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## "A Citizen of No Mean City": Jermain W. Loguen and the Antislavery Reputation of Syracuse

Milton Charles Sernett

*Syracuse University*, [mcsernett@syr.edu](mailto:mcsernett@syr.edu)

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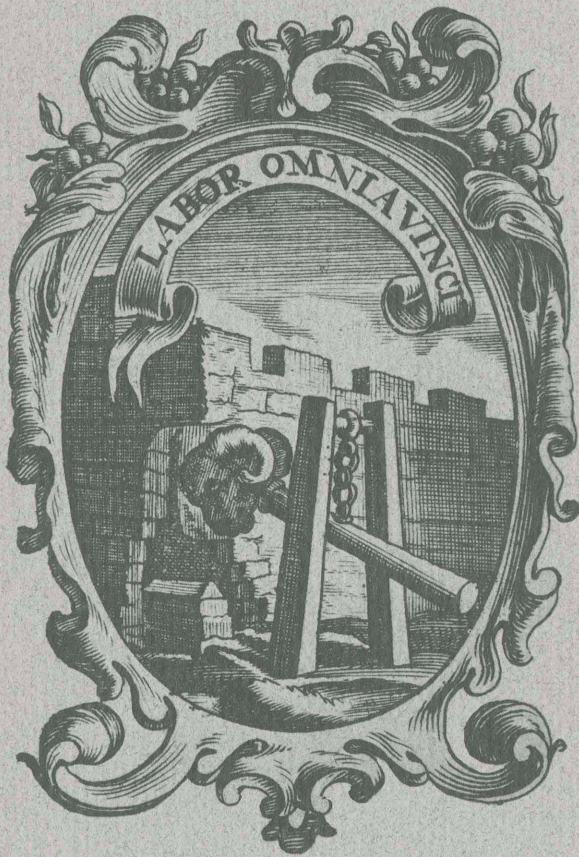
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# “A Citizen of No Mean City”: Jermain W. Loguen and the Antislavery Reputation of Syracuse

BY MILTON C. SERNETT

Benjamin Quarles, a widely known and respected pioneer in the scholarly study of Afro-American history, wrote in 1942 that the Gerrit Smith Papers constitute “perhaps the largest single collection of a purely reformist nature in the United States”.<sup>1</sup> With the assistance of Professor W. Freeman Galpin of Syracuse University, Quarles examined the collection, given to the University in 1928, and concluded that Gerrit Smith had “received at least one letter from every literate Negro who was prominent in the North during the twenty years preceding the Civil War”.<sup>2</sup> Quarles counted 277 letters from black correspondents, nearly twice as many as are included in the Boston Public Library’s extensive Antislavery Collection. Letters from Frederick Douglass to Gerrit Smith account for 101 of those Quarles examined. Douglass and Smith were intimately associated in the emergence of political, non-Garrisonian abolitionism after Douglass settled in Rochester in 1849.

Another, though less well known black correspondent, Jermain Wesley Loguen, also was prominent in upstate New York reform movements, especially in Syracuse. His grave in Oakwood Cemetery is only a short walk from the George Arents Research Library, where his five letters to Gerrit Smith are housed. Together with the Loguen correspondence in the Chapman Family Papers (also in the George Arents Research Library) and other primary sources, they reveal that Loguen’s abolitionist career intersected at many points with that of Smith, especially after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill in 1850.

1. Benjamin Quarles, “Letters from Negro Leaders to Gerrit Smith”, *Journal of Negro History* 27 (July 1942): 432.

2. *Ibid.*, 434. Quarles drew upon the Gerrit Smith Papers in subsequent years, most notably for his *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969).

Though a fugitive himself, Loguen felt “bound to Syracuse” and was instrumental, as Superintendent (or General Agent) of the Underground Railroad, in making Syracuse an “open city”. The following essay highlights Loguen’s connection with Syracuse and substantiates historian Larry Gara’s observation: “No underground railroad station was more frequently and openly advertised than the one at Syracuse, New York”.<sup>3</sup>

A biography of Loguen appeared in 1859 with the title *The Rev. J. W. Loguen, as a Slave and as a Freeman*. Though the author is not identified and the narrative is written in the third person, Loguen himself was the principal contributor. He had asked Smith in March 1859 for assistance in order to “get out a book”, the proceeds of which were to offset his expenses in caring for fugitives.<sup>4</sup> The Syracuse papers carried excerpts, and five hundred copies of the 444-page volume were advertised in 1859 at one dollar per copy. Loguen presented himself as “the Editor” and dedicated the volume to all those who aided fugitives, admitting that some of the episodes prior to his escape had to be supplied from the editor’s “fancy”.<sup>5</sup> The narrative ends in 1852 with Loguen’s return from Canada, where he had sought refuge subsequent to the Jerry Rescue of 1851.

Born about 1813 in Davidson County, Tennessee, of a slave mother and a white master named David Logue, Jermain—or ‘Jarm’, as he was called—failed at his first attempt to escape. But after the sale of his sister to another master, he resolved to try again. In 1834, he and another slave ran away from Tennessee and “track[ed] their way from point to point, and from abolitionist to abolitionist, by aid of the [North] Star, through the dreary wilderness to Canada”.<sup>6</sup> Loguen hired himself out to clear land and then in the spring of 1837 farmed on shares near Hamilton, Ontario, until creditors seized the property.

3. Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961), 145.

4. Loguen to Gerrit Smith, 23 March 1859. Unless otherwise noted, all future references to Loguen-Smith correspondence draw upon the Gerrit Smith Papers at Syracuse University.

5. [Jermain W. Loguen], *The Rev. J. W. Loguen, as a Slave and as a Freeman* (Syracuse: J. G. K. Truair & Co., 1859), iv. *Syracuse Daily Journal*, 28 September 1859.

6. *Ibid.*, 303.

