ANTI-NEGRO SENTIMENT IN CINCINNATI, 1829-1841

A Thesis

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by

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to Sandy Amoros, Andrew Pafko, Edwin Snider, and Carl Furillo, whose fond memories have enabled me to accomplish many difficult tasks.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

There has often been a tendency on the part of Americans studying the ante-bellum sentiment toward the Negro to designate the Mason-Dixon line as geographically separating southern racial inhumanity from northern liberalism and benevolence. However, a careful examination of this period illustrates that this is far from the truth. The overwhelming majority of northerners also advocated the doctrine of Negro inferiority.[1] Racial discrimination then, as today, was both blatantly and subtly displayed in northern cities in regard to housing, employment, and education. An examination of the statutes of local and state governments, along with the numerous newspaper accounts illustrates the extent of this discrimination.

Ohio was one of the northern states that, although it prohibited the institution of slavery, was notorious in its discriminatory treatment of its Negro population. A contemporary author examining the magnitude of hostility toward the Negro commented, "were we to inquire into the

[1]Leon Litwack, North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860 (Chicago, 1961), vii.

geography of this prejudice, we should find that the localities in which it attains its rankest luxuriance, are not the rice-swamps of Georgia, nor the sugarfields of Louisiana, but . . . the prairies of Ohio!"[2]

An important reason for this attitude was that the antislavery clause in the Ordinance of 1787 attracted to Ohio a large number of whites who were not only opposed to this inhumane institution, but also to the presence of the black man.[3] Concurrently, the geographical position of Ohio established her as the logical "Mecca" for southern Negroes. Both freedman and bondsman envisioned the crossing of the Ohio River as a journey to the "Promised Land," where they would at last find the freedom and liberty for which they had yearned.[4]

The problem of how to regard the free Negro and Mulatto, in relation to the rest of society, was an issue of lengthy discussion at the Constitutional Convention, convened in Chillicothe in November 1802.[5] The delegates assembled to determine the various laws that the new state

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[2]William Jay, Miscellaneous Writings on Slavery (Boston, 1853), 373.

[3]James Rodabaugh, "The Negro in Ohio," Journal of Negro History, XXXI (January, 1946), 13.

[4]Allan Peskin (editor), The Autobiography of John Malvin, Free Negro, 1795-1880 (Cleveland, 1966), 4.

[5]Isaac Franklin Patterson, The Constitutions of Ohio (Cleveland, 1912), 71.

should adopt in preparation for admission to the Union. However, from the beginning it became evident that the question of the Negro would be a major obstacle that had to be surmounted, if the purpose of the convention was to be fulfilled.[6] Part of the reason for the "warmth of feeling" in the convention was the fact that twenty-eight of the thirty-five delegates were either Jeffersonian Republicans, or those who sided with their cause.[7] In addition, seventeen of these Jeffersonians were natives or former residents of the South,[8] and were of the opinion that Negroes and Mulattoes should be ineligible to hold office, participate in the militia, pay a poll tax, or testify in the courts whenever a white person was involved.[9] John Browne, a member of the committee drawing up proposals for the Bill of Rights, even introduced a proposition that would have allowed a limited form of slavery in Ohio. Browne proposed, "No person shall be held in slavery, if a male, after he is thirty-five years of age; or a female, after twenty-five years of

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[6]Jacob Burnet, Notes on the Early Settlement of the North-Western Territory (Cincinnati, 1847), 355.

[7]John Barnhart, "The Southern Influence in the Formation of Ohio," Journal of Southern History, III (February, 1937), 32.

[8]Ibid., 42.

[9]Ibid., 41. See also Burnet, 355.

age."[10] Debate over this question became so heated that the meeting had to be adjourned. During the recess each member was instructed to set forth his own proposal on this issue. When the committee reconvened, they decided, by the narrow margin of 5-4, to adopt the proposal of Ephraim Cutler, which prohibited slavery or any form of involuntary servitude in the state. This proposal still had to go before the entire convention, and here it also met strong opposition. It appears that the bill was finally adopted only after one member, who previously voted with the proslavery faction, changed his stand. Thus by a majority of one vote slavery was excluded from Ohio.[11]

As the convention progressed, other questions concerning the status of the Negro were discussed. A motion was made to strike the word "white" from the article relating to the qualifications of electors, but it was defeated by a vote of 19-14.[12] This was followed by a move to secure the right of suffrage for male Negroes and

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[10]Julia Cutler, Life and Times of Ephraim Cutler (Cincinnati, 1890), 74. John Browne was the delegate from Hamilton County.

[11]Ibid., 77. Ephraim Cutler was the delegate from Washington County. The delegate who changed his stand was John Milligan of Jefferson County.

[12]Journal of the Convention (1802), reprinted in the Senate Journal of 1827, index, Art. IV sect. 1, "In all elections, all white male inhabitants above the age of twenty one years . . . shall enjoy the right of an elector."

Mulattoes presently residing in the state, on the condition that they record their citizenship within one month. The proposal was favorably received, by the vote of 19-15. However, when a further motion was made to secure this right for their male descendents, the convention rejected it by a vote of 17-16.[13] Eventually the final vote was taken to determine whether the Negroes then residing in Ohio would have the right of suffrage; the result was a tie, 17-17. Thereupon, Edward Tiffin, president of the convention, cast his vote with the opponents of Negro suffrage.[14]

Thus the Negro emerged from this convention little more than a second-class citizen. He undoubtedly had the right to request that the laws treat him with humanity and justice, but beyond that he had no claims.[15] All he received was the right to be considered in determining the ratio of apportionment for the members of the state legislature. In short, "he was given the privilege of standing

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[13] Ibid., 28.

[14] Ibid., 34. Charles Wilson, "The Negro in Early Ohio," Ohio Archeological and Historical Society Publications, XXXIX (1930), 723, makes an interesting notation in regard to Edward Tiffin. It appears that the ex-Virginian, who had freed his slaves before moving to Chillicothe, was in favor of legislating to prohibit blacks from entering Ohio. The "Black Laws" of 1804 and 1807 were passed while he was Governor.

[15] Burnet, Notes on the Early Settlement of the N.W. Territory, 356.

up and being counted."[16]

Even though Ohio, at the time of the convention, had only between 500 and 600 Negroes,[17] hostility toward this group already was great. The restrictions placing the Negro outside the body politic were established with the hope that they would discourage immigration into Ohio. Ohio, it should be noted, had a 375 mile border with Kentucky and Virginia,[18] and accordingly a persistent attitude prevailed that unless the Negro was made aware that he was unwelcomed, he would inundate Ohio, competing with the immigrants from the East coast and Europe. This, Ohioans feared, would retard their growth and prosperity by making labor less reputable. Another apprehension was that Ohio would become the dumping ground for poor and decrepit Negroes, no longer wanted by the slave states.[19]

These phobias eventually persuaded the Ohio Legislature to enact a number of restrictive laws regulating the immigration of Negroes. Beginning in 1804 it passed a series of "obnoxious" limitations upon Negroes, which were commonly referred to as "Black Laws." These edicts were

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[16]Emilus Randall and Daniel Ryan, History of Ohio (New York, 1912), Vol. IV, 115.

[17]Rodabaugh, "The Negro in Ohio," 13.

[18]Ibid., 15.

[19]Ibid.

designed to make it difficult for the Negro to establish a residence in the state, and also to prevent him from participating in the life of the community. On January 5, 1804, the legislature passed "An Act to regulate black and mulatto persons," whereby all Negroes entering the state had to produce evidence that they were indeed free. Those already residing in the state had to register themselves and their families at the office of the county clerk. Furthermore, two sections were incorporated to make it difficult for any white man to assist a Negro. The first provision stated that anybody employing a Negro or Mulatto who was unable to produce a certificate of freedom would be fined a sum up to $50 per offense. He was also required to reimburse the owner of the bondsman $.50 per day for the time he employed the slave. The second provision provided that anyone harboring or concealing a Negro or Mulatto fugitive was again subject to a $50 fine. In addition, the law stipulated that anyone aiding a fugitive to escape from the state would be fined $1000. What made these provisions all the more odious was that they rewarded any informer with half the fine. The reward indicated the government's determination and desire that these oppressive laws be enforced.[20]

It appears that this aversion to emigrating Negroes

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[20] Laws of Ohio, Vol. II, 63-66.

continued, for in 1807 a more stringent law was enacted. The amendment of 1807 provided that, "no negro or mulatto should be permitted to emigrate into and settle within this state unless [he shall] . . . twenty days thereafter, enter into bond with two or more freehold sureties, in the sum of five hundred dollars . . . for the good behavior of such negro or mulatto, and moreover to pay for the support of such persons in case . . . unable to support themselves." Any Negro or Mulatto not complying with this provision was to be immediately removed from the state.[21] The amendment also increased the fine for concealing or harboring a black to $100. Equally severe was the section prohibiting blacks or mulattoes, "to be sworn or give evidence in any court . . . where either party . . . is a white person."[22] In adopting such measures, the legislature was well aware that it would be generally impossible for a stranger, especially a black one, to find a surety. Thus by placing impractical conditions on the Negro, the act hoped to prevent this group from emigrating to, or remaining in, the state. The increased risk of aiding blacks also discouraged those whites who might otherwise have assisted these unfortunate outcasts.[23]

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[21] Laws of Ohio, Vol. V, 53-54 (section 1).

[22] Ibid., 54 (sections 3 and 4).

[23] Jay, Miscellaneous Writings on Slavery, 377.

The laws of 1804 and 1807 were not the only ones enacted to restrict the liberty of Negroes. On February 10, 1829, the legislature signed a bill providing for "the support and better regulation of Common Schools," but the bill included a proviso that nothing in the act should be construed to permit blacks to attend these schools.[24] On February 10, 1831, the legislature again restricted the freedom of Negroes by stating that blacks could not become jurors.[25] The following month the legislature passed a law providing for the establishment of poorhouses. However blacks were refused the right to establish a legal residence within the state, thus excluding them from the benefits of the law.[26] The last of the "Black Laws" was signed on March 7, 1838. This law established a fund for the education of all "white" children in Ohio.[27]

As demonstrated by this series of legislation, the old Northwest, sometimes referred to as "The Valley of Democracy," had some of the most stringent anti-Negro

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[24] Laws of Ohio, Vol. XXVII, 1829, 72-73. Under the Constitution of 1802, Art. I sect. 17, a bill became law when signed by both the Speaker of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. In 1903 in the Governor's Veto Amendment, Art. II sect. 16, a bill became law when signed by the governor.

[25] Ibid., Vol. XXIX, 1831, 94.

[26] Ibid., 321.

