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Hinda Mandell
Rochester Institute of Technology, hbmgpt@rit.edu

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The Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society: Handcraft as a Metaphorical Tool for the Abolitionist Cause

Hinda Mandell, Rochester Institute of Technology

Abstract: In 1851, in Rochester, New York, a group of six women banded together as the founding members of an anti-slavery group in order to support the work of the abolitionist Frederick Douglass. They called themselves the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society, although they dropped “Sewing” from the group’s name in 1855. Yet the fact that “Sewing” was included in the original name of this reformist group indicates the foundational role of craft not only as a guiding activity but also central as an activist mechanism to abolish the institution of slavery. They were the benefactors of Frederick Douglass, himself regarded as the founder of the twentieth century Civil Rights movement. This article employs three handwork metaphors to analyze points of friction around race that emerge in the annual reports of the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society. The three textile metaphors that undergird this article include: 1) the construction of weaving, through its warp and weft, as representative of social structures; 2) the search for seams as sites of tension and transition; and 3) the symbolism of the needle as a mending device. This article reveals the analytical power of handcraft metaphors to understand the social-reform activity among the “Rochester Ladies’,” whose members were all White, and how such conceptions motivated their abolitionist work. This research project fulfills a significant gap in the literature since there is no scholarly investigation chronicling, exclusively, the work of the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society. Analysis is based on the existing fourteen annual reports published by the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society since 1852, in an effort to understand how craft was used in a historic period for political purposes.

Keywords: Frederick Douglass, Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Sewing Society, Rochester, abolitionist, craft, handcraft, social reform, anti-slavery societies

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This article employs three handwork metaphors to analyze points of friction around race that emerge in the annual reports of the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society. The annual reports of the society are now housed in the Clements Library of the University of Michigan, which has fourteen of the known seventeen annual reports in its collection. The first report was published in 1852, one year after the group was founded, with the seventeenth report published in 1868, three years after the end of the American Civil War, when the group had shifted its focus from the financial support of their benefactor, the famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass and his newspaper, The Frederick Douglass Papers, to fundraising in support of freedpeople in Virginia.

The three textile metaphors that undergird this article include: 1) the search for seams as sites of tension and transition; 2) the construction of weaving, through its warp and weft, as representative of social structures; and 3) the symbolism of the needle as a mending device. Undergirding this article is the assertion that handcraft serve as rhetorical sites of meaning and message-making. The methodological
underpinnings of this work engage the composition approach of English professor Joseph Harris (2006, 38-39). To deploy his technique and language, I engage in “forwarding” the texts of others by: 1) “authorizing” the works of those who have written about the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society in a historical manner, including historians Leigh Fought (2017), Julia Roy Jeffrey (1998), Nancy Hewitt (1984), and Clare Midgley (1995), in an effort to bolster my own research, which is more metaphorical and conceptual in approach than theirs; and then 2) “extending” the concepts from artist-writer Sabrina Gschwandtner (2008) in an effort to protract the “range of meanings” with my own theoretical twist (Harris 2006, 47). Specifically, this article “extends” the metaphorical assertion by Gschwandtner that, “knitting is a site, and it can and should be used as a form of broadcasting, just like the Internet, television, or any other public media” (2008, 216). In my approach, I expand her use of the word “knitting” and argue to replace it with “handcraft” more broadly. If handcraft itself is a site of message making, then the annual reports by the Rochester Ladies’, which chronicle the sale of such craft goods, further extends the legacy of social-reform handcraft from the nineteenth-century marketplace to a historical phenomenon. This article represents the first-known effort to focus solely on the Rochester Ladies’ annual reports not as supplementary material to a historical period, or in service to more famous abolitionists with whom they worked, but as central to understanding how they chose to present themselves and therefore their written legacy. While the following quote by historian Julia Roy Jeffrey (1998) was written about the abolitionist holiday bazaars, it applies equally to the publication of the Rochester Ladies’ annual reports, and I extend this reference in that spirit: they “demanded considerable business and organizational acumen, entrepreneurial energy, and even courage” (110). For that reason, it is of critical importance to center the Rochester Ladies’ as not just ancillary historical figures but worthy of their own spotlight.

The Ideological Positioning of Anti-Slavery Women

Before exploring the textile metaphors that will serve as a lens to understand the work of the Rochester Ladies’, including their social standing and beliefs as abolitionists, it is first necessary to clarify their ideological position. While conducting this research contemporarily, especially during the time of writing in 2020, which marks the centennial of women winning the right to vote in the U.S., it seems prudent to reflect and situate the work of the Rochester Ladies’ along the social reformist continuum. The group’s founder, Julia Griffiths, is clear in her politics: “I am not a woman’s rights’ or a public speaker,” she said (Hewitt 1984, 150). Indeed, that view is tacitly reflected and reinforced in the annual reports, which serve as the objects of inquiry for this article. The constitution of the Rochester Ladies’—reproduced, and sometimes amended over the years in the published reports—reflects their commitment to abolitionism and makes no mention of “women’s rights” work. Contextually, this makes sense along the historical continuum, since their work occurred from 1851-1868, with the group’s shuttering four years before Susan B. Anthony was famously arrested for voting illegally in 1872 at the local polling station in Rochester, New York.

The Rochester Ladies’ devoted themselves completely to abolitionism, and did not view themselves as the forebearers of the feminist movement. Like their British colleagues who identified as anti-slavery campaigners but not women’s rights activists, the Rochester Ladies’ approached their work from a religious and moral grounding, as will become clear through an analysis of their annual reports. Since they did not position themselves as overtly political agents, this “made it possible for women to assert that anti-slavery lay within the sphere of religiously inspired philanthropy, an arena of public activity which they had by the 1820s established as an acceptable extension of their domestic duties” (Midgley 1995, 91-92). By presenting
their anti-slavery efforts as an extension of “women’s work” and of a moral duty characteristic of their sex, activist campaigners in Britain and abolitionists co-workers across the Atlantic pulled upon “womanly” traits such as “pity for sufferings, and a desire to relieve misery” as justification to engage in their work outside the confines of the domestic sphere (Midgley 1995, 92). For many of the white and financially secure women who ran the anti-slavery associations, their concern for enslaved women “frequently reinforced existing class and racial hierarchies among women” (202). Yet, even if the abolitionist motivation of the Rochester Ladies’ was not driven by even a nascent sense of women’s autonomy, their work as social reformers was nevertheless emblematic of a “radical cause” (Jeffrey 1998, 25); and, as this paper will make clear in its discussion of abolitionist fundraising events organized by the group, while their moral and religious calling undergirded their abolitionist work, their engagement in this work shifted traditional conceptions of gender and class expectations in public activism (26). By examining the annual circulars, it is possible to understand how the Rochester Ladies’ intended to present their abolitionist works through a written legacy; how a white, segregated, and middle-class group of women engaged in activist work, inherently political, but outside of the political process. While they possessed no political rights, they had a political voice nonetheless—even if they may have outright denied their work as politically motivated. Through an examination of public-facing and publicly circulating documents, it is possible to better understand the construction of white femininity, religiously devoted, in service to the eradication of slavery.