He went temporarily to St. Catharines and in the fall of 1837 crossed Lake Erie to Rochester, New York, where he worked as a hotel waiter and porter. He was now twenty-four years old and had added an 'n' to his name. Although he had only recently learned to read,<sup>7</sup> Loguen showed enough natural ability to be accepted at Oneida Institute, the radical abolitionist and interracial school at Whitesboro, New York, presided over by the Reverend Beriah Green. Here he found himself in the company of youthful reformers, black and white, who were dedicated to doing something practical in the fight against slavery.<sup>8</sup>

Since Loguen spent only two years at Oneida Institute, he probably did not complete the entire college curriculum. Older than many of the students, he may have been anxious to put his education to practical use, as well as to begin a family. In his last year at Oneida, Loguen started a school for black children in nearby Utica. There, he met Caroline Storum, a refined and well-educated young woman from Busti, New York, whose parents were described as being but "slightly tinged with African blood".<sup>9</sup> Caroline and Jarm were married in 1840 and settled in Syracuse the following year.

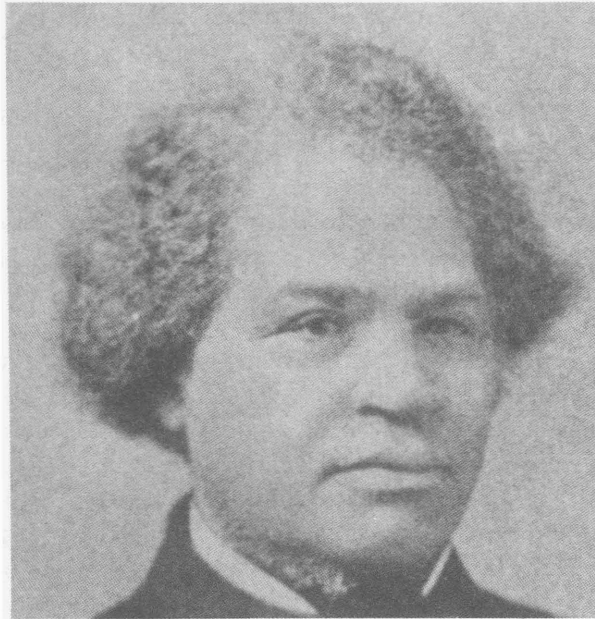
"Syracuse", Loguen reported to the *Colored American* in May of 1841, "has its philanthropists, and those who can feel for the colored man". He was able to discover about two hundred black inhabitants, perhaps one thirty-fifth of the entire Syracuse population. They took religious matters seriously, gathering for worship in private homes and making plans, under the leadership of the Reverend John Chester, for a chapel to accommodate about four hundred. "But candor compels me", Loguen wrote, "to acknowledge that there prevails a most reprehensible apathy in regard to education [within the black community]".<sup>10</sup> He set about to rectify the situation and soon had a school with forty-four pupils. When a hired classroom proved too small, Loguen began erecting a separate structure near the white Baptist

7. Loguen made 'Wesley' his middle name at the suggestion of Methodist friends. He reported that he was twenty-three before he learned to read. *Douglass' Monthly*, May 1859.

8. On the influence of Oneida Institute upon Loguen and other black activists, see Milton C. Sernett, *Abolition's Axe: Beriah Green, Oneida Institute, and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1986).

9. [Loguen], *Loguen*, 354-55.

10. *Colored American*, 15 May 1841.



Bishop Jermain Wesley Loguen (1813?–1872), from William J. Simmons, *Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising* (Cleveland, 1887).

building on Church Street. However, due to public animosity he later moved the uncompleted building with oxen to the vicinity of McKinstry's Candle Factory and then again onto the premises of a tannery.

Elder Lewis licensed Loguen to serve as preacher to the small African Methodist Episcopal Zion congregation, which was still, after Loguen's third year of residence in Syracuse, without a finished building. While visiting Steuben County in search of financial aid, Loguen delivered his first abolition lecture. Antislavery clergy were so impressed that they induced him to lead a small, racially-mixed congregation at Bath. Before assuming the charge, he attended the Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion denomination, where he was licensed to be an elder. About 1845, he accepted a temporary call from a black congregation in Ithaca. In 1846 he returned to Syracuse, where he remained until 1848, when he was appointed presiding elder and stationed at Troy.

Jermain Loguen is representative of the activist antebellum black

clergy who, however intimately involved in church affairs, viewed abolitionism as essential to their sense of sacred vocation.<sup>11</sup> He early came to the attention of the white upstate New York abolitionists who, like Gerrit Smith, sought to employ political instrumentalities when moral suasion tactics, as advocated by William Lloyd Garrison, proved fruitless. These advocates of single-issue abolitionist politics formed the Liberty Party and in 1844 urged Loguen to “stump” for their candidate, James Birney, against the Whig nominee Henry Clay and the Democratic standard-bearer James K. Polk. Loguen was so effective that John Thomas, an abolitionist in Cortland and later in Syracuse, wrote Gerrit Smith urging that Loguen be given the duties of an antislavery lecturer. Smith entertained Loguen at his Peterboro home and later wrote Thomas: “What a man you sent me! I invited him to pray in my family, and he prayed so feelingly for his mother that he set us all in tears.”<sup>12</sup> Loguen subsequently returned to Syracuse from Ithaca in order to become more active in the antislavery field.

Of the five extant letters from Loguen to Smith in the Gerrit Smith Papers, the first concerns Smith’s efforts to give away more than three thousand parcels of land to poor but qualified blacks. Gerrit Smith had by inheritance and his own good fortune amassed an immense amount of land in the counties of northern New York. In 1846 he decided to act on his anti-land-monopolist principles and his belief that if black freedmen crowding the cities were given farms of forty to sixty acres each, they might deliver themselves from economic poverty and, not incidentally, develop some of the virtues of self-respect and industry which Smith associated with the agrarian myth. He requested the aid of black leaders in New York City and upstate New York in finding suitable candidates for his largess.

Loguen assisted with the task of matching candidates and deeds, especially in Tompkins County. His correspondence with Smith reveals that the plan to help the black poor was not going smoothly. Incorrect names appeared on a number of deeds, and Loguen felt

11. See Carol V. R. George, “Widening the Circle: The Black Church and the Abolitionist Crusade, 1830–1860”, in *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists*, ed. Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1979), 75–95.

