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**Grass-Roots Garrisonians in Central Massachusetts:  
The Case of Hubbardston's Jonas and Susan Clark**

**By**

**William A. Koelsch**

Much of the enormous literature on American abolitionism has been centered on state and national leaders and prominent lecturers. Yet as Gary Nash reminds us, "without thousands of anonymous individuals, black and white, male and female, taking unpopular and often dangerous stands, it would have foundered."<sup>1</sup>

Leaders must have followers; lecturers, hearers. A number of recent studies have attempted to strip away the anonymity of which Nash speaks by using various prosopographic methods to uncover the religious, economic and social affinities of those adhering to the movement.<sup>2</sup> More research needs to be done along such lines, especially at the level of localities and local abolitionist societies. Little more has been done at the intermediate level, examining the commitment of local activists and the consequences for their later lives.<sup>3</sup> Yet the participation

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<sup>1</sup> Gary B. Nash, Charlotte Crabtree and Ross E. Dunn, *History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 80.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Edward Magdol, *The Antislavery Rank and File: A Social Profile of the Abolitionists' Constituency* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986) and Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> See Andrew S. Barker, "Chauncey Langdon Knapp and Political Abolitionism in Vermont, 1833-1841," *New England Quarterly* 73 (2000): 434-462.

of persons who were active only at the regional level may serve as something of a key to the lived experience of many of the abolitionist rank and file who must, for lack of sufficient documentation, remain utterly anonymous.

The question of motivation in such cases remains elusive. We do not often get as clear a statement as that of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, who recalled in 1928 “in my youth I was an abolitionist and shuddered at a Negro Minstrel Show, as belittling a suffering race and I am glad I was and did.”<sup>4</sup> Those former grass-roots abolitionists for whom documentation has been preserved are most often those who, like Holmes, had become important for something else in their later lives. Such was the case with Jonas and Susan Clark. As Holmes’ statement would be of little historical interest had he not become a distinguished jurist, so the grass-roots abolitionist activism of Jonas Clark would be of little or no interest had he not subsequently founded Clark University.

Opened in 1889 in Worcester as an all-graduate and research institution,<sup>5</sup> Clark University, unlike Oberlin or Howard, had no role in the education either of future abolitionists or former slaves. The abolitionist link occurs in the early lives of the founder of Clark University, Jonas Gilman Clark (1815-1900) of Hubbardston, Massachusetts, and his wife Susan (Wright) Clark (1816-1904) who, together with Clark’s older sister Caroline (1811-1896) and her husband, James Alson Waite (1807-1861), were grass-roots Garrisonian activists during the 1840’s and 1850’s. Most writers of biographical and memorial sketches of Jonas Clark in the 1890’s and early 1900’s, however, were unfamiliar with his early life, and make no reference to his anti-slavery activity.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Oliver Wendell Holmes to John C. H. Wu, 21 June 1928. In *Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes: His Book Notices and Uncollected Letters and Papers*, ed. Harry C. Shriver (New York: Central Book Company, 1936), 197.

<sup>5</sup> William A. Koelsch, *Clark University, 1887-1987: A Narrative History* (Worcester: Clark University Press, 1987), ch. 1.

<sup>6</sup> The fullest biographical sketch is Calvin Stebbins, “Address,” in “Founder’s Day, Clark University,” *Publications of the Clark University Library* I, no. 6 (April, 1906), 138-176. Koelsch, *Clark University*, pp. 1-6, summarizes Clark’s life and career before 1887. The importance of kinship networks in the abolitionist movement is stressed in Goodman, *Of One Blood*, passim, esp. p. 226.

A single book kept by Susan Clark during anti-slavery days survives. Its entries, dated between 1845 and 1847, include long inscriptions or poems written out by Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, Rev. Adin Ballou and Mrs. Abby H. Price of the utopian Hopedale Community, and others. A few scattered additional references exist in manuscript material, references and reports in *The Liberator*, the records of the Worcester County Anti Slavery Society, North Division, and local histories. From these, along with the facts of Jonas Clark's business career, it is possible to reconstruct the moral commitments of a local abolitionist family confirming the general profile of grass-roots activists that historians of the movement have recently begun to identify.<sup>7</sup>