**Textile Metaphors and Piecing Apart Gender and Racial Tensions in the Annual Reports**

Calling upon textile metaphors as theoretical frames to scaffold larger social inquiry has a long epistemological history. “There is a distinct ontological dimension to making,” writes the cultural theorist Ulrich Lehmann (2018), “as it implies the emergence of the new, of something that is whole, from separate, often disjunctive and opposing components” (58). People can make objects and then gain a knowledge set as a result, and—conversely—they can know something because they engaged in the making process. But the correlation of making to knowing is not limited to the direct experience of a particular object. It has ripple effects, reminiscent of entangled threads that are deeply ontological and epistemological. Indeed, philosophers have argued that the physical construction of fabric affects the scaffolding of knowledge building itself, as well as the construction of built environments. Plato pulled upon craft, specifically the art of weaving, in his dialogues, as a metaphor for the nature of being and the production of knowledge (Lehmann 58). “[T]he significance of weaving lay for the philosopher in the intersection of two threads, the warp and the weft, running at an angle to each other, going in different directions, yet connecting to form a substantial and flexible whole” (ibid.). The weaving process, with the warp threads that stand as steady columns in the loom and weft threads that move from left to right, offer as fine a metaphor as any for the construction of a “social fabric” and moving parts to a whole. Additionally, the German architect Gottfried Semper (2004) argued in his book, *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts; or, Practical Aesthetics*, that fabric construction serves the foundation upon which the physical elements of civilization are quite literally built, since looms superceded built structures, and influenced epistemological constructions of how parts can connect through interlocking principles, elements and sections. With a centuries’ long history of applying handcraft metaphor to as a knowledge-building tool, and a mechanism to analyze and understand social structures, I humbly situate myself under Plato’s literary tutelage to “extend” handcraft metaphors as sites of social questioning, knowing, and rebuilding.

**Emergence of the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society in 1851**
Before applying the three metaphorical lenses to an analysis of the annual reports, it is first necessary to share a historical overview of this social-reform group. In 1849, when the British abolitionist Julia Griffiths arrived from England to Rochester, New York, little could anyone have known that her presence, through her insertion into the Douglass family household and as founder of the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society would create such a social stir (Hewitt 2018, 5). Griffiths, and her sister Eliza Griffiths, met Douglass upon his tour of England in the mid-1840s, and they moved stateside the last year of that decade with the intention of harvesting their wealthy connections back home in financial support of Douglass’s work, particularly in the nascent years of The North Star newspaper, which was founded at the end of 1847. But as Julia Griffiths made her way through the connected web of Rochester’s social reform networks, she found herself at odds with a prominent member at the center of Rochester’s activist circles: Amy Kirby Post, a leader in the region’s anti-slavery movement. Described by one historian as possessing an “authoritative style” (Hewitt 2018, 5), Griffiths was an inveterate fundraiser, but Post bristled at Griffith’s refusal to engage in women’s rights reforms (beyond abolitionism) and saw her approach to politics as too partisan. “Post’s refusal to orchestrate a union between her radical coworkers and the more moderate reformers Griffiths recruited ensured the division of Rochester’s abolitionist women into rival organizations as well as a painful, if temporary, rupture with Douglass” (ibid.).

In Griffiths, Douglass found an unabashed supporter, fundraiser, confidante and business partner. His requests for financial support of Griffiths were welcomed, in contrast to the more conservative reactions of Post, who requested that he open up his North Star financial books to inspection in exchange for remuneration, at which he bristled (ibid., 154). What separated Post and Griffiths the most, and which connects directly to the latter’s founding of the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society, is their contrary approaches to race relations, according to Post’s biographer. Hewitt notes,

While Griffiths befriended Douglass and lived in his household for an extended period, she was not an advocate of interracial organizing. When she founded the single-sex Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society, she invited white women, most from well-to-do families, to join. Post, on the other hand, was active in the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society, an interracial and mixed-sex organization that attracted people from diverse economic backgrounds. (5-6)

Before founding her group in 1851, she understood the power and potential of fundraising bazaars for the abolitionist cause by witnessing Post’s attempts at such efforts, and the difficulties Post faced that Griffiths would be able to overcome as a fundraising maven. Indeed, it was the low fundraising amounts of Post’s craft fairs that further cemented a rift between Post and Douglass, and allowed Griffiths an opportunity to make her mark as an abolitionist organizer and fundraiser distinct from Post’s influence in Rochester.

In 1849, Post began organizing a series of fairs that sold handcrafts to the Rochester public. But they were not a fundraising success. One fair raised $80, considered sufficiently below what was needed to help fill the abolitionist coffers, and another fair was “a failure” according to Douglass (Hewitt 2018, 158) on the fundraising front. Yet Post and her activist partners saw these craft events as “a medium through which a knowledge of our principles, our measures, our faith and our works have been spread more extensively and useful among the people than they otherwise would have been in any other way” (ibid., 158). The potential that the fairs offered to connect with a Rochester public, but the “sorry” state of the funds raised at such events, offered an opening to Griffiths on both the abolitionist fundraising front and an “in” with a dissatisfied Douglass. Douglass, too, was in a period of political transition. In 1851, a few short months before the official founding of the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society, Douglass declared his allegiance to political abolitionism, causing a thunderclap in abolitionist circles. Douglass’s
former mentor, William Lloyd Garrison, founder of *The Liberator* newspaper in Massachusetts (whose spin-off was Douglass’s *The North Star*, now a competitor), was the founder of Garrisonian abolitionism, their common belief that antislavery organizations should be fundamentally inclusive—regardless of individuals’ views on society, religion, and politics—and should require of members only their devotion to immediate emancipation; and their collective allegiance to the government of God (as opposed to its human counterpart), which required direct obedience to divine law and merely submission, and disobedience when their consciences dictated, to its man-made analogue. (Krohn 2007)

