



Washington History in the Classroom

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“Washington History magazine is an essential teaching tool,” says Bill Stevens, a D.C. public charter school teacher. “In the 19 years I’ve been teaching D.C. history to high school students, my scholars have used *Washington History* to investigate their neighborhoods, compete in National History Day, and write plays based on historical characters. They’ve grappled with concepts such as compensated emancipation, the 1919 riots, school integration, and the evolution of the built environment of Washington, D.C. **I could not teach courses on Washington, D.C. history without *Washington History*.**”



Bill Stevens engages with his SEED Public Charter School students in the Historical Society’s Kiplinger Research Library, 2016.

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The Pearl Affair: The Washington Riot of 1848

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In the months following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago, which ended the Mexican War in early 1848, the United States was caught in a deepening sectional crisis over the question of slavery expansion into the vast territories that had been gained in the Southwest as a result of the war. Most northerners desired that slavery not be allowed to enter these territories. Most southerners believed that slavery should be given a chance to establish itself where it could. The center of controversy was not in the territories, however, but in Washington, D. C. where Congress would either find a suitable solution which would satisfy a majority in both sections or see the Union destroyed.

From the time Congress had convened in December 1847 the question of slavery expansion, and inevitably of slavery itself, had been vehemently debated in both the House and Senate. With each week that passed the tension at the Capitol grew and overflowed into the city, where those taking a proslavery position enjoyed a supportive atmosphere.¹

This did not mean that the residents of the city considered themselves to be "ultra" proslavery people. Although Washington was a slaveholding community, surrounded by slaveholding states, its citizens were embarrassed by the abolitionist contention that human beings were bought and sold within sight of the Capitol of the United States. Many of them favored ending the slave trade in the District of Columbia. But like other southerners they believed slavery to be an essential element in race relations and shared with other southern whites the nagging fear that the servile black population would at any moment claim its freedom.² This outlook was buttressed by the city's political press. The Whig *National Intelligencer*, edited by Joseph Gales

¹*Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., I sess., *passim*. David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), pp. 63-72. Allen Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union* (8 vols.; New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1947), I, 21-24.

²Constance McLaughlin Green, *The Secret City, A History of Race Relations in the Nation's Capital* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 35-50. Wilhelmus Bogart Bryan, *A History of the National Capital from Its Foundation Through the Period of the Adoption of the Organic Act* (2 vols.; New York: MacMillan Co., 1916), II, 384-85.

and William Seaton, defended the status quo, while the *Union*, edited by Thomas Ritchie as the national organ of the Democratic party, was unabashedly proslavery.

As the sectional controversy continued into the spring most Washington residents went about their normal lives confident that Congress would reach some acceptable solution to the nation's problems. The city's newspapers indicated that there was as much interest in the preparations for the excavation of the ground on which one day would be erected a "Grand National Monument" dedicated to George Washington as there was in sectional politics. Then in mid-April the popular mind riveted on the revolution which had once again brought republican government to France, and which appeared to be spreading throughout the other countries of Europe. The *Intelligencer* upheld its conservative reputation by carrying a few articles which worried about the excesses of the French mob, but its editors endorsed the various plans for commemorating this victory of the people. Democrats were unrestrained in their jubilation.³ At one event Henry Foote, a slaveholding Senator from Mississippi, declared,

That the age of tyrants and of slavery was rapidly drawing to a close, and that the happy period to be signalized by the universal emancipation of man from the fetters of civic oppression, and the recognition in all countries of the great principles of popular sovereignty, equality and brotherhood, was at this moment visibly commencing.⁴

Into this tumultuous scene, marked by torchlight parades celebrating universal liberty, sailed the schooner *Pearl* on Thursday, April 13, 1848. On board the tiny ship were three men: the captain and part owner, Edward Sayres; the cook, Chester English, and Daniel Drayton, an unlucky, semiliterate bay trader. Drayton—sometimes called captain—had offered Sayres one hundred dollars to charter the *Pearl* for the purpose of transporting a number of slaves from Washington to Frenchtown, New Jersey and freedom.⁵

Ventures of this kind—called slave stealing by southerners—though highly dangerous were not uncommon during the decades prior to the Civil War.⁶ The attempt by Drayton, however, to carry off seventy-

³ *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 16–30, 1848. *Daily Union*, April 16–29, 1848. *Washington Saturday News*, April 15, 1848.

⁴ Daniel Drayton, *Personal Memoir of Daniel Drayton, for Four Years and Four Months a Prisoner (for Charity's Sake) in Washington Jail* (New York: American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1855), p. 27. *Daily Union*, April 17, 1848. *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 17, 1848. John Messerli, *Horace Mann, A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), pp. 483–84.

⁵ Drayton, *Memoir*, p. 25.

⁶ Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Arno Press, 1968), pp. 150–78. William Still, *The Underground Railroad* (New York: Arno Press, 1968), pp. 74–75, 166, 263. Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line, The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961), pp. 51–55.

some slaves was the most audacious of all such enterprises down to John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry eleven years later. Like Brown's raid the *Pearl* undertaking failed. Unlike the Brown raid it left the antislavery cause in the border states strengthened rather than weakened.

On Friday, April 14, Drayton made arrangements to take the slaves on board the *Pearl*. There was no difficulty in this as the steamboat wharf where the *Pearl* docked was in a sparsely settled area one mile from Pennsylvania Avenue. At approximately ten o'clock Saturday night the *Pearl*, with its "cargo" safely below deck, cast off only to be left stranded in a dead calm until daylight. Then the wind picked up, and the schooner sailed down the Potomac without incident until just after sunset it reach Point Lookout where the river flowed into Chesapeake Bay. The plan had been to head north from Point Lookout up the Bay to the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal and across Delaware Bay to New Jersey. The rising of a strong north wind rendered this infeasible. Rather than take the small craft south into the open Atlantic as Drayton urged, Sayres decided to lay over in Cornfield Harbor just inside the mouth of the Potomac, which afforded good shelter from the bay winds and some cover from river traffic.⁷

Hours later, at approximately two o'clock in the morning of Monday, April 17, a small steamboat named *Salem* found the *Pearl* lying peacefully at anchor in the harbor. The steamer had headed down river the previous day after citizens of Washington, Georgetown, and Alexandria observed that their servants were missing. A black hackman, who had conveyed two of the escaped slaves to the *Pearl*, indicated that the schooner had set off down stream, and the *Salem* departed the Georgetown wharf in pursuit at one o'clock that afternoon. On board were the steamer's crew and thirty volunteers "armed with muskets and other weapons," including two field pieces, under the command of W. C. Williams, a Washington peace officer.⁸

Once they discovered the *Pearl* the men of the *Salem* quickly boarded the vessel while the fugitives and their erstwhile rescuers slept. Hatches were fastened from above and Drayton, "the supposed master and ringleader of the thieves, was ordered up." The slaves were ready to fight for their freedom, but Drayton dissuaded them, pointing out that without arms they had no chance of successful resistance.⁹ Nevertheless

⁷ *Daily Union*, April 19, 1848. Drayton, *Memoir*, pp. 29-37.

