

You are viewing the archived content of Scholarly Editing, Volumes 33 – 38 issued between 2012 and 2017. [Go to the new site.](#)

[Issues](#) [Editions](#) [Essays](#) [Reviews](#)

[About](#)

THE ANNUAL OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR DOCUMENTARY EDITING
2013, VOLUME 34

*"Will not these days be by thy poets sung": Poems of the Anglo-African
and National Anti-Slavery Standard, 1863–1864*

Edited by Elizabeth Lorang and R. J. Weir

Go to: [Introduction](#) [Poem Index](#) [Edition XML](#)



Mrs. Marian A. Bigelow, "The Martyr of
Freedom, Col. Robert G. Shaw" *The Anglo-
African* (30 April 1864): [4]



[View Poem Image](#)
Full size in new window

THE MARTYR OF FREEDOM,
COL. ROBERT G. SHAW.^[1]

BY MRS. MARIAN A. BIGELOW.^[2]

FAIR in his manhood, an offering he made;
Youthful ambition and talents so high,
All on his country's red altar he laid,
Battling for freedom, for freedom to die.

Beautiful martyr of freedom he stood,
Surrounded by those, the oppressed and the brave;
And blest with the wishes and prayers of the good,
How early alas! he has gone to the grave.

Far south in a city of traitors he fought,
While storming a stronghold of rebels he died;
Winning fresh laurels he heeded them not,
With a race of oppressed and down-trodden allied.

The oppressed were his brethren—he thought he beheld
The star of their freedom arise to his view;
The oppressed were his comrades and there where he fell,
With a band of true-hearted they buried him too.

His name shall in grateful remembrance be held,
 In the heart of his country his valor shall live;
 In the contest for right and for justice he fell,
 And the fame he has earned is the guerdon we give.

There's a circle, alas! where they mourn for him now,
 The friends of his hearth-stone, the friends of his heart;
 There's one with the orange wreath fresh on her brow,^[3]
 How sad that young and the gifted should part.

Our country will mourn her illustrious dead,
 The banner he loved will be drooping and low;
 And when tyranny hides from the land her dark head,
 And we shall have conquered the traitorous foe;

When the stars of our Union shall brightly shine forth,
 And this wicked rebellion be linked with the past;
 When the bright rays of freedom streaming over the North,
 Dispel all the shadows that slavery has cast;

Then history shall gather up deeds of the brave,
 And with pen of the diamond engraven them here;
 And to those who have cared for and pitied the slave,
 Shall the Martyr of Freedom forever be dear.

—*Northern Christian Advocate*.^[4]

Notes

1. Robert Gould Shaw (1837–July 18, 1863), colonel of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Regiment, the first regiment of African American volunteers raised in the North, authorized in late January 1863 and mustered into the US service on May 13. Governor John A. Andrew of Massachusetts received War Department authorization to raise the first Northern regiment of African American volunteers in January 1863. Determined to form a model regiment, Andrew took care to select advisers, officers, and recruiters with antislavery convictions or connections; he offered Shaw the regiment's colonelcy at the end of January, on the basis of the young captain's military record and his wealthy family's influence in reform circles. Shaw turned Andrew down; he did not have abolitionist principles to trump his strong attachment to the Second Massachusetts Infantry. His mother persuaded him to think again.

Under Shaw's command, the regiment took shape at Camp Meigs in Readville, Massachusetts. On May, 28, 1863, after weeks of training, the men paraded through Boston's cheering streets and then embarked on the steamer *De Molay*, bound for South Carolina's Sea Islands and the theater of war. July 18, 1863, Shaw and the Fifty-Fourth courageously led a frontal attack on Morris Island's Fort Wagner. Their bravery could not compensate for General Quincy Gillmore's poor planning; the assault failed, and 272 members of the regiment were killed, wounded, or taken prisoner (Russell Duncan, ed., *Blue-Eyed Child of Fortune: The Civil War Letters of Col. Robert Gould Shaw* [Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999], 52). Northern newspapers reported that Fort Wagner's Confederate garrison had buried Shaw in a mass grave with his men. Abolitionists reinterpreted the Confederate gesture of contempt as a mark of distinction. Shaw's parents made known their wish that his body should not be disturbed: "We would not have his body removed from where it lies surrounded by his brave & devoted soldiers, if we could accomplish it by a word" (letter dated August 3, 1863, quoted in Duncan, 54). →

2. Marion Albina Bigelow, born Marion Albina Purmont in 1822 in New Hampshire. She married the Reverend Andrew Frank Bigelow in 1847. She and Andrew had eight children, and Marion died in New York in 1891. According to an obituary published in the *Northern Christian Advocate* of August 13, 1891, she "was for many years a regular contributor to the *Ladies' Repository*, the *Northern Christian Advocate* and other Church periodicals."

In 1853 Andrew edited a collection of her verse, *The Northern Harp: Containing Songs from the St. Lawrence, and Forest Melodies* (New York: Carlton and Phillips), which apparently drew on earlier collections of her poetry. In his editor's preface, Andrew wrote that "Mrs. Bigelow has been for several years a regular contributor to the columns of several periodicals," which have published "nearly three hundred" of her "poetical productions." In preparing *The Northern Harp*, Andrew reported examining "more than a thousand manuscripts" (3). He offered scant specific biographical information, focusing instead on archetypal aspects of Marion's character in describing her life, particularly her suffering of loss and her fortitude. Significant other details of Marion's life are scarce. ➤

3. Annie Kneeland Haggerty Shaw (1835–1907). Haggerty married Robert Gould Shaw on May 2, 1863, in New York City's Protestant Episcopal Church of the Ascension. The couple returned to Boston on May 9. Before the end of the month, Shaw and the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Regiment left Camp Meigs for South Carolina. ➤
4. A regional paper of the Methodist Episcopal Church, based in Auburn, western New York. Founded as the *Northern Advocate* in 1841 by the Reverend John E. Robie, the weekly was edited by Rev. Freeborn G. Hibbard, then by "radical" abolitionist Rev. William Hosmer (Ray Allen, *History of the East Genesee Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* [Rochester, NY: Published by the Author, 1908], 33; Ralph A. Keller, "Methodist Newspapers and the Fugitive Slave Law: A New Perspective for the Slavery Crisis in the North," *Church History* 43 [1974]: 320, n6). It was purchased by the Methodist Book Concern in 1844; renamed the *Northern Christian Advocate*, it became an official church organ (Allen, 33). Rev. William Hosmer returned to the *Advocate* in 1848 and continued as editor until his reelection was blocked by a conservative faction that objected to his antislavery program at the General Conference of 1856. Hibbard was installed as Hosmer's replacement; during his editorship (1856–1859), the *Advocate* claimed 10,400 subscribers (Howard A. Snyder, *Populist Saints: B. T. and Ellen Roberts and the First Free Methodists* [Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006], 370, 544). Hibbard was succeeded by Isaac S. Bingham (1860–1863) and Dallas D. Lore (1864–1874) (Allen, 34). In 1872 the paper moved from Auburn to Syracuse. It closed in February 1917. ➤



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).
Sponsored by the [Center for Digital Research in the Humanities at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln](https://centerfordigitalresearch.org/). ISSN 2167-1257

