

“The Experiment of Freedom:”

James Miller McKim and Civil War Abolitionism

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Honors Proposal

2018-2019

Introduction

“This freedmen business is...abolition already begun,” James Miller McKim declared in a letter written in the midst of the American Civil War. “The experiment of freedom should be initiated with as much care as possible.”¹ McKim was one of the country’s best-known abolitionists. In McKim’s view, this “experiment of freedom” was not complete merely by freeing slaves but rather in also providing provisions and resources to recently freed slaves. McKim resigned from his position in the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society to focus his wartime efforts on the creation of relief societies for these freed slaves. Acting as an informal coordinator and lobbyist, McKim used his widespread connections to unite the various factions of the antislavery movement with the Lincoln administration. Yet McKim’s critical wartime role remains understudied and under-appreciated.

McKim has not been alone in this development. By 1863, asserts historian Manisha Sinha, “Lincoln was well on his way to becoming the Great Emancipator, and abolitionists, who had agitated so long for emancipation, the forgotten emancipationists.”² While the abolitionist cause was nowhere near over by 1863, their legacy was already beginning to be overshadowed by the prominence of Lincoln. Yet McKim’s legacy has been almost obliterated. There is no published biography of him, and the only notable PhD dissertation devoted to his career, completed in 1968, essentially ends its discussion of his work on the eve of the Civil War, condensing his final fourteen years into four pages.³ Otherwise, there have only been a few articles that feature McKim’s story and just several monographs and studies that truly address his

¹ James McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 161.

² Manisha Sinha, *The Slave’s Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 585.

³ William Cohen, “James Miller McKim: Pennsylvania Abolitionist,” Unpublished PhD Dissertation (Ann Arbor: Unpublished PhD Dissertation, 1968).

private and public wartime writings.⁴ If Sinha is correct as she wrote only two months ago that abolitionism during the Civil War “is indeed the next frontier in abolition studies,” then surely a figure like McKim will be at the center of this resurgence.⁵

An especially effective advocate for equal rights for African Americans under the law. Historian Ira Brown claims McKim was generally considered “quiet, reserved, businesslike, and efficient” because “he applied a fundamentally conservative temperament to the prosecution of a radical cause.”⁶ Abolitionist editor Oliver Johnson declared McKim to be a “prudent rash man” with “an earnest zeal” and “great wisdom.”⁷ Black abolitionist William Still described McKim’s best qualities, noting his “caution, sound judgement, and mental balance.”⁸ It was this balance of wisdom, caution, and zeal that made McKim such an influential abolitionist.

Background of McKim

Born in 1810 in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, McKim spent his childhood unconcerned with abolitionism. Because of the 1780 Gradual Emancipation law of Pennsylvania, McKim lacked an exposure to slavery. Having been around few, if any, slaves growing up, McKim knew little about the treatment of slaves or the humanity of African Americans. Lacking this understanding, McKim believed that, while slavery was unjust, its eradication necessitated the removal of all African Americans to Africa.⁹ McKim’s priority was instead on graduating Dickinson College in

⁴ The only texts that discuss James Miller McKim at length are: James McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, Manisha Sinha, *The Slave’s Cause: A History of Abolition*; Ira V. Brown, “Miller McKim and Pennsylvania Abolition,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* no. 1 (1963); William Cohen, “McKim, James Miller (14 November 1810-13 June 2074),” *American National Biography*, (June 2017); Willie Lee Rose, “‘Iconoclasm Has Had Its Day:’ Abolitionists and Freedmen in South Carolina,” *The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists*, ed. by Duberman Martin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965); and Wille Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1964).

⁵ Manisha Sinha, “Editor’s Note: June 2018 Issue,” *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, (May 22, 2018).

⁶ Ira V. Brown, “Miller McKim and Pennsylvania Abolition,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* no. 1 (1963), 71-72.

⁷ Ira V. Brown, 72.

⁸ Ira V. Brown, 72.

⁹ William Cohen, “James Miller McKim: Pennsylvania Abolitionist,” 48-50.

