

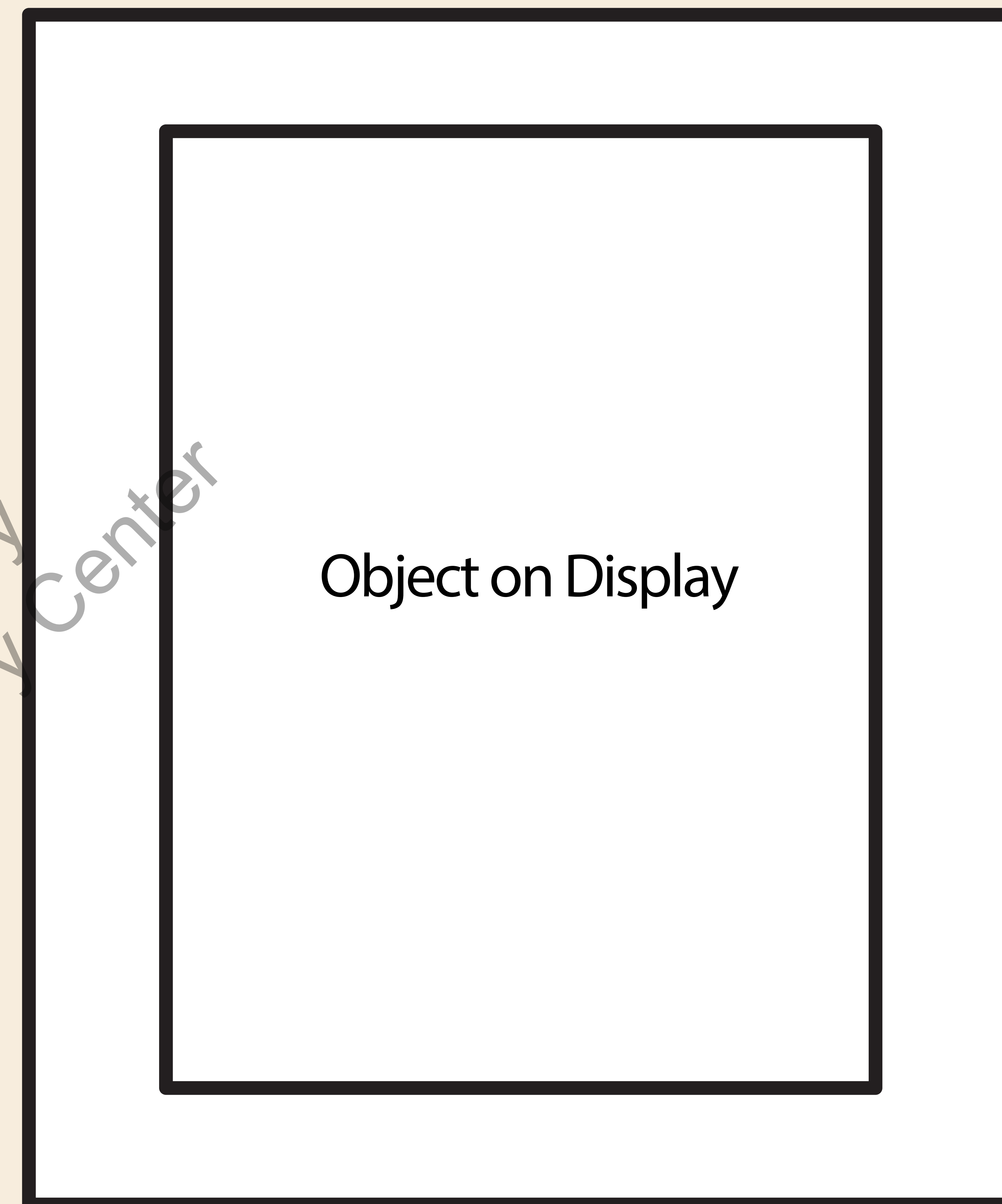
From its beginnings as a nation, the United States was based on both the promise of freedom and the reality of slavery. Slavery had existed in all of the 13 original states, but had become crucial to the economy of the southern states. The Constitution accepted and protected slavery, and the country's new leaders were generally sympathetic to slavery. Ten of our first fifteen presidents had been slaveowners.

"I TREMBLE FOR MY COUNTRY WHEN I REFLECT THAT GOD IS JUST: THAT HIS JUSTICE CANNOT SLEEP FOREVER."

— THOMAS JEFFERSON, 1781

As the nation grew, controversy arose over the expansion of slavery into new areas. Growing numbers of northern whites feared that expanding slavery would limit the opportunities available to free men. A small but effective anti-slavery movement raised a strong voice against the expansion of slavery, and even called for its immediate end, or abolition. On the other side, southern whites believed that slavery needed to expand in order for their economy to flourish, and feared losing influence in national government. Slavery was deeply intertwined with the national economy: the products generated by enslaved labor accounted for 80% of all American exports.

A series of compromises kept the political peace in the nation but by the 1850s - with the Fugitive Slave Act, the Dred Scott decision, and John Brown's attack on Harper's Ferry - this peace could no longer be sustained. After Abraham Lincoln was elected in 1860, southern states started to withdraw from the Union. The Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861 marked the beginning of the Civil War.



Object on Display

This **Illustrated London News** engraving, published only a few months before the Civil War broke out, depicts a slave auction in Richmond, Virginia, which was one of the largest slave markets in the country.

"Slave Auction," *Illustrated London News*, 1861
Loan: Original Ancestors

"I Have a Dream" is a 17-minute public speech by Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered on August 28, 1963, in which he called for racial equality and an end to discrimination.

Video of MLK speech, 1963

Object on Display

Object on Display

Signs such as these were part of an elaborate system of segregation of public facilities, including restrooms, drinking fountains, swimming pools, libraries, restaurants, and bus stations. This system of segregation was in place from the 1890s until it was overturned during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

"Colored Only" and "Drinking Fountain" signs
Loan: Original Ancestors

Robes like this were worn by members of the Ku Klux Klan as they terrorized African-Americans (and sometimes whites) who challenged white supremacy in the years after the Civil War. The KKK became active again throughout the country in the 1920s, and again in the South in the 1950s and 1960s, when local whites opposed the civil rights movement. The Klan costumes were designed to be outlandish and terrifying, as well as hiding the wearer's identity.