12. Quoted in [Loguen], *Loguen*, 380.



that some of the proposed grantees were not qualified for the demanding task of subsistence farming.<sup>13</sup> His reservations were justified by the fact that the majority of those awarded land abandoned farming due to their lack of experience. The problem was compounded by the poor soils and harsh winters of northern New York, especially in the Adirondack counties of Franklin, Essex, and Hamilton. Loguen spent nearly seven weeks investigating the lands in Franklin and Essex counties and discovered that many of the illiterate black recipients had been overcharged by unscrupulous “pilots” and were selling their deeds “for a song”.<sup>14</sup>

With their common interests in political abolitionism and the economic welfare of northern blacks, Loguen and Smith naturally joined forces in opposition to the Fugitive Slave Bill, which formed a part of the Compromise of 1850. Earlier southern efforts to enforce compliance with fugitive slave measures, such as that included in Article IV of the Constitution and the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793, had been rendered largely ineffective by the passage of personal liberty laws in such states as Pennsylvania and by the unwillingness of northern whites to cooperate with slaveholders or their agents in the recapture of blacks. Due to increasing sectionalism, it became clear that the Missouri Compromise of 1820 would not hold. Northern politicians became concerned about the expansion of slavery into the western territories. In the Compromise of 1850, which sought to balance out northern and southern interests, the slaveholders achieved a victory in the inclusion of a more comprehensive fugitive slave law.

By successfully making the problem of runaways a national matter, Southerners could call upon federal officers to help in the recapture of fugitives. The new law was to be exercised by commissioners appointed by the United States circuit courts; and United States marshals and deputy marshals were liable for the slave’s full value, should

13. Loguen to Gerrit Smith, [1847], Gerrit Smith Papers. The abolitionist John Brown purchased land at North Elba from Smith and settled among a contingent of black grantees in the vicinity of Lake Placid. Here he hoped to recruit soldiers for his liberation army.

14. Loguen to James McCune Smith, *North Star*, 24 March 1848. For further details regarding Smith’s plan, see Zita Dyson, “Gerrit Smith’s Effort in Behalf of the Negroes in New York”, *Journal of Negro History* 3 (October 1918): 354–59; Ralph V. Harlow, *Gerrit Smith, Philanthropist and Reformer* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1939), 242–58.

he or she escape from their custody. Owners of fugitive slaves, or their agents, had only to take an alleged runaway before these commissioners and prove his identity. They were then to be granted a certificate to remove the escaped slave back to the state or territory from where he or she allegedly escaped. Denied the right of habeas corpus, fugitives could not give testimony before the commissioners. Any person who obstructed the arrest of escapees or attempted to aid or harbor them risked a fine of up to one thousand dollars and a maximum imprisonment of six months.<sup>15</sup>

The abolitionists of Syracuse, a city of 21,901 whites and 370 blacks in 1850, viewed the Fugitive Slave Bill with contempt and alarm. Since the organization of a county antislavery society in 1835, the city had witnessed numerous abolitionist meetings and debates. In 1839, two years prior to Loguen's arrival, Syracuse activists assisted in the rescue of Harriet Powell from a Mississippi family that was lodging at the Syracuse House. Described as almost white and "as richly dressed as her mistress", Harriet was taken to Marcellus and then, because of the ensuing uproar, delivered to Gerrit Smith in Madison County. There, she stayed for several weeks before being escorted to Canada.<sup>16</sup>

Soon after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill on 18 September 1850, a call went out for the friends of the escaped slave in Syracuse to voice their indignation. On 4 October a crowd of some five hundred, representing a variety of antislavery views, gathered at city hall. The Reverend Samuel R. Ward, the black abolitionist from Cortland, delivered a blistering attack upon the statute. Mayor Alfred H. Hovey declared, "Come what will of political organizations, and fall where I may, I am with you". Reverend Samuel J. May, pastor of the Unitarian Church of the Messiah in Syracuse and an outspoken abolitionist, vowed that if any fugitive came to his house, he would defy the law. When Loguen's turn to speak came, he "uncapped the volcano".<sup>17</sup>

Loguen had returned to Syracuse from Troy, where he was preach-

15. See Stanley W. Campbell, *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), Chapter 1.

16. [Loguen], *Loguen*, 364–71. William M. Clarke to Gerrit Smith, 25 October 1839, Gerrit Smith Papers.

17. [Loguen], *Loguen*, 394–95.

ing, only one day prior to the rally against the Fugitive Slave Bill. He felt that he would be more secure among the friends of freedom in Syracuse. Though many urged him to seek refuge in Canada, he rejected their counsel, claiming that his freedom was “from Heaven” and that neither the “despots” in Washington nor their proxies would take it from him. He urged his hearers to resist the Fugitive Slave Bill and to “tell its soulless agents that no slaveholder shall make your city and county a hunting field for slaves”.<sup>18</sup> Whatever the outcome, Loguen was adamant regarding his course of action:

What is life to me if I am to be a slave in Tennessee? My neighbors! I have lived with you many years, and you know me. My home is here, and my children were born here. I am bound to Syracuse by pecuniary interests, and social and family bonds. . . . I don't respect this law—I don't fear it—I won't obey it! It outlaws me, and I outlaw it, and the men who attempt to enforce it on me. I place the governmental officials on the ground that they place me. I will not live a slave, and if force is employed to re-enslave me, I shall make preparations to meet the crisis as becomes a man.<sup>19</sup>

In the aftermath of this and other vocal protests of the Fillmore administration's plan to enforce the Fugitive Slave Bill, W. H. Burleigh of Syracuse wrote Gerrit Smith: “It would be almost certain death to a slave-catcher to appear, on his infernal mission in our streets. No fugitive can be taken from our midst.”<sup>20</sup> To assure this, abolitionists in Syracuse organized a biracial vigilance committee of thirteen citizens whose duty it was to ensure that no person would be deprived of liberty without due process of law. Loguen was one of the members.

Syracuse was already recognized as a haven for runaways prior to 1850. When Samuel J. May came to the city in 1845 from New England, where he was an active Garrisonian, he opened his house to fugitives. So many sought refuge that a local Fugitive Aid Society

18. [Loguen], *Loguen*, 393.

19. *Ibid.*, 391, 393–94. *The Religious Recorder*, 10 October 1850.