Jonas Gilman Clark was born on February 1, 1815 in Hubbardston, Massachusetts, which was a prosperous hill-country town about twenty miles northwest of Worcester. He was the fifth of eight children of William Smith Clark, a substantial Yankee farmer and stock-raiser, and his wife Elizabeth (Clark) Clark, her husband's second cousin once removed. Both his grandfathers were Revolutionary War veterans and his paternal great-grandfather had been Hubbardston's delegate to the Massachusetts Provincial Congresses of 1774 and 1775. His maternal grandfather's first cousin, Rev. Jonas Clark of Lexington, had hosted John Hancock and Samuel Adams on the night before the battle of Lexington. Jonas Gilman Clark thus appears to share with other abolitionists of his generation a consciousness of their Revolutionary forbears and a sense that they were fulfilling a symbolic trust in their attempts to purify the land of slavery.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For general background and recent approaches, I have relied most heavily on Ronald Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism After 1830* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) and Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> For Clark's Revolutionary War forbears, see John Clark, *Records of the Descendants of Hugh Clark of Watertown, Mass., 1640-1866* (Boston: Privately Printed, 1866), pp. 48, 51; John M. Stowe, *History of the Town of Hubbardston* (Hubbardston, Mass.: Privately Printed, 1881), pp. 42-43; Stebbins, "Address," p. 140. For abolitionist links to the Revolution and to the Union generally, see Walters, *Antislavery Appeal*, chap. 8; Louis S. Gertais, *Morality and Utility in*

Hubbardston in Clark's young manhood was a flourishing town of nearly 1,800 souls, with about fifty houses, two hotels and two churches in the village center. Hubbardston was increasingly tied to the metropolitan and regional economy of central and eastern New England.<sup>9</sup> According to an 1837 Massachusetts survey of manufactures, the making of boots and shoes was the principal industry. As timber nearer the coast ran out, lumbering had become important as a winter occupation for Hubbardston farmers. Some younger farmers began to split and shave "chair stock" during the off-season, selling it in nearby Sterling. The next step was to manufacture wood-seated chairs locally, an industry that eventually put forty Hubbardston men to work, turning out 70,000 chairs annually.<sup>10</sup> Young "Gilman" Clark's maternal uncle, Simpson Clark, a prosperous Boston merchant, would sometimes take his energetic young nephew with him on business trips. At sixteen Gilman apprenticed himself to a wheelwright, and after five years set up his own carriage shop. Experienced in woods and paints from his carriage-making apprenticeship, he soon expanded into chair manufacturing, trading carriages in exchange for chair stock, and marketing both carriages and chairs for cash in Providence and Boston.

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*American Antislavery Reform* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), ch. 1, 2; and Goodman, *Of One Blood*, 142-143.

<sup>9</sup> The broader economic transformation of rural life and the emergence of modern capitalism in central and western Massachusetts in the period of Jonas Clark's early life is treated in, among other notable studies, John L. Brooke, *The Heart of the Commonwealth: Society and Political Culture in Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1713-1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), especially pt. 4, and Winifred Barr Rothenberg, *From Market-Places to a Market Economy: The Transformation of Rural Massachusetts, 1750-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>10</sup> Massachusetts, Secretary of the Commonwealth, *Statistical Tables [of] Branches of Industry in Massachusetts for the Year Ending April 1, 1837* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1838), pp. 52, 206; William Bennett, "Hubbardston," in [Abijah Perkins Marvin et.al.] *History of Worcester County, Massachusetts* 2 vols. (Boston: C. F. Jewett and Co., 1879), 1: 584-594, and Stowe, *Hubbardston*, passim.

About 1845, discovering that there was a better profit margin in “tinware,” which was gradually replacing crockery in rural New England, Clark sold his carriage shop and constructed a tinsmith’s shop in Hubbardston, taking his brothers into the business. By 1849, the Clarks had twenty-five teams on the road, and were selling products all over interior New England. By his mid-thirties, Gilman Clark was a prosperous regional merchant and manufacturer, respected by his associates, flexible in his management of capital, and exceptionally committed to whatever he undertook. In this too he fits a characteristic Massachusetts abolitionist pattern: about thirty-one percent of the Massachusetts male abolitionists studied by Paul Goodman were “proprietors,” mostly master mechanics and small manufacturers.<sup>11</sup> In no way does he resemble the stereotypical “disturbed fanatic” or member of a “displaced elite” of earlier abolitionist historiography.