KKK robe, c. 1925
Loan: Original Ancestors

The Emancipation Proclamation began a new phase in the struggle to fulfill America's promise of freedom. In the years following the Civil War, the federal government put its weight behind efforts to secure equality, passing the 14th and 15th Amendments, which provided for citizenship, civil rights, and the right to vote. But federal intervention soon faded, and a system of white supremacy emerged which limited the freedom that African-Americans had gained. As scholar W.E.B. DuBois wrote, "the slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery."

"LIBERTY HAS BEEN WON. THE BATTLE FOR
EQUALITY IS STILL PENDING."

— CHARLES SUMNER
EULOGY FOR LINCOLN, 1865

A hundred years after the Proclamation, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stood before thousands of people gathered at the Lincoln Memorial and referred to the Proclamation as both a "beacon light of hope" and an unfulfilled promise. In 1964, as he worked to enforce new civil rights legislation, Attorney General Robert Kennedy purchased a copy of the Proclamation and hung it on the wall of his home. In 2010, President Barack Obama hung a copy in the Oval Office, next to a bust of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Despite its limitations, the Emancipation Proclamation's significance in the struggle for freedom in the United States is indisputable. During its 150th anniversary, it is fitting that we should rediscover and celebrate that "beacon light of hope," while focusing on the work that remains to be done to fully realize the promise of freedom.

Although Lincoln was personally opposed to slavery, he did not act against it during the first 15 months of the Civil War for two reasons: he did not believe he had the legal authority to do so, and he feared that attacking slavery would send the slaveholding border states into the arms of the Confederacy. "I hope to have God on my side," he said, "but I must have Kentucky." Lincoln hoped to persuade these slaveholding states to end slavery themselves, with the promise of federal compensation. Under the Constitution, the states - not the federal government - had the power to determine questions like slavery.

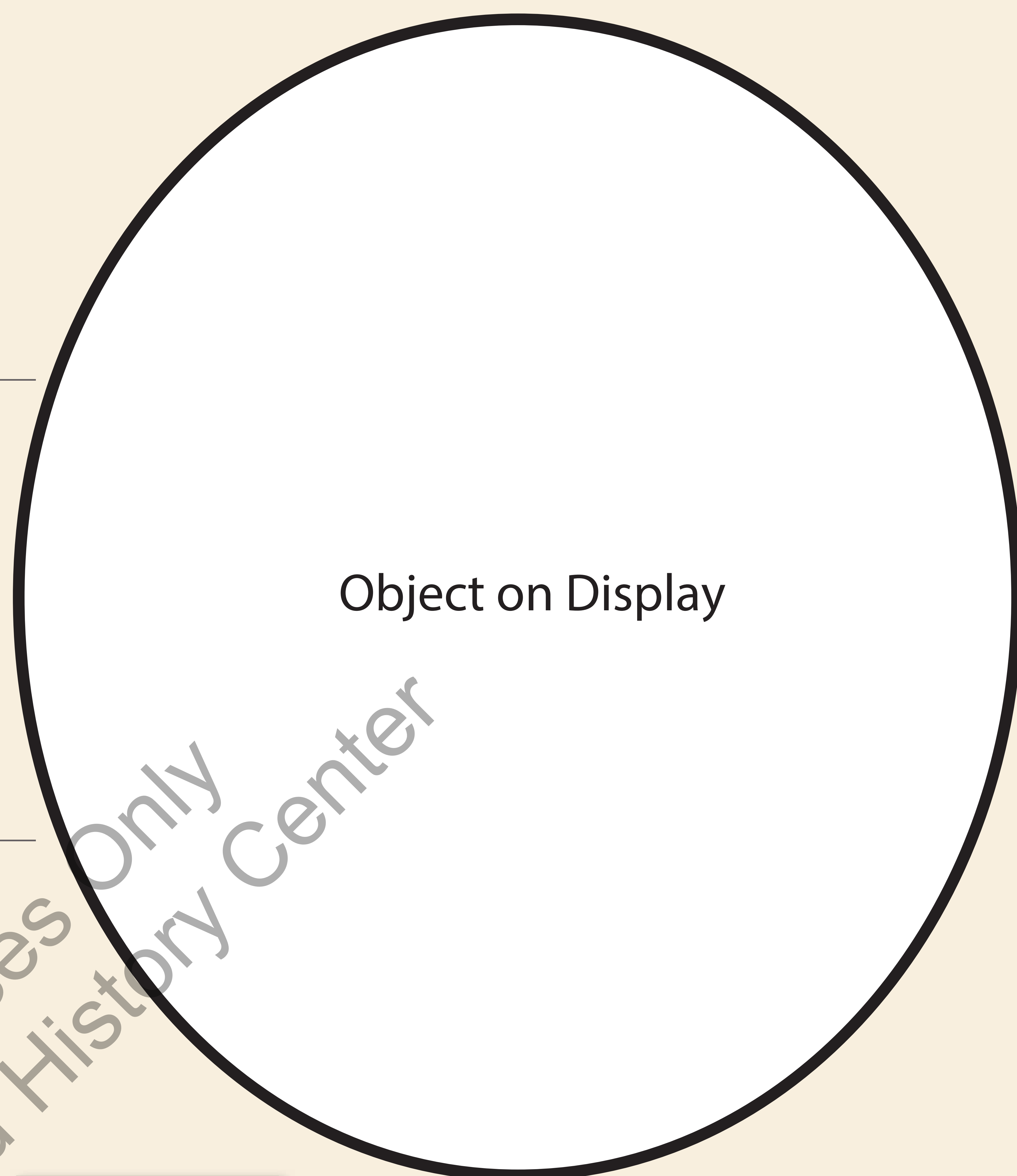
"NO HUMAN POWER CAN SUBDUE THIS REBELLION
WITHOUT USING THE EMANCIPATION LEVER
AS I HAVE DONE."

—LINCOLN, 1864

The slaves themselves helped to force the issue. From the moment the war began, thousands fled to Union lines seeking their own freedom. Dubbed "contrabands" (enemy property seized during war), these runaway slaves compelled the administration to take action. In July 1862, Congress passed a Confiscation Act stating that slaves would not be returned to their masters. Instead, they were put to work in helping Union forces.

