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Senator Benjamin F. Wade and the Influence of Nature, Nurture, and Environment on his Abolitionist Sentiments

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**SENATOR BENJAMIN F. WADE AND THE INFLUENCE OF NATURE,
NURTURE, AND ENVIRONMENT ON HIS ABOLITIONIST SENTIMENTS**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Humanities

By

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY David L. Richards ENTITLED Senator Benjamin F. Wade and the Influence of Nature, Nurture, and Environment on His Abolitionist Sentiments, BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Humanities.

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ABSTRACT

Richards, David L. M.Hum. College of Liberal Arts, Wright State University, 2016.
Senator Benjamin F. Wade and the Influence of Nature, Nurture, and Environment on His
Abolitionist Sentiments.

Senator Benjamin F. Wade was a well-known politician and abolitionist leader of the nineteenth century. This work looks at influences in his life that lead him to become a prominent politician in the antebellum antislavery movement. By researching his hereditary background, education, and the environment that he lived in one may gain an insight into what formed the personality and conscience of a man who came within one vote of being our eighteenth president of the United States.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Senator Wade's voice boomed across the chamber that chilly February day in 1854 as he strained forward on the balls of his feet to deliver his maiden speech in the United States Senate. "You may call me an Abolitionist if you will; I care but little for that; for if an undying hatred to slavery or oppression constitutes an Abolitionist, I am that Abolitionist. If man's determination, at all times and all hazards, to the last extremity, to resist the extension of slavery, or any other tyranny, constitutes an Abolitionist, I, before God, believe myself to be that Abolitionist."¹ With those words the first term senator from Ohio, "Bluff" Ben Wade, made it clear as to where he stood on the South's "peculiar institution."²

By his own admission he was an abolitionist, but abolition was a complex social, religious, and political reform movement in antebellum America. Antislavery religious communities divided over the issue of abolitionism, with conservatives eschewing political agitation in favor of converting society by moral suasion, avoiding any radical changes in the Republic.³ Congregations that disagreed with this viewpoint started breakaway churches and generated a revivalist antislavery reform movement that used political activism to lead to immediate emancipation.⁴ Not a religious man, Wade's antislavery viewpoints evolved from moral beliefs that slavery was an evil and contrary

¹ Benjamin Wade, "Senate speech, Senate of the United States, February 6, 1854, <https://archive.org/details/speechofhbnfwad00wade>

² Hans L. Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade: Radical Republican from Ohio* (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1963), 26.

³ Ryan Jordan, "Comeouters," and the Meaning of Abolitionism in the Antebellum Free States," *Journal of the Early Republics*, 24, no.4 (Winter, 2004), 588-589

⁴ Jordan, "Comeouters," and the Meaning of Abolitionism in the Antebellum Free States," 594-595

to the principles of the country as espoused in the Declaration of Independence. He stated, "Until the laws of nature and nature's God are changed, I will never recognize the right of one man to hold his fellow man a slave. I loathe and abhor the cursed system; nor shall my tongue belie the prompting of my heart." Wade concluded, "Divert yourselves of prejudice, and answer before God, Mr. Speaker, it is because I love and venerate my country, that I wish to wipe away this, her deepest and foulest stain. To be blind to her faults would be weakness, to be indifferent to them unpatriotic."⁵

To be sure, he held the common prejudices of the times against African-Americans, but always accorded to them the dignity of freedom and the recognition of their humanity.⁶ William Westfall, in his essay, "Antislavery as a Racist Outlet: A Hypothesis," proposed that some, but not all, abolitionist were racists who promoted abolitionism to advance an African-free country. Westfall quotes Theodore Parker, "The Anglo-Saxon with common sense does not like this Africanization of America; he wishes the superior race to multiply rather than the inferior."⁷ Louis Filler, quoted by Westfall, says of Wade, "The key to [his] abolitionism--as with many of his companions--was his dislike of the Negroes."⁸ If, as Filler has stated, Wade disliked the negro and used antislavery sentiment as a way of purging America of its African population, his political endeavors to insure their rights throughout America were distinctly hypocritical. When asked on the

⁵ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 36-37.

⁶ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 311.

⁷ William Westfall, "Antislavery as a Racist Outlet: A Hypothesis," *International Social Science Review*, 61, no.1 (winter, 1986), 3-11, 7.

⁸ Westfall, "Antislavery as a Racist Outlet: A Hypothesis," 8.

floor of the Senate if he thought that the slave was equal to the free laborers of the north, Wade replied, “The slave, in my judgement, is equal to anybody else, but is degraded by the nefarious acts and selfishness of the master, who compels him by open force and without right, to serve him alone.” He understood that the Founding Fathers considered slavery best confined to the states where it already existed, fenced in and never extended to into new territories, but never missed a chance to extend to freedmen the liberty that America was founded on.⁹ Within months of the of the Civil War starting, he advocated for the immediate emancipation of the slaves and later civil rights. He completed his evolution to complete abolitionist and civil libertarian with his final campaign for the Senate, a state-wide tour of Ohio, advocating for Negro suffrage. He lost the contest, ending his political career.

George Julian, Wade’s colleague and son-in-law of Wade’s law partner, attributed Wade’s abolitionism to the rhetoric of Theodore Weld, a fiery abolitionist who had crisscrossed the Western Reserve in 1837 preaching the gospel of abolitionism to large crowds. Trefousse states that Wade himself converted many people to the antislavery cause. But Riddle asserts that Wade came by his abolitionist sentiments naturally.¹⁰

Were Wade’s antislavery principles the product of nature, nurture, his cultural environment, or a combination of all three? Were Wade’s views on slavery a convergence of tradition, upbringing, environment, and practical politics? His ancestors had a record of achievement as politicians, religious leaders, and academicians. He was

⁹ Wade, Senate speech, February 6, 1854,
<https://archive.org/details/speechofhonbfwad00wade>

¹⁰ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 31, A. G. Riddle, “Rise of the Antislavery sentiment on the Western Reserve,” *Magazine of Western History*, 7, (June 1887), 151.

raised in an impoverished debtor's community where a man worked hard with his own hands and looked down on no one. His mother provided him a moral and academic education uncommon for ordinary people of the time. His father's adherence to the humanitarian ideals of the Revolutionary War provided Wade with a philosophical grounding in the natural rights of man. As an adult, his time spent as a laborer allowed him to see the world through a working man's eyes. His law professors and partners excited his interest in politics. And finally, his neighbors in the Western Reserve of Ohio provided him the perfect soil to plant his abolitionist roots and nurture them to fruition. Each one of these influences contributed to Wade's abolitionism. Wade found himself sympathetic to the situation of southern slaves because of his life experience.

Persecution, poverty, lack of formal education, backbreaking manual labor, and a lack of political power were aspects of slavery to which Wade related. Taken collectively, they fueled his hatred for the evil institution that was so contrary to his and his family's humanitarian ideals.

Slavery was a festering boil on the soul of the Constitution and its authors. Contrary to the Declaration of Independence and its assertion that “. . . all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. . .,” the southern slave power contended that the Constitution of the United States guaranteed their right to slaveholding as an exercise of “property rights.”¹¹ Benjamin Wade spent his political career lancing the boil of slavery. He was one of five antislavery United States Senators,

¹¹ The Constitution of the United States with index and The Declaration of Independence, Senate Document 105-11, Nineteenth Reprint: 1997.

all from northern states, called Radical Republicans. They were the voice of the growing antislavery movement in antebellum America.

Wade had burnished his antislavery credentials in the 1830s. Partnered with Joshua Giddings in their Jefferson, Ohio law office, the two men became prominent antislavery advocates on the Western Reserve.

Wade began his political career in 1835, running for Prosecuting Attorney of Ashtabula County, Ohio, as a member of the Whig party. The number of transplanted New Englanders in northeast Ohio, a region called the Western Reserve, who identified with the Whig party, guaranteed any Whig candidate a sure victory at that time. As descendants of the Federalists, Whigs advocated for a national bank, internal improvements, public education, transportation projects, a protective tariff on imports, and a strong federal government, all of which Benjamin Wade endorsed. He, however, parted ways with his Whig brothers on business and labor issues. A staunch supporter of human rights, Wade consistently advocated positions counter to the conservative corporate interests of members of the Whig, and later Republican, parties. In 1835, before being elected to any office, Wade displayed his independence when he broke with the Whigs of Ohio over a territorial dispute with Michigan. He decried the apparent war fever that overcame the people of Ohio who felt that the federal government had favored Michigan in the dispute.¹² He chastised the Whigs for their irresponsible calls for nullification of the negotiated settlement.

Agitation of the slavery issue plowed fertile ground for northern politicians in the 1830s and 1840s. The motivations for politicians to join the abolitionist bandwagon were

¹² Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 28-29.

varied. Some, such as Salmon P. Chase, used abolitionism for personal gain, flitting between political parties seeking an avenue for political advancement. Others, like Edward Wade and Joshua Giddings, used antislavery sentiment to form new political parties dedicated to the ending of slavery.

Wade's position on the "peculiar institution" colored his political actions for the rest of his career. Wade opposed extension of slavery into the territories and advocated for free labor. In 1837, Wade's Whig party credentials helped advance his career when the people of the Western Reserve elected him to the Ohio State Senate without his awareness or approval.¹³ In the statehouse he fought against the annexation of Texas, the Ohio Fugitive Slave Law, and for the repeal of the state Black Codes. In 1839 he again displayed his independence from Whig leadership. Ignoring his Whig supporters he championed a Democratic bill for the abolition of debtors' prisons in Ohio. Growing up in the debtors' community of Feeding Hills, Massachusetts, he remembered the hard economic times his parents and siblings had suffered. He took a strong stance against a state fugitive slave law, supported public education for African-Americans, and opposed state subsidies for industry.¹⁴ Even though this independence cost him the next election, he never failed to pursue what he deemed the right course of action over political expediency. He served two non-consecutive terms, during which he proudly flew the antislavery banner in Columbus.

Although Wade diverged from the Whigs on certain issues, he maintained a loyalty to them until the party's demise in 1854. During the 1840s, abolition sentiment

¹³ Albert G. Riddle, "B. F. Wade, the Politician," *Magazine of Western History*, 3 (Nov. 1885-Apr. 1886): 478.

¹⁴ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 38.

steadily increased on the Reserve, spawning abolitionist third party movements such as the Liberty party and, later, the Free Soil party.¹⁵ His brother, Edward Wade, and old law partner, Joshua Giddings, tried to persuade him to desert the Whigs. Edward was well established in Cleveland and a supporter of Oberlin College, an abolitionist stronghold in Ohio, where he embraced the Liberty party's antislavery platform. Wade was unwilling to hang his hat on the single issue of slavery, preferring to work with antislavery Whigs who also shared issues such as a protective tariff, a limited executive branch, and opposed federal sanction of slavery in the territories.¹⁶ This refusal to flirt with a third party contributed to a lifelong estrangement between Wade and his brother.¹⁷ Wade reacted the same way when Giddings tried to enlist him in the later Free Soil party. Relations between Giddings, Edward, and Wade were already strained from a failed financial scheme during the 1837 Panic. Giddings's later abandonment of the Whig party in favor of the Free Soilers completed the permanent rupture between him and his former partner.¹⁸

Wade's antislavery views quickly became known in Columbus and throughout the Western Reserve. His first crusade against the slave power was an attempt to level the playing field for free African-Americans in the state by repealing the "Black Codes." These laws forbade the education of blacks, excluded them from the franchise, disallowed their testimony and jury service in legal proceedings against whites, and prevented their settlement in the state unless they secured a \$500 bond. During the

¹⁵ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 54.

¹⁶ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 54.

¹⁷ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 70.

¹⁸ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 54.

legislative session of 1837-38, Wade and a small contingent of like-minded senators presented petitions from their constituents in an unsuccessful challenge to these codes.¹⁹ Although he fell short of his goal, Wade and others kept the hope for African-American civil rights and justice alive.