On October 6, 1836, after a two-year courtship, Gilman Clark married Susan Wright, the daughter of a neighbor: he was twenty-one years old, she not yet twenty. It was, by all accounts, a “companionate marriage.” For nearly sixty-four years, until Clark’s death in 1900, they were rarely separated, and it is clear that she shared both his life and his interests, including those in abolitionism. Susan Clark, in addition to supporting the “women’s work” of the movement, was to take a more public stance through signing resolutions and even standing for office in her local society. In a recent study, Chris Dixon has argued that marriage was the most important of the male abolitionist’s relationships, and many encouraged their spouses in their work in the movement. Dixon’s assertion that “many abolitionists derived pleasure and

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<sup>11</sup> Goodman, *Of One Blood*, pt 2; see also Magdol, *The Antislavery Rank and File*, Chaps. 3, 4, 9 and appendices. Goodman argues that abolitionists were predominantly those marginalized by the commercial revolution, but clearly Hubbardston, perhaps the strongest anti-slavery town in Worcester County, had profited from it. As Walters, *Antislavery Appeal*, p. 114, wryly remarks, “if [the abolitionists] had a fundamental hostility to commercial society it was remarkably well concealed...” The Peases’ cautious generalization, that “there does seem to have been a special compatibility between Unitarians and the process of economic modernization,” appears better to fit the Hubbardston Clarks and Waites. Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, “Whose Right Hand of Fellowship?: Pew and Pulpit in Shaping Church Practice,” in *American Unitarians, 1805-1865*, ed. Conrad Edick Wright (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society and Northeastern University Press, 1989), 188.

satisfaction in their family lives” finds a late echo in the provisions made for Susan in Jonas Clark’s Will (1893). Providing for her comfort and well-being, he said, had always been his “highest pleasure.”<sup>12</sup>

Although establishing himself in business was Clark’s principal activity during his early adult years, it had not been his sole interest. His mother had instilled in him a life-long love of books and reading. As a youth he listened to and later participated in political and religious discussions at the village store and the local church. These led him to study the Bible and old political pamphlets. The William Clark family were religious liberals in the great theological controversies that divided Massachusetts towns and families in the years prior to disestablishment in 1833. In Hubbardston, in 1827, ninety-four people left the “town church” to form their own “Orthodox” religious society; thirty, including the Clarks, remained Unitarians. Young Gilman had held evening religious meetings in Hubbardston and surrounding towns, as well as teaching a women’s Sunday school class in the Unitarian Church. He was especially close to his sister Caroline, whose husband, “Alson” Waite, was superintendent of the Unitarian Sunday School. Waite was to become a partner in Clark’s retail ventures by 1850.<sup>13</sup>

Several of the Hubbardston ministers were active abolitionists, notably Samuel Gay, who had been the town’s minister until his dismissal in 1827 during the Unitarian controversy. Gay subsequently became minister of the seceding First Calvinist Society (later the Evangelical Congregational Society). After his retirement from that post in 1841, Gay remained in Hubbardston until his death in 1848 and frequently spoke at local abolitionist meetings. Beginning in 1843 he

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<sup>12</sup> Chris Dixon, *Perfecting the Family: Antislavery Marriages in Nineteenth-Century America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), pp. 234-249; Jonas Clark, “Will of Jonas G. Clark,” in *Early Proceedings of the Board of Trustees; Will of Jonas G. Clark* (Worcester, Mass.: Press of the University, 1901), p. 59; Stebbins, “Address,” p. 149; and Goodman, *Of One Blood*, ch. 15.

<sup>13</sup> See comments on ordinary Unitarian lives in Walters, *Antislavery Appeal*, ch. 7; John R. McKivigan, *The War Against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830-1865* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 69-73, 172-173; and Pease and Pease, “Whose Right Hand...,” pp. 181-206. Goodman, *Of One Blood*, p. 113, argues for the importance of the earlier disestablishment movement to abolitionism in Massachusetts.

was elected to various positions in the Worcester North Division antislavery group.

Cornelius Bradford, minister of the Unitarian church from 1840 to January, 1845, and probably the most important clergy influence on Jonas and Susan Clark in those years, was a Garrisonian and an abolitionist lecturer who continued his abolitionist work after leaving the Hubbardston church. Gilman Clark frequently accompanied Bradford on his lecturing trips, and the Clarks would host him on his subsequent visits to the town. Although the Congregational society appears to have divided over the issue (resulting in the dismissal in 1846 of Gay's successor, Oliver Bidwell), Hubbardston's Unitarian clergy were strong backers of radical abolitionism throughout the period. Two former Hubbardston ministers, Bradford and Abner Jones, signed the 1845 "Protest Against American Slavery by One Hundred and Seventy Unitarian Ministers." Of the others, we know that both George T. Hall (1847-52) and A. S. Ryder (1855-60) encouraged Waite to hold meetings of the Worcester North Division at the Unitarian Church.<sup>14</sup>

Jonas Clark was twenty-five when Bradford was installed as his minister; his brother-in-law, Alson Waite, had turned thirty-two the previous December. Seventy per cent of Massachusetts male abolitionists Paul Goodman studied were forty-five and under. Most fell within the thirty to forty-five age group, which fits the age span during which Jonas Clark and Alson Waite were most active.