⁸ *Daily Union*, April 19, 1848. *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 19, 1848. *New York Herald*, April 20, 1848. Drayton, *Memoir*, pp. 32-35.

⁹ *Daily Union*, April 19, 1848. *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 19, 1848. Drayton, *Memoir*, p. 32.

rumors circulated in Washington that night that “the runaway slaves had been captured, after a desperate struggle, in which seven of their number were killed.”¹⁰ The rumors contributed to growing excitement among the populace of the District, which had been initiated by the discovery of the missing servants on the day before.

After the *Pearl* had been taken, the three white men were brought on board the *Salem* to be interrogated, while the blacks were left aboard the schooner which was to be towed back to Washington. Drayton, Sayres, and English were all terribly frightened. English, a young man whom Drayton described as “inexperienced as a child,” “wept bitterly, and protested he had had no part in the criminality of the concern.” The other two captives agreed that this was the truth, that “he knew nothing of their plans, and had been directed after night to receive the slaves, who, they said to him were going down the river on an excursion of pleasure!”¹¹

Drayton later claimed that during the interrogation he was threatened with a knife. He had heard that the penalties in the slave states for aiding slaves to escape were very severe, but he began to fear that he would not live to find out. A particularly ominous event occurred as the steamer passed Alexandria, Virginia on the way back to Washington. The white prisoners were called on deck to be “exhibited to the mob collected on the wharves.”¹²

When the *Salem* reached its destination at seven-thirty on the morning of Tuesday, April 18, a small crowd had already gathered despite the early hour. The crowd grew as the prisoners disembarked at the steamboat wharf and began the trek towards Pennsylvania Avenue. Drayton and Sayres, manacled and tied together with a guard at each side, headed the procession. After them came English and the male slaves, who were also tied together in double file and closely guarded. Bringing up the rear were the women and children captives, who were allowed to march untied. Of the slaves there were approximately thirty-eight men and boys, twenty-six women and girls, and thirteen children. They were guarded by the same men who had manned the *Salem*, who Williams—probably fearing a disturbance—had disarmed before the procession began.¹³

As they went along and the crowd grew, individuals “used very threatening language towards the white men.”¹⁴ Drayton recalled that

¹⁰ *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 19, 1848. *New York Herald*, April 19, 20, 1848.

¹¹ Drayton, *Memoir*, pp. 25–26, 36. *Daily Union*, April 19, 1848.

¹² Drayton, *Memoir*, pp. 35–39.

¹³ *Daily Union*, April 19, 1848. *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 19, 1848. *Emancipator*, April 26, 1848. Drayton, *Memoir*, p. 39.

¹⁴ *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 19, 1848.

as they passed Gannon's slave market, Gannon rushed at him with a knife. There were cries of "lynch them! lynch them! the d--n villains!"¹⁵ Finally in front of the United States Hotel the crowd became so dense and unruly that it was impossible to proceed. The Washington correspondent of the Boston *Whig* reported that there were demands to drag Drayton away from his captors, to "knock his d--d brains out!"... "shoot him! shoot the hell hound!" "lay hold of him! hang the d--d villain."¹⁶ One member of the crowd broke through the guard to attack Sayres and was felled by a blow from one of the guards. Fearful that they could not protect their charges any longer the guards then procured a hack and drove Drayton and Sayres the rest of the way to the jail. There a large crowd formed, and many—including the Washington correspondent of the New York *Herald*—agreed that it was "high time that the citizens of this district were proceeding to measures for the security of their property and their rights, under the federal constitution." Meanwhile the *Whig's* correspondent heard "the most bitter imprecations against the abolitionists and the abolition paper (National Era) of the District."¹⁷

The obvious assumption among members of the crowd was that in any attempt to steal slaves an abolitionist establishment must be involved. Drayton repeatedly denied that this was the case. He told his captors that he "had been paid by others to take the slaves and that he had no connection with persons called abolitionists." During his trial he said he had no sympathy with abolitionists. He had met with "persons" in Washington prior to setting forth with the slaves in the *Pearl*, but he refused to reveal who these persons were.¹⁸ During his trial his defense indicated that his employer was Daniel Bell, a free black resident of Washington, who fearing that the manumission of his wife and eight children might be reversed by the courts had taken action to secure their freedom. To avoid the possibility that they might be sold south he wrote to Philadelphia in February 1848 seeking assistance in carrying his family north. The people to whom Bell wrote contacted Drayton because it was known that he had helped a woman and five children flee Washington the previous fall. Once in Washington Drayton set the time and place with Bell's family and agreed to take on "quite a number of others who wished to avail themselves of this opportunity of escaping."¹⁹ That free blacks and slaves would, or

¹⁵ Drayton, *Memoir*, pp. 39–40.

¹⁶ *Emancipator*, April 26, 1848.

¹⁷ *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 19, 1848. New York *Herald*, April 19, 20, 1848. Drayton, *Memoir*, p. 40.

¹⁸ New York *Herald*, April 19, 20, 1848. Drayton, *Memoir*, pp. 28, 36, 94.

¹⁹ Horace Mann, *Slavery: Letters and Speeches* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), pp. 116–17. Drayton, *Memoir*, pp. 23–24, 28, 90–91.

could, play the major part in planning their own escape was throughout the South a disquieting assumption that in this case was put to rest by imagining an abolitionist plot in the city, involving "persons of note too."²⁰

In Washington the most visible symbol of abolitionism was the printing office of the *National Era*. Upon leaving the jail the frustrated crowd turned in its direction. Such behavior was predictable, and Gamaliel Bailey, the *Era's* editor, had been preparing for such a confrontation ever since he arrived in Washington from Cincinnati sixteen months earlier.²¹ In the North the time of antiabolition riots had long passed. The small, slight Bailey, who had experienced mob violence in southern oriented Cincinnati in 1836 and 1841 as assistant editor and editor of the *Philanthropist*, understood that a continual threat of violence would remain in a slaveholding city. Believing that if slaves were to be peacefully emancipated the abolitionist message had to be carried into the South, and also that the antislavery forces in Congress needed the support of a friendly press in the capital, he was willing to take a chance.²² As he moved with his Virginia born wife, five young children, and his aged parents to Washington in December 1846 he worked purposely to establish cordial relations with the community which would cushion any blow aimed in his direction.

