

By the end of 1841 Quincy had a population of 2686 people and boasted of 414 frame and log buildings, 138 brick buildings and 2 stone buildings.

QUINCY ABOLITIONISTS

Some of the prominent men of Quincy from the very beginning were anti-slavery in sentiment. Quincy's founder John Wood helped defeat a proposed pro slavery convention in 1824.¹⁰ By 1833 with the arrival of Asa Turner, Joseph Holmes and Eells, the anti-slavery group organized. When an anti-slavery convention was called in 1837, Turner, Rufus Brown, Dr. Eells, Willard Keyes, Joseph Holmes, William Kirby, and Ezra Fischer attended as delegates. In 1839, The Adams County Anti-Slavery Society elected Dr. Eells as President.¹¹

1842 was the year that focused attention on Dr. Eells and his abolitionist views and activity. On August 21, 1842, Dr. Eells assisted a run away slave from Missouri know as "Charley" in his escape attempt from his wealthy MO owner, Chauncey Durkee. Dr. Eells provided dry clothes and attempted to transport Charley to Dr. David Nelson's Mission Institute on north 24th Street, where Eells taught classes. The carriage was intercepted and Charley ran off and was later captured in Samuel Pearson's stable. After Charley's wet clothes were found in Dr. Eells carriage, Dr. Eells was arrested, taken before Justice of the Peace Asbury and after two days of examination on August 23/24, 1842, Dr. Eells was held on bail for appearance in Circuit Court to be held in September in Quincy.¹²

When the Grand Jury met in September, Dr. Eells was indicted under the State statue for harboring and secreting a fugitive slave as stated in Section 14 of the Criminal Code of Illinois.

Trial was scheduled for October 1842 but was postponed until the next term because Dr. Eells' wife was confined with a nervous fever and it was feared that the excitement of the trial might endanger her life. Missouri pro-slavery elements secured an indictment against Dr. Eells in Lewis County, MO and rewards were offered for the delivery of Eells to Missouri. The Missouri request for the arrest and extradition of Eells to Missouri was initially refused by Governor Ford of Illinois. An order for extradition of Dr. Eells to Missouri was signed by Gov. Ford in January of 1843. Dr. Eells reportedly traveled in hiding to Chicago where he remained until his Chicago and Quincy friends and supporters were able to convince Gov. Ford to cancel the order. Dr. Eells returned to Quincy to await his trial.¹³

¹⁰ Asbury, "Reminiscences of Quincy, Illinois", p 33.

¹¹ Conover & Gauthier "Richard Eells, Quincy Abolitionist". Historic IL, Oct 1990 p10.

¹² Asbury, "Reminiscences of Quincy, Illinois", p 71.

¹³ This information is a compilation of reports of the three sources: Past and Present; Reminiscences of Quincy; and Dr. Richard Eells, Quincy Abolitionist; Finkelman's "Slavery, the 'More Perfect Union' and the Prairie State" presents a sound legal argument for the refusal to extradite-State sovereignty.