In 1843 the townsfolk of Hubbardston elected a Liberty Party candidate as their representative to the Great and General Court, the first such anti-slavery lawmaker to sit in the Massachusetts legislature. William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper, *The Liberator*, had more subscribers in Hubbardston than in any other Worcester County town. In 1844 one of Garrison's correspondents wrote that he had found no town

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<sup>14</sup> For religion and antislavery in Hubbardston and Worcester County, see, principally, Worcester Anti Slavery Society, North Division, Record Books, 1835-1843 and 1846-1860, Worcester Historical Museum; *The Liberator*, Boston, Mass., 1831-1865; Stowe, *Hubbardston*, p. 104ff; manuscript notes on Jonas Clark, G. Stanley Hall Papers, Clark University Archives (hereafter CUA); James E. Mooney, "Antislavery in Worcester County, Massachusetts: A Case Study" (Ph.D. diss., Clark University, 1971); and Brooke, *Heart of the Commonwealth*, ch. 11 and appendices. The protest of the 170 Unitarian ministers is in the *Christian Register* 24, no. 40 (October 4, 1845), 157.

in Worcester County that could match Hubbardston's strong anti-slavery feeling and "the moral effect of the true anti-slavery spirit."<sup>15</sup>

As early as 1840 Hubbardston had its own table at the annual Anti-Slavery Fair in Boston. Frederick Douglass and Wendell Phillips addressed the Worcester North meetings in Hubbardston in February, 1842. Douglass was to return during the "Hundred Conventions in Massachusetts" campaign in April, 1844 and again in July, 1845, following the first publication of his *Narrative of The Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*. During the latter visit he wrote a long statement in Susan Clark's book critical of organized religion and thanking God that "the sublime and world saving principles of the ever blessed Jesus" were able to function independently in the world in the task of relieving "suffering humanity."<sup>16</sup>

Other speakers in Hubbardston during the 1840's included Abby Kelley, Stephen Foster, Garrison himself, Charles Lenox Remond, C. C. Burleigh, Adin Ballou, Parker Pillsbury, Lucy Stone, William Wells Brown and other escaped slaves, and many less known figures. A local anti-slavery society, similar to others in the area, kept up interest with exhortations and picnics. In December, 1844, 150 people were present in the vestry of the Unitarian Church to hear Loring Moody speak on behalf of Captain Jonathan Walker, an abolitionist currently jailed in Pensacola, Florida for attempting to free slaves there. Hubbardston residents, including the Clarks, when the state of rural roads permitted, frequently attended abolitionist meetings and picnics in north county towns notable for anti-slavery activity, such as adjacent Barre, Princeton, and Westminster, as well as nearby Fitchburg and Leominster.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Stowe, *Hubbardston*, pp. 132-34; Charles Spear, "Status of the Abolition Cause in Worcester County," *The Liberator*, 2 August 1844.

<sup>16</sup> *The Liberator*, 1 January 1841; 4, 11 March 1842; 12 April 1844; Susan Wright Clark, "Note Book, 1845-1847," Jonas and Susan Clark Papers, CUA. For Douglass, see William McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1991) and Gregory P. Lampe, *Frederick Douglass: Freedom's Voice, 1818-1845* (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1998), esp. Appendix A, "Douglass' Speaking Itinerary: 1839-1845."

<sup>17</sup> *The Liberator*, 1841-1853, passim; Walker references in 22 November 1844 and 3 January 1845.

The exact date the Clarks became committed to the abolitionist cause cannot now be determined. But clearly this had occurred well before April 1844, when controversial abolitionist lecturer Abby Kelley was enjoying a quiet stay as a guest in the Clark home, recuperating from an intensive two-week lecture tour of northern Worcester County in the company of Douglass and others. The following month the Clarks participated in the pivotal 1844 “no Union with slaveholders” meeting of the New England Anti-Slavery Convention at Marlboro Chapel in Boston. In response to the prospective annexation of the Republic of Texas, through a formal treaty then before the Senate, the convention passed two resolutions. One declared that there could be no equal union between slaveholding and free societies. The other, even more incendiary, proclaimed that no abolitionist could in good conscience take an oath to support the Constitution, or vote in either state or national elections. Further, the resolution declared that it was now “a first duty” for abolitionists to “to agitate for a dissolution of the Union.” Cautious businessman Jonas Clark and his wife Susan were among the 250 signers (as against 24 in opposition), and Jonas Clark contributed fifty cents toward convention expense. Clearly by 1844 both Clarks had become deeply committed to the most radical anti-slavery stance.<sup>18</sup>