That same month, Lincoln decided to issue an emancipation proclamation. He did so because the war was dragging and the Union needed to strike against the rebellion. He had concluded that as commander-in-chief he could legitimately act against slavery in order to win the war, and that public opinion would support it. The Confederacy's use of slave labor strengthened its ability to wage war, and it was time to deprive the enemy of this resource. He did so also because he came to realize that the border slave states would not initiate action against slavery—that slavery would have to fall first in the Confederacy. And he did so because, as he would write two years later, "...if slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong."

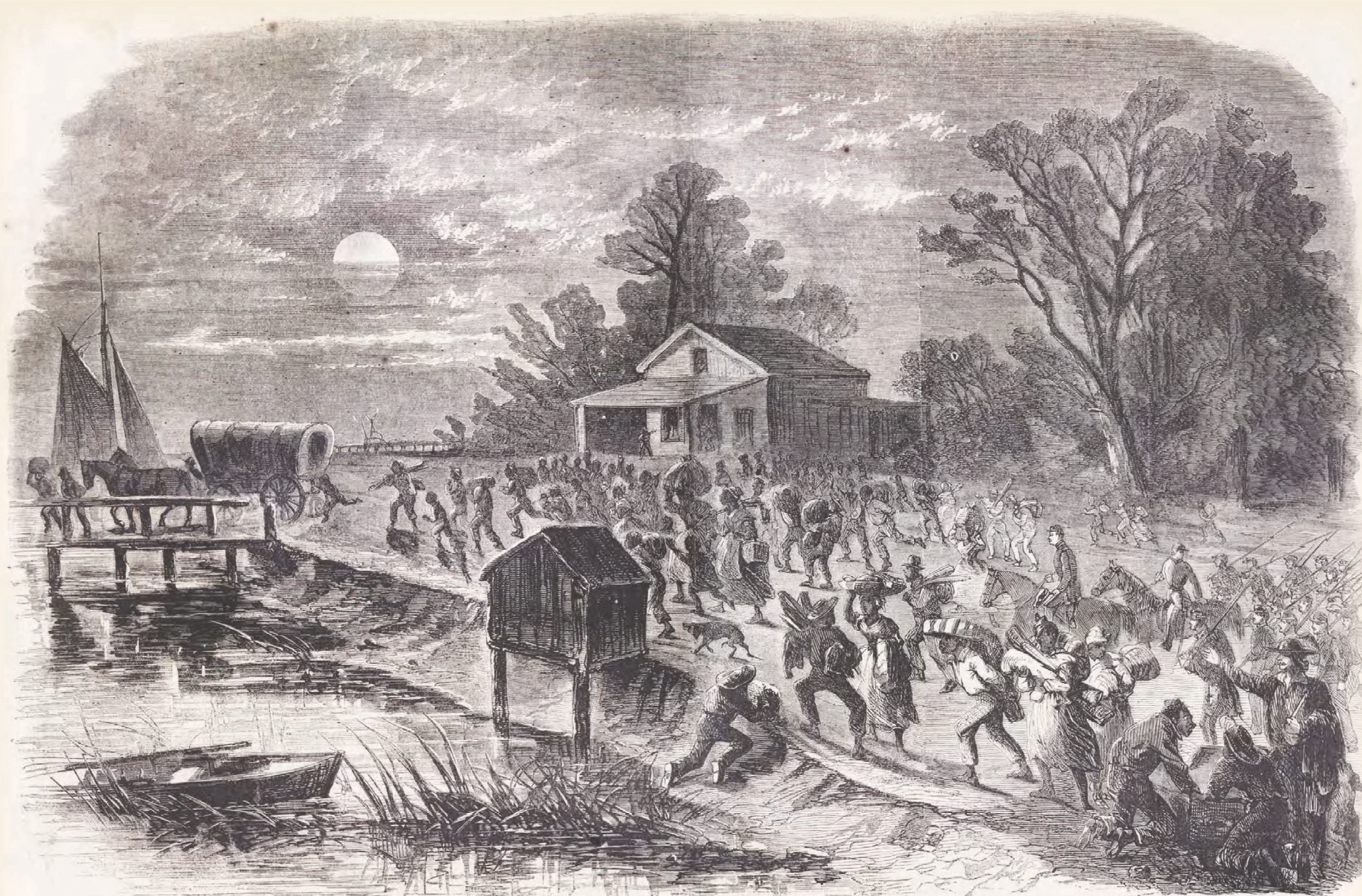
Although he drafted the proclamation in July, he delayed issuing it until a Union military victory, so that it would not seem like an act of desperation. He issued a preliminary proclamation on September 22, 1862, and the final Emancipation Proclamation a hundred days later, on January 1, 1863. Some had feared that the president might change his mind, but he did not retreat. Indeed, he had earlier told a group of visiting Kentuckians "he would rather die than take back a word of the Proclamation of Freedom."



E.C. Middleton,
Portrait of Abraham Lincoln, c. 1864
Fairfield Museum collection

The engraving above offers an idealized vision of Lincoln's first reading of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet that seems to celebrate the importance of the document. In reality, at this meeting Secretary of State Seward (in the foreground) urged Lincoln not to issue the proclamation until the timing was better. This print became one of the best-selling engravings in nineteenth-century America; the painting on which it is based hangs in the U.S. Capitol.

Alexander Hay Ritchie,
First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, c. 1866
Loan: Seth Kaller, Inc.



From the very beginning of the war, slaves took their freedom into their own hands by escaping to Union lines. When three slaves sought refuge at the Union-controlled fort in Virginia, General Benjamin Butler refused to return them to their master, saying that they were "contraband of war." Thousands followed in their footsteps, and ultimately actions like these forced Lincoln to create a policy on emancipation.

"Stampede of Slaves from Hampton to Fortress Monroe."
Harper's Weekly (August 17, 1864)
Courtesy Watkinson Library, Trinity College

To arms to arms! Black men join the fight.

Making former slaves into soldiers was almost as significant as emancipation itself, for serving in the military provided a path to citizenship. Lincoln became an avid supporter of black military service; by war's end, blacks made up nearly 10% of Union forces.

Black soldiers participated in the war at great risk to their lives, for the Confederate government threatened to execute or sell into slavery any of them they captured. Nevertheless, black soldiers served with great courage and won the respect of others. One white soldier noted that "they have won the praises of all and the rebels are as afraid of them as they would be of many tigers."

Lincoln became a strong advocate of black soldiers. Refusing to retract emancipation, he wrote that "With silent tongue, and clenched teeth, and steady eye, and well-poised bayonet," black men were helping to win the war.

"Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters 'U.S.', ... and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pockets, and there is no power on earth or under the earth which can deny that he has earned the right of citizenship in the United States."

—Frederick Douglass

But making emancipation last beyond the war would require a constitutional amendment. Fearing that his Proclamation could be overturned, especially if he was not re-elected in 1864, Lincoln worked behind the scenes to secure Congressional approval for outlawing slavery throughout the United States. He was assassinated before the 13th Amendment was ratified in December 1865.

Object on Display

Tintype of African-American soldier, c. 1863-65
Loan: Seth Kaller, Inc.

In Philadelphia, a mass meeting of African Americans ratified the text of this dramatic seven-foot tall **broadside**, shown above at reduced size. Frederick Douglass, who was active in recruiting African-American troops, joined fifty-three local leaders in signing the call to arms.

Men of Color! To Arms! To Arms! broadside, 1863
Courtesy The Library Company of Philadelphia

Rosenthal presented the **lithograph** above to Lincoln shortly after his second inauguration in 1865. Reproduced in the shape of a shield, Lincoln's words were surrounded at the top by portraits of the nation's founders, along with antislavery leaders including Lucretia Mott and Lydia Maria Child. Lincoln occupies the central place at the bottom, along with contemporary leaders who played a role in combating slavery. Vignettes depicting the curse of slavery and the blessings of freedom adorned the sides. The print's publisher predicted it "will be in the house of every lover of his country." Prints like this, celebrating the moment of emancipation, became particularly popular after Lincoln's death, when he would be remembered as a martyr for freedom.

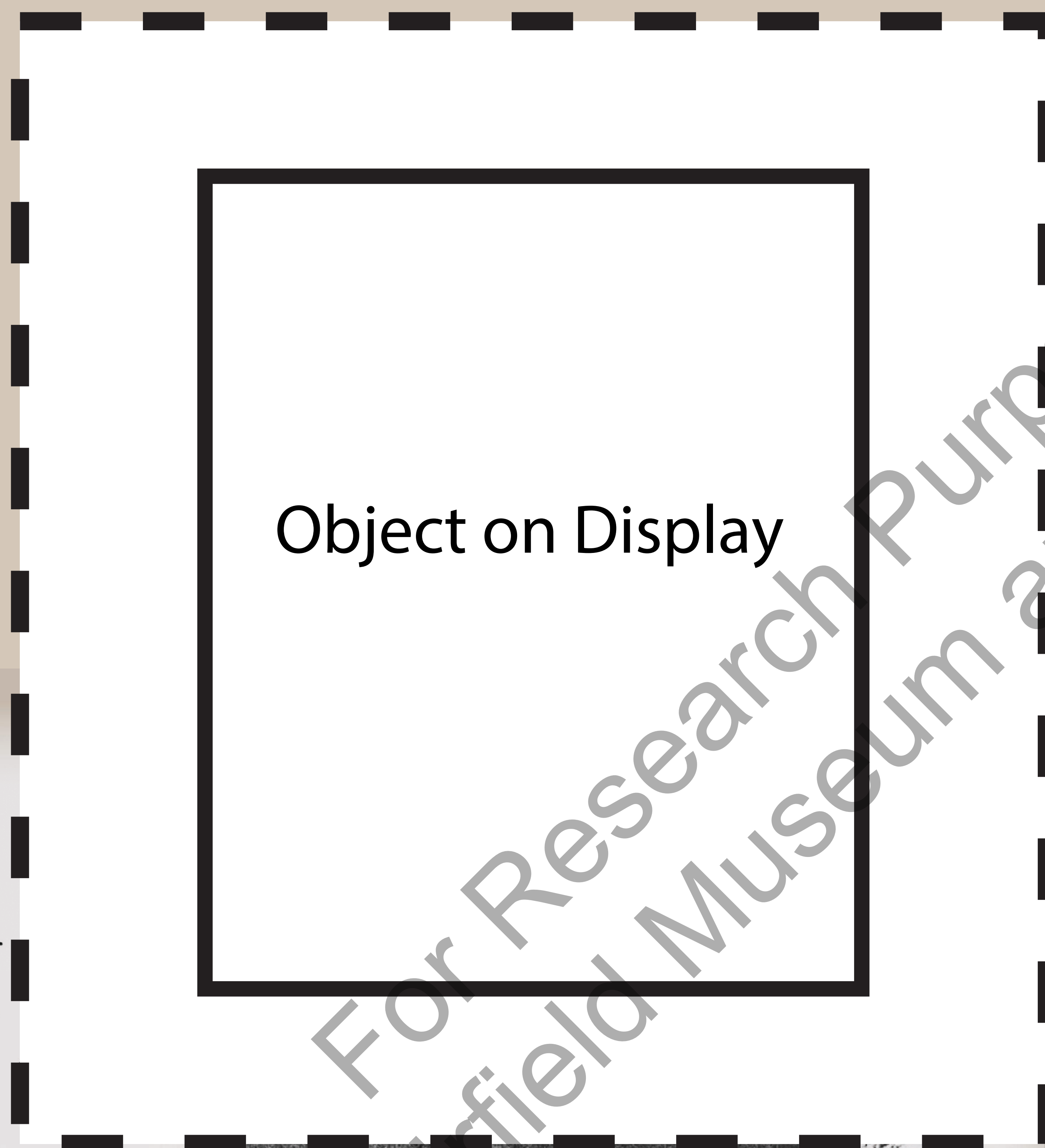
B-32 Proclamation of Emancipation
Max Rosenthal, (Hand-colored lithograph, 1865)
Loan: American Antiquarian Society

In the center of this **recruiting poster**, a Union soldier has trampled the Confederate flag into the dust while holding up an American flag, topped with a red liberty cap. An African-American soldier shatters the manacles that bind the wrists of half-clothed slaves; one of them rips the Confederate flag with his bare hands. At the left, the promise of freedom is represented by a freedman reading a newspaper, sitting near a young child and a sturdy, modern plow, close to a public school and a church. The reverse of this dramatic illustration proclaims, "All Slaves Were Made Freemen by Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States. Come then, Able-Bodied Colored Men, to the Nearest United States Camp and Fight for the Stars and Stripes."