In contrast, Douglass’s conversion to political abolitionism indicated his belief that the Constitution offered “antislavery potential,” clashing directly with the Garrisonian ideology that adherence to manmade works such as the Constitution were below moral service to God in the abolitionist cause (ibid.). With Douglass’s political shift, Post and her co-activists with the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society pushed their fundraising efforts to *The Liberator*, Douglass’s newspaper competition. This realignment allowed Griffiths to breeze into control of *The North Star*’s financial footing. The Douglass-Griffiths alliance cemented her standing as an abolitionist insider, albeit a highly divisive one, especially so when Douglass declared her social reform group as the sole bearers of women’s abolitionist work in Rochester, leaving Post and her Western New York Anti-Slavery Society peers in shock. “Douglass both erased their efforts of recent years and anointed the newly formed Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society as Rochester’s only female anti-slavery organization,” even though the women of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society had worked tirelessly in support of *The North Star* (Hewitt 2018, 168). This historic erasure, the eclipsing of others’ work in service to one’s own, brings us into the first metaphorical lens of “seams.”

**Finding the Seams as Focal Points of Disjuncture**

“Seams” represent the first handcraft metaphor deployed for textual analysis of the Rochester Ladies’ reports. Rarely, however, are seams seamless. This is the case in life, with points of transition, as is the case in textiles. Rather, seams are points of connection in the service of transition — moving from one point in a life event, or a garment, to another. As such, seams become metaphors ripe for disjuncture, movement, tension and controlled conflict. Searching for seams in a text is not the same as searching for rupture or disrepair, since seams hold the pieces of the garment together. Rather, searching for, finding and analyzing sites of seams is doing sensitive work to unpack examples of controlled conflict; such sites are kept in place by a formal structure that keeps the seam-work visible but expected within the system of design, metaphorically. The literary and cultural scholar Janice Radway (1986) argues for the framework of “ideological seams” as a means to unpack ideology in all its jagged states. She reminds us that “no ideology is a simple, uniform, organic thing” (108); therefore, the joining of seams can never be seamless. Radway also serves as a relevant guide in this work because she calls for context-specific audience interactions with messages, arguing that, “The content of any message, whether textual or behavioral, is not simply found in that message but is constructed by an audience interaction with that message” (96). Accordingly, a contemporary reading of a mid-nineteenth-century reform group will find ideological seams in ways that their historic contemporaries could not. By seeking and locating seams within the annual reports of the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society, one could find sites of transition in their work, and offer an opportunity to analyze not only what these sites were but how the group frames such junctures. As white women working in a world where they did not have a voice at the ballot box (nor did this group advocate
for such rights as asserted at the outset of this article), engaging in seam-work can reveal the complicated nature of their ideological underpinnings in service to their abolitionist activism. As Radway argues,

To challenge the very solidity, indeed the “naturalness,” of any particular patriarchal vision of the world, then, we must be able to identify the seams, as it were, those points of intersection between the discourse and practices that together constitute individual subjects (including ourselves) in particular ways and address the needs produced as a consequence of that constitution. (110)

Identifying the Seams: Emerging Tensions

The first Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society report was published in 1852. The report, resembling a newsletter, offered its audience a professionally designed reading experience that was elegantly expressed and clearly designed. “CIRCULAR,” read the heading, in capital letters, with the clarifying subhead, also in caps, “THE FIRST REPORT OF THE ROCHESTER LADIES” ANTI-SLAVERY SEWING SOCIETY. The “TREASURER’S REPORT” immediately followed, indicating a successful anti-slavery fair occurring on March 18 and 19, 1852, raising $408.57. “Donations to Mr. Douglass” that year included $233, and with a $50 payment to the owner of Corinthian Hall, where the handcraft fundraisers and lecturers were held, in addition to “sundry bills” totaling $49.36, the treasury balance showed $76.21 at the end of its inaugural year. The prominent placement of the group’s expenditures, and its overall healthy fiscal state, did not preclude tensions hinted at within its document. Indeed, the first four reports offer seams revealing tensions, and even falsehoods, among the social reformist groups in Rochester seeking to abolish slavery. The first such instance of these tensions, occurring in the first report, is worth quoting at length due to the falsehood it promotes and the manner in which it erases the work of the area’s abolitionist women who preceded the founding of the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society,

The Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Sewing Society would avail themselves of the present occasion to state a few facts, and to offer a few remarks, which we trust will be acceptable to the friends of the slave generally. The circumstances which led to the organization of our society were, the utter coldness, in the community on the slavery subject, and the absence of any such society as ours. The organization which had here existed had been disbanded, and their members scattered. Although individuals retained their anti-slavery feeling, there was no concert of action; and the only anti-slavery instrumentality in the community was Frederick Douglass’ Paper. In consideration of these facts, several ladies agreed to send out notices to all whom they thought likely to co-operate, irrespective of sect or party, inviting them to assembly with a view of forming the present association.

The report explains that six women joined at the outset and established a constitution in August 1851, with 19 members among its ranks by the conclusion of the year. The group held 22 meetings. But the way the group, consisting of an “all-white, all-female organization” (Hewitt 2018, 169) erased the work of the racially integrated Western New York Anti-Slavery Society (WNYASS) is rather shocking. WNYASS continued its abolitionist work, although the Rochester Ladies’ report suggests otherwise, and its (WNYASS’s) efforts received little coverage in Douglass’s newspaper (ibid.). Reading the aforementioned excerpt without context or annotation would impress upon the reader, perhaps a contemporary reader, that the Rochester Ladies’ work was unwelcome due to “the utter coldness, in the community on the slavery subject, and the absence of any such society as ours.” But the “coldness” may have stemmed from the circumstances in which Griffiths founded the Rochester Ladies’ as a “rival group,” and pre-existing tensions among Douglass and his abolitionist co-workers, than a lack of abolitionist feeling or caring among active
Julia Wilbur, who became an “agent” of the Rochester Ladies’ group, and helped aid “contraband” (enslaved people who escaped into Union territory) during the Civil War, and later freed people following the war’s end, in Washington, D.C., and Alexandria, Virginia, was one of just two people who participated in both the Ladies’ group and the older, integrated Western New York Anti-Slavery Society (Hewitt 2018, 176). Wilbur wrote in her diary the difference between the two abolitionist groups, including that the Rochester Ladies’ “have little sympathy with the old society” (ibid.). Yet she also noted that the new society offered “more influence & ‘respectability’” (ibid.). The historian Nancy A. Hewitt (1984) argued in Women’s Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York 1822-1872 that the group’s publications were written and produced with an audience of respectable women in mind (251) and that they sought to attract “a class of Rochester citizens’ not previously reached by abolitionist appeals,” and they did this by seeking wealthy members (250).