Because he believed he could appeal to southerners and because of the continuing threat of violence in Cincinnati, Bailey's conduct as an abolitionist had always been more diplomatic and conciliatory than that of his colleagues further north. When he went to Washington, he realized that even greater moderation would be necessary if he were to be tolerated in a slaveholding community. Not only did he avoid harsh language, address slaveholders as reasonable human beings, and disavow federal action to abolish slavery in the South, he did not immediately make an issue of abolition in the District of Columbia. Instead he concentrated on finding a legal way of ending the slave trade in the capital.²³ William Lloyd Garrison, as well as some of

²⁰ Drayton, *Memoir*, pp. 36, 46. *Daily Union*, April 19, 1848. *New York Herald*, April 19, 20, 1848. *Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., I sess., pp. 652-54.

²¹ Threats of violence greeted the founding of the *National Era*. See: Lewis Tappan to Amos A. Phelps, January 16, 1847, Lewis Tappan Lt. Bk., Lewis Tappan Papers, Library of Congress. Gamaliel Bailey to Zebina Eastman, June 11, 1847, J. Frank Aldrich Papers, Chicago Historical Society. Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, January 21, 1847. Baltimore *Patriot*, quoted in *Emancipator*, December 23, 1846.

²² *Philanthropist*, July 22, 1836; September 8, 1841. Gamaliel Bailey to Joshua R. Giddings, August 31, 1846, Giddings-Julian Papers, Library of Congress, *National Era*, January 7, 1847; May 20, 1847; June 17, 1847. Cincinnati *Weekly Herald and Philanthropist*, March 6, 1844.

²³ *National Era*, January 7, 1847; September 2, 1847; December 30, 1847. Lewis Tappan to Joshua Leavitt, January 14, 1848, Tappan Lt. Bk., Tappan Papers. Joshua Leavitt to James G. Birney, June 19, 1842, in Dwight L. Dumond, ed., *The Letters of James G. Birney, 1831-1857* (2 vols.; New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1938), II, 699. Cazenovia (N. Y.) *Abolitionist*, July 12,

Bailey's colleagues in the Liberty party, wondered if such a tactic did not sacrifice real abolitionism for safety. Other abolitionists believed Bailey's polite, well-reasoned critiques of slavery were quite good "for the lattitudes [*sic*] in which they were printed," and the moderate portion of the southern press accepted him as a gentleman—though one enlisted in a bad cause.²⁴

Not willing to rest the future of the antislavery cause in the District of Columbia on editorial policy—a policy he hoped to alter once he had been accepted by the community—Bailey had moved to neutralize hostile reactions from his opposition. To Gales and Seaton of the *Intelligencer*, he carried "a genuine letter of friendship" from Justice John McLean. To Ritchie of the *Union*, he brought a letter from a Virginia born son-in-law of William H. Harrison. He also mentioned to Ritchie that his own wife was related to a number of prominent Virginia slaveholders and secured the *Union's* "neutrality, so far as any public demonstration was concerned."²⁵ Finally Bailey helped organize a "great Relief meeting for Ireland . . . which soon reached the ears of the Irish population."²⁶ By September 1847 he was able to tell Gerrit Smith, "I am slowly gaining upon the people here. There will be at no distant period a sentiment on which I can rely in any direct attack upon the abomination."²⁷

It was an open question how Bailey's efforts would serve him once the crowd turned its attention from the inaccessible Drayton and Sayres to the nearby office of the *National Era*, a two story brick building with an annex for the printing press at its rear, that stood opposite the United States Patent Office Building. While he was on the *Salem* Drayton had heard his captors say that the abolitionist press must be stopped, and with that purpose in mind the crowd began to gather around the *Era* office Tuesday night. There were reputedly hundreds of people in the area at ten o'clock.²⁸ By then the mob had developed a character which was to distinguish it for the rest of the week. The antislavery journalists on the scene and those of the

1842, quoted in *Philanthropist*, August 27, 1842. Gamaliel Bailey to Zebina Eastman, June 11, 1847, Aldrich Papers. Bailey to John Quincy Adams, August 3, 1847, Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. Bailey to Gerrit Smith, September 2, 1847, Gerrit Smith Miller Papers, Syracuse University.

²⁴ *Liberator*, July 16, 1847; March 10, 1848. Lewis Tappan to Amos A. Phelps, February 27, 1847, Tappan Lt. Bk., Tappan Papers. Silas M. Holmes to James G. Birney, January 28, 1847, Dumond, *Birney Letters*, II, 1038. Horace Mann to Mary Peabody Mann, May 18, 1848, Horace Mann Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. *National Era*, April 27, 1848; May 4, 11, 1848.

²⁵ Gamaliel Bailey to Zebina Eastman, June 11, 1847, Aldrich Papers.

²⁶ *Ibid.* Lewis Tappan to Joshua Leavitt, February 28, 1847, in *Emancipator* March 10, 1847.

²⁷ Gamaliel Bailey to Gerrit Smith, September 2, 1847, Gerrit Smith Miller Papers.

²⁸ Lewis Tappan to Joshua Leavitt, February 28, 1847, *Emancipator*, March 10, 1848. Drayton, *Memoir*, p. 42. *New York Herald*, April 19, 1848.