[27] Ibid., Vol. XXXVI, 1838, 21.

laws on record, and Ohio, the first of these northwestern states to be established, set the trend for the area.[28] Her "Black Laws" were so oppressive that many of the slave states seemingly treated their free Negro population with less cruelty than the free state of Ohio.[29]

However, this restrictive legislation did not deter Negroes from emigrating to Ohio in large numbers. To be free and away from the confines of slavery was their only hope. By the 1820s it became increasingly clear that Virginia and Kentucky would allow manumission of their slave population only on the condition that they leave the state.[30] Naturally, many of them chose Ohio as their new home.

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[28]Peskin, Autobiography of John Malvin, 3. Carter Woodson, A Century of Negro Migration (New York, 1969), 53, 54, claims that in 1831 Indiana passed a law similar to the Ohio law of 1807, and in Illinois the anti-Negro sentiment became so intense that it passed in 1853 a law forbidding the immigration of Negroes. Any Negro staying in the state longer than 10 days was fined $50, and if unable to pay the fine, could be sold to anyone willing to pay the cost of the trial. Also see Frank Quillin, The Color Line in Ohio (New York, 1969), 9. In 1851 Indiana passed by a vote of 108,513 to 20,951 a decree that all Negroes should be excluded from coming into the state.

[29]J. Reuben Sheeler, "The Struggle of the Negro in Ohio for Freedom," Journal of Negro History, XXXI (April, 1946), 214.

[30]Henry Noble Sherwood, "Movement in Ohio to Deport the Negro," Quarterly Publication of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, VII (June and September, 1912), 54.

PART TWO

CINCINNATI: THE CONDITIONS OF THE NEGRO AND THE RIOT OF 1829

During the decade 1820-1830, a large number of Negroes began their exodus from the rural areas of the South to the Northern urban centers, which were then experiencing rapid development. One of these new bustling metropolises was Cincinnati. Situated on the Ohio River, a major tributary of the Mississippi, Cincinnati soon became the most important commercial center in the Northwest.[1] This economic boom naturally attracted many newly arriving Irish and German immigrants, but the city's proximity to the slaveholding states also made it appealing to a multitude of blacks, who hoped to exercise the skills which they had been deprived of pursuing as outcast members of Southern society. Cincinnati was also thought to be a refuge for runaway slaves.

A major concern soon developed over the arrival of these Negroes; for Cincinnati had become economically

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[1] Eugene Berwanger, The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy (Urbana, 1967), 34.

dependent on the South by supplying it with machinery, farm implements, furniture, and food.[2] Accordingly, the Queen City assumed an attitude of hostility toward the black immigrants in an attempt to drive them from her midst. In this way she hoped not to acquire the reputation of harboring fugitives. She hoped also to encourage the settlement of white immigrants.[3]

Thus the "Promised Land" proved to be a barren expectation for the many Negro Pilgrims flocking to her shores. In 1827 John Malvin, a free Negro from Virginia, was one of those who hoped to establish himself in the Queen City. Here is an account of what he found:

> At Marietta I got aboard of a flatboat on the Ohio River, and worked my passage to Cincinnati, which was then a growing town. I thought upon coming to a Free State like Ohio, that I would find every door thrown open to receive me, but from the treatment I received from the people generally, I found it little better than Virginia.[4]

After reading the statutes establishing the status of free Negroes, Malvin concluded:

> Thus I found every door closed against the colored man in a Free State, excepting the

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[2]Edward S. Abdy, Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States of America (London, 1835), Vol. III, 65.

[3]Wendell Dabney, Cincinnati's Colored Citizens (New York, 1970), 33.

[4]Peskin, The Autobiography of John Malvin, 39.

> jails and penitentiaries, the doors of which were thrown wide open to receive him.[5]

As the number of Negroes settling in Cincinnati began to rapidly increase, a feeling of apprehension engulfed the white citizenry. Unless something was done to prevent this unlimited immigration, the result, they feared, would surely be an amalgamation of the races.[6] They were determined to discourage such a development by making it exceedingly difficult for Negroes to secure employment, suitable housing, or education, that might make the Queen City attractive. Tocqueville, in his visit to Cincinnati, inquired about these efforts to dissuade Negro immigration. A local lawyer, Timothy Walker, explained the plan as follows: "We are trying to discourage them in every possible way. Not only have we made laws allowing their expulsion at will, but we annoy them in a thousand ways. A negro has no . . . rights."[7] He then described an incident that had recently been brought to his attention. It concerned a Negro who, after supplying a master of a steamboat with numerous provisions, was

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[5] Ibid., 40. Peskin points out that in 1850, 1.9 whites out of every 10,000 were in jail, whereas out of the same number of blacks, 17.4 were imprisoned in Ohio.

[6] Berwanger, The Frontier Against Slavery, 36.

[7] George W. Pierson, Tocqueville in America (New York, 1959), 360.

refused payment, the master disclaiming any knowledge of the debt. Since the only witnesses were Negroes who worked for the supplier and were not allowed to testify against the culprit, no suit was brought to court.[8] This case helps to illustrate the extent to which Cincinnati Negroes were at the mercy of the white community.

Regardless of all the difficulty and prejudice they encountered, Negroes still flocked to Cincinnati, the largest and most flourishing free city on the Ohio River. To these unfortunate souls, the city offered a variety of discrimination. The Negro and Mulatto found themselves separated from the rest of society by being forced to live in their own sections, known as "Little Africa." Here they lived in the most wretched conditions, often in huts or decayed shacks, which created both health and fire hazards.[9] In addition to living in such squalor, the Negro also had to live with the accusation of his white landlord that improvements would not benefit him, for this was indeed the way he chose to live.[10]

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[8] Ibid., 361.

[9] Richard Wade, "The Negro in Cincinnati, 1800-1830," Journal of Negro History, XXXIX (January, 1954), 44. In Richard Pih's article "Negro Self-Improvement Efforts in Ante-Bellum Cincinnati, 1836-1850," Ohio History, LXXVIII (Summer, 1969), 179, he mentions that there were a few Negro sections, but the main one was "The Swamp" located in the First Ward.

[10] Litwack, North of Slavery, 170.

If housing conditions were deplorable, then discrimination in regard to employment was often intolerable. The citizens adopted the attitude that it was a disgrace for white laborers to work alongside of Negroes.[11] Thus keen economic competition produced by the large number of European immigrants as well as the fear of social ostracism prevented anyone from aiding Negroes to secure jobs. Accordingly, white mechanics refused to work in the same shops as Negroes, while white servants considered it a disgrace to eat with Negro help.[12] The hostility of these white laborers became so acute that the president of a mechanical association was publicly tried by that organization for the "crime" of assisting a Negro youth to learn a trade.[13]

In general, Negroes found themselves laboring in the lowest forms of drudgery, for which employers often preferred hiring black women.[14] Thus at best, a male Negro could aspire to work as a drayman or porter, or eke out a pitiful existence along the docks.[15]

It would be wrong to imply that there were no

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[11]Dabney, Cincinnati's Colored Citizens, 34.

[12]Litwack, North of Slavery, 158.

[13]Dabney, Cincinnati's Colored Citizens, 34.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Hickok, The Negro in Ohio 1802-1870 (Cleveland, 1896), 55.

successful Negroes in Cincinnati. The Queen City had her share, but these cases also illustrate the extent of animosity displayed by the white community. An excellent example is that of Henry Boyd, a Kentuckian who had mastered the art of working in the various fields of woodcraft. In 1826 he arrived in Cincinnati with the expectation of securing employment in a cabinet shop. Inquiring at a number of establishments, he was constantly refused on account of the color of his skin. If at times an employer exhibited a willingness to hire such a gifted artisan, his other employees would quash such a notion by threatening to quit, rather than work beside the Negro. Disappointed, Boyd had to content himself by working as a stevedore.

Eventually, Boyd managed to find work as a builder, and shortly thereafter his reputation enabled him to form a partnership with a white man. From this point, it took little time before the industrious craftsman saved enough money to establish his own woodworking enterprise. His practice of hiring both black and white employees illustrated that the two groups could get along. However, this action, along with his success, had so antagonized the white community that they burned his establishment three times, and eventually forced him to retire.[16] Men

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[16]George W. Williams, History of the Negro Race in America, from 1619-1880 (New York, 1883), Vol. II, 138-140.

like Boyd were the exception rather than the rule. The majority did not have the skill or fortitude of Boyd, and instead lived on a marginal level of subsistence often wondering where they would get their next meal.

The education of Negro youth was an additional aspect of discrimination in the Queen City. Cincinnatians feared that "equal educational privileges would encourage Negro immigration and antagonize Southern born residents."[17] Prejudice was too great even to tolerate white and black children playing together, and it was not uncommon to hear prominent men claiming, "they are not by nature equal to the whites . . . and their children cannot be made equal to my children."[18] The City Council went so far as to insert a provision in the Act of 1829, incorporating and establishing the town of Cincinnati, whereby Negroes were excluded from the municipal schools, and no provision was made for their education. Instead they had to provide their own schools and instructors.[19]

Even in regard to religion the hostility of the white community did not abate. The white churches reflected the prejudice of the time, and Negro parishioners found themselves separated from the other members in

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[17]Litwack, North of Slavery, 115.

[18]Ibid., 116.

[19]Hickok, The Negro in Ohio 1802-1870, 81.

sections commonly known as the "Nigger Pew." Not only did the Negro have to sit by himself in the "House of the Almighty," but during the rite of Eucharist he had to wait until all the white communicants had partaken of the bread and wine before he could do so. In addition, the Sunday schools were established so that there were separate facilities for Negro and white youth.[20]

The Negro clergy were similarly treated with disdain by their fellow white brethren. White ministers tended not to associate with Negro ministers out of fear that their congregations would rebuke such behavior and eventually dismiss them.[21]

With such prevalent attitudes against the Negro, it is little wonder that many blacks were destitute and left to wander the city streets. But, again, the municipal government refused to provide any assistance for Negro paupers and orphans. Unless some sympathetic person intervened, these unfortunate people were left to die amid the squalor of poverty and at best were thrown into a common burial ditch, without obtaining medical treatment or ministerial consolation. The sentiment was so intense against helping these Negroes that a Quaker superintendent

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[20]Litwack, North of Slavery, 196. Also Peskin (editor), The Autobiography of John Malvin, 57.

