

Rev. Samuel Ringgold **Ward** and Judge E. T. **Foote**
By Douglas H. Shepard, April 2015

Rev. Samuel Ringgold **Ward** (1817 – 1866) and his parents fled from slavery in 1820. He became a Congregationalist minister, an abolitionist, a writer, an editor, and a well known lecturer. He was living in Warsaw (Wyoming County) NY at the time of the following letter to Judge Elial T. **Foote** (1796 – 1877) of Jamestown (Chautauqua County) NY. The letter, transcribed as follows, is preserved in the anti-slavery collection of [the Foote papers](#).

Warsaw Mar 6 '45

*Hon. E. Todd **Foote***

My dear Sir

My health has been such since we parted at Ellington that I have not been able to fulfil [sic] all my appointments. The roads are in such a state now, that I can not move my family, and I have no claim upon the house I now occupy longer than till the 1st of April. I must, therefore, move before that day. I promised to be at Westfield. In order to do so I am obliged to postpone moving [until?] my return from your county. It seems necessary that I should after the Westfield meeting return in the course of 2 weeks, about the 26th, not spending an entire month with you just now, unless you should desire my going back into Chautauque, after a few days. You are at liberty to make 14 appointments for me succeeding the convention.

The Liberty ticket is elected entire, in China [today's Arcade (Wyoming County) NY], except one constable.

hastily yours

*Saml R. **Ward***

Ward's "appointments" were to give anti-slavery lectures in various locales in Chautauqua County. A subsequent letter of 22 March 1845 from Samuel **Hall** (1783 – 1862) of Brocton (Chautauqua County) NY to E. T. **Foote** explains that **Ward** did attend the meeting in Westfield, probably on Thursday 13 March, and then went to Salem X Roads (today's Brocton), lecturing there on Friday evening. He lectured each evening thereafter through 22 March, when he was at Fredonia. On 20 March, he had lectured at today's Stockton (Chautauqua County) NY, then known as Delanti. **Hall's** letter stated that while **Ward** was in Delanti, he stayed at the home of Mr. B. [Benjamin] **Miller**.

A second letter from Samuel R. **Ward** at Brocton to E. T. **Foote** in Jamestown, transcribed as follows, was written during this tour. It is also preserved in the anti-slavery collection of [the Foote papers](#).

Salem X Roads Mar 18 '45

Hon. E. T. Foote

Sir

Capt **Hall** [probably Samuel **Hall**] showed me a line from you which he received this morning or last evening. I like your suggestions in the main. I am pleased to hear, and to weigh the suggestions and criticisms of experienced men. I always take it for granted that Anti Slavery men in their several localities know better what is adapted to their peculiar regions, than a stranger.

So far as the church is concerned, however, it may be that the different positions, you and I have occupied, and the different relations we have sustained for the last 9 years, operate as a ground of honest and conscientious difference of views, feelings, and opinions, betwixt us. I can see nothing but bald inconsistency in demanding of the Political Parties, that they should be true to the claims of the downtrodden, and that their abominable guilt and hipocrisy [sic] should be repented of, or honest men should abandon them, while the church may remain unchecked, unexposed, and either partially, or fully apologised [sic] for, in her pro-slavery position, and character, obeying man, as she does more than God, in the matter of slavery. I feel as much called upon as a christian minister to demand Christianity of the churches, as to demand Republicanism of the Parties, or a Politician. I look upon pro slavery as irreconcilable with both Republicanism & Christianity, the one as destitute of the Law of Love, as the other is of the doctrines of '76. And if honest men can not sustain the one guiltless, I see not how the existence of the other can be justified.

Nevertheless the matter of secession or the contrary, I leave for every man to judge of, in his own case. I neither urge it nor deprecate it, I do not, even, advocate it, on the one hand, nor object to it on the other, in my public exhibitions of truth unless, indeed, my own personal positions in regard to this matter, is taken into the account and even here, Judge **Foote** will bear me witness, that when at Jamestown where he supposed I was "too severe upon the churches" I did so little as defining my own position, as to leave a doubt on the mind of Rev. Mr. **Ferris**, as to whether my ecclesiastical connexions [sic] were pro slavery, or anti slavery.

From a careful review of the subject I am obliged to conclude, that the "severity" of which my excellent and kind hearted friend complains, is a simple recital of the facts, connected with, and forming the pro slavery history of the American church for the last 14 years, which facts I freely admit are calculated to convey the same impressions of duty, in reference to the church, that similar facts do in reference to the pro slavery parties.

I beseech you, however, not to think your suggestion unkindly received. I am receiving, continually, suggestions of the opposite character, from Wesleyan

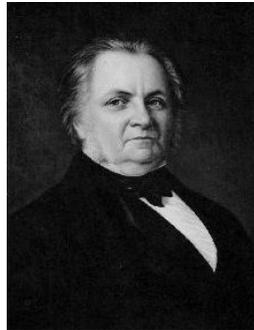
brothers. I accept and discuss all, but only adopt such as are accordant with my own convictions of duty. A course, the propriety of which I doubt not, you will readily perceive.

Appointments are made up to the time for my return, next week. As I wrote you from Warsaw, I am obliged to move my family the next week and must return, to attend to that, and other, private business. I am much embarrassed by not knowing certainly when I am to perform another months labor in this county. Other counties make applications, I can give them no answer, and so, time is lost. If Chautauque has my labors at all during the ensuing year, she must say, at once, during what months she wants them or leave it to my own discretion. July and August will be too busy for meetings. We have then but 6 months of this political year, and I want to dispose of them to the best advantage to the cause.

Very sincerely

Your humble & obt Sevt

Saml R Ward



Rev. S. R. Ward Hon. E. T. Foote