Washington press agreed that the mob was a conglomeration of undesirables—boys and outsiders from Virginia and Maryland. Antislavery observers included a number of federal employees among the undesirables engaged in the riot. Only men of an extreme proslavery perspective, such as John C. Calhoun and Jefferson Davis, saw the mob as outraged citizens of the District driven to protect themselves against abolitionist aggression. On the other hand only antislavery sympathizers described the mob as unruly, vicious, and violent, led by a disreputable Baltimore slave-trader named Slatter. Other witnesses from the North as well as the South were impressed by the orderliness of the mob and by the structurely democratic procedures by which it arrived at its decisions. William W. Wick of Indiana called it a “most polite and law-abiding mob.” Joseph Root, a free soil Whig from northeastern Ohio, admitted that “he passed through the mob on Tuesday night without knowing it.”²⁹

Nevertheless there was no doubt that the intention of those who gathered before the *Era* building that night was, as Joshua Giddings put it, “to prostrate . . . that press and that office.”³⁰ Amidst shouting and threats, individuals hurled stones through the windows, damaged the sign, and managed to smash the doors before the municipal police, under Captain J. H. Goddard, and some of the city’s prominent residents halted them. Shortly thereafter a heavy rain began to fall. By midnight the mob had dispersed after resolving to return with reinforcements Wednesday night.³¹

Among the things that the mob shouted before the rain came on Tuesday was the name of Giddings, an outspoken antislavery Whig Congressman from Ohio’s Western Reserve. Rioters accused him of involvement in the *Pearl* enterprise. Later he was advised that his lodgings had been inquired for and that he would be lynched. Aside from the fact that he was a visible antislavery symbol in the city, Giddings had attracted the ire of influential proslavery leaders by a resolution he had introduced in the House of Representatives earlier in the day, shortly after the *Pearl* prisoners had been lodged in the city jail. The resolution, which alluded to the popular struggles in Europe, called for the creation of a committee to inquire into why “more than eighty men, women, and children” were confined in a prison “sus-

²⁹ *New York Herald*, April 20, 21, 1848. *National Era*, April 27, 1848. Washington Correspondent of the *Boston Whig*, quoted in *Emancipator*, April 26, 1848. *Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., I sess., pp. 655–71; *Appendix*, pp. 501–07.

³⁰ *Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., I sess., pp. 670–71. *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 20, 21, 1848. *Daily Union*, April 20, 1848. *Washington Saturday News*, April 22, 1848. Benjamin B. French to H. F. French, April 26, 1848, B. B. French Papers, Library of Congress.

³¹ *National Era*, April 20, 1848. *New York Herald*, April 19, 1848. *Washington Saturday News*, April 22, 1848.

tained, by funds contributed by the free as well as the slave states," "without being charged with crime, or of any impropriety other than an attempt to enjoy that liberty for which our fathers encountered toil, suffering, and death itself."³² To this Isaac E. Holmes of South Carolina had replied "that if the resolution was considered, he would move to amend, by an inquiry whether the scoundrels who caused the slaves to be there ought not to be hung."³³

Characteristically reacting to the mob's threats as a challenge, Giddings publicly displayed his sympathy for Drayton and Sayres by calling upon them at the jail the following morning. Accompanied by Edwin S. Hamlin, the antislavery Whig editor of the *Cleveland True Democrat* who had agreed to act as counsel for the imprisoned men, Giddings entered the large three story stone structure and with the jailer proceeded up the winding staircase to the prison cells. While Giddings and Hamlin were speaking with the prisoners a number of persons, having compelled a guard to give them the key to the main gate, came to the iron partition that separated the stairs from the cell corridor, threatened Giddings' life, and demanded that he immediately leave the building. Giddings refused, but the jailer arranged that if those on the stairs would retire beyond the main gate the Ohioans would depart. Giddings later reported that as he passed through the angry crowd on his way out of the jail Slatter and others proposed "to lay violent hands upon me."³⁴

Provocative as his actions were Giddings had underlined the impression struck by the mob of the previous day and night: that although the original transportation of the slaves away from their owners was clearly a crime under the laws of the District, it was the proslavery element in the capital which trampled upon the law, not the antislavery element. Gamaliel Bailey—building on his tactics of the previous year—made this point even clearer than Giddings that Wednesday. At the request of his next door neighbor William Seaton, who was the Mayor of Washington as well as the editor of the *Intelligencer*, Bailey published a handbill "denying the absurd rumor that myself or any person connected with my office, had anything to do with the abduction of the slaves on the Pearl." He said that while "determined to yield no right to menace or violence," he believed it his duty "to remove any serious misapprehension calculated to provoke unpleasant excitement."³⁵

Bailey went on to outline the position taken by Giddings, John P.

³² *Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., I sess., pp. 641, 664.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 641.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 664.

³⁵ *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 20, 1848. *National Era*, April 27, 1848.

Hale, and others who were drawn into the *Pearl* affair. He said: "Believing that the extinction of slavery can be effected in accordance with Constitution and Law, and that this is the better way, no system of unconstitutional or illegal measures will find in us a supporter." He would not directly or indirectly "take part in any movement which would involve strategy or trickery of any kind."³⁶

Those who had bothered to read the *Era*, Bailey continued, "will testify that I have counselled no measures repugnant to the foregoing declaration; that I have abstained from invective and denunciation; and addressed myself to the reason, the conscience, the sense of honor, the patriotism of the slaveholders, many of them being near relatives and personal friends." He had learned of the *Pearl* undertaking "only by general report" but, "if illegal violence" were inflicted on him "for writing and printing freely about Slavery or any other subject," he would "suffer cheerfully," confident of the vindication of his character. He doubted, however, "that they who are rejoicing at the emancipation of the Press in Paris, will themselves put fetters upon it in Washington."³⁷ Again and again in the months since he arrived in the city Bailey had stressed freedom of the press.³⁸ Now he redoubled his arguments without the public display of sympathy for the captives that had marked Giddings' response to the crisis.

If Bailey's handbill, which "had very limited circulation," was meant to discourage what he called "unmistakable indications of a determination among the evil disposed to suppress the *Era* by violence," it was a failure. If it aimed at assuring the civil structure and the "good citizens" of Washington that the *Era* was not a threat, it was a success.

That evening a larger crowd than that of the previous night gathered around the paper's office. Giddings estimated that it numbered in the thousands. The *Alexandria Gazette* reported that four or five hundred individuals assembled. Bailey said many of them were "strangers from adjoining counties in Maryland and Virginia," and the *Intelligencer* added that many who were there were so only out of curiosity, and that others were there to "prevent the city from being disgraced." All agreed that the avowed intent of the mob was to demolish the press.³⁹

³⁶ *National Era*, April 27, 1848. Bailey's statement included a large excerpt from his initial issue of the *Era* on January 7, 1847, which is quoted.

³⁷ *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 20, 1848. *National Era*, April 27, 1848.

³⁸ *National Era*, January 7, 1847; February 18, 1847; May 6, 1847; October 21, 1847.

³⁹ *Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., 1 sess., pp. 670-71. *Alexandria Gazette*, quoted in *National Era*, April 27, 1848. The Washington Correspondent of the Boston *Whig* (quoted in *Emancipator*, April 25, 1848) estimated 3,000. The Washington Correspondent of the New York *Herald*, April 21, 1848, guessed around 1,500. *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 21, 1848.

