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The Boston Vigilance Committee: A Reconsideration

Gary L. Collison

Popular accounts of the underground railroad tell the melodramatic story of an elaborate conspiratorial network complete with codes, stations, trapdoors, secret passageways, and hairbreadth escapes.¹ But as Larry Gara pointed out in his 1961 study, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad*, too much of both the popularized tales and even the studies by historians have depended on vague statistics, propagandistic literature, local legends, the faulty memory of old men and women, and an uncommonly strong desire to believe in the legendary material—a desire that persists even today. According to Gara, the real underground railroad was far less glamorous, less well organized, less widespread, and less important socially and politically than has been generally believed. Moreover, black individuals and communities played a far more important role in protecting and aiding fugitives than the traditional stories of the underground railroad have admitted. To Gara, the Boston Vigilance Committee, which underground railroad historian Wilbur H. Siebert called an “important local center” of a “great secret system,” is a prime example of how far the actual events and the legends have diverged.² An examination of the available records shows that the Boston Vigilance Committee has indeed been romanticized and its accomplishments exaggerated as Gara contended, but it also challenges some of his conclusions.

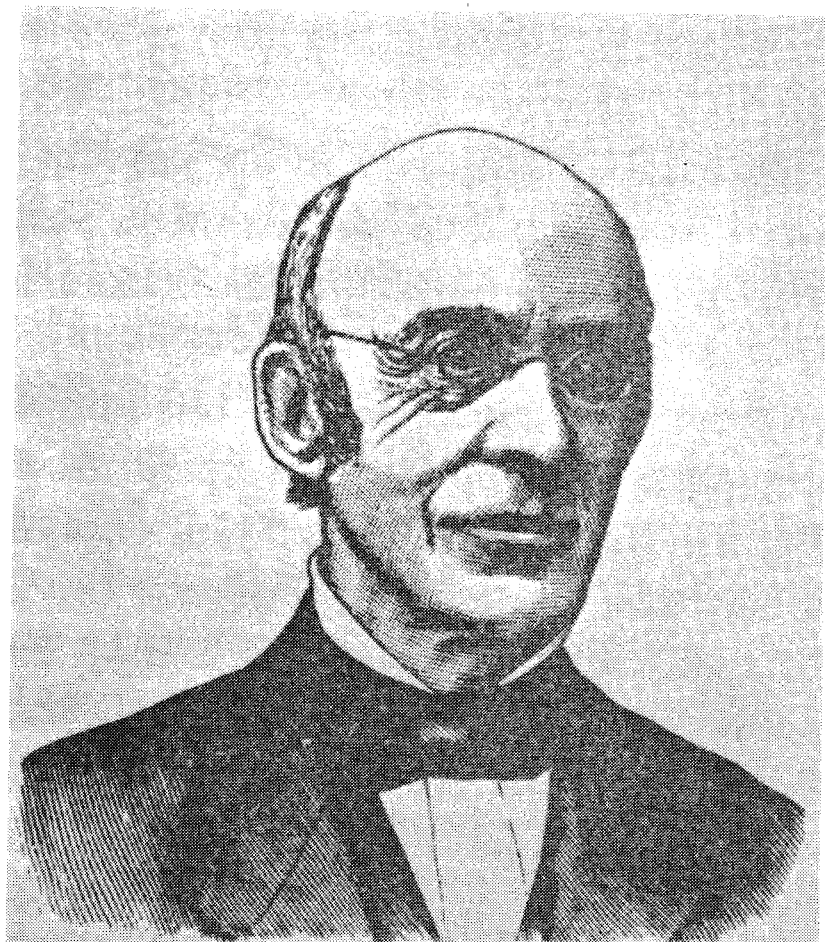
Gara’s historiographic observations raise important questions about the Boston committee. On what scale were its operations conducted? What was the relationship between the committee and the black community? How well organized were the committee’s activities, and in what ways were those activities coordinated with the actions of others in Massachusetts and elsewhere who were trying to aid fugitives? Did the committee reassure Boston’s black community and effectively protect Boston’s blacks from the Fugitive Slave Law? What effects did the committee’s activities have either on the debate over the fugitive question or the underlying sectional conflicts? While complete answers to these questions may never be possible, the Boston Vigilance Committee left enough evidence of its work to encourage a fresh examination.

