Joseph A. Dugdale:
A Friend of Truth
by Robert K. Bower

One hot Iowa August day in 1863 more than 3000 men, women, and children gathered at Hickory Grove outside of Mount Pleasant for a Union Sabbath School Celebration. After opening remarks and a prayer by area ministers the crowd was entertained with patriotic songs by the children and rousing tunes by the Mount Pleasant Brass Band. Then the audience listened "with close attention" to Mount Pleasant's own Sen. James Harlan who spoke on "the State of the Country." But the highlight of the day for the children, and perhaps for more of the adults than would admit it, came in the afternoon. After the picnic lunches were disposed of, the children raised their colorful Sunday school banners and, hardly noticing the oppressive heat, listened to "the man of all others who gets at the hearts of children—Uncle Joseph Dugdale."

Joseph A. Dugdale was a Quaker minister well known for his "children's conventions" which he held all over southeastern Iowa (including Salem, Wapello, Fairfield, and Iowa City). But he was interested in much more than entertaining and teaching the children. He had dedicated his life to helping the oppressed wherever he found them.

There were many expressions of idealistic efforts to correct social evils in the nineteenth century: the anti-slavery movement, the woman's rights movement, various peace movements, prison reform, and attempts to aid the spiritually and physically beaten Indians. Dugdale involved himself in all of these and more.

On any given day in the 1860s and 1870s Dugdale, usually accompanied by his faithful wife Ruth, might have been found visiting inmates of the penitentiary at Fort Madison or the institution for the insane at Mount Pleasant; speaking at a religious meeting in Iowa or an adjoining state; attending a meeting on temperance, peace, or woman's rights; entertaining in his home some famous reformer such as Anna Dickinson or Sojourner Truth; visiting needy neighbors, black as well as white, in Mount Pleasant; drafting a protest against some social wrong which would be sent to a public official, even the President; or writing a letter to anyone from Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier to Iowa Governor Cyrus Clay Carpenter urging support of some cause or clarifying his own stand on some issue.

Joseph A. Dugdale was active both nationally and locally, yet in the Quaker manner he went about his work quietly and remained relatively anonymous. Aside from exercising his own vote and sending petitions and letters to those in office, he steered clear of orthodox political action, shunning party politics for a more straightforward appeal to the people themselves. He and Ruth crisscrossed the country preaching and joining with other Friends in an attempt to open people's eyes to the injustices about them.

Joseph Annesley Dugdale, the first child of John and Sarah Barton Dugdale, was born November 14, 1810, in Bristol, Pennsylvania. The next year the family moved to Trenton, New Jersey,

Joseph A. Dugdale (courtesy of Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College).

where Joseph enjoyed his boyhood years. As he recalled forty years later: "I picked huckleberries over there [in New Jersey], played in the sand, swam in the streams and thrashed a boy for calling my little plain coat a name . . . ." Under the guidance of his mother, a minister in the Society of Friends, Joseph continued to forego finer apparel for his suit of Quaker drab and dedicated himself to the simple but earnest life it represented.

In 1827, the family moved west to join the Salem (Ohio) Monthly Meeting of Friends. But within a year, growing differences among the Friends over the slavery issue led to a split in the Society known as the Hicksite Separation. Because of his sympathy to the anti-slavery position of Elias Hicks, young Joseph was disowned by the Salem Meeting.

Dugdale married Ruth Townsend in 1833, and two years later the couple moved west again, to a farm in Clark County, Ohio. That same year (1835), Joseph attended the first meeting of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society (he had been elected president of the New Garden Anti-Slavery Society in eastern Ohio). From 1835 until as late as 1875 when he was elected president of an Underground Railroad Convention in Salem, Iowa, where "the conductors and stockholders in the old Underground Rail Road in Iowa"—and some who had been active in other states—gathered together, Dugdale was always to be found in the ranks of those actively seeking abolition of slavery and equal rights for all.

The Green Plain Meeting, which the Dugdales joined when they moved to Clark County, had a generous share of the radical Friends who felt that a higher truth justified breaking an unjust law and readily helped fugitive slaves on their way to Canada. Years later in Iowa, Joseph Dugdale was fond of recalling how he and Ruth aided fugitives on the Underground Railroad in Ohio and how their threshing floor had served as a bed for many a noted abolitionist, including Salmon P. Chase, later to become Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. The more conservative Friends, though sincerely opposed to slavery, took no part in harboring runaway slaves and were opposed to opening the meeting house to abolition lecturers. Many of the elders also disagreed with the more liberal Friends on such issues as woman's rights. Though

attempts were made to reconcile their differences, the radicals ultimately seceded from the parent body and formed their own meeting, variously called "Progressive Friends," "Congregational Friends," or "Friends of Human Progress." Dugdale played a key role in attempts to unify the factions, but in the end he helped organize the Congegational Order of the Green Plain Meeting.

These were difficult years for the Dugdale family. Their first child, a son, lived only a little over a year. Another son, John, born in 1835, was a healthy child destined to live a long and fruitful life. But their third child, a little daughter, also died at an early age, "when she was just beginning to prattle little words." Ruth, besides supporting her husband in the religious controversy, kept busy caring for her sister, Sabina T. McDonnell, who came to live with the Dugdales in 1836, and who was ill much of the time until her death in 1844. To complicate matters, Joseph's health was not good, and at one point he nearly died. With courage and strength Ruth guided the family through these trying years.

By 1850, Joseph's father had died. So his mother, Sarah, joined Joseph, Ruth, and their son, John, and continued to live with or near her children the rest of her years. Sarah Dugdale's deep interest in the reforms of the age, especially temperance, woman's rights, and peace, was to have a marked influence on her eldest son's life.