Wade also actively engaged the slave power with his objections to the annexation of Texas. Although this was a national issue, Wade was selected for a state senate committee to review and report on petitions from citizens protesting the annexation.²⁰ In his report to the senate he concluded that the annexation was neither useful nor lawful, and was contrary to the true intent of the Declaration of Independence. He saw the Texas question as an underhanded effort by the South to sanction the institution of slavery in federally annexed territories. He concluded, “It is madness to tempt destruction by extending this rotten and wicked system over what are now unpeopled solitudes.” He asserted that it was duplicitous to annex land in the name of the United States for the benefit of slavery. It was too partisan a report, and he had to withdraw it and submit a milder resolution that gained the support of Whigs and Democrats in Columbus.²¹

With abolitionist sympathy on the rise in Ohio, it had become a safe haven for runaway slaves from the border states, especially Kentucky. In 1838, Kentucky state officials came to Columbus to implore the state legislature to pass a fugitive slave law. The lower house passed an exceedingly helpful bill that expedited the return of suspected runaways to their masters, contingent only upon the minimal requirement of filing a warrant with a judge, with no due process or protections for emancipated slaves or free

¹⁹ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 31.

²⁰ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 31.

²¹ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 31-32.

blacks. It had stiff penalties for assisting runaway slaves or interfering in the “legal” extradition of accused individuals. It was sent to the state senate for debate and passage, where Wade made a determined but unsuccessful effort to defeat it.²²

By 1849, Wade’s antislavery convictions had impressed the Free Soil party, which was influential in Columbus at that time. Before ratification of the 17th Amendment in 1913, United States Senators were elected by each state’s legislature. The splinter antislavery Free Soil party, which advocated for free soil, free labor, and free men in the new territories, held the balance of power between Whigs and Democrats in Columbus. They agitated for an antislavery man for United States Senate.²³ Consequently, only an antislavery man acceptable to the Free Soil party was considered, and Wade, even though a Whig, was their man.²⁴ He went to Washington to join the other antislavery senator from Ohio, Salmon Chase, and a handful of other likeminded legislators. Wade served in the Senate eighteen years, from 1851 to 1869. His belief in the need for social advancement in America never faltered. He spoke out against the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska bill, the Lecompton Constitution, and the Dred Scott Decision. In 1854 he reluctantly left the dying Whig party and helped organize the new Republican party. He continued to battle against the expansion of slavery into the territories throughout the 1850s.

The election of 1860 resulted in limited success for the Republican party. Lincoln’s popular vote total for president was less than his three opponents nationwide,

²² Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 35.

²³ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 64.

²⁴ Albert G. Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 2 ed., (Cleveland: William W. Williams, 1888), n. 136.

and the party did not gain a majority in Congress.²⁵ When southern Democrats walked out of Congress, the die was cast for the Civil War. Wade utilized his influence in the Senate and party to push “radical” Republican war policies and objectives, often times at odds with Abraham Lincoln and conservative Republicans. During the war, Wade became the chairman and leading spokesman of one of the senate’s most important committees, the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War (JCCW). This committee had the authority to investigate every aspect of the Union war effort, with subpoena power for “persons and papers.” As its chairman, Wade ran the JCCW in a manner that promoted radical Republican war policies.²⁶ In this committee he influenced the selection of Union officers according to their abolitionist sympathies, harangued President Lincoln for his conservative war aims, promoted abolition, and advocated for the recruitment of African-American troops. Wade manipulated the JCCW’s findings to propagandize in support of Congressional Reconstruction. He used it to castigate General Nathaniel Banks who, as military governor of Louisiana, was forging ahead with President Lincoln’s reconstruction plan.²⁷ Some denounced the committee as a Star Chamber and others applauded it as true civilian control of the military.²⁸ Lincoln’s pocket veto of the Wade-Davis Bill on reconstruction in 1864 angered Wade to the point that he put principle before practical politics with the publication of his Wade-Davis Manifesto, lambasting the president for his veto.²⁹ Arguably, it could be said that Wade

²⁵ Kenneth Bruce Shover, “The Life of Benjamin F. Wade.” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkley, 1962), 111.

²⁶ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 157.

²⁷ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 241.

²⁸ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 157.

²⁹ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 227.

used the JCCW as a weapon to effect social change in America.

Wade came within a heartbeat of being the eighteenth president of the United States. During the impeachment trial of President Andrew Johnson in 1868, Wade, as President *pro tem* of the Senate, was next in line of presidential accession. Again, as with the Wade-Davis Manifesto, he put principle before practical politics. By speaking out earlier on other social issues of the day, such as women's suffrage, labor rights, and rights for immigrants, he created doubt in the minds of several Republican senators as to his presidential qualifications.³⁰ With the acquittal by one vote of President Johnson, and Wade's defeat in Columbus for Senate, Wade's political career came to an end and, perhaps, delayed the implementation of civil rights in this country for a hundred years.

Wade was promoted as a Vice Presidential candidate or cabinet secretary for General Grant in 1868, but his failure to win re-election in Ohio due to his belief in "exact and equal justice for all men without reference to color, condition, or race" may have ended his political career. His exhortation for Negro suffrage while on the stump throughout the state cost the Republicans the statehouse and Wade his Senate seat.³¹ He refused to run for elected office again, but did serve on several government commissions. Ironically, his last political effort in 1876 was in support of Rutherford B. Hayes, who, along with conservative Republicans, compromised with Democrats to close the book on southern reconstruction and usher in 90 years of apartheid in the South.³² He passed away in March of 1878, one of the last original abolitionist warriors to disappear.³³

³⁰ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 7-8

³¹ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 289.

³² Shover, "The Life of Benjamin F. Wade," 331.

³³ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 320.

Scholarship on Benjamin Wade is scarce. Only three biographies have been produced on the man. Albert G. Riddle wrote an initial account of Wade in 1886. He revised his work in 1888. Riddle's *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade* is one of the few primary sources for Wade. Six years younger than Wade, Riddle was born in Massachusetts, was an antislavery ally colleague of Wade's in Congress, and lived on the Western Reserve of Ohio. He became an attorney and served in the United States Congress with Benjamin and Edward Wade. Riddle was with Wade at the First Battle of Bull Run when he and Wade attempted to stem the route of the Union Army. This friendship with Wade and his family offers us a rare glimpse into the life of a man who destroyed all his personal papers out of principle. Riddle tells us that Wade was a modest man, one who did not blow his own horn or wear his successes on his sleeve. Wade was not a believer in monuments to men. As such he was a "careful, persistent destroyer of all the ordinary means from which his own personal history could be composed or a memoir of his time and associates. . ."³⁴ Slanted in Wade's favor, this biography formed the foundation of all subsequent works on Wade. Other than Riddle's work, the primary sources left to researchers were Wade's speeches, letters to friends, official records in the *Congressional Globe*, and newspaper articles of the day.

The other two biographies are useful secondary source material. They are valuable for their references to other primary source documents such as individual memoirs, government records, and news accounts. Ken Shover wrote a detailed account of Wade's life and political career in his 1962 Ph.D. dissertation *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, while Hans Trefousse produced a later biography *Benjamin Franklin Wade*:

³⁴ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 13.

Radical Republican from Ohio, in 1963, chronicling Wade's life and his political sympathies.³⁵ Trefousse is the most recent historian to examine Wade's life and politics in a biography. Published during the resurgent civil rights movement in 1963, his work was an attempt to correct the previous view of Wade as a vindictive bully and hater of all things southern. Trefousse reevaluated Wade as a humanitarian and patriot fighting for the cause "all men are created equal" enshrined in the Declaration of Independence. According to Trefousse, ending slavery and saving the Union allowed no time for timid or weak politicians who compromised away the ideals of our founding fathers.³⁶ He relied on Riddle's admiring work plus papers of Wade's associates, contemporary accounts of the day, and government documents as references.

T. Harry Williams's 1941 *Lincoln and the Radicals* focused on Radical Republicans in general and the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War in particular. In his work, Williams indirectly examined Wade's life as part of his argument on the corrosive effects of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War that Senator Wade chaired. He critically scrutinized the role of the Committee on the Union's war effort and Lincoln's conducts as Commander-in-Chief. His view of Wade is as a thorn in the side of Lincoln and a nuisance to the conduct of the war. Bruce Tap's 1998 work *Over Lincoln's Shoulder: The Committee on the Conduct of the War* offered a fairer view of Wade and the committee's work.³⁷

³⁵ Kenneth Bruce Shover, "The Life of Benjamin F. Wade." (Ph. D. diss., University of California, Berkley, 1962.)

³⁶ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 9.

³⁷ Bruce Tap. *Over Lincoln's Shoulder: The Committee on the Conduct of the War*. (University Press of Kansas, 1998) and Williams, T.H., *Lincoln and the Radicals*. (Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1965.)

In 1954, Mary Land authored an article for the *New England Quarterly* titled “Bluff Ben Wade’s New England Background.” In it she examined Wade’s New England roots as a source for his uncompromising and sometime self-destructive, political stands. She attributed these stands to his Puritan background and belief in the revolutionary ideals of his ancestors. He considered the Declaration of Independence an antislavery document. She argued that Wade was converted to the abolitionist cause when he heard Theodore Weld speak at a Jefferson, Ohio rally.³⁸

Riddle, Land, Shover, and Trefousse all identify, to some degree, Wade’s Puritan roots and background as the source of his abolitionist feelings. Riddle and Trefousse asserted that Wade came by his abolitionism naturally. They did not venture into a nature/nurture examination of Wade’s “abolitionist roots.” Land came closest in her work when she wrote, “Puritanism and the virtues of the Revolutionary forefathers as he saw them, combined to create the ethic which governed his stormy life.”³⁹ Historian David Donald contributed to the Wade debate indirectly with his work “Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists.” In it he profiled abolitionist leaders as young, of New England heritage with famous ancestors, Federalist in political hue, enthusiastic for higher education, of moderate income, and of restless religious affiliation.⁴⁰

The argument over the respective roles that nature and nurture play in development of human personality has been on-going. The purpose of this paper is not to rehash which had a more pronounced influence on Wade’s character. Social scientists

³⁸ Mary Land, “Bluff Ben Wade’s New England Background,” *The New England Quarterly* 27, no.4 (Dec. 1954): 509.

³⁹ Land, “Bluff Ben Wade’s New England Background,” 509.

⁴⁰ Donald, David Donald, “Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists,” *Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959): 27-28.

and biologists have debated the effects of each in the formation of human personality traits.⁴¹ The history of this debate has seen the evidence for nature (heredity) and nurture (education, experience, or environment) swing back and forth.⁴² Advances in genetics and psychology have provided scientists in both fields with an ever increasing understanding that they are closely related in a multidirectional reciprocity.⁴³ This work seeks to draw together and integrate the various aspects of Wade's nature, nurture, and culture for a possible explanation of his antislavery sentiments.

⁴¹ Arnold Sameroff, "A Unified Theory of Development: A Dialectic Integration of Nature and Nurture," *Child Development*, 81, no.1 (Jan. /Feb. 2010): 6-22, 6.

⁴² Sameroff, "A Unified Theory," 7.

⁴³ Sameroff, "A Unified Theory," 6.

II. ANTISLAVERY SENTIMENT IN NEW ENGLAND CULTURE

The actions of individuals in any particular cultural environment are determined by the outcome they aim to achieve. Human behavior is not only a product of nature and nurture, but also social conditions.¹ It combines innate temperament, individual experience, social learning, and external conditions. Contemporary researchers have determined that environmental influences that are outside of the nurturing family, i.e. culture, contribute to an individual's personality.² Slavery was such an issue that conflicted with the environmental or cultural norms of a community in nineteenth century New England and western states. Wade readily adapted to the familiar New England inspired culture in Ohio, particularly on the Western Reserve where he eventually settled. This environment may have lent itself to his abolitionist leanings.³

Donald argued the view that radical antislavery leaders were predominantly of New England origin. He noted that eighty-five percent of abolitionists came from northeastern states, sixty percent of them were from New England, and that a full thirty percent of abolitionists were from Massachusetts alone. Wade fit this profile, as did many of the settlers on the Western Reserve. These statistics can help us understand the antislavery environment that developed on Ohio's Western Reserve, with its predominantly New England-born population, in the antebellum period.⁴ In his senate speeches, Wade acknowledged the influence of his Ohio constituents in general, and the

¹ Larry Arnhart, "The New Darwinian Naturalism in Political Theory," *The American Political Science Review* 89, no. 2 (Jun., 1995): 393-394.

² Costa, "Nature over Nurture: Temperament, Personality, and Life Span Development," 176.

³ Arnhart, "The New Darwinian Naturalism in Political Theory," 393.