The basic history of the Boston Vigilance Committee is well known.³ It was formed at a Faneuil Hall meeting of black and white citizens on October 14, 1850.⁴ Many of the members of the new group had been part of a similar,

short-lived organization of the same name that had been formed in 1846. The new Fugitive Slave Law, which placed the full power of the federal government behind slaveholders trying to recover their human property, was to give the new organization the strength of purpose that the first committee had lacked. Within a week, the fifty members (swelling to eighty by the second meeting and to more than 200 during the next year) from all wards of the city were meeting to plan their defense of Boston's fugitives. For their president they chose Timothy Gilbert, a Washington Street manufacturer of pianos, and they named the radical Unitarian minister Theodore Parker to head the executive committee. Francis Jackson, president of the Massachusetts Antislavery Society, was made treasurer. His financial account book, one of the most valuable documents left by the fugitive slave resistance movement, shows that during the next eleven years, the committee was to raise over \$8,000 to aid fugitives, defend them and their rescuers in court, and propagandize for the fugitive cause.⁵ Besides providing more than 430 fugitives with aid in the form of legal representation, medical treatment, food, clothing, shelter, and even coal, the committee paid all or part of the fares to Canadian sanctuaries for more than 100 fugitives.

In addition to Jackson's financial accounts, other sources such as John Weiss's 1864 biography of Theodore Parker and the reminiscences of Captain Austin Bearse, sometime doorkeeper and agent for collections who led harbor rescues and assaults, have preserved the story of the four dramatic fugitive cases in which the committee took part.⁶ In 1850 members of the committee hid William and Ellen Craft while frightening their Georgian pursuers away.⁷ In 1851, the legal committee mounted the defense of Fred Wilkins, known as Shadrach, and had all but lost him to his Southern owner when a black crowd surged through the courtroom and spirited him away.⁸ Then in April, despite public agitation and a welter of legal motions, the committee failed to prevent the rendition of Thomas Sims, the first fugitive returned to the South by Massachusetts since the Revolutionary War.⁹ In 1854, the Boston group lost Anthony Burns after a futile legal battle in federal court.¹⁰ Following an ill-planned assault on the heavily-guarded court house where the prisoner was kept, Burns became the second (and last) of Boston's victims to the Fugitive Slave Bill of 1850.

While the historical record is far from complete, there is enough evidence to test Gara's argument that the Boston Vigilance Committee was not an integrated part of a "great secret system" but instead was relatively isolated and independent, and much less effective, than earlier accounts have led us to believe. To begin with, the small numbers the vigilance committee dealt with and the lack of immediate danger made an elaborate system unnecessary. According to Jackson's account book, the vigilance committee helped only about a hundred fugitives—an average of fewer than ten a year—to flee from Boston to other Massachusetts communities, to Canada, or, in a few cases, to England.¹¹ Apparently the other fugitives assisted by the committee remained in Boston, though undoubtedly some who never appeared in Jackson's records were aided in their flight by private contributions of vigilance committee members. Nevertheless, the number of fugitives needing transportation, let alone secret transportation, appears to have been small.



WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON

Moreover, there is little evidence that the Committee made even token efforts to conceal fleeing fugitives except in the rare cases of narrow escapes when slave hunters were known—or just rumored—to be close on the trail.¹² In the New England states, fugitives were almost completely safe from extra-legal seizure by virtue of both stronger antislavery sentiment and greater distance from the South. In the border states the situation was far different. Fugitives there faced capture not only by agents of Southern owners but by Northern bounty hunters attracted by the promise of rich rewards.¹³ In New England, slave hunters had to be as cautious and secretive as fugitives. More than one agent for a Southern owner found himself in a Boston jail cell thanks to the efforts of the Boston Vigilance Committee's legal division.¹⁴ Experience in Boston and elsewhere had shown that once arrested, slaves were as likely to be freed by rescue or by the unfriendly state court system as they were to be returned to their owners. Consequently, few Southern owners were willing to undertake the expense and risk of trying to recover their runaways from Boston and New England. Only six fugitives were ever taken prisoner in New England, and perhaps a dozen more narrowly escaped arrest or seizure during the dozen years when the Fugitive Slave Law was in force.¹⁵ Only three of those arrested were returned to their owners. Thus it was simply not necessary for the vigilance committee to devise elaborate secret schemes for transporting and concealing Boston's fugitives. The "main routes" and "branches" on Siebert's underground railroad map turn out to be little more than the major public thoroughfares.¹⁶ At least in Massachusetts, the underground railroad appears to have run above ground on ordinary rails.

However, while there is almost no evidence that the Boston committee participated in an elaborate underground system, neither is it entirely possible to rule out the existence of a secret system. Such a system was theoretically feasible. The Boston committee had friends in all directions. Thirteen members of the committee listed addresses in surrounding communities such as Salem, West Roxbury, Cambridgeport, Brookline, and Danvers.¹⁷ William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Theodore Parker, and other well-known public figures on the vigilance committee had a multitude of antislavery friends. Garrison's *Liberator* regularly reported on fugitive aid groups elsewhere in Massachusetts.¹⁸ The Committee itself forged links with other towns in Eastern Massachusetts when twice they sent out circulars encouraging other towns to form vigilance committees if they had not already done so.¹⁹ Although a few towns refused and others ignored the appeal, some new committees resulted. Austin Barse and other members occasionally canvassed neighboring towns for funds.²⁰ Two appeals for contributions to the fugitive cause that were sent out to Massachusetts' 1,600 churches brought in dozens of responses.²¹ In all, counting churches, groups such as the "Ladies of Lancaster," and individuals, Francis Jackson's accounts show that roughly half of the Boston committee's contributions came from outside the city. Clearly the Boston committee knew who could be called upon to shelter and protect fugitives once they left Boston. Nevertheless, how often and how effectively the vigilance committee used this information is simply not known. Francis Jackson's account book reports only that fugitives were given money for "passage to Canada" or "to Halifax" or similar destinations. Letters of recommendation, records of travels, itineraries, and other documents that could provide evidence of an organized system for con-

veying fugitives are entirely lacking. Without any substantial evidence, it is not possible to accept Siebert's notion of a "secret system," at least in the Boston area.

Even the records of total numbers of fugitives assisted present inconclusive testimony about the vigilance committee's operations. Francis Jackson's financial accounts show that some 430 fugitives received aid for which someone was reimbursed.²² But what does this figure actually reveal? The number of fugitives who were helped by the committee was small in comparison with the total number of fugitives. By 1860, according to a recent estimate, 30,000 fugitives had fled to Canada from the West alone.²³ Vigilance groups in other cities helped far more fugitives than the Boston group did. The Detroit vigilance group reportedly assisted twenty-five fugitives a week for long periods.²⁴ The Philadelphia Vigilance Committee was said to have aided nearly 500 fugitives in four years in the mid-1850s, when in the same period the Boston group helped hardly more than one hundred.²⁵

Records of the number of fugitives helped by the Boston group, however, provide only part of the evidence needed to judge the committee. We need to know more about how the black community reacted to the committee and its efforts. Was the committee completely trusted? Did its actions have a genuinely reassuring effect on the community? How many fugitives actually came to Boston? Especially needed to answer these questions is a study that integrates local history, census data, vital records, and demographic studies to try to reconstruct the movement of Boston's blacks after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill. Without such a study, there will always remain serious doubts about the Boston Vigilance Committee's usefulness and about what actually happened to Boston's black citizens and transients during the turbulent decade before the Civil War.

