

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Massachusetts	
COUNTY: Worcester	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Liberty Farm (The Foster House)

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
116 Mower Street
CITY OR TOWN:
Worcester
STATE: Massachusetts CODE: COUNTY: Worcester CODE:

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure 	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress 	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment 	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum 	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific 	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Joseph A. Sinnott
STREET AND NUMBER:
116 Mower Street
CITY OR TOWN:
Worcester
STATE: Massachusetts CODE: 01602

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Worcester Courthouse, Registry of Deeds
STREET AND NUMBER:
CITY OR TOWN:
Worcester
STATE: Massachusetts CODE:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
None
DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
STREET AND NUMBER:
CITY OR TOWN:
STATE: CODE:

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

"Liberty Farm," the Fosters' home for almost their entire married life, is located in the hills of western Worcester. The Fosters made it a station on the Underground Railroad, sheltering fugitive slaves on their flight to Canada. Probably built c. 1810, it is a good, simple Federal-style house, of red brick with white painted stone lintels and black shutters. The facade is five bays across, and the rather shallow sides feature gable returns. An attractive distyle Doric portico with full entablature complements the entrance, as do both the fanlight and sidelights.

The main portion of the house is completely original and in an excellent state of repair, though there have been additions on the right side and to the rear (c. 1902). With the exception of new doors cut through into the additions, the interior remains unaltered, and the elegant fireplaces are especially noteworthy. Stephen Symonds Foster has been called "a sturdy farmer of his New England fields,"¹ and Liberty Farm was reputed to be "one of the best managed and most productive in the district."² Indeed, Foster built one of the finest stone fences in New England around his house and barn, and literally every stone in all its 600 feet remains exactly as he set it.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

¹Lillie B. Chace Wyman, "Reminiscences of Two Abolitionists," New England Magazine, January, 1903, p. 537.

²William A. Robinson, "Foster, Stephen Symonds," Dictionary of American Biography, 1933, VI, 558.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian;	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1847-1881

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

William Lloyd Garrison once told Abby Kelley: "Of all the women who have appeared upon the historic stage, I have always regarded you as peerless--the moral Joan of Arc of the world."¹ Kelley was not only one of the first American women to speak out in public on the issue of slavery, at the same time she defended the slave's right to immediate emancipation she also defended women's right to a full measure of freedom of expression. "Polite society" was alarmed at such radicalism, and the part that women should play in the anti-slavery movement engendered a bitter controversy. In 1840 Abby Kelley's nomination to a position on the executive committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society precipitated the final split between the conservative and radical camps of abolition. Resigning her post as a teacher at the Lynn (Massachusetts) Friends School, Kelley devoted the rest of her life to reform. She lectured throughout the North on the horrors of slavery and the subjugation of women, risking both her physical safety and reputation.

Abby's husband, Stephen Symonds Foster, was a prominent reformer in his own right, a man who vehemently rejected all institutional religion in mid-century America because of its tacit approval of slavery. One biographer has noted that in the passion of his abolitionist sentiments, he was probably second only to Garrison.²

The Fosters were also champions of suffrage, and in later years refused to pay the taxes on their farm in Worcester, Massachusetts, in retaliation for Abby's denial of the vote. "Liberty Farm," as it was known, was occupied by the Fosters from 1847 until 1881, and the attractive, Federal-style farmhouse there still stands as a memorial to these two radical reformers able--despite opposition--to hold steadfast to their vision of a more equitable society.

¹Quoted in Richard E. Greene, "Abby Kelley Foster: 'Ultra Abolitionist'" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Clark University, no date), p. 6.

²William A. Robinson, "Foster, Stephen Symonds," Dictionary of American Biography, 1943, VI, 558.

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8. Significance (page 1)

Liberty Farm

Biography

Abigail Kelley(1810-1887) was born at Pelham, Massachusetts, the fifth of seven children of Wing Kelley and Diana Daniels. She spent her childhood in rural Worcester, where her family moved soon after her birth. Reared in the Quaker faith, she early developed a spirit of independence and strong moral commitment. Abby, as she was always known, spent several years at the Providence (Rhode Island) Friends School, and subsequently became a teacher in the Friends School at Lynn, Massachusetts.