The rift in the Green Plain Meeting created an uncomfortable atmosphere for the reformers, and in 1851 Dugdale moved his family to Chester County, Pennsylvania. There in the Kennett Monthly Meeting he found a number of Friends, some of them station masters on the many lines of the Underground Railroad in the area, who were sympathetic to his views, and who were also experiencing growing discontent with their conservative leaders. Dugdale's experiences in Ohio and his participation in 1849 and 1850 in the Yearly Meeting of Congregational Friends held at Waterloo, New York, made him a natural leader of the discontented Friends.

In 1853, Joseph and other reformers established the "Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends," not a sanctioned "Yearly" Meeting, but "a kind of convention for reformers." The group consisted of not only discontented and disowned Friends but also some sympathizers who had no formal religion at all. At the inaugural session, whose participants included Lucretia Mott and Sojourner Truth, Dugdale made the opening remarks, and the group proceeded to develop a platform "as broad as Humanity, and as comprehensive as Truth . . . ." By 1855, they had built their own meeting house, and "Longwood" became a gathering place for thousands of reformers every year. In 1859, for example, the little meeting house could not hold a fourth of the over 5000 participants who gathered to listen, "whether in the house or in the open air, with deep interest to the radical and progressive views of the speakers. . . ."

During this decade before he moved west again, Dugdale actively campaigned for the abolition of slavery, better treatment of the Indians, woman's rights, and other reforms in which he and his Progressive friends believed. His reputation as a reformer grew, and his efforts, like those of other reformers, were often derided by the general public. A West Chester, Pennsylvania newspaper referred

The Progressive Friends are shown here in front of Longwood Meetinghouse in Pennsylvania, June 1865, three years after the Dugdales left for Iowa. The balding man in the center holding a bouquet is William Lloyd Garrison (courtesy of Chester County Historical Society).

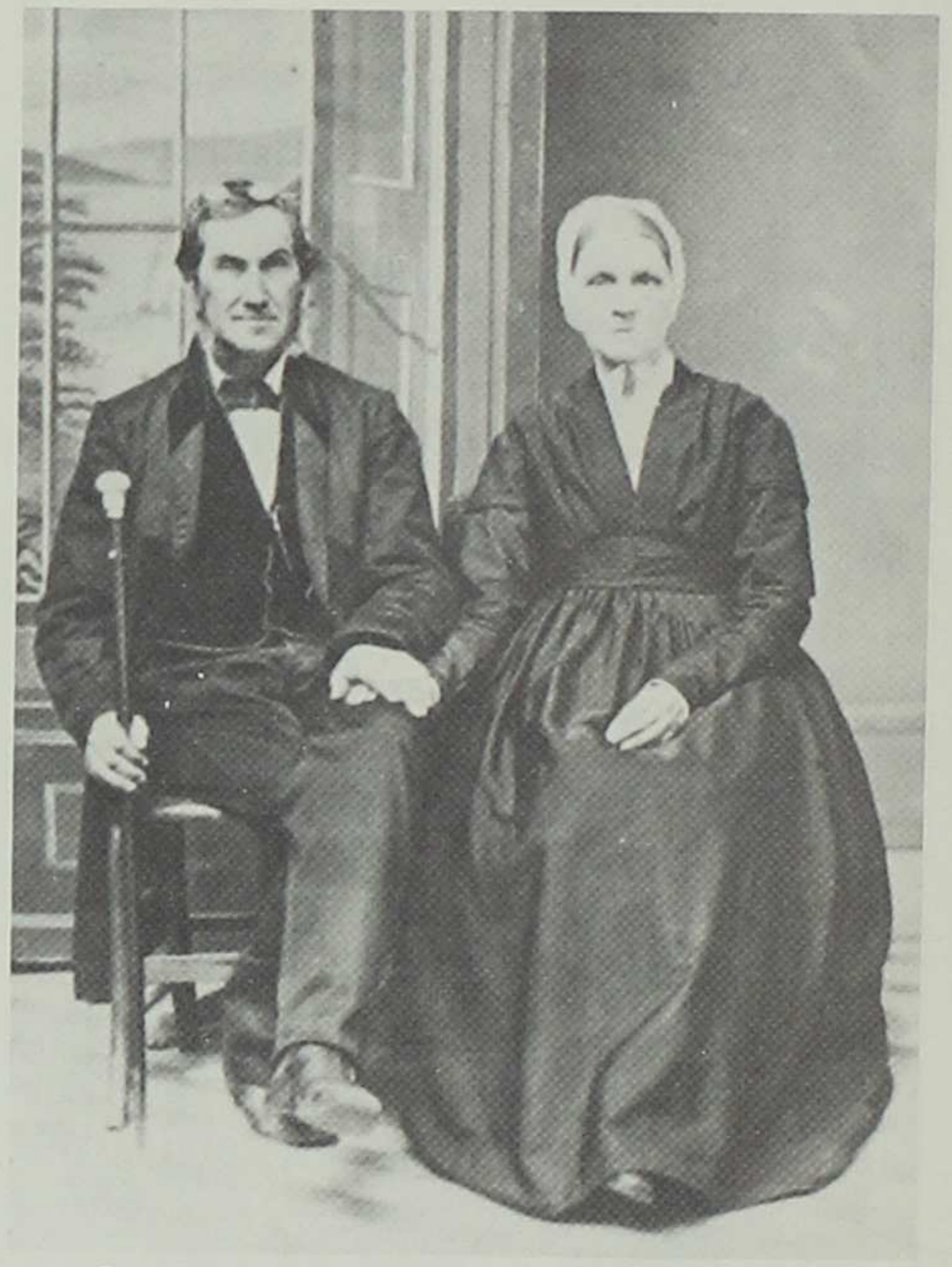
to Dugdale as "the great Apostle of the new motley sect" at Longwood.