A number of observations, however, can help explain the figures for the Boston committee. Geography and population at least partially account for the small number of fugitives. Boston is almost three hundred miles northeast of Philadelphia on a line roughly paralleling the Canadian border. Even for fugitives from the easternmost parts of Maryland and Virginia, travelling by way of Boston would have more than doubled the distance to the Canadian border. For geographical reasons alone, the numbers of fugitives arriving in Boston would have been small, particularly since more conveniently located Northern cities offered equal safety. The small size of Boston's black community also must have reduced the number of fugitives who came to Boston either to settle or to rest on the way to Canada or to England. Though already swelling with the tide of old world immigrants, Boston in 1850 was still a small city, and its black community of approximately 2,000 was only a tenth the size of Philadelphia's, a fifth the size of New York's.²⁶ Given both its location and its small black population, it is hardly surprising that fugitives were drawn elsewhere. And while Boston may have been known for its antislavery firebrands, the city had an undistinguished record of integration and employment opportunities for blacks. The school system, for instance, was segregated until 1855.²⁷

Another question about the Boston Vigilance Committee's accomplishments has to do with its seeming inability to organize effectively in response to crises—the Burns and Sims cases particularly. The records show, for example, that the loosely-organized committee never had a constitution, despite a directive to the executive committee to prepare one. The 200-person general committee was unwieldy, slow-moving, and indecisive. The members were able to give their approval to proposals for printing their names only after much hesitation, and they vacillated over the question of whether their meetings should be secret. Their gatherings, Thomas Wentworth Higginson later remembered, were a “disorderly convention.”²⁸ Meetings were held irregularly, most often when a fugitive had been seized or was threatened. During the four major fugitive cases, the committee met frantically, issuing petitions and placards, arranging public meetings, arguing over a thousand schemes.²⁹ Their response to crisis mirrors the pattern of the earlier ephemeral protest organizations of the city: the Latimer Committee of 1842-43, formed to protest the capture of the fugitive George Latimer; the black New England Freedom Association of the same year, and the first Boston Vigilance Committee, formed in 1846 after an unnamed fugitive was carried back to slavery from Boston harbor in a Boston ship.³⁰ None of these lasted long beyond the crises that called them into existence. Many members of the new vigilance committee of 1850 had taken part in these earlier organizations.

If weak organization helps account for the vigilance committee's seeming helplessness during the Burns and Sims cases, so too do the varied backgrounds and conflicting ideologies of the members. The Boston group was at least as divided on the question of pacifism versus forcible resistance as was the anti-slavery movement as a whole.³¹ At one extreme, radical groups like Henry C. Wright's vigilance group in Ohio threatened “DEATH TO KIDNAPPERS” in their posters and announcements.³² In Boston, hotblooded Thomas Wentworth Higginson wanted the vigilance committee to arm themselves and forcibly prevent Anthony Burns from being taken from Boston. Captain Austin Bearer and Theodore Parker, at least theoretically, joined Higginson in accepting the necessity of physical resistance. Though Parker was opposed to the use of weapons, he loved to cite the deeds of his grandfather, the leader of the Lexington forces on April 19, 1776, and he had his grandfather's two muskets, most unclerical symbols, hanging on the wall of his study.³³ Parker and Higginson brought with them the anti-institutional biases of their transcendentalist battles with the Unitarian church. For them it was a short step from challenging the church to challenging the state.³⁴

Parker, Bearer, and Higginson were not, however, at all representative of the vigilance committee. The majority of members were completely unwilling to oppose civil authorities with force, let alone to take up arms in revolt. Some were philosophical nonresistants, most notably William Lloyd Garrison and treasurer Francis Jackson.³⁵ Higginson has left a telling portrait of Garrison standing at his desk in serene calm while across the room committee members argued feverishly over plans to rescue Anthony Burns.³⁶ Other members of the committee, who might be called political nonresistants, believed in working within the political and judicial systems no matter how corrupted those institutions had become. Among this group were many of the more than two dozen

members with law degrees and in some cases political careers. John A. Andrew and Richard Henry Dana, Jr., are most representative of this group.³⁷ Such men were patient with the painfully-slow process of political and institutional change. Unlike Higginson and Bearer, they were not likely to be found battering down court house doors with axes.