Abby Kelley's Quaker conscience could not abide slavery and she confessed: "my whole soul was so filled with the subject that it would not leave me."³ She became a close friend of William Lloyd Garrison, and her exposure to the Liberator led her into the ranks of abolitionism. She, in turn, was to have an important influence on his thinking, for Garrison was not initially convinced that woman's rights should be fought for along with those of the slave. Kelley wrote to Garrison: "I trust the time is now fully come when thou wilt take a decided stand for all truths, under the conviction that the whole are necessary to the permanent establishment of any single one."⁴ Under Kelley's influence, Garrison did indeed develop an acute concern for the issue of equal rights.

From 1835 until 1837 Abby Kelley served as secretary of the Lynn Female Anti-Slavery Society, circulating petitions, distributing literature, and raising funds. In May 1838 she made her first public address on the slavery issue before a mixed audience of men and women, at an anti-slavery convention in Philadelphia. So effective was her speech there that Theodore Weld begged her to become an abolitionist lecturer, insisting, "Abby, if you don't, God will smite you!"⁵ Abby resigned her teaching post that same year to devote her life to the cause of abolition.

Kelley became close friends with the Grimké sisters and, as agents of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Abby and Angelina Grimké went about the State of Massachusetts speaking, in schoolhouses and churches, against slavery. Both endured an incredible amount of insult and abuse. Harriet H. Robinson recalls the ecclesiastical reception given these women in Massachusetts:

³Quoted in Richard E. Greene, "Abby Kelley Foster: 'Ultra Abolitionist,'" p. 5.

⁴Quoted in Wendell Phillips Garrison and Francis Jackson Garrison, William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of His Life as Told By His Children (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1894), p. 174.

⁵Keith E. Melder, "Foster, Abigail Kelley," Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary, 1971, I, 647.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Greene, Richard E. "Abby Kelley Foster: 'Ultra Abolitionist.'" Unpublished M.A. thesis, Clark University, no date.

Melder, Keith E. "Foster, Abigail Kelley." Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary. 1971. Vol. I.

Robinson, Harriet H. Massachusetts in the Woman Suffrage Movement. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1881.

(Continued)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 ' "	0 ' "		42° 16' 50"	71° 51' 36"	
NE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SW	0 ' "	0 ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1-1/4 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Robert C. Post and Carol Ann Poh, Survey Historians

ORGANIZATION: Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service

DATE: 10/9/73

STREET AND NUMBER:
1100 L Street NW

CITY OR TOWN: Washington

STATE: District of Columbia

CODE:

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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8. Significance (page 2)

Liberty Farm

"The churches were alarmed at such an innovation, and both men and women were expelled from their body for going to hear them Had not St. Paul said that women were to keep silent in the churches? It unsexed them, said the church dignitaries, and a Pastoral Letter was written by the General Association of Congregational Ministers in Massachusetts, declaring it to be unnatural that a woman should assume the place and tone of man as a public reformer."⁶

Thus, the part that women should play in the anti-slavery movement became a bitter point of contention by 1839, and would ultimately result in a schism in the ranks of abolitionists. The fact that Abby Kelley was one of the first American women to be heard from the public platform had inevitably brought out a new aspect of the anti-slavery issue that could not be avoided: while speaking in defense of the slave, she was defending the right of woman to speak in public.

In 1840 Abby Kelley was nominated to a position on the executive committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society. The abolition movement at this time was racked by dissension between moderate and radical factions over many issues--nonresistance, relations with the church, political strategies, and the role of women in the movement. At the 1840 convention of the Society, for example, after a conservative attempt to block her appointment, as a woman, to the executive committee was defeated by a vote of 560 to 450, a large bloc of delegates walked out, causing a crucial split in the forces of abolition. The "Garrisonian wing," as it came to be called, remained in firm control of the American Society, however, and firmly espoused the equal rights of all citizens, irrespective of sex. Abby Kelley's reputation grew, and for the next 15 years she traveled throughout New England and into New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan, carrying Garrison's doctrine of "No Union with Slaveholders" and at the same time upholding woman's right to the public platform.

