

Few persons know that slavery was abolished in the National Capital April 16, 1862, and the action here is believed to have encouraged, if not prompted, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. The District abolition bill was introduced in Congress by Henry Wilson, Senator from Massachusetts, in 1861. Wilson had been elected successor to Edward Everett and later was elected Vice President on the Republican ticket with U. S. Grant. He had his name changed by the State Legislature with the approval of his parents when he was 21, from Jeremiah Jones Colbaith to Henry Hamilton Wilson. He learned the trade of shoemaker and subsequently became a shoe manufacturer.

Wilson's Abolition Act fulfilled a pledge made 26 years before when he first came to Washington. He boarded for a month on Capitol Hill and visited William's notorious slave pen at Seventh and B streets. "I saw slavery beneath the shadow of the flag that waved over the Capitol," he said. "I saw the slave pens. I left the Capital of my country with the unalterable resolution to give all that I had to the cause of emancipation in America." From Washington he returned to Dartmouth College and at the close of the school year spoke on the affirmative side of the question: "Ought slavery to be abolished in the District of Columbia?" He died in the Capitol and lay in state in the rotunda.

The redemption of the slaves took place in the historic old City Hall, now known as the District Courthouse, where President Harrison—President for a month—is said to have caught the cold which resulted in his death. In this building also was conducted the trial of Guiteau for the assassination of President James A. Garfield. Only slave owners who took an ironclad oath of allegiance to the Government were paid for their human chattels. A veteran slave dealer from Baltimore handled the business in one of the courtrooms. The highest appraisal was \$785 for a good blacksmith and the lowest \$10.95 for a baby. The total estimated value of the slaves was nearly two million dollars, but as only one million dollars was appropriated, prices had to be scaled down. Some of the slave owners themselves were colored. They had been freed and then saved their earnings until they could buy their wives and children out of bondage.