

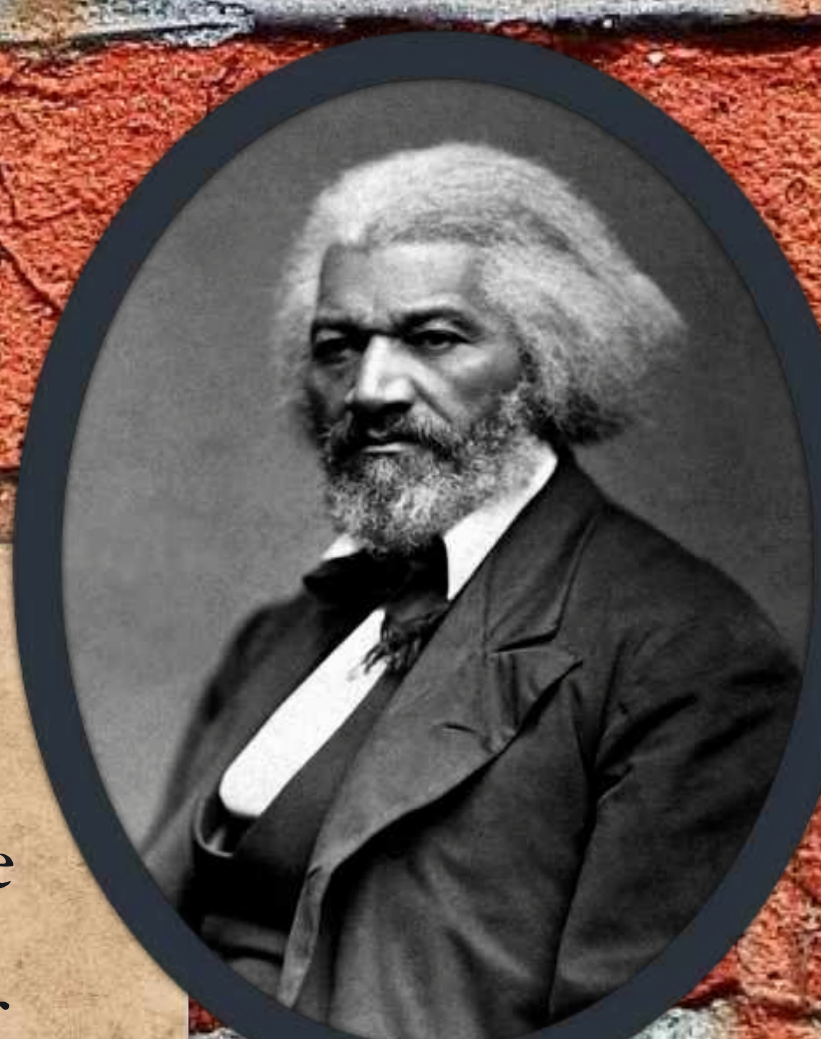
Abby Kelley Foster

FREEDOM



Abolition

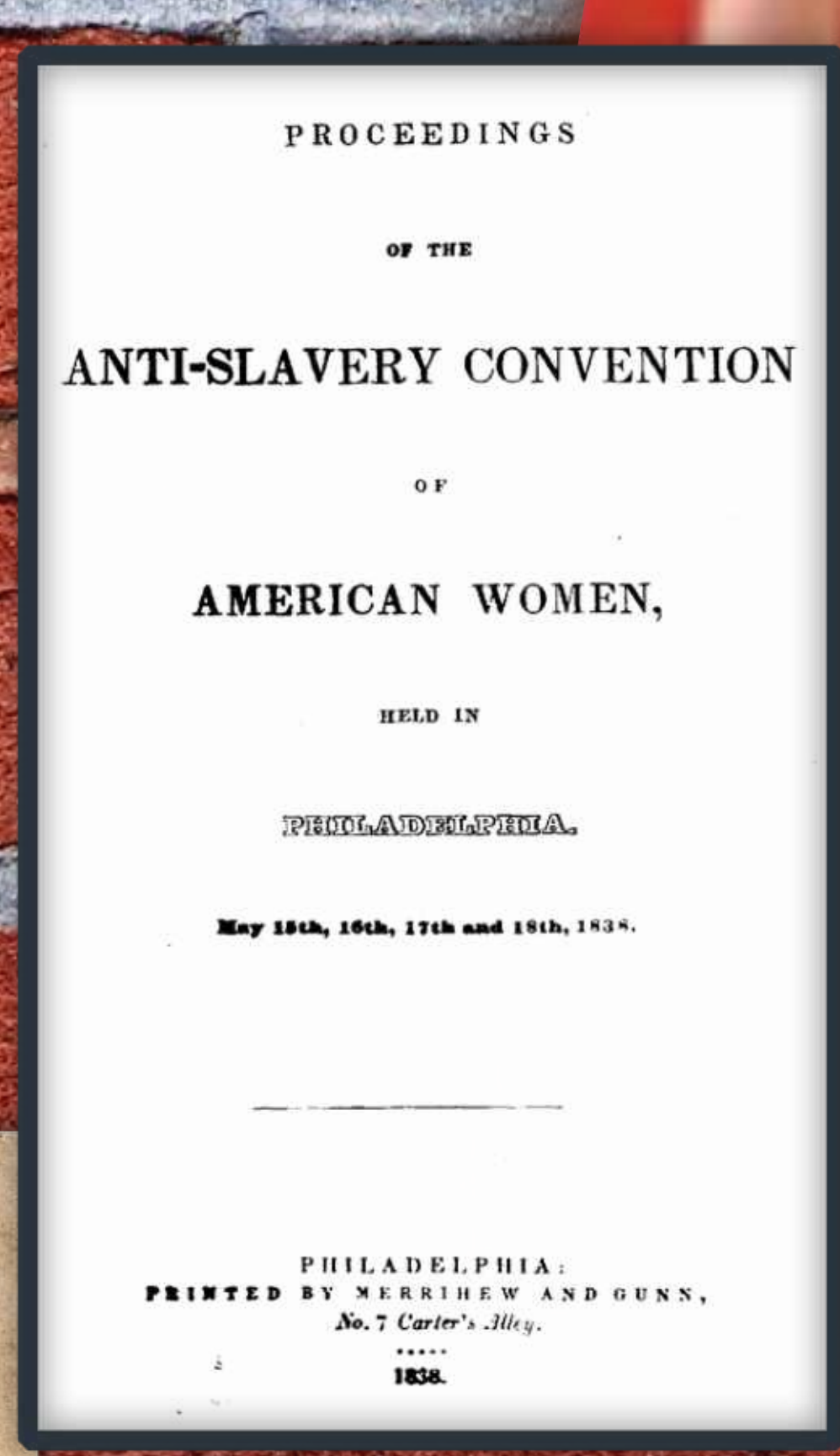
Even after the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade by the United States government in 1808, slavery continued in the country until the passage of the 13th Amendment at the end of the American Civil War. Abby Kelley and her husband, Stephen Foster, were among the nation's most recognized Abolitionists. Other notable figures of the movement were Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and Sojourner Truth.