Sometime during the early 1840s Abby met a kindred spirit in the person of Stephen Symonds Foster (1809-1881), whom she married in 1845. Foster, "a New Hampshire radical of radicals,"⁷ was a graduate of Dartmouth College, and had briefly attended Union Theological Seminary. While there, he was assailed by doubts as to whether the churches were genuine upholders of

⁶Massachusetts in the Woman Suffrage Movement (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1881), p. 11.

⁷Melder, "Foster, Abigail Kelley," 648.

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8. Significance (page 3)

Liberty Farm

true Christian principles; he subsequently rejected all clerical institutions as proslavery, severing his connection with any organized religion. Stephen Foster became one of the most extreme of abolitionists. A close friend of Garrison's, he was "probably second only to [him] in influence and activity in the early years of the agitation."⁸ He turned to the anti-slavery platform, and suffered much hardship and persecution while on the lecture trail throughout New England. One of his favorite strategies was to interrupt religious services with his denunciation of slavery:

"He was repeatedly ejected [from churches], several times prosecuted, and more than once roughly handled by offended worshipers, but he attracted attention to the cause which could hardly have been gained by more decorous methods."⁹

Besides abolition, Foster became interested in other reforms as well: he was a strong advocate of woman suffrage, temperance, and world peace, and an energetic supporter of the rights of labor.

In 1847 the Fosters purchased a farm near Worcester, Massachusetts, and that same year their only child, Paulina Wright, was born. Upkeep of the farm and care of a new child necessarily curtailed the Fosters' reform activities somewhat, but they managed to continue lecturing, either separately or together, almost every year until 1861. Thereafter, poor health greatly limited Abby's lecture tours, though she remained active in the abolition cause until 1863, and later found both time and energy to address temperance and feminist meetings.

The Fosters' last public protest took place between the years 1874 and 1879. Following the example of Abby and Julia Smith of Glastonbury, Connecticut, they refused to pay taxes on the farm, as a protest against Abby's disenfranchised status. On numerous occasions Liberty Farm was taken over and sold at public auction, but friends of the Fosters always bought it back for them.

Abby's husband and companion in reform died in 1881. At a memorial service for Foster, Wendell Phillips made a fair estimate of his work:

⁸William A. Robinson, "Foster, Stephen Symonds," 558.

⁹Ibid.

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8. Significance (page 4)

Liberty Farm

"You are not to-day, the younger portion of you, in a condition to measure the vastness of the sacrifice that men were called upon to make in 1835 and 1840. You do not know how bitter, how unrelenting, how persistent, how ingenious was the opposition. It needed something to shake New England and stun it into listening. He was the man, and offered himself for the martyrdom."¹⁰

Abby herself died 6 years later, shortly after attending an abolitionists' reunion organized by Lucy Stone. What can be said of this outspoken pioneer? In her total commitment to reform, Abby Kelley Foster disregarded health, reputation, and even physical safety. "[T]hough unquestionably dogmatic, fanatical, virtually humorless, and given to harsh attacks upon those who disagreed with her," according to one historian, as an agitator she was unequaled.

"Her reputation among the conventional was summed up by an Oberlin professor who dismissed her as one of those 'women of masculine minds and aggressive tendencies ... who cannot be satisfied in domestic life ...' (James H. Fairchild, Woman's Rights and Duties, 1849, p. 20). But to the few who could envision an enlarged future for woman as well as for the Negro, Mrs. Foster was both example and heroine."¹¹

¹⁰Quoted in Lillie B. Chace Wyman, "Reminiscences of Two Abolitionists," New England Magazine, January, 1903, pp. 542-43.

¹¹Melder, "Foster, Abigail Kelley," 649.

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9. Bibliography (page 1)

Liberty Farm

Robinson, William A. "Foster, Abigail Kelley" and "Foster, Stephen Symonds." Dictionary of American Biography. 1943. Vol. VI.

Wyman, Lillie B. Chace. "Reminiscences of Two Abolitionists." New England Magazine, January, 1903, pp. 536-550.