[21]Dabney, Cincinnati's Colored Citizens, 34.

of the county poorhouse was immediately discharged when the community became aware that he had taken pity on a group of Negro paupers and allowed them to enter the confines of the institution.[22]

Many Cincinnatians believed that their actions were justifiable. They insisted that the economic well-being of the city depended upon its trade with the South, and anything injuring those relations was detrimental to the interests of the community. Since they believed these things, the citizens viewed the presence of the free Negroes as a source of irritation for their Southern brethren. This was indeed the case, for approximately three hundred fugitive slaves each year passed through Cincinnati on their way to Canada. Here they were given asylum by the local Negroes, and then sped on their way North.[23]

Besides harboring fugitives, the free Negro population also aided bondsmen who were visiting the city to escape from their masters. John Malvin, in his autobiography, boasts of the way he managed to rescue four slaves on board a docked boat awaiting departure for the South. He concluded his account as follows:

> When they were found to be missing the city was thrown into great commotion, and constables

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[22]Williams, The History of the Negro Race in America, Vol. II, 143

[23]Abdy, Journal of a Residence and Tour, Vol. III, 23.

> were sent in all directions to search for the missing slaves; but they did not succeed in finding them.[24]

Many Southerners came to Cincinnati, along with their servants, to spend the summer months, and did not relish the idea of having their slaves abscond during their sojourn. The citizens of Cincinnati resolved not to remain idle while these transgressions occurred, lest they incur the wrath of their Southern guests, whose continual friendship they regarded as essential to their prosperity.

To many Cincinnatians, colonization seemed the logical solution to their dilemma. On the one hand, colonization would prevent the continual influx of Negroes from the neighboring slave states, and furthermore, it offered a way to rid the city of these pariahs. As early as 1824 a Colonization Society in Cincinnati began to investigate the feasibility of colonizing the Negroes in Haiti.[25] However, Africa seemed to be the more logical choice since they had originally come from her shores. Although some humanitarians espoused this cause as the only way the Negro could enjoy the fruits of his labor, prejudice was at the core of this movement. The president of the Ohio branch of this national organization stated on December 19, 1827, that the Negro was

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[24]Peskin (editor), The Autobiography of John Malvin, 46.

[25]Sherwood, "Movement in Ohio to deport the Negro," 56.

> an unfortunate race of men who . . . do not, but in a small degree, participate in the privileges and immunities of the country, and who, from causes in their nature inevitable and reasons insuperable, never can be admitted to the full enjoyment of those rights as fellow citizens. It is proposed to remove them . . . to a territory which they can claim as their own, where they may enjoy under a constitution and government adapted to their situation all the rights and privileges which might belong to a separate and independent community.[26]

The newspapers of Cincinnati, as well as those of the other cities bordering on the Ohio River, continually published tracts supporting the goals of Colonization. However, many of these articles were derogatory in nature, portraying the free Negro as a wretched, profligate individual whose presence threatened the security of the white community. The American Friend printed the following statement from a report on the urgency of Colonization, by a committee of the Ohio Legislature:

> The emigration of the free people of color to this state, has long been tolerated, and they have become so numerous, as to render them in many parts of the state a serious political and moral evil . . . for although they are nominally free, that freedom confers only the privilege of being more idle and vicious than slaves. . . . Besides the colored population has a tendency to depress and discourage the white laboring classes of the state, who are her source of wealth in peace, and her defense in war.[27]

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[26] Ibid., 56-57.

[27] American Friend and Marietta Gazette, January 2, 1828.

Statements such as this probably reflected the mood of Cincinnati and other southern Ohio cities which had been the terminus for this wave of black emigration.

Newspapers also printed reports of people visiting and living in Liberia. By illustrating the numerous economic, political and social advantages the Negro now possessed in his new home, the authors hoped to induce free Negroes to emigrate.[28] Some of the accounts written by the Negroes in Liberia appealed to their brethren to abandon the delusion that they could find liberty in America, and instead return to the land of their forefathers.[29]

By 1829, between one-quarter and one-third of all the Negroes living in Ohio had congregated within the city limits of Cincinnati.[30] This continual inundation of free blacks, which had been a thorn in the side of both the business and laboring classes, reached a violent climax in the summer of that year when the white laborers attempted to banish the Negro element from their midst. The impetus for this movement developed when the Ohio Supreme Court, convening in Hamilton County, ruled that the law of 1807,

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[28] Cincinnati Daily Gazette, April 24, 1829.

[29] American Friend and Marietta Gazette, March 28, 1828.

[30] Proceedings of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention, 1835 (New York), 17. Also Quillin, The Color Line in Ohio, 46.

which regulated the settlement of Negroes in the state, was constitutional. According to "Wilberforce," the reasoning behind the judges' decision was that the judges felt the constitution of Ohio was "framed and adopted by white people, and for their own benefit; and they of course had a right to say on what terms they would admit black emigrants to a residence here." Claiming that their geographical location made it imperative that the whites have this right, "Wilberforce" concluded, "if we open our door to them we shall be overwhelmed by an emigration at once wretched in character and destructive in its consequences."[31]

The consequence of this ruling was that on June 29, 1829, the Trustees of Cincinnati notified the Negro population that they had thirty days to leave the city, or else comply with the provision requiring that they give bond of $500 per person. Determined that the law should be enforced, the trustees also warned that the third section of the law would be rigorously enforced, so that anyone harboring or concealing any Negro would be fined a sum not exceeding one hundred dollars.[32]

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[31] Cincinnati Daily Gazette, July 24, 1829. "Wilberforce" was a pseudonym of a proponent of the decisions of both the Ohio Supreme Court, and later the Trustees of Cincinnati, to enforce the law of 1807. The Cincinnati Daily Gazette printed a number of articles concerning the feelings of the people of the city on this issue. "Jefferson" and "Blackstone" were opponents of this decision, and of "Wilberforce."

[32] Cincinnati Daily Gazette, June 29, 30, 1829, in a

In response to this directive, the Negroes called a meeting to explore the possibilities of emigrating to some distant place. In a public notice, they requested that the trustees await the return of a delegation they were sending to Canada before enforcing the law. Claiming that Negroes were being thrown out of work, this group also appealed for a three-month extension, in the hope that they could prepare for their journey and, at the same time, not become destitute.[33]

During the interim, the newspapers discussed the decision of the trustees. One of the most ardent spokesmen against the enforcement of the law was Charles Hammond, the editor of the Cincinnati Daily Gazette. Hammond claimed that it was not only totally inhumane to impose such a law, which would in effect drive approximately two thousand persons from their homes, but also extremely impractical, for the slaveholding states from whence they originally came would never readmit them.[34]

As part of a campaign to enlighten the citizens on the decision of the trustees, Hammond encouraged discussion, which he printed in his newspaper. Accordingly,

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public notice printed by the trustees; also Ohio State Journal, July 16, 1829.

[33]Cincinnati Daily Gazette, July 1, 1829.

[34]Ibid., July 4, 1829. The Western Star (Lebanon), August 1, 1829, echoed this view. It claimed, "the slave states will not have them because they are free and the free states will not have them because they are black!"

"Wilberforce" wrote a series of four articles supporting the constitutionality of the law and the decision of the trustees. The courts, according to "Wilberforce," were sworn to uphold the provisions of the Ohio Constitution and not to "consult all the writers of ancient and modern times, on moral philosophy and rights of man."[35] Continuing on this point, he claimed the law of 1807 proceeded from the supposition that all Negroes emigrating into Ohio were paupers. "Wilberforce" felt that this was indeed the fact in most cases. He concluded that by giving bond the Negroes proved they were not paupers, and by being unable to do so, simply reconfirmed the opinion that they were paupers.[36]

Opponents of "Wilberforce" and the trustees were also given their chance to reply to these accusations. Both "Jefferson" and "Blackstone" felt that the recent court decision was unjust, for it, "requires the emigrant black, however virtuous, industrious, and wealthy, to give security for his good conduct and support, whilst he is yet a stranger among us, and of course unable to furnish a surety." Besides, the law, having never been enforced, had led Negroes to believe that they could come to Cincinnati. By forcing them to remove themselves, if unable to

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[35] Ibid., July 20, 1829.

[36] Ibid., July 24, 1829.

comply with the provisions therein, a financial burden would be inflicted. They would be compelled to sell their belongings, undoubtedly at a loss.[37]

On August 1, 1829, in reply to "Blackstone," "Wilberforce" wrote, "the only alarming consequences, that I can discover from rigorously enforcing this law, are, that thereby we shall exclude from our community, a few worthy persons and a large number of miserable worthless vagabonds."[38]

It is also interesting to note how the Negroes reacted to the decision of the trustees. John Malvin, then living in Cincinnati, furnishes us with a valuable insight into what the black population proposed to do. He claims that a petition was drawn up and signed by numerous black and white opponents of the trustees' policy, requesting that the obnoxious "Black Laws" be repealed. However, it seems the Negro community was far from united on this matter, for one group issued the following notice:

> We, the undersigned, members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 200 in number, do certify that we form no part of that indefinite number that are asking a change in the laws of Ohio; all we ask, is a continuation of the smiles of the white people as we have hitherto enjoyed them.
>
> Signed, ABRAHAM DANGERFIELD,

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[37] Ibid., July 28, 1829 ("Jefferson"); also see July 27, 1829 ("Blackstone").

[38] Ibid., August 1, 1829.

JACK HARRIS,
THOMAS ARNOLD,
GEORGE JONES,
JOSEPH KITE.

Malvin felt that this display of discord among the Negroes was instrumental in persuading the legislature not to take any action on the petition for repeal of the Black Laws.[39]

As the summer progressed, the mood of Cincinnatians became more inflammatory in regard to their Negro inhabitants. The fact that very few, if any, blacks had posted bond so enraged the citizens that they finally decided to take matters into their own hands.[40] Forays were directed against the Negro community, reaching a climax on the weekend of August 22, when the mob assailed the unfortunate blacks. Immediately after the first outbursts of violence, approximately 400 Negroes left Cincinnati, heading in the direction of Canada and taking only what little personal belongings they could carry.[41]

According to the account printed by the Western Star, mobs roamed through the streets for four or five nights.

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[39] Peskin (ed.), The Autobiography of John Malvin, 43-44.

[40] Proceedings of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention, 1835, 20.

[41] Western Star (of Lebanon), August 29, 1829. An account of the riot. Cincinnati Daily Gazette, August 22, 1829. A notice was issued by the Negroes notifying the public that 400 had already left, many of whom were almost destitute. It stated that those who remained were anxious to leave, but didn't have the means to do so. Accordingly, the Negroes appealed for donations to their cause.