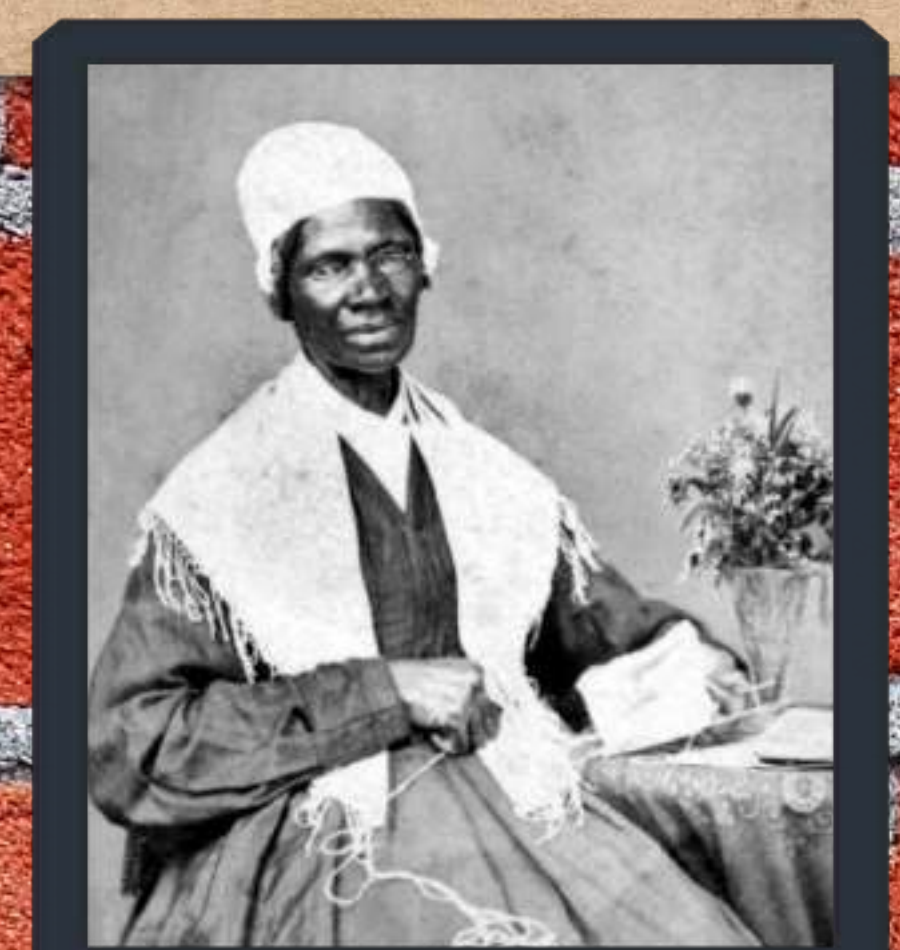
Portraits of Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and Sojourner Truth