By 1850, Dugdale was well enough known in reform circles that delegates to the first National Woman Suffrage Convention, held at Worcester, Massachusetts, named him to the central committee along with such suffrage pioneers as Lucy Stone, Lucretia Mott, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Two years later, he helped organize the First Woman's Rights Convention in Pennsylvania at West Chester. In September of the next year (1853), he spoke at the national woman's rights meeting in New York known as "the mob convention" because an unruly crowd broke it up. And during that same month in New York, he was a delegate to the Whole World's Temperance Convention, but he declined to serve until women were given equal privileges with the men. Susan B. Anthony was eventually elected secretary to the convention. During these years, Dugdale continued his anti-slavery activities, attending a number of state and national conventions. One of the highlights of his life was to be listed among the vice presidents of the American Anti-Slavery Society.

Perhaps Dugdale was most widely known in Pennsylvania and New Jersey (among the children at least) for his children's conventions. The conventions, begun at Longwood in 1854, became an annual event eagerly awaited by children who came from miles around to hear "Uncle Joseph, the Children's Friend." "There would be songs and flowers and games and recitations and plenty of good things to eat, interspersed with speaking and teaching by [Joseph] and other elderly friends." Uncle Joseph soon began traveling to other towns in Pennsylvania and New Jersey to speak to the children, and in 1860, he and Ruth made a tour of the West, holding conventions along the way.

In 1861, the tensions of war caused a temporary suspension of the monthly meetings at Longwood, and the Dugdale family reluctantly decided to move west again. The next year, on February 11, they paid a little less than $17 an acre for a 160-acre farm in Marion Township, Henry County, Iowa—six miles north of Mount Pleasant.

The editor of the local *Home Journal* lost little time acquainting his readers with their new neighbors. On the front page of the March 8 issue appeared a story by Joseph A. Dugdale entitled "The Blind Children," telling of a visit he and Ruth had made to an institution for the blind in Columbus, Ohio. (The story had originally appeared in the *Educator and the Museum,* published in Media, Pennsylvania, and would also appear in the March 14 issue of William Lloyd Garrison's anti-slavery newspaper, *The Liberator.*) On the next page of the *Home Journal* the editor introduced Joseph by printing the following lofty description which also originally appeared in the *Educator*:



Joseph and Ruth Dugdale. Joseph holds an ivory-headed walking stick inscribed with the following: "Lucretia Mott, to Joseph A. Dugdale Green Plains OHIO." The cane is on display at the Harlan-Lincoln Home in Mount Pleasant (courtesy of Iowa State Historical Department, Division of Historical Museum and Archives).

> To the children of Iowa and her sister states, we would say:—Welcome to your midst with cordial warmth of affection, this devoted friend of youthful humanity, and you will never have cause to forget the bestowing of your confidence and esteem. Manifest by words and deeds a kindly interest in his happiness, and you will remove to a great extent, the loneliness that he will feel, separated many hundred miles from his friends and relations, and the cherished memories of a dear old Chester county home.
>
> Bear in mind that the deepest feelings of his heart, the most exalted energies of his life, are devoted to the welfare of youth. This has ever been his aim—the goal of his ambition; welcome him, then, with pleasant smiles and affectionate words of good cheer.

Uncle Joseph called the first children's convention in Henry County for the afternoon of May 25, 1862, at the Methodist Episcopal Church in Mount Pleasant. "I mean to see you all," he said in his published letter, "and, in my old-fashioned way, tell you some stories, with the understanding, that whenever the little folks stop looking at the black spots in my eyes, and cast their eyes downward, looking directly at their shoestrings, it will be *understood* it is time for Uncle Joseph to hold up, as the saying is, and let you all go home. I may not wait for that." If he did, it must have been a long wait. For according to those who heard him, he had "a wondrous power in his persuasive eloquence, that touches the hearts of both children and adults. The children at the close of the service seemed eager for more." Their "eyes . . . were riveted upon the speaker from the time that he arose in the desk, until he took his seat."

In January of 1863, Uncle Joseph wrote a letter to the children "back East." The following excerpt gives an interesting description of his Iowa prairie home as well as demonstrates his facility at capturing the interest of children:

> If we could only rig a vessel that would sail in the air, about as big as five meeting houses that could be managed by a committee of girls and boys and then you could all get into it and never lower the sails until you would come to a great magnificent prairie 30 miles long and six miles wide, a little bit north of where Aunt Ruth and Uncle Joseph live—what a *big* time we would have. It is too terribly cold to think of coming this *winter*, but next summer you would see the grandest display of wild flowers that ever you beheld! The grass grows as high as a horse's back! In the spring the people set it on fire. A prairie on fire is a *magnificent sight*. Sometimes travellers have been overtaken by the fire and suffered cruelly, or been consumed by it. At this season of the year I could show you tens of thousands of beautiful prairie fowls. They have great conventions among themselves, and sometimes go into unhusked corn-fields, which by the way are many in this country, and will be until plowing time next spring!

It was not long before Uncle Joseph's friends in the East could see him again. For in 1864-65 he spent "some six months gladdening the hearts of all, especially the little folks, in Pennsylvania and Maryland in preaching to them."