The newspaper claimed that the prospect of increased wages for whites "which the sudden removal of fifteen hundred laborers from the city might occasion," was an important reason for the violence. The "riot" naturally had its casualties; these resulted from the fact that the mayor and other city officials refused to act on the appeals of the blacks for protection against the infuriated mob. Eli Herrick, a white man, was killed, and two others were injured when they assailed the homes of the Negroes.[42]

There seems to be some difference of opinion as to whether or not the status of the Negro improved as a result of this "riot." The most immediate consequence was that almost 1200 Negroes out of a total population of 2200 fled from their homes to settle in Canada or other areas willing to exhibit more tolerance than the Queen City.[43] Probably it was fear that the laws were going to be enforced rather than fear of mob violence that made so many

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[42] Western Star (of Lebanon), August 29, 1829. See also Randall and Ryan, History of Ohio, Vol. IV, 123. Also see Richard Wade, "The Negro in Cincinnati, 1800-1830," 55. Wade makes an interesting point that violence was not unusual in western cities, and perhaps this episode, which has been referred to as "the riot of 1829," was instead just another one of these outbursts. The fact that one has to go to the Western Star, of Lebanon, Ohio, to get an account of the "riot" seems to confirm this interpretation.

[43] Proceedings of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention, 1835, 20. Cincinnati Advertiser, August 15, 1829, printed that the city had 2258 Negroes, whereas on August 18, 1830, it printed a figure of 1087 Negroes.

Negroes leave the city.[44] According to some contemporary views those Negroes who did remain seemed to find conditions deteriorating. Large numbers of common laborers were turned out of work, and often had to resort to thievery in order not to starve. Additional pressure was also exerted on those whites who had previously employed blacks, and few had the courage to risk the imposition of this social ostracism. At one point, a clergyman had to inform one of his Negro laborers, who was also a member of his church, that he could no longer employ him. After searching without success for another job, this same Negro despondently turned to his minister for advice. Whereupon, all that the latter could suggest was that he "go to Liberia."[45]

Richard Wade, however, believes that the "riot" had substantial, positive results. Most important was its effect in changing the attitude of many whites who formerly remained noncommitted in regard to the status of the Cincinnati Negro. He claims that the viciousness of the mob against the defenseless Negro had so moved this

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[44]Richard Wade, "The Negro in Cincinnati 1800-1830," 41. This is contrary to the view held by Carter Woodson in his article "The Negroes in Cincinnati Prior to the Civil War," Journal of Negro History, I (January, 1916), 7, who felt it was the fear of continued violence that induced the blacks to leave the city.

[45]Proceedings of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention, 1835, 21.

group that they now sympathized with his plight and were determined to help him. Wade cites the example of the editor of the Cincinnati Daily Gazette, who, he maintains, had previously supported the enforcement of the "Black Laws," but after evaluating the episode condemned the Queen City for her action.[46] According to the editor,

> It has driven away the sober, honest, industrious, and useful portion of the coloured population. The vagrant is unaffected by it. The effect is to lessen much of the moral restraint, which the presence of respectable persons of their own colour, imposed upon the idle and indolent, as well as upon the profligate. It has exposed the employers of coloured persons to suits by common informers, where no good or public motive was perceptible. It has reduced honest individuals to want and beggary, in the midst of plenty and employment; because employers were afraid to engage them. It has

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[46]Richard Wade, "The Negro in Cincinnati, 1800-1830," 56, 57. While Wade makes a valid point in stating that many Cincinnatians were appalled by the actions of the mob, and that some of them would later help the Negro, Charles Hammond, editor of the Cincinnati Daily Gazette, is not the best example to cite as a convert to this cause. If one examines his newspaper during the summer of 1829, he finds that the editor is continually denouncing the ridiculous attempts of the trustees to enact such an odious and impractical law. While he allows people like "Wilberforce" to state their views, he also allows "Jefferson," "Blackstone," and other opponents to respond. Another point of contention is that the article Wade uses (footnote #47) to support his claim gives one the impression that Hammond is talking about the results of the "riot." However, this article appeared on August 17, 1829, and the "riot" occurred on the weekend of August 22, 1829. What Hammond must be referring to is the sporadic attacks on the Negro community during the middle of August, as well as the publicly expressed intention of the trustees to enforce the law. As previously mentioned, there were already a large number of Negroes who had left for Canada before the "riot" actually started.

> subjected men of colour who held property, to great sacrifices. It has furnished an occasion for the oppressor and common informer to exhibit themselves, and commence their depradations upon the weak and defenceless, under color of law. It has demonstrated the humiliating fact, that cruelty and injustice, the rank of oppression of a devoted people, may be consummated in the midst of us, without exciting active sympathy, or operative indignation.[47]

Thus by 1829, the Negro had established the right to live in Cincinnati. This had been accomplished at the expense of oppressive discrimination and violence; but hereafter he would have friends to ease his burden in the quest for justice. The 1830s would find mobs assaulting white supporters for their endless struggle for the Negro.[48]

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[47] Cincinnati Daily Gazette, August 17, 1829.

[48] Richard Wade, "The Negro in Cincinnati, 1800-1830," 57.

PART THREE

THE LANE SEMINARY CONTROVERSY AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ABOLITIONIST PRESS

The decade 1830-1840 was a time when the friends of the Negro endured many agonizing experiences in their quest to uplift these social outcasts to a higher place in society. While the Queen City, with its large black population, offered the ideal location to test the ability of Negroes to make advancements, if given the opportunity, she was also the last place that could be expected to encourage this group. The scars of 1829 had still not healed by 1834.[1] Therefore it is hardly surprising that Cincinnati reacted with repugnance to the efforts of the Lane Seminary students. The students not only established an abolition society[2] at their institution, but also

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[1]Dwight Dumond, Antislavery Origins of the Civil War in the United States (Ann Arbor, 1964), 28; also Gilbert Barnes, The Anti-Slavery Impulse 1830-1844 (New York, 1964), 70.

[2]Lane Theological Seminary: Fifth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Cincinnati Lane Seminary (Cincinnati, 1834), 36. This was one of the results of the "Lane Debates," a series of discussions by the students on the topic of immediate emancipation and the future role of the American Colonization Society. The debates were held in February 1834.

expounded the view that all citizens, irrespective of color, should be treated equally.[3] Accordingly, they decided to establish a program to improve the condition of the free Negro in Cincinnati. A lyceum was established where the students lectured three or four evenings every week on geography, natural philosophy, and various other topics. They also organized evening schools to give instruction in reading. In addition, some of the students were so moved by the plight of the Negro that they obtained permission from the seminary to take leaves of absence, and began a school for the Negro youths of the city.[4]

These efforts were frowned upon by a large number of citizens who considered that the students were fanatics in trying to elevate the "inferior" Negro. The residents of Cincinnati instead attempted to discourage individuals from participating in this program.[5] One way was to make it difficult to secure a place in which to teach the Negro children. Mobs would assault and destroy any building

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[3]Gilbert Barnes and Dwight Dumond (editors), Letters of Theodore Weld, Angelina Grimke Weld, and Sarah Grimke 1822-1844 (New York, 1934), Vol. I.

[4]T. Weld to L. Tappan, March 18, 1834, Ibid., 133; also Benjamin Thomas, Theodore Weld Crusader for Freedom (New Brunswick, 1950), 72. Augustus Wattles and Marius Robinson were full-time teachers, while other students would assist them from time to time.

[5]Ibid., 134.

occupied for this purpose. Furthermore, prejudice was so intense that the citizens refused to accommodate white teachers in boarding houses.[6]

John Wattles, a white Cincinnatian, described one of these displays of mob violence that he witnessed.

> The howling of the rowdies around the church, chiming with the rattling of the window shutters and the whistling of the winter winds through the vacant panes and cracks of the door, the rattle of the stones and brickbats against the house, while the little ones within would gather up close to the teacher, and huddle closer together, trembling with fear and knowing not what to do, whether to stay and await the fire of the assailants, or rush out and brave the curses of the drunken rabble.[7]

Another indication of Cincinnati's opposition to allowing the Negro to participate in the life of the community was the passage of an ordinance on March 1, 1834. The law refused Negroes the right to vote for Mayor or other city officials. It also provided funds for the support of common schools, but added that black and mulatto children could neither attend these schools nor receive instruction therein.[8]

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[6]Cincinnati Board of Education, History of the Schools of Cincinnati, and Other Educational Institutions, Public and Private (Cincinnati, 1900), 182, 183; also Williams, History of the Negro Race in America, 171.

[7]John Shotwell, History of the Schools of Cincinnati (Cincinnati, 1902), 450, 451.

[8]The Laws and Ordinances of Cincinnati, of a General Nature, Now in Force (Cincinnati, 1842), sect. XXIII on

Probably the greatest source of irritation between the citizens and the students derived from the fact that the Lane students insisted upon treating the Negro as a social equal. Augustus Wattles outraged the Queen City by boarding with a Negro family, and other students adopted the same practice when teaching in the black community. Students were also frequently seen walking in the company of Negroes.[9] These actions caused so many resentful rumblings throughout the city that it was necessary for the faculty to convene the student body. The faculty explained that without offending the community or injuring the reputation of the seminary, Negroes could be instructed in common schools, Sabbath Schools, or any other missionary pursuit which the students viewed necessary, "provided they abstained from the apparent intention of carrying the doctrine of intercourse into practical effect." This, the faculty believed the community would never tolerate and would resist in a manner that it would be impossible to protect either the students or the seminary.[10]

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education, 25, 26. Negroes were allowed to establish their own schools. The revenue to operate these schools was to come from taxes on the property of black residents. This proposal, in effect, assured the city that the Negro would have no education, for the money assessed for this purpose would be hardly adequate to operate schools.

[9]Thomas, T. Weld Crusader for Freedom, 75.

[10]Lane Theological Seminary Reports, 35; also Charles Beecher (editor), The Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc. of Lyman Beecher, D.D. (New York, 1865), Vol. II, 325.

The students, however, were unmoved by this appeal. Instead they justified the boarding of white teachers in black homes as a necessary step to secure the confidence of the Negroes. Besides, they claimed that any reference to color in regard to social intercourse was immoral and that "some action, in advance of public sentiment was necessary to put it down."[11] There is little doubt that many of the students were unaware of the extent of hostility most Northerners harbored toward either immediate emancipation or the social equality of the races. A good illustration of the student's naivete is a letter Theodore Weld wrote to his good friend James Birney. In it Weld expressed his belief that "all the signs of the times convince me that within twenty years Slavery in these United States will be at an end and within five years in Kentucky and Missouri, and within half that time, that is two years, the free people of color in all the free States and in some of the now slave States will be raised to an equality of rights and privileges with the whites."[12] In the same letter Weld also suggested that Birney undertake, either at Lexington or Cincinnati, a weekly newspaper devoted to the cause of emancipation. "If it should be located in

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[11] Ibid., 37.

[12] T. Weld to J. Birney, June 19, 1834, Dwight Dumond (editor), Letters of James Gillespie Birney 1831-1857 (New York, 1938), I, 119.

