

The Fugitive Slave Law -- Mexico, NY

©2017 OSWEGO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 135 EAST THIRD STREET OSWEGO, NY 13126

The Fugitive Slave Law at Mexico.

Mr. Editor.--One of the largest meetings ever convened in this town, was held in the Town Hall last evening, to take into consideration the late "Fugitive Act."

All sections of the town were fully represented --all party distinctions were forgotten in the strong and deep indignation felt towards this infamous law.

The following is an outline of the proceedings:

At a meeting of the citizens of Mexico and vicinity, held at their Town Hall in the village of Mexico, on the evening of Thursday, the 17th day of October, 1850, on motion, Starr Clark Esq., was chosen President, and Charles Benedict, Levi Downing, Levi Mitchell and Asa Wing, were chosen Vice Presidents. On motion, C. Upson, and G. G. French, were chosen Secretaries.

On motion, the following Committee of five were appointed by the Chairman, to report resolutions expressive of the views and feelings of the meeting, upon the Fugitive Slave bill of 1850, to wit: Messrs. T. A. Weed, C. Upson, L. Downing, --Everingham and W. Mitchell.

While the Committee were drafting and preparing the resolutions, the meeting was addressed by several able, distinguished and enthusiastic speakers. The Committee then reported the following resolutions, which were, on motion, received, and the Committee discharged, to wit:--

Whereas, the American Declaration of Independence affirms, among other self-evident truths, that all men are born free and equal, therefore

The Fugitive Slave Law at Mexico

Northern Democrat, October 23, 1850, page 2

Mr. Editor --

One of the largest meetings ever convened in this town was held in the Town Hall last evening, to take into consideration the late "Fugitive Act."

All sections of the town were fully represented --all party distinctions were forgotten in the strong and deep indignation felt towards this infamous law.

The following is an outline of the proceedings:

At a meeting of the citizens of Mexico and vicinity, held at their Town Hall in the village of Mexico, on the evening of Thursday, the 17th day of October 1850, on motion, Starr Clark Esq., was chosen President, and Charles Benedict, Levi Downing, Levi Mitchell and Asa Wing were chosen Vice Presidents. On motion C. Upson, and G. G. French were chosen Secretaries.

On motion, the following Committee of five were appointed by the Chairman, to report resolutions expressive of the views, and feelings of the meeting upon the Fugitive Slave bill of 1850, to wit:

Messrs. T.A. Weed, O. Upson, L. Downing, --Everingham and W. Mitchell.

While the Committee were drafting and preparing the resolutions, the meeting was addressed by several able, distinguished and enthusiastic speakers. The Committee then reported the following resolutions, which were, on motion, received, and the Committee discharged, to wit. --

Whereas, the American Declaration of Independence affirms, among other self-evident truths, that all men are born free and equal, therefore

1st. *Resolved*, That freedom is the birthright of every human being, and that all laws that strike down or impair this right, except for crime, are null and void and of no binding obligation.

2d. *Resolved*, That the law recently enacted by the Congress of the United States for the recapture of fugitive Slaves, is anti-republican, at war with the precepts of christianity, inhuman, and virtually outlaws every individual of this

The Fugitive Slave Law -- Mexico, NY

©2017 OSWEGO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 135 EAST THIRD STREET OSWEGO, NY 13126

...continued - The Fugitive Slave Law at Mexico

Northern Democrat, October 23, 1850, page 2

1st. *Resolved*, That freedom is the birth-right of every human being, and that all laws that strike down or impair this right, except for crime, are null and void and of no binding obligation.

2d. *Resolved*, That the law recently enacted by the Congress of the United States for the recapture of fugitive Slaves, is anti-republican, at war with the precepts of christianity, inhuman, and virtually outlaws every individual of this nation, except the man-thief and creature who traffics in humanity.

3d. *Resolved*, That the law in question is so palpably unconstitutional—in permitting the miscreant claimant to be his own witness—in withholding the right of trial by jury—in cutting off all right to appeal—in abolishing the writ of *Habeas Corpus*—in bribing the mock courts, instituted to execute its hated and detestable provisions, and in screening the wretch who may commit perjury under it, that we will trample it under foot, and pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honors, that it shall never be executed in the town of Mexico.

