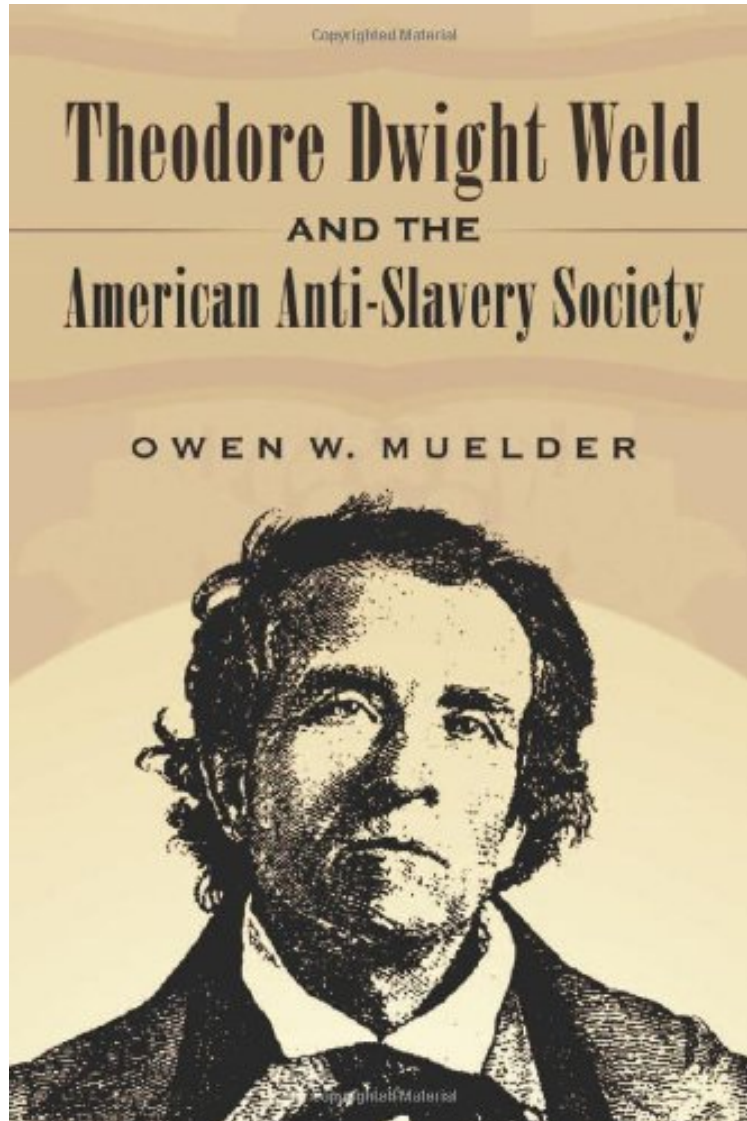


(Library ebook) Theodore Dwight Weld and the American Anti-Slavery Society

Theodore Dwight Weld and the American Anti-Slavery Society

Owen W. Muelder

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Owen W. Muelder : Theodore Dwight Weld and the American Anti-Slavery Society before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Theodore Dwight Weld and the American Anti-Slavery Society:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. First Responders to SlaveryBy Roger TaylorFirst Responders to Slavery In his latest book, Theodore Weld and the American Anti-Slavery Society (McFarland Company, Inc., 2011), Owen Muelder tells the story of fearless missionaries of the abolitionist movement who responded to slavery in the early 1800s with "righteous militance". Risking verbal and physical abuse, even death, in their work, they confronted

