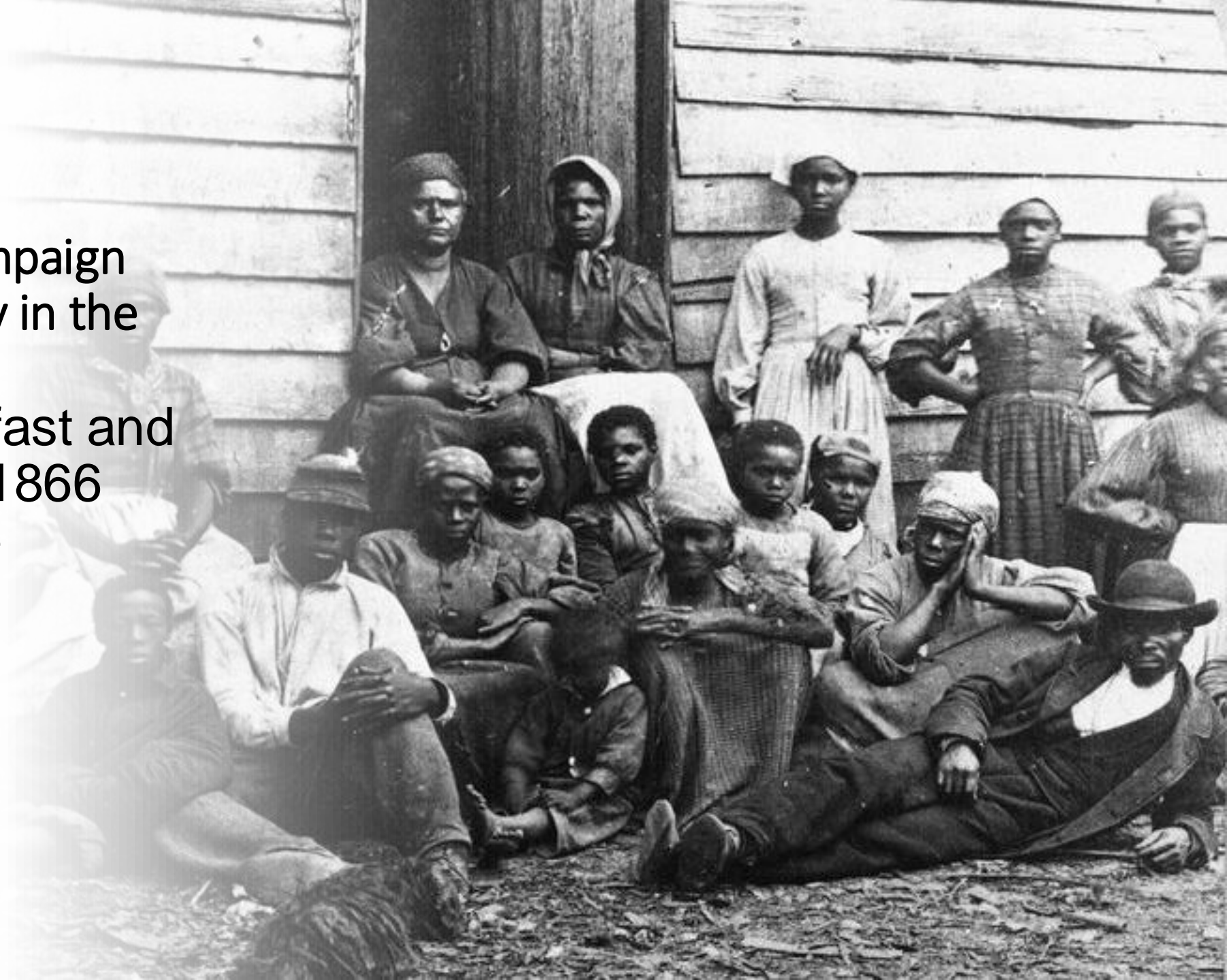


7.The Belfast Campaign  
to Abolish slavery in the  
USA, 1833-1844

OLE3245 - Belfast and  
Slavery, 1613-1866  
Dr Tom Thorpe



# Contents

Why does anti-slavery continue after British slavery ends?

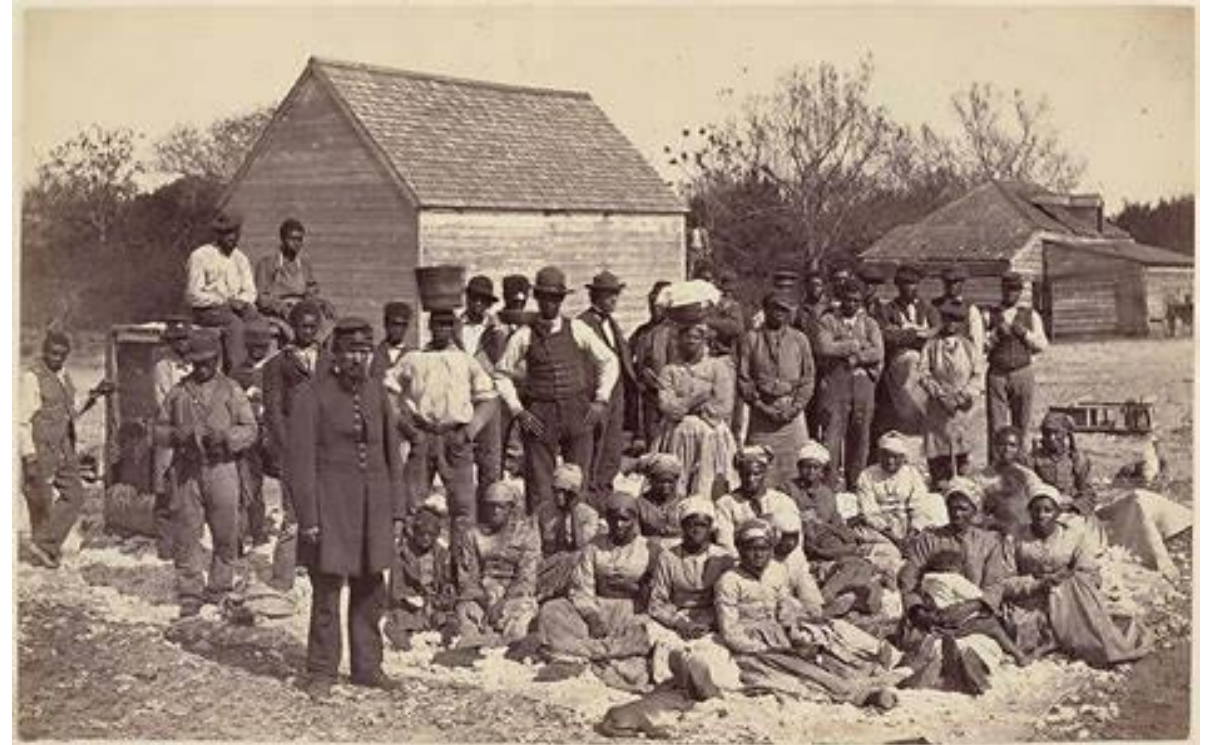
Role of BASS as a hub of activity

Rise in new newspapers and their impact in attacking US slavery

The visit of American abolitionists to Belfast and their impact

Attitudes and involvement to the Belfast anti slavery movement

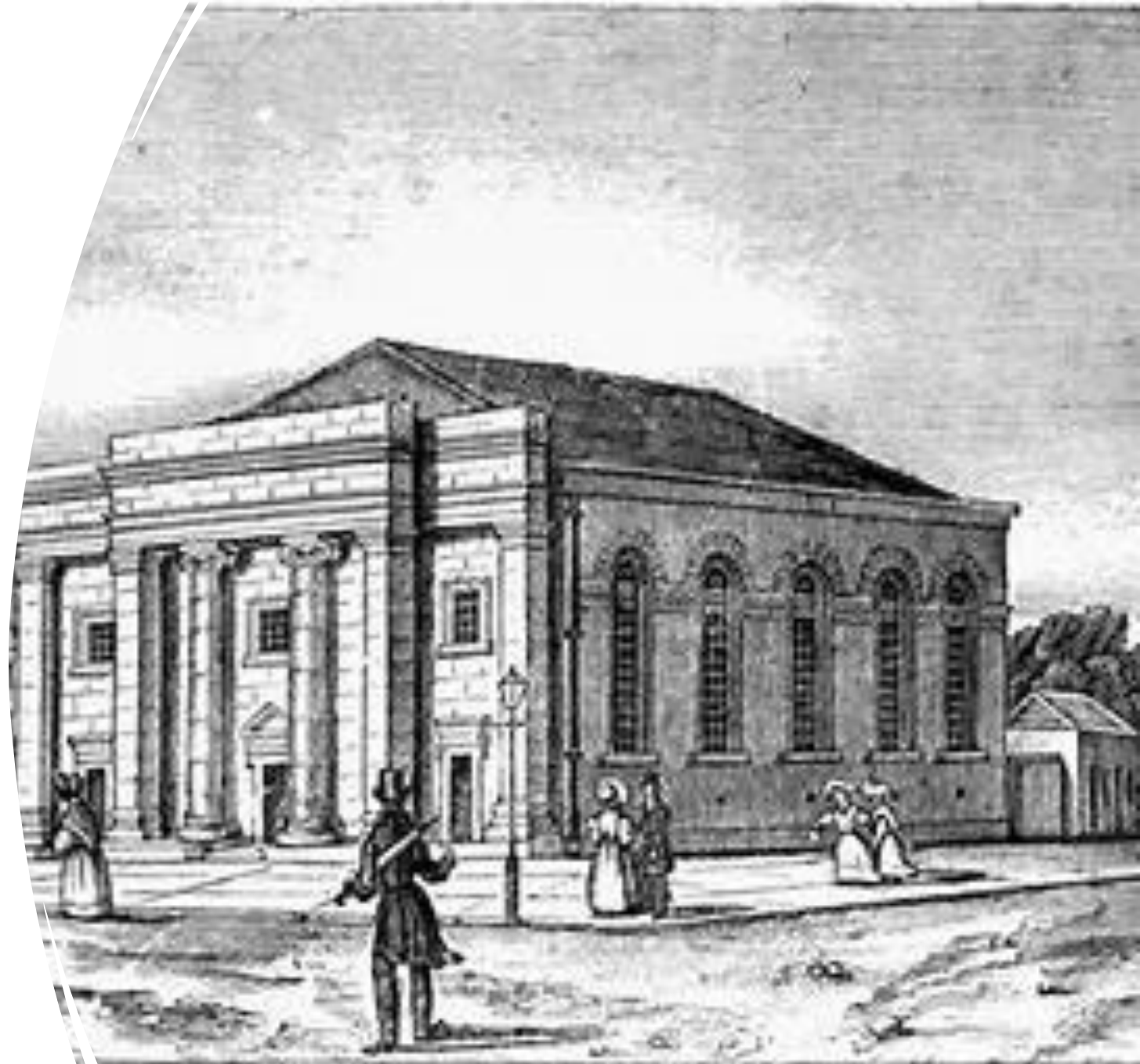
One odd anti slavery connection to Belfast



# Recap: situation in 1833

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- Slavery abolished in 1833 in most of the British Empire
- Slavery owners compensated
- Apprentice system introduced for former slaves
- Major period of political reform (e.g. Catholic Emancipation, Great Reform Act, New Poor Law)
- Belfast expanding under industrial revolution and immigration into the town from the countryside.



CHRIST CHURCH, COLLEGE SQUARE.