Map of Lynn, Massachusetts, 1829

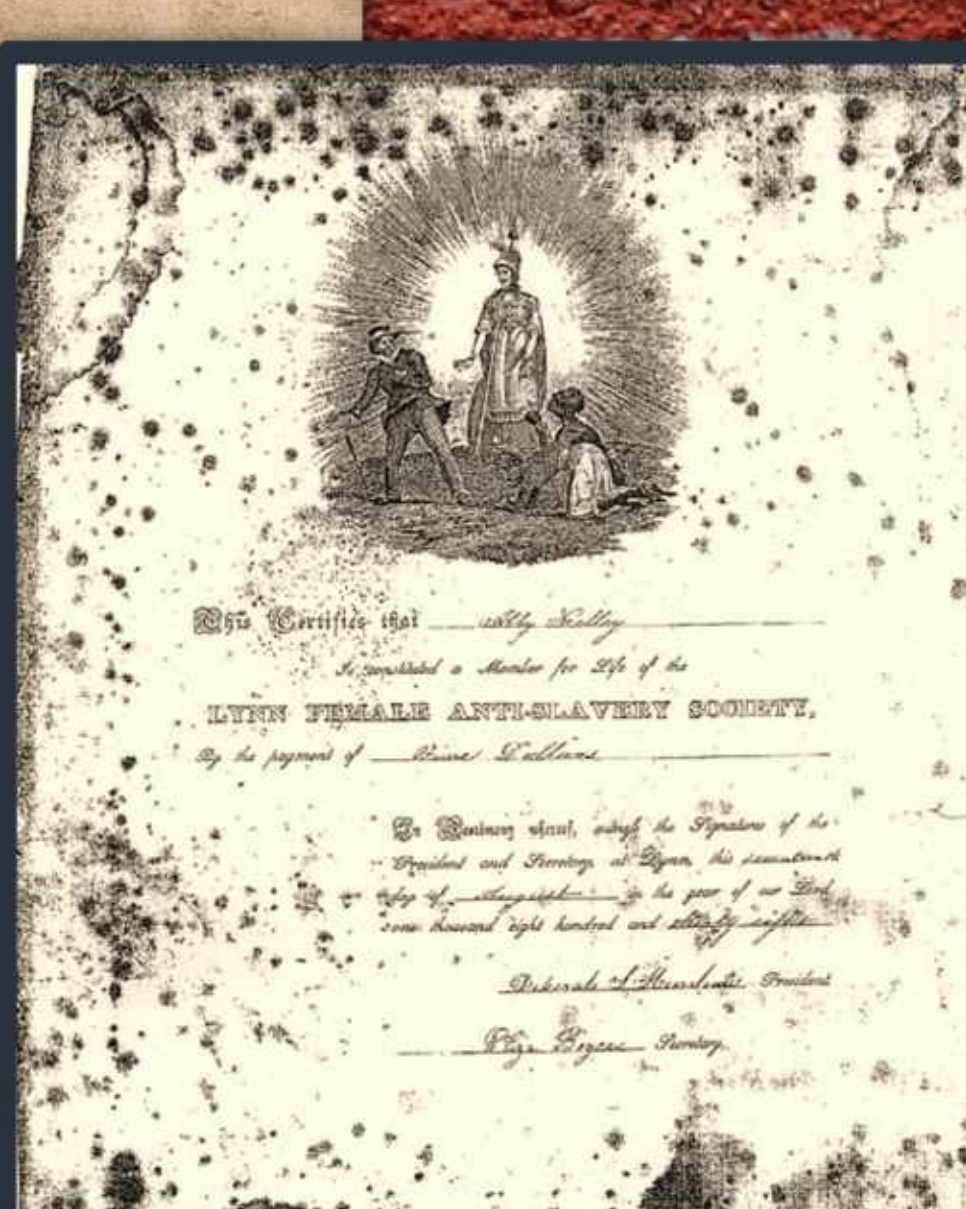


Portraits of Stephen Symonds Foster and Abby Kelley from the Massachusetts Historical Society



The Female Anti-Slavery Society of Lynn

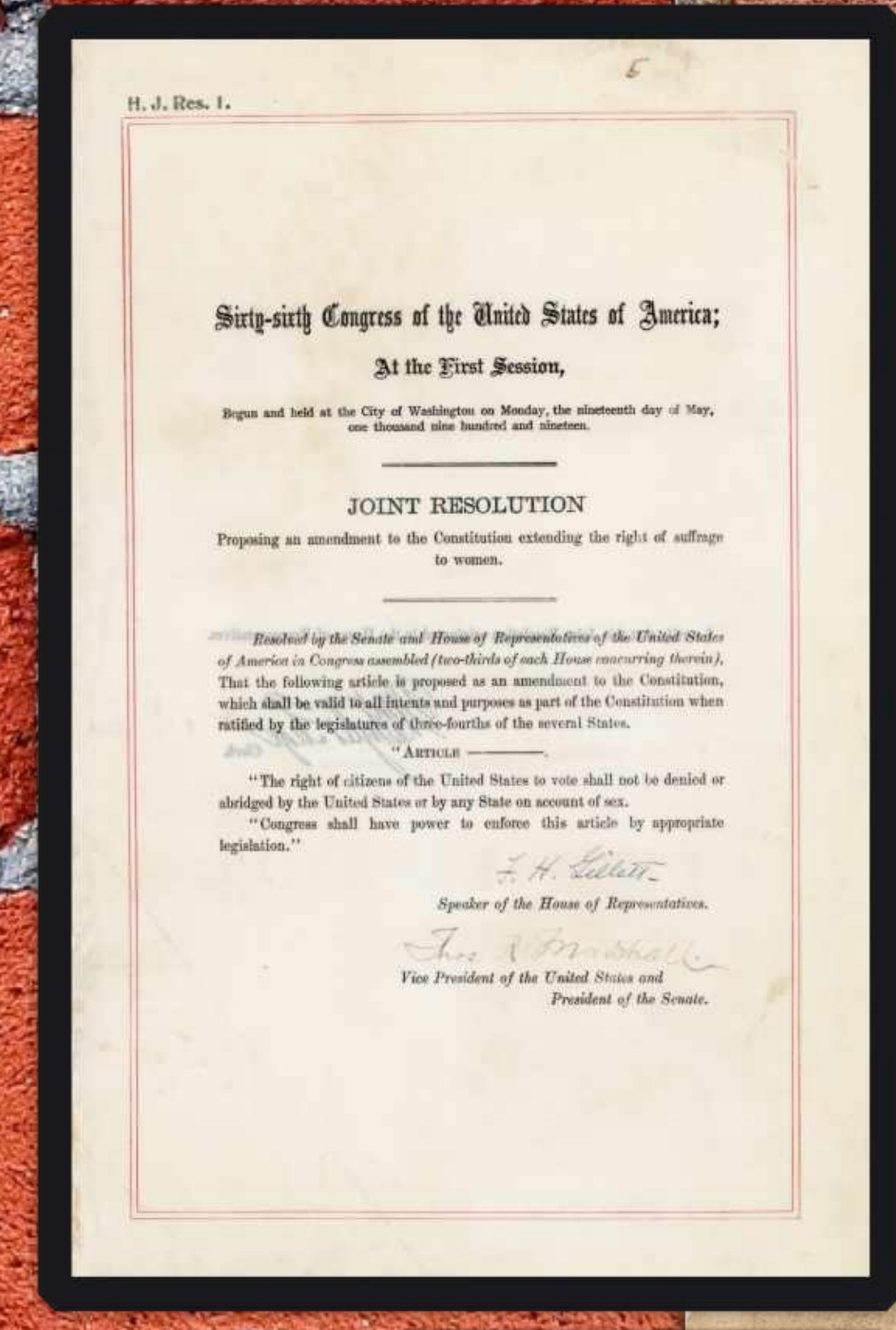
When Abby Kelley became the teacher at a Quaker school of Lynn, MA in 1835, she joined the Female Anti-Slavery Society's chapter in Lynn and became their corresponding secretary, writing to activists like the Anti-Slavery Society's founder, William Lloyd Garrison. In 1837, she was selected as the society's delegate to the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women in New York, and was a delegate the next year at the convention in Philadelphia. There she gave her first speech, and made a name for herself as an orator. She left her teaching position in 1839 and started a new career on the lecture circuit.