20. W. H. Burleigh to Gerrit Smith, 17 October 1850, Gerrit Smith Papers.

was organized, and the Loguen home became an official 'station' on the Underground Railroad.<sup>21</sup> This report from the *Syracuse Daily Star* of 21 July 1847 demonstrates that the city was openly known as a haven for those fleeing the "peculiar institution":

Eleven runaway slaves arrived here from the east on Monday morning last. Assigned to the care of a gentleman of this village, they remained here during the day and passed on toward Rochester in the evening. The party consisted of six males and five females.<sup>22</sup>

Because of its antislavery reputation and its proximity to Canada, Syracuse was viewed with considerable concern by proponents of the Fugitive Slave Bill.

Senator Daniel Webster, one of the architects of the Compromise of 1850, added fuel to the impending crisis by appearing in Syracuse in May 1851. He spoke from a small balcony of the Courier Building and warned the abolitionists:

Depend upon it, the law will be executed in its spirit, and to its letter. It will be executed in all the great cities; here in Syracuse; in the midst of the next Anti-Slavery Convention, if the occasion shall arise; then we shall see what becomes of their lives and their sacred honor.<sup>23</sup>

Loguen wrote Frederick Douglass on 11 August that in traveling about he discovered that the debate over the Fugitive Slave Bill had made the public more sensitive to the plight of the escaped slave than at any time since he had become an abolitionist lecturer. He predicted that friends of the slave would soon be driven "to action" and vowed

21. Samuel J. May, *Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict* (Boston: Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1869), 303. See also Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, "The Gentle Humanitarian: Samuel Joseph May", Chapter 12 of their *Bound with Them in Chains: A Biographical History of the Antislavery Movement* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972).

22. *Syracuse Daily Star*, 21 July 1847.

23. Daniel Webster, *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1903), 13:420.

to stand his ground and fight even if returned to “the prison-house of woe”.<sup>24</sup>

The Syracuse stage was now set for a dramatic confrontation. On 1 October 1851 the city was crowded with visitors to the state agricultural fair and abolitionists attending a Liberty Party convention. At the request of a slavehunter from Missouri, Deputy United States Marshal Henry W. Allen arrested Jerry McReynolds, originally called ‘William Henry’ after his white father, but popularly referred to as ‘Jerry’. He had fled Missouri about 1843 and was working in a coop-erage and cabinet shop when taken before Commissioner Joseph F. Sabine for a hearing to ascertain whether he should be returned to John McReynolds, his Missouri master.

Word of Jerry’s arrest quickly reached the Liberty Party members assembled in the Congregational church. A signal bell tolled from the Presbyterian church, and a large crowd gathered at the Commissioner’s office on the second floor of the Townsend Block Building, located at the corner of Water and Clinton streets. Gerrit Smith acted as one of two defense counsels. When Commissioner Sabine adjourned the proceedings to find a larger room, Jerry, still in handcuffs, was hustled by supporters out the door and down the stairway to the street. City police recaptured him on the Lock Street bridge, put him in leg irons, and imprisoned him in the Police Office, located in the Journal Building of the Raynor Block.<sup>25</sup>

Loguen, Smith, May, and members of the Vigilance Committee, met at the home of Dr. Hiram Hoyt, a local physician, in order to engineer a rescue. Smith is reported to have said:

It is not unlikely the Commissioner will release Jerry if the examination is suffered to proceed—but the moral effect of such an acquittal will be as nothing to a bold and forcible rescue. A forcible rescue will demonstrate the strength of public opinion against the possible legality of slavery and this

24. Loguen to Frederick Douglass, August 1851, *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, 21 August 1851.

25. Readers interested in more detailed accounts of the Jerry Rescue should consult the following: Samuel J. May, *Recollections*, 373–84; Earl E. Sperry, *The Jerry Rescue* (Syracuse: Onondaga Historical Association, 1924); and W. Freeman Galpin, “The Jerry Rescue”, *New York History* 26 (January 1945): 19–34.

Fugitive Slave Law in particular. It will honor Syracuse and be a powerful example everywhere.<sup>26</sup>

The committee's plans were set in motion about eight o'clock on the evening of 1 October 1851. With encouragement from a throng estimated at two thousand, an interracial group of abolitionists broke into the police headquarters using a wooden battering ram, and liberated Jerry. They removed his irons and found a temporary refuge for him at the home of Caleb Davis. Eventually, they spirited him to Kingston, Ontario, where he died of tuberculosis in 1853. Syracuse citizens, even some of the most conservative, such as the non-abolitionist and Democrat Davis, viewed Jerry's deliverance from the hands of outside agitators as a glorious day for the community.<sup>27</sup>

On 19 November 1851, a federal grand jury in Buffalo indicted twenty-six persons, twelve of them Afro-Americans, for having "engaged in the Syracuse riots". All but three of the blacks and four of the white defendants escaped to Canada to avoid prosecution.<sup>28</sup> Lo-

26. Cited in [Loguen], *Loguen*, 409.

27. The shackles Jerry wore and the key to his cell in the Journal Building are in the possession of the Onondaga Historical Association and are periodically on display as objects of civic pride. James A. Sokolow compared the pro-abolitionist rescuers of Jerry with the anti-abolitionist mobs involved in riots at Utica in 1835 and Cincinnati in 1836. The white abolitionists of Syracuse represented a disproportionate number of commercial and professional people, as had the anti-abolitionist mobs in Utica and Cincinnati. Sokolow concluded that Syracuse's upstanding citizenry felt proud of the city's "amicable race relations and republican institutions" and had reacted so violently against efforts to enforce the Fugitive Slave Bill because of the intrusion of outsiders "who threatened local elites and community autonomy". See Sokolow, "The Jerry McHenry [sic] Rescue and the Growth of Northern Antislavery Sentiment during the 1850s", *American Studies* 16 (December 1982): 437-43.

