

CURRICULUM IDEAS FOR 11TH GRADE U. S. HISTORY WITH SOME IDEAS FOR 12TH GRADE

“...I think I was born with a hatred of oppression, and, too, in my father’s house, I was trained in the anti-slavery ranks, for it was one of the stations on the underground railway, and a home of anti-slavery speakers. Well I remember the wonder with which, when a young girl, I looked upon Abby Kelly, when she spoke of the wrongs of black women and black men. Then I remember, before the Round House [*railroad station*] in my city of Syracuse was finished, a large and enthusiastic anti-slavery convention was held there, attended by thousands of people who all joined in singing William Lloyd Garrison’s song, *I’m an Abolitionist and glory in the Name*, and as they rang out that glorious defiance against wrong, it thrilled my very heart, and I feel it echoing to this day.” (Dr. Sally Roesch Wagner, Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation, Underground Railroad Room)

MATILDA JOSLYN GAGE, ABOLITIONISM AND THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

High School lesson plan by Joanne Sassi-Willcox

Themes:

1. The brutality of slavery
2. Differing opinions on the institution of slavery
3. Abolitionist movement and reaction in the North and the South
4. Role of Women in the Abolitionist Movement
5. Causes of the Civil War
6. The role of the Gage family in the Underground Railroad
7. Slavery today/Human Trafficking

Activities:

1. Recreate the Middle Passage: Scenario: stripped naked (though don’t do this in class!) examined by ship’s doctor - branded on breast - shackled together by twos - right wrist and ankle of one to left wrist and ankle of another. (Get plastic chain from store)
Recreate slave quarters on ship: get a tarp big enough to measure 51/2’ long, 3’10” high by 16” wide. Divide with masking or duct tape. (Do about four or five sections). Put shackled students in each section. Discuss while students remain in their spaces.
2. Have students assume the following roles: southern planters - southern farmers with a few slaves - slaves - yeomen farmers without any slaves vs. northern abolitionists, non-abolitionists, northern workers, northern industrialists, Northern Democrats, Northern Republicans. You could have specific people, such as Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, William Lloyd Garrison, Abraham Lincoln, Stephen Douglas, John Brown, etc. to get all opinions/perspectives on the issue
 - a. have the students debate the pros and cons of slavery
 - b. hold a trial indicting the south for perpetuating slavery where students play the above roles
3. Ask students to draw a map showing the stations on the Underground Railroad in Onondaga County and describe a slave’s experience escaping to freedom.
4. Tour sites for first-hand experience (Gage Home, Harriet Tubman house, Peterboro, site of The Jerry Rescue/Monument and the Onondaga Historical Society, First Congregational Church)
5. Have students read an excerpt from Gage’s speech given in 1862, as she presented a flag from the Ladies of Fayetteville to the 122nd Regiment of New York State Volunteers. (See pictures) and debate the causes of the Civil War. Was slavery the pre-eminent cause? Slavery in the territories?
6. Have students do a skit and recreate the Jerry Rescue

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Background:

- A. Discussion of slavery in America - Colonial through 1850
 - 1. Slave trade/Middle Passage/slave codes
 - 2. Slaves During the Revolutionary War
 - a. Declaration of Independence and Slavery
 - 1. principles of the Declaration go against the institution
 - 2. people began to question the institution: Northern states called for gradual emancipation (New York among the last, 1828) Some discussion in Va. and Md./none in GA/SC
 - 3. Slave trade legally ended in 1807 but illegal trade continued
- B. Philadelphia Convention - The Constitution and the vague wording
 - 1. word “slavery” nowhere in the document; “all other persons” used instead: why?
 - 2. 3/5ths Compromise in determining how to count enslaved persons for state Congressional representation
 - 3. Article IV, Section 2, paragraph 3: Fugitive slaves are property to be returned
- C. Revitalization of Slavery with Cotton Gin - constant need to move west....slavery in the territories
 - 1. Missouri Compromise
- D. Abolitionist Movement: discuss history/people involved/not united/how viewed and treated in the South and the North
 - 1. North and South’s arguments for/against slavery (see #2, Activities)
- E. Manifest Destiny and Slavery in the Territories - The Mexican War.
 - 1. Thoreau’s “Essay on Civil Disobedience”
- F. Compromise of 1850 and the Stricter Fugitive Slave Law (FSL)
 - 1. Provisions of the FSL
 - 2. The Underground Railroad/slaves escaping and northern abolitionist resistance:
 - a. Oberlin College: group of students rescued a fugitive slave from a slave catcher; some convicted by a federal jury; an Ohio state court arrested the slave catcher and fed. officials who’d cooperated with him.
 - b. Black waiter seized in Boston; crowd broke into jail and took him away
 - c. 1854: Boston; fed. troops and US marshals accompany Anthony Burns, fugitive slave, from the courthouse to a ship to take him back to slavery in VA. A mass meeting at Faneuil Hall led Bostonians to say that if he were taken back south, Mass. was a conquered state. 50,000 people showed up protesting and were repelled by the marshals and 22 companies of state troops. Cost the fed. government \$100,000 to return him.
 - d. Upstate NY - a hotbed of reform/revivals:
 - 1.1839: Harriet Powell was in Syracuse with her Miss. owners at a hotel when abolitionists helped her escape to Canada
 - 2.The Jerry Rescue:
 - a. born William Henry - escaped from Missouri; barrel maker on Salina St.; arrested under FSL. An attempt by abolitionists to free him led him to escape but was recaptured. This was described by Samuel Holmes: ‘He was retaken, his handcuffs still on, and loaded onto a cart, like a hog; was brought back with his clothes torn, and bruised and bleeding.... We saw the officers rub salt and water on Jerry’s raw and bleeding wounds....(Dick Case, Herald American, Feb. 1, 1998, B5)
 - b. 2000 Syracusans used a battering ram to break into the jail and free him; helped him escape to Canada on October 1, 1854.