When the Dugdales came to Iowa, Joseph and Ruth returned to the fold by joining the Hicksite Meeting at Prairie Grove, 12 miles north of Mount Pleasant in Wayne Township. The Henry County Hicksite Friends were a part of first the Baltimore Yearly Meeting and later the Illinois Yearly Meeting held at McNabb, Illinois, and are not be be confused with the Orthodox Friends of the Salem (Iowa) Monthly Meeting. Prairie Grove Meeting had been established in 1856 by Hicksite Friends who had migrated from Virginia. There was another group of Hicksites in Iowa, at West Liberty in Muscatine County, that united with Prairie Grove in June 1866 to form the Prairie Grove Quarterly Meeting. (The term *Meeting* here means much more than "a gathering of people"; it denotes the basic structure of the Society of Friends. Groups of Friends usually met twice a week—Sunday and mid-week—for worship. Official business was conducted at the Monthly Meeting, sometimes made up of several of the smaller groups of Friends. Larger matters were taken by representatives of the Monthly Meetings to Quar-

Site of Prairie Grove Meetinghouse near Winfield, Iowa. Built in 1858, the plain frame building was surrounded by a grove of maples, box-elders, and evergreens. Sarah Dugdale, Joseph's mother, is buried in the little cemetery.

terly Meetings. And final authority rested with the Yearly Meeting. The same terminology was usually used by each of the factions of Friends—whether Hicksite, Orthodox, or some other faction.)

That the Dugdales chose the Prairie Grove Meeting rather than the Salem Meeting might seem peculiar when we recognize the progressive spirit, the efficient organization, and the large numbers of the Orthodox Friends in Iowa in the 1860s and 1870s. Iowa Orthodox Quakers, especially in the Salem area, had provided an effective link in the Underground Railroad from Missouri to Canada, and they were destined to establish an organization to aid the freedmen after the War. In addition, Iowa Orthodox Friends bore major responsibility for carrying out Grant's program to help the Indians, while the Iowa Hicksite Friends "took little or no part in the work assigned by Grant to their branch of the Society." (This seems odd in view of Dugdale's background and the Hicksite philosophy. But perhaps because of their small numbers the Iowa Hicksites were happy to turn the organizational work over to their Orthodox friends.) Of course the Dugdales had joined the Hicksites in the beginning, and to move from the ranks of the Progressive Friends to those of the Orthodox Friends would have been too great a theological and philosophical reorientation for Joseph and Ruth. The scars of the 1828 split still remained.

Nevertheless, as time passed and relations between the Orthodox Friends and

Hicksites improved, Joseph was invited to speak frequently in Orthodox meetings at Salem and elsewhere. By 1873 Joseph was able to pen the following message to a friend: "Yesterday morning by *express invitation* I addressed the hundred students in the Whittier College (Orthodox Friends) and in the afternoon attended a large meeting among them and took part in the services, great cordiality and kindness being shown me. I rejoice at the increasing toleration and fraternity."

During the 1860s and 1870s, Dugdale's interest in reform activities continued. During the winter of 1866-67, Mount Pleasant hosted a number of prominent reform lecturers, including Anna Dickinson and C. C. Burleigh. Dugdale reported in a letter to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* that Dickinson and Burleigh "made impressions *deep and lasting*." Dugdale said that he and Ruth had them as guests in their home, and when other friends joined the group for an evening of conversation and discussion, "it seemed like a resurrection of the olden time, when we used to mingle together while our hearts gushed for liberty and the freedom of the suffering slave." The Dugdales were out of town when Theodore Tilton spoke, but they heard Frederick Douglass warn of "the Dangers Threatening the Republic." And on March 23, 1867, Dugdale met Wendell Phillips at the railroad depot. "There was an intense anxiety to hear the silver-tongued orator," Dugdale reported, "and he not only uttered his radicalism on the impeachment of the President amidst the cheers of the crowed auditory, but generously consented on the same evening to give us his celebrated lecture on 'The Lost Arts,' in all occupying two and a half hours!"

Dugdale saw positive effects of such lectures on the local citizenry, for in the same letter he reported that "our people here are being fast educated up to the type of radical anti-slavery, and are about to open the public schools for the reception of all the pupils in this city, irrespective of color!"

The passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 guaranteeing all citizens the right to vote regardless of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude" represented another victory for the old-line abolitionists. Joseph and Ruth Dugdale (now living in Mount Pleasant with their son John and his family), along with 50 or 60 others, signed a call for a meeting in "recognition of the success of the Fifteenth Amendment." The meeting was held at Union Hall in Mount Pleasant on May 7, 1870. The participants adopted a long list of resolutions praising those who had worked on behalf of the black man and affirming the justness of the Fifteenth Amendment. Afterward, at the unanimous request of those present, Dugdale addressed the meeting.

The spring of 1870 also marked the end of the anti-slavery era by the dissolving of the American Anti-Slavery Society. A letter from Joseph Dugdale graced the pages of the last issue of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* along with other letters from his "Beloved Coadjutors." He recalled setting out in 1835 to walk the 200 miles to the Ohio state association meeting. After a day's walk he was picked up by a friend and rode in a carriage the rest of the way. "So it has been all along the line," he remarked, "the way looked hard to travel but achievements have been won, and instead of plodding, we

now ride in the *triumphant car* of *emancipation!*"

Joseph and Ruth were already turning to more pressing issues. They recognized that the time was right for a state woman-suffrage convention in Iowa. Other woman's rights advocates such as Amelia Bloomer of Council Bluffs and Annie Savery of Des Moines agreed. Bloomer and Savery were considering calling a state convention to meet in Des Moines, a site they felt to be more accessible to all concerned than Mount Pleasant. But they delayed issuing a call when they had trouble scheduling speakers of national repute.