28. The trial began in the United States District Court at Albany on 21 January 1852 but was postponed until January 1853. Enoch Reed, a black defendant, was found guilty; a second case resulted in acquittal. The jury was divided on two other defendants, and the remaining cases were dropped. Reed died before having to serve his sentence. Campbell, *Slave Catchers*, 156-57. The abolitionists had Deputy Marshal Henry W. Allen indicted for violation of a New York statute of 1840, known as "An Act to Extend the Right of Trial by Jury". Gerrit Smith, special counsel for the prosecution, presented a seven-hour argument against the constitutionality of the Fugitive Slave Bill during the trial in 1852 in Syracuse. Judge Marvin of the New York Supreme Court declared the Fugitive Slave Bill constitutional, and the jury acquitted Marshal Allen. Harlow, *Gerrit Smith*, 299-302. Smith's speech can

guen was prevailed upon by his wife and friends to seek temporary asylum with a Quaker widow in Skaneateles. After three or four days, he was taken to Rochester, from where he went by boat to Canada. He took refuge for seven months in St. Catharines, where he preached, taught school, promoted temperance, and boarded with Hiram Wilson, a white abolitionist who was a graduate of Oneida Institute and a zealous supporter of the fugitive slave colonies in Canada West.<sup>29</sup>

When word reached Loguen that efforts were being made to have the Canadian government extradite him for allegedly advising the killing of a man during the Jerry Rescue, he angrily defended his reputation. He resolved that if a “requisition” did come, he and his friends would make it plain to the British authorities that the accusations were but a cover to punish him for challenging the Fugitive Slave Bill.<sup>30</sup> In December 1851 he wrote a friend that if the government would put him on trial “for rescuing Jerry, and that *alone*”, he would “hasten back and meet the charge like a man”. To be considered a traitor or a coward, Loguen felt, was a fate worse than recapture or death. He longed to be reunited with his family and participate once again in common cause with the American abolitionists.<sup>31</sup>

Loguen wrote Governor Washington Hunt of New York State requesting protection should he return to stand trial. He gave no apology for participating “in common with thousands of my fellow-citizens” in the Jerry Rescue, but instead asserted that the bill of indictment at Buffalo had been based on perjured testimony. He was being accused of having urged the killing of a man during the Jerry Rescue. Loguen passionately declared that the Fugitive Slave Bill had so exposed him to “rapacious slave-hunters” that he would not be able to defend himself. Yet he expressed strong loyalty to Syracuse and the United States:

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be found in *Trial of Henry W. Allen, U. S. Deputy Marshal, for Kidnapping with Arguments of Counsel & Charge of Justice Marvin, on the Constitutionality of the Fugitive Slave Law, in the Supreme Court of New York* (Syracuse: Daily Journal Office, 1852), 9–40.

29. [Loguen], *Loguen*, 427–30.

30. Loguen to General James R. Lawrence, 30 October 1851, *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 27 November 1851. Lawrence served as United States District Attorney in Syracuse.

31. Loguen to J. R. Johnson, 18 December 1851, *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 8 January 1852.

I have resided long enough in her Britannic Majesty's dominions to have become a British subject; but having lived for many years in the State of New York, at Syracuse, as a minister of the Gospel and "citizen of no mean city", I have never been able to produce any other certificate of freedom than the one which was indelibly written upon my constitutional nature, by the finger of the Almighty.<sup>32</sup>

Loguen appealed "not for Executive clemency, but for the shield of protection in the free course of Justice".<sup>33</sup> Governor Hunt turned a deaf ear to his request.

Nevertheless, Loguen returned to Syracuse in the spring of 1852. The United States marshal, sensitive to the outcry which would have resulted had he attempted to act on the warrant for Loguen's arrest, went through the appearance of having friends of Loguen sign a bond guaranteeing that the defendant would not again flee the city. Loguen did not help his case by continuing to advocate resistance to the Fugitive Slave Bill and by traveling about collecting funds for the aid of runaways. While en route to Skaneateles, he eluded a trap set by Marshal Henry Allen. Once again the alarm went through Syracuse, and a rally was held at the Congregational church. But fortunately, Loguen had arrived safely in Skaneateles, soon to return—to the delight of his family and friends. The indictment against him was never successfully brought to court, owing no doubt to the political uproar it would have created.<sup>34</sup>

Loguen discovered that since returning from exile in Canada, he had become something of a celebrity. Large audiences, estimated at more than two thousand on one occasion, heard him preach, and numerous invitations to speak came his way.<sup>35</sup> He no longer preached on a full-time basis to the fifty- to sixty-member Zion congregation in Syracuse, but resumed work as a domestic missionary under the sponsorship of the American Missionary Society. Traveling with his own horse and wagon, Loguen ministered to black and mixed con-

32. Loguen to Washington Hunt, 2 December 1851, *Liberator*, 14 May 1852.

33. *Ibid.*

34. [Loguen], *Loguen*, 433–42.

35. Loguen to Henry Bibb, 13 August 1852, *Voice of the Fugitive*, 9 September 1852.



gregations and spread the gospel of abolitionism in predominantly white churches in upstate New York.<sup>36</sup>

As was Gerrit Smith's habit, Loguen linked abolitionism to a host of other reforms. In 1853 he toured Maine in support of a recently passed temperance law, for he believed that temperance advocates were also abolitionists. Loguen served as an agent for the *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, participated in conventions of free blacks, and continued to voice defiance of the Fugitive Slave Bill. He rallied with other black citizens of Syracuse in March 1853 to protest the African colonization scheme. Having risked his very life in defense of the right to be considered fully American, Loguen was not about to lend his name to any, however well-intentioned, efforts by certain black leaders to revive interest in resettling in Liberia.<sup>37</sup>

Subsequent to the freeing of William Henry (or Jerry), Syracuse became known as the "Canada of the West" and honored annually—until the Civil War—the first day of October as Jerry Rescue Day. Gerrit Smith presided at the first such holiday observance in 1852 and spoke at the 1853 celebration by invitation of the Jerry Rescue Celebration Committee, which publicly lauded Smith for his "cheerful, bold, positive" bearing on the "eventful" day in October 1851.<sup>38</sup> Smith felt honored and urged his audience to continue in "the high and holy cause" of rescuing every fugitive slave as a sacred obligation.<sup>39</sup> Smith's address at the convention in 1857 illustrates the rapid apotheosis of Jerry:

The Jerry of today is the Christ of today: and if we have not the anointed vision to discern it, then are we still blind to the original Christ, and all faith in Him is vain. . . . The readiness of men on the night of the first October, 1851, to

36. Loguen to Frederick Douglass, 5 August 1853, *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 12 August 1853. Loguen to [Nathan Randall] Chapman, 17 January 1852, Chapman Family Papers, George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University.