⁴ David Donald, "Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists," in *Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1959), 27.

people of the Western Reserve in particular, on his thinking. In one, he argued, “. . . the northern mind, imbued with the principles of liberty, is unable to see the force of your claim and title to slaves.”⁵ In another he recognized the weight that his constituents accorded to the slavery question.⁶

The economic conditions in western Massachusetts had never been good and after the War of 1812 they became even worse. These conditions forced many New Englanders to migrate to the Western Reserve of Ohio.⁷ In 1820 the Wades moved westward to Ohio. It was a change of physical environment for the Wade family, but in some ways not a change in social environment from Feeding Hills, Massachusetts. The Western Reserve of Ohio was steeped in the traditions and culture of New England.⁸ That culture originated with the earliest Puritan settlers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. By the 1800s gradual emancipation was an accepted answer to the slavery question in New England. To understand antislavery sentiment in the Western Reserve, and thus Wade’s turn to abolition, it is crucial to briefly revisit New England’s involvement in slavery.

New England Puritans faced a dilemma on the question of slavery. Slavery of one kind or another had existed in New England since the founding of Massachusetts in 1630. Captured Native Americans, indentured servants, and enslaved Africans constituted the unfree labor pool of the Puritans. Native Americans proved to be unacceptable as forced

⁵ Wade, Senate speech, February 6, 1854.
<https://archive.org/details/speechofhonbfwad00wade>

⁶ Wade, Senate speech, March 3, 1854.
<https://archive.org/details/speechofhonbfwad00wade>

⁷ Kenneth Bruce Shover. “The Life of Benjamin F. Wade.” Ph. D. diss., University of California, Berkley, 1962, 1.

⁸ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 51.

labor and the supply of indentured servants was limited. Around 1638, African slaves first appeared in the records of New England.⁹

Slaves in New England labored as family servants, craftsmen, and farm hands. Puritan piety required that masters treat their slaves as family members. Provisions of the New England Confederation required that slaves had “. . . all the liberties and Christian usages which the Law of God, established in Israel concerning such persons doth morally require.”¹⁰ Puritan ministers such as Samuel Willard of Boston’s Old South Church and Cotton Mather saw African slaves as part of Massachusetts’s familial and spiritual traditions.¹¹ With Puritanism’s influence on all aspects of life in the colony, theocratic scripture and ministerial pronouncements abetted abolitionist endeavors in New England.

Massachusetts was founded as a semi-theocracy where Puritanism substantially contributed to aspects of community and everyday life.¹² John Winthrop’s 1630 sermon, “A Model of Christian Charity,” preached that service to God ensured His blessing on the Puritan community.¹³ Winthrop preached that God’s will was served when the general welfare of the community was considered a priority over the private good of individuals.¹⁴ The community that performed God’s work prospered economically and spiritually.

Building upon Old Testament legal mores, the legal system that developed in

⁹ Lorenzo J. Greene, “Slave-Holding New England and Its Awakening,” *The Journal of Negro History* 13, no. 4 (Oct., 1928): 493-495.

¹⁰ Greene, “Slave-Holding New England and Its Awakening,” 501.

¹¹ Christopher Cameron, “The Puritan Origins of Black Abolitionism in Massachusetts,” *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 39, no. 1/2 (2011): 83.

¹² Cameron, “The Puritan Origins of Black Abolitionism in Massachusetts,” 81.

¹³ Jonathan Winthrop, *Winthrop’s Journal: History of New England 1630-1649*, 2 vols., ed. James Kendal Hosmer (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908).

¹⁴ Jonathan Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity,” 1630.

Massachusetts adopted standards that, although not outlawing slavery, mandated the benign treatment of “servants.” It criminalized their mistreatment drawing in particular on key passages from the book of Exodus.¹⁵ Exodus 21:20 asserts, “If a man strikes his male or female slave with a rod and he dies at his hand, he shall be punished.”¹⁶ And Exodus 21:26-27 commands, “If a man strikes the eye of his male or female slave, and destroys it, he shall let him go free on account of his eye. And if he knocks out a tooth of his male or female slave, he shall let him go free on account of his tooth.”¹⁷ Legal principles derived from these and other Bible passages allowed slaves to petition for redress of grievances and their own freedom.¹⁸ Thus, Puritan religious convention contributed to laws that defined the rights of bondsmen in Massachusetts, influencing the theology and social theories of families such as the Wades.

In 1641, the Bay Colony adopted the first of these laws into its legal system. Codified in its statute book, *Body of Liberties*, it defined who was a legal slave in the eyes of God. Persons taken prisoner in war, those who sold themselves, and persons sold to others were considered legitimate bondsmen. This injunction was tested in 1645, when Massachusetts judges freed several slaves who had been kidnapped in Africa on the Sabbath and brought to the colony. Included in the statute was the requirement that these people “. . . shall have all the liberties and Christian usages which the law of God established in Israel concerning such persons doth morally require.” This obligation was acknowledgement that slaves were human beings entitled to God’s law as expressed in the Bible. In 1646, *Body of Liberties* was revised to allow Africans to challenge their

¹⁵ Cameron, “The Puritan Origins of Black Abolitionism,” 94.

¹⁶ Exodus 21:20 KJV.

¹⁷ Exodus 21:26-27

¹⁸ Cameron, “The Puritan Origins of Black Abolitionism,” 80.

enslavement. The relevant code in this revision provided that all men “whether Inhabitant or foreigner, free or not free” had the right to file a legal complaint in court contesting their condition of servitude.¹⁹ In 1652, Rhode Island’s legislature passed a law limiting servitude to ten years or the age of twenty four if the enslaved person resided in the colony.²⁰ This liberal application of law allowed slaves to petition for a redress of grievances in Massachusetts and Rhode Island and laid the foundation for outlawing slavery.

By the eighteenth century, the general attitude in Massachusetts on slavery was changing. Some Puritan ministers asserted that slaves were a part of their master’s family and God’s family on earth.²¹ As such, it was a duty of their masters to minister to a slave’s spiritual well-being as well as to their physical well-being. Prominent Puritan minister Cotton Mather wrote in “A Good Master Well Served” that virtuous masters were obligated to provide for their “servants” sustenance, livelihood, discipline, and, most importantly, their soul. Mather believed that “masters indeed should be fathers unto their servants,” instructing them in piety and Christianity.²² Humanitarian attempts to ease the condition of African enslavement came primarily from orthodox Puritans.²³ This covenant with God was the theological foundation for much of the antislavery rhetoric of the time.²⁴ This recognition of humanity and Christian responsibility was a weight on the Puritan conscience and laid the foundation for outlawing slavery, a foundation inherited

¹⁹ “The Massachusetts Body of Liberties,” <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/masslib.html>, accessed 3 Apr. 2016.

²⁰ Bernard Rosenthal, “Puritan Conscience and New England Slavery,” *The New England Quarterly* 46, no.1 (March 1973): 70.

²¹ Rosenthal, “Puritan Conscience and New England Slavery,” 82.

²² Rosenthal, “Puritan Conscience and New England Slavery,” 83.

²³ Rosenthal, “Puritan Conscience and New England Slavery,” 62.

²⁴ Cameron, “The Puritan Origins of Black Abolitionism in Massachusetts,” 81.

by Wade.

Some Puritans, determined to do God's work on earth, perceived the redemption of souls as a covenant of grace. Cotton Mather, himself a slaveholder, was not antislavery per se, but he was alarmed by the unbaptized mass of African slaves in God's community. He argued that an individual's salvation was unknown; therefore, Africans may be members of God's elect.²⁵ Some masters feared that conversion to Christianity made their slaves eligible for emancipation. The economic interests of New England resisted the baptism of slaves on those grounds, thus hindering the religious argument for salvation.²⁶ Others believed that accepting God's knowledge would make slaves more compliant and accepting of the institution of slavery.²⁷ Still, inspired by the large population of unconverted Africans in their midst, Puritan ministers attempted the conversion of many of them to Christianity. An effort in 1694 to legislate the conversion of slaves was opposed by the wealthier enterprises of New England.²⁸ Although made legal and regulated by the 1643 New England Confederation instrument of government, slavery was economically unsuited to New England. Climate, the general unsuitability of the land for cash crops, and the poverty of the religious refugees from England militated against slavery.²⁹ If slavery was not profitable in the hinterlands of New England, merchants in New England seaports such as Newport, Rhode Island, where Wade's mother grew up, made enormous profits on slave trafficking. Regardless, a number of New England churches baptized and admitted into church membership both free and

²⁵ Rosenthal, "Puritan Conscience and New England Slavery," 64.

²⁶ Rosenthal, "Puritan Conscience and New England Slavery," 63-65.

²⁷ Cameron, "The Puritan Origins of Black Abolitionism," 84.

²⁸ Rosenthal, "Puritan Conscience and New England Slavery," 64.

²⁹ Greene, "Slave-Holding New England and Its Awakening," 501-502.

enslaved Africans.³⁰

In 1700, Samuel Sewall, noted for his role as a judge in the Salem witch trials, wrote the first antislavery pamphlet in the colonies, *The Selling of Joseph*. The heartfelt plea from no less a person than Judge Sewall for the freeing of slaves highlighted the immorality of slavery, but received condemnation from other noted men of the time. Judge Sewall noted that liberty was second in importance to life, and that no man should be deprived of his God-given liberty except under extreme circumstances. He argued for the equality of all men as sons of Adam, foreshadowing the Founding Father's argument that "all men are created equal."³¹ Judge Sewall's proscription against slavery struck a chord among the pious Puritans of New England. Some argued for the conversion of slaves to Christianity as a way of doing God's work. This sparked a conversation within the English religious community on the propriety of Christians enslaving fellow Christians.

Puritan theology by the mid-eighteenth century contained essential expectations about God and man.³² In 1741 the Great Awakening, led by Northampton pastor Jonathan Edwards, reinvigorated the basic canons of Protestantism: man's sinful character, the requirement for conversion, and the characteristics of grace.³³ Edwards owned and converted slaves, but his theological heirs extended his principles to encompass an antislavery philosophy. These doctrines, taken to their rational conclusions by students of Edwards's New Divinity theology, undermined slavery and reinforced the

³⁰ Cameron, "The Puritan Origins of Black Abolitionism in Massachusetts," 85.

³¹ Samuel Sewall, *The Selling of Joseph, a Memorial* (Boston: Green & Allen, 1700), 1.

³² David S. Lovejoy, "Samuel Hopkins: Religion, Slavery, and the Revolution," *The New England Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (June 1967): 227.

³³ Lovejoy, "Samuel Hopkins: Religion, Slavery, and the Revolution," 231.

abolitionist position.³⁴ Theological considerations about slavery thus played a small, but significant, part in New Englanders' attitudes in the pre-Revolutionary Era. New Divinity theology was espoused and enhanced by a pair of Edwards's disciples: his son Jonathan Jr. and Samuel Hopkins. They applied the abstract theology of Edwards to the real world around them.³⁵ Hopkins had studied with Edwards. He collected a select sample of Edwards's works posthumously and published it in support of an abolitionist message to share God's grace with all men. Hopkins also had a close association with Jonathan Jr., with whom he studied. Jonathan Jr. became active with the antislavery movement at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.³⁶

Jonathan Jr.'s and Samuel Hopkins's antislavery work complemented one another. After moving his ministry to Newport, Rhode Island, Hopkins came face to face with the brutality of slavery and the slave trade. He reformed the senior Edwards's message of true virtue to encompass relationships between all men, highlighting the inhumanity of slavery. Jonathan Jr. similarly wrote and preached an antislavery message and encouraged other ministers to likewise repudiate the cruel practice.³⁷ Both men framed their message in the same political context that American patriots used against the tyranny of Great Britain. Puritan theocracy, therefore, was one impetus for New England's antislavery sentiment, but not the only one.

In 1767 Nathaniel Appleton, a candle maker, made an economic argument against slavery in his tract *Considerations on Slavery*. Like Edwards Jr. and Hopkins, Appleton

³⁴ Kenneth P. Minkema and Harry S. Stout, "The Edwardsean Tradition and the Antislavery Debate, 1740-1865," *The Journal of American History* 92, no.1 (June 2005): 49.

³⁵ Minkema and Stout, "The Edwardsean Tradition," 50.

³⁶ Minkema and Stout, "The Edwardsean Tradition," 51-52.