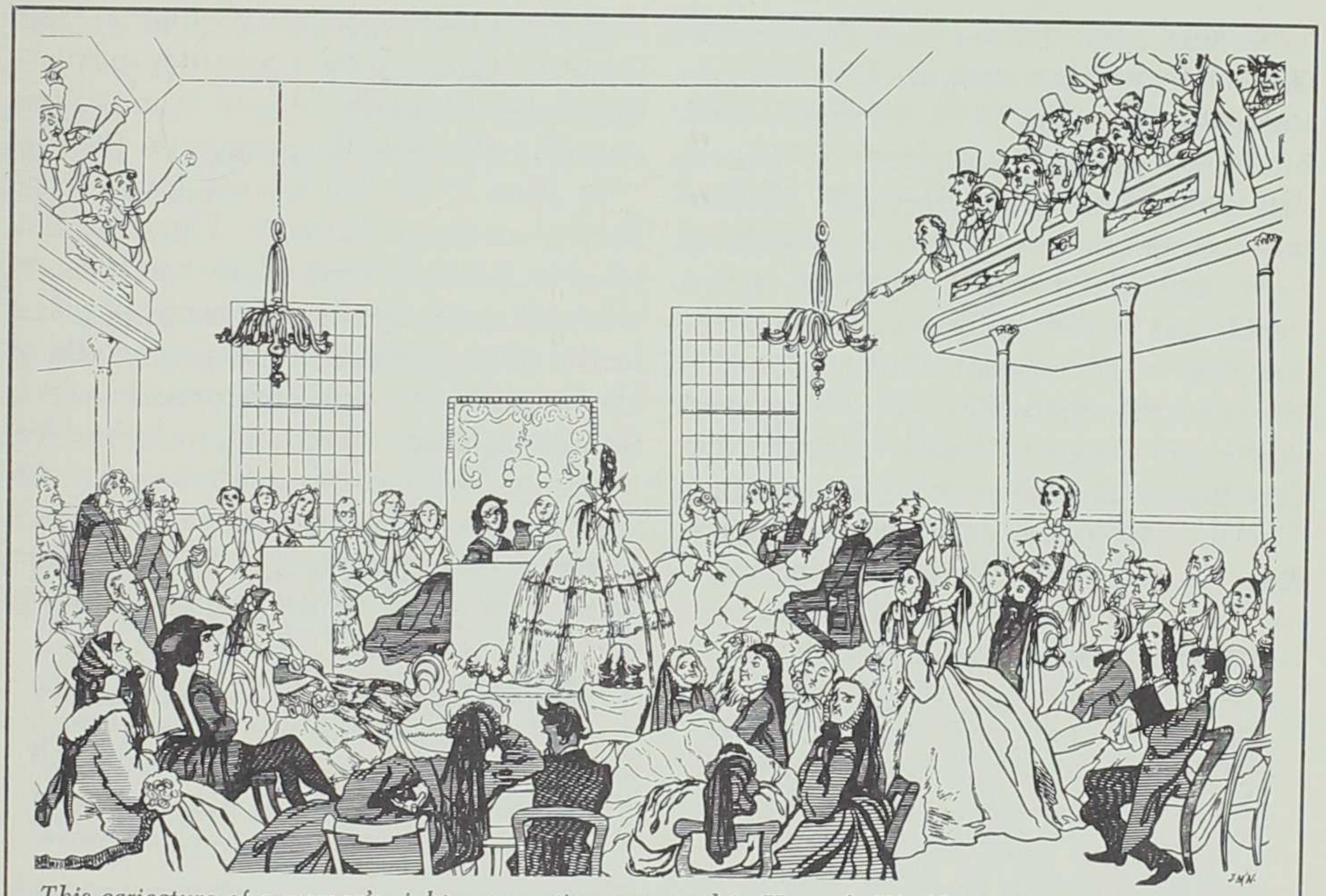
These reformers felt that the woman's hour in Iowa had arrived. The woman-suffrage movement in Iowa was growing. Politicians could no longer shun the woman-suffrage issue on the pretext that it would endanger Negro suffrage legislation. On March 29 and 30, 1870, the Iowa House and Senate approved a suffrage amendment to the Iowa Constitution, the first step toward granting Iowa women the right to vote. Woman-suffrage leaders in Iowa saw much work ahead in obtaining favorable sentiment for the required second approval two years hence and finally the important popular referendum.

Woman-suffrage associations, mostly headed by men, had been accepted with relative equanimity by most Iowans, but the forming of the Northern Iowa Woman Suffrage Association in April 1869 by a group of Dubuque women had caused much excitement. Lectures on woman suffrage by both local and national figures were becoming more common across Iowa, and the subject of woman's rights was broached more frequently in parlor conversations and chance meetings on the street.

Mount Pleasant had its share of strong-minded women: Mattie Griffith, a young school teacher, who in 1868 had toured central and southern Iowa with her lecture "Shall Women Vote?"; Mary A. Beavers, well-known throughout the state for her temperance and woman's rights lectures; Belle Mansfield, the first woman to be admitted to the Bar in the United States; and Alice Bird, co-founder and first president of the P.E.O. Sisterhood at Iowa Wesleyan College (then Iowa Wesleyan University). Little wonder that Joseph Dugdale thought Mount Pleasant an ideal meeting place for the first Iowa state woman-suffrage convention.