By 1845, the Clarks were among the Garrisonian elite of northern Worcester County, becoming visible both as office-holders in their division of the Worcester County Anti-Slavery Society and on the pages of *The Liberator*. In late January they were in Hopedale, the anti-slavery Utopian community headed by the abolitionist and pacifist Adin Ballou. Here Susan Clark secured a two-page statement of faith from Ballou for her autograph book, as well as a poem by Abby Price, another abolitionist activist. In March Anne Weston reported to Garrison on the recent Worcester North Division convention and fair in Fitchburg, at

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<sup>18</sup> Abby Kelley to Stephen S. Foster, 22 April 1844, Abby Kelley Foster Papers, American Antiquarian Society. For Kelley, see Dorothy Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time: Abby Kelley and the Politics of Antislavery* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991). *The Liberator*, 7, 14 June 1844; Edmund Quincy to Richard D. Webb, 14 June 1844, in Wendell P. and Francis Lloyd Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of His Life Told by His Children* 4 vols (New York: The Century Company, 1885-1889), 3: 111; Goodman, *Of One Blood*, ch. 15. As Walters, *Antislavery Appeal*, ch. 8 points out “No Union With Slaveholders” was not incompatible with nationalism, as Jonas Clark was to demonstrate during the Civil War.

which Wendell Phillips spoke and music was provided by the Hutchinson family of singers. “The very flower of the abolitionists from the various towns of Worcester County had assembled to hold communion,” gushed Miss Weston. “Some of the truest and most devoted friends of the cause” were present. Listed among those “to whom the fair is deeply indebted for its success” were Jonas and Susan Clark. At the concurrent business meeting, Jonas Clark and his brother-in-law Waite were among those elected Vice-Presidents (always male), and Susan Clark and Rev. Gay were elected to the Executive Committee (both genders). Jonas Clark was to be frequently elected a Vice-President as long as the Clarks remained in Hubbardston.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps the clearest expression of Jonas Clark’s moral stance, however, came after the outbreak of the war with Mexico in May, 1846. Following hard upon the annexation of Texas, the events of that year seemed to a number of Massachusetts anti-slavery folk to confirm the Garrisonian argument that southwestern expansion was a slaveholders’ conspiracy. In Cambridge in June, James Russell Lowell wrote the first of his “Biglow Papers,” a stinging critique of the war and of attempts to recruit Massachusetts men to fight on behalf of what Lowell regarded, in his biographer’s words, as “a squalid attempt to extend the boundaries of slavery.” In Concord, late in July, the local constable and tax collector arrested and jailed Henry David Thoreau for failure to pay his poll tax. Thoreau regarded his refusal as an act of resistance to the war, and signifying his commitment to the abolitionist cause. He was thus chagrined when one of his abolitionist aunts bailed him out the following morning. The experience of a night in jail, however, eventually bore fruit in his celebrated essay on civil disobedience.<sup>20</sup>

In Hubbardston, in December, the Worcester County North Division once again held its annual meeting in the vestry of the Unitarian Church. A “business committee” of five (Loring Moody, Abby Kelley Foster, H.

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<sup>19</sup> Susan Wright Clark, “Note Book, 1845-1847,” CUA; A.W.W. [Anne W. Weston] to William Lloyd Garrison, 15 February 1845, printed in *The Liberator*, 28 March 1845; *The Liberator*, 6 June 1845.

<sup>20</sup> Martin Duberman, *James Russell Lowell* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), p. 102; Walter Harding, *The Days of Henry Thoreau* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), pp. 199-205. There is a biographical sketch of Lowell in Susan Clark’s “Note Book,” signed by “R. C.” and dated 22 January 1845.

W. Carter, Jonas Clark, and Samuel Gay) drafted and introduced resolutions even more fiery than those the Clarks had endorsed the previous year. The resolutions decried the annexation of Texas, denounced the country's "murderous expedition against Mexico," asserted that the American government was "wholly in the wrong," and described the war itself as "unparalleled in atrocity." Accordingly, it was resolved, "the time has come for the formal separation [sic] of Massachusetts from this slaveholding confederacy." A second resolution called upon women, "as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, abolitionists," to make every effort to prevent participation in the war by their male relatives. *The Liberator* described those present as having been "much revived, cheered, animated, and edified" by these seditious proceedings, with the anticipated result being "substantial evidence of a growth in anti-slavery grace" during 1847.<sup>21</sup>

In May, 1847 Henry Watson, a recently escaped slave from Mississippi, came to speak in Hubbardston. *The Liberator* had requested volunteers to make local arrangements for him and his white companion, though did not record the response. But in August William Wells Brown, who had published his own slave narrative the previous month, was sent on a speaking tour as the recently hired agent of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. Brown was scheduled for Hubbardston on Tuesday evening, August 17th, and for Barre two nights later. The Treasurer's report for Brown's lecture tour reports the sum of \$3.19 collected at the Hubbardston meeting, but also notes an additional \$5.00 from Jonas Clark.