³⁷ Minkema and Stout, "The Edwardsean Tradition," 51-53.

had an unquestionable Puritan background. His father was ordained as a minister by Increase and Cotton Mather, had a Doctorate of Divinity degree from Harvard, and was commonly called upon to arbitrate religious differences among theologians.³⁸ This family environment gave Appleton credibility with allies in the clerical camp and enemies in the economic camp. Appleton's arguments covered the issues of immigration, cost, defense, and moral principles. The exploitation of slave laborers from Africa kept Europeans from migrating to America in search of work and opportunity. These immigrants, free laborers, did not have to be bought and cared for by a master, thus reducing the cost of labor to business owners. White Europeans could explore, settle, and develop the new lands of America as well as participate in colonial defense. And finally, the morality of Europeans was lowered to the level of "inferior" African slaves as a consequence of slave wages imposed by other Christians.³⁹ Appleton's arguments for free land settled by free labor echoed throughout the abolition movement.⁴⁰ Wade used the same argument ninety years later in the United States Senate.⁴¹

In the decade before the Revolutionary War, American colonists increasingly bristled at the British Parliament's attitude that the colonists were second class citizens of the Empire. This feeling of oppression and denial of equality was cause for the American colonists to agitate for their independence from the British Crown.⁴² Appleton pointed out the inconsistency of Americans engaging in the enslavement of an entire race while

³⁸ Rosenthal, "Puritan Conscience and New England Slavery," 72.

³⁹ Nathaniel Appleton, and James Grainger, *Considerations on Slavery: In a Letter to a Friend*. (Boston: Edes and Gill in Queen-Street, 1767), 12-13, <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/N08260.0001.001>, accessed 19 Dec. 2015.

⁴⁰ Rosenthal, "Puritan Conscience and New England Slavery," 74.

⁴¹ Benjamin Wade, speech in the U. S. Senate, Washington D.C., 3 March, 1854, <https://archive.org/details/speechofhonbfwad00wade>.

⁴² Lovejoy, "Samuel Hopkins: Religion, Slavery, and the Revolution," 227.

protesting their lack of liberty under colonial rule.⁴³ The duplicity of a slave-owning society that begged for liberty from a foreign ruler brought the issue of natural rights and the rights of man front and center in the slavery question. A debate in 1773 at Harvard exposed the corruptness of the pro-slavery argument, and, even though an antislavery bill had been defeated in the state legislature, the increasing unpopularity of slavery among the people was evident.⁴⁴ This issue hung over the Founding Fathers throughout their deliberations on the meaning of liberty and governance. New England fathers of the American Revolution were aware of the comparisons between British domination of the colonies and the realities of chattel slavery. A pastor of the Second Church in Boston, John Lathrop, argued that Parliament's control in the colonies would leave Americans as slaves with "a tiny fraction of their hard earnings, to support a miserable existence."⁴⁵ John Adams opined that the British Parliament would transform colonists into "the most abject sort of slaves." A Connecticut advocate of independence wrote that Parliament would leave the colonists in "abject slavery" and vulnerable to chains and the lash. Simeon Howard, a New England clergyman, made claims that the British wished to "divide and enslave" the colonists. With the realization of these external threats from Parliament framed in the language of chattel slavery, New Englanders turned their eyes toward the evil reality of slavery in their midst. A door was opened to this truth on July 14, 1774, when Reverend Samuel Webster of Salisbury, Massachusetts alluded to elements of the African slave trade and slavery itself to warn his countrymen that their pleadings for liberty would be unanswered until they alleviated the suffering of the "poor

⁴³ Appleton, *Considerations on Slavery*, 18.

⁴⁴ Rosenthal, "Puritan Conscience and New England Slavery," 75.

⁴⁵ F. Nwabueze Okoye, "Chattel Slavery as the Nightmare of the American Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (Jan., 1980): 14.

and oppressed” in their midst. A thanksgiving sermon delivered by Joseph Emerson of Pepperell, Massachusetts alluded to African slavery when describing conditions such as loss of liberty, loss of home, unhappiness, and lawlessness developing between the Americans and British.⁴⁶ The truth of the evilness of slavery was recognized and debated in New England.

The application of Puritan theology to the legal system in the Bay Colony influenced the trajectory of the abolitionist movement throughout New England. The use of the legal system as codified in *Body of Liberties* resulted in legal emancipation for some slaves. These “Freedom Suits” rested on various issues, such as non-fulfillment of contract, physical abuse, parental heritage, scripture, and natural rights. Between 1700 and 1783, thirty of these suits were adjudicated in court, almost all of which resulted in the emancipation of the plaintiffs.⁴⁷ Petitions for redress of grievance were another route to freedom. Slavery continued to draw support in New England from moneyed interests, but was slowly legislated out of existence by gradual emancipation. This was accomplished by a combination of the intelligentsia, as represented by the clergy, and the white working class of New England; first in Massachusetts in 1780, then Rhode Island in 1784, and Connecticut in 1789.⁴⁸

This New England environment developed what historian Edmund Morgan called a “Puritan Ethic.” This ethic, although not confined to Puritan theology or New England, glorified a productive “calling” that enhanced society, the individual, and reinforced a

⁴⁶ Okoye, “Chattel Slavery as the Nightmare of the American Revolution,” 16-20.

⁴⁷ Cameron, “The Puritan Origins of Black Abolitionism,” 96-97

⁴⁸ Rosenthal, “Puritan Conscience and New England Slavery,” 79.

prudent lifestyle. The ethic treated the merchant warily and abhorred the speculator.⁴⁹ The institution of slavery violated this Puritan Ethic by robbing a man of the rewards of his labor and promoting sloth and wastefulness.⁵⁰ Historian Kenneth Lottick described this same environment as the “Connecticut Spirit,” which emphasized the Puritan Ethic as well as the ideals of democracy, education, and equality.⁵¹ These legal, religious, and political prescriptions produced a culture in New England slanted against slavery. It was this environment that was carried westward and modified by the Wades and other people of New England to accommodate life on the newest frontier, the western lands of Connecticut known as the Western Reserve.

The Western Reserve, where Wade eventually settled, is part of the larger Ohio Valley region. Composed of twelve counties in northeastern Ohio, it was the western frontier of Connecticut until taken by the federal government to form the Free State of Ohio in 1803. By royal charter, Connecticut held claim to western lands until well after the Revolutionary War.⁵² In 1786 Connecticut yielded the majority of its western territory to Congress, but reserved 3.5 million acres “bordered on the north by the lake [Erie], east by the Pennsylvania state line, south by the 41st parallel and on the west by a line a hundred and twenty miles west of, and parallel to, the Pennsylvania border, as a Connecticut “Reserve.”⁵³ Connecticut designated 500,000 acres, the Firelands, in the

⁴⁹ Edmund S. Morgan "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution." *The William and Mary Quarterly: A Magazine of Early American History* 24, no.1, (1967): 4-11.

⁵⁰ Morgan, “The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution,” 22.

⁵¹ Kenneth V. Lottick, “The Connecticut Reserve and the Civil War,” *History of Education Journal* 8, no. 3 (spring, 1957): pp 92-104, quote on p 95.

⁵² Eric Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 28.

⁵³ Harriet Taylor Upton, *History of the Western Reserve*, 3 vol. (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1910), 1:9.

west of the Reserve to compensate Connecticut refugees of the war in the hope that they would lead the way to settlement of its western territory.⁵⁴

In 1795, Connecticut sold the Western Reserve to the Connecticut Land Company. In 1800 Congress assumed governmental responsibility for the civil and political integration of the Reserve into the Ohio Territory as a means to enhance settlement.⁵⁵ Even so, the Western Reserve was slow to attract settlers. By 1788, southern Ohio had two significant thriving settlements along the Ohio River at Marietta and Cincinnati, while Conneaut and Cleveland were not established on Lake Erie until 1796.⁵⁶

Settlement of the Western Reserve developed with the arrival of New England pioneers. It proved a hazardous undertaking. Wade may have believed, as historian Frederick Jackson Turner argued, "The Frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin . . . In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man."⁵⁷ Harry Shaffer offered a slightly different interpretation of the role of the frontier environment, "It was not western life in and of itself, then, that shaped American culture; it was rather a fusion between the European background and the

⁵⁴ Upton, *History of the Western Reserve*, 1:10

⁵⁵ William Sowell Mills, *The Story of the Western Reserve of Connecticut* (New York: Brown & Wilson Press, 1900), 91.

⁵⁶ Mills, *The Story of the Western Reserve of Connecticut*, 14.

⁵⁷ Harry Forrest Lupold, "The Western Reserve as a Section in American History," *The Great Lakes Review* 7, no.1, (1981): 25.

experience of the frontier.”⁵⁸

Until the mid-nineteenth century the Reserve was populated almost exclusively by New Englanders, with few recent immigrants and fewer African-Americans.⁵⁹ Never a part of the Northwest Territory, its isolation and identification with Connecticut, made it a unique cultural section of Ohio with a haphazard design of settlement that resulted in isolated but durable pockets of New England culture.⁶⁰ Even though some settlers came by way of Pennsylvania and New York, they carried their New England roots with them, much as the Wade family. They lived in a homogenous society of pioneers moving west from New England, who brought with them their religious, political, economic, educational, moral, and work ethics. The townships carved out of the Reserve imitated the New England style of political organization with the township, governed by three trustees, as the basic political building block. The legal system was of the Old English pattern with one or more Justices of the Peace and constables. Township business was conducted at the yearly meeting of qualified resident voters. The township supervised highways, welfare of the poor, fence-riders, and common school districts, all hallmarks of New England organization.⁶¹

These first generation settlers were a resourceful, prolific, and intellectual community of farmers, with enough mercantile, manufacturing, and professional men to provide for the needs of the pioneers.⁶² These pioneers of the Reserve were first and

⁵⁸ Lupold, "The Western Reserve as a Section in American History," 25.

⁵⁹ William Cox Cochran, "The Western Reserve and the Fugitive Slave Law; A Prelude to the Civil War," *The Western Reserve Historical Society Collections*, no. 101 (Jan., 1920): 79.

⁶⁰ Lupold, "The Western Reserve as a Section in American History," 29.

⁶¹ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 53.

⁶² Cochran, "The Western Reserve and the Fugitive Slave Law," 78.

foremost farmers who harnessed the land to their ends. They tackled the virgin forests of Ohio, hacking out clearings for homesteads and fields. To provision a family farm was an extremely laborious task. Yet they came to the Western Reserve, “Where nothing dwelt but beasts of prey, or men as fierce and wild as they.”⁶³ In 1803, Ohio became the seventeenth state in the United States. Despite this change it was not commercially viable for settlement until internal improvements such as the Erie and the Ohio-Erie Canals in the 1820s relieved the area of its economic isolation. A European tourist in 1822 wrote in his journal, “I was much disappointed upon my arrival in this state, to find it so much more thinly settled, than from all accounts I had heard, I had reason to expect, and to discover so few marks of wealth, and so frequent and great appearances of poverty and distress.”⁶⁴

Pioneers in the Western Reserve were a hardy lot. Because of the connection with Connecticut most of the early settlers were New England in character. Descendants of Puritans who had made the hazardous voyage from England to the New World to colonize New England, they had the fortitude and resourcefulness to carve a new life out of the Reserve.⁶⁵ They were explorers of a new frontier. They brought with them their views, changed and modified by the frontier to be sure, of life, its meaning, and values. One settler’s opinion of the Reserve was that it “was for many years . . . the home of various *-isms*, the vagaries . . . of a people, noted throughout the land for this distinctive

⁶³ H. M. Addison, “Monroeville, Past and Present,” *The Fire Lands Pioneer* 13 (July 1878): 77.

⁶⁴ Zerah Hawley, *A Journal of a Tour through Connecticut, Massachusetts, New-York, the North Part of Pennsylvania and Ohio, Including a Years Residence in that Part of the State of Ohio Styled New Connecticut or Western Reserve* (New Haven: S. Converse, 1822), 27.

⁶⁵ Mills, *The Story of the Western Reserve of Connecticut*, 101.

feature, so that whoever had a hobby elsewhere rejected, rode it straightaway to the Reserve, where it was quite certain of hospitable pasturage and shelter.”⁶⁶ The religious revivalism of the Second Great Awakening and reform character of New England was one that clearly found a hospitable home among the people of the Reserve.