In May of 1870 Dugdale issued a call for the Iowa Woman's Enfranchisement Convention to be held in Mount Pleasant June 16-17 for the purpose of creating "a more effective union of the friends of woman's enfranchisement" in Iowa. The convention caused much excitement in southeastern Iowa, drawing prominent Iowans in the woman-suffrage movement from all over the state and attracting some out-of-state delegates. Susan B. Anthony was expected, but a change of plans prevented her attendance. The convention founded the Iowa Woman Suffrage Society (also called the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association and later dubbed the Iowa Equal Suffrage Association). The Society elected as its president Henry O'Connor, Attorney General of Iowa. Joseph Dugdale and Amelia Bloomer were among the vice-presidents, and Belle Mansfield and Annie Savery were the secretaries. Dugdale acted as temporary chairman of the convention. The New York *Standard* reported that Dugdale "was the prime mover in the Convention."

Certainly the majority of Iowans did not agree with the aims of woman's rights



This caricature of a woman's rights convention appeared in Harper's Weekly *in 1859.*

advocates. No doubt even some of the delegates to the Mount Pleasant convention doubted the seriousness of the whole affair. The *Burlington Hawkeye* printed a document presented to the Bloomfield delegate by the mayor commending the delegate "to the tender mercies and loving embraces of the women and tearful prayers of the men of said convention."

The more serious delegates left the convention with high hopes for the cause in Iowa, and many helped organize local woman-suffrage societies in their hometowns. Two local societies were formed in the Mount Pleasant area: the Salem Women's Rights Association on August 7 and the Henry County Woman's Suffrage Association on August 13. Ruth Dugdale was a vice-president of the Henry County Association, and Joseph served on the nine-member executive committee.

The next year, in October, the second statewide woman-suffrage convention was held in Des Moines. Dugdale did not attend (possibly by his own choice, preferring to absent himself from the debate on the free-love issue sure to arise at the convention) but sent a letter which was read before the convention. He was reelected as a vice-president, but he gradually faded out of woman's rights activities. In the years to come, Iowa suffragists would incur repeated disappointments as suffrage amendments to the Iowa Constitution, introduced in the Legislature session after session, repeatedly went down in defeat. In 1920, an amendment to the U.S. Constitution finally gave Iowa women the vote.

Dugdale decided to take advantage of the abundance of reformers due in town for the woman-suffrage convention in 1870

by issuing a call for an Iowa Peace Convention to be convened on June 18, immediately after the woman-suffrage convention. Peace had long been an important concern of Friend Dugdale. He had been elected one of the vice-presidents of the Universal Peace Society when it was established at the National Peace Convention held in Providence, Rhode Island, in May of 1866, though he was not present at the convention. Dugdale thought that the summer of 1870 seemed an opportune time to establish a state peace organization. The call, signed by 44 men and women, mostly from the Mount Pleasant area, said the convention was called:

> for the purpose of organizing a State Association, to aid in the presentation of Peace views to the public mind and cooperate with the Universal Peace Society in America and France, and with the lovers of peace thro'out the world, in order to aid in hastening the period when disputations between the Powers of the East will no longer be determined by sanguinary conflict, but by arbitration of nations and the extension of the Kingdom of Christ be promoted.

The meeting, held in the wake of the exciting woman-suffrage convention, was poorly attended and hardly covered by the press of the state; woman-suffrage was the issue of the hour, not peace. As with the woman-suffrage movement, however, local auxiliaries to the Iowa Peace Society, such as the Salem Auxiliary Peace Association, were established.

The executive committee of the Iowa Peace Society met the next year in Mount Pleasant and drafted a letter to the English High Commission, a delegation which was visiting the United States on a peace mission. They also sent a "plea for peace," penned by Dugdale, urging Congress to lead the way toward establishing a High Court or Congress of Nations to mediate disputes, such as the bloody Franco-Prussian War that was then raging in Europe.

In June 1872, the annual Iowa Peace Society meeting, chaired by Dugdale, took place in Salem. Letters which had been received "from a number of friends of peace in the United States containing words of cheer for the sublime enterprise in which we are engaged" were read, including letters from John Greenleaf Whittier and Alfred H. Love, president of the Universal Peace Society. A number of resolutions were passed, of which the following is typical:

> *Resolved,* That the age in which we live is pervaded with the advancing and accumulating spirit of truth, and this spirit demands the abolition of War because it is barbaric and invades the rights of man.

The newspaper account of the proceedings ends with the text of a letter from Governor Cyrus Clay Carpenter.

On September 3, 1873, the Iowa Peace Society held its annual meeting in New Sharon. Dugdale chaired the meeting and read letters of support from Governor Carpenter; Alfred H. Love; former Governor Samuel Merrill; Alexander Burns, president of Simpson College; H. C. Dunham, secretary of the American Peace Society; Lydia Maria Child, the well-known reformer from Massachusetts; and Ed Wright, former speaker of the Iowa house and twice-elected secretary of state. Wright, who had just been appointed assistant superintendent for the construction of the new capitol building in Des Moines, was a special friend of Dugdale's. In the early 1830s, Joseph A. Dugdale had taught little Ed Wright in a log schoolhouse near Salem, Ohio.

As its founder and first president, Joseph Dugdale gave the Iowa Peace Society strength and vitality. There is evidence that the organization lasted for almost half a century.