the north with the evils of the institution. The abolitionists shaped public sentiment and influenced voting in the north, supporting the later work of Lincoln and the Union Army. Muelder lays the groundwork for his history of the early abolitionists by teaching us things that most of us didn't learn in school. In the early 19th century, northern urban businessmen scorned abolitionism because of the financial benefits that redounded to them from the production, milling, insuring, and shipping of cotton, as well as from the sale of finished goods to southerners. Slave-produced cotton, Muelder explains, was the basis for the expanding American economy. In addition, fear of losing jobs to a glut of freed slaves prompted northern urban labor to be hostile to the abolitionists. Rebuffed in the cities, the abolitionists took to the rural hamlets and farms with their anti-slavery message. Muelder focuses his monograph on both the work of the American Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1833, and on one of the Society's leaders, Theodore Weld. It was Weld who recruited and trained close to 70 agents of the Society. "Weld's Seventy" brought accomplished speaking skills and religious zeal to the cause. Indeed, many agents included in their anti-slavery lectures a warning that slavery was so extraordinary a sin that it foreclosed salvation for its defenders. Muelder documents the dangers that Weld and the other agents faced from frequently hostile and sometimes violent mobs as they traveled about delivering their lectures and organizing local anti-slavery organizations. Muelder points out that it was not just mobs who sought to block the abolitionists. Slaveholding President Andrew Jackson in an address to Congress called for "severe penalties" to stop the "unconstitutional activities" of the abolitionists. In addition to telling the story of the work of these abolitionists, Muelder also examines the politics of the movement. For example, the effective lectures to mixed sex audiences of two of Weld's agents, Angela and Susan Grimke, opened a debate among male leaders of the American Anti-Slavery Society on the proper role of women in the movement. This debate, in turn, exposed the "remarkable similarities" between the denial of rights to American slaves and the denial of rights to most American women. One result was that most of the women who were involved in the anti-slavery campaign in the 1830s participated in the women's rights convention in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. Muelder tells some of the history with lengthy quotations from correspondence of the Weld Seventy and other contemporaries. These passages may annoy impatient readers and even raise the eyebrows of other historians. Use of these quotations enriched the story for me. These eye witness accounts vividly illustrate the horrors of slavery: the cruelty imposed on other human beings both by slave owners and by those who trafficked in human bondage. These passages make for gruesome reading, but reckoning with them leaves the reader with a deep appreciation of the importance of the work of the abolitionists whose history Muelder has researched so meticulously and chronicled so well.

Roger L. Taylor practiced law for 30 years at Kirkland Ellis LLP in Chicago, becoming of counsel in 1999. He retired in 2011 after ten years as president of Knox College, from which he and Muelder both were graduated in 1963.

In the 1830s, the abolitionist movement gained remarkable momentum due in large measure to the establishment of the American Anti-Slavery Society and the work carried out by one of its most important leaders, Theodore Dwight Weld. One of Weld's most significant accomplishments was the recruitment of a group of key abolitionist agents, known as the "Seventy," who worked to expand the reach of abolitionist thought and action and enlisted new members into the movement. This volume chronicles the founding, development, and mission of the American Anti-Slavery Society, the contributions of Weld, and the crusading efforts of the agents he assembled. With the most complete list to date of the identities of the Seventy, this work constitutes a valuable contribution to the history of the abolitionist movement.

"Significant contribution to the understanding of a part of our nation's past that haunts us to this day...Muelder has researched so meticulously and chronicled so well." --Roger L. Taylor, *Illinois Heritage*

"Well-informed and smoothly articulated...useful...crammed with interesting appendices on Weld...Muelder has done the history of the anti-slavery movement a real service." --Larry Sommers, *The Congregationalist*

"Wealth of materials...offers much to researchers and students of American abolitionism...plenty of material for interested scholars." --Bonnie Laughlin-Schultz, h-net.org

"Owen Muelder's incisive work, Theodore Dwight Weld and the American Anti-Slavery Society deserves the widest possible readership for its extensive research and compelling insights." --Lewis L. Gould, *The University of Texas at Austin*

"The most complete list to date." --Reference Research Book News

About the Author Owen W. Muelder is director of the Galesburg Colony Underground Railroad Freedom Center at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. His work has appeared in *Illinois Heritage*.