Cincinnati, we of the Seminary could afford you constant and very important aid."[13] Surely Weld did not expect the Cincinnatians to welcome Birney with open arms!

During the late spring and summer months the Cincinnati newspapers explicitly demonstrated the antagonism of the citizens toward abolitionists and the doctrine of immediate emancipation. In an article concerning a recent race riot in New York, the Cincinnati Daily Gazette supported the view that abolitionists were the worst enemies that blacks had.

> They are holding out to them the prospect of amalgamation, feeding their pride with impractical hopes, exclaiming and denouncing the prejudice against color, leading them to believe that they are unjustly and cruelly treated by the whites, by the denial of equal political and SOCIAL privileges, fomenting their passions, denouncing all who will not join them in their absurd crusade as kidnappers, villains, manstealers, thieves and pirates, inviting them to sit down with the whites indiscriminately . . . in public assemblies, and social parties, and thus attempting to break down the barrier which nature had set up between the races, and of which the guardian sentinel is Taste.[14]

Attempts were also made to ridicule publicly the Lane students in the hope that this might deter them from proceeding with their project. Accordingly, the Western Monthly Magazine published an article illustrating the

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[13] Ibid., 121.

[14] Cincinnati Daily Gazette, July 18, 1834.

folly of these "precocious undergraduates" to tackle a problem that even the most experienced leaders of the nation considered it prudent to avoid--the immediate emancipation of the entire Negro Race![15] The students were also charged with turning Lane into a partisan institution. The magazine claimed that the seminary was originally intended to train men for the ministry and not to graduate abolitionists.

The article also expressed the opinion that few people in Ohio supported the doctrine of immediate emancipation, and even fewer desired to be tutored on this subject by the students of the Lane Seminary.[16] Besides the formation of the Abolitionist Society contradicted the tenets of colonization of the free Negroes which, it felt, "has been justly considered one of the noblest devices of christian benevolence and enlightened patriotism, grand in its object, and most happily adapted to enlist the combined influence, and harmonious cooperation, of different classes of society."[17]

A few weeks later a letter sent by Theodore Weld to James Hall, editor of the Western Monthly Magazine, was printed in a Cincinnati newspaper. The reply condemned

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[15] Western Monthly Magazine (Cincinnati, 1834), Vol. II (May, 1834), 268.

[16] Ibid., 270.

[17] Ibid., 272.

the article for misrepresenting the designs and nature of the students. Rather than a bunch of immature students intent on carrying out a "revolution" to achieve their goals, the articulate Weld illustrated that the accusations against the students were unfounded. The preamble of their Antislavery Society's Constitution clearly stated that although they desired the abolition of slavery they did not advocate the use of force to achieve this goal. As to the other charge that the students were "boys," Weld corrected the editor by enunciating the facts.

> Thirty of the theological students are over twenty-six years old, fourteen are over twenty-eight, and nine are between thirty and thirty-five. Two of the class were members of colleges seventeen years ago; two others graduated eight years since; six others, three years since. . . . One of the class was a practicing physician for ten years, twelve others have been public agents for state and national institutions, employed in public lecturing, in various parts of the Union.[18]

This was hardly the group of irrational men as portrayed by Hall. Instead Weld claimed that the article was intended to provoke the public to commit acts of violence in an attempt to forestall the discussion of slavery. However, claimed Weld, this was too late for the days of slavery were numbered.[19]

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[18]Cincinnati Journal, May 30, 1834; also T. Weld to J. Hall, May 20, 1834, Barnes and Dumond (editors), Letters of Theodore Weld, I, 137-146.

[19]Cincinnati Journal, May 30, 1834.

Weld had clarified for Cincinnatians exactly where the students stood on the issue of the Negro. Although they were opposed to the use of force, the students were determined to put an end to slavery, once and for all, and at the same time, elevate the Negro to his rightful place as a citizen of the Queen City. Accordingly, the hostile reaction to the students intensified to the point where it seemed as if violence would break loose at any moment. As a result, the faculty reconvened the students and implored the latter to show more restraint in their seemingly indiscriminate mingling of the races, for now even the safety of the institution had been threatened.[20]

On June 16, 1834, the students unanimously reported to the faculty that they could not, in good conscience, comply with their wishes, for they were committed to assisting the Negro and would not retreat now. They expressed their desire that the faculty support their efforts, and claimed it was impossible to "censure the practice of our members in eating, visiting, and boarding in colored families, on any principle of religion or reason."[21]

During the summer recess the climate at Lane continued to grow tense as the students intensified their efforts

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[20] Lane Theological Seminary Reports, 38.

[21] Ibid., 41; see also Sydney Strong, "The Exodus of Students From Lane Seminary to Oberlin in 1834," Ohio Church History (Oberlin, 1893), Vol. IV, May, 1893, 6.

to uplift the oppressed Negroes. Public wrath and indignation reached a peak when the students entertained a number of Negro girls at a picnic party on the seminary grounds.[22] Thus, on August 20, 1834, the Executive Committee of the Lane Seminary Board of Trustees cracked down upon the students by declaring that slavery would no longer be a topic for "immature" minds.[23] In addition the abolitionist society was dissolved and no student was allowed to absent himself from the seminary without taking a leave for the entire term.[24] This action was not surprising in view of the inflammatory reaction of the community and their avowed threat to discontinue support for the seminary.

From this point onwards matters never improved for the Lane students. On October 6, 1834, the Board of Trustees ratified the decision of the Executive Committee by a vote of 14-3, and instructed the faculty to enforce

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[22]Walter Keagy, "The Lane Seminary Rebellion," Bulletin of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio (Cincinnati, 1951), Vol. IX (April, 1951), 153.

[23]Thomas, T. Weld Crusader for Freedom, 81; also Charles Beecher (editor), Autobiography of Lyman Beecher, Vol. II, 327. Beecher claims that on September 13, 1834, while visiting the East coast, Beecher was informed of the action of the Executive Committee. They stated that they took this move with great reluctance but had they procrastinated, the very existence of the seminary would be threatened.

[24]Abdy, Journal of a Residence and Tour, III, 270-271.

these rules.[25] The faculty on October 17 concurred by adopting this decision.[26] The city was elated by these moves for it believed that the student abolitionists would undou btedly leave the seminary. There was, however, some concern that this would terminate the existence of the Lane Seminary. The Cincinnati Journal attempted to quiet these fears by illustrating that once the abolitionists left, a large number of young men, born and educated in the West, and "acquainted with the habits and feelings of the people would flock to Walnut Hills."[27]

Many of the students, believing that there was no hope for reconciliation, left Lane Seminary.[28] In a statement explaining the reasons for their departure, the students claimed that the primary difference between the seminary and themselves was over freedom of discussion. The institution desired to permit only dialogue that would

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[25]Thomas, T. Weld Crusader for Freedom, 84.

[26]Cincinnati Daily Gazette, October 22, 1834.

[27]Cincinnati Journal, October 10, 1834; Thomas, T. Weld Crusader for Freedom, 44. Lane Seminary was located two miles north of Cincinnati in a section known as Walnut Hills.

[28]Strong, "The Exodus of Students From Lane Seminary to Oberlin in 1834," 9. Fifty-one students left Lane and settled in Cumminsville for four months. Here they were invited to go to Oberlin, but refused until the trustees of that institution ratified a resolution admitting all students, "irrespective of color." Oberlin was thrown into a state of excitement by this request, but it was finally adopted.

tend not to aggravate public sentiment against the seminary.[29] The students also denied the accusation that they had given Lane a partisan character by committing it to the tenets of abolitionism. On the contrary, the institution already had a partisan nature by having twenty-one of the twenty-five trustees as proponents of colonization. The faculty also shared these sentiments, and in the spring of 1834 some members were the principal speakers at colonization meetings.[30] In addition, the students claimed that Professor Biggs was employed during the summer vacation to write essays on the benefits of colonization.[31]

Sydney Strong makes a valid point in justifying the actions of the Lane Trustees. He claims that besides the fact that Cincinnati was truly a Southern city, one also should remember the times.[32] William Garrison was really

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[29] A Statement of the Reasons which Induced the Students of Lane Seminary to Dissolve Their Connection with That Institution (Cincinnati, 1834), 6.

[30] Ibid., 21; also Cincinnati Journal, June 13, 1834. At a meeting at the First Presbyterian Church, Dr. Beecher defended the principles of colonization and appealed to the abolitionists to act in concert with the Colonization Society. Professor Stowe was also present and appealed for contributions to further the cause of colonization.

[31] Ibid., 22; also Cincinnati Journal, August 8, 22, 1834. Professor Biggs defends the tenets of colonization. He also denounces the abolition society organized by the Lane students.

[32] Strong, "The Exodus of Students From Lane Seminary

just beginning his work, and Elijah Lovejoy was murdered only a few years later. The seminary wanted to help the Negro, but felt it had to do so in ways that would not antagonize the community whose patronage it needed to exist. Even after the "rebels" left, Lane continued its work with the Negro population. The institution helped Negroes secure homes by granting them "perpetual leases" at nominal fees. One man secured a homestead in this manner for $4 per year. And as late as the 1841 riot, the terrified Negroes fled to the sanctuary at Walnut Hills.[33]

Another fact to consider was that actions similar to those taken by the Lane Trustees were occurring throughout the North. In 1835 fifty students left the Phillips Andover Seminary when refused permission to organize an antislavery society. A student abolition society at Hamilton College was dissolved by the faculty, and similar events occurred at Marietta College and Hanover College of Indiana. In addition, Charles Follen, a German Professor at Harvard, was refused reappointment because of his abolitionist activities.[34]

However, it was the fear that the efforts of Weld

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to Oberlin in 1834," 11. Points out that Cincinnati lay further south than Baltimore, Washington, D.C., half of Maryland, and part of Virginia.

[33] Ibid., 12.

[34] Thomas, T. Weld Crusader for Freedom, 87.

and the other Lane students would succeed in ameliorating the condition of the Negro, and thus stimulate a more rapid and intense emigration that caused Cincinnati to react so vehemently. As Weld explained in a letter to Lewis Tappan, more than three-fourths of the city's adult Negro populatio n had been slaves who had worked to purchase their freedom. Most families still had relatives and friends in bondage and were struggling to save enough money to buy their liberty. Weld found one man and wife who "bought themselves some years ago, and have been working day and night to purchase their children; they had just redeemed the last! and had paid for themselves and children 1400 dollars!"[35] It was only natural to expect that as conditions improved for the Negro, he would be in a better position to help his black brothers.