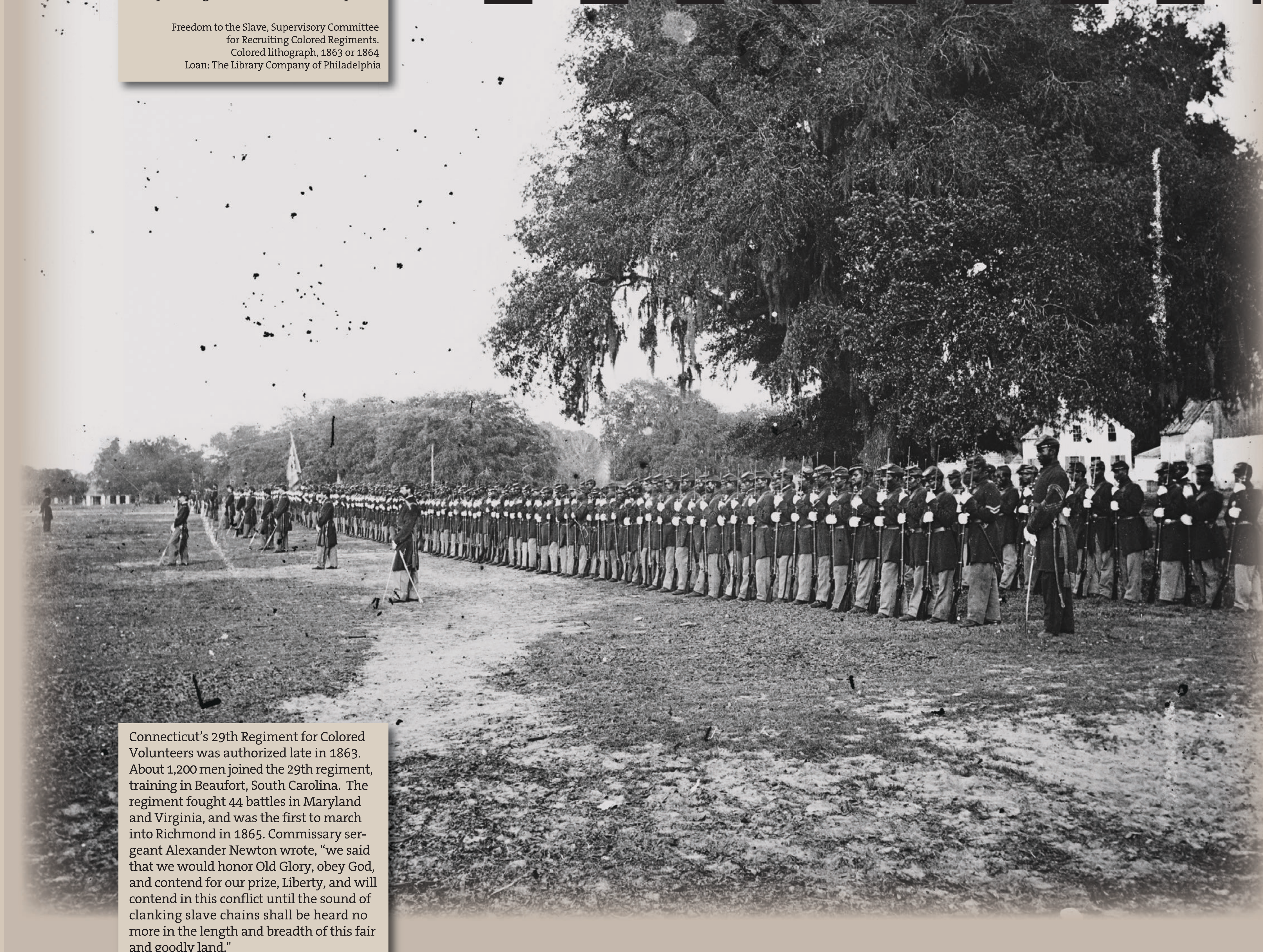
Freedom to the Slave, Supervisory Committee for Recruiting Colored Regiments.
Colored lithograph, 1863 or 1864
Loan: The Library Company of Philadelphia

Connecticut's 29th Regiment for Colored Volunteers was authorized late in 1863. About 1,200 men joined the 29th regiment, training in Beaufort, South Carolina. The regiment fought 44 battles in Maryland and Virginia, and was the first to march into Richmond in 1865. Commissary sergeant Alexander Newton wrote, "we said that we would honor Old Glory, obey God, and contend for our prize, Liberty, and will contend in this conflict until the sound of clanking slave chains shall be heard no more in the length and breadth of this fair and goodly land."

29th Regiment from Connecticut,
Beaufort, South Carolina, 1864
Courtesy Library of Congress



Object on Display



Emancipation!

Understanding the Document

Lincoln did not have the authority as president to attack slavery, a state institution, so he acted in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief, on the grounds of military necessity. Since Confederates had been using slave labor in a number of ways to sustain military action, freeing the slaves would weaken the Confederate cause and strengthen the Union war effort by encouraging slaves to flee to Union lines.

The Emancipation Proclamation applied only to those states and areas in rebellion. Lincoln had no power to act against the institution in the four slaveholding states that remained in the Union: Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. The document also omitted areas in the Confederacy that had already come under Union control because the rationale of military necessity did not apply to them. Of the four million slaves in the United States, the Emancipation Proclamation applied to approximately 3.2 million.

In the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln included a provision for resettling freed slaves outside the United States (colonization), but in the final decree he abandoned this idea and instead authorized the enlistment of black men in armed service. Lincoln had been reluctant to enlist former slaves because he had doubts about whether black men would make good soldiers; he also feared that this step would alienate slaveholding states like Kentucky and lead to atrocities on the battlefield. In time, however, he came to believe “the bare sight of fifty thousand armed, and drilled black soldiers on the banks of the Mississippi, would end the rebellion at once.” By war’s end, some 180,000 black men had fought, about 10% of the Union army. Their service helped to win the war and support the case for constitutional rights afterward.

The Emancipation Proclamation was an executive order justified on military grounds. Lincoln was careful to avoid rhetorical flourishes about slavery, despite his longtime hostility to the institution. But in the final draft, at the urging of Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, he added the clause “sincerely believed to be an act of justice.” The phrase elevates the document and reminds us, as Frederick Douglass maintained, that the Emancipation Proclamation stands alongside the Declaration of Independence as one of the cornerstones of American freedom.