Mary Land asserts in her work “John Brown’s Ohio Environment,” that the environment on the Reserve influenced the abolitionism of John Brown.⁶⁷ Historian Alfred Matthews said about the Reserve, “It is not too much to say that the region was the most conspicuous and detested piece of abolition territory in the United States, and that in zeal and accomplishment the Puritans of northern Ohio equaled, if they did not surpass, the Puritans of New England and the Quakers of Pennsylvania.” He further stated that the Underground Railroad had more safe houses in the Western Reserve than in any other location of comparable size.⁶⁸ A biographer of Joshua Giddings, Walter Buell, described the Reserve as “. . . a community so firm and fearless; so impatient of wrong and injustice; so liberal and enlightened, that from it spread the influence which the Western Reserve so early began to exert over the opinions and in the counsels of State and Nation. . .” He went on to comment that the Western Reserve, if not the geographical center was the moral center of Ohio and said of northeast Ohio, “The antislavery spirit was stronger there than anywhere in the United States.”⁶⁹

In 1832 a controversy among trustees and faculty for Western Reserve College at Hudson erupted over abolition. The twelve trustees, eleven of which were native New

⁶⁶ A. G. Riddle, “Rise of Antislavery Sentiment on the Western Reserve,” *Magazine of Western History*, 7 (May-Oct., 1887): 145.

⁶⁷ Mary Land, “John Browns Ohio Environment,” *Ohio History Journal*, on-line, accessed 13Apr. 2016

⁶⁸ Alfred Matthews, *Ohio and Her Western Reserve* (New York, 1902), 175.

⁶⁹ Walter R. Buell, *Joshua Giddings: A Sketch* (Cleveland, 1882), 16 and 153.

Englanders, were ardent supporters of the American Colonization Society. They valued stability, harmony, and consensus at the institution and in the community, unwilling to become involved in abolitionism. The younger faculty was committed to immediate abolition as espoused by William Lloyd Garrison. They believed, as Garrison did, that slavery was a moral sin and immediate emancipation was the only remedy for restoration of grace.⁷⁰ Also conforming to Donald's profile as being born between 1790 and 1810, this younger generation of immediate abolitionist clashed with the well-established colonization-supporting trustees.⁷¹ The controversy ended with a modus vivendi between the two factions after some faculty resigned, most notable among them immediate abolitionist Elizur Wright, Jr. and Beriah Green. They had been influenced by a young preacher, Theodore Weld.⁷²

Theodore Weld was an evangelizing reformer who had a notable influence on the abolitionist movement as a speaker, organizer, and pamphleteer. He was a student of famous evangelist and reformer Charles Finney. In 1831 Weld went west to the Western Reserve under the hire of the notable abolitionist brothers, Arthur and Lewis Tappan, searching for a site for a new college. He spent time on the Reserve during the controversy at Western Reserve College between 1832 and 1833 before migrating to southern Ohio and the Lane Seminary. Here he led a walkout by students in protest over the administration's racist anti-abolitionist policy similar to those that had precipitated the controversy at Western Reserve College the year before. In 1834, Weld, with fifty of

⁷⁰ Lawrence B. Goodheart, "Abolitionists as Academics: The Controversy at Western Reserve College, 1832-1833." *History of Education Quarterly*, 22, no.4 (Winter, 1982), 421-433, 421

⁷¹ Donald, "Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists," 27.

⁷² James Brewer Stewart, *Joshua R. Giddings and the Tactics of Radical Politics*, (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1970,) 28.

the students from Lane, retreated to Oberlin on the Western Reserve and founded the abolitionist Oberlin College. Influenced by Theodore Weld, it opened its doors in the 1830s to African-Americans and women. From here they spread the abolitionist message on the Reserve and throughout the country.⁷³ Alfred Matthews said that Oberlin was, “. . . exemplification of the new progressivism that had taken hold upon the people. . .”⁷⁴ In later years Wade came to Oberlin’s defense by thwarting a charter revocation, thus keeping the college a center of enlightened thinking.⁷⁵

By the late 1830s, the abolitionist cause was making headway in Ohio. In 1837, the Ashtabula County Antislavery Society had been started by Ben Wade and Joshua Giddings. Wade won election to the state senate that year and Giddings won election to Congress in 1838 as antislavery candidates. The depth of antislavery feeling on the Reserve can be gauged by the fact that Giddings served as Congressman from this area for almost twenty years, even as Whig politicians tried to redistrict him out of office.⁷⁶ James Birney had set up an abolitionist newspaper in Cincinnati and promoted the formation of the antislavery Liberty party in Ohio. He was the party’s presidential candidate in 1840 and 1844. Ben’s younger brother, Edward Wade of Cleveland, bolted the Whig party and allied himself with the new Liberty party. He won election to Congress, along with Giddings, in 1848 as a member of the Free Soil party. Of five abolitionist senators in the United States Senate by 1850, two of them were from Ohio: Salmon P. Chase and Wade. The depth of antislavery feeling in Ohio can be judged by the fact that Chase was a Democrat from Cincinnati in southwest Ohio and Wade was a

⁷³ Goodheart, “Abolitionists as Academics,” 430-431.

⁷⁴ Alfred Matthew, *Ohio and Her Western Reserve* (New York, 1902), 175.

⁷⁵ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 47.

⁷⁶ Stewart, *Joshua R. Giddings*, 29-30.

Whig from Ashtabula in northeast Ohio. This feeling was reinforced when the people of Ohio elected Chase governor in 1855. This was the culture that inhabited northeastern Ohio.

It was here that the Wade family relocated. The familiar New England environment was attractive to the settlers of the Reserve. The majority of them were younger farmers (as were most abolitionists according to Donald) who journeyed into the wilderness to hew out a farmstead, few had a professional background, and even fewer possessed a college education.⁷⁷ But they carried with them the same standards of conscience and culture that prevailed in the east, seasoned with a free men, free labor, and free soil ideology. This atmosphere reinforced the general antislavery attitude of Wade's New England nature and education. This made him and other second generation Reserve settlers more open to the increasing abolitionist agitation on the Reserve and across the country.

⁷⁷ A. G. Riddle, "Rise of Antislavery Sentiment on the Western Reserve," *Magazine of Western History* 7 (May-Oct., 1887): quote on 145.

III. NATURE'S INFLUENCES ON WADE'S ANTISLAVERY SENTIMENT

Some researchers assert that heredity can play a significant role in the personal development of individuals. Researchers have argued that personalities follow natural paths of development essentially free of environmental input.¹ They have found that human behavior has a substantial genetic component that cannot be influenced by environment. They concluded that the internal disposition that has the most evidence of inheritability is "Openness to Experience."² A research team from New York's Mount Sinai Hospital has even found evidence that traumatic life experiences may affect the genes of later generations.³ Possibly, religious persecution, re-settlement in a foreign wilderness, starvation, and threat of attack can be considered experiences that would affect the inheritability of "Openness to Experience."

In Benjamin Wade's case, coming from a long line of professional thinkers, a reform minded tradition of "Openness to Experience" may have been a natural inheritance of his. Donald, in his profiles of abolitionist leaders, cites a connection between antislavery leaders and their ancestors. He highlights that most of those abolitionist leaders had famous ancestors who were described as "of the best New England stock," "of Pilgrim descent," and "of a serious, pious household." Suffering religious persecution in England their forebears braved the hostile environment of the

¹ Paul Costa, M. L. Sanchez-Bernardos, Jesus Sanz, Peter B. Smith, "Nature over Nurture: Temperament, Personality, and Life Span Development," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 78, no.1 (Feb. 2000): 173.

² Costa et al., "Nature over Nurture: Temperament, Personality, and Life Span Development," 176.

³ Helen Thomson, "Study of Holocaust survivors finds trauma passed on to children's genes," *The Guardian*, 21 August, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/aug/21/study-of-holocaust-survivors-finds-trauma-passed-on-to-childrens-genes> accessed 21 Oct. 2015.

New World in order to build a “community of God” in America.⁴ They were leaders in New England society, politics, religion, and education. Although not specifically profiled in his work, Wade’s ancestors qualified in all areas of Donald’s criteria.

Benjamin F. Wade was born October 27, 1800 in Feeding Hills, Massachusetts the second youngest of nine surviving children.⁵ He and his siblings were heirs to a distinguished New England ancestry; the blood of earlier Puritan politicians and New England intelligentsia ran in their veins. Even though of poor circumstances, the Wade brothers succeeded in politics, law, medicine, and education. These accomplishments echoed those of their ancestors. Their lineage traced back to England through Wade’s great-great-great grandfather, Jonathan Wade. Some insight into Wade’s antislavery foundations may be gained by examining the generations that came before him.

Jonathan Wade was born sometime between 1612 and 1614. He and his wife emigrated in 1632 from the Norfolk region of England to Massachusetts.⁶ As a Puritan he shared in the belief that each person was given a role to play in society, some of more importance than others, and that all work was to be the best it could be to fulfill God’s plan. His desire for reform of government and church, along with increasing levels of persecution by these same authorities against the Puritans in the late 1620s and early 1630s, motivated him and many others to immigrate to New England.⁷ This reform-mindedness and experience with persecution was perhaps eventually reflected in Benjamin Wade.

⁴David Donald, “Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists,” 27.

⁵Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 33.

⁶Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 17.

⁷Charles Labarge, “Jonathan Wade: Merchant and Landowner,” *The Wades of Ipswich, Massachusetts 1610-2010*. <https://ipswichwades.wordpress.com/2014/08/09/jonathan-wade-merchant-and-landowner/> accessed 15 June 2015.

By 1656 Jonathan Wade was considered a successful man, well thought of in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. His investments as a merchant and landowner earned him the honor of having “Mister” added to his name. This made him a “gentleman” among the select of Massachusetts, which included the Winthrop, Dudley, and Bradstreet families.⁸ Jonathan’s military prowess, piety, and wealth earned him the respect of the townsfolk.⁹ His substantial land acquisitions made him a prosperous individual and politically connected. Like Ben and other descendants, Jonathan had an interest in politics. He served two terms as a delegate to the Massachusetts General Court.¹⁰ His marriage produced six children, who leveraged their father’s position in the colony to marry into the Puritan elite of New England. One daughter married the Reverend Seaborne Cotton; one son married a daughter of Governor Thomas Dudley; and another son, Nathaniel, married Mercy Bradstreet, the daughter of Governor Simon Bradstreet and Anne Dudley Bradstreet.¹¹

Thomas Dudley, Mercy (Bradstreet) Wade’s grandfather, was highly respected and held in high esteem in England.¹² One source claims he was a descendant of Charlemagne.¹³ He served the English Crown in the French religious wars and married a lady of nobility.¹⁴ Through her he met “several eminent and pious dissenting clergymen” who converted him to “the most sincere and inflexible of the persecuted body of the

⁸ Labarge, “Jonathan Wade: Merchant and Landowner.”

⁹ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 18.

¹⁰ Land, “‘Bluff’ Ben Wades New England Background,” 490.

¹¹ Land, “‘Bluff’ Ben Wade’s New England Background,” 490.

¹² Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 20.

¹³ Raymond F. Dolle, *Anne Bradstreet: A Reference Guide* (Boston, Mass: G. K. Hall & Co., 1990): 38.

¹⁴ Jacob Bailey Moore, *Lives of the Governors of New Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay* (New York: Gates & Stedman Publishers 1848), 275.

Puritans.”¹⁵ Contemporaries of Thomas Dudley remarked that he was an intelligent man who was loyal to God and country.¹⁶ In the matters of religious and political reform, he was confident that only he had the solutions and was uncompromising in advocating for those solutions, a trait that Wade seemed to have inherited.¹⁷ Cotton Mather called Dudley a “devourer of books.”¹⁸ Thomas immigrated to Massachusetts in 1630, where he became “one of the most distinguished of the Puritan settlers of the colony of Massachusetts Bay.”¹⁹ The year 1634 saw Dudley elected governor by representatives of the colonists in one of the first American experiments in representative democracy.²⁰ Perchance, this penchant for politics followed the Wade family.

One Dudley daughter, Anne, wrote poetry and earned the nickname “The Tenth Muse.”²¹ Anne Dudley was the great-great-great-grandmother of Wade. As the daughter of a colonial governor who took a great interest in her education, she was raised and schooled in the best English manner. Married at the age of sixteen to Simon Bradstreet, she was an unenthusiastic immigrant to New England. Her duties to her husband and father required her to leave her royal lifestyle in England for an unknown future in the New World.²² A friend of the “heretical” Anne Hutchinson, Anne Bradstreet was a strong willed woman who suppressed her true feelings in order to conform to the

¹⁵ Moore, *Lives of the Governors of New Plymouth*, 276

¹⁶ Jonathan Winthrop, *Winthrop’s Journal: History of New England 1630-1649*, 2 vols., ed. James Kendal Hosmer (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908), 2-3.