Before any real damage was done, the city government intervened. Realizing that they lacked the police power to thwart a determined attack on the *Era* building the officials proposed a moonlight meeting in front of the United States Patent Office. The crowd agreed and this assemblage contributed to the notion that the mob was an extremely orderly mob; more orderly than the House of Representatives one southerner remarked.

Because Mayor Seaton had during the entire crisis been confined to his bed by a severe illness, Walter Lenox, the President of the Board of Aldermen, addressed the crowd from one of the wings of the steps of the building. He noted that he was a life-time resident of the District, that as a property holder he had an interest in the city, and he pleaded with his audience not "to accomplish by force what could be effected by law." No good, he said, would come from the destruction of the office because the magistrates would have to award damages. Instead he recommended a meeting of Washington citizens at the city hall on Friday night to decide what action should be taken against the "obnoxious press."

Cries of "Down with the Era!" and "Damn the Expense!" drowned out Lenox. He was succeeded by E. B. Robinson, who further roused the emotions of those gathered. The public had been outraged by the abolitionists, he said. The authorities had been "derelict in duty. Why did not the grand jury indict the *Era* as a nuisance? . . . Why didn't they treat it as Garrison's paper here, years ago? They made him pack up and be off. . . . These moderate scoundrels are the worst kind of scoundrels." Robinson proposed that as the law had not acted, they must protect themselves. He suggested that Bailey be given "till tomorrow to decamp."⁴⁰

Daniel Radcliffe, a prominent Washington attorney, followed Robinson. While acknowledging that the local residents had been aggrieved and that if "the mad schemes of deluded people are persevered in, our houses may be given to the flames," he attempted to forestall an attack on the *Era* by moving to adjourn the meeting until Thursday or Friday. The crowd shouted him down with more cries that it was too late, that the office had to be torn down, and, finally, "Now! Now! Now!" Nevertheless Radcliffe brought about a compromise by which a committee consisting of five men from each of Washington's wards and five each from Georgetown and Tennallytown—totaling fifty in all—would call on Dr. Bailey immediately to ask him to remove his press from the city.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Washington Correspondent of the *New York Herald*, quoted in *National Era*, April 27, 1848. *New York Herald*, April 21, 1848.

⁴¹ *Emancipator*, April 26, 1848. Washington Correspondent of the *New York Herald*, quoted in *National Era*, April 27, 1848. *New York Herald*, April 21, 1848.

Bailey's home—across from the General Post Office Department Building on the southeast corner of 8th and E Streets—was, as the Washington correspondent of the New York *Herald* wittily observed, only “a stone's throw from the Patent Office.”⁴² The editor met the committee, headed by Radcliffe and composed of prominent Washington residents, on his front steps. Radcliffe explained that the excitement in the city had gained “a most threatening aspect.” As spokesmen of the “community” the committee was convinced that the existence of Bailey's press was the chief threat to the public peace and that the public interest demanded its removal. In the name of peace Radcliffe and the others asked Bailey, “To remove your press by ten o'clock to-morrow morning.” They realized that they were asking a great deal, but, unless Bailey agreed, the mob would violently pull the press down, and once started they did not know where the violence would end.

Bailey calmly replied that he did not believe the committee acted upon unkind feeling toward him. “But,” he said, “you must be aware that you are demanding from me the surrender of a great constitutional right—a right which I have used, but not abused—in the preservation of which you are as deeply interested as I am. How can you ask me to abandon it, and become a party to my own degradation?” He was the “representative of a free press” and he would rather die than surrender his rights. “Tell those who sent you hither,” he concluded, “that my press and my house are undefended—they must do as they see proper. I maintain my rights, and make no resistance!”⁴³

When the committee returned to the Patent Office steps, and Radcliffe announced that although Bailey had been respectful “he would give no pledges or promise anything,” cries of “Down with the Era!” arose from the crowd. As Radcliffe attempted to dissuade those intent on violence, a number of people turned away and ran towards the *Era* building. A stone went through a window, a brickbat struck at the office door. Someone shouted, “Fire it!”⁴⁴

A block away John G. Palfrey, a Whig Congressman from Massachusetts, John Wentworth, a Democratic Congressman from Illinois, and others rushed into Bailey's house, took his children from their beds, and escorted the entire family next door to Mayor Seaton's home for safety.⁴⁵ Then there were cries of “Fight!” “Fight!” from in

⁴² Washington Correspondent of the New York *Herald*, quoted in *National Era*, April 27, 1848.

⁴³ *National Era*, May 4, 1848.

⁴⁴ Washington Correspondent of the New York *Herald*, quoted in *National Era*, April 27, 1848. Washington Correspondent of the New York *Tribune*, quoted in *Liberator*, May 5, 1848.

⁴⁵ Gamaliel Bailey to Moses A. Cartland, September 12, [18]56, Moses A. Cartland Papers, Harvard University. H. Augusta Dodge, ed., *Gail Hamilton's Life in Letters* (2 vols.; Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1901), I, 176–77.

front of the *Era* office, and the crowd began to retreat. Captain Goddard, six of his Auxiliary Guard, several police, and a number of citizens deputized as constables stood before the building. The man with the brickbat had been arrested, and if the press were to be destroyed the crowd would have to pass through Goddard and his men.

Meanwhile, as the leaderless throng milled about, Philip Barton Key, the United States District Attorney for the District of Columbia and the son of Francis Scott Key, climbed upon a horse-trough and called upon his "fellow citizens" to retire and look to the Constitution and the law for justice. Those who had instigated the present disturbance, he said, "were the least interested in the property of slaves." Robinson now joined Key in urging legal steps against the *Era* instead of violence, but he was not well received. A large, whiskered man named Honeykont, who claimed to be a clerk in the Treasury Department, then mounted the horse-trough and managed to persuade the crowd to depart by promising to lead them against the *Era* the following morning. Nevertheless it was well after twelve o'clock before the mob dispersed.⁴⁶