4th. *Resolved*, That it is our duty and solemn obligation, to use all the means in our power to rescue and protect all fugitives which this law authorizes to be hunted down and consigned to helpless bondage from the hands of the cruel oppressor.

nation, except the manthief and creature who traffics (sic) in humanity.

3d. *Resolved*, That the law in question is so palpably unconstitutional -- in permitting the miscreant (sic) claimant to be his own witness -- in withholding the right of trial by jury -- in cutting off all right to appeal -- in abolishing the writ of *Habeas Corpus* -- in bribing mock courts, instituted to execute its hated and detestable provisions, and in screening (sic) the wretch who may commit perjury under it, that we will trample it under foot, and pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honors, that it shall never be executed in the town of Mexico.

4th. *Resolved*, That it is our duty and solemn obligation, to use all the means in our power to rescue and protect all fugitives which this law authorizes to be hunted down and consigned to helpless bondage from the hands of the cruel oppressor.

5th. *Resolved*, "That we solemnly forewarn all who, under color of office or otherwise, assume to enforce this statute,

by acting as the slaveholder's bloodhounds in hunting down or arresting the panting fugitive, or returning him to the bondage from which he may have escaped, will be arraigned at the dread tribunal of public opinion, and if found guilty, be adjudged unworthy of any public office of honor, profit of trust, within the give of a free people."

6th. *Resolved*, "That the passage of this infamous law should cover with reproach the men who proposed it -- the men who advocated it -- the men who voted for it -- and not less the men who basely sneaked away from their responsibility as representatives of the people."

7th. *Resolved*, That it is our duty to become familiar with the names of those who supported this bill, and those who cowardly fled the House of Representatives, to avoid the responsibility of, recording their votes for or against it, and to see that under no circumstances which can be made to bear, these men who have betrayed the highest interest which pertains to man, shall ever

The Fugitive Slave Law -- Mexico, NY

©2017 OSWEGO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 135 EAST THIRD STREET OSWEGO, NY 13126

...continued - The Fugitive Slave Law at Mexico

Northern Democrat, October 23, 1850, page 2

5th. *Resolved*, "That we solemnly forwarn all who, under color of office or otherwise, assume to enforce this statute, by acting as the slaveholder's blood-hounds in hunting down or arresting the panting fugitive, or returning him to the bondage from which he may have escaped, will be arraigned at the dread tribunal of public opinion, and if found guilty, be adjudged unworthy of any public office of honor, profit or trust, within the gift of a free people."

6th. *Resolved*, "That the passage of this infamous law should cover with reproach the men who proposed it—the men who advocated it—the men who voted for it—and not less the men who basely sneaked away from their places in Congress, rather than meet their responsibility as representatives of the people."

7th *Resolved*, That it is our duty to become familiar with the names of those who supported this bill, and those who cowardly fled the House of Representatives, to avoid the responsibility of recording their votes for or against it, and to see that under no circumstances which can be made to bear, these men who have betrayed the highest interest which pertains to man, shall ever hereafter receive our aid to elevate them to power or place, however trivial. That especially will we mark the man who has misrepresented our District in the House of Representatives—a man who has shamefully betrayed his

hereafter receive our aid to elevate the to power or place, however trivial. That especially will we mark the man who has misrepresented our District in the House of Representatives -- a man who has shamefully betrayed his constituents -- broken his solemn pledges -- falsified his written and private word -- and blazoned his shame for Eternal ages as a traitor to freedom.

8th. *Resolved*, That we feel a sense of deep and sincere gratitude to those members of Congress who have nobly withstood the aggressive spirit of slavery, and have voted on the side of right and freedom. Especially do we commend the noble and fearless course of WILLIAM SEWARD in the U.S. Senate. He has stood erect among the fallen, unbought (sic) by the love of prosperity, power or place -- unawed (sic) by the misrepresentations and persecutions of Slavery's minions, and maintained the true, the right, and the just. And forgetting all party distinctions in this contest for our own and the freedom of others, we tender him our warmest

sympathies -- our deep gratitude, and pledge to him our hearty support in his resistance to the encroachments of the slave power.