More importantly, one of Brown's two entries in Susan Clark's book is dated "Hubbardston, August 19, 1847," the date of the Barre meeting. It cannot, then, have been scribbled in simply as a post-lecture inscription. It is more reasonable to infer that Brown's two lengthy 1847 entries in Mrs. Clark's book, one a poem, "Get Up Early," and the other a plea for recognition as a man and a brother, beginning "Reader! The writer of this is a slave!," were written as a kind of "hostess gift" in return for two nights of hospitality, and perhaps also transportation, from the Clarks. If so, the Clarks were hosting lecturers regardless of race or

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<sup>21</sup> Worcester County Anti Slavery Society, North Division, Record Book, 1846-1860, under date of 9 December 1846; *The Liberator*, 1 January 1847. Mooney, "Antislavery in Worcester County," p.142, misquotes the phrasing as "this slaveholding conspiracy."

status. It is likely, then, that either the Clarks or the Waites had also hosted Watson in May, and that Frederick Douglass's lengthy entry of July, 1845 was, like Brown's, a gesture of thanks to a hospitable couple. The Clarks' hospitality to Brown and Douglass is a practical demonstration of the ideal of racial equality and friendship recent scholars have identified as a core value of Garrisonian abolitionism.<sup>22</sup>

From time to time *The Liberator* carried other mentions of the Clarks and the Waites, noting in 1848, for example, remarks by James Waite in which he, like Douglass earlier, had denounced "the hopelessness of the church" in the current situation. Both men were regularly elected to office and contributed money to the cause. During the 1840's and 1850's Waite was regularly chosen as a "Director" or "Counselor" or Vice-President of Worcester North, almost up to his early death in 1861. He was also the liaison between the Hubbardston Unitarian church and the male anti-slavery hierarchy. In 1850 Waite wrote Samuel May, then the General Agent of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, requesting that he not be accompanied on his next visit to Hubbardston by either Stephen Foster, Pillsbury, or Moody, all of whom had angered so many townfolk in the last two Hubbardston meetings that "it is next to impossible to get people out to hear antislavery." But Waite's own heart remained pure; in an 1856 letter concerning another upcoming Hubbardston meeting, Waite requested Garrison as a speaker and signed himself "yours for the oppressed."<sup>23</sup>

The importance of the Christmas anti-slavery fairs in Boston, capably chaired by Maria Weston Chapman, has often been commented upon in studies of women's roles in the abolitionist movement. Caroline Waite and Susan Clark contributed to the annual anti-slavery fairs in

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<sup>22</sup> *The Liberator*, 7 May, 25 June, 6 August, 24 September 1847; Susan Wright Clark, "Note Book, 1845-1847," CUA. For Brown's Massachusetts career, see William Edward Farrison, *William Wells Brown: Author and Reformer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), ch. 8. For the Clarks' hospitality toward anti-slavery lecturers, see [Susan Wright Clark, comp.], *In Memoriam: Jonas Gilman Clark* (New York: Atlantic Publishing and Engraving Co., [1900]), unpaginated and Stebbins, "Address," p. 47. For anti-racism in the movement generally, see Goodman, *Of One Blood*, pt. 5.

<sup>23</sup> *The Liberator*, 14 January, 31 March 1848; 12 January 1849. James A. Waite to Samuel May, 4 August 1850; James A. Waite to Mr. Allen, 7 June 1856, The Abolitionist Papers, Boston Public Library.

Boston, as well as to regional fairs in northern Worcester County. Indeed, Mrs. Waite seems to have been the local agent for the contributions of Hubbardston women to these fairs. In late 1847 she transmitted to Mrs. Chapman a donation of \$14.00 for the upcoming Boston fair, including \$3.00 from the Hubbardston anti-slavery sewing circle and \$4.00 as her personal contribution.<sup>24</sup>

Toward the end of the decade Jonas Clark began to concentrate on the retail end of his manufacturing business, opening general hardware stores in Hubbardston, Milford (with Waite as a partner) and Lowell. The Clarks moved to Boston in 1850, and Jonas Clark began to supply miner's supplies, hardware, tinware, and furniture to the newly opened California market. Clark's last election as a Vice-President of the Worcester County North Division came in February, 1849. In May, 1850, at the annual meeting of the New England Anti-Slavery Convention in Faneuil Hall (the largest held up to that time), Jonas Clark gave \$5.00 and pledged an additional \$5.00 toward the expenses of another "100 Conventions" lecture tour.<sup>25</sup>

To handle the California trade, Jonas Clark and Isaac Church had established a firm of commission merchants, with Clark remaining in Boston to do the purchasing and Church running the San Francisco office. But, probably owing largely to the roller-coaster economy of San Francisco, the firm of Clark and Church was out of business by early 1853. Clark then sold his share of the Hubbardston tinware factory and also his retail stores to replenish his capital. Late in the year the Clarks went out to California by sea to reestablish the commission business. They had planned to remain only three months, but with the exception of three trips back east (two of them extended to Europe), they were to be San Francisco residents for the next dozen years. In so doing, they effectively removed themselves from the abolitionist movement after a decade of intense personal commitment.