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e. How Abolitionists were viewed in Syracuse:

1. speakers were met with eggs and interrupted during speeches; effigies were burned of Susan B. Anthony (Case B5)

a. seeing escaped slaves returned under the law angered more people in the North who'd previously been hostile to the abolitionist movement; northern resistance to the FSL hardened

G. The Civil War

1. Different opinions as to why the War was being fought - discuss

2. excerpt of Gage's speech - 1862:

a. "At a time when the administration maintained that the war was being fought simply to preserve the Union, Gage stated in her flag presentation speech that the war's purpose was far more important. This war was to end slavery. She predicted:

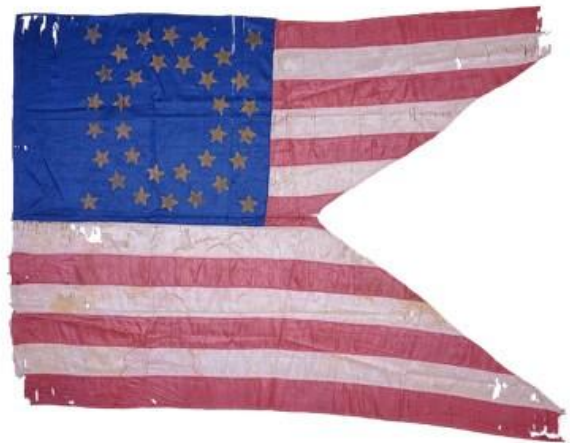
'There can be no permanent peace until the cause of the war is destroyed. And what caused the war? Slavery! And nothing else. That is the corner stone and key stone of the whole. The cries of down-trodden millions arising to the throne of God.'

Gage roused the soldiers to their duty:

"Let each one of you feel the fate of the world to be upon your shoulders, and fight for yourselves, and us, and the future." (Dr. Sally Roesch Wagner, Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation, Underground Railroad Room)



122nd Regiment NY
Volunteer Infantry
Guidon



122nd Regiment NY
Volunteer Infantry
National Color

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H. 13th , 14th and 15th Amendments

I. “Slavery” today: have students do research and discuss human trafficking

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD ROOM:

“Fayetteville’s Gage House was offered as a station on the Underground Railroad. The Matilda Joslyn Gage Home, which is on the New York State Underground Railroad Heritage Trail, was accepted for inclusion in the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom in 2004.”

‘One of the proudest acts of my life; one that I look back upon with most satisfaction is that when Rev. Mr. Loguen [*Syracuse conductor of the Underground Railroad*] ... went to the village of my residence to ascertain the names of those upon whom run-away slaves might depend for aid and comfort on the way to Canada, I was one of the two solitary persons who gave him their names. Myself and one gentleman of Fayetteville, were the only two persons who dared thus publicly defy ‘the law’ of the land, and for humanity’s sake rendered ourselves liable to fine and imprisonment in the county jail, for the crime of feeding the hungry, giving shelter to the oppressed, and helping the black slaves on to freedom.’