1828 and then attending Princeton to become a Presbyterian minister. However, after the loss of his parents, he returned home to care for his siblings. In the spring of 1833, upon reading abolition sentiments written by William Lloyd Garrison and conversing with John Peck, a black barber, McKim found his new cause in the abolition movement and attended the first National Anti-Slavery Convention in Philadelphia that same year. The anti-slavery convention was led by Garrison and his faction of abolitionists who called for immediate emancipation, a more radical position than was held by other groups of abolitionists.¹⁰

At the convention, he intrigued Lucretia Mott, who became his mentor within the anti-slavery movement. In mid-1836, he joined a Quaker faction of abolitionists known as the “Band of Seventy.” McKim quickly realized he joined an incredibly radical faction of the movement, which led him to denounce his Presbyterian ties.¹¹ Just a few years later, he married Sarah Allibone Speakman and became an official agent of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. The couple would go on to have two children and adopt McKim’s niece. Their daughter Lucy would eventually marry William Lloyd Garrison’s son, thereby linking the McKims and the Garrisons in friendship and marriage long after the end of the struggle for abolition was won.¹² Lucy was also the first person to transpose African American music.¹³

McKim played a prominent role in abolitionism throughout the 1840s and 1850s. Throughout this time, he served as an editor for the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, the Philadelphia Abolition Society’s newspaper and retained a position in the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. In 1847, he reorganized Pennsylvania’s Vigilance Committee, which would become the

¹⁰ Ira V. Brown, “Miller McKim and Pennsylvania Abolition,” 57.

¹¹ William Cohen, “McKim, James Miller (14 November 1810-13 June 2074),” *American National Biography*, (June 2017).

¹² William Cohen, “McKim, James Miller (14 November 1810-13 June 2074).”

¹³ Dena J. Epstein, “Garrison, Lucy McKim (1842-1877),” *American National Biography*, (June 16, 2017).

Philadelphia Vigilance Committee and became an agent of Frederick Douglass's black newspaper the *North Star*.¹⁴ In 1849, he famously assisted in freeing Henry "Box" Brown, an enslaved man who escaped from Richmond to Philadelphia inside a shipping crate. McKim was one of the agents to receive Brown in a box that had been shipped out of slavery.¹⁵

McKim served as both an organizer and the metaphorical glue that kept factions of abolitionists together. McKim's greatest quality was perhaps his ability to "work harmoniously with all kinds of people."¹⁶ According to historian Willie Lee Rose, McKim became so enmeshed within the abolitionist cause that "there were no important abolitionists of the day who were not McKim's friends."¹⁷ He was close to black abolitionists like Frederick Douglass and worked closely with William Still. At the same time, he was friends with plenty of white abolitionists despite being a Garrisonian.¹⁸

The Civil War Story

By the eve of the Civil War, McKim was ready for a military conflict over slavery and disunion. In his column in the *National Anti-Slavery Society Standard* on December 29, 1860, he penned of South Carolina's recent secession, "I hope she will be allowed to make the experiment. It would hasten the day of emancipation."¹⁹ Just a few months later on April 20, 1861, the *Standard* published another McKim article in which he wrote that "A virtuous war is

¹⁴ William Cohen, "James Miller McKim: Pennsylvania Abolitionist," 171; Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*, 388, 426, 513.

¹⁵ Eric Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of America's Fugitive Slaves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 103-104.

¹⁶ Ira V. Brown, "Miller McKim and Pennsylvania Abolition," 72.

¹⁷ Willie Lee Rose, "'Iconoclasm Has Had Its Day': Abolitionists and Freedmen in South Carolina," *The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists*, ed. by Duberman Martin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 179.

¹⁸ William Cohen, "James Miller McKim: Pennsylvania Abolitionist."

¹⁹ William Cohen, 295.

better than a corrupt peace” and claimed that ““this is to be an abolition war,”” which would end in ““the triumph or extinction of slavery.””²⁰

Despite McKim’s earlier devotion to Garrisonian abolitionism, the start of the “abolition war” convinced him that the movement had entered a new phase. Less than a year into the war, he resigned from the society ““because I believe that my peculiar work, in the position I have occupied is now done.””²¹ In his role at the abolition society, he had helped to raise awareness for African Americans and provoke the “abolition war,” both of which were completed as the war over slavery geared up. However, McKim realized that abolition was not yet fully achieved. He simply no longer believed there was anything left for him to do at the abolition society. In explaining why he decided to leave, he stated that ““my interest in the old appliances and old watchwords is pretty much all gone.””²²