# Why did people continue to campaign against slavery?

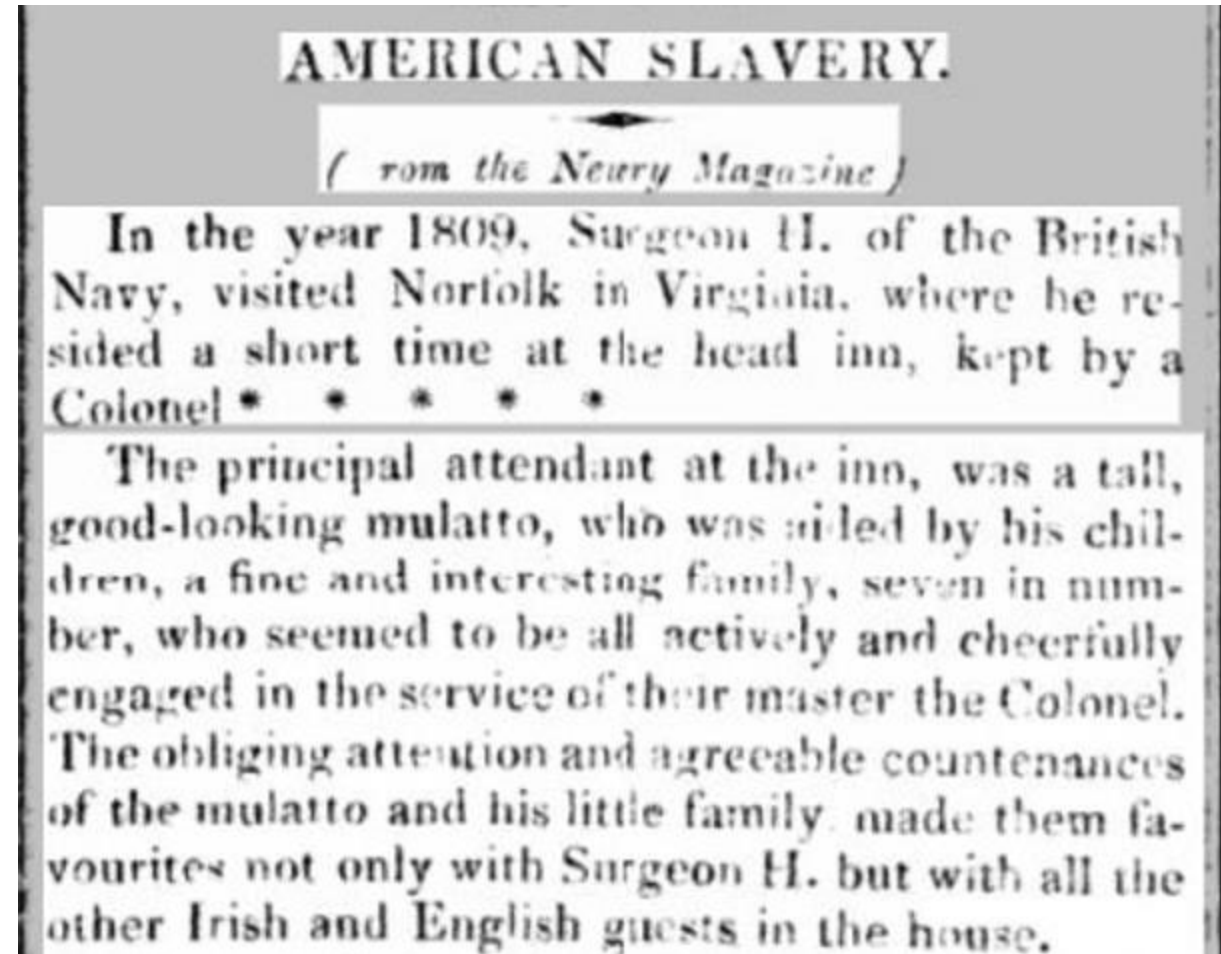
Belfast press – new papers

Long held concern about slavery in America

Continuance of the Apprentice system

Role of BASS as a focus and hub

International co-ordinations and actions





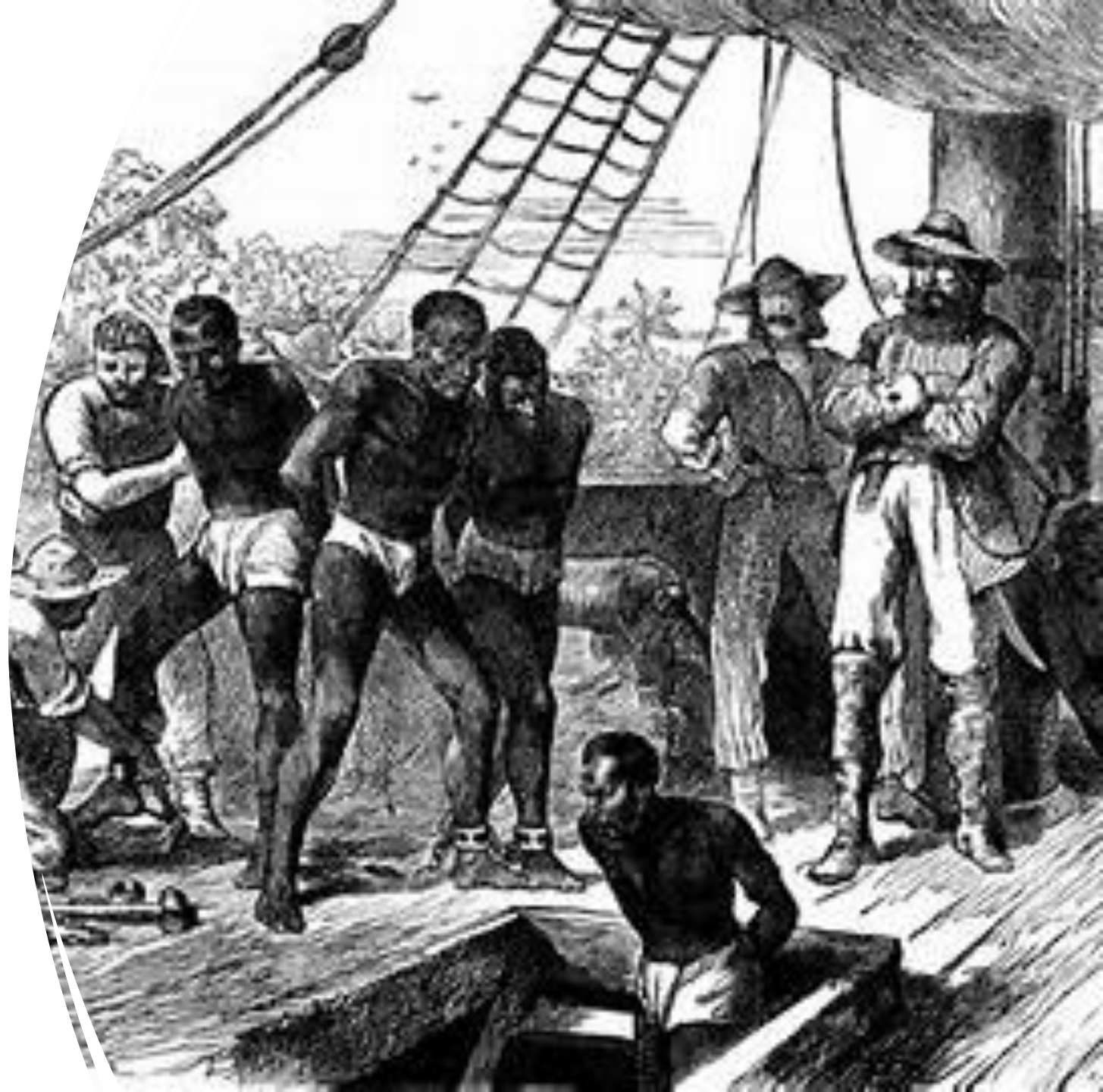
**BASS as a hub  
and focus for  
action**

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# Background: Formation of BASS

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- In September 1830, the Belfast Anti-Slavery Society (BASS) was established, marking a pivotal change in the town's stance on slavery.
- The society's formation resulted from a request by one hundred and fifty inhabitants who urged Sir Stephen May, the Sovereign of Belfast, to convene a meeting.
- The primary objective of the meeting was to promote the abolition of slavery within the British Empire.





## Backbone of anti slavery activity in 1830s/40s

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- Associational focus of abolitionist activity for Belfast's elites.
- Organisational platform for statements, activities, meetings and publicity.
- Brand that all those with an interest in abolition could back and support.

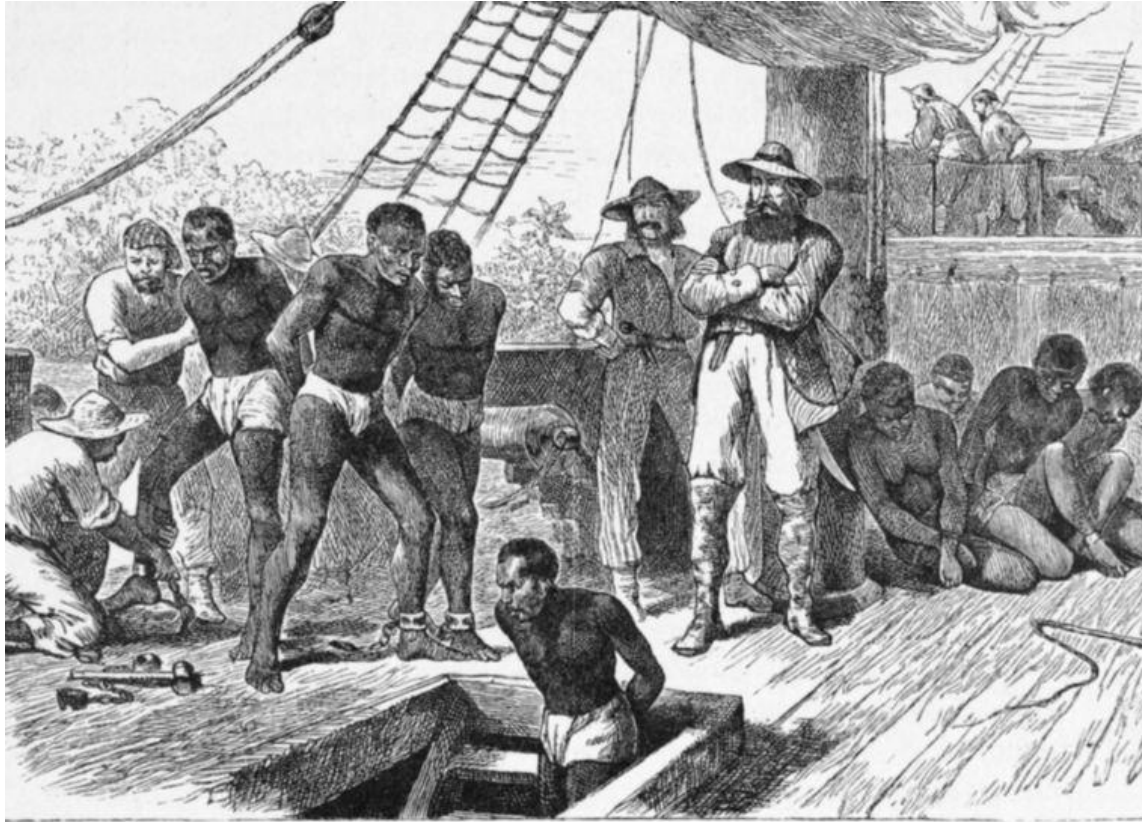


# Demand for immediate emancipation

---

- In 1833, BASS strongly criticised the Abolition of Slavery Act, contending that the apprenticeship system diverged from its vision of immediate emancipation.
- BASS expressed indignation at the allocation of twenty million pounds in compensation to slaveholders, deeming it a contentious aspect of the legislation.





Ombord å ett slafskepp.

# BASS criticism

---

- The Abolition of Slavery Act faced disapproval from BASS, which argued against the apprenticeship system for not conforming to its ideal of prompt emancipation.
- Additionally, BASS raised objections to the substantial compensation granted to slaveholders, totalling twenty million pounds.

# BASS attacked Apprenticeship system

In 1837, they called upon Belfast's citizens to once again:

“aid them in their efforts for having the emancipation act carried out, and their fellow-subjects in the West Indian Islands emancipated in reality, and not in name.”

BASS held a large meeting in the town's Lancastrian School House

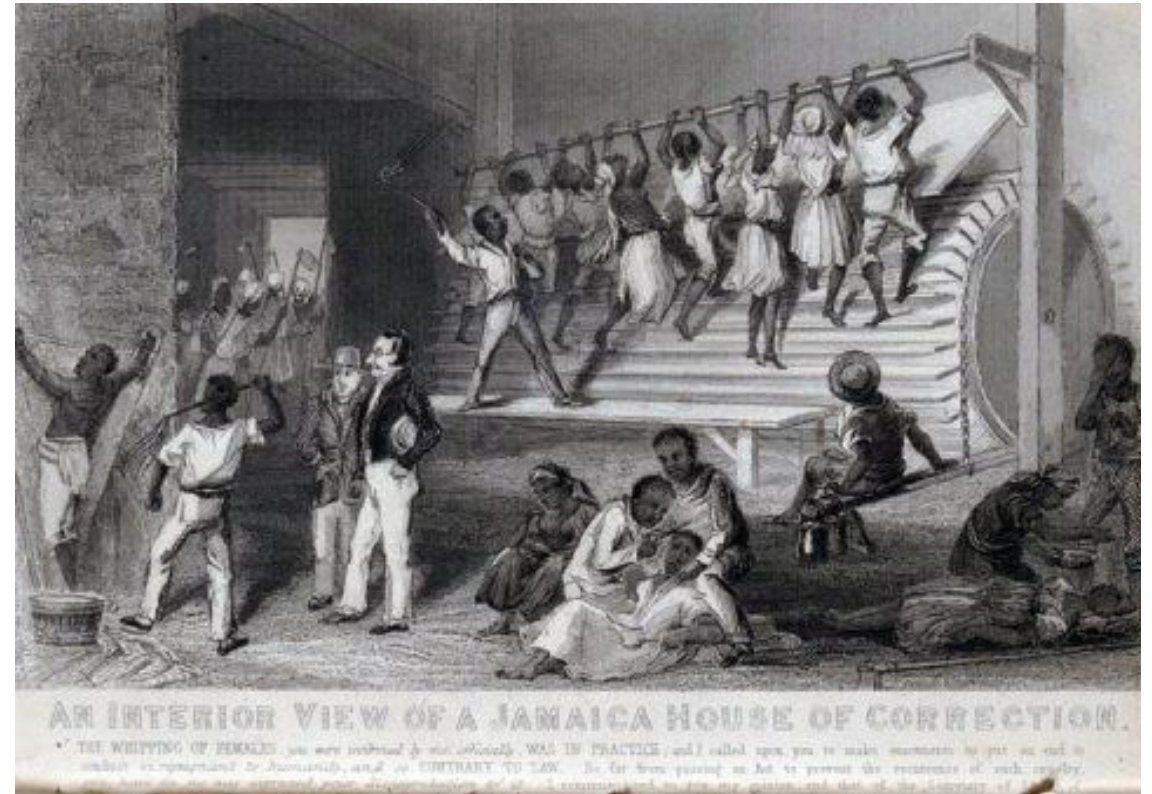


# What was the apprenticeship system?

- The Apprenticeship System was implemented in the British colonies following the 1833 Abolition of Slavery Act.

- It aimed to transition former slaves into a new labour arrangement before granting them full freedom.

- The system was designed to last for six years for most apprentices, during which they were required to work for their former masters for a set number of hours per week.



# Criticisms of the Apprenticeship system

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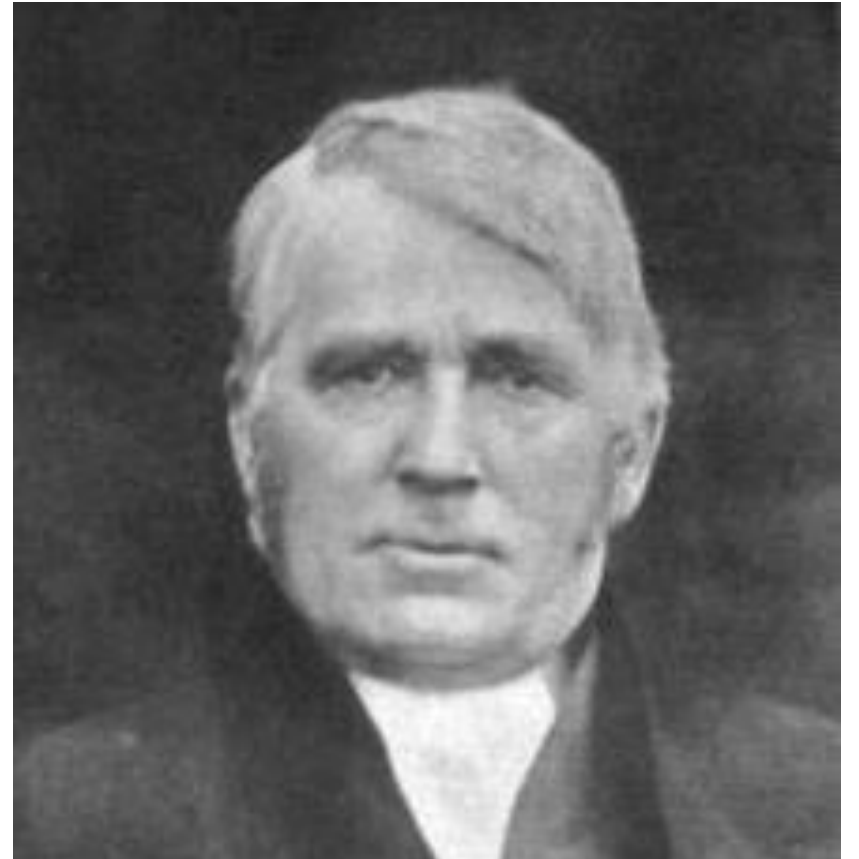
- Critics argued that the Apprenticeship System fell short of genuine emancipation, as it maintained elements of coercion and subjugation.
- Many believed that the apprenticeship period perpetuated a form of quasi-slavery, limiting the progress towards true freedom.
- Plantation owners were granted considerable power over apprentices, contributing to ongoing exploitation and inequality.



# BASS evidence

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- The BASS, citing personal evidence from Joseph Sturge, who gathered information in the West Indies, asserted that the British Government's stipulations for slave liberation had been met.
- Joseph Sturge (1793–1859) was a British Quaker philanthropist, abolitionist, and social reformer known for his to abolish slavery.



# Sturge's evidence

- Sturge reported that the money for emancipation and the stipulated conditions had been fulfilled, yet the treatment of slaves remained severe, exemplified by instances of cruelty such as the tread mill and flogging.

- The BASS considered these conditions a poor representation of the emancipation for which Britain had paid twenty million pounds sterling.



# BASS to action!

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- Sturge emphasized the duty of the BASS to expose the details of ongoing mistreatment in the West Indies, urging people to demand the immediate abolition of such practices.
- This account was reported in the Belfast Commercial Chronicle on November 4, 1837.



# James Williams' Narrative of Events

---

James Williams, born around 1819, lived as a slave on the Pinehurst plantation in Jamaica under the British apprenticeship system.

Despite the 1833 act designating slaves as apprentices, Williams revealed that the conditions for freed slaves were virtually the same as under slavery.

In 1837, Williams, an eighteen-year-old apprentice, met British anti-apprenticeship activists, including Joseph Sturge, who provided funds for Williams to purchase his freedom and publish his Narrative.

SINCE THE FIRST OF AUGUST, 1834,

By JAMES WILLIAMS,

AN APPRENTICED LABOURER IN JAMAICA.

LONDON:

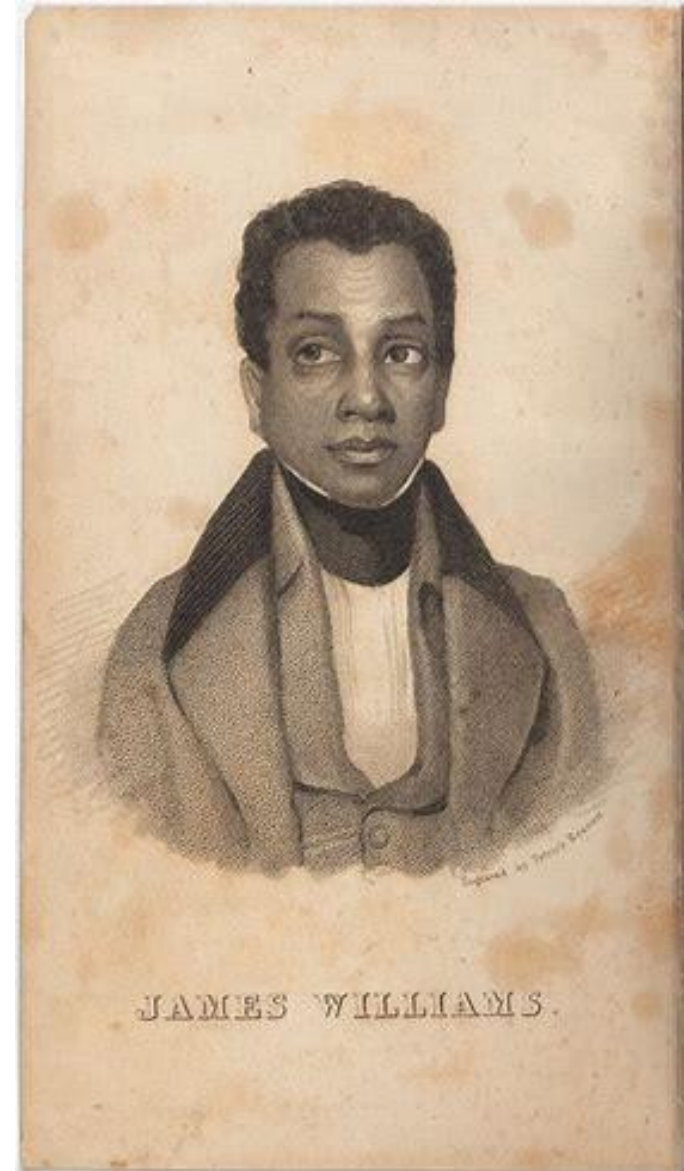
PRINTED BY J. RIDER, 14, BARTHOLOMEW CLOSE.