Cover to the Proceedings of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, Philadelphia, 1840

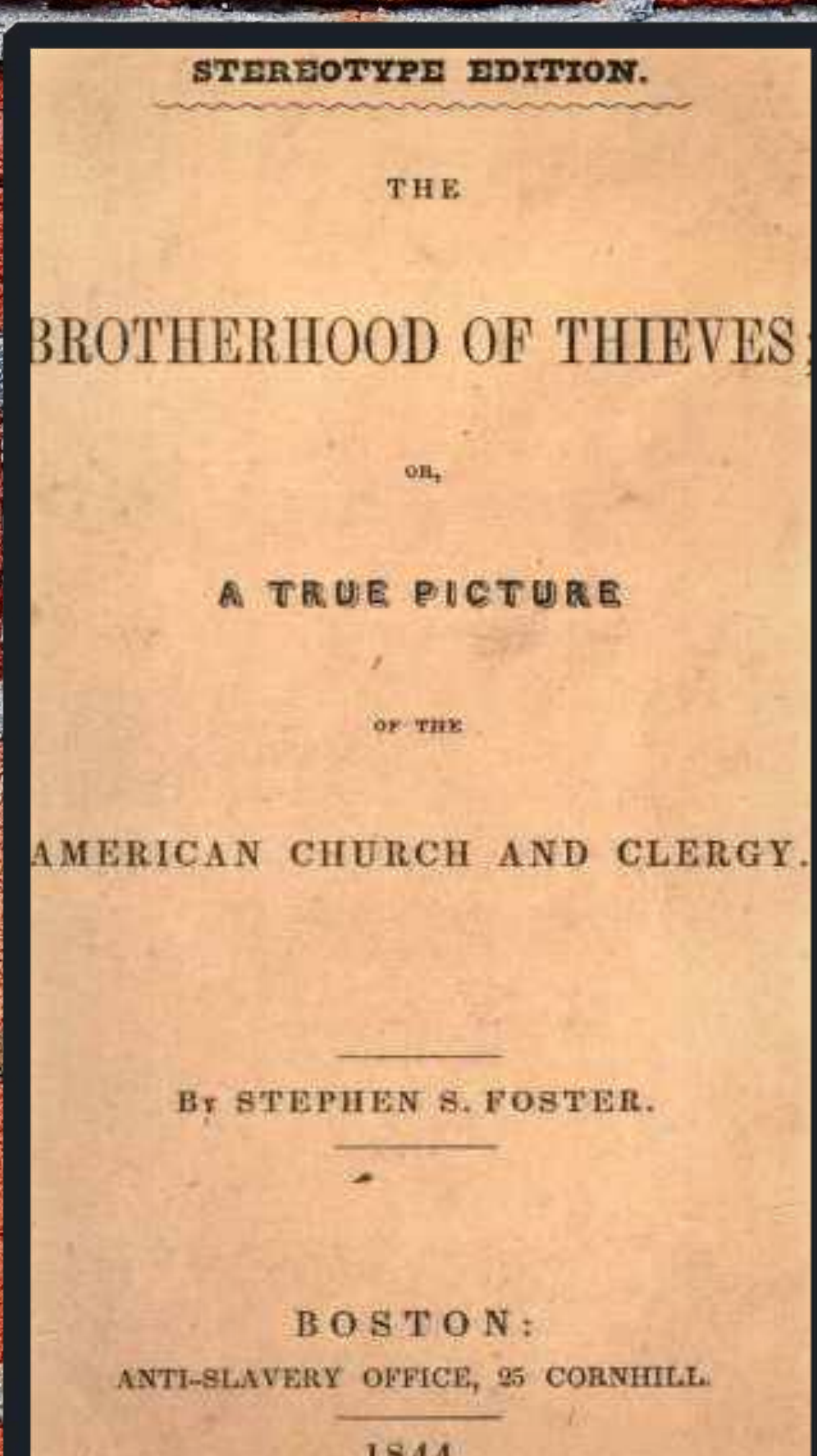
"Bloody feet, Sisters, have worn smooth the path by which you come hither."

