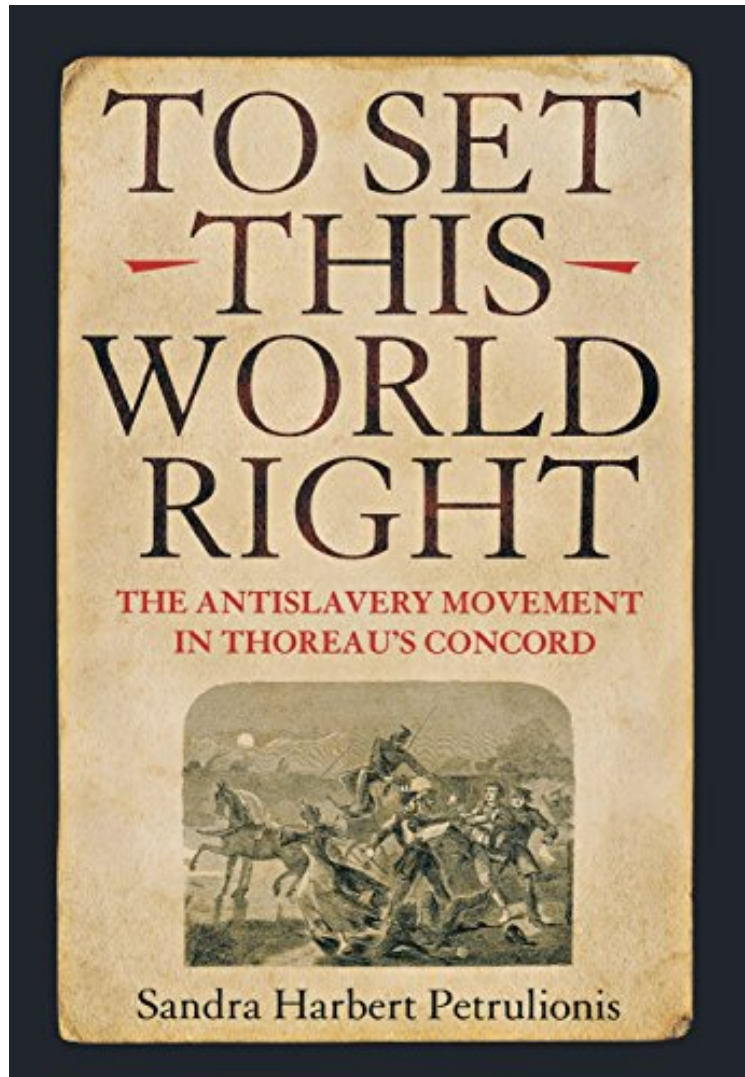


[Read free] To Set This World Right: The Antislavery Movement in Thoreau's Concord

To Set This World Right: The Antislavery Movement in Thoreau's Concord

Sandra Harbert Petrulionis

*ebooks / Download PDF / *ePub / DOC / audiobook*



DOWNLOAD



+

READ ONLINE

#1904143 in Books Cornell University Press 2006-11-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.18 x .97 x 6.501, 1.18 #File Name: 0801441579264 pages | File size: 17.Mb

Sandra Harbert Petrulionis : To Set This World Right: The Antislavery Movement in Thoreau's Concord before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised To Set This World Right: The Antislavery Movement in Thoreau's Concord:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. How the women of Concord furthered the Antislavery movement ...By Corinne H. Smith...might be a more appropriate subtitle for this book. After all, it was Concordian Mary Merrick Brooks who lamented in 1843, "I don't know what is to set this world right it is so awfully wrong every where." And