# Abuse of the system

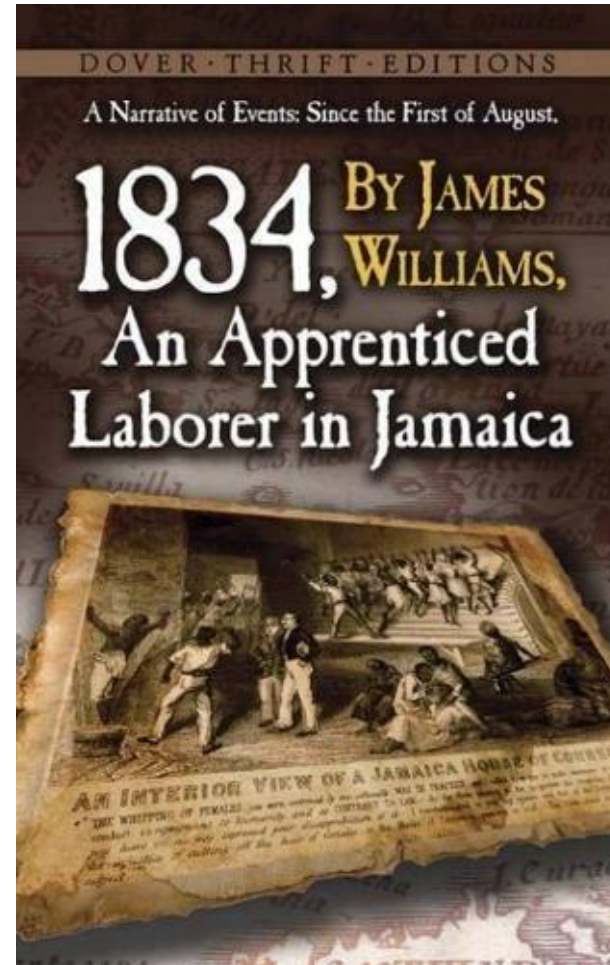
Co-authored with Dr. Archibald Leighton Palmer, Williams's Narrative, published in June 1837, exposed the severe punishments and abuses suffered by apprentices.

Williams highlighted the discrepancy between the new law, which mandated an end to slavery, and the continued physical abuses faced by apprentices.



# The Narrative

- The Narrative detailed the collaboration between apprentice-holders and magistrates, leading to public floggings, millhouse work, and chain gangs for minor offenses.
- Williams underscored the particular vulnerabilities of women, emphasizing their exposure, sexual exploitation, and the denial of basic rights, urging immediate abolition of the oppressive system.



# Williams' narrative shocked the Belfast press

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'...if its terms had been faithfully observed by the planters, the friends of the negro would have patiently awaited the termination of the six years; but...the planters have violated grossly and scandalously the contract...The testimony of Mr. Sturge and his companions, corroborated by that of the missionaries, and confirmed by the official investigation into the case of James Williams, shows that systematic violation and evasion of the spirit of the abolition act of have been all but universal in our colonies'

(Belfast Commercial Chronicle, 21 May 1838.).

SINCE THE FIRST OF AUGUST, 1834,  
*by* JAMES WILLIAMS,  
AN APPRENTICED LABOURER  
IN JAMAICA

---

JAMES WILLIAMS  
EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
DIANA PATON

---



# BASS passed a resolution in June 1838

'In urging the adoption of the resolution, the Reverend speaker related a number of facts to show the withering influence the atrocious system exerts over the finest feelings of human nature...He said that slavery had long enough been a blot in the escutcheon of Britain, the land of liberty and it was full time the atrocious system should come to an end.'

(BNL, 22 June 1838)



# Abolition of the Apprentice system

- Due to widespread dissatisfaction and resistance among the newly freed individuals, the British government ultimately accelerated the abolition of the Apprenticeship System.

- In 1838, two years earlier than initially planned, apprentices were granted full freedom.

- The premature end of the system marked a crucial step towards the realization of complete emancipation for formerly enslaved individuals in the British colonies.



UNITED STATES.

4265.120

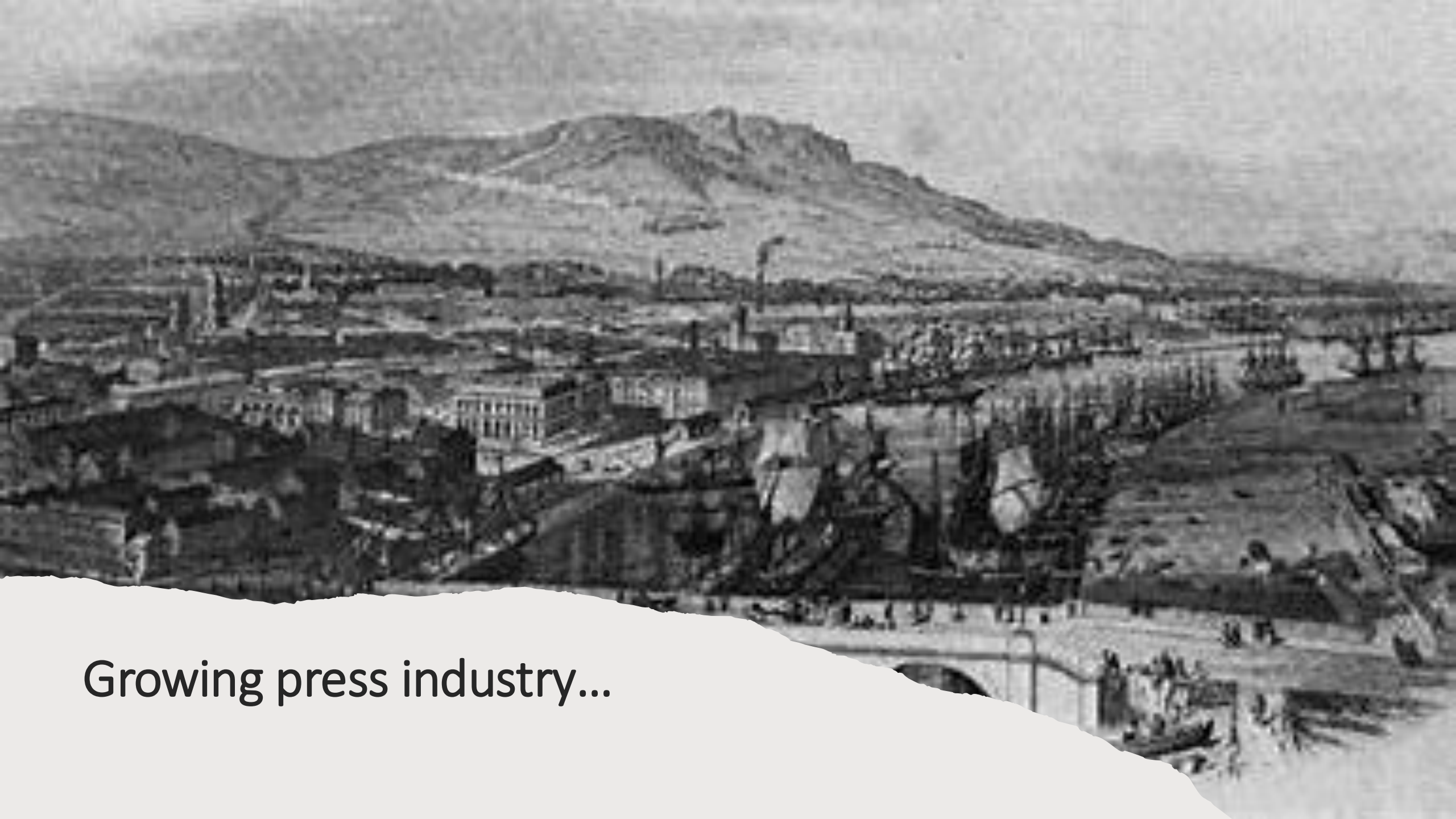
—  
THE ADDRESS

OF THE

BELFAST ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

To the Christian Churches of the United States, The Address of the Belfast Anti-Slavery Society

- BASS published a pamphlet which made clear its negative assessment of the American slave system.
- Targeting the Christian Churches in America, the publication remonstrated with their Christian brothers in allowing slavery to find “its more secure refuge in the Church”.



Growing press industry...

# Rise in news publications



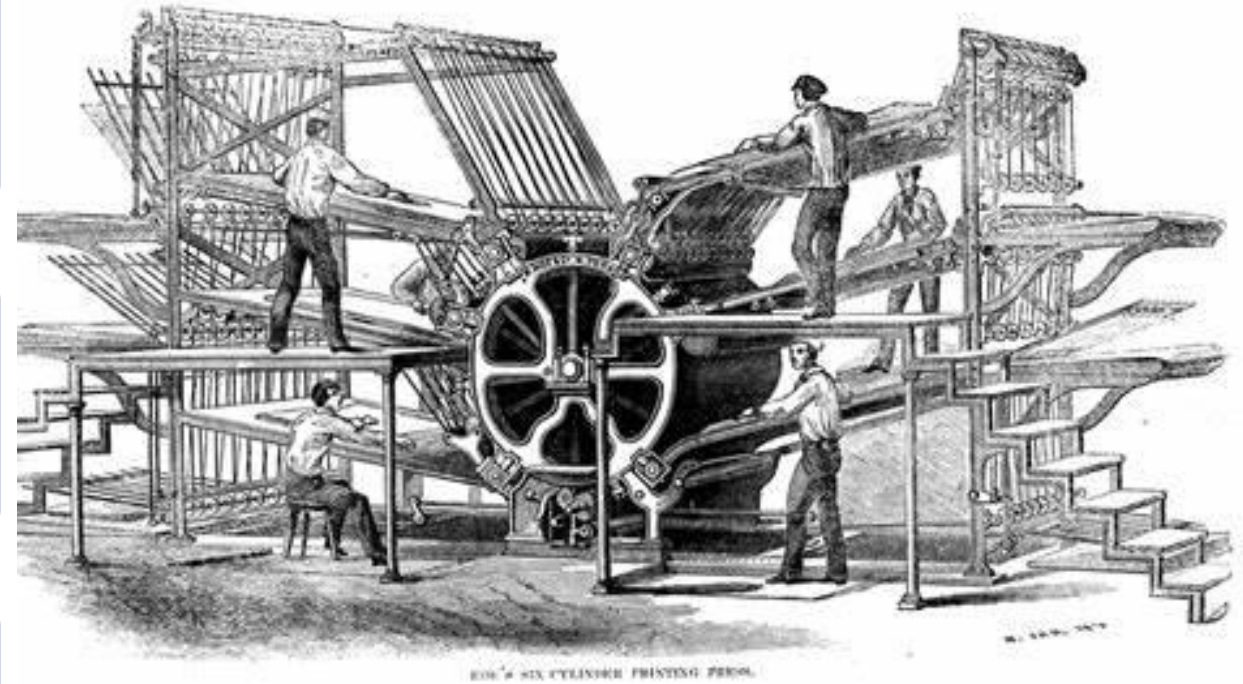
Introduction of advanced steam-powered printing presses and improved printing technology increased speed and efficiency.



Expansion of railway systems facilitated widespread distribution and more reliable postal services enhanced the reach of newspapers and periodicals.



Increasing literacy rates, especially in urban centres and the establishment of public education systems contributed to widespread literacy.





# Stimulated by political and social change

---

- Newspapers played a pivotal role in shaping public opinion during political reforms (e.g. Great Reform Act).
- Media served as a platform for various social movements, influencing societal perspectives.
- Emergence of advertising as a key component in newspapers and commercialization attracted entrepreneurs, leading to the growth of the media industry.
- Rise in population in Belfast and increasing prosperity.





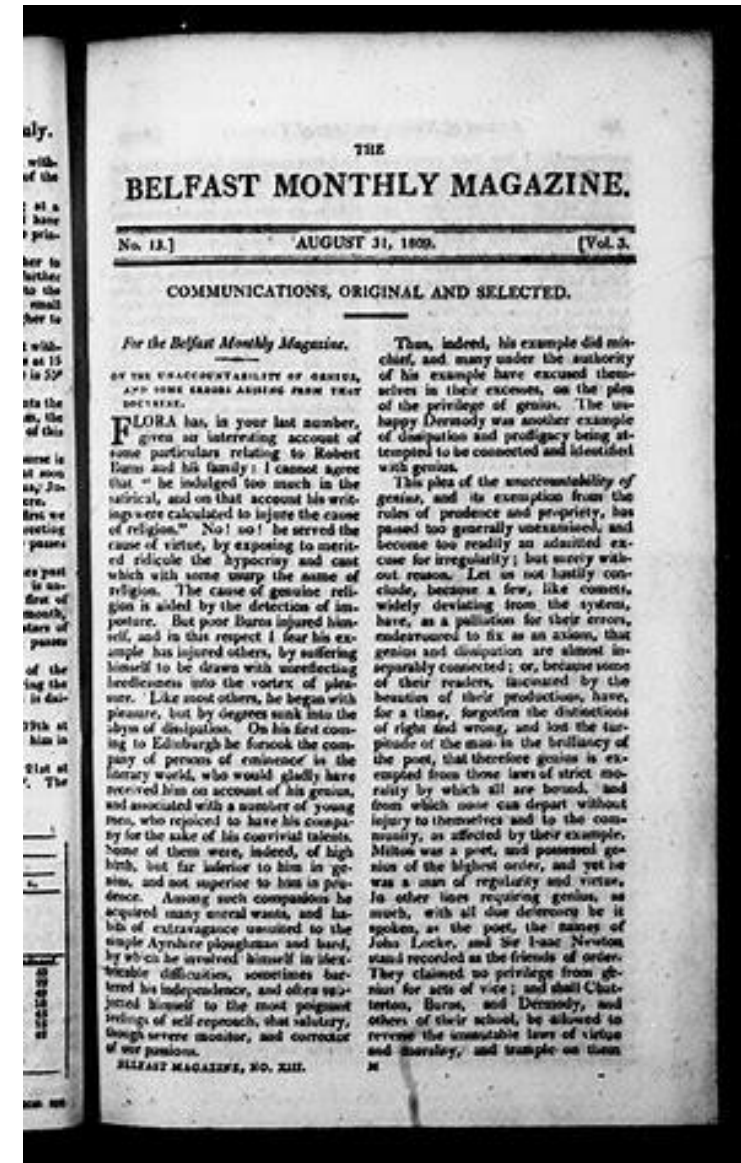
# Belfast Monthly Magazine



Founded in 1808 by William Drennan, it was a liberal publication exploring global connections.



Exposing the hypocrisy of those who professed an understanding of liberty while supporting slavery.



