

Book review on the town that started the civil war

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



With the division between the south and the north on the issue of slavery, the fugitive slave act was passed in 1850. According to the act, if slaves ran away and caught, they were to be returned to their masters. This act was one of the most controversial because people who supported the freedom of the slaves did not embrace this law. Northerners did not obey this act despite the harsh terms according to the fugitive act.

According to the act, a northerner who refused to help in the capture of slaves was jailed in addition to the one thousand dollars fine. Abolitionist in the north could not be able to follow these terms and they decided to work the way they thought was best for them. Spectacular slave rescue missions by the northerners became the order of the day especially in Oberlin, a college town in Ohio which was said to be the most abolitionist town in America at the time.

This town was peculiar with its integration from the college classrooms to public schools and churches. There were black professionals and merchants in the town's main street. As that is not enough, black people could vote in Oberlin; a scenario that had not been seen in America especially at that time. Basing on this, it is obvious that the people of the town would go an extra mile to save slaves from the hands of the southerners who were roaming everywhere along the Border States.

In fact, the book is all about John Price who was a slave who had escaped from his master across the frozen Ohio River. Price was betrayed by a fourteen year old boy named Shakespeare Boynton claimed to be a son of a local democrat who supported slavery. John Price was captured by American Marshals along the way near Oberlin and taken to the town of Wellington. By

the time the slave catchers were getting to Wellington, information of Price being caught had spread like bushfire to Oberlin. The people of this small town had had enough about slaves being caught and taken back to the southern states.

Oberlin's people; white and black, men and women, old and young in wagons and carriages set for wellington to rescue John Price. They wanted to rescue Price from the captors without any bloodshed. Price was held in an upstairs room of a hotel in wellington waiting to be taken back to his master in the south. When Oberlin people arrived at that house, they barred from entering. One of Scott's men was so furious that he said " the first democrat to stop us from going upstairs to rescue Price I will shoot". The man did just that, he pointed his gun towards a white democrat man and shot. His gun's barrel was knocked up by one of the men near him and the bullet went to the ceiling.

The situation almost got out of hand with the marshals refusing to let Price go and the Oberlin's people pushing for his release. Marshalls were requested to release price or lose their lives. With the current situation, the Marshalls and other people they working with preferred to save their lives and let Price go. Oberlin's people celebrated for the rescue of Price. A special banquet was held in January 11 and people in the town were jovial. However, their celebration mood was cut short three days later when Lincoln was arrested. Later on, most of the people called the Oberlin heroes were arrested.

They were twenty four individuals half of whom were Blacks. Four of the indicted rescuers were from wellington. Their trail was politically

manipulated because the southern democrats were not ready to witness such a scenario again. Democratic Buchanan administration was out to ensure this. One democratic official said “ a defiant hotbed of abolitionism had to be taught a lesson”. The grand jury involved in the case was made up of democratic judges including the Shakespeare Boynton's father; there was no a single republican judge. At this time, the indicted men apart from Simeon Bushnell who was white and Charles Langston who was black refused to raise the bond. This prevented them from being tried and be put in custody instead. In fact, it was only Simeon and Charles who were tried. The rest of the men preferred to be in custody to protest against legal injustices observed at the time. They felt that there should have been republican judges to represent them it was only logical that they would lose because they were being prosecuted by their opposing side.

The twenty four resuers were taken to jail and were taken to the third floor of the prison where they were allowed to run. There were no restrictions placed on them. They would receive unlimited number of visitors at any given time. William Lincoln, Ansel Lyman and Richard Winsor had been brought books to keep up with their studies. The rescuers were eventually released and the Oberlin residents were very happy to have their heroes back.

Months later, Abraham Lincoln became the president of the United States at a time when southerners wanted to either continue with slavery or secede. This caused tensions between the two sides. The north wanted slavery be abolished and the country remain united. Civil war was fought and during that time, Oberlin people were considering removal of the word white or black from the constitution. Most of the Oberlin rescuers died at the wake

and during the civil war. It is evident that Oberlin rescuers made huge impact to American history.

Works cited

Nat, B. The town that started the Civil War. 2nd edition. Syracuse University Press, 1990.