



For the first time, a biography of William Cooper Nell, and a major portion of his articles which were published in the *Liberator*, *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, *Pine and Palm*, and the *North Star* have been published in a single volume. This book entitled William Cooper Nell: Abolitionist, Historian and Integrationist: Selected Writings, 1832-1874, has been edited and published by the late Dorothy Porter Wesley and her daughter, Constance Porter Uzelac. Nell was so talented a writer that William S. McFeely, in his book on Frederick Douglass stated that Nell "missed his calling. A born reporter, he carried his writing pad with him wherever he went; in the middle of one of Douglass's speeches, or alone at night in bed, he would toss onto the page his immediate thought. Then he would draw a line under it and, the next moment or the next day, leap to a totally different topic."

Read between the lines about his precarious relationship with Frederick Douglass, his staunch support of William Lloyd Garrison, his admiration of Charles Lenox Remond, his tireless work to improve the intellectual level of the free black, the freedom of the fugitive slave and the recognition of women. Nell, an active abolitionist in the American antislavery conflict; a protester, an activist for equal rights, and an integrationist, was also a business agent, an accountant, and a preparer of deeds and mortgages. He conducted the *Liberator's* employment bureau for free blacks and fugitive slaves. As the secretary for numerous organizations and conventions, he edited their proceedings and wrote many of the resolutions, presented toasts, often made brief statements at various conventions and meetings and delivered lectures. He served as a subscription agent and contributor to many newspapers including the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, the *Weekly Elevator*, the *North Star*, the *Provincial Freedman*, and the *Pine and Palm*, and for six months he was the publisher and printer of Frederick Douglass's *North Star*. Through his letters to William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Amy Kirby Post and Jeremiah Burke Sanderson, he painted the daily activities of the Massachusetts abolitionists and their visitors in the Antislavery office. His breadth of writings included articles, editorial comments, obituaries, biographies, notices of meetings, convention and meeting reports, pamphlets and books

Donald Jacobs, historian, wrote that "Nell was the arch-integrationist, perhaps the most vehement black integrationist in all the free states, and his views fit in well with Garrison's." Partly for this reason, Garrison was more than willing to open up the *Liberator's* pages to Nell and his ideas, especially after Nell's return from Rochester. Article after article appearing in the *Liberator* during the 1840/1870's bore the Nell signature, and the paper's point of view in relation to local black affairs was often colored by Nell's own attitudes.

Nell, acknowledged by Carter G. Woodson as the first Black historian to compile information on Black Americans, wrote his first publication Services of Colored Americans, in the Wars of 1776 and 1812, in 1851, with a second edition in 1852; later enlarged and published as Colored Patriots of the American Revolution, With Sketches of Several Distinguished Colored Persons: To Which Is Added a Brief Survey of the Condition and Prospects of Colored Americans, 1855; the next publication Triumph of Equal School Rights. Proceedings of the Presentation Meeting held in Boston December 17, 1855; Including Addresses by John T. Hilton, Wm. C. Nell, Charles W. Slack, Wendell Phillips, Wm. Lloyd Garrison, Charles Lenox Remond, 1856, honored him for his efforts in desegregating Boston's public schools in 1855. His determination to honor Crispus Attucks was realized with the printing of the program of the Boston Massacre, March 5th 1770; That Day Which History Selects as the Dawn of the American Revolution; Commemorative Festival at Faneuil Hall, Friday March 5, 1858; Protest Against the Dred Scott Decision. Boston, E.L. Balah, 1858; he continued programs honoring Attucks for many years. His exposure of voting qualifications in New York State appeared in Property Qualification, Or No Property Qualification: A few Facts From the Record of Patriotic Services of the Colored Men of New York, During the Wars of 1776 and 1812, With a Compendium of Their Present Business, and Property Statistics, 1860, and an additional publication further celebrating more colored patriots entitled The Loyalty and Devotion of Colored Americans in the Revolution and War of 1812. Boston, Wallcut, 1861.

After emancipation in 1865, and the final December 23rd issue of the *Liberator*, in which he published 'Farewell to the *Liberator*', Nell felt he had accomplished most of his goals. He continued publishing historical and biographical information and enjoying the balance of his short life.

In 1864, the U. S. Congress passed Charles Sumner's Bill S.237 integrating the U. S. Postal Service and Nell became the first of his color to become a non military federal employee when he was hired by John Palfrey to work at the Boston Post Office in 1863.

A man of many interests, Nell was a believer in spiritualism, an avid reader, and a book collector

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William Cooper Nell – one of the most important, prolific, and understudied African-American activists in the struggle against slavery – has finally found his voice. This is due to the recent publication of *William Cooper Nell: Selected Writings, 1832-1874* (Black Classic Press), the product of several decades of passionate and painstaking work by editors Constance Porter Uzelac and her late mother, Dorothy Porter Wesley, a renowned pioneer in African-American history and bibliography.

The volume reprints 519 Nell documents, telling his documentary tale from the beginning of his public career in the American antislavery movement until his death during Reconstruction. A wide variety of documents appear in the edition, including speeches, editorials, and letters to and from other important figures such as Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and Wendell Phillips, as well as more obscure persons. Thanks to the hard work of the editors, a lengthy introduction, a chronology of Nell's life, illustrations, and an index enhance the usefulness of the volume. Furthermore, the editors have corrected numerous dating errors introduced into the documents by archivists of an earlier time.

Having so many of Nell's writings together in one place for the first time, and in such an easily-accessible format, should spur a good deal of scholarly work on his contributions to the cause of nineteenth-century reform. After reading the volume, it is hard not to take seriously Uzelac's claim that "completion of this publication has been a labor of love" (xxix).

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