The first report of this group, published in 1852, included a letter dated March 27, 1852, from Frederick Douglass, addressed to the president of the Rochester Ladies’, graciously acknowledging receipt of $233 to his paper raised on behalf of this group. In this letter we see a bulging seam pointing to tensions within the Abolitionist cause, despite the group’s own assertion in the same letter it was an independent group welcoming of all abolitionists. Douglass writes,

Like most other anti-slavery journals, mine continues to need pecuniary support, over and above that which is derived from its subscription list. But for such aid, coming often in the moment of extreme want, my enterprise would have long since perished, and the pro-slavery would have again had occasion to rejoice at the failure of another press, under the management of a colored man. Thank God! my journal yet continues, and there is still a witness of the sable race in the field, humbly asserting emancipation for the slave, and progress for the free. It is gratifying to know that the society which you represent, look kindly on this effort, in behalf of my enslaved, slandered, and persecuted people, and that they do not, in a sectarian spirit, withdraw all support from my paper, because I am a “Liberty Party” man, and think I can give a more direct vote against slavery by acting with that party, than by voting with the pro-slavery parties.4

The Liberty party to which Douglass was referring to was a minor political party that was formed in 1840, and with which Douglass became actively involved in the 1850s. In 1851, he merged the North Star newspaper with Gerritt Smith’s Liberty Paper, to form Frederick Douglass’s Paper (Blight 2018, 213), the latter of which received annual support from the Rochester Ladies’. Douglass’s involvement with the Liberty Party, which would become part of the Republican party, with the latter’s founding in 1854, reflected his fervent transition to political abolitionism, and “his newly adopted faith that votes could one day weaken and destroy slavery” (Blight 2018, 252). With his formation as a political abolitionist, he strongly denounced “moral suasion” as an ineffective abolitionist ideology, calling it “plainly absurd” with “no intelligible principle of action” (ibid.). Therefore, his reference to himself as a “Liberty Party’ man” as excerpted from his letter in the first report, is also indicative of a cultural seam that manifests itself in this document. His assertion, as captured in the first annual report, immediately follows the Rochester Ladies’ comment in the same report in which the group asserts that they “preferred to maintain an independent position, with a view to co-operate with all whose love for the anti-slavery cause rises superior to their connection with any particular party or sect of abolitionists.”5 This juxtaposition, with the Ladies’ proclaiming an open-arm and welcoming stance, while also purposely including a letter from an abolitionist scion persuasively asserting his political allegiance to a particular “sect of abolitionists,” gives the impression of the group trying to play it both ways. After all, those involved in Rochester abolitionist circles would certainly have picked up on the Rochester Ladies’ strategy of proposed inclusion that does not pass muster upon reading the document.
We again read the assertion in the third annual report, perhaps true in its belief but false in its effect due to their exclusive alignment with Douglass and his known political alignment, that the Rochester Ladies’ are independent of internal abolitionist politics. In the published report from 1854, they write,

In closing this Report, the Society desire to reiterate their determination to retain the independent position they have chosen, and to co-operate with ALL whose love for the Anti-Slavery cause rises superior to their connecting with any particular party or sect of abolitionists. There is a great work to be done, and there are few to do it. That work is, not only to succor the ‘Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast’ but to strive to enlighten the public mind, and to improve the moral sense of the community on the subject of human freedom. This is the true mission of our Society—THIS are we striving to perform, by the Press and by the Platform.⁶

It is perhaps due to their allegiance of, and attempted fulfillment of, class and gender expectations, to maintain a deportment that is recognizably genteel. Their reports certainly possess an edge, since they lift themselves up as moral beacons while berating others as lazy, self-serving, and blind to the plight of the dispossessed. But at the same time, their activism is couched in acceptable, Evangelical religious terms, and they declare themselves welcoming of all—certainly a very Christian principle in theory. Perhaps it is risky enough for these upper-class White women to vocally—and through published and circulated writing—to actively ensconce themselves as an activist cell. But they draw the line at further angling themselves as committed to specific abolitionist allegiances, such as the Liberty Party, and instead declare themselves as accepting of seeking to blot out the moral sin of slavery inclusive of all political allegiances.

It’s not only the elegantly written reports that reflected the audience whom the Rochester Ladies’ hoped to attract—which “generally employed more uplifting language to discuss the case, especially in fund-raising appeals” (Hewitt 1984, 223)—but it was also the construction of the constitution and the international offerings for sale at the handcraft bazaars themselves. For instance, written into the Rochester Ladies’ constitution from its founding is “Article 15”—the last article until the constitution was expanded some years later. It states, “It shall be the role of the Society that the support consist of tea, bread and butter, one kind of plain cake, and one simple relish. Any violation of this article subjects the individual to a fine of 25 cents.”⁷ As context, the 25-cent fine is one quarter of the annual dues to the Society (ibid.). Food is important in the smooth functioning of social-reform activity, and it was the role designated to the Rochester-area women at the annual holiday bazaars. The production of handcraft was the domain of their British co-workers, which furnished all of the handcraft tables. This division, driven by a xenophilic affectation, may in fact explain, in part, the financial success of these fund-raising events. While the women members of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society organized anti-slavery fairs in the 1840s, they focused on “useful” goods for sale, such as local eggs and produce; foodstuffs—hardly the goods that would elicit excitable purchases (Hewitt 1984, 251). But from the get-go, the salable objects at the Rochester Ladies’ holiday bazaars were rare finds. Literally—as they were shipped from England, Ireland, Scotland, and even Mexico. The annual reports each year took great care to thank their anti-slavery cohorts overseas, explaining the lovely goods that fetched eager buyers. In fact, the reports described the “British tables” as offering “an elegant and attractive appearance,” while “The American tables were amply provided with useful and ornamental articles”—the latter of which never received descriptive space in the annual reports.⁸

