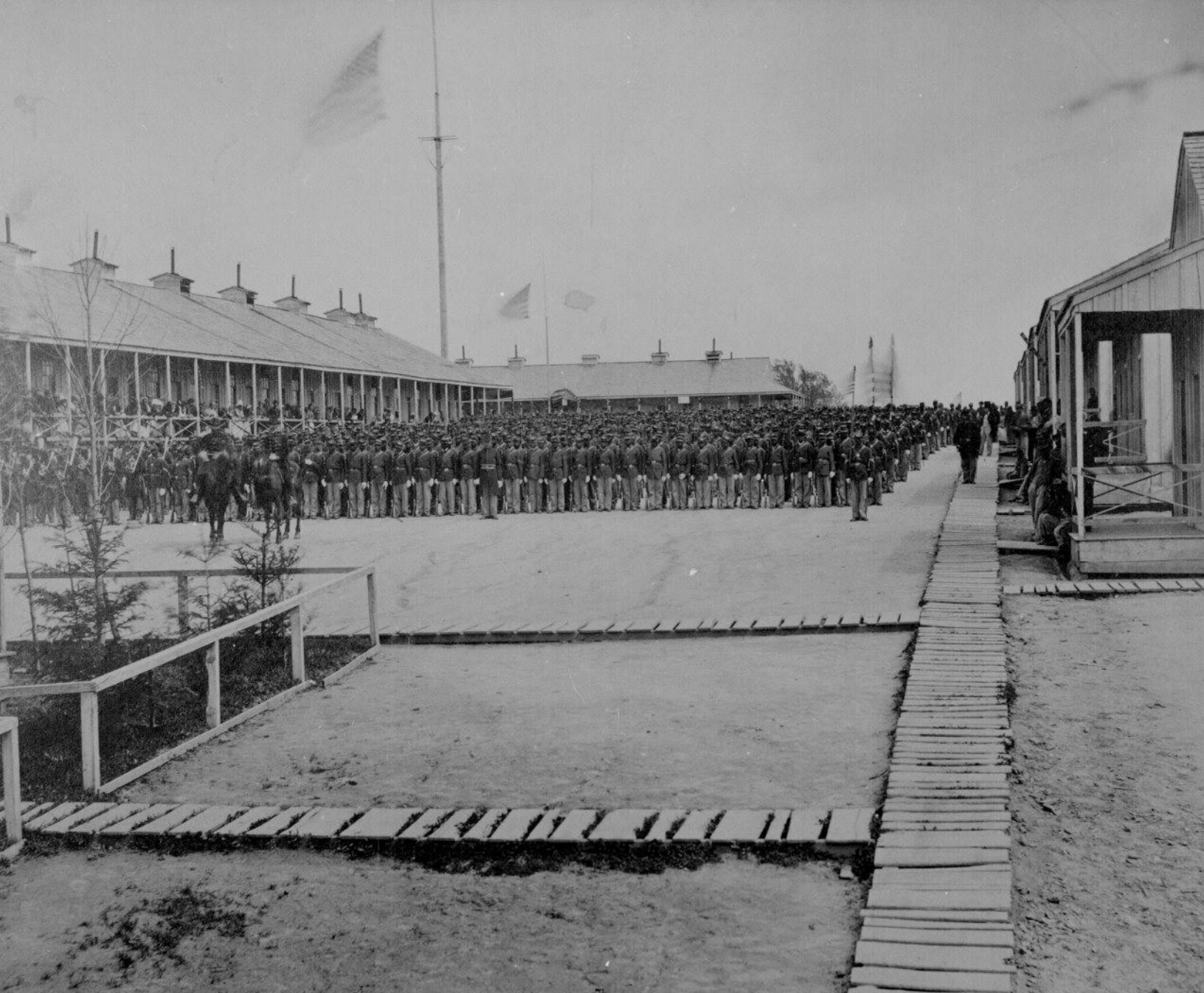


Here is a real photograph of Camp [William Penn](#). As you can clearly see, a waving flag looks quite a bit

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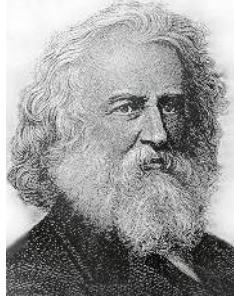
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different in a real photograph of the period!



The irony of this seems rather heavy. [Henry Wadsworth Longfellow](#) wrote, as his contribution to the recruitment campaign for the war (what if they gave a war and nobody came?), the immortal patriotic doggerel

“one if by day, and two if by night.”⁵



Frederick Douglass traveled through the cities of the North, recruiting black men to serve the Union Army. His son Lewis, age 22, and his son Charles Remond, age 19, were among the first to enlist. But the Union armies were routinely returning runaways to their owners. General McClellan ordered that slave rebellions were to be put down “with an iron hand.” But there were **so many** runaways. Finally, in Virginia, a Union general who believed in slavery, Benjamin Butler, began to declare them “contraband of war” and put them to work. Although Abraham Lincoln had twice disciplined Union generals who had freed slaves, putting slaves to work was something the President could accept, and the result was the Confiscation Act.

Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson described a celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation at Camp Saxton on one of the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina, that had been occupied by Northern black

5. Well, at least that was the way Gerald Ford’s teleprompter had it, when he gave the keynote address at the Concord Bicentennial Celebration of April 19, 1975 at the Old North Bridge. And perhaps no poet has been parodied more: it’s all because, while he was at Bowdoin College in 1822 with author-to-be [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#) (still [Hathorne](#)) and president-to-be [Franklin Pierce](#), he was accustomed to play whist without a helmet.

[Acting on a news story about ex-Presidents selling their autographs, I have sent a copy of this page to ex-President Gerald Rudolph Ford, along with a \$1.⁰⁰ bill and a reminder that in the era in question a dollar bill was worth almost precisely what a C-note is worth today, and asked if he could in good humor initial below:

X _____]

Longfellow’s thing about “one if by land, and two if by sea” was of course inaccurate in that the Atlantic Ocean didn’t ever get involved. The militia’s concern was whether the regular troops stabled in Boston were going to march down the Neck and through Roxbury, or first row themselves across the Charles River so they could march through Cambridge. In quoting Longfellow before the Concordians on April 19, 1975 as having said “one if by day, and two if by night,” Former President Gerald Rudolph Ford, Jr., seems to me to have been saying something very Thoreauvian to these people, he was almost saying:

Look, this history stuff you have been passing off is drivel, and besides, you aren’t at all like your ancestors. For one thing your ancestors didn’t worship themselves, the way you worship yourselves through your ancestors. For another thing, it’s way past time you people got busy and did something for others, rather than wanting other people to come around and make your bacon for you. Would you look at this dump, you’re turning Concord into a damned tourist trap! By creatively “misquoting” this poem, I’m going to show you how little it, and you, are worth in the great scheme of things.