# Northern Whig

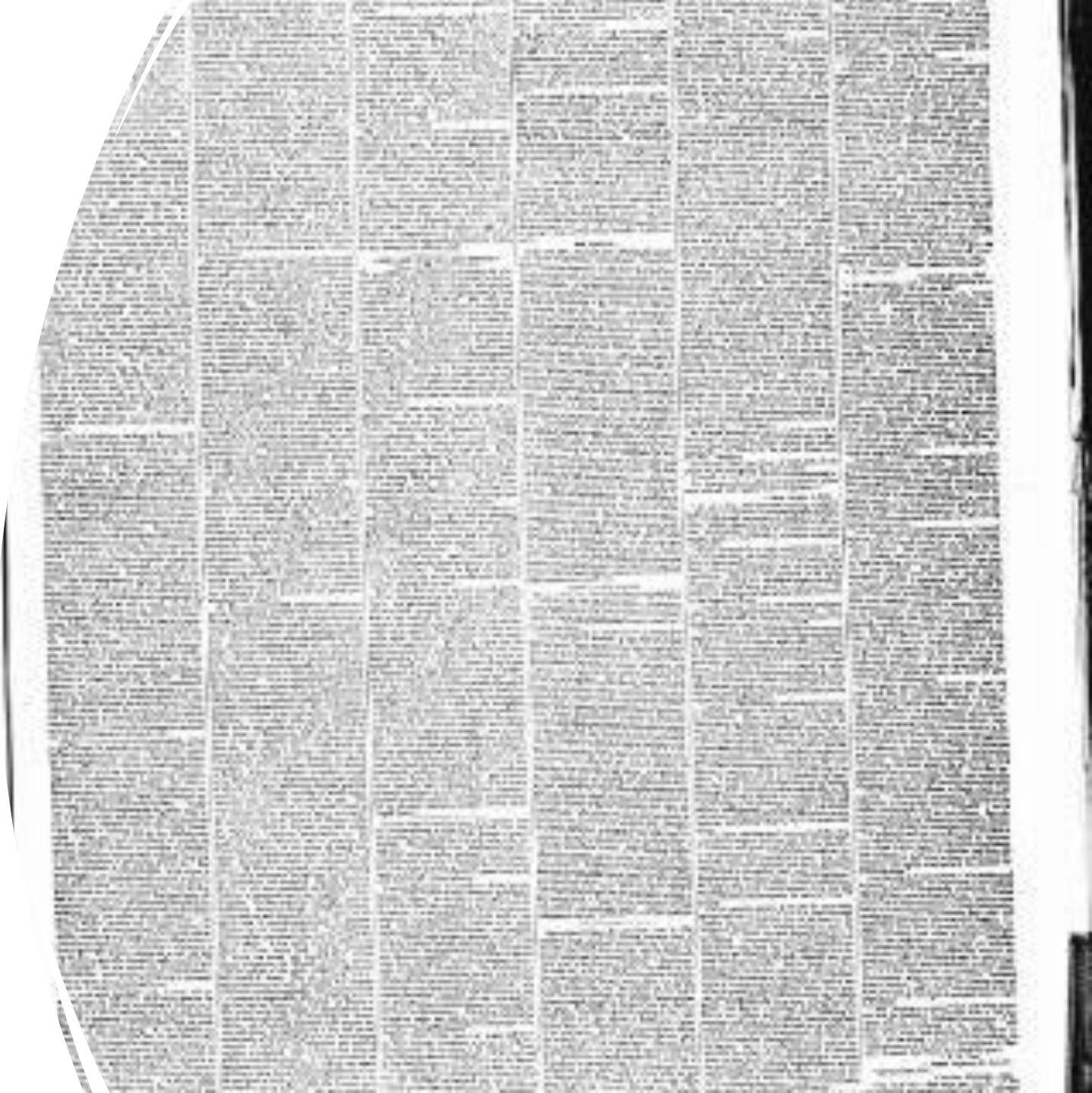
- First published in 1824 in Belfast, founded by Francis Dalzell Finlay.
- In favour of Catholic Emancipation and supported the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland.
- Its editorial line was liberal and unionist, Presbyterian slant on the news



# The Vindicator

---

- Was a Ulster Catholic newspaper established in May 1839 and published in Belfast.
- Founded by a group of Roman Catholics in Belfast, including Charles Gavan Duffy and Rev. Dr. George Crolly.
- Supported Daniel O'Connell's repeal movement and abolition.





# Impact of the newspapers and their impact on attacking US slavery

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# Newspapers: reflecting, representing and forming public opinion

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## Reflection of collective views

**News Reporting:** Newspapers were primary sources of information for the public. They reported on various events, including political developments, social issues, and cultural happenings, providing readers with a broad view of current affairs.

**Public Discourse:** Editorial content and letters to the editor sections allowed for a diversity of opinions. Through these platforms, newspapers reflected the multiplicity of views within society.



# Representation of Public Opinion

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- **Editorial Stance:** Newspapers often had editorial stances that reflected the political and social leanings of their publishers. This editorial stance could influence readers and shape their perspectives on issues.
- **Political Alignment:** Many newspapers aligned themselves with specific political parties or movements, actively representing the interests of those groups. Readers often chose newspapers that resonated with their own beliefs.





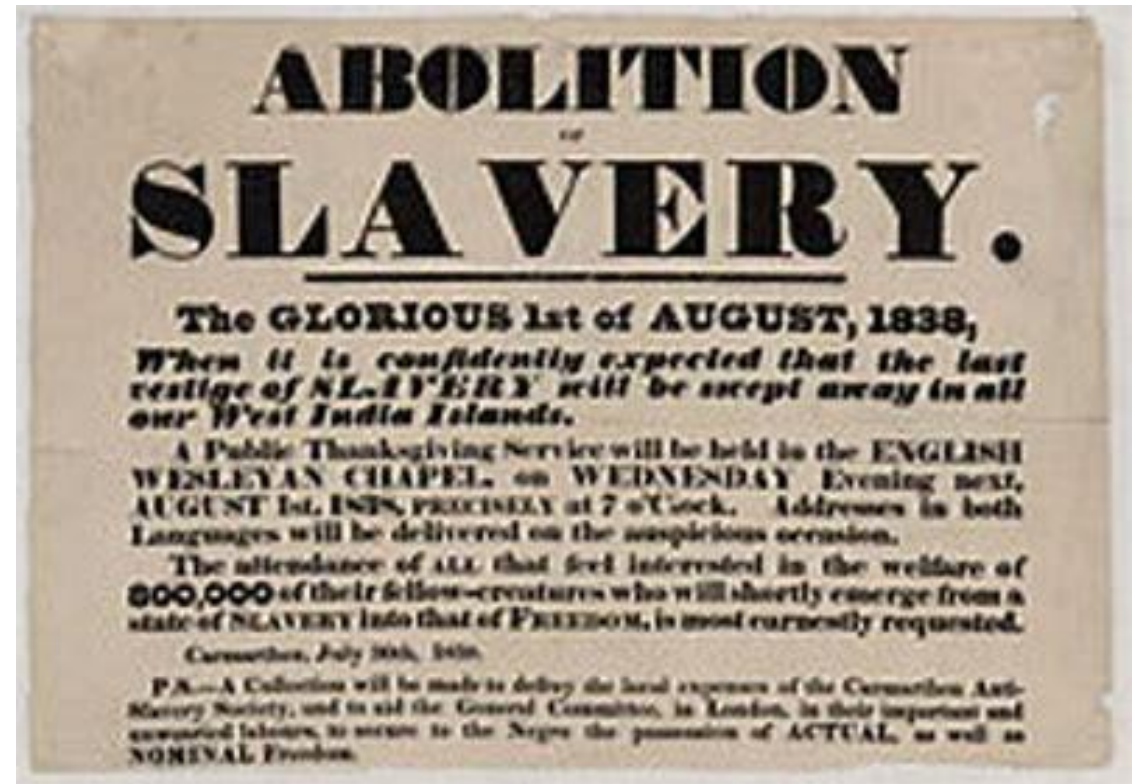
# Formation of Public Opinion

- Agenda Setting: Newspapers had the power to set the agenda by deciding which stories to cover prominently. By highlighting certain issues and downplaying others, they could influence what the public considered important.
- Editorial Influence: Editorial columns and opinion pieces allowed newspapers to articulate and promote specific viewpoints. Influential editors and journalists could shape public opinion by presenting arguments and analysis.



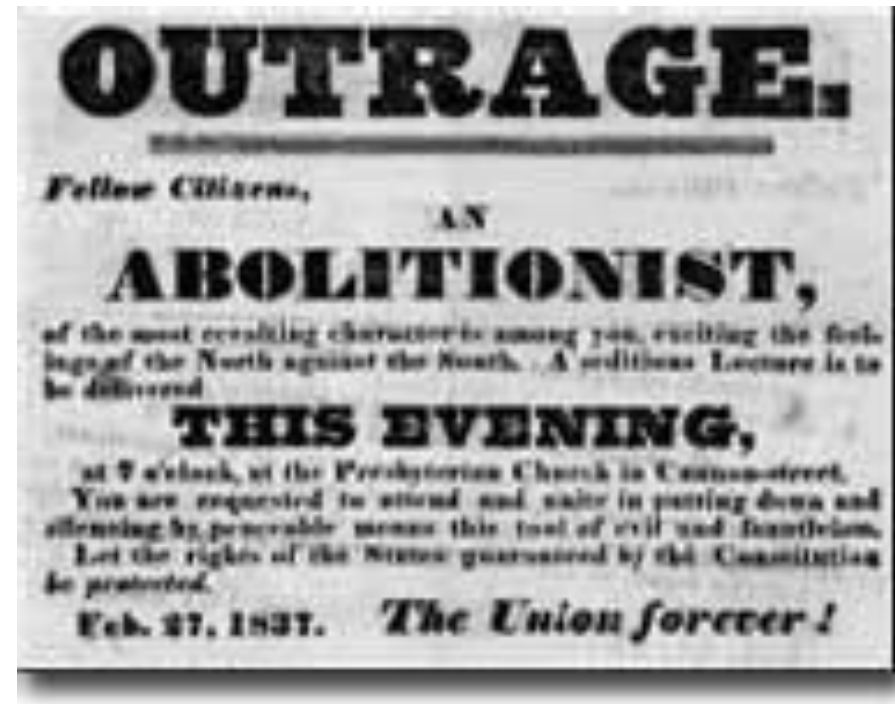
# Interaction with social movements like abolition

- **Advocacy:** Newspapers played a crucial role in advocating for social and political causes. They could champion the interests of certain groups, contributing to the formation of public opinion on issues such as women's rights, labour reform, and social justice.
- **Catalyst for Change:** By raising awareness of social injustices or advocating for reform, newspapers could contribute to societal change and the evolution of public opinion.



# Belfast activists were concerned by situation in America

- Many Belfast anti slavery advocates had strong sympathies for the American Revolution.
- BNL was the first publication outside the USA to publish the Declaration of Independence.
- BUT many abhorred American slavery and wrote about from the 1780s.

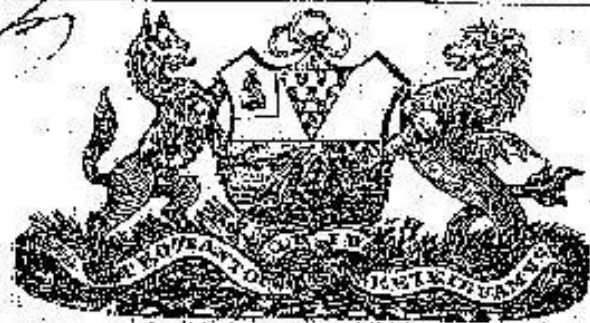


# Attacked George Washington

- In 1808, the Belfast Commercial Chronicle published an editorial criticizing George Washington's ownership of slaves, challenging the admiration of radicals who appreciated his role in the American War of Independence.
- Exposing the hypocrisy of those who professed an understanding of liberty while supporting slavery.



*For Mr. ...*  
*W. Mackay*  
**The Belfast**



185  
**News**

NUMBER 9477

FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 1828.



**TO BE SOLD, BY PRIVATE CONTRACT, SION HILL HOUSE and LANDS,** containing Seventy-two Acres, English measure. The Land is of excellent quality, and in the highest state of Improvement. Nineteen Acres of it Meadow and Loamy. The House, lately built, is large, roomy, and convenient. The Offices and Labourers' Houses good. The Gardens well fenced, and stocked with choice Fruit Trees; upwards of Four Thousand Forest and other Trees, in a very thriving state, above 20 years planted. Free of all Chief or other Rent. Distant

**COLERAINE. OLD WINES.**  
**THOMAS BLACK** begs leave to announce to his Friends, that he has received another supply of OLD BOTTLED WINES, same qualities as his last four importations; which have given such general satisfaction. His present Stock consists of above 1200 Dozen of choice WINES, of every description; and he feels confident that they will, on trial, be approved of. He has, also, ALES, ~~WINE~~ and MALT WHISKEY, for sale.

**TAN YARD TO BE LET.**  
**THAT** extensive and long established TAN YARD with the DWELLING-HOUSE, OFFICES and STORES attached thereto, in the Town of BALLYMENA, as formerly occupied by Mr. THOMAS YOUNG, and lately by Messrs. JOHN & F. LOGAN. The Dwelling House is commodious, and the entire Concern in good repair. — Immediate Possession can be given. Application to be made to **EDWARD KILLEN**

Belfast  
Newsletter  
continued to  
campaign

- In July 1806, the Belfast News-Letter published an article on the sale of slaves in Charleston, South Carolina.
- The article noted the shift in tactics driven by "ingenious avarice," questioning the morality of the slave trade.
- It pondered whether avarice could outweigh even the instinct of self-preservation, reflecting the moral scrutiny placed on slavery and the tension between economic interests and human rights.

# Highlighted the plight of slaves

The News-Letter actively criticised the treatment of slaves in 1819 in America.

Emphasis was placed on the interference slaves faced when attempting to partake in religious services.

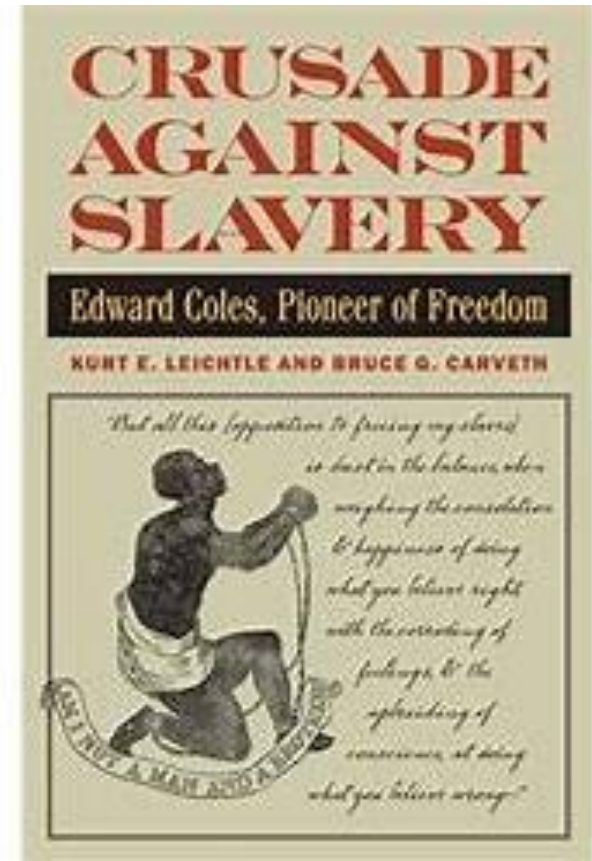
The article condemned such actions as the "consummation of wickedness".



# From the late 1830s, abolishing American slavery was the new crusade

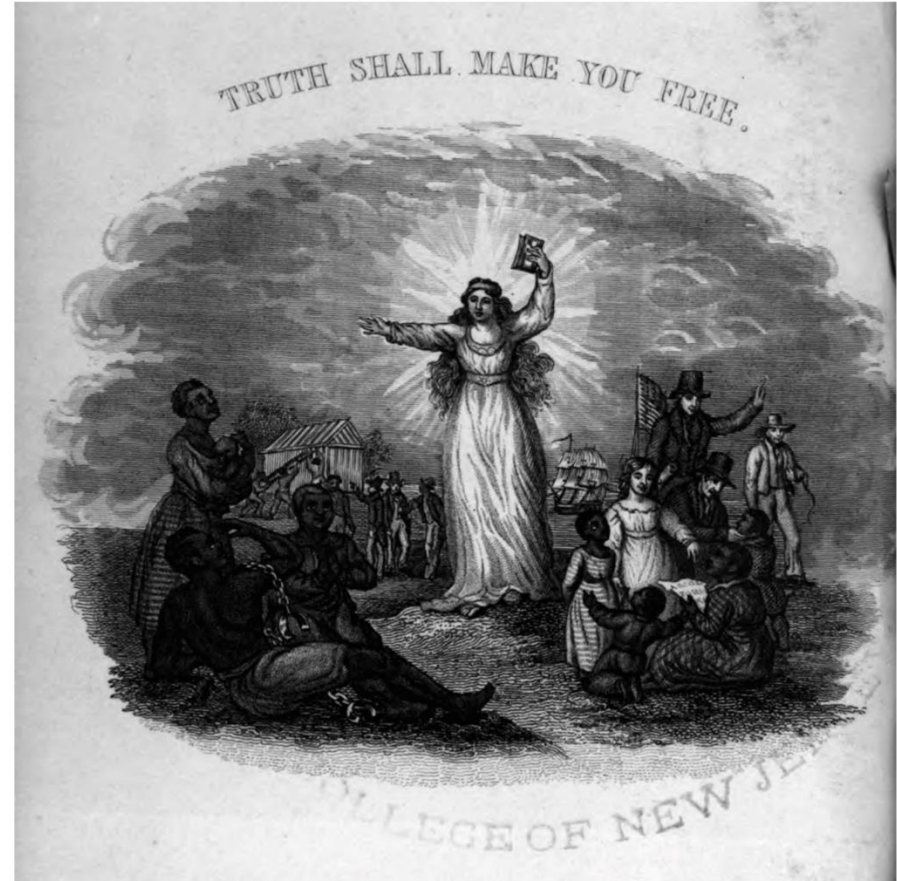
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- Northern Whig, in July 1839, detailed the reasons why the American slave system was more odious than others. Primary disgust was felt at the sexual abuse of slaves, a significant number of whom had fairer complexions than even their masters.
- The paper cited the example of a 12 year old child who was seen wandering a road in Louisville, Kentucky – a slave state.
- The girl, carrying a child, was approached by a visitor who asked if she was a slave “as the circumstance of white people hiring themselves out for service [was] almost unknown”.