—Abby Kelley Foster
1851 National Women's Rights Convention
Worcester, Massachusetts



Stephen Symonds Foster's Letter to Abby Kelley, August 10, 1845

Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution



"The Brotherhood of Thieves"

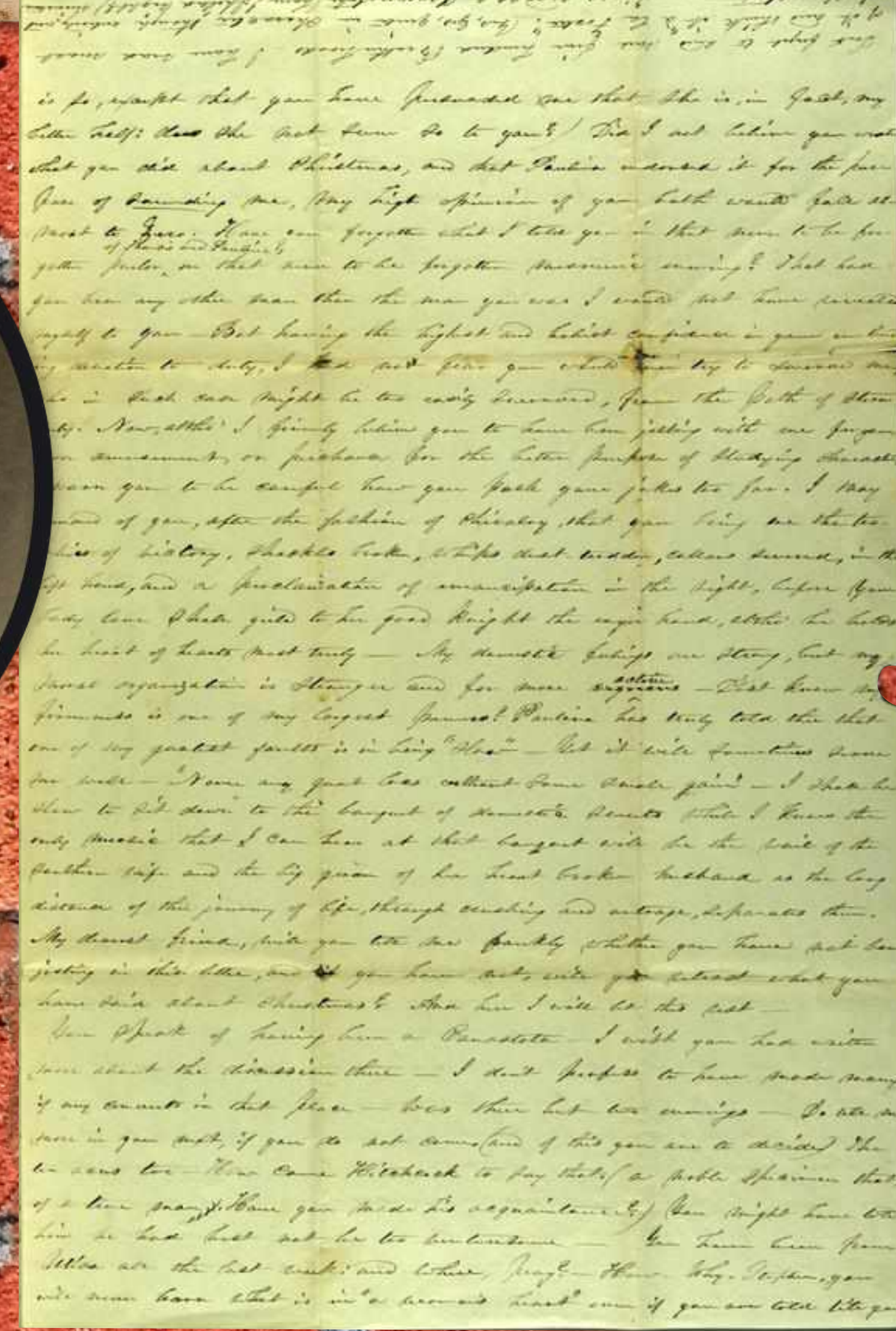
A radical abolitionist and supporter of universal suffrage, Stephen's best known tract, "The Brotherhood of Thieves; or, a True Picture of the American Church and Clergy" was published in 1844 and featured his condemnation of churches who supported slavery. While this made him many enemies, in addition to the damage caused by rioters who did not enjoy his speeches and writing, Abby Kelley was pleased by the tract and let him know in a letter: *Don't forget to send me five hundred Brotherhoods. I have read most of it and think it "à la Foster."* Yes... quite in character, though entirely out of characters... 'Tis as good as a daugueratype (have I spelled right?) miniature.