During the turbulent years of the 1850's Jonas Clark rode the waves of the San Francisco economy, reestablished his business and his credit,

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<sup>24</sup> Caroline E. Waite to Maria W. Chapman, 12 [18?] January 1848, The Abolitionist Papers, Boston Public Library.

<sup>25</sup> *The Liberator*, 27 February 1849; 8 February, 7 June 1850; Jonas G. Clark, "Autobiographical Sketch," Jonas and Susan Clark Papers, CUA, printed incompletely in Stebbins, "Address," Appendix 2.

paid his old debts, and in 1856 established himself in a new business, the manufacture as well as the importation of fine furniture. In 1860-61, however, he sold his business, reinvesting his capital in land around San Francisco Bay, in railroads, in California's first public insurance firm, and in one of the private water companies serving San Francisco.<sup>26</sup>

The Clarks' Unitarian affiliations had brought them into almost daily contact with San Francisco's rising entrepreneurial and professional elite, including the Leland Stanfords and, after 1860, with Rev. Thomas Starr King, who in his four brief years in San Francisco as minister of the First Unitarian Church was to become an articulate leader in the struggle to keep California in the Union. Like many Garrisonian abolitionists, once the Civil War broke out Clark became a staunch supporter of the Union cause. Early in the war Clark had invested heavily in U.S. government bonds and urged other businessmen to do so, at a time when Union victory was problematical, the degree of risk being reflected in an interest rate of two and a half per cent per month.<sup>27</sup>

During his last years in San Francisco Clark directed the moral energies of his abolitionist days into two aspects of the war over what he described to his father as the twin evils of "rebellion and slavery." One was the Soldiers' Relief Fund (later the California Branch of the United States Sanitary Commission). In November, 1863 Clark was elected to the newly enlarged Executive Committee of the Fund, signed an "Appeal for the Relief of Wounded Soldiers," and devoted much time that winter canvassing for funds in the business district. Jonas Clark also became one of the founders, and the first Grand Treasurer, of the Union League of California. Numerous local units of the League were established, and since meetings of the officers were held every Saturday evening, the activity of the Union League must have demanded much of the time of this now middle-aged former abolitionist activist. He continued to serve

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<sup>26</sup> Clark, "Autobiographical Sketch;" Koelsch, *Clark University*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 97-105. For the California financial context, see Joseph Ellison, *California and the Nation, 1850-1869* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1947; reprinted New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), ch. 11; Ellison, "The Currency Question on the Pacific Coast During the Civil War," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 16 (1929-30): 50-66; and Bray Hammond, *Sovereignty and an Empty Purse: Banks and Politics in the Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), passim.

until April 30, 1864, when he resigned while preparing for a second trip to Europe.<sup>28</sup>

In the concluding section of his pioneering study of the anti-slavery rank and file, Edward Magdol raised a number of questions for future abolitionist research. The last of them was this: “is the legacy of abolitionism discernable in post-emancipation institutions and communities?”<sup>29</sup> The final section of this article considers that question in relation to the founding of Clark University.

From 1866 to 1878 Jonas and Susan Clark lived variously in Boston, New York, and Europe. They also began talking to American college graduates about their educations, and to European scholars and educators, and also visited a number of European universities, collecting materials on new developments in higher education. The Clarks’ move to Worcester in the late 1870’s was their first step in bringing to fruition plans for a modern university. Probably stimulated by the plans for Stanford University announced in the fall of 1886, Clark organized a Board of Trustees. On January 17, 1887 (by curious coincidence, the day of the funeral in Worcester of his old abolitionist friend Abby Kelley Foster), he submitted a petition to the Massachusetts legislature for a university charter, which was granted in March.