# The Vindicator joined the fight

- In September 1839, the Vindicator featured an article by Joseph Sturge, a Quaker abolitionist, concerning a gathering of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.
- The meeting saw the presence of Andrew Stephenson, the American minister, known for supporting slavery, both in attendance and as a speaker at the Society's meeting.
- Joseph Sturge, displeased by Stephenson's participation and speech, expressed his sentiments, which were supported by the Vindicator.
- The article in the Vindicator highlighted the disagreement with Stephenson's stance on slavery and aligned with Sturge's disapproval of both Stephenson's attendance and speech at the scientific association's meeting.





# Opinion was common across political and religious divides

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- The Vindicator reported positively on O'Connell's anti-slavery crusade.
- BNL also covered O'Connell's anti-slavery agitation despite his activities during Catholic emancipation and the Repeal Association
- BNL covered O'Connell's anti slavery opinions during the 1840 Convention



The image features two raised fists, one on the left and one on the right, rendered in a dark brown color with white outlines. The fists are positioned as if they are shaking hands, with their fingers interlocking. The background is a light blue and white abstract pattern. The text "Working with other stakeholders" is overlaid in the center in a white, sans-serif font.

Working with other stakeholders

# What impact did the international dimension have?

---

- Collaboration with national and transnational abolitionist organisations significantly bolstered local campaigns by providing access to resources, expertise, and a broader platform for advocacy.
- Local abolitionist groups benefitted from shared knowledge, strategic guidance, and coordinated efforts, amplifying their impact and effectiveness.
- By aligning with larger networks, local organisations gained legitimacy, increased visibility, and enhanced their capacity to mobilise support and enact meaningful change within their communities.



# Background

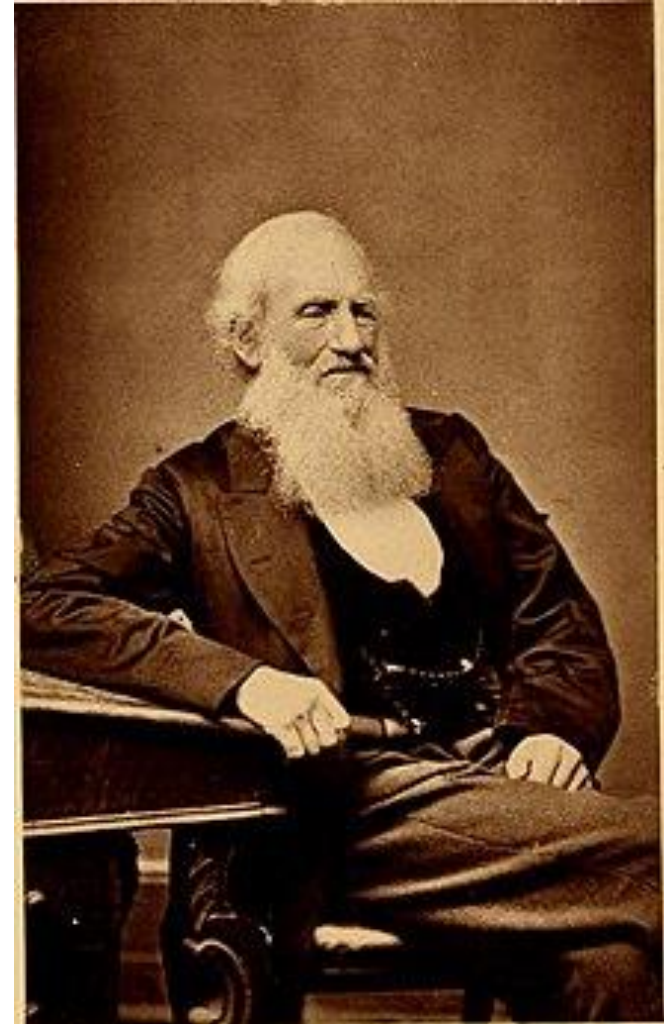
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- The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, founded in 1787, played a pivotal role in the abolitionist movement.
- Efforts led to the Slave Trade Act of 1807, abolishing the international slave trade in the British Empire.
- The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS) was established in 1839, paving the way for the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention.



# Richard Allen

- Richard Allen (1803–1886):  
Renowned British abolitionist, philanthropist, and draper hailing from Dublin.
- Raised £20,000 for Irish famine relief by penning persuasive letters to America, showcasing his commitment to humanitarian causes during dire times.
- Published edition of Douglass' narrative.
- Wrote a biography of John Brown.



# The Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society

---

- Co-founded in 1836 by Richard Allen, Richard D. Webb, and John Haughton.
- Haughton served as chairman, while Allen assumed the role of secretary.
- Recognized as "the most ardent in Europe in its antislavery efforts and activities."
- Aimed to "put an end to the unholy alliance between Irishmen and slaveholders in America."
- Allen's leadership in the society left a lasting legacy in the fight against slavery.

**EIGHT HUNDRED THOUSAND SLAVES  
SET FREE!!**

The Anniversary of EMANCIPATION in the British West Indies, will be celebrated in the

**CITY OF WORCESTER,**  
**On FRIDAY, August 3d,**

By a general MASS MEETING of the Friends of Freedom. If the weather be pleasant, the Meeting will be held in the

**HOSPITAL GROVE**  
Commencing at 10 1-2 O'clock, A. M.  
If the weather be unfavorable, the meeting will be in the spacious

**City Hall,**

Among the Speakers, who have engaged to be present, are

Wendell Phillips, Wm. Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Parker, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Adin Ballou, Charles C. Burleigh, and Robert Morris.

**LET WORCESTER COUNTY**  
give a good account of herself that day. Let the HEART of the Commonwealth be moved from its depths. Let a mighty voice go up, in the name of GOD, demanding that His

# World Anti-Slavery Convention (1840)

---

- The World Anti-Slavery Convention convened at Exeter Hall in London from 12–23 June 1840.
- Organized by the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, with Joseph Sturge, an English Quaker, taking a leading role.
- Notably excluded women from participation, sparking significant consequences for the women's suffrage movement in the United States.

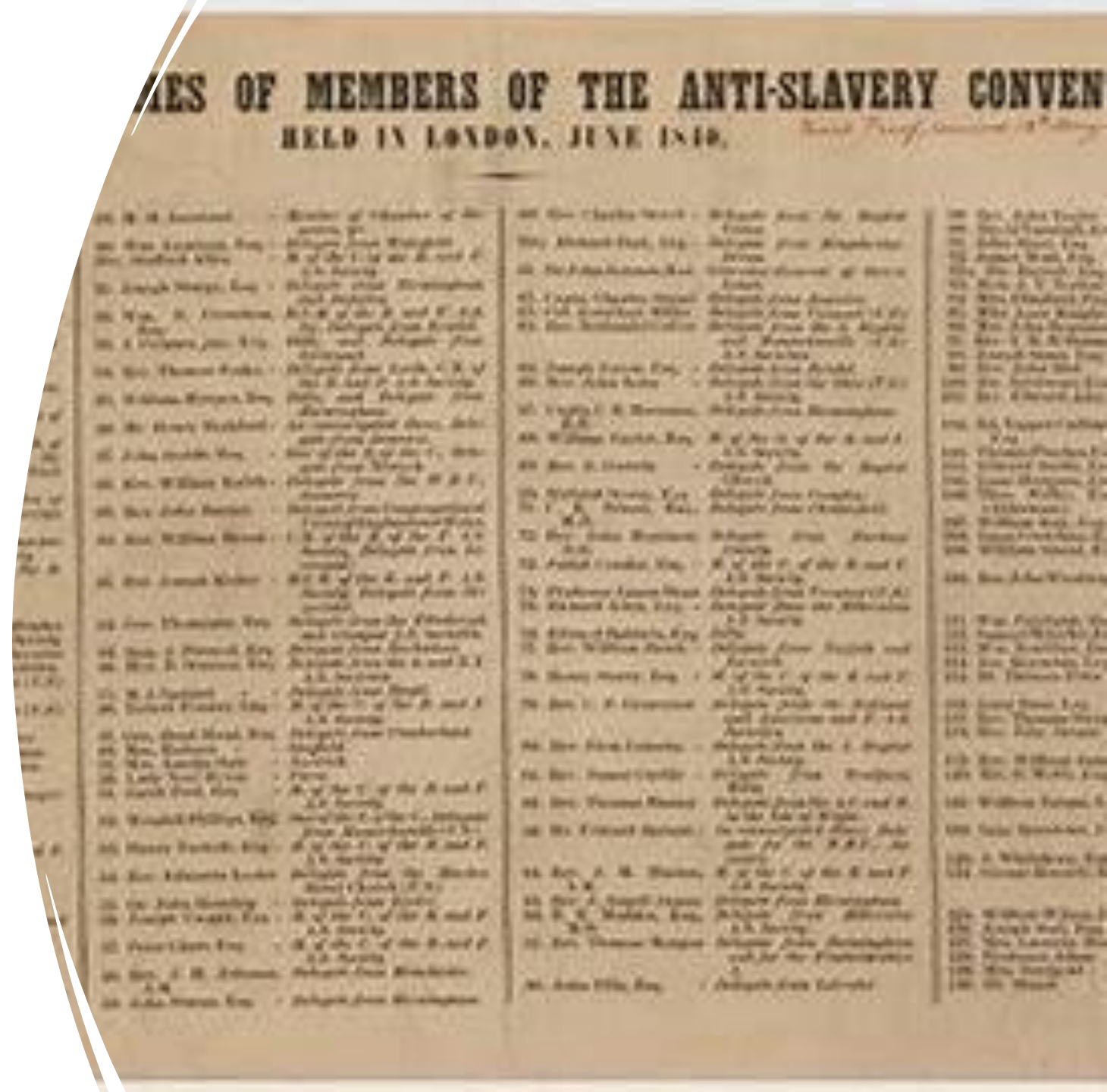


# Lots of attention prior to the Convention

Prior to the Convention, John Harfield Tredgold (secretary of the BFASS), met King Louis Phillipe I of France.

Reported in Belfast press, Tredgold asked the King to:

“take the earliest and most effective means of securing the abolition of the odious traffic in slaves, and the extinction of slavery itself.” (BNL, 1 June 1840)





# Supported and encouraged in Belfast



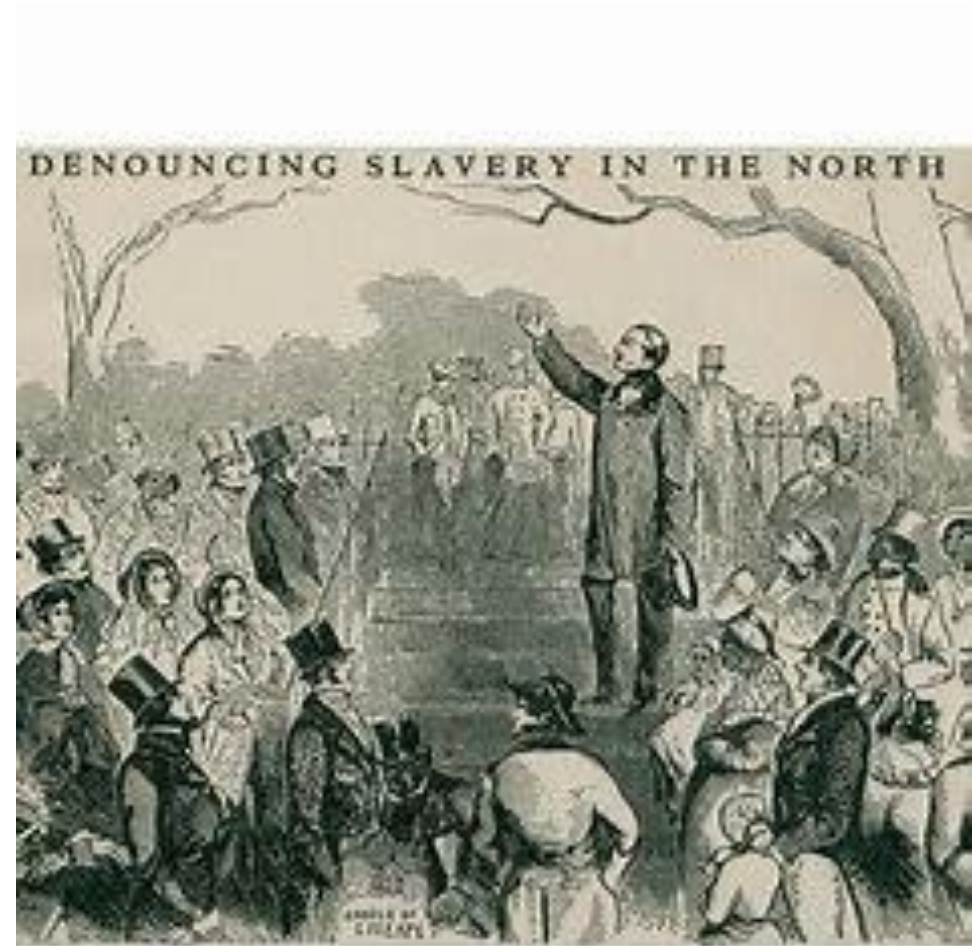
Several weeks prior to the June Convention, a well-attended meeting of the BASS took place.



Meeting welcomed the formation of the BFASS and how the local society by:



“the help of that God who had formed all nations of the earth, and infused into their veins the one blood...would never cease their exertions, till slavery died– never, never to live in the world again.”



# BASS, Secretary, James Standfield, supported the convention

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He: 'concurred in the opinion of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, that moral and religious means were the only efficient instruments for doing away with slavery. They had pledged themselves to give a preference to free-grown produce over slave-grown – to support the principle, that a slave should be free in every part of the British empire – and never to desist from their opposition to slavery, while a vestige of it remained on the civilized world...Not less than 150,000 Negroes were annually torn from their homes in Africa, to supply the Western world, and 50,000 for the Eastern market; to say nothing of the three hundred thousand, or upwards, who perish, every year, in wars in the interior, tormented by the slave-traders themselves. In the rice-swamps and cotton plantations of the Southern States of the American Union, the number of slaves was not under 3,000,000...while in the old slave-holding States of America, – Maryland, Virginia, &c., – the odious practice prevailed of breeding slaves for the market, without regard to either decency or shame.'



# Attendance

---

- More than 500 abolitionists from Canada to Mauritius attended the meeting.
- Attended by Thomas Clarkson, John Scoble, Richard D. Webb, William Lloyd Garrison, Lucretia Mott and Daniel O'Connell.
- Proceedings attracted around 1,000 spectators daily.
- Conference produced resolutions and open letters of protest to countries where slavery existed.



# Women's Participation and Controversy

---

- Despite the exclusion of women, female abolitionists, including Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, attended the 1840 Convention.
- The Garrisonian faction supported women's inclusion, while the conservative group led by Arthur Tappan group opposed it, leading to controversy.
- Although restricted to spectators, women made their presence felt, with notable figures like Mott and Stanton playing key roles.