Women's Rights

Founding Mother Abigail Adams' often quoted plea, "Remember the ladies", marks a sentiment expressed by many women through US history. Denied the right to vote, own property, serve on a jury, and often to marry against her father's will, even the most affluent, well-educated woman had few rights. While there were notable exceptions—Uxbridge, MA resident Lydia Chapin Taft is anecdotally said to have voted as a landowner in a 1756 town meeting—most women had little say in government. Not until the passing of the 19th amendment in 1920 could women across the country vote in a federal election.



Abigail Adams, by Gilbert Stuart



"I prefer not to argue about a woman's rights, but to take them... I do not talk of woman's rights, but of human rights, the rights of human beings. I do not come to ask [for] them, but to demand them; not to get down on my knees and beg for them, but to claim them."

Abby Kelley Foster at the 1850 National Women's Rights Convention Worcester, Massachusetts; from the New York Herald

National Women's Rights Conventions in Worcester

Abby Kelley was essential in organization the First and Second National Women's Rights Convention, held in 1850 and 1851 at Mechanics Hall in Worcester, MA. She encouraged well-known women's rights advocates, including Lucretia Mott, William Lloyd Garrison, and Fredrick Douglass, to attend the convention. This also gave local activists that chance to speak. Notable local guests include the friend of Walt Whitman and Christian socialist leader, Abby Hills Price of Hopedale, MA, along with acclaimed physician and professor, Dr. Martha H. Mowry of Providence, RI.



Dr. Martha H. Mowry



Abby Hills Price

Abby Kelleyites

With countless women across the globe leading the effort for suffrage, Abby Kelley created her own brand of activism, the radical "Abby Kelleyites", who believed in equality for all, regardless of race or gender. Honored by fellow suffragettes and scorned by the mainstream press, Abby Kelley endured verbal harassment and physical threats while speaking to "promiscuous"—mixed-gender—audiences and traveling the lecture circuit. Stephen Symonds Foster was among the Abby Kelleyites and spoke openly of his surprise when others did not view him as such. He wrote in one letter to Abby Kelley: *"One of your converts... denounced me as no Abby Kelley abolitionist... I must beg leave to drop the abolition from the word, + content myself with simply being an Abby Kelly-ist."*