In April 1835 an abolitionist convention was convened in Putnam, Ohio, to establish a State Anti-Slavery Society.[36] The delegates proposed a number of resolutions, but the most significant dealt with the immediate emancipation of all slaves and the determination to liberate the

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[35]Weld to L. Tappan, March 18, 1834, Barnes and Dumond (editors), Letters of Theodore Weld, Vol. I, 135; also Proceedings of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention, 1835 (New York, 1835), 38. Contains a list of statistics relating to the black population in Cincinnati and how many members of their families were still in bondage.

[36]Proceedings of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention, 1835, 6.

free Negroes from the restrictions of oppressive laws and the hostility of public sentiment. The abolitionists also pledged to give "preference only to those goods produced by the sweat and toil of free labor."[37] This last proposal undoubtedly upset the merchants of the Queen City for much of their business involved the sale of Southern produce.

In the same year James Birney, an abolitionist, emigrated to Ohio with his newspaper. He had originally established an anti-slavery publication at Danville, Kentucky, but had been driven out by the inhabitants.[38] As early as November 1835, Birney became aware of the anti-abolitionist sentiment in Cincinnati. In that month he was visited by the Mayor and other city officials complaining of a handbill alleged to have been issued by the Cincinnati Anti-Slavery Society. They warned Birney that this placard had antagonized the citizenry and that there was a good possibility that an assault might be made on his home or the printing office where the handbills were supposedly composed.[39] Birney, however, refused to be intimidated and instead continued with his plans to

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[37] Ibid., 11.

[38] Randall and Ryan, History of Ohio, 126.

[39] Birney to Gerrit Smith, November 11, 1835, Dumond (editor), Letters of James Birney, Vol. I, 259.

establish an anti-slavery newspaper. The primary reason for this decision was that all the other daily publications were hostile to the cause of emancipation. Thus, in January 1836, the Philanthropist was established. However, due to the anti-abolitionist agitation in the city, and the threat of being "mobbed," Birney decided to do the actual publishing in New Richmond, a small town twenty miles north of Cincinnati.[40]

One reason why the commercial interests of the Queen City were particularly vexed over the appearance of Birney's abolitionist press was that in the autumn of 1835 Southerners began expressing their indignation toward the supporters of Garrison and Tappan. In an attempt to stifle the antislavery "fanatics," they threatened to terminate all business with the North.[41] As long as this possibility existed, many Cincinnatians felt that it was necessary to silence the abolitionist rhetoric in their city.

The spring of 1836 was relatively calm for Cincinnati, considering Birney had moved his press into the

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[40]Birney to Gerrit Smith, November 25, 1835, Ibid., 273; also Dumond, Antislavery Origins of the Civil War, 55; also Executive Committee of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, Narrative of the Late Riotous Proceedings Against the Liberty of the Press, in Cincinnati (Cincinnati, 1836), 10-11. This is a detailed account of the hostility towards Birney.

[41]Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette, September 25, 26, 1835.

city in April, and on May 3 the Philanthropist became the property and organ of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society.[42] However, on the night of July 12, 1836, violence erupted against the abolitionists. That evening a band of men, numbering between fifteen and twenty, raided the premises of Achilles Pugh, the printer of the Philanthropist. Here they proceeded to dismantle the press, carrying away many of the smaller pieces. Afterwards the mob went to an adjoining lot and tore the newsprint, smearing the debris with ink.[43] Although this operation made quite a commotion, none of Pugh's neighbors made any attempt to restrain the assailants. Even the "nightwatch of the city" refused to interfere with the assault. The explanation was that the night watchmen were stationed in another section of town where they suspected a disturbance.[44]

The next evening the following handbill was posted on the street corners throughout the city.

> THE DOG DAYS ARE COMING!
> "Abolitionists Beware"
> The citizens of Cincinnati, embracing every class, interested in the prosperity of the City, satisfied that the business of the place

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[42] Report of the Second Anniversary of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society (Cincinnati, 1837), 53; also Dumond, Anti-Slavery Origins of the Civil War, 55; Levi Coffin, Reminiscences of Levi Coffin (Cincinnati, 1880), 524.

[43] The Philanthropist, July 15, 1836.

[44] Narrative of the Late Riotous Proceedings Against the Liberty of the Press, 13.

> is receiving a vital stab from the wicked and misguided operations of the abolitionists, are resolved to arrest their course. The destruction of the Press on the night of the 12th instant, may be taken as a warning. As there are some worthy citizens engaged in the unholy cause of annoying our southern neighbors, they are appealed to, to pause before they bring things to a crisis. If an attempt is made to re-establish the Press, it will be viewed as an act of defiance to an already outraged community, and their heads be the results which will follow.
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> Every kind of expostulation and remonstrance has been resorted to in vain--longer patience would be criminal. The plan is matured to eradicate an evil which every citizen feels is undermining his business and property.[45]

A contemporary source felt that one of the immediate causes for the assault on the press involved a clash between a respectable member of the Cincinnati community and a group of Negroes. On July 5, the day the Cincinnati Negroes celebrated as the anniversary of American Independence, this prominent citizen proceeded to abuse the Negro, as a class, "in terms of unmeasured severity." He not only opposed their marching in parades but charged that they subsisted by pilfering and plundering. He further reprimanded them for encouraging the slaves of visiting Southerners to abscond. The result of this tirade was that one of the Negroes verbally assaulted the astonished white man. Since this person was known to be generally

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[45] The Philanthropist, July 15, 1836; also Narrative of the Late Riotous Proceedings Against the Liberty of the Press, 14-15.

hostile to the antislavery movement, and was also intimate with other influential citizens who shared his view, the author believed that the incident was somehow related to the destruction of the press.[46]

Probably a more plausible reason for the raid on Mr. Pugh's office was the fact that Southern slaveholders had come to the Queen City to escape the unpleasantness of their own climate and to conduct some business. The mobocratic assault seemed to have been made with the view of conciliating these visitors. The Ohio Anti-Slavery Society claimed that the Cincinnati hotels, being crowded by Southerners, had requested, or even ordered, that the antislavery discussion be quelled.[47]

The sentiment in Cincinnati continued to mount against the abolitionists. On July 17, a handbill was circulated rewarding with $100 anyone who would deliver James Birney, "a fugitive from justice." It was to be paid by "Old Kentucky" and no questions would be asked![48]

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[46]Narrative of the Late Riotous Proceedings Against the Liberty of the Press, 13.

[47]Ibid., 14; also Second Anniversary of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, 49, mentions that a short time preceding the July violence, efforts were underway to multiply and strengthen the commercial connections between the Queen City and the South. In Roseboom and Weisenburger, History of Ohio, 211, the authors claim that at this time Cincinnati was interested in developing a railroad linking their city with Charleston.

[48]Narrative of the Late Riotous Proceedings Against the Liberty of the Press, 17.

The following week a public notice was issued calling for a meeting to be held on Saturday, July 23, at 6 o'clock at the Lower Market House to decide whether the citizens would continue to permit the publication of the abolitionist newspaper. Many of the respectable citizens were requested, by name, to attend this gathering. The announcement claimed that the overwhelming majority of Cincinnatians were in favor of eradicating this evil by force if admonitions were found insufficient. It concluded, "the peace of our city requires that the voice of the community be known."[49]

Charles Hammond believed that such a meeting could only offer a resort to violence in an attempt to stifle the freedom of the press. Hammond denounced the contention that the abolitionists by antagonizing the Southerners were injuring the city. Instead the editor believed that a recourse to mob violence would do more harm to the reputation of the Queen City than any group of abolitionists could ever hope to do. He claimed, "Abolitionists and their newspapers, left to pursue their own courses, undisturbed and unnoticed, would not have occasioned in years, one tythe [sic] of the injury to the city, that the mobocratic doings, in respect to them, has inflicted

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[49]Cincinnati Daily Gazette, July 23, 1836.

upon us within a few days."[50]

The results of the meeting at the Lower Market House were twofold. One was that the citizens decided that nothing short of absolute discontinuance of the Philanthropist could prevent a violent assault against Birney and his supporters. This they believed would taint the reputation of their "fair city." Accordingly a committee was appointed to visit Birney and his associates to request that they desist from their operations, and warn them that if they persisted in publishing their newspaper, they would be responsible for the consequences.[51] The other result was that by adopting a resolution comparing their own actions with those of the patriots in Boston, in 1773, they, in effect, sanctioned the use of violence if the abolitionists refused to heed their demands.[52]

On July 28 Judge Burnet and the other citizen's committee members met with James Birney and the Executive

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[50]Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette, July 23, 1836. The Cincinnati Journal, July 21, 1836, also opposed the mob action against the Philanthropist, and saw the attacks on the freedom of the press as a grave danger to society.

[51]Ibid., July 25, 1836.

[52]Ibid. The Cincinnati Journal, July 28, 1836, claimed that the association of the action decided upon at the Lower Market House and the Boston Tea Party was preposterous. One attempted to end the oppression of a tyrannical government, while the other sanctioned violence to take away the freedom of individuals whose views differed from those of the majority of citizens.

Committee of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society. Burnet emphasized that the merchants were receiving correspondence from their Southern counterparts to either suppress the antislavery discussion or be content to lose their business. He also claimed that the presence of the abolitionists had made the local Negro population more impudent to the white people than formerly.[53] In response, the abolitionists recognized that they were unpopular with certain segments of the Queen City but refused to abide by the demand to terminate their newspaper. To do so would only hinder the principle of freedom of the press and, in effect, would be a surrender to the pressures of other states. The Philanthropist was the spokesman for the abolition of slavery, and as such, was a vital organ of expression that was needed in the community.[54]

The result of this meeting was that the enraged citizens of Cincinnati concluded that if the abolitionists could not be persuaded to discontinue their discussion of slavery, they would have to be stopped! Thus on the night of July 30, 1836, very shortly after dusk, a large number of citizens assembled at Main and Seventh Streets. Upon consultation they advanced to the printing office of the

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[53] Narrative of the Late Riotous Proceedings Against the Liberty of the Press, 34.

[54] Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette, August 1, 1836.

Philanthropist, where they proceeded to scatter the type into the streets, dismantle presses, and destroy the office. From the printing office the crowd headed toward the home of Mr. Pugh. Here they continued their search for additional printing materials, but having no success, left without injuring anyone. They next proceeded to the home of Mr. Donaldson.[55] Finding only women at home, the disappointed mob headed for the residence of James Birney. Here they were informed that Birney had earlier that evening taken a stage to Hillsborough.[56]

The mob then returned to Main Street where they proposed to pile the contents of the printing office into the street and start a bonfire. This action was finally discouraged when one of the participants warned that such a fire would eventually spread to the nearby houses. Thereupon a portion of the press was carried down to the river and thrown in.[57] The crowd, still not satisfied with their destruction, proceeded to attack the Negro residences in Church Alley, a section where both Negroes and whites had been living together. The mob drove the

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[55]Clarissa Gest to her brother Erasmus, August 2, 1836, Erasmus Gest Papers 1832-1883, Manuscript and Archive Division of the Ohio Historical Society, Vol. I.