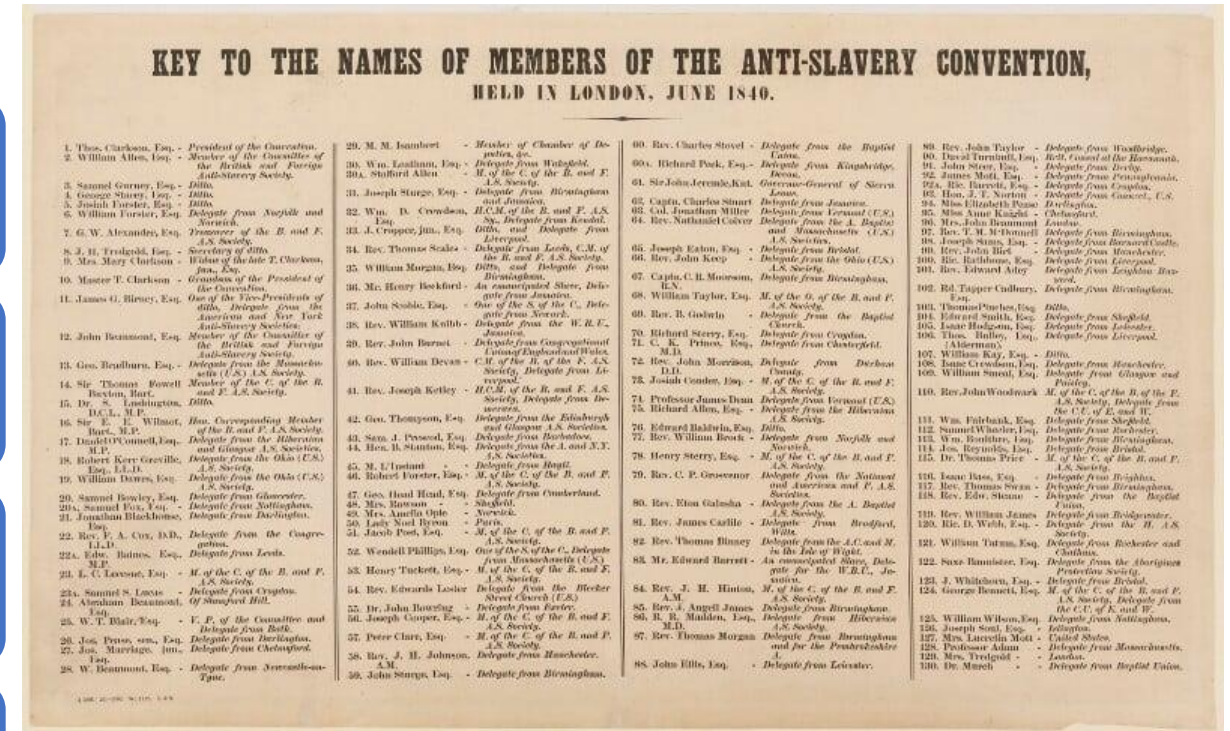
# Proceedings and Legacy

- Reverend Benjamin Godwin presented a paper condemning slavery and challenging religious leaders worldwide.

- George William Alexander reported on slave conditions in Dutch colonies and Suriname, prompting letters of protest.

- Legacy: Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, denied full access, later organized the Seneca Falls Convention, a landmark in the women's rights movement.

- A century later, the Women's Centennial Congress celebrated women's progress since the World Anti-Slavery Convention.




# Much of the Belfast coverage of the Convention focused on abolition in the USA

---

Belfast Commercial Chronicle (on 22 June 1840) reported:

There was not a single word in the declaration of independence of the United States which allowed or sanctioned the accursed principle that man can have a property in his fellow man. The American people were undoubtedly a brave and courageous people, but they had the moral, or rather the immoral, courage to insert a single word to that effect in their great charter... [Daniel O'Connell] dwelt at considerable length on the extent of slavery in the United States, and contrasted with great power the boasted love of freedom and justice which the American people are so fond of displaying, with their vagrant violation of every principle of both in the slave states



**\$1200**  
**TO**  
**1250 DOLLARS!**  
**FOR NEGROES!!**

---

**THE undersigned wishes to purchase a large lot of NEGROES for the New Orleans market. I will pay \$1200 to \$1250 for No. 1 young men, and \$850 to \$1000 for No. 1 young women. In fact I will pay more for likely**

**NEGROES,**



# Belfast visits by abolitionists

# Moses Roper – 1<sup>st</sup> 'fugitive slave' to visit Ireland

---

- Moses Roper (c. 1815 – April 15, 1891): Influential African American abolitionist, author, and orator.
- Escaped enslavement in the United States, wrote "Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper from American Slavery," detailing the horrors of slavery.
- Comes to Ireland in 1838 but not Belfast





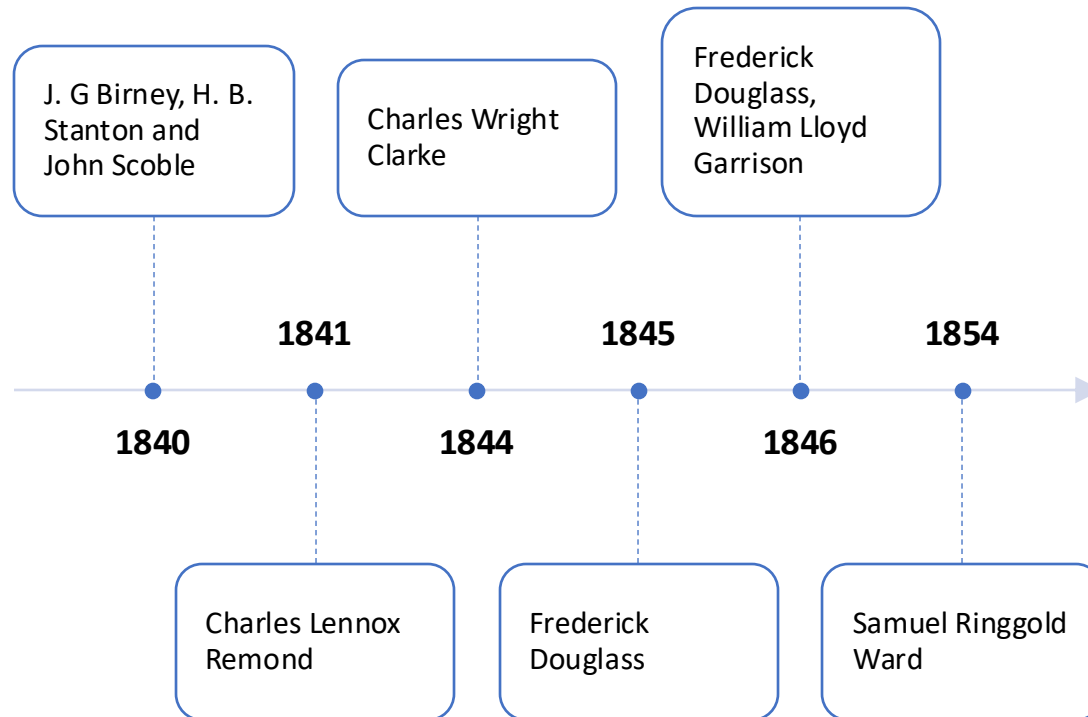
# Starts a trend

- Embarked on extensive lecturing tours across Great Britain and Ireland, advocating for abolition.
- Despite challenges to his credibility, Roper persisted in sharing his firsthand experiences and promoting abolitionist ideals, leaving a lasting impact on both sides of the Atlantic.
- Returns to Ireland in mid 1850s, talks at Armagh, GreyAbbey but not Belfast!



An illustration of an enslaved African American woman being forced to wear [slave bells](#) to prevent her escape.

# Abolitionists visited Belfast from 1840 to 1854



**Important Meeting**  
**T O - M O R R O W .**

**A** MEETING of the BELFAST AUXILIARY to the BRITISH and FOREIGN ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY will be held in the PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ROSEMARY-STREET (in connexion with the General Assembly), on THURSDAY Evening, 29th inst., at SEVEN o'clock.

Important information on the results of Emancipation in the British Colonies, also on the condition of slavery in the United States of America, will be given by the Hon. I. G. Birney, H. B. Stanton, and John Scoble, Esq., who visit Belfast for this purpose.

JAMES STANDFIELD, } Secretaries.  
F. A. CALDER, }  
2 (626

October 27, 1840.

# The public in Belfast were prepared for the meeting

*Visit of the Anti-Slavery Delegation.*—We are gratified to learn that J. G. Birney, H. B. Stanton, and J. Scoble, Esq. three of the most distinguished champions of negro emancipation of the present day, will arrive here this week, for the purpose of holding a meeting to further this great cause. We have reason to believe, that the occasion will be one of the most interesting that has taken place in town, as well from the presence of these eminent individuals and others who have proved themselves ardent friends of freedom throughout the world, as from the statements which will be submitted to the meeting. The precise day is not yet announced, but we expect to be able to do so in our next; and, in the meantime, we would direct the earnest attention of our readers to an article in our first page, in which a most interesting account is given of the three gentlemen mentioned above, and in which their abundant claims upon public confidence and gratitude are pointed out.

**VISIT OF ANTI-SLAVERY DELEGATES TO BELFAST.**—During the next week this town will be visited by three distinguished slave emancipationists:—J. G. Birney, H. B. Stanton, and John Scoble Esqrs., who will hold a public meeting, for the purpose of affording information relative to slavery in the United States of America, and the results of emancipation throughout the British Colonies.

Vindicator - Saturday 24 October 1840, p.2

Belfast Commercial Chronicle - Monday 26 October 1840, p.2

# Visit by BFASS members

- BFASS members J. G Birney, H. B. Stanton and John Scoble, visited Belfast in October 1840.
- They came to hear local opinion regarding the results of the emancipation of slavery in the British colonies.
- The trip demonstrated that the BFASS, and Belfast, were becoming increasingly well-known as centres of anti-slavery sentiment.



James G. Birney

# Saturday 29 October 1840, Meeting Held at the Third Presbyterian Congregation Meeting Hall

THE ANTI-SLAVERY MOVEMENT—JAMES G. BIRNEY.

This eminent man, who has distinguished himself so greatly in the abolition of slavery, and whose zeal has been marked by such considerable personal sacrifices, is shortly, we understand, to arrive in Belfast in company with Mr. Joseph Sturge, another distinguished champion of the cause, on which occasion a meeting is intended to be held for the purpose of giving these gentlemen an opportunity of exhibiting, the one the horrors of the slave-trade as it exists in America, and the other the improved condition of the negroes in their emancipated state. We extract the following interesting account of Mr. Birney from a letter by Mr. James Haughton, in the *Dublin Evening Post*:—"Some of your readers may ask who is Mr. Birney?—and as that great and good man is to be among us in a few days, will you allow me to answer the question? I will first tell them who James G. Birney was. He was a man of rank and influence in the State of Alabama, where his talents advanced him to the honourable post of Solicitor-General, and, I understand, he would have been soon created a Judge. He was a slave-owner, caressed and honoured by his friends, on account of his talents, and his kindness, and courtesy of manners. His mind became enlightened on the subject of slavery—he viewed it with horror—and he determined to wash himself clear of such pollution. He retired to one of the Free States of the American Union, and he there rendered up to his slaves their liberty. He did more than this, for, some time after, on the death of his father, who left a considerable property, he begged that his father's slaves might be handed to him as his portion; it was done, and he made them also free. He went even further than this: he settled in Cincinnati, where he set up a newspaper, and there, 'against many awful attempts upon his life, he at length succeeded in establishing freedom of speech and of the press.' Such is the noble-minded James G. Birney."

ANTI-SLAVERY MEETING IN BELFAST

On Thursday evening, the largest meeting ever held in Belfast, for the purpose of expressing sympathy with the children of bondage, and to co-operate with their most zealous and indefatigable friends, for their emancipation, was held in the Meeting-house of the Third Presbyterian Congregation, Rosemary-street. It had been convened by the Belfast Auxiliary to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, to receive a distinguished deputation, consisting of the Hon. I. G. Birney, and H. B. Stanton, Esq., of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and John Scoble, Esq., of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.—In consequence, however, of the former gentleman having gone to Cootehill, on his way from Dublin, in order to visit some relations, residing there, he did not arrive in

# J. G Birney

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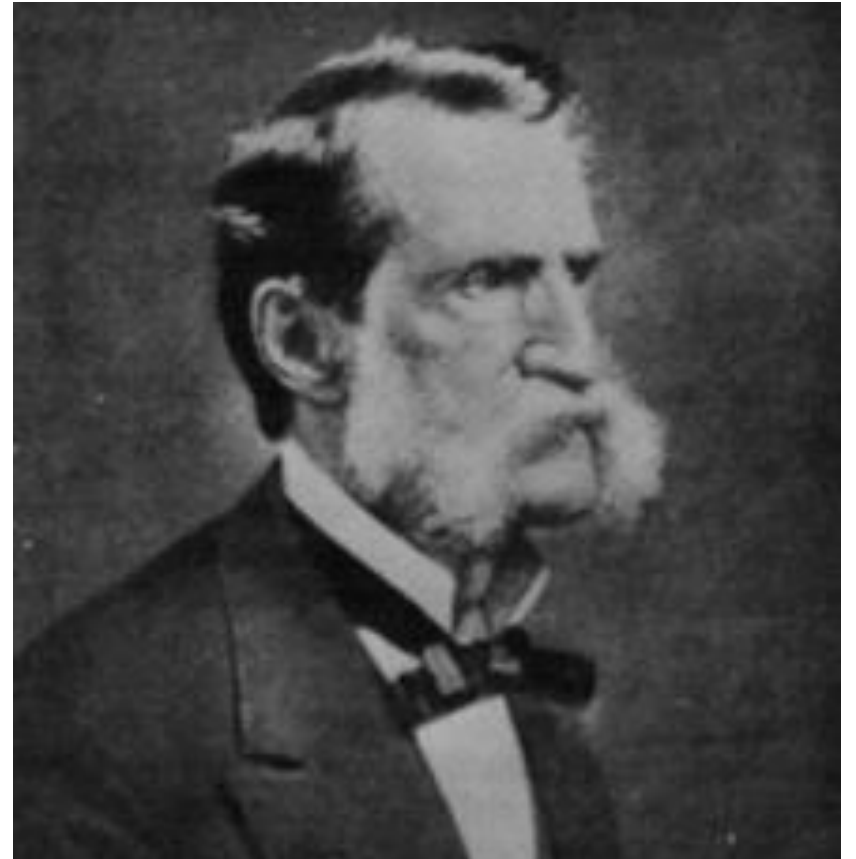
- Birney, born in Danville, Kentucky, in 1792, initially owned slaves but later became a prominent American abolitionist and advocate for the immediate abolition of slavery.
- He served as the presidential nominee for the anti-slavery Liberty Party in both the 1840 and 1844 elections, although he received a relatively small percentage of the popular vote.
- Birney pursued a legal career, volunteering for Henry Clay's campaigns, serving on the town council, and achieving success as a lawyer in Alabama.
- In his youth, Birney had mixed views on slavery, influenced by his aunt's opposition to it, but later developed strong anti-slavery sentiments during his education at Transylvania University and Princeton University.
- 5. He founded the abolitionist newspaper, *The Philanthropist*, in Cincinnati, Ohio, which faced opposition and violence from pro-slavery groups.
- Birney's health deteriorated after a horseback riding accident in 1845, leading him to withdraw from public life. He died in 1857, leaving a lasting legacy as a prominent figure in the anti-slavery movement.



# Henry Brewster Stanton (H. B. Stanton)

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- American Abolitionist: Henry Brewster Stanton was a prominent American abolitionist who dedicated his life to advocating for the rights and freedom of enslaved individuals.
- Journalist and Writer: Stanton's writing was published in influential newspapers like the New York Tribune and Anti-Slavery Standard, where he used his words to advance the cause of abolitionism.
- Political Career: He was elected to the New York State Senate in 1850 and 1851, using his position to push for legislative changes that supported the abolitionist movement.
- Marriage to Elizabeth Cady Stanton: Henry was married to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a leading figure in the early women's rights movement. Together, they were a prominent activist couple.
- Legacy of Oratory: Stanton was renowned for his oratory skills and was considered one of the best orators in the anti-slavery movement. His speeches left a lasting impact on listeners, including figures like Frederick Douglass.



# John Scoble

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- **British Abolitionist:** was a British abolitionist who played a significant role in the anti-slavery movement in England.
- **Involvement in the West Indies:** Scoble was part of the protests against the apprenticeship system, which replaced slavery in the West Indies. He, along with others, was invited to report on the apprenticeship system during a voyage organized by Joseph Sturge in 1837.
- **Leadership and Publications:** He helped form the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and served as its secretary from 1842 to 1852. Scoble published several reports on the conditions of indentured workers on plantations in the West Indies.
- **International Impact:** Scoble also revitalized the anti-slavery movement in France and corresponded with figures like François-André Isambert. However, he had disagreements with American anti-slavery advocate William Lloyd Garrison and his followers.
- **Involvement in Canada:** Scoble came to Upper Canada in 1852 and was involved with the British-American Institute of Science and Industry, a vocational school for black people. He later entered Canadian politics, serving in the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada.
- **Retirement and Legacy:** Scoble retired from politics in 1867 and passed away in Ontario in November 1877. His published works included writings on British Guiana, Texas, the conditions of hill coolies, and more.





# A public meeting was held

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- Northern Whig declaring that “it was the largest meeting ever held” in Belfast.
- In the meeting, the Church of Ireland Revd Thomas Drew noted the town’s long held anti-slavery views remarking that:
  - “The advocates of emancipation had no ordinary claim on the attention and sympathies of the people of Belfast...”
- Proved abolition was popular cause.