Abby's House

LEGACY

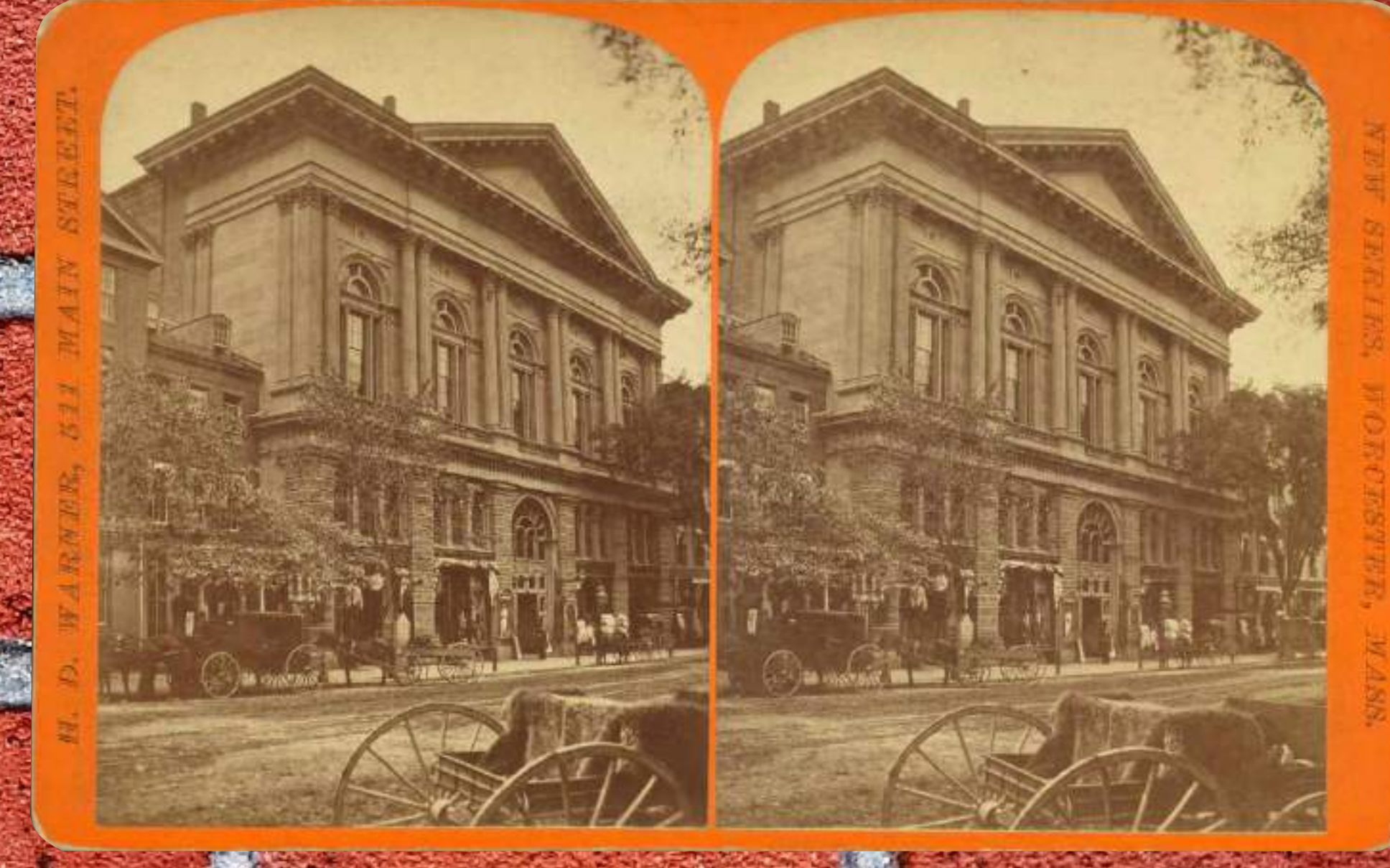
Despite her lifelong work for equality, many of Abby Kelley Foster's aspirations for the United States were not realized in her lifetime. While her work influenced the 1870 passage of the 15th amendment, which extended the vote to men of all races, the 19th amendment extending the vote to women was not passed until 1920, thirty-three years after her death. Because of her work, she is a member of the National Women's Hall of Fame and the National Abolitionist Hall of Fame. Additionally, two organizations in Worcester, MA — Abby Kelley Foster Charter Public School and Abby's House women's shelter — are named in her honor.



Abby Kelley Foster Charter Public School

"The movement in England, as in America, may be dated from the first National Convention, held at Worcester, Mass., October, 1850."

Elizabeth Cady Stanton,
1870 National Woman's Rights Convention in New York City



Stereograph of Mechanics Hall



Blackstone River Valley
National Heritage Corridor



Blackstone River Valley
National Historical Park

NPS.gov/blrv