In contrast,

The costly Honiton lace, and the elegant Pupete-rie from Bridgewater were greatly admired […] The finely wrought baby’s frocks—the handsome maccassars—the elaborated crochet work, and the tastefully dressed dolls in this box were readily disposed of. The baby’s pinafores from Evesham, and the delicately-made tatting,
soon found purchasers. Many dozen yards of the *tatting* could have been sold. The handsome slippers and purses from Birkenhead proved very acceptable. The beautiful *papier mache* from Manchester was greatly admired and disposed of. The contents of the Dublin box were peculiarly valuable. The find drawings and engravings—the handsome carriage bays—the sofa cushions—the scent bags—the baby's frocks, were very acceptable.9

Clearly, these foreign-made items of handcraft are described in appealing and valuable terms, further lending a refined patina to not only the handcraft but the work of the Rochester Ladies'. This strategy, of offering highly curated and artisanal faire, no doubt contributed to the financial successes of the annual bazaars. Indeed, in an 1859 letter to Anna M.C. Barnes, a Rochester Ladies' secretary, Griffiths wrote, “it is invariably the case that people like to purchase articles sent from a distance—& made in foreign lands” (Fought 2017, 121). And purchase they did. For instance, the first report listed that they raised $114.02 in “foreign goods sold” their first year, compared to $38.76 in “domestic” goods.10 In their second year, according to the second annual report, they sold $103.32 in foreign goods, and $59.50 in “American goods sold.”11 The trend continued in their third year, 1854, with foreign goods comprising $195.37 in sales, and $68.70 in sale of American goods.12

While the consumer strategy to offer “foreign-made” goods to local audiences was not unique to Julia Griffiths's fundraising approach, she capitalized on a trend that put the annual Rochester holiday bazaars on the abolitionist fundraising map (Jeffrey 1998). In her book, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Anti-Slavery Movement*, historian Julia Roy Jeffrey (1998) notes that anti-slavery fairs organized by women's abolitionist groups emerged in the 1830s, with the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society holding the first such event in 1834 (108). These fundraising efforts replaced petition drives as a women-led and women-organized mechanism to raise money for the abolitionist cause. Early on, featured goods from Europe not only served to draw in interested buyers but also served a symbolic purpose: “When fair managers were able to obtain goods sent by women in the British Isles, the message was even stronger, for these goods symbolized the international dimensions of antislavery and reminded Americans that the English efforts to abolish slavery had succeeded” (Jeffrey 1998, 122-23), since Britain abolished slavery in 1833. The goods for sale at such abolitionist bazaars spotlighted the “feminine” and genteel craft skills of typically white, middle-class and genteel women whose handwork were typically on display on home parlors. Yet when such objects were brought out of the domestic space and into public, consumer spaces, a tension emerged as women-produced objects were central to this abolitionist marketplace—a commercial space where middle-class women and their crafted objects were not expected to circulate as organizers and sellers. According to Jeffrey,

> Items produced at home assumed a political and public purpose and meaning when they were sold for profit in settings designed to encourage consumption and the exchange of money [. . .] Should middle-class women be engaged in what was clearly a commercial activity? Should they make and sell frivolous goods that encouraged people to waste their money?” [. . .] By pulling upon their religious and moral duty, abolitionist women blurred gender expectations between public and private surrounding commercial activity.” (1998, 109)

Regardless of the tensions, all women involved in the fundraising bazaars were committed to maximizing their profits.

But even with the financial success of the holiday fairs, and the winning xenophilic handcraft strategy, the annual reports revealed seams of a membership quandary. In fact, even after seventeen years of social reform work, the group’s ranks never exceeded more than two dozen members (Hewitt 1984, 173). However, the annual reports were hardly shy in broadcasting the need, and indeed a moral, religious and
prophetic necessity, for new members to join the group. For instance, in the second annual report published in 1853, the officers,


cordially invite the co-operation of every sincere friend of the slave, at home or abroad. “The harvest truly is great but the laborors [sic] are” still “few” in number; and while we desire to render our devote thanks to the Father of all mercies, who has given us that blessing “which cannot be reversed,” we say to each and to all, who have hearts to feel and hands to work—“Come with us and we will do thee good, for” (though man may malign or misrepresent us, yet) “the Lord hath spoken good concerning us.”

In the following year’s newsletter in 1854, the group coughed its appeal for new members in an epic guilt fest, insinuating that those who don’t join are guilty of “self indulgence.” “What can be more ennobling,” the report girds rhetorically, “than a life of devotion to the interests of suffering humanity; and what can be more full of consolation, or in reality, more glorious than the thought that life has not been given to us in vain—not devoted to self indulgence—but to earnest labors for others; that we have been permitted to begin, if not to see the end of a work so noble as that of breaking the fetters of those upon whom pride and avarice have fastened them?”