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

“That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever, free; and the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

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

Now, therefore, I, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, by virtue of the power in me vested as commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States, in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do, publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof, respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit: ARKANSAS, TEXAS, LOUISIANA, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terre Bonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans,) MISSISSIPPI, ALABAMA, FLORIDA, GEORGIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, NORTH CAROLINA, AND VIRGINIA, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth,) and which excepted parts are for the present left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

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

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

And I further declare and make known that such persons, of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States, to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the CITY OF WASHINGTON this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

[L. S.]

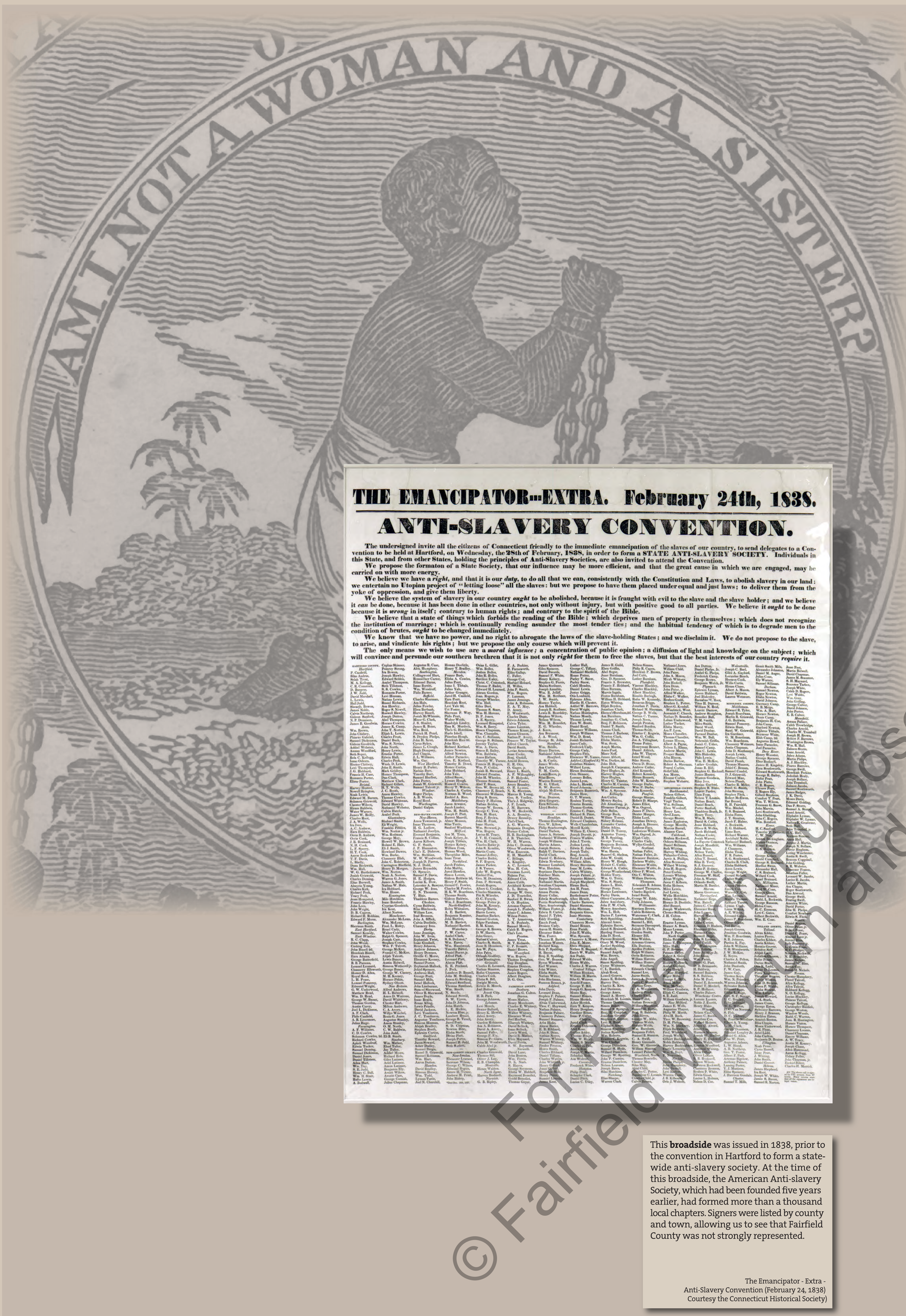
By the President:

Abraham Lincoln

William H. Seward Secretary of State.

A true copy, with the autograph signatures of the President and the Secretary of State.

John W. Nicolay
Priv. Sec. to the President.



COLONIZATION OR ABOLITION?

People in Connecticut were active in the nation's debates about slavery, abolition and emancipation. During the 1800s, several prominent residents of Fairfield were drawn to the colonization movement, which advocated sending freed slaves to settle in Africa. Colonization was embraced by many of the nation's early leaders, and President Lincoln promoted the idea through much of his career.

Fairfield-born Benjamin Silliman, a prominent Yale professor, said in 1827 that he had come to regard support of the Colonization Society as a "private Christian duty, and a public national duty." Most African-Americans strongly opposed colonization, arguing for the abolition of slavery instead.

Connecticut abolitionists organized the Connecticut Anti-Slavery Society in 1838. Some, like William Wakeman of Wilton, helped escaping slaves by providing shelter and safe passage along the "Underground Railroad." These early abolitionists were often met with violent resistance from their neighbors. When two anti-slavery lecturers were speaking at the Georgetown Baptist Church in 1838, a threatening mob attacked the church. Opponents exploded a keg of gunpowder beneath the pulpit, destroying the interior of the church and blowing off the front of the building.

THE EMANCIPATOR--EXTRA. February 24th, 1838. ANTI-SLAVERY CONVENTION.

The undersigned invite all the citizens of Connecticut friendly to the immediate emancipation of the slaves of our country, to send delegates to a Convention to be held at Hartford, on Wednesday, the 28th of February, 1838, in order to form a STATE ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY. Individuals in this State, and from other States, holding the principles of Anti-Slavery Societies, are also invited to attend the Convention.

We propose the formation of a State Society; that our influence may be more efficient, and that the great cause in which we are engaged, may be carried on with more energy.