After his resignation from the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society in January 1862, McKim found work in March 1862 as the secretary of the Philadelphia Port Royal Relief Association.²³ It was through this work that he met Prince Rivers, a former slave who became a color sergeant and who held office in early Reconstruction years, when he personally traveled to the Sea Islands to inspect conditions for freed slaves. McKim organized events that gave Rivers a platform to speak. However, despite McKim’s efforts in Port Royal and with Prince Rivers, mention of his ties to McKim are sparse.²⁴

Lucy McKim Garrison, James Miller McKim’s daughter, accompanied him to Port Royal and kept a journal of her time there and wrote to her best friend about the experience. During her

²⁰ William Cohen, “James Miller McKim: Pennsylvania Abolitionist,” 296-297.

²¹ William Cohen, 296-297.

²² William Cohen, 299.

²³ William Cohen, “James Miller McKim: Pennsylvania Abolitionist,” 298; Ira V. Brown, “Miller McKim and Pennsylvania Abolition,” 69-70.

²⁴ Matthew Pinsker and Sarah Goldberg, “The Prince of Emancipation,” Google Arts & Culture.

time there, she described the happiness of living there while also detailing the pain she saw in the form of scars on the backs of the freed slaves. This is also where she first heard slave music and how she came up with the idea of transposing African American music.²⁵

Amidst the struggle for freedom, McKim and a very small faction of abolitionists split from the emancipation movement and began preparing themselves for the fight for equality. McKim became an influential player in the pursuit of freedmen's relief programs. McKim often advised the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association on how to best support freed slaves. He also played an important role in forming the Philadelphia Port Royal Relief Committee and he became the secretary, a position he held until the end of the war.²⁶ When he returned from Port Royal, he organized an event at National Hall in Philadelphia to discuss conditions for freedmen in Port Royal and to collect resources for them. Because he had so many contacts willing to donate to his cause, he quickly accrued five thousand dollars and piles of clothing to be shipped to the freedmen.²⁷ A few months after this event on July 9, 1862, he successfully lobbied Congress in Washington, D.C. to form a freedmen's relief commission and later lobbied for the formation of the Freedmen's Bureau, which would become enacted in 1865.²⁸ However, despite his importance to the creation of relief societies and the Freedmen's Bureau, very few scholarly works even mention him.

While McKim was looking to the future and beginning the fight for freedmen relief societies, the newly proclaimed anti-slavery government was working to mollify abolitionists

²⁵ Margaret Hope Bacon, "Lucy McKim Garrison Pioneer in Folk Music," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, 54, no. 1 (1987), 5-6.

²⁶ James McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, 127, 160.

²⁷ Wille Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1964), 75-76.

²⁸ James McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, 181, 189.

who believed President Abraham Lincoln's administration was responding too slowly on the issue of emancipation. As "military necessity" became one of the "watchwords" McKim had attempted to escape, other abolitionists argued it could be used to implement emancipation.²⁹ Beginning on August 8, 1861, the federal government emancipated slaves under the First Confiscation Act, but it was not until July 17, 1862, almost a full year later, that the Second Confiscation Act, a "more comprehensive" law was passed. The confiscation acts, despite the precedent they set, came as a disappointment to many abolitionists who wanted an emancipation proclamation. Editor Sydney Howard Gay pressed the President, claiming that Northerners were "anxiously awaiting that movement on your part which they believe will end the rebellion by removing its cause."³⁰ Because many believed the rebellion, as Douglass had suggested, was caused by the war over slavery, Gay implied in this conversation that ending slavery would immediately end the war.

In response to abolitionist adamancy, the federal government supported measures to end slavery. The Second Confiscation Act included General Orders No 139. This order allowed generals to free slaves on any Confederate soil they came across. The Fugitive Slave Clause and Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 were obsolete and unenforced by the middle of the Civil War. West Virginia was required to abolish slavery in order to be admitted to the Union. By the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation at the beginning of 1863, abolitionists had already influenced the federal government's policies by diminishing slavery's strength.³¹

While Lincoln decided to meet with a black delegation to smooth the issue over, the meeting too fell short for Douglass. He left, thinking that it "leaves us less ground to hope for

²⁹ James McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, 63.

³⁰ James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865*, 51, 226, 308.