37. *Syracuse Journal*, 21 March 1853. Loguen to Mary Ann [Loguen], *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 2 September 1853.

38. "Committee's Letter to Gerrit Smith", *Syracuse Daily Standard*, 9 September 1852. Loguen was an active member of the celebration committee.

39. *Address of the Convention held in Syracuse, Oct. 1, 1853, for the Purpose of Celebrating the Rescue of the Man Jerry*, Gerrit Smith Papers. Smith to J. W. Loguen et al., 5 September 1853, *Liberator*, 16 September 1853.

put themselves in the place of Jerry, and lose their own liberty for the sake of restoring his, was of its single self a far greater evidence of the likeness to Christ than it was possible for any man to give, however full of professions and prayers he might be, if nevertheless he refused to sympathize with Jerry, and to suffer for his sake.<sup>40</sup>

The Jerry Rescue celebrations served to renew opposition to the Compromise of 1850, raised money to aid fugitives, and demonstrated the need for continued vigilance lest attempts be made again to enforce the Fugitive Slave Bill.

Because of the stalwart opposition shown by the citizens of Syracuse to the Fugitive Slave Bill in 1851, traffic on the Underground Railroad increased annually until the Civil War. Samuel May's recollections of the antislavery movement in Syracuse speak of the assistance rendered by Jermain and Caroline Loguen:

The charge thus committed to them Mr. Loguen and his excellent wife faithfully and kindly cared for to the last. And I more than suspect that the fugitives they harbored, and helped on their way, often cost them much more than they called upon us to pay.<sup>41</sup>

Jermain Loguen kept the Jerry-spirit alive by intense involvement in efforts to aid other fugitive slaves, for, as he wrote Frederick Douglass on 5 August 1853, the memory of "brother Jerry" could best be honored by "agitating, and agitating again".<sup>42</sup>

The attic of Loguen's house at 293 East Genesee Street served as the temporary refuge of numerous fugitive slaves. Loguen became even more widely known for his success in directing the Underground Railroad in Syracuse. He claimed to have assisted 1500 escaped slaves in reaching Canada in the decade before the Civil War.<sup>43</sup> While it is now difficult to obtain an exact count, the extant records

40. *Address Reported by Gerrit Smith to the Jerry Rescue Convention, held in Syracuse October 1, 1857*, p. 1, Gerrit Smith Papers.

41. May, *Recollections*, 303.

42. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 12 August 1853.

43. *Syracuse Daily Standard*, 28 June 1860.

indicate that the Syracuse terminal received as many as two hundred fugitives a year.<sup>44</sup> Loguen worked incessantly to obtain food, money, and clothes for the runaways, traveling as far as England to plead their cause. He did so with no apology, despite the fact that he was himself still liable to seizure. The following is the text of “Mr. Loguen’s Card”:

To the friends of Humanity:

The entire care of the fugitives who may stop at Syracuse, for comfort and assistance, having been devolved upon me by the Fugitive Aid Society, I hereby give notice that I shall devote myself assiduously to the duties I have undertaken to discharge. I must depend for the support of my family, and of the operations I am to conduct upon the liberality of the friends of freedom. I shall gratefully receive money, clothes, and provisions. I will make a faithful use of the same, and will report same annually (in Frederick Douglass’ Paper, and the Syracuse Standard and Journal) the amounts that I have received and of the numbers of Fugitives that I have sheltered and found homes for. Meanwhile, and at all times, my accounts will be open for the inspection of the friends of the cause.<sup>45</sup>

From 1857 onwards, when Loguen devoted himself exclusively to the work of the Fugitive Aid Society, he was never known to turn away an escaped slave from his door.

Loguen and his wife took a deep personal interest in the welfare of the fugitives. In May 1859 he reported in the *Douglass’ Monthly*:

The slaves come to us with their frostbitten and bleeding feet, and then we go to work to get them healed. Sometimes we have to keep them for weeks and months—we have two mothers, with a child each, to care for with us at present. Their husbands were sold, and they made their escape and came to us some months ago. We have a father that has just got to us with his little daughter about three years old; its

44. [Loguen], *Loguen*, 444.

45. “Mr. Loguen’s Card”, *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, 17 September 1858.

mother was taken from it, and the father then ran away with the child, so that man thieves could not get it. We are caring for them, too at present. It takes about all the time of myself and family to see after their wants; I mean the fugitives. We have so much to do in the night that some nights we get little or no sleep. They often come sick, and must be cared for forthwith.<sup>46</sup>

Loguen's commitment to the welfare of the fugitives did not end with their departure from Syracuse, for he made several trips to investigate conditions in the fugitive slave colonies in Canada.<sup>47</sup>

Loguen's work was made difficult by the appearance of several imposters whose reputations were suspect and who pretended to be fugitives in order to solicit funds. He once wrote Gerrit Smith concerning a certain William Smith, who had arrived as a fugitive in Syracuse and had approached the philanthropist of Peterboro for money. Loguen's letter reveals that he was concerned about the character of some of the fugitive slaves, for in it he expressed the opinion that William Smith was a "bad man".<sup>48</sup>

At that time Loguen was himself having to contend with rumors that he was diverting donations for the fugitive cause in order to buy his own freedom.<sup>49</sup> When friends in Cortland, where Loguen preached in the mid-1840s, offered to purchase the freedom of his mother, Nathaniel Goodwin was sent to Tennessee. He was allowed to talk with Cherry, Loguen's mother, and his sister. But Manasseth Logue, brother of David Logue, refused to part with mother and daughter until 'Jarm' should purchase his own freedom. Goodwin returned to Syracuse and informed Loguen of these conditions. Loguen, his narrative tells us, "felt wronged and insulted by the proposition. The result of this effort set him to the extreme of hatred against slavery."<sup>50</sup>

It was equally offending to him when in 1860 the widow of David Logue wrote asking one thousand dollars in exchange for a bill of

46. *Douglass' Monthly*, May 1859.

47. *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, 14 July 1854; "J. W. Loguen's Visit to Canada", *Provincial Freeman*, May 1856; and *Syracuse Daily Standard*, 5 June 1856.

48. Loguen to Gerrit Smith, 23 March 1859.

49. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 13 March 1854.