9th *Resolved*, That it is with humility and shame, that while we see the world is making great advances in the principles of liberty -- that not a government in Europe, even the most iron and despotic, which has not participated in the amelioration which characterizes the present age -- we Model Republic, stand out alone, a conspicuous exception -- not a single ameliorating law has been passed. But, on the contrary, slavery has spread its dominions and strengthened its stakes -- in every compromise slavery has gained its end -- in every conflict with freedom, it has bribed and corrupted a majority of the representatives of the free, until it has finally, justly and righteously, rendered us a by word and a stench among the nations of the earth.

10th. *Resolved*, " That the Friends of Freedom and Humanity, out to agitate

The Fugitive Slave Law -- Mexico, NY

©2017 OSWEGO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 135 EAST THIRD STREET OSWEGO, NY 13126

constituents—broken his solemn pledges—falsified his written and private word—and blazoned his shame for Eternal ages as a traitor to freedom.

8th - *Resolved*, That we feel a sense of deep and sincere gratitude to those members of Congress who have nobly withstood the aggressive spirit of slavery, and have voted on the side of right and freedom. Especially do we commend the noble and fearless course of WILLIAM H. SEWARD in the U. S. Senate. He has stood erect among the fallen, unbought by the love of prosperity, power or place—unawed by the misrepresentations and persecutions of Slavery's minions, and maintained the true, the right, and the just. And forgetting all party distinctions in this contest for our own and the freedom of others, we tender him our warmest sympathies—our deep gratitude, and pledge to him our hearty support in his resistance to the encroachments of the slave power.

9th *Resolved*, That it is with humility and shame, that while we see the world is making great advances in the principles of liberty—that not a government in Europe, even the most iron and despotic, which has not participated in the amelioration which characterizes the present age—we the Model Republic, stand out alone, a conspicuous exception—not a single ameliorating law has been passed. But, on the contrary, slavery has spread its dominions and strengthened its stakes—in every compromise slave-

...continued: The Fugitive Slave Law at Mexico

Northern Democrat,
October 23, 1850, page 2

ry has gained its end—in every conflict with freedom, it has bribed and corrupted a majority of the representatives of the free, until it has finally, justly and righteously, rendered us a by-word and a stench among the nations of the earth.

10th. *Resolved*, "That the Friends of Freedom and Humanity, bight to agitate more than ever the question which this law was devised to settle. Let the country be rocked by discussion, from centre to circumference, until every one who has a heart may be roused to enquire what is his or her duty, and fired with a determination to do it."

11th. *Resolved*, "That a Committee, of three be appointed by the Chair to prepare and cause to be circulated, a petition to be presented to our next Congress, praying for the immediate repeal of this infamous law."

12th. *Resolved*, That these resolutions signed by the officers of this meeting, be presented to each Newspaper in this County for publication, and that a copy of the same be sent, by the Secretary, to Wm. Duer and the Hon. W. H. Seward.

On motion, the resolutions were then taken.

more than every the questions which this law was devised to settle. Let the country be rocked by discussion, from centre to circumference, until every one who has a heart may be roused to enquire what is his or her duty, and fired with a determination to do it."

11th. *Resolved*, "That a Committee of three be appointed by the Chair to prepare and cause to be circulated, a petition to be presented to our next Congress, praying for the immediate repeal of this infamous law."

12th. *Resolved*, That these resolutions signed by the officers of this meeting, be presented to each Newspaper in this County for publication, and that a copy of the same be sent - by the Secretary, to Wm. Duer and the Hon. W. H. Seward.

On motion, the resolutions were then taken.

The Fugitive Slave Law -- Mexico, NY

©2017 OSWEGO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 135 EAST THIRD STREET OSWEGO, NY 13126

QUESTIONS

Questions from the text:

1. Who attended the meeting?
2. Where was the meeting held?
3. When was the meeting held?
4. What happened at the meeting?
5. Select one of the resolutions and explain what it means.

Questions for further research and discussion:

1. Use census data and directories to research the citizens of Mexico, NY to determine what they did and who they were related to.
2. Who was William Seward and what were some of his important accomplishments?
3. Review the resolutions and select one to research and determine its impact on the Fugitive Slave Law.