MEETING TO PROTEST FUGITIVE SLAVE BILL, COLLINS CENTER, NY,
DECEMBER 17, 1850

At a meeting in relation to the fugitive slave bill, held at Union Meeting House, Collins Centre, Erie Co., N.Y., the 17th of 12 mo., 1850, William Henry, of Gowanda, was called to the Chair, and Joseph Griffin was appointed Secretary.

The meeting was feeling addressed by Joseph Parkins in a discourse of considerable length, showing the nature of the bill passed as a law by Congress, but which he did not acknowledge as a law, as it contravenes some of our most important moral obligations. After a free discussion of the following preamble and resolution, they were unanimously adopted;

Resolved, That as the fugitive slave bill denies the right of trial by jury in cases involving the right of trial by jury in cases involving personal liberty when the person is not even claimed as a criminal, and when the value in controversy incalculably exceeds twenty dollars; and that it refuses the writ of habeas corpus; that a commissioner appointed for the purpose, having supreme jurisdiction in the cases is required to deliver up to the tender mercies of slavery any person on the affidavit of any other person in a distant slave state, who may claim him as a slave, thereby giving little or no opportunity for such a claim being contested, or evidence being furnished of his being legally entitled to freedom, it is a gross violation of the Constitution, of our country, in the spirit and letter of it, therefore not legally binding upon us.

Resolved, That as instances have not been wanting in times past, of individuals of obscure parentage, or of a dark skin, but of partly European origin, being claimed by Southern kidnappers, and carried off as slaves, this bill, by preventing evidence, offers great facilities for such miscreants to prey upon the liberties of the whites, we, if we had nothing further in view than the protection of our white brethren, object to it, as an insult offered to all classes of freemen in the Northern States.

Resolved, That in respect to personal liberty, we know no distinction as regards color; we regret it, as in its principles it contravences our highest obligations of duty to on and another or that higher law than the Constitution, that impels us to relieve suffering humanity without respect to color.

Resolved, That the pay of a Commissioner according to the bill, is in effect nothing more than bribery, five dollars if he fails to make out the claim sufficient, and ten dollars if he succeeds in it.

Resolved, That in the view of the unconstitutionality of the fugitive slave bill, of the mischiefs and miseries it is working to the colored population of the Northern States and Canada, in compelling us to become slave catchers for the slave claimants of the South and of its being utterly repugnant to the best feelings of our nature, that impel us to acts of humanity toward those in bound as bound with them, we do all in our power, morally, socially and politically, to procure the immediate and unconditional repeal of said bill.

William Henry, Chrn.
Joseph Griffin, Sec’y.

[North Star (Rochester, NY), January 23, 1851]