³¹ James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States*, 317-318, 328.

anti-slavery action at his [Lincoln's] hands than any of his previous utterances."³² At the same time of this public disapproval of the president, Horace Greeley published a scathing article attacking Lincoln's delay in emancipating slaves, or as Greeley claims, his "refusal to 'EXECUTE THE LAWS.'"³³ According to historian James Oakes, this strengthened pressure on the president was because Republicans and many Northern Democrats alike interpreted emancipation to restore the Union as within the Constitution's boundaries.

The Emancipation Proclamation was the culmination of abolitionist pressures throughout the first half of the Civil War. While Wendell Phillips exalted Lincoln for "abolishing a system found inconsistent with the perpetuity of the Republic," African Americans in particular were thrilled. Despite his previous doubts of the president, the 1863 proclamation convinced Frederick Douglass that it was "the first step on the part of the nation in its departure from the thralldom of ages."³⁴ Oakes argues that even though the document was filled with legal language, it was the direct result of abolitionists who themselves employed legal language that "was much more...than red-hot rhetoric."³⁵ Because they "stressed the inhumanity and injustice of slavery," their usage of "common law, case law, statute law, and constitutional law" often go unappreciated and unrecognized.³⁶ By explaining these abolitionist tactics, Oakes depicts the Emancipation Proclamation as an abolitionist document despite its writer's lack of affiliation with the abolitionists.

Using logical manipulation, abolitionists justified emancipation on Constitutional premises they previously doubted. Whereas before the war abolitionists argued that "this is a

³² James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865*, 310.

³³ James Oakes, 311.

³⁴ James Oakes, 346.

³⁵ James Oakes, 346-347.

³⁶ James Oakes, 347.

pro-slavery government” in which “slavery is stamped on its heart—the Constitution,” following the Emancipation Proclamation, they insisted upon the anti-slavery currents within the Constitution.³⁷ Republican policymakers such as William Whiting argued that slaves were only described as “persons held to labor or service,” which likened them to children and laborers as opposed to property.³⁸ Law professor Francis Lieber argued that the Constitution was an example of natural law, so slavery cannot exist within that nation. Lieber ensured the military justification of emancipation by arguing that “the laws of war were part of the law of nations, the law of nations was based on natural law, slavery was incompatible with natural law, hence in wartime belligerents had the right to restore slaves to their ‘natural’ condition of freedom.”³⁹ While the interpreters of these documents were Republicans not abolitionists, their explanations were based upon abolitionist arguments from previous decades and allowed abolitionists to reaffirm their faith in the Union because the reclassification of the Constitution as an anti-slavery document that enforced the Emancipation Proclamation and military orders.

With the Emancipation Proclamation came the opportunity for black enlistment. While not all abolitionists agreed with the measure, McKim was enthralled by this step toward equality. He organized an enlistment rally for African Americans on July 6, 1863 in the National Hall in Philadelphia and arranged for Frederick Douglass to speak. His rally assisted in the enlistment of ten black regiments to come out of Pennsylvania and close states in the course of only ten months.⁴⁰

³⁷ James McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, 32.

³⁸ James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865*, 350.

³⁹ James Oakes, 349-350.

⁴⁰ James McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, 192, 207.

During Lincoln's reelection campaign, many abolitionists were skeptical of Lincoln's intentions to help African Americans. According to historian James McPherson, they were "perplexed" by Lincoln because "he was plainly *against* slavery, but he was just as plainly not *for* its immediate and total abolition."⁴¹ Believing him to be reluctant and ineffectual in his policies to help free slaves, some abolitionists debated denouncing him. However, McKim was not among this number. He strongly supported Lincoln's reelection.⁴² Deeming the Emancipation Proclamation "the great event of the century on this continent," McKim likened Lincoln's influence to the prestige of Thomas Jefferson's pen by saying "what the Declaration of Independence was to" the American Revolution, "the Proclamation of Freedom...is to this war."⁴³ His support of the president resulted from his contentious belief that Lincoln was "a friend to the black man" who sought to "advance...the question of negro suffrage."⁴⁴ While other abolitionists portrayed Lincoln's personal agenda as not in favor of full emancipation, McKim recognized Lincoln's abolitionist tendencies and support of African Americans.⁴⁵ McKim even managed to convince a skeptical Garrison, who previously described Lincoln's support of emancipation as "stumbling, halting, prevaricating, irresolute, weak, [and] besotted."⁴⁶

With their successes in the adoptions of abolitionist policies, abolitionists began to turn their focus upon their original target: to abolish slavery. Between the two paths of establishing permanent abolition, abolitionists decided upon the ratification of what would become the

⁴¹ James McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, 11.

