

Wilbur Young 12/12/57
Federal Writer's Project
Racial Group

Benjiman Lundy

Benjiman Lundy was born in Sussex, New Jersey on January 4th, 1789. His parents were both members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) His mother whose maiden name was Shotwell died when Ben was five years old. His father remarried soon after.

Young Lundy even as a child showed a remarkable ambition and a thirst for knowledge. When he reached the age of nineteen, he was taken with bad health and had to change climate. He left Jersey and went to Berks County, Pennsylvania and later to Mount Pleasant, Ohio. He remained here for a while and then left for Wheeling Virginia where he remained for four years as an apprentice to a saddler. He later worked at this trade for a year and a half. However, he still remained an active member of the Society of Friends and it was through the principles of this faith that led him to revolt against the slave trade when he came in contact with it for the first time in Wheeling.

Benjiman Lundy returned to Mount Pleasant, Ohio where he met and married one of the sisters of William Lewis. From this union he had two children and about this same time, he wrote and published his first work. It was a poem which was written in rebuttal to a tirade against matrimony. From here, he moved to St. Clairsville, a little town just ten miles west of Wheeling.

It was at this place that he organized his first anti-slavery movement called the Union Humane Society in 1815 at the age of 26. In a few months time, membership rose to 500 people, the majority of whom were "Friends."

Benjamin Lundy-continued

Lundy also wrote at this time an appeal on the subject of slavery addressed to the philanthropists of the United States which was later published under a fictitious signature. He soon became a regular contributor to the anti-slavery publication called the "Philanthropist" over which paper he later became editor.

In 1819, Lundy went to St. Louis Mo. where the Missouri Question was attracting much attention. (The question was whether or not this new state should incorporate slavery in its state constitution). Here, Lundy devoted much energy and time writing articles and making speeches on the evils of slavery. After a long and bitter struggle, his cause was lost. Slavery was admitted to the new state.

In 1821, he established the "Genius of Universal Emancipation" the first edition of which was published in Stubenville, Ohio. During that same year, he moved to Tennessee. Here he ran into stormy times with his anti-slavery publication and was threatened more than once with bodily injury for his stand against slavery. It was while he was here that he made his memorial jaunt on horseback to Philadelphia Pa, to attend the American Convention for the Abolition of Slavery, he represented the first delegate to that group from the South. This trip served him well for he made many valuable acquaintances many among whom urged him to come to Baltimore.

In the early part of the year 1824, he packed bag and baggage and set out for Baltimore where he lectured on the way in North Carolina, and Virginia on the subject of anti-slavery. These lectures resulted in the formation of many anti-slavery societies in these states.

The first publication of the Baltimore "Genius" came out in October, 1824. It was Vol.4 No.1 and was published monthly.

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After a year's time, the circulation of the publication was such that it became a weekly.

In 1825 while Lundy was in Hayti (Haiti) he received word that his wife had died and that his children was being cared for by friends. This unfortunate event had a sad effect on him for a time which he revealed when he wrote and published a stirring poem to her memory.

In 1828, he traveled from Baltimore to New York and Boston on a lecture tour. It was on this trip that he met and became lifelong friends with William Lloyd Garrison. He met him again on another trip later in that same year and persuaded him to come to Baltimore to assist editing the "Genius". Garrison was not available at that time as he had just taken over a paper in Vermont.

During the following winter of 1828-9, he was assaulted and nearly killed by a slave trader Austin Woolfolk for merely commenting on the latter's conduct. The case was taken to court and Lundy was told that he received nothing more than he deserved and also charged a libel suit against the paper. However, the jury refused to indict the defendant.

In 1829, he made a second trip to Haiti taking along 12 emancipated slaves. Prior to this, assisted in delivering 88 slaves to their freedom. During this same year, Garrison came to Baltimore and took over the editorship of the "Genius" and immediately landed in jail on a charge of libel. He wasted no time in returning to Boston upon his release.

From the years of 1830 to 1831, Lundy traveled to Canada and Texas preaching his anti-slavery doctrines as he went and studying the conditions of the Negroes at the same time. While in Texas, feeling was so bitter against him that he was forced to travel incognito. For the following three years, he continued these lecture ~~###~~ tours which carried him as far South as Mexico.

In a perusal of the contents of the "Genius", Lundy reveals his policy in his crusade against slavery in the following resolutions printed in 1825; That all slave holding members of the manumission society who shall heretofore refuse or neglect to educate their slaves, so far as it can be practicable, be excommunicated and no longer be considered members of this society.

In still another issue, the story of Adamson, a twenty-four year citizen of Camden, South Carolina who was shot and killed just after making arrangements to liberate seventy slaves and send them to Haiti was revealed. His death suddenly put an end to this plan.

In the issue of June 3rd, 1826 was the following poem to Lundy's wife:

" O' death, thy keen and fatal dert

Bids anguish wrung from a sorrowing heart".

Esther Lundy was born in Chester County, Pa. on March 26th, 1793 and was the eldest daughter of Henry Lewis, a Quaker.

In 1826, Lundy established himself as an agent to aid slaveholders who were willing to free their slaves by sending them to Haiti, Liberia, and other places.

Lundy moved to Illinois in 1836 to join his children. On the way, he met and became engaged to a young woman from Chester, Pa., the home of his first wife and who was also a member of the Society of Friends. Having been reunited with his family, Lundy in 1839, built a home and printing office in Lowell, Ill. His publication appeared irregularly since he had no help but that of his two sons. However in August of that same year, he took sick and died on August 22nd at 11 P.M. He was buried at Clear Creek in the Friends Cemetary.

Thus Lundy brought to a close a promise made twenty-three years ago to devote his life to anti-slavery cause, a cause which he never

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lived to see fulfilled.

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Benjamin Lundy in appearance was a man slightly under middle age, slight of form, light and rather sandy complexion of hair. He had a sanguine temperment and a cheerful and spritely disposition. His manners were gentle and very unassuming and was afflicted with considerable difficulty in hearing. He was an eloquent speaker and was very convincing in his manner of presenting a proposition. He, along with Garrison were pioneers in the cause against slavery.

Source of Information

Life, Travels, and Opinions of Benjamin Franklin
The Life of Benjamin Franklin