Clark’s ideas about higher education were distilled from many of his own life experiences: his Unitarian background, his European trips, his conversations with American students and college graduates, family ties with Cornell, Johns Hopkins and Harvard, his friendship with Leland Stanford, and his experience as an entrepreneur. But when his public statements concerning the new Clark University are reviewed, a congruence with two principal values of earlier abolitionist college-founders in the pre- and post-Civil War periods, whether exemplified at Berea or Hampton, Ripon or Fisk, is quickly found; namely, an extension of educational opportunity to previously

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<sup>28</sup> Jonas Clark to William Clark, 25 November 1863, printed in Stebbins, “Address,” p. 170; Records of the California Branch, United States Sanitary Commission, New York Public Library; Russell M. Posner, “Thomas Starr King and the Mercy Millions,” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 43 (1964): 291-307; Union League of California, *Proceedings of the Grand Council* (San Francisco: Grand Council, 1863), passim.

<sup>29</sup> Magdol, *The Antislavery Rank and File*, p. 140.

underserved groups and individuals, and a positive stand against discrimination based on either status or belief.<sup>30</sup>

In public statements and private acts, Clark realized these values in several ways. At the legislative hearing early in 1887, Clark promised for his new foundation “the utmost breadth and freedom both of teaching and of investigation.” His Board of Trustees included at least two other former abolitionists, U.S. Senator George Frisbie Hoar and Dr. Joseph Sargent, who thirty years earlier had been a friend of Samuel May and an admirer of and donor to Abby Kelley. During the university’s opening ceremony in October, 1889, Clark promised that qualified persons who wished to engage in research in the newly constituted graduate school would be “free from all trammels and hindrances, without any religious, political and social tests,” and that “everything approaching religious, political or social bias shall be excluded” from the selection of faculty and students. Experience had shown, he argued, that whenever the “baleful influence” of such discrimination is allowed to enter a university, “the effectiveness of its work will be seriously impaired and its influence for good weakened or altogether gone.” To ensure that economic necessity would not prevent equal access, the Clarks together established thirty full-tuition fellowships and scholarships; twenty of these also carried stipends.

Though these values were to mark the institution as a whole, they are always articulated by Jonas Clark, never by the aggressively careerist Clark University founding president, G. Stanley Hall. But Jonas Clark’s values were most clearly expressed in his plans for his posthumously established undergraduate college for men. Clark’s extremely complex Will, in part a record of his struggles with President Hall (who was determined to prevent the creation of an undergraduate college) reveals the moral foundations of creating a college that Clark shared with many of his abolitionist colleagues of earlier days. Both in his original Will (1893) and in later codicils, Clark repeatedly expressed the need to make the “collegiate department” available at moderate cost, “so that [students] may be able to avail themselves of an education that they could not otherwise obtain.” In addition, Clark repeated his “earnest desire, will and direction” that Clark University, both in theory and practice, be free of bias and open to those of any religious or political affiliation.

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<sup>30</sup> Jonas Clark’s ideas on education are largely contained in Clark University, *Early Proceedings* and summarized in Koelsch, *Clark University*, ch. 1.

In 1897 codicils, Clark mandated the establishment of a three-year undergraduate college for men, under a president and faculty responsible directly to the Trustees. Tuition should be free the first year of this new division's existence, rising to \$25 per year in the second, and to \$50 in the third (a tuition charge which was indeed not increased until after World War I). Clark also specified that the college should be a place where young men of limited means "may obtain at a moderate cost...a practical education which shall fit them for useful citizenship and their work in life," leaving half his residuary estate to endow the new institution. After Jonas Clark's death but before that of Susan Clark, the college was established on these terms.

In terms of broadening access to higher education, the new college also fulfilled the hopes of its abolitionist founders. When it was announced, the Worcester Board of Trade's magazine reported that "Many a boy said at once, 'That means a college course for me, since I can board at home and still go to college.'" The streetcar system allowed students from all parts of the city and twenty-seven surrounding smaller towns to get to the university for a five-cent fare. Simplified entrance requirements, living at home or boarding inexpensively near the campus (there were initially no dormitories), no intercollegiate sports, low tuition and the prospect of saving one year's worth of that, combined to broaden access to higher education for many students for whom college would otherwise have been out of the question. The inaugural group of seventy-nine undergraduate students was thirty-two larger than any Massachusetts college had ever enrolled in its first year.

On the evidence, Magdol's suggestion that we need to examine post-Civil War institutions and communities for evidences of the abolitionist legacy appears to have merit. Clark University in its intellectual foundations had indeed drawn on the burgeoning research model pioneered in this country at Johns Hopkins, from which President Hall and many of the original Clark faculty had come, and thus deserves its place in the historical record of late nineteenth-century research university foundations. Morally committed by Jonas and Susan Clark to equality of opportunity and to the elimination of all "religious, political or social bias," Clark University, and especially its "collegiate department," may plausibly also be seen in Magdol's terms, as a post-  
emancipation legacy of the abolitionist movement.