¹⁷ Francis J. Bremer, *First Founders: American Puritans and Puritanism in an Atlantic World* (Durham NH: Univ. of New Hampshire Press, 2012): 67.

¹⁸ Wendy Martin, “Anne Bradstreet 1612-1672.” Queens College, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/anne-bradstreet>, accessed 21 June 2015.

¹⁹ Moore, *Lives of the Governors of New Plymouth*, 273.

²⁰ Winthrop, *Journal: History of New England 1630-1649*, 3.

²¹ Land, ”‘Bluff’ Ben Wade’s New England Background,” 490.

²² Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 20-21.

expected domestic role of the Puritan goodwife.²³ A fondness for scholarship and verse appeared to run in the family. Governor Dudley wrote poetry, Anne's sister, Mercy, wrote at least one poem and Anne's son Samuel also composed verse.²⁴ Anne's father encouraged her scholarly pursuits and she was recognized as a woman of rare literary talent.²⁵ Her education included the classics, such as Homer, Ovid, Sydney, and Milton.²⁶ Her poetry was a staple of her life in New England, portraying her love for husband, family, and friends.²⁷ She was published in England in the 1650s as *The Tenth Muse*, one of the first New World poets.²⁸ Anne's father was also the legal guardian of her future husband, Simon Bradstreet. This marriage joined the Dudley and Bradstreet families.

Simon Bradstreet's father died when he was fourteen. Thomas Dudley took him into his family and raised him. He attended Emanuel College, Cambridge, before he and Anne (Dudley) Bradstreet immigrated to the Massachusetts Bay Colony on the *Arabella* with John Winthrop and Anne's parents. He had a long history of service to the New England colonies, which earned him respect, admiration, and confidence from the people. Upon their arrival in Massachusetts he was appointed an assistant judge. He was active in the affairs of several settlements, including Cambridge and Andover, Massachusetts, and he performed executive duties for the colony, first as a colonial Secretary and later as

²³ Ann Woodlief, *Biography of Anne Bradstreet*, <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/webtexts/Bradstreet/bradbio.htm>, accessed 21 June 2015.

²⁴ Anne Bradstreet, *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, ed. Jeannine Hensley (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), xxiv.

²⁵ Moore, *Lives of the Governors of New Plymouth*, 295.

²⁶ Elaine Showalter, *A Jury of Her Peers: American Women Writers from Anne Bradstreet to Annie Proulx* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2009), 6.

²⁷ Ann Woodlief, *Biography of Anne Bradstreet*.

²⁸ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 21.

Commissioner of the United Colonies in 1643.²⁹ In 1650, he was one of a few leaders in the New England colonies who banded together to preempt a war with the Dutch and Native Americans in New York.³⁰ From 1672 to 1679 he served as deputy Governor and afterwards as Governor till he was ousted and replaced by Sir Edmund Andros in 1686.³¹

The prominence of Jonathan Wade among the Puritan elite in the Massachusetts colony was highlighted by the marriage of his second son, Nathaniel, to Mercy Bradstreet, daughter of Governor Bradstreet and granddaughter of Governor Thomas Dudley. Theirs was an arranged marriage negotiated by Jonathan and Governor Bradstreet. These negotiations ensured that Mercy and grandchildren were well taken care of in the marriage and in case of Nathaniel's untimely demise. With the marriage of Nathaniel and Mercy, the Wade family pedigree was significantly enhanced. Moving to Medford, Massachusetts where his father had significant landholdings, Nathaniel Wade continued his father's pattern of success in New England. Nathaniel involved himself in the politics of the area and served in the local militia, rising to the rank of major in the Middlesex Regiment.³² He was held in high regard by the populace and considered a notable citizen of the town who was allowed to build a family pew in the town meeting-house.³³ The Medford Historical Register called Nathaniel ". . . one of Medford's foremost townsmen. . ." thus affirming his important status.³⁴

With their union, the two families' economic, political, literary, and religious

²⁹ Moore, *Lives of the Governors of New Plymouth*, 378-379.

³⁰ Moore, *Lives of the Governors of New Plymouth*, 381.

³¹ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 23.

³² Charles Labarge, "Friend of the Family: The Bradstreets," *The Wades of Ipswich, Massachusetts 1610-2010*. <https://ipswichwades.wordpress.com/2014/08/09/jonathan-wade-merchant-and-landowner/> accessed 17 June 2015.

³³ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 19.

³⁴ *The Medford Historical Register*, VII, (Medford Historical Society, 1904)

success joined together in a privileged Puritan pair. They raised eight children: Nathaniel, Simon, Susannah, Mercy, Jonathan, Samuel, Anne, and Dorothy.³⁵ Wade's great grandfather was Capt. Samuel Wade. Some sources cite his birthday as 1681, others have it in 1683. Little is known of this generation except that Capt. Samuel Wade married Lydia Newhall in 1706 and fathered eleven children, including Samuel Wade Jr.³⁶

Wade's grandfather, Samuel Jr., married into another prominent New England family when he took Martha Upham as his wife. This introduced into the Wade family another well-known Puritan poet, Michael Wigglesworth. Martha Upham was the daughter of Dorothy (Wigglesworth) Upham and James Upham, and granddaughter of the reputable Reverend Michael Wigglesworth, author of the poem *The Day of Doom*.³⁷ *The Day of Doom* was required reading for generations of New England scholars and school children alike.³⁸ Part of Wade's education in his youth consisted of memorizing his great-great-grandfather Wigglesworth's poem.³⁹ Wigglesworth offered an insight into the motivation and character of Puritan settlers. His parents were god-fearing people who considered England a den of iniquity.⁴⁰ Like others before them, they left their home, family, and friends and undertook a hazardous voyage seeking religious freedom in the New World.⁴¹ They immigrated to the Puritan colony of Massachusetts in 1638

³⁵ James Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary of New England*, 1862, 378.

³⁶ Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary*, 378.

³⁷ Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary*, 541.

³⁸ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 24.

³⁹ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 18.

⁴⁰ Michael Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom; or a Poetical Description of the Great and Last Judgment: With Other Poems* (New York: American News Company, 1867, 6th ed.,) 10.

⁴¹ Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom*, 10.

with young Michael.⁴² Although not a rich man, Michael's father desired that Michael become a highly educated clergyman to repay the Lord their good fortune.⁴³

		Gov. Thomas Dudley							
		1576 - 1652							
Jonathan Wade		Anne (Dudley) Bradstreet & Gov Simon Bradstreet							
c1614-1683		1612-1672		c1602-1697					
Maj Nathaniel Wade		& Mercy (Bradstreet) Wade		Michael Wigglesworth		& Martha (Mudge) Wigglesworth ?			
?- 1707		1647-1715		1631-1705		c1655-1708			
		Samuel Wade & Lydia (Newhall) Wade		James Upham & Dorothy (Wigglesworth) Upham					
	1681-1738		1687-1743	1687-1756		1687-1764			
		Samuel Wade, Jr.		& Martha (Upham) Wade		Rev. Edward Upham & Sarah (Leonard) Upham			
		1715-1788		1714-1785		1710-1797	1720 - ?		
		James Wade				Mary (Upham) Wade			
		1750-1826				1762-1826			
				Benjamin F. Wade & Caroline (Rosecrans) Wade					
				1800-1878	1805-1889				
		sources: Riddle, Land, and LaBarge				Created by my exceptional wife Sandi			

In 1651, Michael Wigglesworth graduated from Harvard College, where he then became a professor. He taught some of the leading clerics of New England, including the Reverend Increase Mather.⁴⁴ He travelled to Bermuda in 1663 for his health, and undertook the study of medicine while there. Married three times and father to eight children, his health issues kept him from preaching.⁴⁵ Taking up a literary career in addition to his pastoral and medical duties, he wrote poetry to spread the Puritan word as he interpreted it, his most famous piece being the Puritan classic *The Day of Doom*.

His poetry reflected the Puritans' struggle with God's favor or disfavor in the

⁴² Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary*, 540.

⁴³ Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom*, 4.

⁴⁴ Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom*, 5.

⁴⁵ David S. Shields, ed. *American Poetry: the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York, NY: Literary Classics of the United States, 2007), 876-877.

conduct of their daily lives. He reminded his parishioners of the corrosive effects of the sins of pride, greed, and especially lust. *The Day of Doom* was a stilted, fire and brimstone Puritan screed against humankind, describing God's ultimate judgement, and it was hugely influential. One of Wade's friends commented on *The Day of Doom*, "Committed to memory, recited, quoted on all occasions; it had much to do in forming the common mind and character of the people."⁴⁶ It reinforced the doctrines of righteousness that all devout Puritans agreed upon at the time. *The Day of Doom* became the first literary "bestseller" in America and resided in most pious households.⁴⁷ The Reverend's daughter, Dorothy Wigglesworth, passed his stern, no-nonsense attitude to her heirs.

In 1709, Dorothy (Wigglesworth) Upham married James Upham; they were the great-grandparents of Benjamin Wade.⁴⁸ The record is quiet concerning the background of James Upham. He may have been a grandson or great-grandson of a John Upham, who arrived in Massachusetts in 1635.⁴⁹ Dorothy and James had two children, Edward and Martha. Martha (Upham) Wade and Samuel Wade, Jr., united the Dudley, Bradstreet, Wigglesworth, Upham, and Wade families in 1741.⁵⁰ It was Martha's second marriage and produced two children for Samuel: Edward in 1746 and James in 1750.⁵¹ James was the father of Benjamin F. Wade.

⁴⁶ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 24-25.

⁴⁷ Stephen Lawson, "About Michael Wigglesworth," Fire and Ice: Puritan and Reformed Writings, <http://www.puritansermons.com/poetry/wigglife.htm>, accessed 20 June 2015.

⁴⁸ Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary of New England*, 542.

⁴⁹ Land, in her work "'Bluff' Ben Wade's New England Background," has Dorothy Wigglesworth married to Samuel Wade, son of Major Nathaniel Wade.

⁵⁰ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 23.

⁵¹ Historical Person Search, Martha Upham, Ancestry.com, http://records.ancestry.com/James_Wade_records.ashx?pid=20555047

By marriage, another transfusion of Upham-Wigglesworth blood came from Martha's niece, Mary, daughter of Martha's brother, the Reverend Edward Upham. Mary's father was a notable scholar and clergyman of the time.⁵² Considered a radical at the time, William Brackney described him as "one of the best educated Baptist clergymen of his era."⁵³ He graduated from Harvard College in 1734, and at the age of twenty five became pastor to a small Baptist church in West Springfield, Massachusetts.⁵⁴ In 1740 he married Sarah Leonard, daughter of Dr. John Leonard, an early American physician.⁵⁵

Reverend Upham served ten years as pastor in West Springfield until a dispute with parishioners caused him to move to more tolerant Newport, Rhode Island.⁵⁶ Upham earned a reputation as a "controversial minister" who's "pedo-baptist beliefs managed to split the local church."⁵⁷ His removal to Newport was awkward because his church in West Springfield denied him a letter of discharge.⁵⁸ Several of the parishioners, relatives of Upham, wrote the congregation of the First Baptist Church of Newport in an effort to reclaim some of the property given to him as compensation.⁵⁹ This complication kept him from being ordained properly in Newport. In Newport, Reverend Upham became

⁵² Land, "'Bluff' Ben Wade's New England Background," 492.

⁵³ William H Brackney, *The A to Z of the Baptists* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2009), 590.

⁵⁴ William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Baptist Pulpit; or Commemorative Notices of the Distinguished Clergymen of the Baptist Denomination in the United States* (New York, NY: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860), 43-44.

⁵⁵ *Papers and Proceedings of the Connecticut Valley Historical Society 1882-1903*, 2 vols. (Springfield, MA: Connecticut Valley Historical Society, 1904), 2:164.

⁵⁶ Brackney, *The A to Z of the Baptists*, 590.

⁵⁷ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 17.

⁵⁸ Brackney, *The A to Z of the Baptists*, 590.

⁵⁹ "Extracts from Rhode Island Colonial Records," *The Newport Historical Magazine* 2, no.1 (July 1881): 36.