Finally, the majority of members simply were solid middle class citizens who had a deep respect for laws and institutions. The membership list is a Whitmanesque catalogue of Boston's occupations.³⁸ About half the members came from the professional classes. Besides the lawyers, there were nearly a dozen doctors and ministers, several publishers, editors, and superintendents of various institutions, a ship captain, a hotel owner, and manufacturers of paper hangings and pianos. Skilled trades were represented by housewrights, carpenters, printers, a cigar maker, a daguerreotypist, a mason, a blacksmith, a chair-painter, a maker of marble castings, and a "japanner." By far the largest and most varied group consisted of merchants and storekeepers—sellers of seeds, furniture, thread, confections, dry goods, clothing, books, shoes, woolens, hats, soap, candles, leather, paper, medicines, groceries, and even East India goods.

The varied but predominantly middle class composition of the Boston Vigilance Committee helps explain its apparent confusion during the Burns and Sims cases. The excitement of the times and the inflammatory rhetoric of Parker, Phillips, and Higginson could bring even the mild, philosophical Bronson Alcott down from his Transcendental ether to patrol the streets at night during the Sims case.³⁹ But it could not turn lawyers, storekeepers, and craftsmen into revolutionaries. Many of the members insisted on such scrupulous fidelity to laws and moral codes that during the Sims excitement abolitionist Deborah Weston complained despairingly to her sister, "People are not much for a rescue who are to[o] conscientious to bribe a man."⁴⁰

What Weston and other critics of the vigilance committee failed to note, however, was that the committee attracted much of its support precisely because people responded to its ethical appeals. To have agreed to resort to violence would have betrayed the original pledge to use nonviolent means and consequently betrayed the trust of the community upon which the Committee depended for protecting fugitives. Indeed the committee lost at least one influential member when they refused to rule out the use of force.⁴¹ Furthermore, the committee's failure to save Sims and Burns, which many people expected them to do, is mitigated by the special circumstances of those cases. Before the Sims trial in April of 1851, the vigilance committee's opposition had been weak. Federal authorities had been slow to act on slave hunter's requests, and officials had been lax or unprepared. The Georgian agents trying to arrest William and Ellen Craft had had to appear before four federal judicial officers before they were finally granted a warrant.⁴² Legal delays that resulted from a sluggish federal judiciary and a plethora of counter motions by the legal committee had given the vigilance committee ample time to frighten the slave hunters out of Boston. But after a surging crowd of blacks rescued Fred Wilkins (Shadrach) from a poorly-guarded courtroom early in 1851, the vigilance committee lost the advantages that made their earlier tactics successful. To Southerners and law-and-order Northerners, the lawlessness of "mad Aboli-

tionism" was bad enough, but lawlessness by blacks was far, far worse.⁴³ Stung by increasingly strident criticism, the federal government grew increasingly determined to see that the law was enforced. The result was that the vigilance committee never again had the kind of opportunities they had had in the first months under the Fugitive Slave Law. Thomas Sims and Anthony Burns were quickly seized and immediately placed under heavy guard. Federal and local troops were ready to turn back armed assaults. Burns and Sims were thus fated to be returned to slavery, sacrifices to the Union.

Another question concerning the Boston committee's effectiveness has to do with its relations with its black members and with the black community which it was designed to serve. Some of the most interesting recent studies of the antislavery movement have uncovered a surprising racism in many individual members.⁴⁴ The fact that the Boston Vigilance Committee was overwhelmingly white and that at least one of its leaders harbored a belief in the inferiority of the black race hints that the Boston group was not untouched by racial prejudices. Only eight members of the committee were black, and none of the principal officers.