⁴² William Cohen, "James Miller McKim: Pennsylvania Abolitionist," 306.

⁴³ Ira V. Brown, "Miller McKim and Pennsylvania Abolition," 70.

⁴⁴ Ira V. Brown, 70.

⁴⁵ Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*, 587.

⁴⁶ James McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, 112.

Thirteenth Amendment. While white abolitionists fought for the amendment, black abolitionists had the most to lose if an amendment was not ratified. They worried about re-enslavement because there was no legislation that specifically deemed it unconstitutional. For this reason, abolitionists repealed the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 even though it had not been in effect in recent years.⁴⁷ After decades of hard work, the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified, officially abolishing slavery in the United States.

Historiography

There are no biographical studies of James Miller McKim's wartime experiences, but the major interpretive studies that will influence my research on his Civil War era career are James M. McPherson's *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (1964), James Oakes's *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865* (2013), and Manisha Sinha's *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (2016). McKim's role as a broker between factions of abolitionists, black activists, and Republican policymakers explains how these groups partnered, despite their differences, to create lasting de jure and de facto changes during the Civil War.

In the 2014 preface of his reprinted *Struggle for Equality* (1964), James McPherson claimed that the study of abolitionists during and after the Civil War is "a story as noteworthy today as when it was first published fifty years ago."⁴⁸ Crucial for its breakthrough in defining the field of abolitionist studies leading up to, during, and after the Civil War, *The Struggle for Equality* addresses the contributions abolitionists lent to the issue of civil rights and liberties of African Americans. McKim plays a central role in his book because of his involvement in civil

⁴⁷ James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865*, 431, 434.

⁴⁸ James McPherson, "Preface to the Princeton Classics Edition," *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964, new preface, 2014), xii.

rights. More so than many of the other prominent older abolitionists, McKim realized early into the war that freedmen relief programs that provided resources and education were the next places abolitionism needed to progress to. McPherson emphasizes the debates between abolitionists over the need for civil rights and McKim's rise on the cutting edge of the push for full equality. He highlights the struggle for emancipation, the disagreement over Lincoln's re-election, and the fight for the Freedmen's Bureau.⁴⁹

McPherson's book stood the test of time of more than fifty years, but its emphasis on the war for civil rights during the Civil War has not been significantly revised or added upon since his publication in 1964. The majority of the records he relies upon regarding McKim, who is a centerpiece within his study, come from only a handful of letters from the McKim papers at Cornell. In addition to providing a new perspective upon McKim and Civil War abolitionism, I will also have the opportunity to access records that were not present when McPherson's book was published. Most notably, the handful of boxes devoted to McKim in the Garrison Papers at Smith College, which now contains McKim's autobiographical diary as well as multiple letters written to and by McKim throughout and after the Civil War.

James Oakes's 2013 *Freedom National* details the policymakers of the Civil War. Emphasizing Lincoln, his cabinet, and Congress, Oakes describes Republican policies that shaped and redefined the Civil War such as the Confiscation Acts and the Emancipation Proclamation. In his review, historian Gary Gallagher praises the book for its inclusion of all "the crucial actors" including the abolitionists as he portrays "the ebb and flow of events that eventually led to the Thirteenth Amendment."⁵⁰ Clarifying the war was always over slavery, he

⁴⁹ James McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

⁵⁰ Gary W. Gallagher, "Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865 by James Oakes," *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, 3, no. 2 (2013): 262-265.

presents a convincing argument of the Republicans' role in maintaining this emphasis. He also revolutionizes the study of the importance of the Emancipation Proclamation and evaluates Lincoln's role as the "Great Emancipator." The study of the Republicans' Civil War policies and their incorporations greatly lends itself to studying the laws' impact on the war and the policies abolitionists such as McKim were responding to when revising and adapting their civil rights aims.⁵¹

While Oakes emphasizes Republican policy in the Civil War period, his focus on the government leads him to turn away from abolitionists like McKim, whom he does not even mention. Reviewer Gary Gallagher cautions that Oakes leaves critical questions about emancipation and the war effort unexplored. George C. Rable, in his review, claims that the book "is sometimes missing...doubts, questions, and political messiness."⁵² Yet, McKim's prominent role as a freedmen's relief coordinator, recruiter of black soldiers, and reelection campaign supporter, would all seem to support key points from Oakes's arguments.

