

Haverford College Library
Special Collections

Finding Aid for the ABBY KELLEY FOSTER PAPERS,
1837-1887

Collection No. 1139
4 document boxes (2 linear feet)
©August 2010

Gift of Margaret Hope Bacon, 1980 and by purchase, 1984.

INFORMATION FOR USERS

These papers of Abby Kelley Foster are almost exclusively photocopies (the exception is noted below).

RESTRICTIONS

No restrictions

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Abigail Kelley Foster (1811-1887) began her career as a teacher in Massachusetts. In 1837, she abandoned teaching for the anti-slavery cause, for which she was denounced by both the public and clergy. In 1840, she was appointed to the executive committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society. She was disowned by her Meeting, Uxbridge Monthly Meeting (MA) for her anti-slavery stance and "impropriety". She m. Stephen Foster in 1845, also an anti-slavery worker. In 1850, Abby Kelley Foster attended the first large women's rights conventions and from that time, she led the movement of women who refused to pay their taxes unless they were enfranchised.

Stephen Symonds Foster (1809 - 1881) was also an abolitionist and reformer. He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1838. While at Dartmouth he served a jail sentence rather than perform military duty. Foster was a close friend of William Lloyd Garrison, and like Garrison he denounced the Constitution and was ready to dissolve the Union. He accompanied his colleague on several lecture tours and became equally well known as an agitator, not only in New England, but throughout the Northern states. His career was as a lecturer on anti-slavery themes and he wrote the pamphlet, *The Brotherhood of Thieves; or a True Picture of the American Church and Clergy* (1843). He also advocated for woman suffrage, he was a temperance worker, an advocate of world peace, and a

supporter of the rights of labor. His refused to pay taxes while women were denied the suffrage.

(Information from the Dictionary of Quaker Biography; Dictionary of American Biography in Biography Resource Center (online))

SUBJECT HEADINGS

[Foster, Abby Kelley, 1811-1887](#)

[Foster, Stephen S. \(Stephen Symonds\), 1809-1881](#)

[Antislavery movements -- United States -- History -- 19th century](#)

[Women's rights -- United States -- History -- 19th century](#)

ARRANGEMENT OF THE COLLECTION

Box 1: Letters of Abby Kelley Foster, 1837-1887 & n.d.

Box 2: Letters to Abby Kelley Foster and Stephen S. Foster: A-F

Box 3: Letters to Abby Kelley Foster and Stephen S. Foster: G-O

Box 4: Letters to Abby Kelley Foster and Stephen S. Foster: P-Z; unidentified letters to and by others; manuscripts other than letters.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS

All the papers are photocopies with the exception of an A.L.S. by Abby Kelley Foster in 1852 stating she is on "Liberty Party ground" so doesn't see papers such as the Liberator or National Anti-Slavery Standard. (In Box 1)