her abolitionist efforts, along with those of Prudence Ward, Ann Bigelow, Mary Rice, and all of the Alcott, Thoreau, and Emerson women, were what put Concord, Massachusetts, on the map as far as antislavery work went. It began as early as 30 years before the Southern states seceded and Fort Sumter was fired upon. Women found ways of making their voices heard in spite of being unable to officially register them in ballot boxes. Sure, it was William Lloyd Garrison who began to issue the *Liberator* newspaper in 1831, and he was generally considered the leader of the antislavery movement; but his most active foot soldiers in that battle were the women of the cities and towns of the North. They were the ones who formed local antislavery societies, organized fairs and invited speakers and held "indignation meetings." As a general rule, the Concord men (like Henry Thoreau and Waldo Emerson) took a bit longer to jump on the bandwagon. And most northerners began to take personal interest only when one of their own was threatened: when Concord natives Samuel and Elizabeth Hoar were run out of Charleston, S.C., in 1844, for example; or when Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner was physically beaten at his desk by South Carolina congressman Preston Brooks in 1856. Widely reported in the newspapers, incidents such as these only escalated the emotions of residents of states located above the Mason-Dixon line. Each incident drew more supporters to the cause to end the ill that fueled the fire: the continued slavery of blacks brought from Africa. It's all here. Women and men both did what they could to think nationally but act locally. Locals helped former slaves use the Underground Railroad to get to Canada. They reacted violently to the implications of the Fugitive Slave Law, requiring Northerners to turn over escapees from the "peculiar institution" to their owners or agents who followed them north. The Kansas Nebraska Act, which allowed those states to become slave-holding states if their residents wanted them to be that way, was another cause for indignation. The resulting formation of the Emigrant Aid Society sent Northerners into Kansas so that it wouldn't become a slave state. And everything seemed to climax with the efforts of John Brown, his New England supporters who supplied him with money and ammunition, and the failed mission he initiated at Harpers Ferry in 1859. National events that we learned about in history class were felt keenly and intimately by the people living in small towns. Concord was just one of them and is shown to live up to its own "revolutionary" standards in the antislavery fray. Key here are Henry David Thoreau's own reactions to the events. Retold, and logically linked to those events, are stories known well by Thoreauvians and by students of basic American literature courses: Henry's two year departure to Walden Pond; his one night in jail that resulted in the essay known as "Civil Disobedience," and of course his overwhelming support of John Brown and to the possibilities that make violent acts necessary. Even Henry's fans may learn a thing or two among these pages, once his actions are placed in the context of what his other townsmen and women were doing. Too often we study him as though he lived in a vacuum, and that he was the only one who thought a particular thought or did a particular deed. It is valuable indeed to see the whole picture of that turbulent time. When Petrucci found no cohesive account of abolitionist activity by the people of Concord and their Transcendentalist friends, she aptly researched the topic and condensed it into this succinct volume. With academic veracity but general readership appeal, *TO SET THIS WORLD RIGHT* offers insight into the daily lives of people we thought we knew. Those of us entranced with the lives of the Transcendentalists take from these words a sobering realization: that these folks of the mid-1800s dealt with more personal tension, were more involved with the true democratic process, and more often protested government-sponsored outrages than we do today (even living with an unpopular war and an even more unpopular president). We could learn much from the people of our past, especially the women. Maybe we should be holding some "indignation meetings" of our own these days.

1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Voices United By BeatleBangs1964

The Alcott, Emerson, Thoreau families along with Abolitionist John Brown were among the most prominent in Concord, Massachusetts. The women of each of these families were equally supportive of Anti-Slave rights and worked diligently for social reforms. Emerson's grandfather, the Lord of the Manse by the North Bridge was a Tory/Loyalist (supporter of the Crown) whereas his son and daughter-in-law were Patriots who chafed at British Rule. They have been called a house divided because of their differing political viewpoints. Ann Bigelow, Mary Rice and Prudence Ward worked tirelessly to end slavery. These women were pioneers in championing equality and social reforms. They formed fora where people were free to speak against slavery and encouraged many to see the evils of this institution. In time, their efforts would influence such noted thinkers as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Those who were opposed to their efforts felt threatened; they felt that abolishing slavery would weaken their economic foothold and by eliminating an underclass, chaos would ensue. And chaos did ensue in the form of civil war as well as antebellum uprisings. In 1856 Senator Sumner was beaten viciously for his anti-slavery stand; others were run out of their respective towns and division harmed communities. Preston Brooks, the man who beat Senator Sumner led such a vicious attack that Sumner was never able to walk unaided afterward. Concord became known as a town of unrest; after the 1775 battle/massacre on the North Bridge and the later rise in anti-slavery movement, many Concordians were driven from southern states. The Northerners coming to Kansas to keep it from becoming a slave state helped Kansas earn its sobriquet, "Bleeding Kansas." The intensity of the change in political climate had reached a white hot level; Concord's influence had spread far and wide. The climate of the events has the feel of the Deep South until 1964, when President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act. Although many reforms have taken place, thanks to these pioneers and President Johnson's tireless efforts in more recent history on behalf of equality, there has yet to be a cure for bigotry and bias of any kind,