[56]Ibid. The author claims the mob intended to tar and feather Birney.

[57]Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette, August 2, 1836.

occupants from their homes, which they then damaged. Afterwards the crowd continued to the "Swamp" where they destroyed five or six houses. Only by firing guns did the blacks succeed in routing their assailants. About midnight the Mayor addressed the mob and told them they might as well now disperse![58]

Disturbances continued the following day when the crowd marched to the Franklin House where Birney had boarded a few days during the summer. The Mayor conducted a search of the premises after the mob had threatened to demolish the establishment unless allowed to enter and look for Birney. No trace was found of the abolitionist, and thus the mob reluctantly dispersed. On Monday another confrontation occurred. The mob had assembled on Sixth Street where they decided to destroy the African Church. However, this time they were met by the Mayor accompanied by a volunteer force of citizens intent on putting an end to these disturbances. After an initial response of irritation at the Mayor's request for order, the mob hesitantly disbanded.[59]

The extent of Cincinnati's animosity toward Birney was so great that in a letter to Lewis Tappan, the editor

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[58]Clarissa Gest to her brother Erasmus, August 2, 1836, Erasmus Gest Papers; also the Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette, August 2, 1836.

[59]Ibid.

of the Philanthropist wrote, "I had but little idea of the personal malignity of the mobocrats against myself. It is confidently asserted that I could not have entered town by the way I did, had it been at the usual hour when the people are generally out of bed--but that I would have been instantly seized and lynched."[60] Although Birney refused to leave the city, it was weeks before he could safely walk on the streets, even in the daytime.[61]

The reaction to the destruction of the press was far from unanimous. One group of Cincinnatians felt that they had performed a patriotic service to the city and the nation by quieting the voices of the abolitionists whose publication, they believed, had threatened the existence of the Union. On the request of Wilson Brown, a participant in the Lower Market House meeting of July 23, an article was copied from the Vicksburgh Register praising the citizens of the Queen City for the manner in which they rose to deal with the menace of the abolitionists. Acknowledging that their actions were in violation of the laws of the land, the Vicksburgh Register claimed that there was a higher law to which the Cincinnatians were amenable. It concluded, "Our brethren in Cincinnati, have

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[60]August 10, 1836, Dumond (editor), Letters of James Birney, I, 349.

[61]Dumond, AntiSlavery Origins of the Civil War, 56.

acted in the true spirit of Christianity. Their delicacy in interfering with the property of others, is above praise. A few more such moves, in other quarters, and the spirit of abolition is quenched forever."[62]

In contrast, the Cincinnati Journal denounced the wave of anarchy that seemed to be sweeping throughout both Cincinnati and the nation as a whole. The newspaper claimed that this total disregard for the rights and property of individuals who held different opinions from those of the majority would eventually lead to the abrogation of liberty for everyone.[63] A number of Southerners also regretted the way in which Cincinnati reacted to the abolitionists. The Louisville Advertiser claimed that they were against the operations of the abolitionists in the Queen City, but deplored the fact that the hostility to the Philanthropist was based merely on business interests. It felt that the Committee of Citizens should have urged Birney that slavery was an institution that people of the nonslaveholding states had nothing to do with, and that they could only encourage disunion by interfering. The newspaper concluded that selfish interests alone prompted a violation of law in favor of the rights of slaveholders,

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[62]Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette, September 1, 1836.

[63]Cincinnati Journal, August 4, 1836.

and thus they could not "thank the Cincinnatians for what they have done."[64]

It is interesting to examine the Negro reaction to the destruction of the property of their supposed friends. On August 1, 1836, a meeting was called by the Cincinnati Union Society of Colored Persons. At this gathering the Negroes announced that the abolitionist newspaper had a direct tendency to injure their interests by antagonizing the white community, and therefore made it more arduous to substantially improve their condition. They resolved to dissociate themselves with the actions of Birney, and the other abolitionists, and instead requested to be left alone to determine their own salvation. This declaration was signed by Dennis Hill, president, and thirty-five members of the organization.[65]

Although twenty-eight members subsequently declared that their names had been affixed to this document without their consent, they also stated that they had no affiliation with either the Colonization or Abolitionist Societies in Cincinnati. Their own association had been organized before the formation of an abolitionist press or society, and for the purpose of aiding the distressed

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[64]Cincinnati Daily Gazette, August 8, 1836.

[65]Narrative of the Late Riotous Proceedings Against the Liberty of the Press, 45.

Negroes of the city. The members also declared they comprehended that their privileges and immunities were not equal to those of whites. They expressed the belief that these conditions could only improve if the Negro conducted himself in a way that would win the admiration and respect of all the white people. Therefore they decided to leave the question of "abolition and anti-abolition to those with whom it originated."[66]

This response by the Negro community is somewhat reminiscent of the reaction of certain blacks to the petition to repeal the "Black Laws" in 1829. It appears violence against blacks was so rampant, and at times so brutal, that they feared that unless they denounced the actions of the abolitionists they would be the victims of future reprisals. One should remember that the Negroes could still be called upon to post $500 bond, which very few of them had. Many vividly remembered that less than ten years before, more than half of their black brothers had been forced to leave Cincinnati, and thus did not cherish the idea of further antagonizing the white community.

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[66] Cincinnati Daily Gazette, August 8, 1836.

PART FOUR

THE RIOT OF 1841 AND CONCLUSION

By 1840 racial prejudice toward the Cincinnati Negro had by no means diminished. It is true that the black man had made some economic gains, but this was due rather to chance than to a reversal in sentiment. The development of the steamboat as a major mode of transportation improved the condition of the Negro. These ships frequently employed him as a servant to the traveling public. In this manner he acquired large sums of money in the form of "tips," which he subsequently used to purchase real estate and to establish businesses in the Queen City.[1] However, the majority of Negroes still faced a hostile white community. In May 1841 the Philanthropist appealed to the people of Cincinnati to hire the talented black mechanics and artisans in their midst. Economic discrimination was apparently also practiced by many of the city's abolitionists. The newspaper claimed that a number of abolitionists were master mechanics and could surely open

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[1]Carter Woodson, "The Negro of Cincinnati Prior to the Civil War," 10.

their shops to either employ black craftsmen, or train Negro youths interested in learning a trade.[2]

Prejudice against the black man was so intense in many of the local churches that in many instances he stopped attending altogether. In 1840 John Rankin urged his fellow Presbyterians to assist these Negroes in building their own houses of worship since they no longer had any intention of returning to the white churches.[3] In addition to these local incidents, the Ohio Legislature resolved not to repeal any of the "Black Laws." The legislators felt that this would only invite a further emigration of Negroes into the state which would injure the public interests.[4]

In the latter part of the spring of 1841, Cincinnati was thrown into a frenzy over a recent decision of the Supreme Court of Ohio. The court decided that whenever slaves were brought into Ohio, with their master's consent, for any purpose whatsoever, "even with the view of passing through it to settle in another slave State, [this] would, ipso facto, free the slaves."[5] The initial reaction

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[2]The Philanthropist, May 26, 1841.

[3]Benjamin Quarles, Black Abolitionists (New York, 1969), 71.

[4]William Jay, Miscellaneous Writings on Slavery, 386.

[5]Cincinnati Daily Gazette, May 29, 1841, June 1, 1841.

of many Cincinnatians was that the decision was unconstitutional, for it refused to protect the property of citizens, of sister states, in Ohio.[6]

This decision to deprive the wealthier and traveling portions of Southerners the use of their servants naturally upset the residents of Cincinnati. The citizens requested that the city advertise this latest decision so that their Southern friends could be aware of the consequences of bringing their slaves into the state. Already a number of Southerners who had come to the Queen City, without any knowledge of the new ruling, had witnessed the conversion of their slaves into free men upon arrival.[7]

While the city was in such a state of excitement, another incident occurred that further added to the tension. It involved a Kentuckian, John McCalla, who claimed that one of his slaves was harbored at the home of a local confectioner, Cornelius Burnett. It seems that the Negro had informed Burnett that his master had given him permission to come to Cincinnati. Thus when McCalla, along with two other men, forcibly entered Burnett's home, the

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[6] Ibid., June 2, 1841.

[7] Ibid., June 25, 1841; also The Philanthropist, June 30, 1841. Commenting on the anger of the merchants over this latest court decision, the newspaper stated that if slaveholders wanted to retain their bondsmen, let them do so at home. In Cincinnati people pay for services rendered!

confectioner and his family naturally assumed that the men were kidnappers.[8]

A fight developed during which McCalla was severely beaten after he had drawn a gun and fired at the Burnetts. The noise attracted a crowd of people, who in the meantime had heard reports that Burnett was harboring a fugitive and resisting the attempts of peace officers to return the Negro. When they saw a bloodied McCalla fleeing from the house, the crowd became enraged. News of what had happened soon spread throughout the city, until a large crowd gathered outside Burnett's home. As the mob approached, Burnett warned the intruders that he would shoot anyone who came on his premises. The crowd reacted by throwing stones through the windows, and then an attempt was made to tear down the awning. During the melee that followed, Cornelius Burnett was thrown to the floor and assaulted.

Later that afternoon Cornelius Burnett, his three sons, and three friends who had assisted the confectioner, were arrested. Refusing to pay the $3000 bail, they were sent to jail. During these proceedings the mob continued to demonstrate. When the prisoners were marched to jail, "an attempt was made to lynch them, but the determined spirit of the constables" prevented such an incident. However, the mob continued its violence throughout the

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[8]The Philanthropist, June 30, 1841.

weekend, attempting to destroy both the home of Burnett and the Philanthropist printing office. One of the reasons that the mob had gathered in such strength seemed to emanate from the decline in business associated with the rise in the Negro population as well as the latest Supreme Court decision.[9]

As the summer progressed, the tension in the city did not decrease. In the beginning of August the Cincinnati Daily Gazette reported that a new racial incident had taken place on the outskirts of town. It seemed that a couple of Negroes were ordered by two Germans to leave the latter's blackberry patch. The Negroes complied, but later returned and as a result a fight ensued. The newspaper claimed that both white men were stabbed, one so seriously that he later died.[10] About three weeks after this event a respectable white lady was reported to have been insulted by a group of blacks on her way home.[11]

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[9]Ibid.; The Philanthropist attacked the Cincinnati Enquirer's article of June 26, 1841, relating to the McCalla-Burnett incident. The Enquirer stated that McCalla had come with a warrant and officer Black to reclaim the fugitive. It also claimed that the crowd although outraged by Burnett's flagrant violation of the law, did not turn into a violent mob. The Philanthropist claimed that these unfounded charges led to incidents like the riot of 1836, and that the other newspaper was inciting the passions of the community to repeat such disgraceful acts.