The next day, Thursday, April 20, witnessed the peak of the crisis. The morning, Bailey recalled, "was one of intense anxiety. The entire city was agitated. Groups of people were everywhere discussing the late proceedings."⁴⁷ Everyone realized that unless those with power in the city acted decisively there would be a larger riot and a more successful assault upon the *Era* building that night. The *National Intelligencer*, as promised, printed Bailey's disclaimer. The *Union* refused and attributed the unrest in the city to Giddings' resolution in the House on Tuesday and his efforts to "give aid, and comfort, and counsel to the white persons who were taken in the schooner Pearl." But the *Union* did acknowledge Bailey's denial of any prior knowledge of the affair. It argued that the city must be "preserved from all violence," just as the laws must be "strictly enforced against all kidnappers."⁴⁸ Later in the morning, Lenox and Goddard issued a handbill addressed "To the Citizens of Washington" which had extensive circulation. Declaring that "the peace and character of the

⁴⁶Washington Correspondent of the *New York Herald*; *Alexandria Gazette*, quoted in *National Era*, April 27, 1848. *New York Herald*, April 21, 1848. Washington Correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, quoted in *Liberator*, May 5, 1848. *Emancipator*, April 26, 1848. *Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., 1 sess., p. 655. Walter C. Clephane, "Lewis Clephane: A Pioneer Washington Republican," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, XXI (1918), 263-277.

⁴⁷*National Era*, April 27, 1848. Correspondence of the *Journal of Commerce*, quoted in *Liberator*, April 28, 1848.

⁴⁸*Dailey National Intelligencer*, April 20, 1848. *Daily Union*, April 20, 1848.

capital of the republic must be preserved," it called upon the city's residents to sustain the municipal and police authorities "in the further efforts to maintain the peace and preserve the honor of the city."⁴⁹

At noon Elisha Whittlesey, former Congressman from Giddings' Ohio district and currently the Director and General Agent of the Washington Monument Society, and Cave Johnson, the Postmaster General, called on President James K. Polk to formally notify him "that great excitement existed in the City, and that there was danger that a portion of the people would engage in a riot to-night, tear down and destroy the printing office of the *New Era* [*sic*]."⁵⁰

Though sympathetic with the outrage the mob expressed against the activities of abolitionists, Polk agreed to cooperate "with the City authorities, if necessary, in any proper steps to preserve the public peace & to cause the laws to be respected." He sent for his Cabinet and directed the department heads "to issue an order to the Clerks & other employees in their respective Departments not to engage in the unlawful or riotous proceeding which was anticipated."⁵¹

Shortly thereafter Deputy Marshall Woodward, Goddard, Lenox, and other council members arrived at the White House. Polk told Woodward that "he should aid the City authorities in suppressing any outbreak...but cautioned him to avoid violence or the shedding of blood, unless in self-defense & in the discharge of his lawful duties." The President declined to call out the militia, or to "employ the military force." The city officials agreed that it would not be necessary.⁵²

In the late afternoon Mayor Seaton convened the city's Board of Aldermen and Board of Common Council, stating that as serious illness made it impossible for him "to act with that promptitude, energy, and decision which the circumstances require," they should select a temporary Mayor to serve in his stead. In joint session the boards elected Colonel Peter Force to that post. Then, upon returning to their separate meeting places, they passed an ordinance authorizing Force to take what measures he believed necessary to carry out his task.⁵³

⁴⁹ W. Lenox and J. H. Goddard, "To the Citizens of Washington," April 20, 1848, *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 21, 1848.

⁵⁰ Milo Milton Quaife, ed., *The Diary of James K. Polk, During His Presidency, 1845 to 1849* (4 vols.; Chicago; A. C. McClurg, 1960), III, 428.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 429.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ W. W. Seaton; "Mayor to The Board of Aldermen and Board of Common Council," April 20, 1848, *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 22, 1848. "In The Board of Common Council," April 20, 1848, *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 22, 1848. "Board of Aldermen," April 20, 1848, *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 21, 1848. Saml. Bacon, Walter Lenox, Peter Force, "City Ordinance, Approved, April 20, 1848," *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 22, 1848.

By evening the Washington city government, backed by the chief executive of the United States and—more importantly—the overwhelming majority of the city’s citizens, had prepared well for the task of defending an abolitionist press. Meanwhile the question of the riot had been introduced into both houses of Congress, where the ferocity of debate overshadowed the violence of the mob and contributed to the tense atmosphere of the city.⁵⁴ In both houses antislavery members—Palfrey in the House and John P. Hale in the Senate—raised the subject ostensibly for the purpose of extending protection to Giddings and Bailey. The result in both cases was that prominent proslavery leaders were quite willingly led into a staunch defense of the mob action against freedom of speech and press, while Hale and Giddings acknowledged the illegality, but not the immorality of Drayton and Sayres transportation of slaves from Washington.

As soon as the preceding day’s journal had been read, Palfrey raised the issue of the riot in a manner calculated to gain and hold the attention of the House. He “rose to a question of personal privilege of a member,” which superseded all other business. A “lawless mob,” he said, had menaced “individuals of this body and other persons residing in this city” and he asked that a committee be appointed to inquire into the facts in order to determine whether legislation was necessary to correct the situation.⁵⁵

While some members attempted to reverse Speaker Robert C. Winthrop’s initial ruling that Palfrey had raised a proper question of privilege, Robert Toombs and other slaveholders immediately tied it to Giddings’ offer of aid and counsel to Drayton and Sayres. Toombs assumed that Palfrey had raised the question of privilege not so much as a means of protecting Giddings from a mob which interfered with his duties as a member of Congress, but as a means of protecting Giddings from legal prosecution for his alleged involvement in the *Pearl* affair under the constitutional guarantee that Congressmen “be privileged from arrest” during a session of Congress. Therefore Toombs asked that the question of privilege not be shut out of the House on a technicality because he wanted to see if “moral connivance with felony and theft was to be vindicated.”⁵⁶

Other southerners suggested that it would be more proper to inquire whether members of the House had not been involved in the theft of the slaves. Willaim T. Haskell of Tennessee charged that Congressmen had “been engaged. . .in the deliberate attempt to scatter the seeds of

⁵⁴ *New York Herald*, April 21, 1848.

