



For North or South? How did North East England react to Slavery and the American Civil War 1861-65?

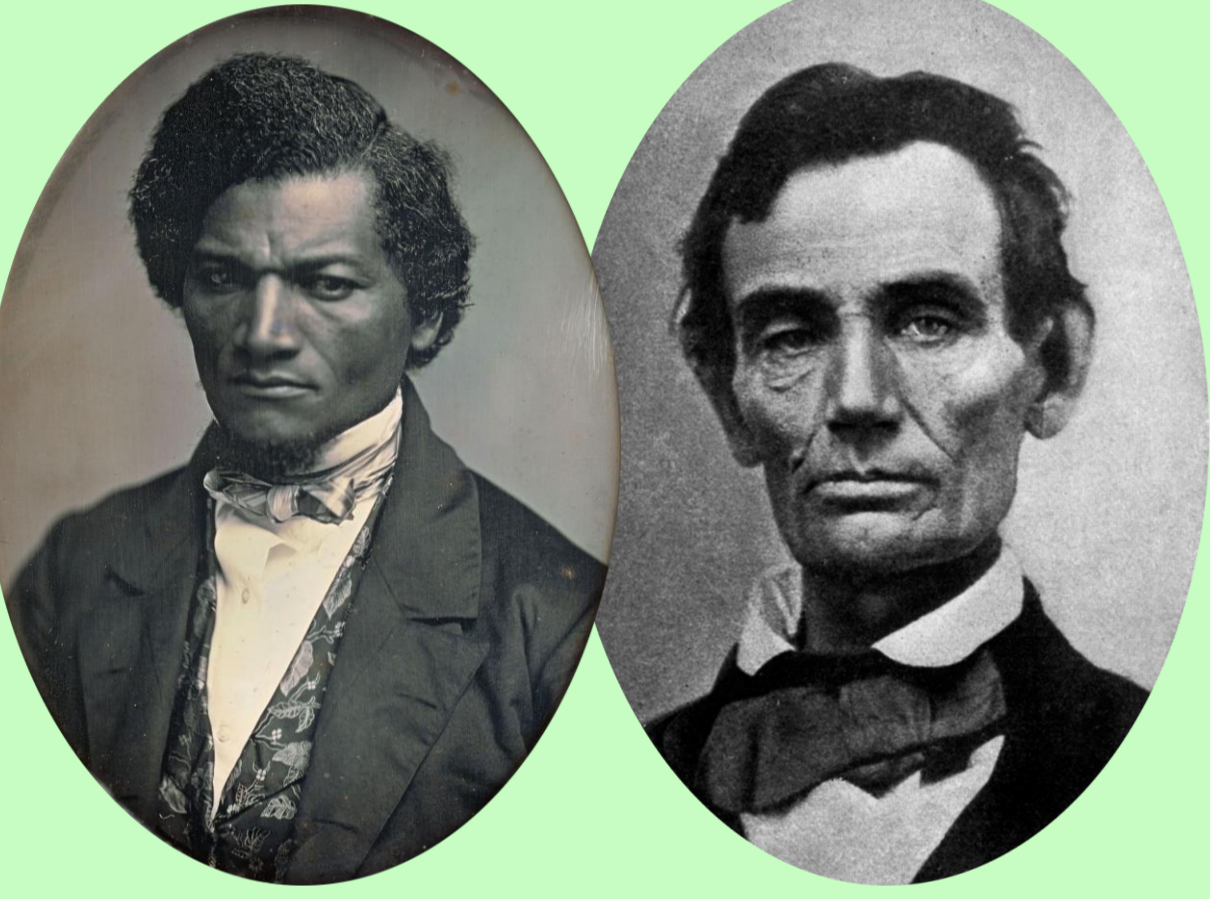


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Aims

To find out whether Newcastle, and other North East regions, held anti-slavery (abolitionist) opinion and if they acted upon this during the American Civil War.

Since little research has been done on Newcastle and the war specifically, I also wanted to find out whether the North East supported the North (Unionists- fighting to sustain the Union and 1863+ to end slavery) or the South (Confederates- claimed to fight for State's rights. Main aim to retain slavery in their States) during the war.



Frederick Douglass American President Abraham Lincoln 1860-65

Methodology

I spent the majority of my time searching through the British Newspaper Archives online for specific event names, dates and key terms. By categorising my searches I was able to see the change in opinions and focus given to the American Civil War by the North East. E.g. as the war went on Newspaper's increased the amount of space and columns given to the war and slavery.

I visited Newcastle University Robinson Library special archives; The Discovery Museum Archives; The Literary and Philosophical Society; and Newcastle City Library. I also used numerous books such as John Charlton's book 'Hidden Chains: The Slavery Business in North East England' regarding the North East and the 1830s Anti-Slavery movement. This helped me build the background to the activism in the 1860s.

My research proves:

- There is more to the narrative of the North East's links with slavery and America than previously thought. The famous visits of Frederick Douglass (a runaway slave, freed by Ellen and Anna Richardson of Newcastle in 1846) and Martin Luther King (during the Civil Rights Movements) are the tip of the iceberg.
- People's decision of which side to support were influenced by economic, religious, and personal moral factors.
- Both men and women were involved in abolitionism.
- Religion featured heavily in 19th century North East. lectures and speeches were held in churches, and were attended or delivered by numerous Reverends from both the North East and America.
- North East abolitionists had trans-Atlantic connections. As did newspapers, which often received letters or complaints from people in the American south.
- Through films, theatre, literature and newspaper story serials, the American Civil War continued to be discussed in the North East to the 1970s. Initially these had a Union/Northern bias, but later they favoured the 'Lost Cause'- a romantic ideal of the American South, starting with the book Gone With the Wind in 1936.
- Many working class, and middle/upper class individuals both supported the North or South and Slavery or Abolition. Class was thus not necessarily a defining factor of North/South support.
- People of the North East as determined abolitionists involving themselves in anti-slavery causes before, during and after the American Civil War. Abolitionist meetings 1865+ still occurred, discussing places with remaining slavery ties, such as Cuba and Spain.