But here we need to be cautious. As Larry Gara has noted, the role played by blacks in the protection of fugitive slaves has been ignored or obscured in histories of the underground railroad for a number of reasons. Blacks kept few records, for they had much to lose. Black members of the Boston Vigilance Committee were no exception. Later histories and biographies that deal with the fugitive slave activity in Boston were exclusively written by whites and naturally reflect the experiences, and in some cases the conscious or unconscious prejudices, of white abolitionists. Even professional historians like Wilbur H. Siebert have occasionally echoed the deeply held anti-black biases and stereotypes of their times.⁴⁵

Thus, for a number of reasons the role of blacks in the Boston Vigilance Committee and in fugitive slave relief efforts in Boston has never been clearly understood. The older histories, for example, are often silent about the crucial role played by blacks in the original formation of the vigilance committee. When the Fugitive Slave Bill became law on the 18th of September, 1850, the black community was alarmed. Within three days, according to one contemporary account, forty black fugitives had fled the city.⁴⁶ The new Fugitive Slave Law was in force for barely two weeks when James Hamlet was seized in New York City and promptly returned to his owner.⁴⁷ When this news reached Boston, the black community was on the verge of panic. Rumors of slave hunters filled the air. No one seemed to know what to expect. To prevent wholesale flight, many of the remaining fugitives met at the black Twelfth Baptist Church on Belknap Street to discuss what needed to be done to protect the black community. At the final meeting on October 4th, the fugitives and their white sympathizers passed resolutions calling on the Boston community to meet with them at Faneuil Hall to take measures for protecting blacks in Boston from the new law.⁴⁸ This led directly to the resurrection of the old Boston Vigilance Committee of 1846.

Not only was the vigilance committee formed in response to a movement

from within the black community, but black members, despite their small numbers, were more important than has been generally acknowledged. The eight black members represented twice the proportion of blacks in the general population in Boston, and they were community leaders or successful businessmen, persons who would engender confidence in both the black and white communities. There was Leonard A. Grimes, minister of the Twelfth Baptist Church; Joshua R. Smith, a well known caterer; Lewis Hayden, a clothing merchant; Robert Morris, Jr., a lawyer; William C. Nell, a leader of the movement to integrate Boston's schools and a close friend of Garrison.⁴⁹ While no working class blacks were members, neither were there many white working class members.⁵⁰ Black members were important contacts between the fugitives and the vigilance committee and were named to nearly every important subcommittee: the executive committee, the finance committee, and the initial relief committee all had at least one black member. When a single agent for relief work was named later, the committee chose William C. Nell. His efforts administering and coordinating relief work for most of the next ten years made him the single most important member of the committee. He shared responsibility for day-to-day operations with members of the executive committee, which included Hayden and Joshua Smith. The extent of Hayden's contribution to the fugitive work is shown by the dozens of reimbursements to him that are recorded in the financial records. The names of Smith, Grimes, and Nell also appear frequently. Fugitives found shelter principally in the homes of black members of the committee or of other black citizens. Hayden reportedly had as many as thirteen such guests at one time, and while reports that other black households were similarly packed are unreliable, the financial accounts show that dozens of black families were reimbursed for taking care of fugitives, sometimes for extended periods of time.

What, then, was the Boston Vigilance Committee? It was clearly not part of a great secret conspiracy—at least we have no evidence that it was in any formal sense. Nor was it primarily an organization for transporting fugitives from one location to another. Nor, finally, was it an organization for preventing any fugitive from being returned to slavery; it had neither the unity nor philosophical justification for accomplishing this end, though Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Theodore Parker tried to turn it into such an organization. The histories that have used Parker's and Higginson's works as source materials have almost all exaggerated the Vigilance Committee's purpose and goals. The committee was principally three things. It was, first of all, a relief organization for preventing physical suffering among impoverished refugees from slavery and for helping them to relocate in Boston or to travel to other destinations. The black community provided much of the day-to-day relief work, and the vigilance committee reimbursed their expenses. It was thus a cooperative venture with the black community, a link between the fugitives, the black resident population, and sympathetic whites. Secondly, it was an organization for ensuring that fugitives who had been charged were given the best legal counsel possible, that the laws were interpreted as favorably as possible, and that whenever possible the laws were used to prevent the smooth operation of the Fugitive Slave Law. Finally, the vigilance committee was an instrument of public opinion. Its meetings, rallies, petitions, and posters gave to the fugitive resistance in Boston a solid middle-class respectability that shielded the black community and