“Matilda Joslyn Gage wrote the statement shown above in her newspaper, *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, in 1880. Eight years later, at the International Council of Women, Gage reflected on her childhood introduction to abolition:

‘...I think I was born with a hatred of oppression, and, too, in my father’s house, I was trained in the anti-slavery ranks, for it was one of the stations on the underground railway, and a home of anti-slavery speakers. Well I remember the wonder with which, when a young girl, I looked upon Abby Kelly, when she spoke of the wrongs of black women and black men. Then I remember, before the Round House [*railroad station*] in my city of Syracuse was finished, a large and enthusiastic anti-slavery convention was held there, attended by thousands of people who all joined in singing William Lloyd Garrison’s song, *I’m an Abolitionist and glory in the Name*, and as they rang out that glorious defiance against wrong, it thrilled my very heart, and I feel it echoing to this day.’”

“Helen Leslie Gage, Matilda’s eldest daughter, noted that one of her ‘earliest remembrances is that of a black man on his knees before her mother, thanking her for a chance of life and liberty.’ Julia Gage Carpenter, another daughter, also asserted to a newspaper reporter that the home had been an Underground Railroad station and that her mother continued to shelter slaves until the close of the Civil War, despite threats that she should discontinue the practice. In a biographical sketch of her mother in her personal scrapbook, Julia wrote, ‘Mother was [an] inveterate worker in the abol[ition] move[ment] & her home was ‘An Underground RR Station’ where runaway slaves were helped on their way to freedom.’”

“Gage’s niece, Blanche Weaver Baxter, and her daughter, Ramona Baxter Bowden, told a newspaper reporter that Mrs. Gage –

- ‘was a noted abolitionist and her house was a station on the Underground Railway
- personally raised an amount sufficient to equip the 122nd regiment with their colors, and presented the flag to them
- was known as being the only person in Fayetteville to affix her signature to a statement saying that she would give aid to any slave who was seeking to gain his liberty, and for that reason was under constant surveillance by the authorities’

Grandniece Ramona Baxter Bowden, who worked for the *Syracuse Post Standard*, made reference to the house in a 1969 article, quoting town historian Barbara Rivette:

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“Mrs. Rivette pointed out not only was Mrs. Gage a fighter for the franchise, but also an ardent abolitionist, her house on E. Genesee St. in Fayetteville was a station in the Underground Railroad”.

“Matilda Jewell Gage, granddaughter and namesake, who was 12 years of age when her grandmother died, told an interviewer, ‘Dr. Joslyn [*Matilda Joslyn Gage's father*] was very much interested in abolition and his home was one of the centers on the Underground Railroad and...when Matilda Joslyn Gage went to live in Fayetteville, her home was [also] a station on the Underground Railroad.’”

“Lucy Seward Noble, a prominent Fayetteville resident and contemporary of Gage, identified the Gage house as an Underground Railroad site in her *Reminiscences*:

‘The cellar which has been rebuilt, was not much more than a hole in the ground, but it was often the over-night lodging for some escaped Negro on his way to Canada and freedom - and recently, Mr. Bilyea, the present owner found the trapdoor leading to this cellar. It is in front of the fireplace in [the] back parlor.’”

“Matilda named her son, Thomas Clarkson, after a famous English abolitionist. When the Gage family moved to Fayetteville in 1854, their house at 210 East Genesee Street ‘quickly became a gathering place for workers in the anti-slavery, temperance and woman suffrage causes,’ according to Barbara Rivette, historian for the town of Manlius and village of Fayetteville. Wendell Phillips, Gerrit Smith, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Charles Sumner were among abolitionists who visited the home.”

“Henry Hill Gage, Matilda’s husband, was likewise active in anti-slavery work. While Matilda, with the ladies of Fayetteville, raised funds for “the suffering in Kansas,” Henry was part of a group who issued a call for the first meeting of the “Fremont Club” in Fayetteville in 1856, supporting the new Republican Party and the non-extension of slavery into the territories. Henry signed at least one petition to oppose the spread of slavery and draped his store in mourning on the day that the abolitionist martyr, John Brown, was executed. Henry again displayed his anti-slavery convictions in 1863, in celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation. A newspaper reporter noted:

‘In passing through Fayetteville yesterday, we noticed a display of flags, drapery etc., in honor of the expected Proclamation of Emancipation by the President. The store of Mr. H. H. Gage was neatly ornamented in Red, White, and Blue, with a large handbill prominently displaying the command to ‘Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.’”