It is unclear why the group’s size never blossomed commensurate with their abundantly good work. For instance, according to its 1855 and 1856 annual reports, the group assisted 136 escaped enslaved people who made their way through Rochester, en route to Canada, thanks to the financial aid of the Rochester Ladies’. And according to the seventh annual report that was published in 1858, the society assisted “About one hundred and fifty of those weary and travel-worn fugitives [who] have come to us for aid during the past year.” The vestiges of a Post-Griffiths rift may have contained the size, as may have the Evangelical and non-integrated (on the basis of sex, religion and race) nature of the group. So too must Griffith’s reputation be taken into consideration. Although she was only one member of the Rochester Ladies,’ she was also its founder. In abolitionist circles, there was significant animosity directed at Griffiths, who lived with the Douglass family in Rochester from 1849-1852 (Fought 2017, 128, 135). Criticism ranged from superficial—including the observation of Amy Post’s husband, Isaac, of her “elaborate dress and abundant jewelry” (Hewitt 2018, 152)—to defamatory, as she was labeled a “jezebel” in the National Anti-Slavery Standard, “a loaded term connoting religious and sexual infidelity that was not lost on readers” (Fought 2017, 138). These sentiments were all very public, and were part of a broader campaign from an opposing political abolitionist camp in an effort to discredit Douglass due to his associations with Julia Griffiths. For instance, William Lloyd Garrison’s newspaper, The Liberator, a hallmark of abolitionist thought that inspired Douglass to create the North Star, published a column by the publisher himself about the unhappiness in the Douglass family home, on behalf of the wife Anna Murray Douglass, due to Griffiths’ presence in the house and her apparent control over Douglass (Fought 2017, 124). The column alluded that even the great Susan B. Anthony could be called as a character witness to attest to the unhappy goings-on in the Douglass household. Indeed, the nature of the Griffiths-Douglass relationship was complicated because not only did she offer political support, business support, and emotional support, but the Griffiths sisters also offered financial support that helped the entire Douglass family. For instance, in the summer of 1849, the financial footing of the North Star was so bleak that Eliza Griffiths loaned Douglass $1,000 to bring it into a more secure future. The Douglass family home was used as collateral for that agreement. Eliza transferred the mortgage to her sister Julia two years later after she married. Two years after that transfer, Julia said that $1,000 loan was paid off (Fought 2017, 144). This information was widely known among prominent abolitionists, as conveyed in their letters to each other (ibid.). While these juicy inner workings of Frederick Douglass’s personal and professional life certainly never made their way into the Rochester Ladies’ annual reports, it may have constrained membership and impacted how readers of the
reports responded to the annual newsletters, knowing that the founder had what many considered to be a “too-close” relationship with the famous social reformer. To emphasize Radway’s argument, “The content of any message, whether textual or behavioral, is not simply found in that message but is constructed by an audience interaction with that message” (96). This section has demonstrated that a closer reading of the Rochester Ladies’ annual reports reveals the political “seams” of their society as it relates to other abolitionist groups, and tensions within social-reformist networks.

Weaving, and the Symbolic Application of Warp and Weft Threads in Social Structures

Weaving represents the second handcraft metaphor. In a weaving structure, the “warp” is the designation of the threads that serve as stabilizing columns to the structure, running up and down the loom, and are secured from front to back. The “weft” refers to the threads that make the pattern, and are woven between the warp columns. As far back as Plato, weaving has been referenced as a social allegory, although his metaphorical application was more idealistic than a contemporary reading of power structures. Plato compared a woven fabric to the state and its citizens. Just as warp and weft threads differ and serve connected but distinct purposes, this is reflective of the ways in which citizens differ from each other and those differences serve the state in “deep and important ways” (Browning Cole 1991, 203). In a piece of woven fabric, the threads “maintain their integrity, and only by so doing can they function as components in the whole. Not by ‘mixing together’ . . . but by intertwining in an intelligible orderly pattern, the threads constitute a web and the citizens a city” (ibid.). The aforementioned reading of Plato, by the philosopher Eve Browning Cole, reveals an idealistic functioning of woven threads that uphold order without attention paid to the oppressive cost of that power structure. Because this is where the metaphor breaks down: while it may be the case that threads serve different functions and each of those differences is “deep and important,” when we zoom out of the metaphorical implications of the “social fabric,” we see that the differences in a woven society, especially indicative of Browning Cole’s assertion that maintenance of integrity is reliant on threads not “mixing together,” are not equal and equitable.

The flawed application of an idealistic woven fabric, opens up the possibility of more complicated readings of the structural fabric. The textile artist and writer Sonja Dahl draws upon the weaving structure as an allegory for power structures within race relations in her 2018 essay, “Whitework: The Call to Cloth as Action.” The title refers to a demanding needlework tradition of “whitework,” a tradition of,

white-on-white embroidery and quilting popular in the 16th to 19th centuries throughout Europe, Scandinavia and North America. Considered the epitome of a young woman’s needleworking skills, whitework required patience, time, focus, precision, and a steady hand. Unsurprisingly, these pristinely stitched textiles were often employed to metaphorically uphold attributes of whiteness that reflected favorably upon the needlewomen themselves, and the societies to which they belonged. (2)

It is not only cloth that is lionized and metaphorized as “the fabric of society,” but, similar to Plato and Semper’s ontological and epistemological arguments, the structure of the cloth itself becomes a metaphorical tool that is representative and symbolic of racialized power structures. So writes, Dahl, when she argues that the structure of weaving,

calls to mind the way Ijëoma Oluo describes privilege in white supremacist structures: as a system in which one group of people flourishes and grows in direct relationship to another group of people who are structurally
disadvantaged, submitted to violence and suppression. One part of society is up because the other is kept down, and vice versa. Try to translate this sort of system to a loom, and you will find it challenging to weave even the plainest of cloths, because white supremacy is engineered in such a way that the threads rarely shift positions, and the roles are rarely reversed. Those who are “down” are kept in their place through many methods both blunt and subtle by those who are “up.” (3)

It is not possible to build a fabric, according to Dahl’s argument, without the dominance of one structure (the warp) that upholds the “integrity” of the fabric. In weaving, the warp is not as easily seen as the weft, since its columns are often covered up by the weft’s more visible pattern. Through this analogy, the warp represents the undergirding white supremacy that “stabilizes” itself and a broader social fabric but is unseen. We will see the contested nature of warp vs. weft (or warp and weft) play out on the pages of the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society annual reports as its members uphold their own racial and religious purity (warp) as they decry weak membership numbers and “the utter coldness” of those not sympathetic to the abolitionist cause.16

Weaving as Metaphor for Depiction of Enslaved in Annual Reports

How do the two structures of warp and weft within the weaving process, already established as offering profound potential as a metaphor for power and society, offer a pathway to understand the Rochester Ladies’ depiction of the enslaved? Warp, the “stabilizing” structure of woven fabric, is represented by the social-reformist group, while the weft—which is more visible, more vulnerable, but also influx, and woven throughout—is represented by America’s enslaved people. In order to make this argument, I will draw upon three instances in which the annual reports depict the plight of the people who they sought to aid in freedom.

In the second report of 1853, the Rochester Ladies’ set the tone early within their published body of work about the manner in which they chose to write about enslaved people. They are depicted as moral, good, hardworking and worthy of help by those who are themselves upstanding enough to take up the demands of the cause. For instance: “On the second evening [of the festival] a powerful appeal, in behalf of his ‘brethren in bonds,’ was made by J.W. Loguen, of Syracuse; the honest-hearted fugitive, who is now engaged in the laudable undertaking of raising money to buy his poor old mother out of slavery.”17 Hewitt argues that the annual reports were designed to appeal to religious, upper-class white women, “directed at a respectable female audience,” by “couching the evils of slavery . . . in the rhetoric of moral and religious sentimentalism” (251). In the excerpt on Loguen, we learn about an enterprising man devoting himself to extract his mother from bondage; and the group’s decision to italicize the last ten words of the account make for impactful reading, highlighting the shocking and urgent disconnect of a son who is seeking money to “buy” his mother’s freedom.