[10]Cincinnati Daily Gazette, August 3, 1841. On September 14, 1841, the newspaper reported that the seriously wounded white man had died as a result of the stabbing.

[11]Ibid., September 14, 1841.

As these racial confrontations increased, reports also began to be spread that there was an organized plan in Cincinnati to harbor and conceal fugitives, as well as to encourage bondsmen to leave their masters. The citizens were reminded that the prosperity of the Queen City was bound to her Southern commercial interests, and thus they should conduct themselves accordingly.[12]

The enmity between the black and white communities reached such explosive proportions that on Tuesday, August 31, violence erupted. That evening a group of Irishmen clashed with some Negroes. During the exchange of blows weapons were drawn, and two or three persons were injured from each group. The quarrel resumed the following night when the whites, armed with clubs, attacked a Negro boarding house on MacAllister Street, demanding the surrender of a Negro they claimed was concealed within.[13] The commotion attracted the neighboring blacks who rushed to the aid of their comrades. In the resulting melee several more people were injured. This fighting continued the next day as the toll of wounded began to mount.[14]

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[12]Cincinnati Enquirer, August 9, 1841.

[13]Cincinnati Chronicle, September 6, 1841. The newspaper claimed that the rioters were intent on dragging innocent Negroes into confinement where they most probably would have killed them!

[14]Cincinnati Daily Gazette, September 6, 1841.

By Friday the city was in a state of great excitement, and violence was everywhere. However, the Mayor and his police force remained totally inactive, taking no measures to preserve the peace.[15] News soon reached the Negro district that the whites were planning an assault on their homes, and accordingly they began to gather arms for the encounter. About 8 o'clock that evening a mob, numbering between seven and eight hundred and which seemed to have originated in Kentucky, began assembling at the Fifth Street Market, entirely unmolested by the police.[16] Their avowed purpose seemed to be to drive the Negroes from the city.[17]

As the mob proceeded to the Negro section, the gathering crowd began shouting continual words of encouragement for the all-out assault on the Negroes. Even the sudden appearance of the Mayor who pleaded that this group desist and return to their homes, made no impression on the mob. As the assailants advanced into the Negro quarters, they were met by a volley from the Negro guns, which temporarily routed the attackers. After a short interval

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Cincinnati Enquirer, September 4, 1841; also Carter Woodson, A Century of Negro Migration, 57, claims that the foreigners and pro-slavery element wanted to kill off or drive out the Negroes who were becoming too well established in the city.

to rally their forces, the whites again descended upon the blacks. This fighting continued for many hours during which time a number of persons were killed and wounded.[18] About one o'clock a party of whites brought a "six-pounder" to the Negro district and as the assailants approached, firing their cannon into the multitude of blacks, they were finally able to rout the defenders.

The barrage from the cannon had sent the Negroes fleeing to the surrounding hills for protection. Here many of them eventually went to Walnut Hills. At first the mob decided to pursue their victims, but when they heard that the students of the Lane Seminary had made adequate preparations to repel such an attack, they decided against this course of action.[19]

On Saturday a meeting was held by the citizens to decide how to put an end to these disturbances. The group resolved to aid the civil authorities in dispersing the mobocratic rabble. However, they requested that the Trustees of Cincinnati enforce the law of 1807 so that the city would be relieved of the effects of both the Negroes and the abolitionists. They also pledged to return all

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[18]John Sullivant to J. Birney, September 11, 1841, Dumond (editor), Letters of James Birney, Vol. II, 632. Sullivant claims that 40 people were killed in the riot.

[19]Levi Coffin, Reminiscences of Levi Coffin, 533.

fugitives to their masters, and thus assure their Southern brethren that they would not become a haven for runaway slaves. In addition, the citizens asked the Mayor to go to the black district and disarm all the Negroes.[20]

The Negroes also held a conference and as a result assured the Mayor "that they would use every effort to conduct themselves as orderly, industrious and peaceful persons."[21] They also declared their willingness to comply with the law of 1807, or leave the city within a specified time. Although the Negroes clearly demonstrated that they were in favor of adopting the proposals of the white community, the mob was still dissatisfied. It was therefore deemed prudent to imprison the Negroes for their own protection, and at the same time take away the excuse for the presence of a mob. Accordingly, that afternoon three hundred Negroes were disarmed and marched off to jail. That night, however, the mob continued on its path of destruction. They attacked the printing office of the Philanthropist, destroying its presses,[22] and then proceeded to attack the homes of both Burnett and the

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[20] Cincinnati Daily Gazette, September 6, 1841.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Cincinnati Enquirer, September 6, 1841, claims that part of the press was thrown into the river, while other sections were carried off to Kentucky as trophies of victory!

defenseless Negroes. Later in the evening, the rioters returned to the settlement on Sixth Street, solely occupied by Negro women and children. Here the assailants smashed doors and windows, destroyed part of the African Church, and insulted the women. It was only the coincidental arrival of Governor Corwin that finally brought these outrages to a conclusion.[23]

A sidelight to this riot was that a para-military force, The Warsaw Guards, from Kentucky, arrived in Cincinnati under the pretense of "giving aid to the citizens of the Queen City whom they heard were being murdered, their city destroyed, and the citizens held at the mercy of bands of Abolitionists and Negroes who had revolted." This group did not take part in the riot, but was nevertheless thanked by the Mayor for its offer.[24]

The Cincinnati Daily Gazette in reviewing the events that led to the riot emphasized the fact that the rise in the Negro population in the last few years, to almost 3000 persons, had greatly antagonized the white community. "The labor of the colored man competes directly with that of the white, and excites jealousy and heart burning." The newspaper also complained that idle blacks were walking throughout the city making commotion and abusing the

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[23]Cincinnati Chronicle, September 6, 1841.

[24]The Philanthropist, September 8, 1841.

white populace with their offensive language.[25] The newspaper thought that the only solution for Cincinnati was to enforce the law of 1807. "Let the law be enforced against the white man as well as against the Negro. We are against encouraging a black population in this city--it is no place for them--they are not, and cannot be, in the nature of things, secure here--and their presence tends to disturb the peace and quiet of the city." It should be noted that this was a direct reversal of the position that the Cincinnati Daily Gazette had taken when the trustees demanded that Negroes comply with the "Black Laws" in 1829![26]

Although the law of 1807 was never enforced, many well-to-do Negroes still made arrangements to go to Liberia.[27] It appeared that this group had realized that the Queen City was no place for the black man. The hostility of the white community and the frequent recourse to violence was little incentive to remain in the city, if one had the means to depart. It was apparent that even if you were fortunate enough to succeed, your property, as

[25] Cincinnati Daily Gazette, September 14, 1841.

[26] Ibid., September 9, 1841. This may be explained by the fact that the previous editor, Charles Hammond, had died in 1840. However it seems more likely that events during the past ten years had convinced most Cincinnatians that the presence of the Negroes was injuring the best interests of the city.

[27] Ibid., September 13, 1841.

well as your life, was never truly secure.

One of the immediate results of the riot was that Negroes began to be hired less often by whites, abolitionists included, and their shops patronized by fewer people.[28] Even domestic service jobs became scarce for blacks. Thus once again only the most resourceful Negro could survive in the Queen City.[29]

The Negro historian Carter Woodson, however, believes that the riot had some positive results. He claims that it demonstrated to the enemies of the Negro that there were enough law-abiding citizens to secure to the blacks protection from the mob violence. In addition, many people were so outraged by this event that they began to petition the Ohio Legislature to repeal the "Black Laws," which although not fully revoked, were somewhat modified in 1849.[30] While Woodson is correct on both accounts he tends to oversimplify the issue. The "Black Laws" were modified in 1849, but this was due more to the political "horse-trading" in the Ohio Legislature than to the feeling on the part of Ohioans that the oppressive legislation

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[28]Pih, "Negro Self-Improvement Efforts in Ante-Bellum Cincinnati, 1836-1850," 181.

[29]Ibid., 181, 182; also Peskin (editor), Autobiography of John Malvin, 8.

[30]Carter Woodson, "The Negro in Cincinnati Prior to the Civil War," 16.

against the Negro should be lifted.[31] Even during the 1850s Ohioans petitioned their legislature, three times, in an attempt to exclude Negro emigration.[32]

In the same year that Woodson claims Ohioans had a change of heart and repealed some of the severe restrictions against blacks, Cincinnati Negroes were still being assaulted in the streets. As a result of a devastating cholera epidemic that had struck the city, many blacks living in the crowded huts and shanties near the swamps of Deer Creek, died. Even in these dire times dissident whites continued to torment them. During a funeral procession a number of whites threw "brickbats" at the Negro mourners. When the funeral procession finally reached its destination, the blacks buried their dead in segregated cemeteries.[33]

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[31]Peskin (editor), Autobiography of John Malvin, 67. In a footnote Peskin illustrates that the repeal of the "Black Laws" in 1849 was accomplished as a result of the election of 1848. The Ohio Legislature was deadlocked, neither Whigs nor Democrats were able to organize the House or elect a U.S. Senator without the support of the Free Soilers. This party eventually threw their support behind the Democrats in return for a promise to repeal certain "Black Laws," and to send the antislavery Chase (in preference to the more radical abolitionist Giddings) to the Senate.

[32]Berwanger, The Frontier Against Slavery, 43, 44.

[33]Pih, "Negro Self-Improvement Efforts in Ante-Bellum Cincinnati, 1836-1850," 186. Also Abdy, Journal of a Residence and Tour, III, 7, comments on the public cemetery in Cincinnati, Potter's Field, where whites and blacks were laid to rest in different positions.

Almost three-quarters of a century after the riot of 1841, a study was conducted to determine the condition of the Negroes then residing in the Queen City. The astonishing aspect of this survey was that the anti-Negro sentiment was as prevalent then as it was during the Ante-bellum period. If anything, the condition of the Negro had seemed to deteriorate. He still was refused permission to practice his skills, and practically the only jobs available were either as domestics or as janitors. In addition, hotels, taverns, restaurants, and places of recreation were almost universally "off limits" to anyone showing the slightest trace of having Negro blood![34] The disheartening fact is that Cincinnati was not a unique community, in her racial attitudes, in either Ohio or the rest of the North. What many people refuse to understand is that prejudice was, and continues to be, a national rather than a sectional problem.

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[34]Quillin, The Color Line in Ohio, 126-133 for his study of Cincinnati.

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