⁵⁵ *Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., I sess., p. 650.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 649–50, 655.

insurrection and insubordination, if not rebellion, among the slaves in this District." He said, "They ought to swing as high as Haman" and moved an amendment to Palfrey's resolution which would launch an inquiry into the conduct of the suspected members.⁵⁷

John Gayle of Alabama questioned Giddings closely about his alleged involvement in the incident. During their exchange Giddings stated that he believed slaves had "the right to free themselves by any means God has put into the[ir] power." He agreed, however, that in the District of Columbia it was a legal—though he believed not a moral—crime to aid slaves to escape and "where legal constitutional laws of the land enforce penalties on such action, they are to be obeyed." Furthermore he denied having seen, heard, or known of Drayton and Sayres prior to the escape of the slaves. He had gone to the jail on Wednesday not to reward the prisoners as Gayle implied, but to assure them that "no mob should take their lives" and that they would be provided with counsel.⁵⁸

Although Giddings in his dialogue with Gayle had paid lip-service to the laws protecting the rights of slaveholders and had denied personal involvement with Drayton and Sayres, Toombs and other southerners maintained their contention that Giddings and Palfrey were attempting to establish a precedent for using personal privilege to protect Congressmen who engaged in helping slaves to escape. If privilege were used to override the law, leaving the District's residents without security, Toombs "trusted in God that discord would reign forever—he wanted no peace among them until their rights were secured."⁵⁹

While Toombs apparently gave encouragement in the House to the mob, his southern colleagues in the Senate were even more forthright in support of vigilantism in defense of southern rights. John P. Hale, the rotund Senator from New Hampshire who was the Liberty party nominee for President, initiated the confrontation by introducing a bill which would make the municipal corporation financially responsible for damage done to private property by a mob. He claimed that he was interested only in protecting the *National Era* from further assaults and in ending mob rule in the capital.⁶⁰

As in the case of Palfrey's resolution in the House, however, Hale's

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 652–53.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 654–55. Although he did not say so publicly at the time, Bailey shared Giddings' view that aiding slaves to escape was not a moral crime. In 1851, while working for the release of Drayton and Sayres from prison, he said their act was "made a crime only by the stern necessities of a wrong institution." *National Era*, October 16, 1851.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 655.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 656; *Appendix*, pp. 500, 503.

southern colleagues in the Senate saw a more sinister motive behind his bill. John C. Calhoun and Andrew P. Butler of South Carolina, and Jefferson Davis of Mississippi all contended that if passed it would protect persons engaged in slave stealing in the national capital by repressing the just indignation of the city's inhabitants. Both Calhoun and Davis perceived in Hale's bill an attack on southern property rights of enough magnitude to cause a civil war.⁶¹ Nevertheless it was Henry Foote—Davis's Mississippi rival and a week earlier a champion of the French revolution and "universal emancipation"—who reacted most sharply to what he perceived to be Hale's complicity in an open challenge to the sanctity of slave property in the District of Columbia.

Foote said that as the abolitionist movement had not been as successful as some desired it to be individuals had resolved to abolish slavery in the District by forcefully removing all the slaves within its bounds. "Asserting themselves to be champions of freedom," they attempted to "committ grand larceny upon the owners of slaves." He had been informed that Hale himself had been involved in the undertaking. In such circumstances "when the arm of the law is too short to reach such a criminal" he might be "justly punished, not by the mob, but by high-spirited citizens convened for the purpose of vindicating their rights thus unjustly assailed."

Hale's bill, Foote continued, would deprive the citizens of this means of protecting their property by subjecting them to "heavy pecuniary damages" if they acted to prevent a vessel like the *Pearl* from sailing with a number of slaves aboard. It was "a bill, then obviously intended to cover and protect negro-stealing!"

Foote then turned to Hale and challenged him to prepare to battle in behalf of his "friends, the blacks—the slaves of the District of Columbia." Foote was sure Hale would "have a fair opportunity of shedding his blood in this holy cause on the sacred soil of the District of Columbia." But if Hale really desired glory he should come to Mississippi, where "he could not go ten miles into the interior, before he would grace one of the tallest trees of the forest, with a rope around his neck, with the approbation of every virtuous and patriotic citizen; and . . . if necessary. . . [Foote himself would] assist in the operation."⁶²

Hale reacted calmly to Foote's outburst. Like Giddings and Bailey he denied any involvement in the *Pearl* affair either "directly or indirectly." He said he had never "counseled, advised, or aided in any way, any encroachment upon the Constitution in any of its provisions or compromises." Neither did he wish to free slaves by force. The

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Appendix, p. 501.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Appendix, p. 502.

battle he and Bailey waged against slavery was one of “reason, of persuasion, or argument.” But did southerners suppose that northerners would not demand lawful protection of property in the city to which they came to legislate? If slaveholders in Congress would not take action to protect the *National Era* why should the Constitution protect property in slaves?⁶³

The answer was clear to Foote. Although it might be true that Bailey’s paper had not “approved of this late attempt to steal slaves from this District,” the editor was “certainly an abolitionist,” and “the publication of such a paper has tended to encourage such movements.” This reasoning, Bailey later claimed, was aimed at the galleries and was meant to encourage another attack on the *Era* building.⁶⁴ Whether or not he was correct, Toombs, Calhoun, Butler, Davis, and Foote had in the United States Congress clearly identified with the mob against the efforts of the Washington authorities to preserve the peace. In contrast Giddings and Hale—though denounced as abolitionist incendiaries by the *Union*—had stood by the law, had rejected illegal measures to achieve their goals, and—Hale in particular—had taken effort to appear calm and reasonable in the face of verbal abuse.

Perhaps stimulated by the rousing events in Congress a crowd again began to form near the *Era* building that evening. Bailey believed it was the largest of the gatherings that week. Once again individuals denounced his abolitionist principles and threw stones. Nevertheless the crowd was overawed by the display of power that had been prepared by the City Council and the President of the United States. The Washington correspondent of the *New York Journal of Commerce* reported that

the number of the police guard from the City and Georgetown, including the deputy marshal and constables, was from seventy-five to one hundred. Besides, there were present a great number of government clerks, who had been requested by the President and the heads of departments as conservators of law and order.⁶⁵

By ten o’clock the crowd, having displayed “no symptoms of a disposition to violence,” began to disperse. The police, clerks, and the “good citizens” also began to retire at that time. It appeared that after three days of turmoil peace had been reestablished in the city. Only one last scene remained.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Appendix, pp. 502–3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Appendix, p. 504. *National Era*, April 27, 1848.

⁶⁵ *New York Herald*, April 21, 1848. *National Era*, April 27, 1848. Washington Correspondent of the *New York Journal of Commerce*, April 21, 1848, quoted in *Liberator*, April 28, 1848.