Sinha's 2016 survey of abolitionism, *The Slave's Cause*, includes abolitionist roles and attitudes leading up to and during the Civil War. She addresses influential abolitionists, including McKim, from early anti-slavery efforts up to the end of the Civil War. One of the major breakthroughs of the book is its groundbreaking research on black abolitionists, who have historically not been researched as much as white abolitionists. Sinha's book won the 2017 Frederick Douglass Prize, among many other awards. However, despite acknowledging how comprehensive her book is, reviewer Adam Rothman laments that Sinha had not "devoted more attention to the Civil War, when the abolitionist waves finally crashed onto shore."⁵³ While the

⁵¹ James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014).

⁵² George C. Rable, "Review," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, 35, no. 2 (2014), 84.

⁵³ Rothman, Adam, "The Truth About Abolition," *Atlantic*, 317, no. 3 (April 2016), 44.

survey does not emphasize Civil War abolitionism, its scope is to abolition studies what Peter Kolchin's *American Slavery* is to slavery studies.⁵⁴

Recognizing there are plenty of places the future of abolition studies can move towards, Sinha wrote an editorial follow-up article in 2018. In this article, she admits that one of the areas she did not devote much time to is Civil War abolitionism. She claims that reviving this emphasis is necessary to the fields of abolition and Civil War studies.⁵⁵ In addition to adding upon this, I will also be able to add upon her groundbreaking work on black abolitionists. Despite Sinha's only passing mention of McKim, he was linked to multiple black abolitionists. Because McKim was introduced to abolitionism by John Peck, was well acquainted with Frederick Douglass, worked closely with William Still, all of whom were black abolitionists, the conclusions she draws about black abolitionists will make for a good springboard into my studies of McKim and his relationship with the most prominent black abolitionists of his day.

Primary Source Material

McKim and his fellow abolitionists left behind plenty of records to be studied. According to Sinha, "abolitionists were not just quintessential agitators but also wordsmiths," in that they compensated for their weaknesses "by outproducing their mighty opponents in newspapers, books, pamphlets, letters, diaries, memoirs, material, and artwork," thereby "creating a huge, complicated historical archive."⁵⁶ This wealth of records will be an asset to my thesis because I will have plenty of resources at my disposal to better understand McKim and Civil War abolitionism. For this project, I will be looking at a range of primary sources including letters

⁵⁴ Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

⁵⁵ Manisha Sinha, "Editor's Note: June 2018 Issue," *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, (May 22, 2018).

⁵⁶ Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*, 5.

written about, by, and to McKim, an autobiographical diary, addresses given by McKim, and American Anti-Slavery Society proceedings papers. These materials have been catalogued in multiple collections in various schools and libraries. Most of these collections are either available online or are within a few hours' drive from Dickinson College, so they are all fairly easily accessible.

McPherson's *The Struggle for Equality* uses multiple McKim documents from the James Miller McKim Collection at Cornell University. While this collection will most likely be important in my study of McKim because it includes letters from McKim's Civil War days, there is another collection at Cornell that McPherson did not use but that will help me with my thesis. The Samuel J. May Collection, also at Cornell, contains a vast body of McKim documents that will be relevant to my thesis. While this collection is not available online, I live only about two and a half hours from Cornell, so I will be able to plan day trips to visit their archives as I pursue the thesis.

William Cohen, in his PhD thesis, relies on a collection of materials he refers to as the "Chubb Collection." Cohen claims to have found the collection in McKim's old house, that, as of the 1960s, belonged to Mrs. Hendon Chubb. The collected materials included an autobiographical diary and a handful of letters. Chubb donated the diary and letters to Smith College after Cohen finished his dissertation, and they are currently stored with the Garrison Family Papers in the Sophia Smith Collection. While the collection contains 302 boxes, only a few relate to McKim. Regardless, some of the letters included in the collection are between McKim and fellow abolitionists during the Civil War as well as between McKim and his daughter Lucy, who married Garrison's son. While the collection has not been digitized, it is open to use at the college in Northampton, Massachusetts.

