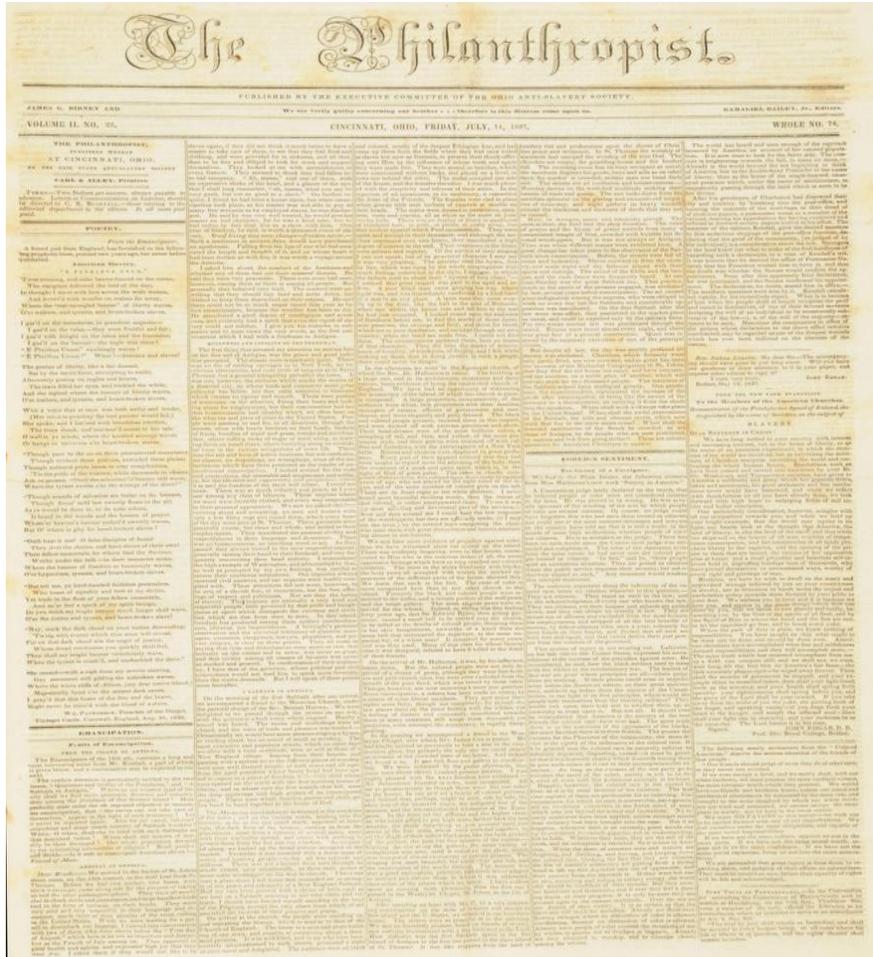




Ohio Anti Slavery Society



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The Ohio Anti-Slavery Society was founded in April 1835 by several abolitionists including Asa Mahan, John Rankin, Charles Finney and Theodore Dwight Weld. Quakers also made up a large portion of the organizations initial membership. Modeled after the American Anti- Slavery Society, the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society sent lecturers around the state to encourage abolitionism. The organization also spread its message through print, using James Birney's newspaper, The Philanthropist, as its organ. Despite significant opposition, Ohio Anti-Slavery Society membership numbered ten thousand by the end of 1836.

In April 1835, prominent Ohio abolitionists including Asa Mahan, John Rankin, Charles Finney and Theodore Dwight Weld were among the many who founded the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society (OASS) in Zanesville. These men, along with many others, assembled for an Ohio Anti-Slavery Convention from April 22 – 24 and resolved that “this Convention do immediately proceed to form a State Anti-Slavery Society” (Proceedings 4). In its infancy, Quakers from Mount Pleasant, Ohio made up much of the OASS membership. The society vowed to fight for the abolition of slavery and the establishment of laws that would protect the rights of African Americans as free men and women.

The object of this Society, shall be the entire abolition of Slavery throughout the United States, and the elevation of our colored brethren to their proper rank as men. While it admits that the several States and Congress have, by our Federal Constitution, the exclusive right to legislate for the abolition of slavery in their respective limits, it maintains that it is our imperative duty, to collect and diffuse information on the subject of slavery, and by all lawful means to convince our fellow-citizens throughout the Union, that Slavery is, in all circumstances, a sin against God and His revealed law, –at war with the fundamental principles of our own liberty, and ruinous to our national morals and prosperity; and that, therefore, the duty, safety, and interest of all concerned, require its utter and immediate abolition (Narrative 8).

Modeled after the American Anti Slavery Society, which was founded in 1833, the OASS employed lecturers to travel throughout the state with hopes of converting more Ohioans to the cause of abolition. At the first annual meeting, members decided that an Executive Committee based in Cincinnati should govern the society. The 1836 Executive Committee members were James C. Ludlow, Rees E. Price, James G. Birney, Isaac Colby, William Donaldson, John Melendy, G. Bailey, Thomas Maylin and C. Donaldson (Narrative 18). Kentucky abolitionist and politician James Birney agreed to let the organization use his Cincinnati-based newspaper, *The Philanthropist*, as its official newspaper. Pro-slavery citizens in Cincinnati were outraged and destroyed Birney’s printing press on July 12, 1836 and again on July 30. More than 1,700 people subscribed to *The Philanthropist* at the time the printing press was destroyed (12). That same year, the organization grew from 20 chapters to 120 chapters, affectively covering every part of the state and by December ten thousand Ohioans were members of the society (Ohio History Central).

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