Brunswick Methodist Church

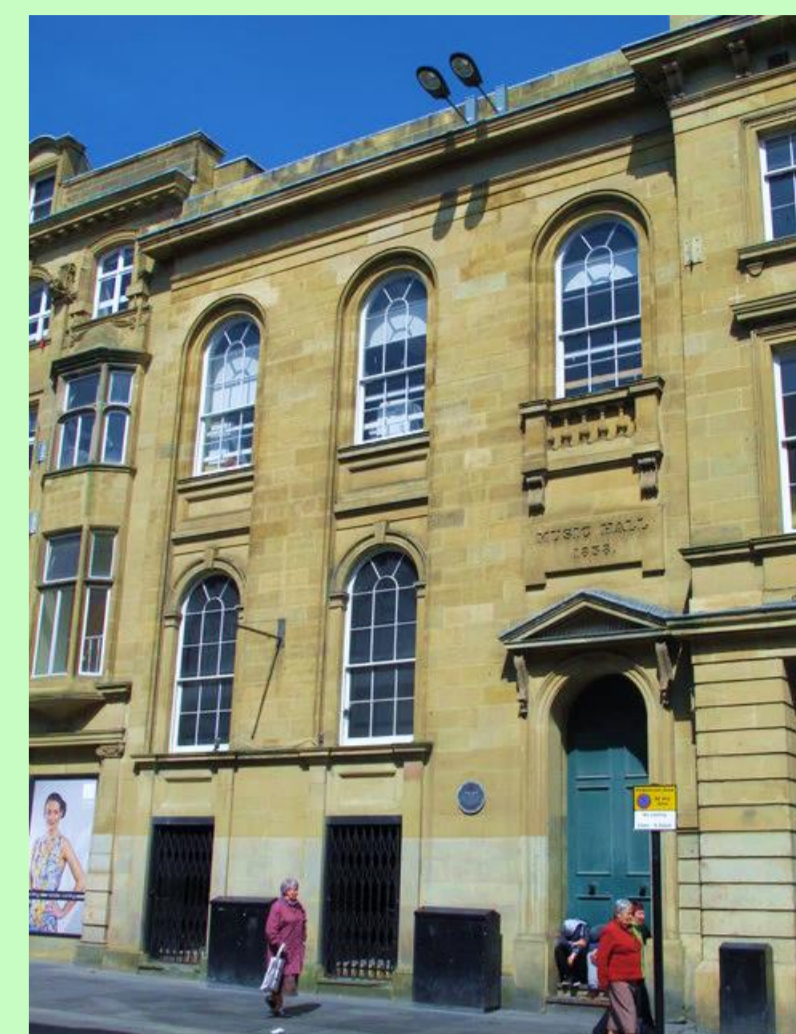


Bath Lane Congregational Church

Locations of Abolitionist Lecturers

Please note that some of these buildings no longer exist.

- Nelson Street: Music Hall and Lecture Rooms
- Grainger Street: Royal Assembly Rooms
- Newcastle Town Hall
- Grey Street: Victoria Rooms
- Blckett Street: United Presbyterian Church
- Clayton Street, John Knox Church
- Clayton St. West: Congregational Chapel
- Brunswick Methodist Church/ Brunswick Wesleyan Chapel
- Bath Lane: Bath Lane Congregational Church
- Erskine Church
- Coundon: New Connexion Chapel
- Salem Methodist Chapel, Hood Street
- (Church names unknown) Durham
- North Shields: Albion Assembly Rooms



Nelson Street Music Hall and Lecture Room

Conflicts of Interest and Changing Opinions

- Not everybody in the North East supported the abolitionist cause. Many military merchants and businessmen with investments in slave plantations and/or the trading of slave goods such as sugar, profited from American slavery. As such, the success of 1846 Newcastle Ladies Free Produce Association, and other Free Produce movements, never received full support.
- There were disagreements over which abolitionist methods. Quakers, and other religious individuals believed in peaceful methods. Thus, some people agreed with President Lincoln's anti-slavery message, but disagreed with his decision to go to war.
- Newcastle Upon Tyne Peace Society (1817-1850) and many later pacifists were dismissed by Chartists who procured weaponry.
- Opinions altered throughout the duration of the year. The Newcastle Daily Chronicle in 1863 noted that "as the rebellion has gone on....the sympathies of England have run more and more in the direction of the South."
- The Newcastle Daily Chronicle in Jan. 1863 claimed that many people have "given their good wishes to the Confederates", yet "they are careful to disclaim at the same moment, all desire for the perpetuation of negro bondage." Thus, people had complex opinions regarding the Civil War, claiming to be pro-Confederate, but anti-slavery.
- After President Lincoln issued his 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, which promised to free the slaves, many people who previously supported the South on the grounds of State's rights began to support the North.



Joseph Cowen Jr. (1829-1900) became the owner of the Newcastle Daily Chronicle from 1863.

Cowen and his editor W. E. Adams publicised abolitionist articles in the paper, and pamphlets, such as Adams' 'The Slave Holder's War.' When Lincoln issued the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation Cowen helped throw a party. Lincoln's death in 1865 upset Cowen, who later made a speech about Lincoln at the Town Council.

There is a statue to him by Westgate Road.