Pastor of the First Baptist Church and was instrumental in the founding of Rhode Island College, later renamed Brown University. When offered the presidency of the college, he opted to remain a fellow and founding trustee.⁶⁰ After a dispute over moving Brown University to Providence, Edward and Sarah moved back to West Springfield, Massachusetts with daughter Mary.⁶¹ In 1781, James Wade and Mary Upham married, uniting the notable families.⁶²

These were the ancestors of Benjamin F. Wade. They fit Donald's ancestral profile and represented several generations of Puritan elite. Governors, poets, ministers, teachers, and doctors constituted the family tradition of the Wade family. They claimed leadership positions in politics, religion, education, and the arts. The Dudleys, Bradstreets, Wigglesworths, Uphams, and Jonathan Wade himself created the groundwork for Wade's abolitionism. Jonathan Wade was a merchant, investor, and landowner in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, one of the leading Puritans of the colony. Thomas Dudley and Simon Bradstreet were counselors to royalty, and attained prominence in New World politics as colonial governors. Anne (Dudley) Bradstreet, of genteel birth and educated by royal tutors far above the norms of the time for women, attained literary distinction as the first female poet of the new colonies. She also carried the seed of women's rights, a seed that Benjamin Wade cultivated. Michael Wigglesworth distinguished himself as poet, physician, teacher, and religious man of the New World. Controversial Edward Upham, one of the best educated Baptist clergymen of the time, was a founder and trustee of Brown University.

⁶⁰ Brackney, *The A to Z of the Baptists*, 590.

⁶¹ "Extracts from Rhode Island Colonial Records," 38.

⁶² Land, "'Bluff' Ben Wade's New England Background," 492.

If, as researchers have argued, the trait of “Openness to Experience” is inheritable, then these people contributed to the underpinnings of Wade’s personality and behavior. Although the record is silent about his ancestors’ views of slavery in general or abolition in particular, as the elite of the day, they would have known about the controversy that arose over the issue of slavery in the American colonies. Wade acknowledged his debt to his ancestors’ tradition of fighting oppression when he said, “We inherit it from our heroic ancestors, who, when occasion required it, dragged guilty kings from their thrones, and deprived them of their crowns, because they undertook to trample upon the rights of the people; and we, their descendants, . . . are as ready to vindicate, not only our honor, but our rights, as were our ancestors at any period.”⁶³

⁶³ Wade, Senate speech, “Property in the Territories,” March 7, 1860, <https://archive.org/details/speechofhonbfwad00wade>.

IV. NURTURE'S INFLUENCE ON WADE'S ANTISLAVERY SENTIMENTS

Nurturing influences play a significant part in the development of people's personalities. Nurturing constructs the system under which children's personality evolves. Skills, values, attitudes, and identities are all formed by nurturing effects. Research shows that there is no doubt that in most cases parental influences on child behavior is immeasurable.¹ Dr. Blanche C. Weill stated that testing, ". . . showed that the springs of conduct lie in the early years of childhood, especially in the pre-school period, and that educational forces acting on this plastic material are able to mold it practically at will."²

Donald's analysis of the parents of antislavery leaders found among them an "enthusiasm for higher education." He further states that, although denied a formal education, women made up a substantial force within the abolitionist movement, a condition that fit Wade's mother, Mary. Donald also identified that virtually all abolitionist were confirmed Federalists politically, as was Wade's father, James. In addition, Donald notes that there was a substantial religious influence of Congregationalist-Presbyterianism, Quaker, Methodist, and Baptist teachings among the parents of antislavery leaders, a profile that matches James and Mary.³ The success of the Wade children in the fields of law, politics, education, and medicine were likely influenced by the parental nurturing of Mary and James.

James Wade's relation to Mary Upham made courtship for the two convenient.

¹ Costa, "Nature over Nurture: Temperament, Personality, and Life Span Development," 175.

² Holmes, "Nature versus Nurture in the Development of the Mind." 247.

³ Donald, "toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists," 27-28.

James and Mary were first cousins, a common relationship for many Puritan couples.⁴ How long they had known each other or under what circumstances they courted is unrecorded. They were married in Feeding Hills, which remained the family farmstead for forty years. Together they shaped the early mental and personal development of their son, Benjamin. Mary's devotion to education focused her substantial teaching aptitudes on the survival of the children and family. In that rural setting, a woman's life was dedicated to hard work from before sunrise until after sundown. People familiar with her remarked that she was a smart, courageous, enthusiastic wife and mother. She labored to bear and raise nine children, provided for their sustenance despite the poorest of resources, and toiled endless hours to furnish a comfortable home. Even under these conditions, Mary bore her Puritan past with pride, possibly in the spirit of Anne Bradstreet, while utilizing the meager resources to the best advantage of the family.⁵

Mary lived during an era of change in the status of women and motherhood. Early Puritan tradition envisioned women as helpers, subordinate to their husbands, whose value lay in their relationship with God and man. The Revolutionary Era Enlightenment brought substantial additions to this concept of domestic helper.⁶ Puritans placed a premium on religious instruction and learning, thus motherhood was recognized as a position of high esteem and social significance in the moral and religious upbringing of children.⁷ It encapsulated the labors of women as wives, child bearers, teachers, and

⁴ Land, "Bluff Ben Wade's New England Background," 492.

⁵ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 30-31.

⁶ Ruth H. Block, "American Feminine Ideals in Transition: The Rise of the Moral Mother, 1785-1815," *Feminist Studies* 4, no. 2, (Jun. 1978), 103.

⁷ Marilyn J. Westerkamp, *Women and Religion in Early America, 1600-1850, the Puritan and Evangelical Traditions* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 18.

moral instructors.⁸ As the daughter of a Brown University trustee and Baptist minister, Mary utilized her connections to expand women's power and impact on the family.⁹

Mary fulfilled the role of religious instructor and teacher of moral values well. She extended this education into other roles which influenced the social outlook of her children.¹⁰ Mary's example defined a nurturing motherhood at a time when Enlightenment thinking was recognizing the increased importance of nurturing in society.¹¹ A New England minister, Reverend William Lyman, lionized women's roles when he stated, "Mothers do, in a sense, hold the reins of government and sway the ensigns of national prosperity and glory, and yea they give direction to the moral sentiments of our rising hopes and contribute to form their moral state."¹² Mary's children did much to realize this promise.

Mary gave careful attention to the children's religious education in Protestant theology. They were tested in the stern religious dogma of the day, the origin and nature of man and his relationship to God, sin, and the salvation of man, as preached in the waning days of that dark and frightful doctrine. Wade, never a religious man, memorized his great-great-grandfather Wigglesworth's Puritan classic *The Day of Doom*, and was well versed in the Scripture. Some of the texts studied were of the religious theology of the time. Such tomes as Jonathan Edwards's *On the Will*, Richard Baxter's *The Saints Everlasting Rest*, and Isaac Watt's *On the Mind*, a college level text, were studied,

⁸ Block, "American Feminine Ideals in Transition, 100.

⁹ Westerkamp, *Women and Religion in Early America*, 116.

¹⁰ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 39.

¹¹ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 42.

¹² Block, "American Feminine Ideals in Transition," 115.

memorized, and recited.¹³ Mary had the children study more practical works as well, such as *Dilworth's Speller*, *Pike's Arithmetic*, and *Guide to the English Language*.¹⁴ Her efforts prepared the Wade boys for a larger world.

In Feeding Hills, children attended school a few months during the winter when their labor was not required in the fields. Those few winter months' instruction at the village school was all a poor local boy could expect. The Wade family struggled to send their sons to the village school; consequently, higher education was out of the question for the children of a man in James Wade's circumstances.¹⁵ Mary, however, did not raise her sons to be adults armed with only a limited education. With her father's home nearby, Mary was able to acquire materials and a household library to educate, stimulate, and strengthen her children beyond the standards of the simple village school.¹⁶ She ensured that the children had the best education she could provide with the family's limited incomes. As great granddaughter of poet, minister, and doctor, Michael Wigglesworth, and daughter of Reverend Edward Upham, she understood the importance of education. This literary and academic tradition instilled a passion for educating her children, particularly the sons.¹⁷ While schooling at this time was rudimentary, she ensured that the children learned the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic. With her father's library, Mary tutored them in the subjects of history, science, and art, as well as a working knowledge of finance.¹⁸ She provided them their religious and academic instruction, producing men who became teachers, doctors, lawyers, and politicians.

¹³ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 36-39.

¹⁴ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 41.

¹⁵ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade: Radical Republican*, 18.

¹⁶ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 42.

¹⁷ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 39.

¹⁸ Block, "American Feminine Ideals in Transition," 113.

Mary's religious background and everyday experiences in Newport, Rhode Island may have affected her views on slavery. Born in 1752, her first nineteen years were spent in the busiest slave trading center in the colonies.¹⁹ Newport's distillery industry worked full time to provide the rum needed by the New England slavers involved in the triangular African slave trade. Trading rum on the West African coast for slaves, the slavers transported them to the West Indies to be traded for sugar that was then sold to distilleries in New England. Mary's education was influenced by the antislavery writings of Richard Baxter. He condemned slavery and the very human trafficking that was an everyday sight for her in Newport.²⁰ She made his works required reading for her children.²¹ She was not alone. Although not a concern to a majority of New Englanders who profited from slavery, abolitionism had a dedicated following among the clergy.²² With the slave trade a substantial part of the Rhode Island economy, the ratio of slaves to whites in the colony was the highest in New England, and abolitionist clergymen began to speak up.²³ One of those clergymen, Samuel Hopkins, was a co-religionist of Mary's father, and student of Jonathan Edwards. Jonathan Edwards's "Great Awakening" sermons and teachings were learned by his noted students Samuel Hopkins and Jonathan Jr. Hopkins used the spirit of the Great Awakening to argue against slavery.²⁴ He initiated an antislavery campaign in Newport that spread

¹⁹ Douglas Harper, "Slavery in Rhode Island," *Slavery in the North*, <http://slavenorth.com/rhodeisland.htm>, accessed 27 June 2015.

²⁰ Arthur A. Torpy, "Samuel Wesley, Sr.: A Late Seventeenth-Century English Abolitionist," *Methodist History* 47, no.1 (October 2008): 7.

²¹ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 39.

²² Bernard Rosenthal, "Puritan Conscience and New England Slavery," *The New England Quarterly* 46, no.1 (March 1973): 62.

²³ Harper, "Slavery in Rhode Island," accessed 27 June 2015.

²⁴ Lovejoy, "Samuel Hopkins: Religion, Slavery, and the Revolution," 227.

throughout the colony.²⁵ And Mary spread the message to her children.²⁶ Mary's and the children's antislavery sentiment were affected by these teachings, evidenced by the fact that her two youngest sons, Benjamin and Edward, became early antislavery politicians from Ohio.

James Wade was Mary's partner in the education of their offspring. The patriarchal religious traditions of the time assumed a large role for fathers in the raising of children. Literature of the era designated the father as the primary educator of offspring, but nurture was also a shared obligation with mothers. It was a mutual responsibility of both parents to socialize their children for the benefit of the community.²⁷ It appears that James's area of expertise was ideology and politics. An indication of James's and Mary's political passion was their naming of Wade after a Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin, in 1800. Franklin was an ardent abolitionist and served as President of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery. He was late to the abolitionist cause, having owned slaves in his earlier years. It was not until the ratification of the United States Constitution that Franklin started agitating for the end of slavery and incorporation of African-Americans into the fabric of America.²⁸ James and Mary may have hoped that Wade would rise to a level commensurate with his namesake.

James Wade was born and raised in Massachusetts during the pre-Revolutionary period of agitation against the English Crown. James was described as a strong young

²⁵ David S Lovejoy, "Samuel Hopkins: Religion, Slavery, and the Revolution," *The New England Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (June 1967): 231.

²⁶ Block, "American Feminine Ideals in Transition," 113.

²⁷ Block, "American Feminine Ideals in Transition," 105.