“Gage continued to speak against slavery throughout the Civil War. She was ‘one of the most enthusiastic workers in Fayetteville in preparing hospital supplies’ for Union soldiers and held various teas and social gatherings at her home in order to raise funds for the Union cause. In 1862, Gage presented a flag on behalf of the Ladies of Fayetteville to the 122nd Regiment of New York State Volunteers. At a time when the administration maintained that the war was being fought simply to preserve the Union, Gage stated in her flag presentation speech that the war’s purpose was far more important. This war was to end slavery. She predicted:

‘There can be no permanent peace until the cause of the war is destroyed. And what caused the war? Slavery! And nothing else. That is the corner stone and key stone of the whole. The cries of down-trodden millions arising to the throne of God.’”

“Gage roused the soldiers to their duty:

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“That same year (1862), both Henry and Matilda spoke at a Washington birthday celebration. Matilda talked about the Women’s Volunteer Aid Societies of the North, describing it as ‘the stupendous volunteer system called into life by the fall of Fort Sumter and the President’s Proclamation of April 15,’ while Henry quoted from one of Washington’s letters to General Lafayette: ‘I have long considered Slavery a most serious evil, both socially and politically, and should rejoice in any scheme to get rid of so great a burden...and I trust we shall finally have a confederacy of Free States.’”

“Thomas Clarkson Gage recalled his mother’s reaction to news about the murder of Lincoln: ‘I rushed through the house to tell my mother. The shock was so great that she went into convulsions and we had to have the aid of a doctor to save her life.’”

“Gage’s obituaries (1898) highlight her abolition work, the Syracuse Journal stating she ‘was an early advocate of the abolition of slavery’ and ‘took a prominent part in the series of anti-slavery conventions held in Syracuse during that period, and she always spoke earnestly and effectively.’ Numerous articles from the Syracuse and Fayetteville newspapers of the twentieth century stated that the home was an Underground Railroad station. Two decades after Gage’s 1898 death, for example, an article about the house stated:

‘It was there, before and during the civil war, that abolition was a usual topic for discussion, and the home also was a terminal of the historically-famous ‘underground railway’ for runaway slaves from the south... The home was a nest of abolitionist activities. The cellar, which has been rebuilt by Mrs. McIntyre, was not much more than a hole in the ground, but it was often the over-night lodging for some escaped Negro on his way to Canada and freedom... During the civil war, the home was the scene of teas and gatherings to raise funds for northern soldiers. Mrs. Gage spent much time and money to further the Union cause. As a result, she was chosen to present a flag to the 122nd regiment of New York Volunteers during the war.’”

“A conversation with Miss Marjory Wright of Fayetteville in 1948 yielded the information that ‘the [Gage] house is historically interesting since it was a station on the Underground Railroad during the Civil War.’”

ABOLITION SENTIMENT IN FAYETTEVILLE

“In 1843 the Fayetteville Baptist Church, whose congregation Matilda Joslyn Gage would eventually join, found itself divided over the issue of slavery. A faction of the church separated and formed the Second Baptist church, which worshipped separately for about ten years before its congregation reunited with the original church. By the time Gage moved to Fayetteville, the slavery issue had been resolved within the church and Gage would attend with fellow abolitionists who shared her passion for reform.”

“Gage’s attorney, Nathan Chapman, was a dedicated abolitionist. Facing the Gage home across Genesee Street was the home of Linneaus P. Noble, an abolitionist and publisher of the National Era, the first publication to print Uncle Tom’s Cabin in serial form. Noble was also a member of the Fayetteville Baptist Church at the time of Matilda Joslyn Gage’s membership. Gage and Noble certainly crossed paths in the community of abolitionists and shared common sentiments.”

“In the 1850s the community continued its strong anti-slavery tradition, continually drawing new abolitionists into its ranks. A newspaper correspondent reported that the first Republican presidential candidate, John Charles Fremont, running on a “Free Men, Fremont” anti-slavery ticket, had strong support in Fayetteville:

Stopping a few days at this thriving and beautiful village I have made inquiries respecting the political conditions and prospects of this and the surrounding towns and find everything so cheering for Freedom and Fremont, I could not resist the inclination to let you know how the pulse of old Onondaga County beats for the cause of human freedom.”

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by Dr. Sally Roesch Wagner

QUOTE BY MJG ON SLAVERY:

"Until liberty is attained--the broadest, the deepest, the highest liberty for all--not one set alone, one clique alone, but for men and women, black and white, Irish, Germans, Americans, and Negroes, there can be no permanent peace."

Civil War Flag Presentation Speech, 1862

SOURCES

Dick Case, "Syracuse Was a Refuge For Slaves," Syracuse Herald American, Feb. 1, 1998, B4-5

New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center

The Gage Foundation Website

Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library (on the Jerry Rescue)