



Growing Up Abolitionist: The Story of the Garrison Children

Harriet Hyman Alonso

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Much has been written about the life of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879), but relatively little attention has been paid to his wife, Helen Benson Garrison, and their seven children. In *Growing Up Abolitionist*, Garrison's public image recedes into the background and the family's private world takes center stage.

The lives of the Garrison children were shaped within the context of the great nineteenth-century campaigns against slavery, racism, violence, war, imperialism, and the repression of women. As children, they became apprentices of these movements and grew up adoring their dissident parents. Collectively and individually, they carried on their parents' values in distinctive ways.

Their path was not always easy. When the Civil War erupted, the entire family had to come to grips with a basic contradiction in their lives. While each member passionately yearned for the end of slavery, all but the eldest son, George, who served as an officer with the 55th Massachusetts Colored Regiment, opposed military participation.

The Civil War years also brought four marriage partners into the Garrisons' lives—Ellen Wright, Lucy McKim, and Annie Anthony (all abolitionist daughters) and Henry Villard, a German-born journalist who later became a railroad magnate and publisher of the *New York Evening Post* and the *Nation*.

Raised by loving parents to be political activists, the Garrison children, as adults, assumed positions as leaders or participants in those radical causes of their day that most closely reflected their upbringing: racial justice, women's rights, anti-imperialism, and peace.

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