50. [Loguen], *Loguen*, 380-87.

sale giving 'Jarm' his freedom. She claimed that his running away had forced her to sell his brother and sister as well as twelve acres of land. Loguen was "indignant beyond the power of words to express" and wrote Sarah Logue:

I will not budge one hair's breadth. I will not breathe a shorter breath, even to save me from your persecutions. I stand among a free people, who, I thank God, sympathize with my rights, and the rights of mankind; and if your emissaries and venders [sic] come here to re-enslave me, and escape the unshrinking vigor of my own right arm, I trust my strong and brave friends, in this city and State, will be my rescuers and avengers.<sup>51</sup>

Loguen took special umbrage upon hearing that Mrs. Logue had reported concerning Cherry, his mother, only that she was "as well as common".

Unable to be reunited with his family in Tennessee, Loguen took special consolation in his family in Syracuse, about which the 1860 United States Census gives us some information. He was then forty-six with real estate valued at \$4300 and a personal estate of \$1500. While not poverty-stricken, he did have to struggle to maintain his large family: wife Caroline, age 43, and his seven children, ranging in age from 17 to 2.<sup>52</sup> Amelia, the eldest, later married the son of Frederick Douglass.<sup>53</sup> Gerrit, age 12, had been named in honor of Gerrit Smith and lived to become an accomplished artist in India ink and crayon. In 1887 he was appointed Deputy Recorder of Deeds of the District of Columbia.<sup>54</sup>

51. Loguen's response to Sarah Logue, dated 28 March 1860, as well as her original letter, can be most conveniently found in *The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters Written During the Crisis, 1800-1860*, ed. Carter G. Woodson (Washington, D. C.: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1926), 216-19.

52. United States Census, 1860, population schedules for Syracuse, Reel 27, pp. 39 and 991. Another daughter had died in 1848. *North Star*, 24 March 1848.

53. See the interesting exchange of letters between Amelia and Lewis, particularly one written by Lewis to his fiancée while serving with a black regiment in the Civil War after the assault upon Fort Wagoner in South Carolina, in *Journal of Negro History* 11 (January 1926): 91-95.

54. *Cleveland Gazette*, 2 April 1887. James A. Porter, *Ten Afro-American Artists of the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, D. C.: Howard Univ. Press, 1967).

Jermain Loguen's reform labors were not limited to aiding fugitive slaves. He was elected a vice-president of the Woman's Rights Convention in Rochester in 1853 and a vice-president of the New York State Suffrage Association in 1855. Thus he joined Frederick Douglass, a participant at the famous Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention in 1848, in linking abolitionism with efforts to dismantle the patriarchal establishment that denied blacks and women the right to participate in the political system.<sup>55</sup> Loguen also engaged in efforts to perpetuate abolitionist politics through involvement with Gerrit Smith in the Liberty Party and its successor organizations, the Liberty League and the Radical Abolition Society. He was elected a vice-president of the Liberty Party state convention in 1854.<sup>56</sup>

Loguen broke with the non-resistance doctrine of the Garrisonians, once writing the editor of *The Liberator* that as an escaped slave he would not shrink from using force to defend his freedom.<sup>57</sup> It is, therefore, not surprising that Loguen should have been party to the plans of John Brown to exercise righteous violence to free the slaves. Loguen accompanied Brown on the first leg of Brown's trip from New York State into Canada in 1858 en route to Chatham, where Brown held a convention to set up a Provisional Constitution prior to the raid at Harpers Ferry. Upon returning to Syracuse, Loguen wrote to Brown on 6 May 1858:

My dear Friend & Bro—

I have your last letter from Canada. I was glad to learn that you & your brave men had got on to Chatham. I have see[n] our man, Gray, & find it as I feared we should—that he was not ready yet. I do not think he will go to war soon—others that would go have not the money to get there with. And I have conclud[ed] to let them all rest for the present. Have you got Isaac Williams with you or not? Have you got Harriet Tubman of St. Catherines [sic]? Let me hear from you soon or whenever you can. As I think I cannot get to

55. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 16 December 1853; 14 September 1855. *Report of the Woman's Rights Convention, Held at Seneca Falls, N. Y., July 19th and 20th, 1848* (Rochester: John Dick at the North Star Office, 1848).

56. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 10 October 1854.

57. *Liberator*, 5 May 1854.

Chatham, I should like much to see you & your men before you go to the mountains. My wife & all unite in wishing you all the great success in your *Glorious undertaken* [sic]. May the *Lord* be with you is our prayer.

Your friend in the cause,

J. W. Loguen<sup>58</sup>

Loguen welcomed the beginning of the Civil War, for he felt that the nation had been “setting traps to catch men long enough” and at last divine providence was working itself out.<sup>59</sup> He at first despaired over the Lincoln administration’s refusal to allow blacks into the Union army. “One colored regiment of brave men”, he declared in August 1861, “. . . would do the cause of liberty more service than half a dozen regiments that are merely fighting for the *Constitution and Union*”.<sup>60</sup> When permission did come to recruit blacks, Loguen was instrumental in organizing a regiment from Syracuse.

Emancipation did not diminish Loguen’s commitment to those who had worn the yoke of slavery. Continuing as an agent of the American Missionary Association with responsibilities for educational work in the Upper South, he visited Tennessee in 1861.<sup>61</sup> He appealed to Gerrit Smith on behalf of the freedmen for financial assistance.<sup>62</sup> The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church elevated Loguen to the office of bishop in 1864 with responsibilities in the South, but he resigned for fear of being apprehended.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, Syracuse’s most famous black minister maintained an interest in the work among the freedmen. In the spring of 1865, Loguen, still a missionary agent for the American Missionary Association, introduced Miss Edmonia G. Highgate, a young women who had been teaching school among

58. Quoted in Benjamin Quarles, *Blacks on John Brown* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 6. Loguen was nominated for president of the provisional government during the Chatham convention, but his name was withdrawn when someone announced that Loguen would not serve if elected. See Benjamin Quarles, *Allies for Freedom: Blacks and John Brown* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), 49.