Over the years, Dugdale's activity as a reformer won him many famous friends, among them the well-known former slave, Sojourner Truth. On February 6, 1872, Sojourner Truth stopped in Mount Pleasant on her western tour and was a guest in the Dugdale home on Madison Street. Noticing that Sojourner was beginning to stoop with age, Joseph remarked, "Sojourner, thou are not so tall as when I first saw thee a quarter of a century ago." She replied with her characteristic wit: "No, dear child; I have been built so long I have settled!" The next day Joseph added the following sentiments to her "Book of Life" alongside those of Presidents Lincoln and Grant, Vice President Colfax, Lucretia Mott, William Lloyd Garrison, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and many others:

> "Our Veteran Friend, *Sojourner Truth*—We have know thee for a quarter of a century, heard thy clarion voice in the day when the slave power rioted in the land and trod with its iron heel upon the hearts of its victims. God has blessed the labors of his servants in a signal manner, and slavery by his mighty power has gone over the battlements and is destroyed. May thy old age be crowned by his presence, and thy trumpet join with Gabriel's in the jubilee, when the countless multitudes shall surround the throne of God.
>
> Joseph A. Dugdale
> *Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, Second Month 7th, 1872.*

Two days later a brief note in the local newspaper informed the public of her arrival and tentatively announced that "she may speak while in this city." After several days of rest, Sojourner was prevailed upon to hold a meeting at Prairie Grove on Sunday afternoon, February 25. Word of the remarkable woman must have spread quickly, for during the next week she held at least four meetings in the Mount Pleasant area.

Dugdale took her to Salem for the Auxiliary Peace Association meeting. After Dugdale lectured on "the horrors of war" and "its enormous expensiveness,"

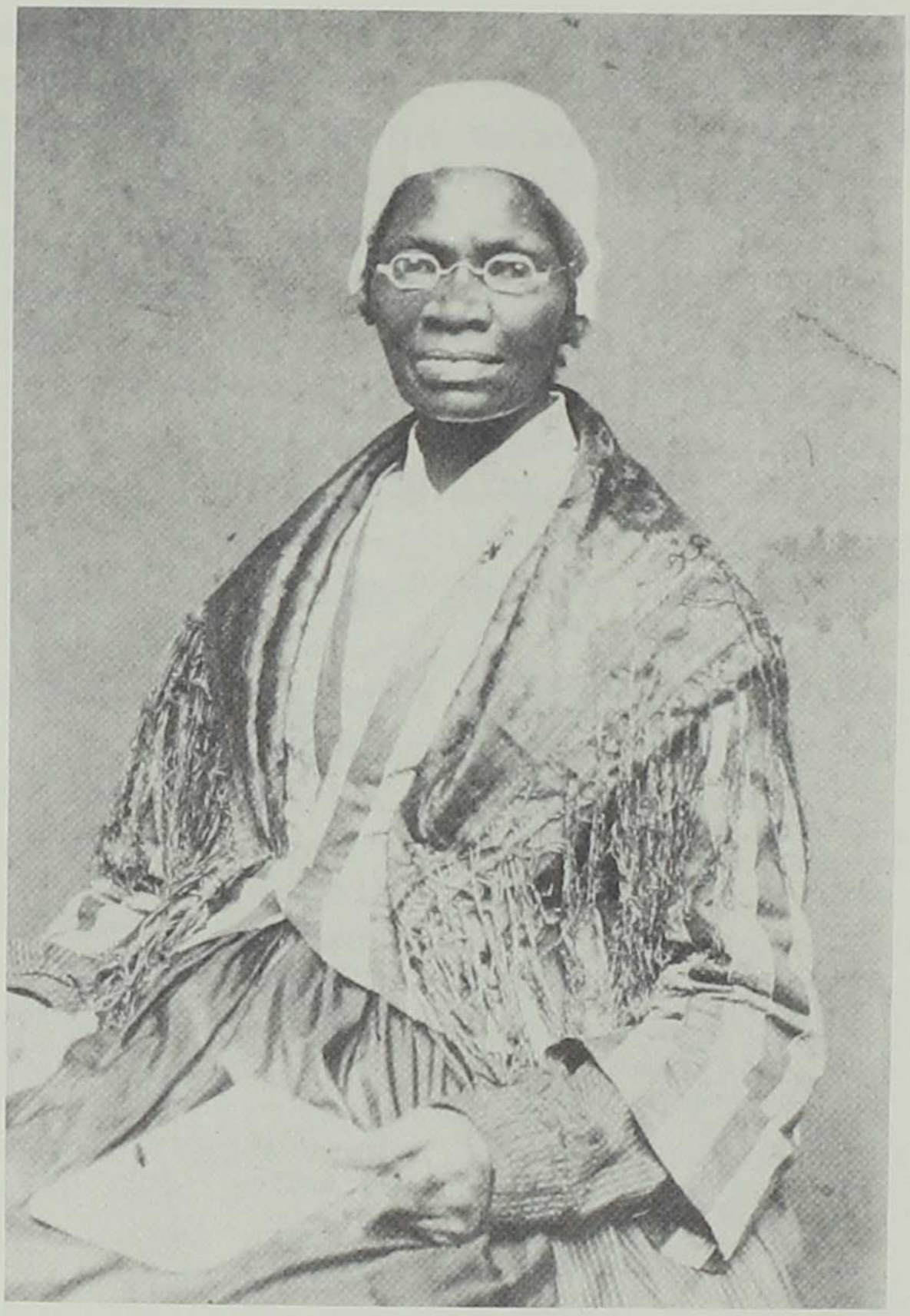
Note on Sources

The author thanks Louise R. Noun for her gracious help and critical comments. Especially useful were her research notes for *Strong-Minded Women: The Emergence of the Woman-Suffrage Movement in Iowa* (Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1969), which are deposited in the Grinnell College library. Mrs. Noun's book contains the only recent account of Dugdale's role in the woman's rights movement in Iowa.