including sexism. The women featured in this book and documented in American and Concord history deserve their place in the sun. They were among many who helped get the ball rolling in the direction of equality and our collective hats are off to them. One can draw parallels to Thoreau and Martin Luther King, Jr. and Lech Walesa. Thoreau wrote "Civil Disobedience" after he served a night in jail for taking a stand with John Brown against slavery. King was jailed and in the 1980s, Polish Reformer and later Leader of Solidarity, Lech Walesa served time. Walesa, an affable, humble man helped set the ball rolling in Poland. Concord could have been Poland; slavery could have been a political underclass as was in Poland prior to the Solidarity Movement. A progressive, realistic thinker, Walesa, a shipyard worker took social reforms in baby steps: he helped unionize dock workers so they could have a voice; he took that same approach to the factories and the mills. The winds of change had hit Poland and many Polish citizens were reading underground newspapers about Solidarity and what it had to offer and how they, too could help make things happen. It was the pre-1964 Deep South and the Underground Railroad all over again. People met secretly in church basements and other places that afforded them protection; Lech Walesa pounded the drum publicly on behalf of his fellow citizens. 1865 - Formal end of slavery. 1866 - Juneteenth, the end of slavery in Texas. 1964 - Civil Rights Act. 1989 - The Fall of the Communist Bloc. June 4, 1989 - the victory of Lech Walesa and the Solidarity Candidates. Fall of 1989 - other Eastern European countries followed suit. Like dominoes, when one iron curtain fell, so did others. Lech Walesa was a voice who, like the Lanterns of Liberty in Massachusetts and the Freedom Bell shone like a beacon and sounded a clarion call for Social Reform. Others joined voices with Walesa and many who shared his ideals. You can see the far reaching effects of the efforts of the good citizens of Concord continues to have on this world today. The history of Concord was the starting point in this series of related world events. Concord really is the Cradle of U.S. History. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Read This Book!! By Wayne T. Dilts Let's set the record straight: *To Set The World Right* is one of the best-researched, most readable accounts of the antislavery movement. Period. Using the tiny but formidable town of Concord, Massachusetts, and its long history of revolutionary activity as the focal point, Sandra H. Petrulionis has set the stage for how the antislavery movement changed the course of American history. Just as it played a pivotal role in the American Revolution of the 1770s, Concord itself, and its' women in particular, were moving forces in how antislavery sentiment grew in New England and across the country. Beginning in the 1830s, Petrulionis shows how the women of Concord became the driving force behind the move for radical social change, how those women brought "their men" into the forefront of the fight for justice, and how some of the most famous names in the American literary Renaissance - Emerson, Thoreau, Alcott, Sanborn - became involved in the struggle for freedom of the more than 3 million souls bound into slavery. Petrulionis also shows how the antislavery movement metamorphosed from nonviolent peaceful protestations, to situations and circumstances that brought more and more prominent men (and women) into the cause, to all-out involvement in the call for separation from the Confederacy (before there was a Confederacy) and advocacy for civil war. She shows how some of the most famous American antislavery spokespersons - John Brown, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass - came back to Concord again and again to promote their cause to larger and more receptive audiences as well as how individual Concord citizens, both the meek and the mighty, played pivotal roles in bringing about the ultimate end to slavery in this country. A fascinating book that brings real historical people "to life" in ways that readers of all persuasions - scholars to historians to enthusiasts to recreational readers - will be able to learn from. **MOST HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!**

In the decade before the Civil War, Concord, Massachusetts, was a center of abolitionist sentiment and activism. *To Set this World Right* is the first book to recover and examine the voices, events, and influence of the antebellum antislavery movement in Concord. In addressing fundamental questions about the origin and nature of radical abolitionism in this most American of towns, Sandra Harbert Petrulionis frames the antislavery ideology of Henry Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson?two of Concord's most famous residents?as a product of family and community activism and presents the civic context in which their outspoken abolitionism evolved. In this historic locale, radical abolitionism crossed racial, class, and gender lines as a confederation of neighbors fomented a radical consciousness, and Petrulionis documents how the Thoreaus, Emersons, and Alcotts worked in tandem with others in their community, including a slaveowner's daughter and a former slave. Additionally, she examines the basis on which Henry Thoreau?who cherished nothing more than solitary tramps through his beloved woods and bogs?has achieved lasting fame as a militant abolitionist. This book marshals rich archival evidence of the diverse tactics exploited by a small coterie of committed activists, largely women, who provoked their famous neighbors to action. In Concord, the fugitive slave Shadrach Minkins was clothed and fed as he made his way to freedom. In Concord, the adolescent daughters of John Brown attended school and recovered from their emotional distress after their father's notorious public hanging. Although most residents of the town maintained a practiced detachment from the plight of the enslaved, women and men whose sole objective was the moral urgency of abolishing slavery at last prevailed on the

philosophers of self-culture to accept the responsibility of their reputations.