We believe we have a right, and that it is our duty, to do all that we can, consistently with the Constitution and Laws, to abolish slavery in our land; we entertain no opinion respecting of "letting loose" all the slaves; but we propose to have them placed under equal and just laws; to deliver them from the yoke of oppression, and give them liberty.

We believe the system of slavery in our country ought to be abolished, because it is fraught with evil to the slave and the slave holder; and we believe it can be done, because it has been done in other countries, not only without injury, but with positive good to all parties. We believe it ought to be done because it is wrong in itself; contrary to human rights; and contrary to the spirit of the Bible.

We believe that a state of things which forbids the reading of the Bible; which deprives men of property in themselves; which does not recognize the institution of marriage; which is continually rending asunder the most tender ties; and the habitual tendency of which is to degrade men to the condition of brutes, ought to be changed immediately.

We know that we have no power, and no right to abrogate the laws of the slave-holding States; and we disclaim it. We do not propose to the slave, to arise, and vindicate his rights; but we propose the only course which will prevent it.

The only means we wish to use are a moral influence; a concentration of public opinion; a diffusion of light and knowledge on the subject; which will convince and persuade our southern brethren that it is not only right for them to free the slaves, but that the best interests of our country require it.

County	Town	Name
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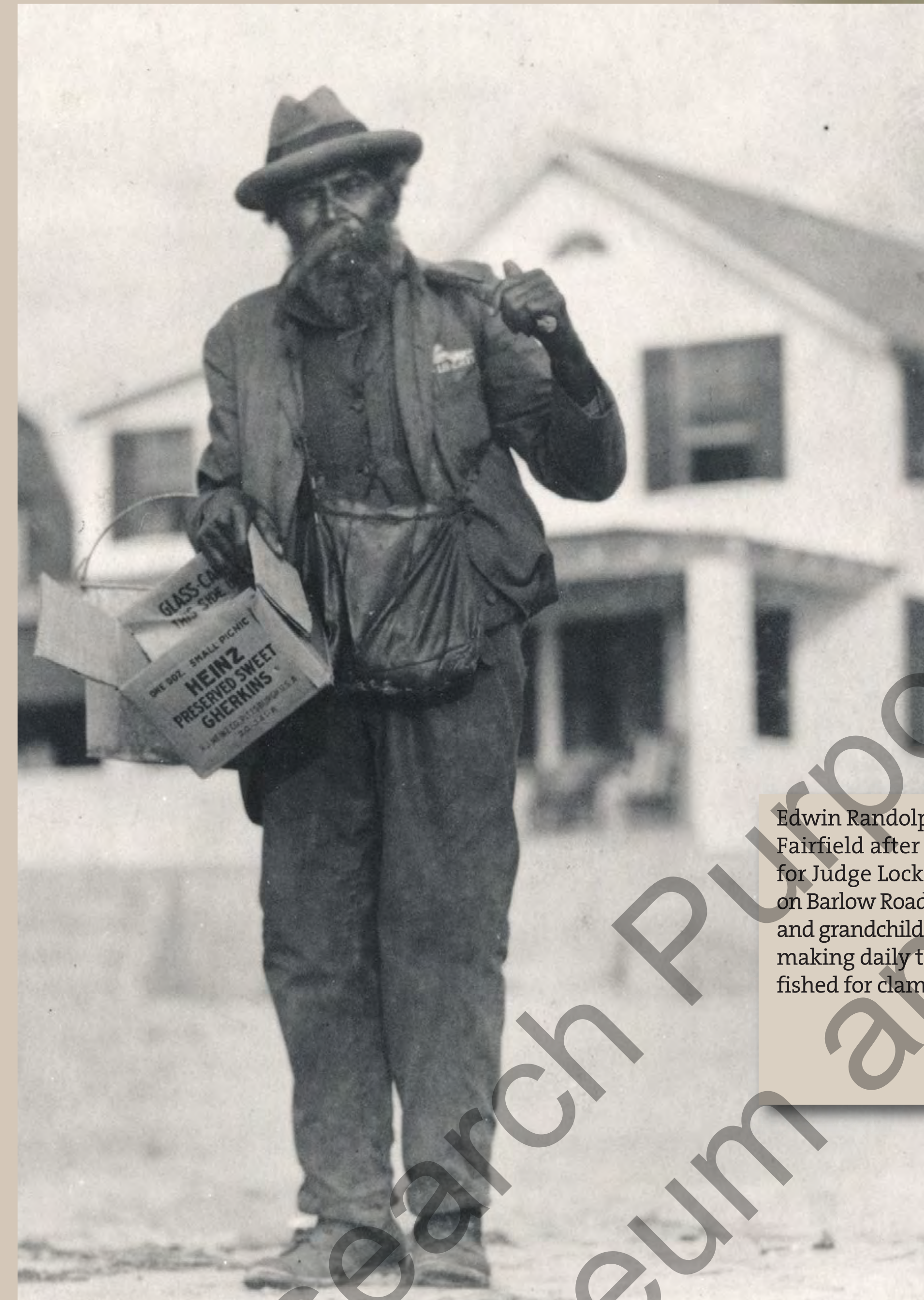
This broadside was issued in 1838, prior to the convention in Hartford to form a state-wide anti-slavery society. At the time of this broadside, the American Anti-slavery Society, which had been founded five years earlier, had formed more than a thousand local chapters. Signers were listed by county and town, allowing us to see that Fairfield County was not strongly represented.

The Emancipator - Extra -
Anti-Slavery Convention (February 24, 1838)
Courtesy the Connecticut Historical Society

LIFE AFTER SLAVERY

Slavery was a part of daily life in Fairfield County during the 1700s, and Fairfield had one of the highest slave populations in Connecticut. A 1784 law provided that children born into slavery from that point forward would be free once they reached the age of 25. Connecticut did not fully abolish slavery until 1848, by which time there were only a small number of slaves left in the state.

African-Americans in Connecticut moved gradually from slavery to freedom, building churches and seeking opportunity in the region's growing cities. In Bridgeport, African-Americans purchased property in an area of the South End that came to be known as "Little Liberia." Freed blacks continued to face racial hostility and limited opportunity to participate in the state's economic and public life: they were barred from voting by the state's constitution, and efforts to open up higher education to them met with violent resistance. In the decades that followed, they continued to seek equality as they created a place for themselves in Connecticut.