The most complete account of Dugdale's pre-Iowa activities is in an unpublished dissertation by Albert John Wall, "The Congregational or Progressive Friends in the Pre-Civil-War Reform Movement," (Temple University, 1951). Other helpful sources were *American Anti-Slavery Society Annual Report . . .*, First-Fifth (New York: Dorr, 1834-1837); Thomas E. Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1950); Olive Gilbert, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth . . .*, reprinted by Frances W. Titus, with additions from Sojourner Truth's "Book of Life" (Boston, 1875); Louis T. Jones, *The Quakers of Iowa* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1914); Robert D. Marshall, "Mt. Pleasant, 'The Athens of Iowa,' 1865-1875," unpublished M.A. thesis (The University of Iowa, 1965); Anonymous, "Relics," *The Annals of Iowa*, First Series, 11 (Jan. 1873), 385-86; Olive Cole Smith, *Mt. Pleasant Recalls Some of the Happenings of Her First Hundred Years* (Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, 1942).

Newspapers provided the bulk of information on Dugdale. Among the most fruitful were the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* and the Mount Pleasant papers: the *Henry County Press*, the *Mount Pleasant Journal*, and the Iowa Wesleyan University *Iowa Classic*.

Two short works by Dugdale survive: *Extemporaneous Discourses* (Poughkeepsie: Platt & Schram, 1850) and *Memoirs of Sabina T. M'Donnell, Late of Green Plain, Ohio* (n.p., 1846), co-authored with Ruth Dugdale. Fortunately, some of the Dugdale correspondence still exists. The Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania has 36 letters to, from, or mentioning the Dugdales. And the Iowa State Historical Department, Division of Historical Museum and Archives (Des Moines) has 29 letters. Due to the courtesy of the officers in these institutions, the Division of the State Historical Society now has in its collection xerox copies of the original letters.



Sojourner Truth (courtesy of Bentley Historical Library, Michigan Historical Collections, The University of Michigan).

Sojourner Truth followed "with appropriate remarks on the subject of Peace." Anticipating the nine-mile carriage ride back to Mount Pleasant, Joseph and Sojourner prepared to leave the meeting early. As they were about to withdraw, a man suggested the audience acknowledge Sojourner's presence and bid her farewell "by a silent vote." The newspaper account reported that "the audience responded by quietly rising. She made an impressive appeal to all, to meet her in the Father's House where she soon expected to be."

That same week she lectured at Union Hall and Asbury Church. At the latter, "Friend Dugdale introduced her by a brief allusion to her powerful appeals for her oppressed people when the black and bloody flag of slavery floated over the whole land a quarter of a century ago." In her remarks Sojourner appealed to the audience to petition the government to set aside land in the West for the freed slaves. The following Sunday evening she "gave an account of her religious experience . . . to a very crowded audience, in Main St. Church." After the service, "the President of the Iowa Wesleyan University, the ministers of several churches, women

and men, students and teachers gathered around her, and gave her their hands, and she breathed on them a parting benediction."

Dugdale gave a rich sampling of Sojourner's views, and her unique way of expressing them, in the March 9 issue of the *Burlington Hawkeye:*

> Her ideas of temperance and woman's suffrage are admirable. She says "we have many booby men in de land, and they came from weak women, who say, 'Ive got all de rights I want.' I tell you if you want great men, you must have great mothers. Why, children, rising babies is the greatest and most important business that is done. How can a woman give brains to her baby, when she hasn't got em herself?" Her religious experience was rich; her love of Jesus full of poetry. "I wonder" said she "in God, as de fishes wonder in de ocean. My soul is as big as my body; it fills me from my nails to de ends of my hair! When I die de soul will walk out into the air; did you ever see spoons made? De mold looks black and dirty. When de silver is run in and de mold opened, out comes de spoon, all bright as de light. So it will be when de soul leaves de old body behind. Thanks be to God slavery has gone over the battlements down into the regions from which there is no resurrection."

Sojourner Truth left Mount Pleasant in early March and continued her tour of the Midwest.

As Joseph grew older, failing health curtailed his activities. In 1874, while on a trip to the East he became severely ill. Ruth sold the carriage and ponies and returned with her husband by rail to Mount Pleasant, where he slowly recovered. But he would never again match the pace he had set in his younger years.

Even in his later years, Dugdale engaged in numerous smaller philanthropic endeavors, such as donating books to the local Ladies' Library Association. He also joined other ministers in town in encouraging the youth of the area to perform dramatic presentations to raise money for the poor. One year, with Ruth Dugdale serving on the Relief Committee which worked with the children, two performances netted $175 after expenses.

As Joseph entered the last decade of his life, he could take comfort in eight grandchildren and a host of memories. Besides a life dedicated to a search for truth, he could recall his many leisure activities and interests, such as horticulture, beekeeping (he had taken out a patent for an "Improvement in Bee-Hives" in 1849), and collecting (everything from minerological specimens to "a piece of the gallows on which John Brown was executed"). He could also take pride in his file of over 200 letters from friends and co-workers in the abolition and woman's rights struggles.

A stone obelisk in Mount Pleasant's Forest Home Cemetery is regrettably one of the few remaining physical reminders of Joseph A. Dugdale. Even the inscription has nearly been obliterated. With no little effort can one make out the words: "Our Father Joseph A. Dugdale Died Mar. 4, 1896 In His 86 Year. *A champion of freedom.*" □