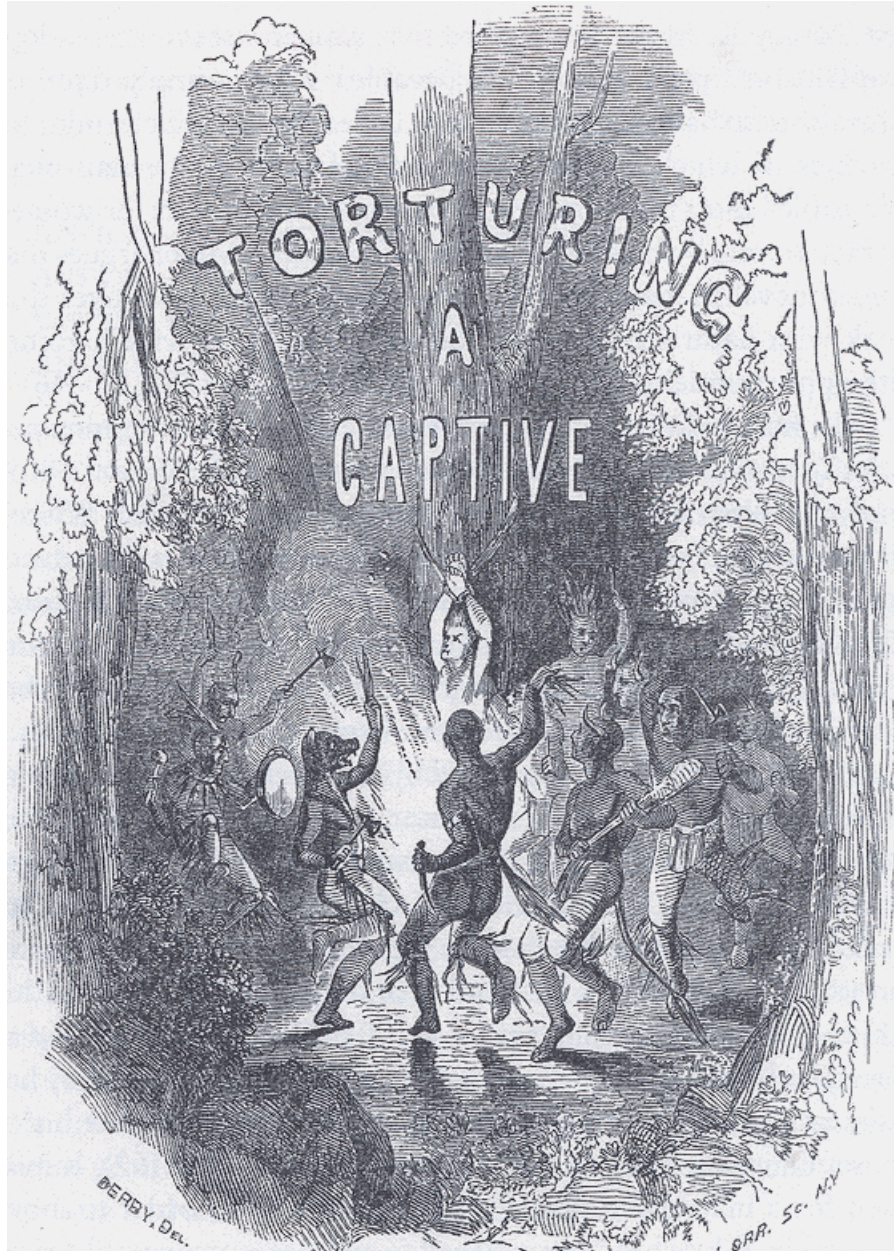


troops and were being protected by the ships of the US Navy.

The services began at half past eleven o'clock, with a prayer.... Then the President's Proclamation was read.... Then the colors were presented.... Then followed an incident so touching, so utterly unexpected and startling, that I can scarcely believe it on recalling, though it gave the keynote to the whole day. The very moment the speaker had ceased, and just as I took and waved the flag, which now for the first time meant anything to these poor people, there suddenly arose, close beside the platform, a strong male voice (but rather cracked and elderly), into which two women's voices instantly blended, singing as if by an impulse that could no more be repressed than the morning note of the song-sparrow. –

My Country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing!

After the ceremony the white officers visited a nearby plantation and viewed the instruments of torture still lying in the local slave-jail.



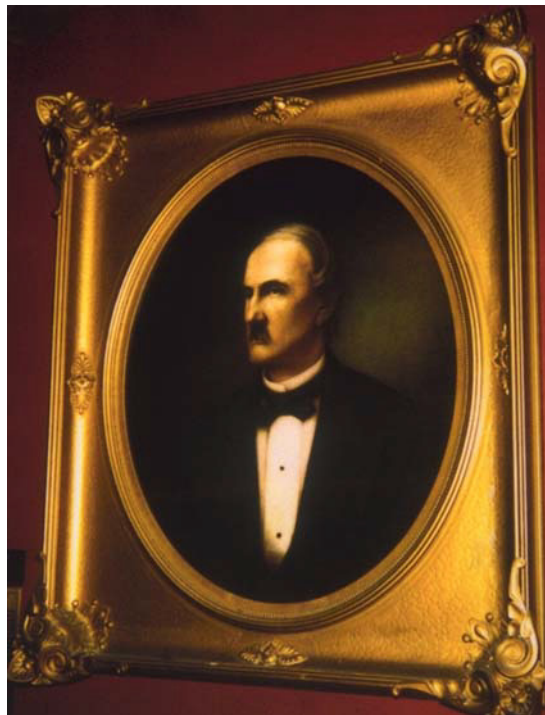
In Beaufort, South Carolina, the Reverend Dr. [William Henry Brisbane](#), the Union officer in charge of auctioning off the lands and structures of the former slave plantations of the district, read the Emancipation Proclamation aloud to thousands of freedmen.

General John Pope sent General Henry Hastings Sibley and General Alfred Sully onto the Dakota reservation in Minnesota, to hunt down the remaining tribespeople and get them off their land so it could be divided into

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farm acreage for white people.



(Early in this year, [Stephen Grover Cleveland](#), a future president, was 26 years of age and it was time to serve his country — so he hired a man to serve in his stead. He was just as much a draft dodger, in his era, as [William J. Clinton](#) and [George W. Bush](#), in our own era!)

1870

The Reverend [William Henry Brisbane](#) retired from his post as Union tax commissioner for occupied Beaufort, South Carolina.



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1878

[William Henry Brisbane](#) died at his Stone House Farm near Arena, Wisconsin.⁶ The body would initially be interred in a grove nearby.

1879

The body of [William Henry Brisbane](#) was moved to the cemetery of Mazomanie, Wisconsin.



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

– Remark by character "Garin Stevens"
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



6. His descendant Wallace Alcorn, Ph.D. is writing his biography. Contact information:
William Henry Brisbane Project
500 Oakland Place NE, Suite J
Austin MN 55912-4173
(507) 437-6272
waalcorn@smig.net



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Prepared: June 16, 2013

*ARRGH AUTOMATED RESearch REPORT
GENERATION HOTLINE*



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, upon someone's request we have pulled it out of the hat of a pirate that has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (depicted above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of data modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture. This is data mining. To respond to such a request for information, we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the program has obvious deficiencies and so we need to go back into the data modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and do a recompile of the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process which you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.
Place your requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.
Arrgh.