black fugitives against the full force of both the Fugitive Slave Law and the anti-black prejudices of some segments of Boston society.⁵¹

NOTES

1. See, for example, Marion Gleason McDougall, *Fugitive Slaves, 1619-1865* (Boston, 1891); Henrietta Buckmaster, *Let My People Go: The Story of the Underground Railroad and the Growth of the Abolition Movement* (New York, 1941); and William Breyfogle, *Make Free: The Story of the Underground Railroad* (Philadelphia, 1958).
2. Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line* (Lexington, Ky., 1961); Wilbur H. Siebert, "The Vigilance Committee of Boston," *Proceedings of the Bostonian Society* (1953), 23-46; *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (New York, 1898); and "The Underground Railroad in Massachusetts," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, n.s. XLV (April 1935), 25-100.
3. Siebert, "Vigilance Committee," pp. 23-46; Harold Schwartz, "Fugitive Slave Days in Boston," *New England Quarterly*, XXVII (June 1954), 191-212.
4. *Liberator*, October 18, 1850.
5. "Treasurer's Accounts: The Boston Vigilance Committee Appointed at the Public Meeting in Faneuil Hall October 21, 1850, to Assist Fugitive Slaves," (facsimile, Boston, n.d.), hereafter cited as "Treasurer's Accounts."
6. John Weiss, *Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker* (New York, 1864), II, 91-153; Austin Bearse, *Reminiscences of Fugitive-Slave Law Days in Boston* (Boston, 1880).
7. For the Crafts, see William Craft and Ellen Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom* (London, 1860); R. J. M. Blackett, "Fugitive Slaves in Britain: The Odyssey of William and Ellen Craft," *American Studies*, XII (April 1978), 41-45; Weiss, II, 91-103.
8. Schwartz, pp. 195-197; Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, *They Who Would Be Free: Blacks' Search for Freedom, 1830-1861* (New York, 1974), 219-222.
9. Leonard W. Levy, "Sims' Case: The Fugitive Slave Law in Boston in 1851," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXV (Jan. 1950), 39-74.
10. Charles Emery Stevens, *Anthony Burns: A History* (Boston, 1856); Samuel Shapiro, "The Rendition of Anthony Burns," *Journal of Negro History*, XLIV (Jan. 1959), 34-52.
11. Figures are approximate since not all fugitives were named in the financial accounts; also, it is impossible to determine how many persons there were in some groups.