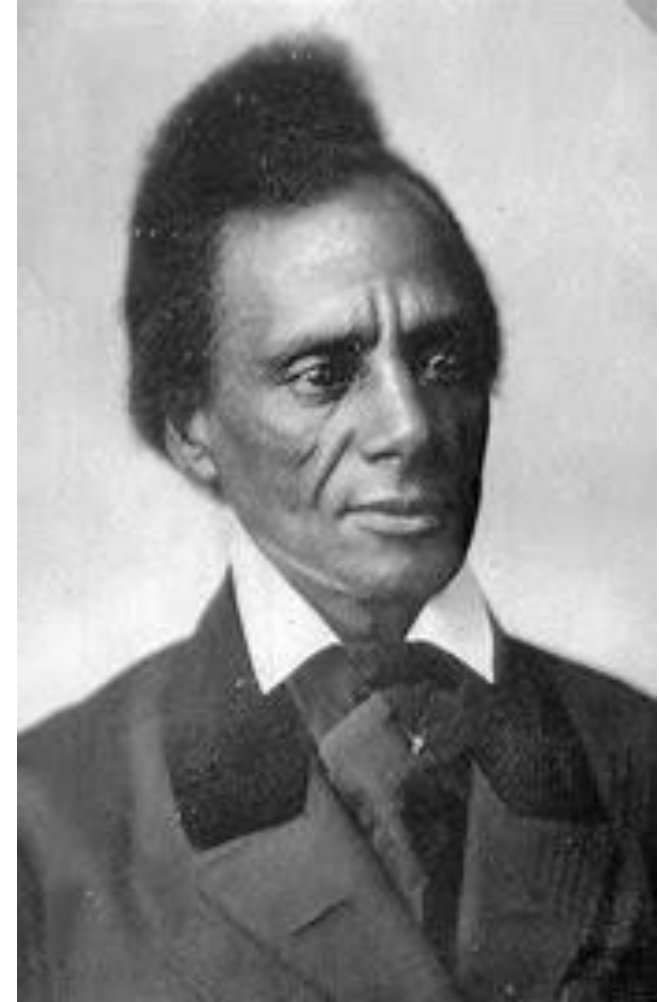
# Charles Lenox Remond (1841)

- Born in Massachusetts, Charles Lenox Remond was the first African-American employed by the American Anti-Slavery Society.

- Raised by freed slave parents, he experienced a relatively privileged upbringing for a black person in the 19th century.

- Renowned for passionate oratory against slavery, Remond made a significant impact on audiences across the Northeast of the US.

- Collaborated with leading abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, playing a crucial role in the abolitionist movement.



# Legacy and Connections

- Friendship with Frederick Douglass
  - Joined by Frederick Douglass on tour in the US, fostering a lasting friendship.
  - During the American Civil War, both Remond and Douglass encouraged black enlistment in the Union Army.
  - Charles Remond's sister, Sarah Parker Remond, lectured in Britain and Ireland in 1859.
  - Studied in London, became a physician in Italy, and left an enduring legacy.
  - Frederick Douglass named his fourth son Charles Remond Douglass, paying tribute to his friend's impactful contributions.
  - Charles Lenox Remond's activism and legacy transcended borders, leaving an indelible mark on the fight against slavery.



# Remond spoke at the Assembly Room, 14 October 1841

- A 'crowded and respectable audience' greeted him.
- Spoke of the 'wretched existence to which they are doomed by their unfeeling task masters, the horrors of the traffic in human flesh...'
- Remond spoke next at Dr Edgar's Meeting House, Alfred Street

ANTI-SLAVERY LECTURE.—Yesterday evening, a lecture on slavery was delivered, to a crowded and respectable audience, in the Assembly-room, Commercial Buildings, Belfast, by Mr. **Charles Lenox Remond** of Rhode Island, United States. He was introduced to the meeting by James Standfield, Esq., the warm and untiring friend of the bondman, in every clime. Mr. Remond dwelt, at considerable length, and with much eloquence, on the condition of slaves in America, the wretched state of existence to which they are doomed by their unfeeling taskmasters, the horrors of the traffic in human flesh carried on in that country, and the prospects of such amelioration in the American Constitution, as would blot out the stain of slaveholding from the statutes of the "great Republic," to the fundamental principles of which he shewed it to be entirely opposed. In support of his arguments, the lecturer quoted extracts from popular works on slavery, published in the United States. Mr. **Remond** spoke warmly of the philanthropic exertions of the Anti-Slavery Society, for the total extinction of the gigantic evil to which it is opposed, and hoped to see its efforts well supported, and crowned with success. The truth and aptitude of his reasoning on the unscriptural, inhuman, and unphilosophical nature of slavery, were duly acknowledged and applauded by the audience. Mr. Remond stated, that it would be impossible for him to finish so important and comprehensive a subject in one lecture; and that he would, therefore, again resume the advocacy of the cause of the slave, on a future evening. After the lecturer had concluded his observations, Mr. Standfield again rose, and announced, that, in consequence of the room in which they were met not being large enough to accommodate numbers who had sought admittance, the next lecture would take place in the Rev. Dr. Edgar's Meeting-house, on Friday (to-morrow) evening, at seven o'clock.

Northern Whig - Thursday 14 October 1841, p.2.

# Revd Henry Clarke Wright (1844)

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- Henry Clarke Wright (1797-1870) was an American abolitionist, pacifist, anarchist, and feminist.

- Born in Sharon, Connecticut, Wright worked as an apprentice to a hat-maker in Norwich, New York, where he underwent an emotional religious conversion during a revival meeting.

- He studied at the Andover Theological Seminary in 1819, married Elizabeth LeBreton Stickney in 1823, and engaged in missionary work and reform in the 1830s.

- Wright aligned with radical pacifists on non-violence and supported immediate abolition in the anti-slavery movement.



# Support for Women's Rights and Notable Publications

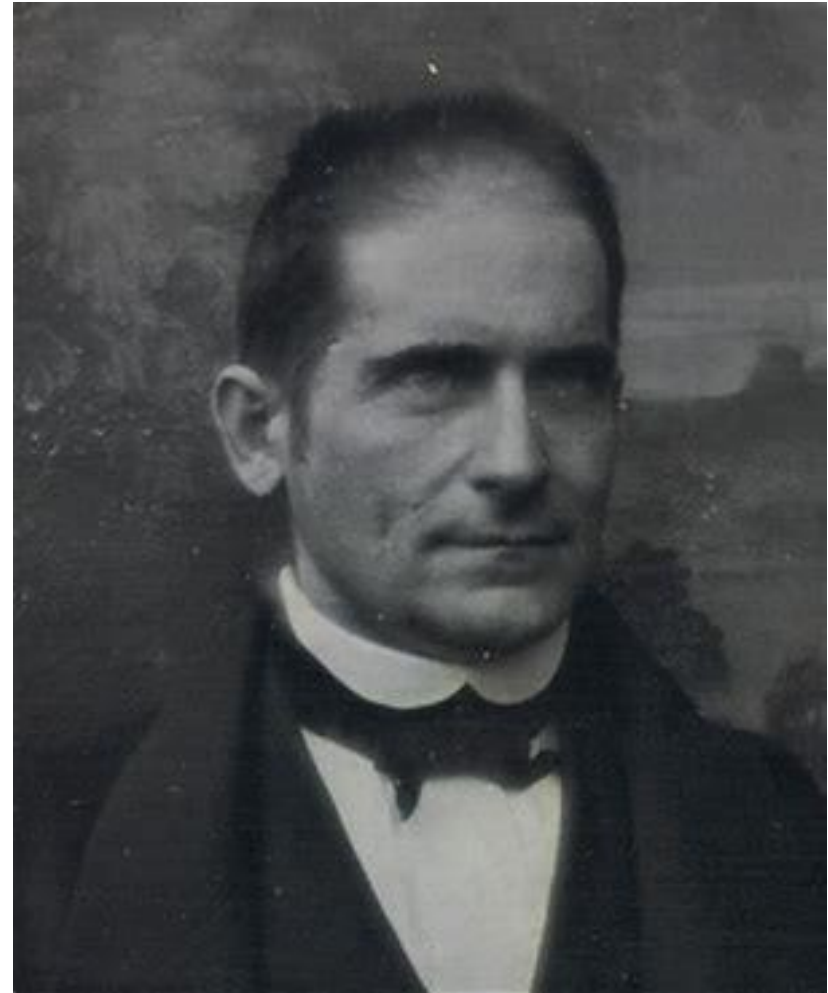
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- Wright's wife, Elizabeth, influenced his shift from parish ministry to missionary work, where he sided with William Lloyd Garrison in promoting immediate abolition.
- In 1836, he became an agent of the American Peace Society, contributing to the peace movement, but was later fired from the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1837 for his radical views.
- Wright demonstrated support for women's rights, endorsing Lucy Stone's proposal for the first National Woman's Rights Convention in 1850.



# Natick Resolution and Legacy

- Wright's radical Natick Resolution essay in 1859 called for slaves' right to resist and the duty of Northerners to aid them, challenging the institution of slavery.
- The resolution was a prominent document of militant abolitionism, and Wright's associates accused him of abandoning non-violence.
- Despite controversy, Wright's radical notions had a profound effect on abolitionism, and he spent his later life as a freelance author and lecturer throughout the Midwest.
- He died in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, in 1870, and a monument at Swan Point Cemetery honours his contributions to the abolitionist cause.



# Henry Clarke Wright

He came to Belfast in 1844.

Talked at the First Presbyterian Church, Rosemary St.

Attended by Dr Drew, Dr Edgar, James Standfield.

## ANTI-SLAVERY MEETING.

A meeting of the members and friends of the Anti-Slavery Society of Belfast was held yesterday evening at seven o'clock, in the Presbyterian Church, Rosemary-street, for the purpose, as stated in the advertisement, of giving to H. C. Wright, Esq. of Philadelphia, an opportunity of bringing before the friends of the anti-slavery cause in Belfast the present state of slavery in America, and the extent to which it is sanctioned by Christian Churches in that country; as also, to hear from George M'Henry, Esq. late surgeon to the liberated slaves in the island of St. Helena, the state of the poor Africans who were rescued from bondage, and located in that island. The meeting was large and respectable, and a very great interest seemed to be excited by the excellent speeches which were delivered.



# Resolutions at the meeting, 18 December 1844, First Presbyterian Church

I. "That this meeting is deeply interested in whatever may affect the abolition of slavery in the United States of America, where, although the people of this country possess no *direct* means of influencing the existing state of society, yet they trust that the expression of public opinion emanating from the Christian community, will have a beneficial effect in behalf of emancipation in the United States."

2. "That it is a melancholy fact that in the United States of America nearly *three millions* of our fellow creatures are held in cruel bondage, and to a great extent debarred the use of the Holy Scriptures and religious instruction; therefore they implore all Christian Churches in Great Britain and Ireland carefully to avoid giving any countenance to their brethren in that country, who sanction slavery, and to use every legitimate influence they may possess to awaken Christian Ministers in America to the deep responsibility which rests on them to use their best exertions for the extinction of a system alike repugnant to religion and humanity."

3. "That a copy of the foregoing resolutions, signed by the Chairman, be transmitted to the official organs of the several Churches in Great Britain and Ireland."

GEORGE TROUP, Esq. seconded the resolution.

The Rev. Mr. BOYD moved the next resolution, as follows:—

4. "That the thanks of this Meeting be given to H. C. Wright, Esq. of Philadelphia, for his lucid and interesting statement on the subject of American Slavery.

This resolution was seconded by Lieut. CALDER, R.N. and passed amid applause.

Mr. WRIGHT returned thanks.

# Impact: Solidarity and Awareness raising

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- **International Solidarity:** These meetings fostered a sense of international solidarity in the fight against slavery. American abolitionists found support and allies among British and Irish activists, and vice versa. This collaboration helped strengthen the global anti-slavery network.
- **Awareness and Education:** American abolitionists brought firsthand accounts of slavery in the United States to British and Irish audiences. Their stories and testimonies provided a vivid and shocking portrayal of the horrors of slavery, raising awareness and educating people about the issue.

## ANTI-SLAVERY MASS MEETING!

Agreeably to a call, signed by about 50 persons, and published in the Lawrence Republican, a Mass Meeting of the friends of Freedom will be held at Miller's Hall, at 2 o'clock P. M., on Friday, Dec. 24 the day on which

**CAPT. JOHN BROWN IS TO BE EXECUTED,**

To testify against the iniquitous **SLAVE POWER** that rules this Nation, and take steps to

**Organize the Anti-Slavery Sentiment**

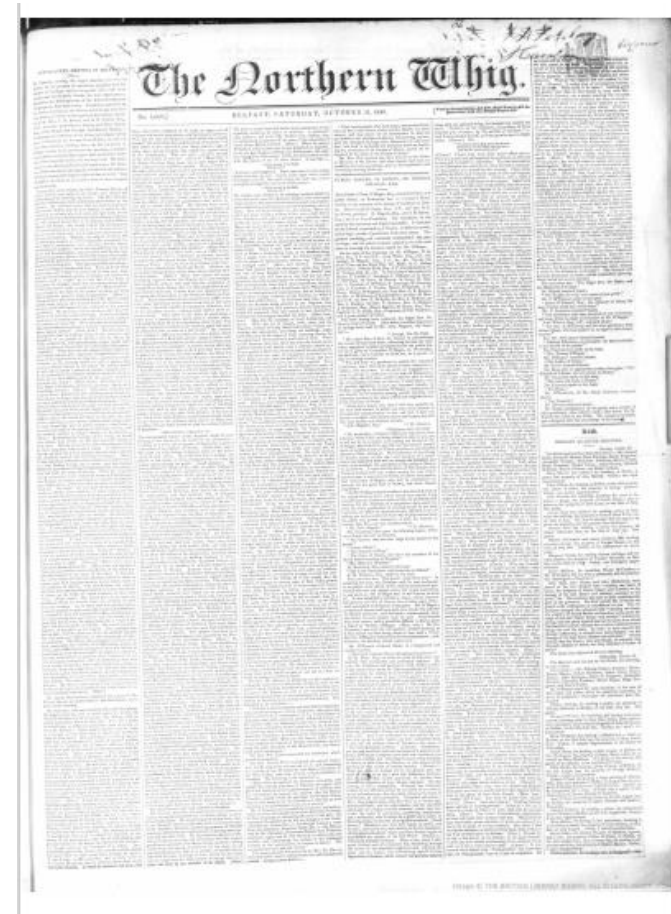
of the community. Arrangements have been made with prominent speakers to be present and address the meeting.

PER ORDER OF COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS.

Lawrence, Nov. 26, 1859.

# Impact: Fundraising and Impact

- **Fundraising:** These meetings often served as fundraising platforms for the American anti-slavery cause. British and Irish supporters donated money to support the abolitionist movement in the United States, helping to sustain anti-slavery activities.
- **Political Pressure:** The presence of American abolitionists and the attention they garnered in Britain and Ireland put pressure on the governments of these countries to take a stance against slavery. It influenced public opinion and encouraged politicians to consider anti-slavery policies.
- **Inspiration for Local Activists:** The visits of American abolitionists served as inspiration for local activists in Britain and Ireland. It encouraged them to become more involved in the anti-slavery cause and emulate the strategies used by their American counterparts



Northern Whig - Saturday 31 October 1840, devoted the whole front cover to the meeting held the preceding Thursday



# Attitudes and involvement in abolition in Belfast

# Francis Anderson Calder

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- Born in 1787, served in the Royal Navy from 1803 to 1815.
- Founding the Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (USPCA)
  - Established the USPCA in 1836 with the mission to 'Prevent Cruelty and Relieve Suffering' to animals. - The USPCA is the second oldest animal welfare charity globally.
  - Funded the construction of ten public water-troughs for cattle between 1843 and 1855.
  - Notably, the one outside the Customs House remains in use today.



# Involvement in Anti-Slavery Activism

- Active participant in the Belfast Anti-Slavery Society.
  - Signed a motion in 1845 urging churches in Britain, Ireland, and the USA to unite against the tolerance of slavery among parishioners.
- Extended hospitality to Frederick Douglass during his visit to Belfast in 1845.



# Quakers

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- In the 1820s, Belfast's Quaker community played a significant role in the abolitionist movement by actively participating in anti-slavery efforts.
- Quakers in Belfast gathered anti-slavery petitions during this period, which were intended to be sent to the British Parliament, and produced literature advocating for the abolition of slavery.



## 1830s

- By the 1830s and 40s, the small Quaker minority in the town began connecting local and national anti-slavery campaigns, contributing to the broader movement.
- In 1837, William Bell, a local Quaker, merchant, and member of the BASS, founded a pioneering periodical called the "Irish Friend."
- "The Irish Friend" marked the first Quaker newspaper within the British Isles and quickly gained widespread readership and influence, further cementing Belfast's role in the abolitionist cause.