In a second anecdote, in the opening page of the fourth report of 1855, the Rochester Ladies’ offer a lengthier description of an escaped enslaved woman, following the proud announcement that the society aided “FIFTY-EIGHTY fugitives to Canada” the previous year.18 One of the heart-wrenching cases that came to their attention involved the following unnamed woman: “The sable hue of her complexion showed that she belonged to the proscribed race; but the dignity of her deportment, and her independent though respectful demeanor, evince that the Creator of all things had never designed her for a slave.”19 According to the report, this woman fell in love with another enslaved person, who was owned by a different master. They married, and were able to see each other twice each week. One such day, however, she waited for him but he never came. He’d been sold. The inquiring Rochester Ladies’ who heard her heart-wrenching story
wanted to know what she did upon hearing of her husband’s loss. “God gave me religion ma’am and that sustained me; and for ten years I lived alone with my sorrows and my God.” She married a second time, and when they learned that he would be sold they decided to flee to Canada. Her husband got a month-long jumpstart on the journey, and now the woman was before the Rochester Ladies seeking only “aid to Canada!” The society gladly abided by the humble request of “this truly heroic woman.” The subject of the society’s aid is described as devout, open-hearted, patient and devoted to husband and God. She has turned to God for solace, but she also eventually took her fate into her own hands by escaping slavery. For assistance, she asks only the small amount needed to secure passage to Canada; all of which earns her the society’s description as “heroic.”

In a third anecdote, also chronicled in the fourth annual report of 1855, the Society tells of a visit to Rochester by Emily Edmondson, whose escape from slavery was the subject of the book, The Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin. As she introduced herself to members of the Society, they decided to set up a special appeals event that could help fundraise on “behalf of her yet enslaved brother.” On that occasion, “ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS were raised on the spot, by the liberal audience, who listened, with tears, to Emily’s thrilling tale, and sisterly appeal for aid to obtain her brother’s freedom. The friends who took so much interest in this case will rejoice to know that Emily left the city $160 richer than when she entered it. $800 is the price demanded for her brother’s ransom; she has now raised $660 of it.” This anecdote offers a rare example of the Rochester Ladies’ expressing praise of the fundraising efforts within the city of Rochester, which the group more typically bemoaned as insufficient and miserly.

The Rochester Ladies’ presented in their annual reports escaped enslaved peoples as moral, hardworking, “heroic,” and committed to God and family. The group’s members deployed personal anecdotes of their encounters with escaped slaves as a vetting mechanism to show these individuals as worthy of community aid as a moral necessity. The Rochester Ladies’ erected themselves as the stabilizing group that had vetted the cause, and its suffering people, as the structure (warp) through which the transient and mobile “fugitive” enslaved peoples (weft) can move through the community but dependent on the good will of the white structure.

**Needles Pierce and Needles Mend: The Symbolism of Needles as Forward Facing**

The third handcraft metaphor used to analyze the texts of the group’s annual reports are “needles.” External to the world of handcraft and her makers, needles are sites of danger, fear and pain. But within the handcraft ecosphere, they are tools of repair and of bringing parts together; the violence they enact on fabric is temporary; its impact typically invisible, and subsumed within a more pleasing embroidery or a functional seam. “The needle is used to repair the damage. It’s a claim to forgiveness. It is never aggressive, it’s not a pin,” writes the artist Louise Bourgeois (Herkenhoff 2018, 126). And the artist Mark Newport argues in his statement that the contact between needle and material is extremely human. “Each pierces the substrate it is repairing, performing a modest violence upon what is to be mended, and reminding each of us of our sensitivity, vulnerability, and mortality” (Newport, nd). This affords needles a symbolic role as future and forward-facing tools, as unifying tools, which can allow us to pivot from points of tension within structural systems to a more positive, potentially, future orientation.

*Forward-Facing Site of Repair in the Annual Reports*
If we have turned to seams conceptually, as a theoretical lens to understand points of tension between the Rochester Ladies’ and their abolitionist networks; and turned to weaving as a metaphorical structure to analyze how the social reformers presented enslaved peoples in their newsletters and themselves as the righteous stabilizing structure; we will now turn to the needle as a site of repair following the end of the Civil War. Why turn to a needle, an object known for its ability to pierce fabric and skin, as a tool for healing?

As Paolo Herkenhoff (2007) notes, “It is a restorative tool, used to repair guilt, hate, abandonment, hostility, destruction of one’s own work, and self-inflicted damage” (126). In this way, the needle becomes an incisive apparatus, metaphorically, to see how the Rochester Ladies’ position its work upon the conclusion of the Civil War, following seventeen years of vociferously and staunchly fighting for, through organization, writing, advocacy, fundraising, and community maneuvering, the abolition of slavery. The needle may be reparative, transformative and restorative, but it is not a tool of magical erasure. Upon close inspection on the underside, of backside of handwork, we see evidence of damage, worn fabric, tangled knots. In other words, we see its history.

The tenth Rochester Ladies’ report offers an apt place to center analysis of the needle within the context of their work, since its publication chronicled the group’s work from 1861-1862, marked by the start of the Civil War. When a national rupture can no longer be contained, when political seams are no longer merely visible but torn open, in which way does this social reformist group pivot in the nature of its work? First, the group continues with “the aid of fugitives. A large number have been helped on their way during the year, and some clothing furnished to those in need.” While no holiday bazaar was held that year because “the War is such a drain on the resources of the people, and the utter stagnation of all kinds of business, would make it useless to attempt anything of the kind at present,” the group continued to support the Frederick Douglass newspaper. But for the first time, through this report, we see the group expressing cautious hope for the future of its work: “we have but to hope that the day when our work will be the elevation of a free people, instead of the liberation of a nation enslaved, is rapidly approaching.”

Future-facing, steely and prescient, the report declares: “The slave system may struggle for a while; it may and will find advocates in the North; ‘Compromise’ may again rear its head for its defence, but it must die.”