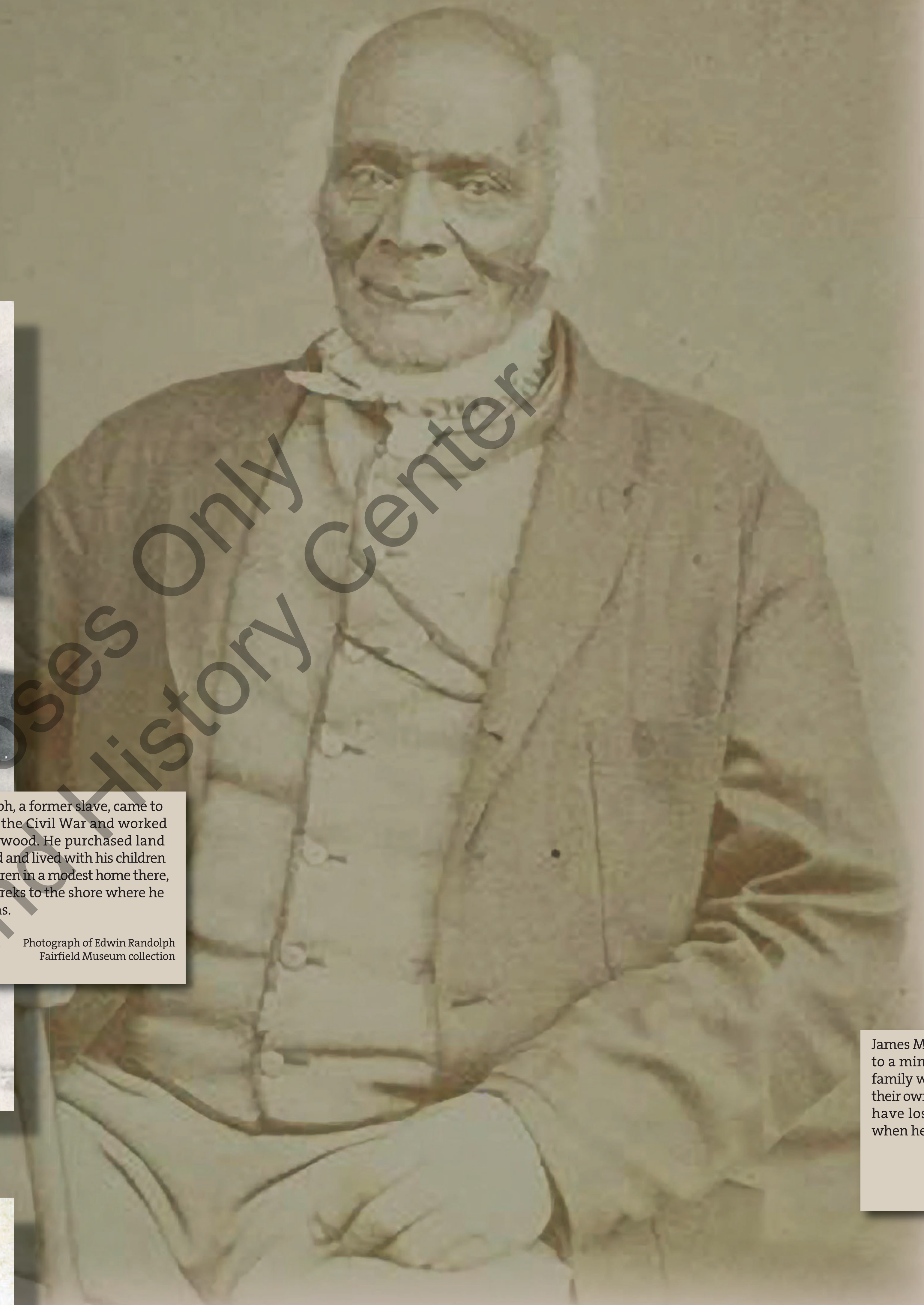
Edwin Randolph, a former slave, came to Fairfield after the Civil War and worked for Judge Lockwood. He purchased land on Barlow Road and lived with his children and grandchildren in a modest home there, making daily treks to the shore where he fished for clams.

Photograph of Edwin Randolph
Fairfield Museum collection



Ida Miller (Edwin Randolph's sister-in-law) also moved to Fairfield after the Civil War and eventually owned land and a home on the east side of Round Hill Road, in the same block south of Barlow Road where the Randolphs lived. Her style of dress suggests that the family enjoyed a comfortable standard of living.

Photograph of Ida Miller,
Cabinet Card Photograph, ca. 1885
Fairfield Museum collection



James Mars (1790-1880) grew up enslaved to a minister in Canaan, Connecticut. His family went into hiding rather than follow their owner to Virginia, where James would have lost the promise of emancipation when he reached age 25.

Photo of James Mars,
Connecticut Historical Society

FAIRFIELDERS AND THE CIVIL WAR

Whatever their views on slavery, Fairfield residents were touched by the war. Many Fairfield men served in the Union army, especially in the CT 17th Regiment, which fought at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, and the 29th Colored Regiment, which fought in Maryland and Virginia; a number lost their lives in battle or to disease. The town of Fairfield offered a bounty to men who volunteered for the military. On the home front, women's organizations like the Southport Soldiers' Aid Society provided much-needed supplies for soldiers, while church services were devoted to praying for the country's welfare.

Fairfield's greatest Civil War hero, Morehouse was captured twice by Confederate troops, wounded twice, and promoted three times while serving in the First Connecticut Cavalry. He earned the title of "War Horse" while serving under Major General George Custer in Virginia. His unit earned honors for its fighting and was chosen to escort Gen. Ulysses Grant when he received Lee's surrender at Appomattox.

Photographs of Fairfield's Captain John Morehouse
Fairfield Museum collection

Charles Thorp of Fairfield served in the First Connecticut Cavalry along with John Morehouse. He saw action at the second battle of Bull Run, Cold Harbor, Spotsylvania, and numerous cavalry raids. He returned to life as a farmer in Fairfield in the fall of 1864, and would be an active member of the Grand Army of the Republic until he died in 1891.

Colt revolver used by Fairfield Charles Thorp II
Fairfield Museum collection

Ely Parker, a Seneca chief, served as a key aide and secretary to Gen. Ulysses Grant during the war, and drew up the documents for Lee's surrender at Appomattox. After becoming the first Native American to serve as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Parker settled in Fairfield in the 1870s.

Photo, Ely Parker in Uniform
Fairfield Museum collection