A group of approximately two hundred Marylanders and Virginians led by a Captain Thomas after leaving the vicinity of the *Era* office proceeded to Bailey's home and called him out. When the editor—for the second night in a row—appeared on the steps of his house to face a hostile audience, Thomas told him that they had come to tar and feather him and to throw his press in the canal.⁶⁶

As on the previous occasion Bailey remained calm and suggested that they hear him before proceeding. Some dissented, but the general disposition was to let him speak. As his wife joined him at the door, he again denied involvement in the escape of the slaves and he reminded his audience that Americans who rejoiced at the freeing of the press in Paris should not violate that freedom in America. Though never noted as a public speaker, Bailey was at one point interrupted by applause. Thomas, enraged, turned upon those responsible and shouted, "What have you to say? you don't own any niggers."⁶⁷

Shortly thereafter Radcliffe, the chairman of the committee of the previous evening, arrived on the scene, joined Bailey on the steps, and added his own appeal to the principles of private property and freedom of the press. He finished by suggesting that the assemblage adjourn. This was agreed to with but one dissenting vote, and in five or ten minutes the street was deserted.⁶⁸

The next day, Friday, April 21, although bitter debate continued in Congress, Washingtonians began to congratulate President Polk, Captain Goddard, and especially themselves for saving the reputation of the capital. The "good citizens" of the city believed they had been sorely tested by the abolitionist incendiaries and proslavery rioters. They took pride in having withstood the extremes and in standing for law and order. North and South, the moderate press of the nation recognized their accomplishment.⁶⁹ Only antislavery men were disturbed by the fact that restored law and order sanctioned the sale of the bulk of the slaves who had taken passage on the *Pearl* to a Baltimore slave-trader, who planned to market these house servants to

⁶⁶ Washington Correspondent of the *New York Journal of Commerce*, April 21, 1848, quoted in *Liberator*, April 28, 1848. *National Era*, April 27, 1848.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Ben: Perley Poore, *Perley's Reminiscences of Sixty Years in the National Metropolis* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Hubbard Bros., 1886), I, 398–99.

⁶⁸ *National Era*, April 27, 1848. *New York Journal of Commerce*, April 21, 1848, quoted in *Liberator*, April 28, 1848. Grace Greenwood, "An American Salon," *Cosmopolitan*, VIII (1890), 439. Poore, *Reminiscences*, pp. 398–99. Greenwood contends that the men called, "Good-night, doctor!" as they departed. Poore remembers that Radcliffe had them go to the mayor's house and give him three cheers.

⁶⁹ *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 22, 1848. *Daily Union*, April 22, 1848. Washington Correspondent of *Philadelphia North American*, quoted in *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 26, 1848. Peter Force to Board of Aldermen and Board of Common Council, April 21, 1848, in *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 27, 1848. *National Era*, April 27, 1848; May 11, 1848.

plantation owners in the deep South.⁷⁰ Law and order also demanded that Drayton and Sayres, who were regarded as humanitarians in the North, be tried and convicted. Even Giddings, Hale, and Bailey had tacitly agreed that they deserved punishment if they had violated the law. Although Horace Mann did his best to defend them they were committed to the Washington jail, where they remained until Charles Sumner procured a pardon from them from President Millard Fillmore in 1852.⁷¹

The *Pearl* affair and the riot that followed amounted to a skirmish in the sectional conflict. Though they vividly brought to focus the breach in values that divided the country, the events which Calhoun and Davis regarded as precursors of civil war briefly caught the attention of the nation and then faded as more momentous sectional conflicts followed. Nevertheless the dramatic events of April 1848, emanating as they did from the national capital, had an acknowledged role in exacerbating antagonisms between the North and the South. Listening to the Senate debate on Thursday, April 20, Stephen Douglas wondered in amazement whether there had been “an understanding” between “the extremes” aimed at gaining votes for abolitionists in the North and fire eaters in the South. Foote himself immediately regretted his violent language.⁷² For he and the antislavery men in Washington realized that, while there were certainly extremes, there was also a middle ground to contend for which lay in the band of states stretching westward from the District of Columbia.

Rumors of an abolitionist plot were widespread. Had Bailey, Giddings, and Hale openly identified with the mission of Drayton and Sayres as radical political abolitionists and Garrisonians had urged, the impact in the North would have been greater for the *National Era* would certainly have been destroyed. Bailey, Giddings, and perhaps Hale would have become antislavery martyrs, a fate none of them sought. By identifying with illegal measures to free slaves they would

⁷⁰ *Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., I sess., p. 671. Washington Correspondent of *Boston Whig*, quoted in *Liberator*, May 5, 1848. *Boston Transcript*, quoted in *Liberator*, May 12, 1848.

⁷¹ *Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., I sess., pp. 654–55; *Appendix*, pp. 502–3. *National Era*, April 28, 1848; May 11, 1848. Samuel Gridley Howe to Horace Mann, April 28, 1848, in Laura E. Richards, ed., *Letters and Journals of Samuel Gridley Howe* (2 vols.; Boston: Dana Estes & Co., 1909), II, 261–62. *Liberator*, May 5, 1848. *Emancipator*, June 14, 1848. Messerli, *Mann*, pp. 461–531. David Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Coming to the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), pp. 220–22. Once the crisis had passed Bailey played a key role in seeking the release of Drayton and Sayres. See: Salmon P. Chase to [Charles Dexter?] Cleveland, May 10, 1852, Salmon P. Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. *National Era*, August 10, 1848; October 17, 1850; October 16, 1851; November 6, 1851; April 29, 1852.

⁷² Richard H. Sewell, *John P. Hale and the Politics of Abolition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 116. Henry S. Foote, *Casket of Reminiscences* (Washington, D. C.: Chronical Publishing Co., 1874), p. 76.

have destroyed the *Era* and what progress Bailey had achieved toward making the advocacy of abolition an accepted practice in Washington and in other communities in the border state region.

By expressing sympathy for Drayton and Sayres, and the unfortunate slaves who had attempted to escape on the *Pearl*, while refusing to countenance illegal tactics, Giddings, Hale, and Bailey placed themselves on the side of law and order. Consequently Bailey in particular gained stature in the eyes of the community as slaveholders in Congress forthrightly justified the illegal destruction of his press. Despite the fact that the week had begun with an abridgment of southern rights, by its end Giddings, who had identified himself most closely with the slave stealers, was confident that a great victory had been won for antislavery in Washington, and that “we shall have no more mobs here for some time to come.”⁷³

⁷³ Joshua R. Giddings to Laura W. Giddings, April 20, 1848; Joshua R. Giddings to Joseph A. Giddings, April 26, 1848, Joshua R. Giddings Papers, Ohio Historical Society.