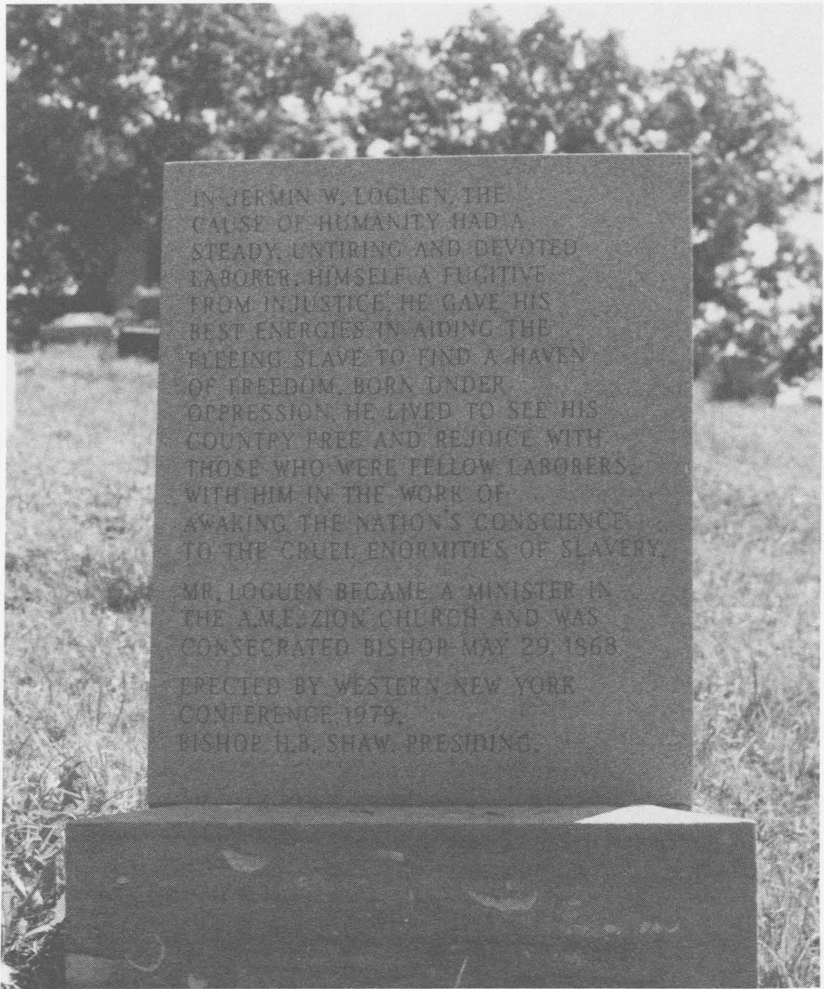
59. *Weekly Anglo-African*, 31 August 1861.

60. Loguen, “Positting Colored Men”, *Syracuse Daily Standard*, 29 August 1861.

61. Loguen to George Whipple, 18 August 1865, American Missionary Association Collection, Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, New Orleans.

62. Loguen to Gerrit Smith, 6 November 1861.

63. Harry V. Richardson, *Dark Salvation: The Story of Methodism as It Developed Among Blacks in America* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1976), 186.



The Loguen gravesite, memorial rededicated in 1979, Oakwood Cemetery.

Norfolk's freed slaves, to Gerrit Smith with a request to his old friend that he help her.<sup>64</sup> He also wrote Smith for financial aid for the African Zion congregation in Syracuse, which had grown rapidly since the Civil War but had not raised nearly enough money to cover its indebtedness and was in danger of losing its building.<sup>65</sup>

64. Loguen to Gerrit Smith, 27 April 1865.

65. Loguen to Gerrit Smith, 13 February 1871.



In 1872 Bishop Loguen was appointed to take charge of missionary efforts on the Pacific coast. Unfortunately, he died on 30 September 1872 while visiting Saratoga Springs, New York. He was thought to have been buried there; but this author was able to locate his grave in Oakwood Cemetery<sup>66</sup> in Syracuse and brought its deteriorated condition to the attention of local black clergy in 1977. Bishop Herbert Bell Shaw, presiding prelate of the First Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, along with clergy from the black Methodist churches of Syracuse, dedicated a new grave marker in April 1979.<sup>67</sup> The inscription reads:

In Jermin [sic] W. Loguen, the cause of humanity had a steady, untiring and devoted laborer. Himself a fugitive from injustice, he gave his best energies in aiding the fleeing slave to find a haven of freedom. Born under oppression, he lived to see his country free and rejoice with those who were fellow laborers with him in the work of awakeing [sic] the nation's conscience to the cruel enormities of slavery. Mr. Loguen became a minister in the A. M. E. Zion Church and was consecrated bishop May 29, 1868.

Erected by Western New York Conference 1979

Bishop H. B. Shaw, Presiding

Thus Loguen's final resting place is fittingly in the "no mean city", to which he felt "bound" since first arriving in 1841 and for whose citizens he frequently expressed admiration and praise.

Loguen's abiding affection for Syracuse was due in no small part to the proximity of such staunch abolitionists as Gerrit Smith in upstate New York. On one excursion en route to visit Smith in Peterboro, Madison County, Loguen stopped to preach at Clockville. From there he wrote Frederick Douglass:

66. On several occasions, I have led students in my Syracuse University course, Slavery and Abolition, on a pilgrimage to Jermain Loguen's final resting place in one of the oldest sections of Oakwood Cemetery. The Loguen grave is in Section 6, Lot 55. His wife Caroline, who died of consumption in 1867, is buried here along with six of the Loguen children. Gerrit Smith Loguen, the artist, is buried in Section 51, Lot 1.

67. *Syracuse Herald-Journal*, 14 April 1979.

I am now snowed in within six miles of our good and *glorious* friend GERRIT SMITH's home and I can feel the influence so sensibly of the MODEL man among white men, that I have thought that I could not improve the time better than to write a few lines to my model man among colored men; and that man is FREDERICK DOUGLASS.<sup>68</sup>

In writing this article I have used the letters of only one of the black correspondents to whom Professor Quarles called attention in 1942. Though far fewer than those 101 to Gerrit Smith from Frederick Douglass or the 29 from James McCune Smith (the second most-represented black author), Loguen's five letters are especially interesting. They document the fact that he provided vigorous leadership to the antislavery movement in Syracuse, most notably and at great peril to himself, by assisting fugitive slaves.

68. Loguen to Frederick Douglass, 12 December 1854, *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 15 December 1854.