12. Weiss, II, 106.
13. See, for example, the account of Pennsylvania bounty hunters in the *Liberator*, October 4, 1850.
14. Blackett, p. 44; John E. Talmadge, "Georgia Tests the Fugitive Slave Law," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, XLIX (1965), 60.
15. Stanley W. Campbell, *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860* (Chapel Hill, 1968), pp. 199-203.
16. Siebert, "Vigilance Committee," p. 43.
17. Addresses are taken from the membership list, Boston Public Library.
18. For example, the *Liberator* for September 4, 1850 reported on the vigilance committee in Springfield; the issue of October 25 contained a report on the formation of a vigilance committee in Worcester.
19. Weiss, II, 139, 142-143.
20. Upton, Haverhill, New Bedford, Salem, and Newton are among the towns where agents for the committee took up collections.
21. Francis Jackson to Theodore Parker, August 27, 1854, B.P.L. (partially printed in Siebert, *Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*, p. 99), lists the contributors to the second request and notes that the total of \$800 represented only half the amount collected in response to the 1851 appeal.
22. Some of Jackson's entries in the account book are for an unspecified number of fugitives, making an exact count impossible.
23. Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (New Haven, 1971), p. 240. Winks, pp. 233-246, provides a thorough discussion of the problems of estimating the Canadian fugitive population.
24. Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York, 1969), p. 153.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
26. Peter R. Knights, *The Plain People of Boston, 1830-1860* (New York, 1971), pp. 20, 22; United States Census Office, *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Washington, 1853).
27. Carleton Mabee, "A Negro Boycott to Integrate Boston Schools, *New England Quarterly*, XLI (Sept. 1968), 341-61.
28. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Cheerful Yesterdays* (Boston, 1898), p. 145.
29. Schwartz, pp. 198-199; Weiss, II, 103-109, 130-135.
30. Quarles, p. 153; Pease and Pease, p. 216; *Address of the Committee Appointed by a Public Meeting Held in Faneuil Hall, September 24, 1846 . . .* (Boston, 1846); Irving H. Bartlett, "Abolitionists, Fugitives, and Imposters in Boston, 1846-1847," *New England Quarterly*, LV (March 1982), 97-99.

31. Lawrence J. Friedman, *Gregarious Saints: Self and Community in American Abolitionism, 1830-1870* (New York, 1982), p. 47.
32. *Liberator*, October 25, 1850.
33. *Ibid.*, October 18, 1850; Theodore Parker to Millard Fillmore, November 21, 1850, quoted in Weiss, II, 101-102.
34. For Parker, see William R. Hutchison, *The Transcendentalist Ministers: Church Reform in the New England Renaissance* (New Haven, 1959), pp. 98-136; for Higginson, see Tilden G. Edelstein, *Strange Enthusiasm: A Life of Thomas Wentworth Higginson* (New Haven, 1968), pp. 84-99.
35. Friedman, pp. 47-48.
36. Higginson, p. 139.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 140-144.
38. Occupations are taken from George Adams, Comp., *Boston Directory for 1847-1848* (Boston, 1848).
39. Odell Shepard, ed., *The Journals of Bronson Alcott* (Boston, 1938), p. 244.
40. Deborah Weston to Anne [W. Weston], April 15, 1851, in Boston Public Library.
41. Theodore Parker scrapbook, March 17, 1851, in Boston Public Library, quoted in Shapiro, p. 43, n. 33.
42. Talmadge, p. 60.
43. Schwartz, p. 196; Levy, pp. 41-42.
44. Schwartz, p. 197; see Michael Fellman, "Theodore Parker and the Abolitionist Role in the 1850s," *Journal of American History*, LXI (Dec. 1974), 666-684.
45. See, for example, Siebert's use of the comic story of the black fugitive racing across a bridge to Canada ("Vigilance Committee," p. 46).
46. Theodore Parker, "The Boston Kidnapping," in *Works* (Centenary Edition, Boston, 1907-1911), XI, 335.
47. A reference in the account of the meeting of black citizens, *Liberator*, October 4, 1850, shows that the news of James Hamlet's case had reached Boston almost immediately.
48. *Liberator*, October 11, 1850.
49. For Grimes, Nell, Hayden, and Morris, see James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North* (New York, 1979), pp. 47-48, 54-59; also, Stanley J. Robboy and Anita W. Robboy, "Lewis Hayden: From Fugitive Slave to

Statesman," *New England Quarterly*, XLVI (Dec. 1973), 591-613; Robert P. Smith, "William Cooper Nell: Crusading Black Abolitionist," *Journal of Negro History*, LV (July 1970), 188-199.

50. Horton and Horton, p. 100, conclude that the absence of working class blacks was significant, but this fact seems less significant in view of the fact that white members were also "not . . . representative" of the community.
51. For some discussion of anti-black prejudice in Boston, see Horton and Horton, pp. 67-80; and Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America 1800-1850: The Shadow of the Dream* (Chicago, 1981), esp. pp. 125, 258-61.