In the group’s fourteenth annual report published in 1865, three years before the group’s work came to an end, they adopted a name change to reflect the changed political environment. Christened as the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery (Sewing) Society in 1851, and then dropping “Sewing” from its title in 1855, the group changed its name entirely a decade later to the “Rochester Ladies’ Freedmen’s Aid Society.”

This name change reflected that the bulk of the group’s work was being carried out at this point by member Julia A. Wilbur in Virginia and Washington, D.C.

**Conclusion: The Winding Down of the Rochester Ladies’**

Despite the prospects of a needle mending and transforming a social fabric, it cannot erase the past, and even the finest stitchers cannot completely hide their seams. So, too, was the case for the Rochester Ladies’ as they pivoted forward, in a country that ultimately abolished slavery but certainly not its murderous bigotry. So too, in the last newsletters, the Rochester Ladies’ reveal the seam that was apparent from the beginning, a righteous one that urged people to take up the cause and step beyond their comfort zone and walk the words they preached as Christians. In the sixteenth annual report, published in 1867, one year before the group would close its ranks, they wrote: “To us, who feel so much interest in the subject, it seems quite unaccountable that in any Christian community, there should fail to be a cordial interest and ready help in the work. But Slavery, though as we trust, practically dead, still exhales a poison over our land,
making hearts which are warm in sympathy towards the white race, cold and indifferent to the welfare of the Black.”

The tone of the penultimate report in 1867 is bittersweet,

Of the little band that commenced work 16 years ago, as an Anti-Slavery Society, removal from the city and death, have left very few members. Many efforts have been made during the few past years, to induce others to come in and help us in the labor of mitigating the condition of the still helpless, ignorant and much abused victims of Slavery. But we have met with but partial success, for while many talk well, very few have been induced to give us either money or labor, so that the meetings of the Society for work, though regularly kept up every alternate week, (except during the hot weather), have been small, and less new material has been made up than usual; but on the other hand, more second-hand garments have been collected than during other years.

The penultimate report is also notable for another reason: the group’s acknowledgement of Suffragist organizing work that others were engaged in, which the Rochester Ladies believed should be enacted gradually and “cannot be accomplished at once.”

What needed more urgent attention, they argued, was the needs of freedpeople at a time when “taint of Slavery is still in the nostrils of our people and infects the high places of the land.”

No doubt sensing the end of the group’s efforts, this penultimate report of 1867 straddles a clear-eyed reflection of the group’s origins with its current state of affairs—collecting used garments for freedpeople in the South. Yet it closes with the forward-looking direction, led by the reparative needle: “And when the day soon come when the people, now so needing help and instruction, may become, under a better state of things, self-supporting, self-respecting, and able to maintain at the ballot box their equal rights as citizens of the Republic.” It is hard, contemporarily, not to become emotional at the expressed hope of this group for the people whom they devoted their activist lives, especially having the historical knowledge of the civil rights battle that would rage in this country to this present day.

The last report—the group’s seventeenth—consists nearly entirely of a 27-page printed booklet by Julia A. Wilbur, the Rochester Ladies’ “agent” working with freedpeople in Virginia. A single page of “Treasurer’s Report” proceeds Wilbur’s account, which notes a balance of $129.15 in the group’s treasury.

Yet it is Wilbur’s last line of her painstakingly thorough account that so consistently with the group’s ethic and appeals over nearly two decades speaks to both the past and a future: Help is always needed, and it’s never too late to lend one’s assistance. In 1868—three years after the end of the Civil War—her last line of the report, the group’s final publication, writes, “To such, and also to those who have never aided in such work, I would, in behalf of your Society, make one more appeal to the Freedmen.”

The commitment to aiding enslaved people, and then freedpeople, never wavered in the seventeen years of this organization’s life, even as the group battled abolitionist politics and slights against its founder. Fervent belief in the moral uprightness of its cause propelled the group forward; never did they suffer from shyness in the righteousness of its cause, and the “utter coldness” of those who did not support their work, or were slow to do so. By applying metaphorical, handcraft lenses to the texts of the group’s body of work, it has been possible to identify political tensions, clarify the structural scaffolding in which the group—through its gatekeeping authority—presented the plight of former enslaved peoples, and shuttered its work with an eye toward voting rights and continued aid to freedpeople. The application of handcraft metaphors is also apt for the way it reveals power inequities in social structures. According to textile artist Sonja Dahl (2018), “White supremacy does not allow for the creation of a whole cloth, wherein every thread is afforded agency to contribute to the whole” (3). If it were not for the application of these three metaphorical lenses, we would not have seen: 1) the historic erasure of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society, which preceded the Rochester Ladies’; 2) the unequivocal, stalwart affirmation and self-presentation of the
Rochester Ladies’ as the righteous, stabilizing structure as the warp through which others (whether they were enslaved people, “cold” Rochesterians, handcrafters from overseas, or even Frederick Douglass himself), moved in service—rhetorically or actually—to the Rochester Ladies’ work; 3) the forward-facing way in which the Rochester Ladies’ pivoted their self-presentation as pillars of social-reform in Rochester and ceded control to emerging activist ideologies such as the suffragist movement. This article historicizes their written legacy through the application of “forwarding” (Harris 2006, 38) the work of historians and artist writers, by weaving together historical documents, historical secondary sources and, what I hope is a creative conceptual approach: one that meshes historical record with craft metaphor in an effort to present the more nuanced forces influencing a contemporary interpretation of the Rochester Ladies’ written legacy and historical work.

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Notes

1. Whether the nature of their relationship extended beyond a professional realm is unclear, their extremely close interactions and interwoven interests was without question the source of scandal and the subject in Abolitionist newspapers, including the widely read publication, The Liberator. The contours of their relationship and the impact in abolitionist circles is beyond the scope of this article. For more, see Leigh Fought, Women in the World of Frederick Douglass; and Nancy A. Hewitt, Radical Friend: Amy Kirby Post and Her Activist Worlds.


3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.


19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.


25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.


29. The extent of Julia Wilbur’s tireless work in service to escaped enslaved peoples during the Civil War, and freedpeople after, is beyond the scope of this article; please see Paula Tarnaple Whitacre, A Civil Life in an Uncivil Time: Julia Wilbur’s Struggle for Purpose (2017).


31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
36. Ibid.

References