The other main collection that I have at my disposal is the McKim-Garrison Papers available in the Maloney Collection at the New York Public Library. This collection has previously not been as well-used, cited briefly by Cohen. Using this collection will help me to diversify the documents that have already been studied with those that have not. Some of the materials in this collection have been digitized, but the library is only a couple hours from my house, so I will also be able to make a few day trips to this archive.

The remaining collections and resources have either been digitized or are available in Pennsylvania, New York, or Massachusetts.

Conclusion

James Miller McKim had a reputation as a calm and rational leader, yet one with deep-seated radical beliefs about the pressing need for black freedom and equality. My thesis will attempt to grapple with his reliance upon these competing traits during the Civil War that allowed him to achieve some extraordinary successes. How did he manage to coordinate relationships between white and black abolitionists that extended beyond himself? Were his antebellum connections enough to help bridge these gaps? How did he gain influence with Republican policymakers without losing his stature among abolitionists? Perhaps most important, how significant was McKim's role in the overall national progress toward the final destruction of slavery? Were there others like him, who served as key brokers for the competing factions in the antislavery cause? These are the primary questions that will guide my research on an important but surprisingly overlooked nineteenth-century egalitarian.

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Timeline of Civil War Abolitionism and McKim

April 12, 1861 – The American Civil War began.

July 25, 1861 – Congress passed the Crittenden-Johnson Resolution, which stated that the war's goal was the reunion of the nation and slavery would not be affected.

August 8, 1861 – Congress passed the First Confiscation Act, which emancipated the slaves of Confederate army abettors.

September 11, 1861 – President Lincoln disallowed General John C. Frémont and other generals from freeing slaves except for slaves whose masters assisted Confederates to align the policy with the First Confiscation Act.

December 4-5, 1861 – This marked a turn in policy in which members of the House rejected the reaffirmation of the Crittenden-Johnson Resolution and proposed bills regarding a new confiscation policy, an emancipation resolution, and punishments for Union Army soldiers who returned slaves.

January 22, 1862 – McKim resigned from the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society. In his explanation for quitting, which appeared in the May 3, 1862 publication of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, he claimed that the war over emancipation had begun and the result of the war would certainly be the end of slavery.

March 5, 1862 – McKim formed the Philadelphia Port Royal Relief Committee and became the secretary. In this position, he selected abolitionists to go to Port Royal and assisted with the implementation of schooling programs. He remained in this position until 1865 with the creation of the Freedman's Bureau, the end of the war, and his efforts toward the *Nation*.

June 1862 – McKim visited Port Royal.

July 9, 1862 – McKim gave a speech about his observations of Port Royal and the needs of the freedmen there.

July 17, 1862 – Congress passed the Second Confiscation Act, which was a more comprehensive policy than the First Confiscation Act. The Second Confiscation Act included General Orders No 139, regarding military policies of emancipation. The act allowed African Americans, regardless of previous slave-status, to serve in the Union Army in an official capacity.

November 7, 1862 – Lincoln removed General McClellan from his position as Commander of the Army of the Potomac because of his hesitance and refusal to obey the confiscation acts.

December 1862 – McKim went to Washington, DC to present a case for the creation of a commission that would assess the situation at Port Royal, where ten thousand abandoned slaves had become the responsibility of Union forces, and write a report that could be used for the formation of a relief committee.

January 1, 1863 – Lincoln delivered the Emancipation Proclamation.

July 6, 1863 – McKim coordinated a rally to recruit black soldiers at National Hall in Philadelphia. Frederick Douglass was a featured speaker.

December 1863-February 1864 – McKim and other freedmen relief organization leaders lobbied in Washington, DC for the passage of the Freedmen's Bureau bill.

June 15, 1864 – Congress passed legislation that authorized equal payment of black soldiers.

June 28, 1864 – Congress repealed the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.

November 8, 1864 – Lincoln was re-elected.

March 3, 1865 – The Freedmen's Bureau was enacted after years of support from McKim and other abolitionists.

April 9, 1865 – General Robert E. Lee surrendered at the Appomattox Court House

April 14, 1865 – John Wilkes Booth assassinated Abraham Lincoln.

May 9, 1865 – Andrew Johnson declared the end of the Civil War.

July 1865 – The first publication of the *Nation*, a freedmen's civil rights paper, was printed. McKim's fundraising made the formation of the paper possible.

December 6, 1865 – The states ratified the Thirteenth Amendment.