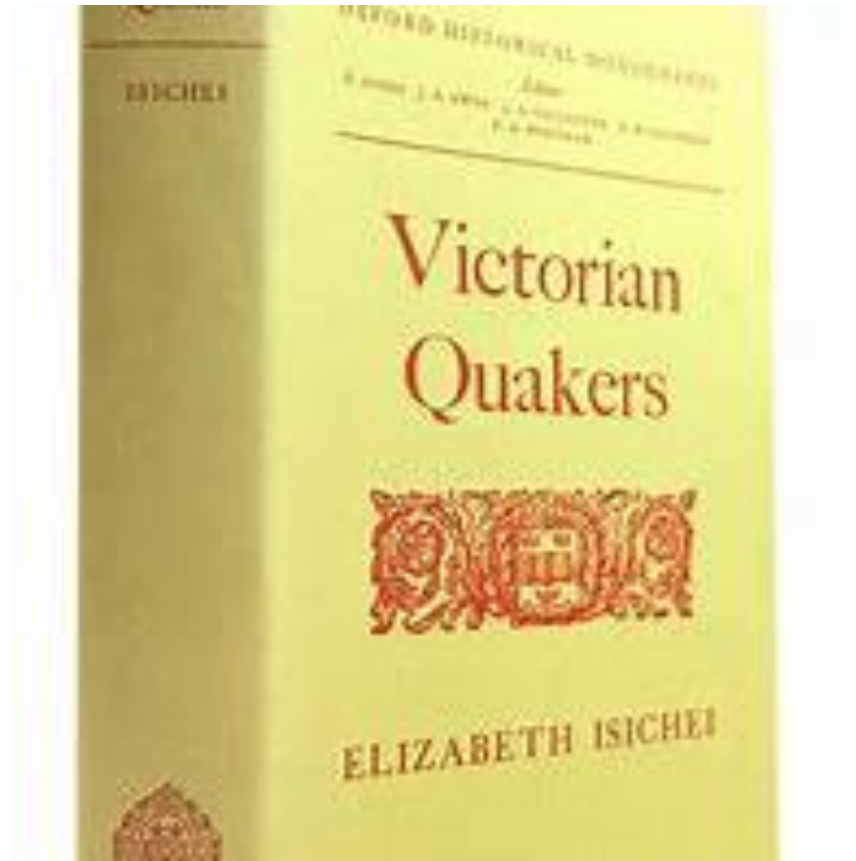




# William Bell

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- William Bell, born on July 11, 1797, in Belfast, Ireland, was a prominent figure in the abolitionist movement and a respected member of the Quaker community.
- He was the son of John Bell, a leading textile manufacturer, and married Hannah Christy Wakefield, also a Quaker, in 1820 in Moyallan, Tullylish, County Down, Ireland.
- Joining his father's firm, William Bell actively participated in the family business until 1833 when John Bell and Company faced bankruptcy.



# After bankruptcy

- Following this setback, William Bell took the initiative to establish and edit a groundbreaking Quaker periodical, 'The Irish Friend,' in 1837. This publication marked the first newspaper for Friends outside of America and gained substantial readership.

- At its peak, 'The Irish Friend' was being read by approximately half of the Quaker households in Great Britain, making it a significant tool in promoting the Quaker values of peace and abolition.



# William Bell's Emigration and Legacy

- In 1842, due to financial difficulties, William Bell emigrated to the United States, likely with the assistance of his cousin Abraham Bell (1778-1856).
- The Bell family initially resided in New York City for two years before relocating to Cincinnati. In 1851, they settled in Richmond, where William and Hannah continued their activism.
- Tragically, Hannah passed away in 1861, followed by William on March 5, 1871, leaving behind a legacy of dedication to the abolitionist and Quaker movements.
- William Bell's contributions, including his pioneering Quaker newspaper and leadership roles in anti-slavery and social justice organizations, continue to be remembered as significant efforts in the fight against slavery and for equality.



# Purpose of the Friend

Friend's founding editorial

'...we shall not shrink, where justice demands it, from the exposure of the prevailing inconsistencies of the present day; neither is it our intention to be confined exclusively to objects connected with Friends. We shall, therefore, devote a portion of our journal to information on the Abolition of Slavery, on Moral Reform, and on Temperance'



# Women

- In the 1840s, women made a notable impact on the local abolitionist movement.
- They recognized their role in educating the community, guided by Christian values and morals.
- Despite the challenges posed by the Great Famine, their commitment to abolitionism remained steadfast and evident.





# “Appeal to the Ladies of Ireland”

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- Poem produced in 1838, by several unknown Belfast women (Northern Whig, 20 March 1838).
- The poem was highly emotive in describing the abuses against slaves and appealed to a woman’s love of family:
- We dreamt we saw her fetters breaking,
- We called our Negro sister – free!
- But, from our pleasant slumber waking, We find her still in slavery;
- And prisons, bonds, and scourges, still Await her, at her tyrant’s will



# Issue on the agenda

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- BFASS did not permit women to be members, extending this prohibition to BASS.
- The issue of female participation became prominent during the 1840 Convention when female representatives from the United States were denied the opportunity to speak or take their seats, causing significant attention in Britain, America, and Ireland.
- 'The Irish Friend' in Belfast expressed disagreement with the BFASS's stance at the 1840 Convention, noting that while there were some reservations, it was disappointed by the assembly's decision not to allow female delegates from America to fully participate in the convention.

Belfast Ladies Anti Slavery Association formed in 1846  
(more later!)

# Popular attitudes to race and slavery

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- Difficult to assess what 'ordinary people thought'
- The tough nature of daily life meant very few people cared or had any real idea of slavery
- One possible perspective is to look at Theatre and Music Hall programmes.





# Grand Opera House

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- Opened on 23 December 1895.
- It was renamed the Palace of Varieties in 1904.
- Charlie Chaplin performed there in 1908.
- The Theatre's annual pantomime, which has been performed since its opening
- Capacity is 1,058.



# Theatre Royal

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- First incarnation; operational in 1793.
- Second incarnation; theatre redeveloped in 1870; opened in 1871
- Third incarnation; major fire June 1881; redeveloped building opened in December, 1881. Demolished in 1915. Today the site is occupied by Starbuck's café.



# General Tom Thumb


- Reported in December 1844 in the papers: General Tom Thumb, 'The American Man in Miniature', who measures 25 inches high and weighs fifteen pounds, will be on exhibition at the Music Hall. Admission is to be charged at one shilling
- Charles Sherwood Stratton (1838-1883), better known by his stage name "General Tom Thumb", was an American performer who achieved great fame as a performer under circus pioneer P. T. Barnum.



Will positively Close on the 20th July.

**GENERAL**  
**Tom Thumb,**  
*THE MAN IN MINIATURE,*  
EXHIBITING EVERY MORNING AND AFTERNOON.  
*In Cottle's Indian Collection,*  
**EGYPTIAN HALL, PICCADILLY,**  
And every Evening, for this Week, at the **Adelaide Gallery**  
From 7 to 9 o'Clock.

THE GENERAL IS IN HIS THIRTEENTH YEAR;  
**ONLY TWENTY-FIVE INCHES HIGH;**  
Of beautiful Proportions; and



**Weights only 15 Pounds!!**  
He is Smaller than any INFANT that ever Walked alone.

The GENERAL has had the honour of appearing at BUCKINGHAM PALACE THREE TIMES, by Command of HER MAJESTY. The elegant PRESENTS from HER MAJESTY and the QUEEN DOWAGER, may be seen in the Hall.

The GENERAL will give his Representations of NAPOLEON BONAPARTE, in full Military Costume, GRECIAN STATUES, SONGS, DANCES, &c. &c.

At Half-past Twelve in the Morning, and again in the Afternoon, the GENERAL will appear in the **COURT DRESS,** Worn before Her Majesty and the Queen Dowager.

N.B. Every Evening, until the 20th, the GENERAL will give a Series of **Grand Concerts at the Royal Adelaide Gallery,** introducing the INFANT THALIA, with whom the GENERAL will Sing a *Comic Duet,* and Dance a *Pas de Polka;* and Mr. J. T. TRENKLEE, the celebrated Buffo Singer; and several other Novelties.

**HOURS OF EXHIBITION,** From 11 to 1; from ½-past 2 to 5.  
**ADMISSION, One Shilling.**

**GENERAL TOM THUMB**—Yesterday evening, this most diminutive, at the same time, most symmetrical, of dwarfs, held his first *levée* in the Music-Hall, Belfast. The attendance was numerous and respectable; and, though the **General** was stated to be somewhat fatigued, after his journey, still he appeared lively, frolicsome, and, as he stated himself, “first rate,” and seemed to be the very personification of health. Although the public were prepared to witness something extraordinary, in consequence of what had been written of his Lilliputian Generalship, in the English and Scotch papers, yet we venture to say, few of those present, yesterday evening, expected to see so perfect a mannikin. Dwarfs we have seen whose diminutive size was accompanied with deformity; but the **General** on the contrary, exhibits a most pleasing and proportionate shape. In his performances, he appears in the dress of a private gentleman; in the Court dress, in which he appeared before her Majesty; in the dress of Napoleon (whose thoughtful pacing to and fro, he imitates, with much success;) and, lastly, in a beautiful Highland costume, presented to him, by a lady, while in Scotland. He relates his history; exhibits the attitudes of the Grecian statues; sings “Lucy Long;” “God Save the Queen;” “Yankee Doodle,” and a variety of other songs; and converses with all around, with the utmost urbanity. We were greatly pleased with the **General** and his performances; and would recommend our friends to lose no time in visiting him, for it is more than probable they will never have an opportunity of looking upon his like again.

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# Theatre programmes, 1840s

- August 1841: Monsieur Chillinski, the 'Fire King', has performed his fiery feats in the Theatre to the great delight of the audience.
- October 1842: The Theatre Royal in Arthur Street is to hold an evening of Scottish entertainment which will include an opera entitled 'Rob Roy'.
- June 1844: Mr. Hughes opened his Circus in Belfast for a brief spell. It was called the 'Grand Modern Roman Amphitheatre of Art' and was held in Chichester Street. One of the main attractions was Mr. Hughes', also known as the 'Prince of Whips' splendid musical carriage which was drawn by thirty horses in pairs.
- October 1844: The Theatre Royal is to host the celebrated Polka, danced by Carlotta Grisi and M. Perrot.
- May 1844: The Virginia Minstrels, who 'impersonate American Negro characters', were 'very well received at their performance in the Theatre'

## THEATRE ROYAL, BELFAST.

### NOTICE.

**T**HE original **VIRGINIA MINSTRELS**, from America, Messrs. F. M. B. BROWER, R. W. PELHAM, D. D. EMMIT, in conjunction with Mr. J. W. SWEENEY, the original BANJO PLAYER, beg to state to the Public, that they have taken the Theatre Royal off Mr. CUNNINGHAM, for a few nights, to give their **ETHIOPIAN CONCERTS**. They have played in every principal city in the United States; the following in England:—London, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, &c., and are now concluding a re-engagement with Mr. CALCRAFT, at the Theatre-Royal, Dublin, for seven nights. Their first Concert will take place

*On MONDAY, the 13th of May,*

In which they will pourtray, through the medium of Songs, Dances, Lectures, Refrains, Sayings and Doings, the Oddities, Peculiarities, Eccentricities, and Comicalities, of that Sable Genius of Humanity.

Each performer plays on an Instrument such as the Slaves use in the Southern parts of the United States.

R. W. Pelham, on the Tambourine; D. D. Emmit, on the Violin; J. W. Sweeny, on the Banjo; F. M. Brower, on the Bone Castanets; forming, altogether, a complete Band of Negro Music, showing a true copy of Negro Life.

Note.—Not a trace or shade of vulgarity is mixed up with the truly original attempt at introducing a *new and better school of Negroism*. There is nothing offered either in *word, look, or action*, that can, in the least degree, offend the most fastidious taste.

Tickets to be had at the Theatre, from Eleven till Four, where places can be secured; also, at the principal Music Shops.

# Northern Whig - Tuesday 14 May 1844, p.3

THEATRE.—THE **VIRGINIA** **MINSTRELS**.—These personators of the American Negro characters made their first appearance, here, last night, and were remarkably well received. Their songs, dances, and characteristic musical accompaniments, called forth repeated plaudits ; and several of their pieces were loudly encored.

# Belfast Commercial Chronicle - Wednesday 15 May 1844, p.2

*The Virginia Minstrels.*—These celebrated performers of negro character made their bow to a very numerous Belfast audience on Monday evening, by whom they were very well received. The performance is certainly quite unique, the songs, dances, and musical accompaniments being of a character altogether different from anything of the kind we have hitherto seen or heard, and admirably illustrative of the liveliness and drollery which distinguish the negro in his hours of enjoyment. The dancing of Mr. Pelham and Mr. Brower was capital, in its way; and Messrs. Emmet and Sweeny, on the Carolina violin and Virginia banjo, performed to admiration. The entertainment, altogether, was excellent, and called forth frequent bursts of well-merited applause.



# Northern Whig - Saturday 18 May 1844, p.4

THEATRE.—THE **VIRGINIA MINSTRELS**—The very entertaining representations, which have been witnessed in our theatre, for several evenings, conclude to-night. “The sayings, doings, oddities, whimsicalities, eccentricities, and comicalities of that sable genus of humanity,” create uncommon merriment; the house continues, nightly, to shew that the performances gain in public opinion; and several of the “parts” continue to be enthusiastically *encored*. The low vulgarities that generally characterize things purporting to be representations of the Negro character do not offend the spectator; and, although the whole affair is laughter-creating in the extreme, there is a “holding of the mirror up to Nature,” that causes the thing to go off with great *éclat*, and calls forth the approbation of the more intellectual portion of the audience.

# A contradiction?

- Modern attitudes would find this difficult to stomach
- People could attend these performances and welcome Frederick Douglass six months later.

THEATRE-ROYAL, BELFAST.  
Great Success of the Original Virginia  
Minstrels  
(FROM AMERICA.)  
(Late of Mr. Calcraft's, Theatre-Royal, Dublin.)  
MESSRS. R. W. PELHAM, F. M. BROWER,  
D. D. EMMIT, and J. W. SWEENEY, the original  
BANJO PLAYER, and the first that ever brought that In-  
strument before the Public (the VIRGINIA MINSTRELS), beg,  
respectfully, to inform the Public, that their SECON  
CONCERT will take place this Evening,

# Belfast connections to the international abolitionist campaign

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# Enforcing the slave trade ban

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1807/8, Royal Navy set up West Africa Squadron to enforce the British Empire banning of the Slave Trade.

In all, around 150,000 Africans were liberated by the West Africa Squadron – crammed into 1,600 slave ships captured between 1808 and 1860.

The cost to the Royal Navy was heavy: one sailor died for every nine slaves freed – 17,000 men over the 52-year period – either in action or of disease.



# George Chichester, 3rd Marquess of Donegall

- Born: 10 February 1797, Great Cumberland Place, London
- Died: 20 October 1883 (aged 86), Brighton, Sussex
- Political party: Tory, Whig
- Spouses: Harriet Butler (m. 1822; died 1860), Harriet Graham (m. 1862)
- Alma mater: Christ Church, Oxford



# Political and Official Positions

- Captain of the Yeomen of the Guard (1848-1852) to Queen Victorian
- Vice-Chamberlain of the Household (1830-1834, 1838-1841)
- Lord Lieutenant of Antrim (1841-1883)
- Knight of St Patrick (1857)
- Elevated to the Peerage of the United Kingdom (1841)
- Senior member of the Privy Council at the time of his death (1883)



# Lord Donegall and the Waterwitch

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- Lord Donegall was into racing and was a sailing enthusiast; member of the Royal Yacht Squadron, founded in 1815.
- Waterwitch was built in 1832 as a racing yacht of advanced, experimental design, by Joseph White of Cowes built the brig in 1832 for Lord Belfast.



The  
Waterwitch in  
the thousand  
guineas  
match 1832

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# Royal Navy become interested

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- The Royal Navy were reluctant to race their ships against Waterwitch.
- In 1834, the Earl of Belfast's brig took on the crack Royal Navy Channel Squadron between Dover and the Isles of Scilly.
- The Isle of Wight-built vessel was said to have outperformed all Royal Navy vessels on every point of sailing and in all strengths of wind.
- RN purchased Waterwitch in 1834.



# Waterwitch in the West Africa Squadron

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- Armed as a 12 gun brig/sloop
- Served in the West Africa Squadron from 1834.
- Responsible for the capture of at least 43 slave trading vessels and the freeing of up to 26,000 slaves off the West coast of Africa.
- Waterwitch phased out in 1861; steam powered ships were faster.



# Memorial to HMS Waterwitch

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- The cost to the Royal Navy was heavy: one sailor died for every nine slaves freed – 17,000 men over the 52-year period – either in action or of disease.
- Waterwitch memorial in St Helena to crew who died.



Questions?