²⁸ Don B. Kates Jr., "Abolition, Deportation, Integration: Attitudes toward Slavery in the Early Republic," *The Journal of Negro History* 53, no. 1 (Jan. 1968): 34.

man, “right-headed” and “well educated, for such that passed for education outside of Harvard.”²⁹ He grew up in this environment of activism in the caldron of revolution that was Boston. He followed James Otis and his teachings.³⁰ In 1761, while arguing against Parliament’s “Writs of Assistance” law, Otis claimed the natural rights of man, black and white, entitled subjects to participate in their own political future, a declaration that was a forerunner of democratic principles.³¹ The Writs of Assistance were a British mandate for Americans to assist the British in enforcing anti-smuggling laws, laws similar to fugitive slave statutes of the next century which Wade railed against.³² Again in 1764, Otis called for the emancipation of African slaves as compliance with nature’s law that all men are freeborn. A year later he referenced a 1739 English law that allowed foreigners who had lived in the American colonies for seven years to become British subjects.³³ John Adams credits James Otis with planting the seed of independence in colonial Americans’ minds.³⁴

James Wade also followed the writings and lectures of both John and Samuel Adams.³⁵ John Adams championed an enlightened view of humanity, one that declared “Human rights are superior to government, that they were rights that cannot be repealed or restrained by human laws,” and a strong form of central government known as

²⁹ Rosenthal, “Puritan Conscience and New England Slavery,” 75.

³⁰ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 27-28.

³¹ James Otis, “Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved” *The U.S. Constitution: A Reader* (Hillsdale, MI.: Hillsdale College, 2012), ConstitutionReader.com, <http://www.constitutionreader.com/> accessed 10 Jan. 2015.

³² Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 28.

³³ Okoye, “Chattel Slavery as the Nightmare of the American Revolution,” 3-28, 22.

³⁴ James M. Farrell, “The Writs of Assistance and Public Memory: John Adams and the Legacy of James Otis,” *The New England Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (Dec. 2006): 537.

³⁵ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 28.

Federalism.³⁶ Adams viewed slavery as offensive and contradictory to the Declaration of Independence.³⁷ His wife, Abigail, detested the institution, writing her husband, “I wish most sincerely there was not a Slave in the province. . . we are daily robbing and plundering from those who have as good a right to freedom as we have.”³⁸ In his later years, Adams realized the threat that slavery posed for the new country.³⁹ A no-nonsense, outspoken politician, he supported a strong central government.⁴⁰ Samuel Adams also opposed slavery. When his niece was presented with a slave woman as a gift he told his niece that the woman must be freed to enter his house. He knew that the freedom he fought for must be realized for African-Americans, too.⁴¹ Samuel Adams, while a Massachusetts legislator, surreptitiously worked for emancipation in that state.⁴² Exposure to the speeches John and Samuel Adams may have influenced an Enlightenment understanding of life and liberty in James Wade.

James endured the presence of British Redcoats, witnessed the first American casualty at the Boston Massacre (an African-American, Crispus Attucks), and the unfair levying of taxes by far-off England.⁴³ James’s temperament rendered him a man of conviction. One of his great-great-uncles had been a captain of Massachusetts cavalry

³⁶ James Grant, *John Adams: Party of One* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2005), 62.

³⁷ John R. Howe Jr., “John Adams Views of Slavery,” *The Journal of Negro History* 49, no. 3 (July 1964): 202.

³⁸ Edmund S. Morgan, “The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (1967): 22

³⁹ Howe, “John Adams Views on Slavery,” 202

⁴⁰ University of Virginia, Miller Center of Public Affairs, accessed Jan. 14, 2015, <http://millercenter.org/president/adams>.

⁴¹ Ira Stoll, *Samuel Adams: A Life* (New York: Free Press 2008), 55.

⁴² Kates, “Abolition, Deportation, Integration: Attitudes Toward Slavery in the Early Republic,” 35.

⁴³ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 28.

and his great-grandfather had been a militia major.⁴⁴ When the time for action against tyranny announced itself he took up arms against the British oppression. He played a significant role as a soldier and sailor in that struggle. James Wade served as a Minuteman. He drilled in the colonial militia and subsequently participated in the battles at Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill.⁴⁵ In these battles James possibly lived and fought in close quarters alongside slaves and freedmen.⁴⁶ He later took the fight to the British on the high seas by becoming a privateer. James Wade seemed as able a sailor as a militiaman, but not as lucky. Privateers captained privately owned and operated vessels that were granted licenses to capture shipping belonging to the British and to sell the “prizes” at auction.⁴⁷ James completed several successful forays against British shipping, living, working, and fighting in close quarters with black sailors.⁴⁸ Eventually he was captured and imprisoned on an English prison ship. He and several other prisoners managed to escape the British and return to Massachusetts.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Savage, *Genealogical Dictionary*, 4:377.

⁴⁵ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 27-28.

⁴⁶ Joseph T. Wilson and Dudley Taylor Cornish, *The Black Phalanx: African American Soldiers in the War of Independence, the War of 1812, and the Civil War* (New York: Da Capo Press., 1994), 30.

⁴⁷ Gary M Anderson. and Gifford, Adam Jr., “Privateering and the Private Production of Naval Power,” *Cato Journal* 11, no.1 (Spring/Summer 1991): 100.

⁴⁸ Robert V. Morris, *Black faces of War: A Legacy of Honor from the American Revolution to Today* (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2011), 10.

⁴⁹ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 28-29. Trefousse referenced Riddle when he wrote about James Wade “. . . escaping from British captivity in a romantic prison break at Halifax”. Riddle actually described the escape thus, “[On the prison ship] he and his fellows conspired against their jailors, overcame, captured them and their ‘old prison hulk’ and made good their escape to freedom and more war.” Research failed to find an incident of a prison ship being captured, but Henry Onderdonk Jr. in his work *Revolutionary Incidents of Suffolk and Kings Counties* reported on a notice from the October 12, 1779 issue of the *New Jersey Gazette* that stated: “Last Wednesday morning, one o’clock, 9 Capts. . .and 2 privates made their escape from the *Good Hope*, prison-ship, in the N. River. They confined the Mate, disarmed the sentinels, and hoisted out the

James Wade's experiences in the war molded his character.⁵⁰ When it was over, he was destitute, a condition common for many veterans, even today. Having fought in three major battles, clashed with the British Navy on the high seas, been captured and escaped, he ended the war with only the clothes on his back and liberty. Unfortunately, it also ruined his finances.⁵¹ Following the war, he traveled until he visited his Uncle Edward Upham and Cousin Mary in West Springfield. After their marriage, James and Mary wrestled a living from the land. Feeding Hills and the area that surrounded it was marginal farmland consisting of sandy soil and rocky hills.⁵² It was described as the poorest settlement around Springfield.⁵³ A native of Springfield called Feeding Hills a "hilly, almost mountainous region, rocky, with a starved, sandy soil, soon exhausted," the bounty of which consisted of huckleberries and wintergreens, fit only for grazing cattle.⁵⁴ James settled down to farming and raising a family in a debtor's community ravaged by war and home to many veterans.⁵⁵ As usual, the cost of the recent war was borne by the people who least could afford it.

The ink was barely dry on the 1783 Treaty of Paris ending the Revolutionary War when Shays' Rebellion broke out. The "rebellion" started in 1782 and centered on Springfield, Massachusetts, over the issue of debtor prisons.⁵⁶ The recent war had left American trade and manufacturing crippled, with the average American bearing the

boat which was on deck." This incidence closely matched what Riddle wrote and did allow James time for "more war" and adventure until it was finished.

⁵⁰ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 29.

⁵¹ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade: Radical Republican*, 18.

⁵² Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 30.

⁵³ Land, "'Bluff' Ben Wade's New England Background," 492.

⁵⁴ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 30.

⁵⁵ Land, "'Bluff' Ben Wade's New England Background," 493.

⁵⁶ Land, "'Bluff' Ben Wade's New England Background," 493.

burden of public and private debt.⁵⁷ Records indicated that a vast majority of the people living in the area at this time paid their highway taxes by laboring on the roads instead of spending scarce cash.⁵⁸ The post-war condition of the new country was one of punishing impoverishment. The economic and political condition of the new confederation of states was perilously close to collapse. Each state issued its own monetary script at highly inflated values making it worthless for debts, and, with no cohesive central government to which people could appeal to, the former colonies acted as sovereign powers that flouted and disregarded the congress, the central government, and other states.⁵⁹ To add insult to injury for the returning veterans, they, who had risked life, limb, and property, found themselves in many cases in debt to creditors who had avoided war service.⁶⁰ The resulting debtor prisons fueled unrest in rural counties against the moneyed conservatives controlling the courts.

No direct evidence linking James Wade to the rebellion has been found, but being a debtor and veteran himself, it is reasonable to assume that he was sympathetic to its aims.⁶¹ Riddle suggested this view when he wrote that, as “a soldier, he must have had some hand in it.”⁶² James was a veteran of the Lexington and Bunker Hill battles, as was the nominal leader of the debtors, Daniel Shays.⁶³ It is likely they knew each other through the local veteran community and may have shared a Federalist political outlook.

⁵⁷ Jonathan Smith, “The Depression of 1785 and Daniel Shays’ Rebellion,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 5, no.1 (Jan. 1948): 78.

⁵⁸ Mason A Green, *Springfield 1636-1886 History of Town and City Including an Account of the Quarter-Millennial Celebration at Springfield, Mass., May 25 and 25, 1886* (Springfield: C.A. Nichols & Co., 1888), 311.

⁵⁹ Jonathan Smith, “The Depression of 1785 and Daniel Shays’ Rebellion,” 78.

⁶⁰ Green, *Springfield 1636-1886 History of Town*, 264.

⁶¹ Land, ““Bluff” Ben Wade’s New England Background,” 49.

⁶² Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 45.

⁶³ Jonathan Smith, “The Depression of 1785 and Daniel Shays’ Rebellion,” 90.

Benjamin Wade grew up within the lifetimes of the Shays' Rebellion participants. He was exposed to memories of that turbulent time from his mother and father, friends, and neighbors. The hard feelings generated by this episode lasted for many years.⁶⁴ Echoes of this cause were heard in the legislation that Wade championed throughout his lifetime. On February 21, 1839, in a major speech against Ohio's Fugitive Slave Law in the state senate in Columbus, Wade explained exactly the influence his parents had in shaping his principles. He stated, "My infancy was rocked in the cradle of universal liberty, and my parents were of the revolution; the earliest lesson I was taught, was to respect the rights of others and defend my own; to resist oppression to the death; neither do nor suffer wrong; to 'do unto others as I would that they should do to me;' and though my venerated instructors have long since passed away, yet the God-like principles which they taught, can never die."⁶⁵ He may have lost his second campaign for the Ohio state senate seat in part as a result of supporting a Democratic bill to outlaw debtor prisons.⁶⁶ His thinking on such issues as federalism and confederation, agrarianism, credit, and speculation were probably influenced by his father's stories and the family's own economic condition.

Wade's first speech after being elected to the United States Senate, channeled the Revolutionary-era forefathers' thinking on slavery, saying that it should be excluded from the territories and states where it did not already exist.⁶⁷ In this same speech he claimed the title of "abolitionist," stating, "So I was taught, and I shall not probably very soon

⁶⁴ Green, *Springfield 1636-1886*, 329.

⁶⁵ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 36.

⁶⁶ Land, "'Bluff' Ben Wade's New England Background," 494.

⁶⁷ Wade, Senate speech, February 6, 1854.

<https://archive.org/details/speechofhonbfwad00wade>

swerve from the faith of my forefathers in this particular.”⁶⁸ When castigating northern supporters of slavery, Wade alluded to a mother’s influence when he said, “. . . they have repudiated the principles under which they were born; they have forgotten the sentiments that they have imbibed even from their mothers’ breasts.” Further on in the same speech he said of slavery’s supporters, “They are all of the same class -- false to the education of their fathers--false to the great principles which have been instilled into them by their mothers from their birth--willing to do anything that will minister to the cupidity of their masters, let the consequences be what they may.”⁶⁹ In a speech on March 7, 1860, Wade channeled his father’s sentiments when he declared, “. . . the framers of our institutions, the fathers of the Republic, all, I believe, without a dissenting voice, (if there were any, I do not know it,) held that slaveholding was against common right, was against natural right, was wrong in itself, and therefore should not be cherished or encouraged.”⁷⁰ With these statements, Wade illuminated the influence that his parents had on his abolitionist sentiments.

Unfortunately for the Wades, change in Feeding Hills never seemed to touch the family in a positive way. The hard times for the family and many of their neighbors in Feeding Hills refused to yield.⁷¹ The lands of the western frontier beckoned to the destitute populations of the seaboard states. They promised a new start for people

⁶⁸ Wade, Senate speech, February 6, 1854.

<https://archive.org/details/speechofhonbfwad00wade>

⁶⁹ Wade, Senate speech, “Plain Truths for the People,” March 13-15, 1858.

<https://archive.org/details/speechofhonbfwad00wade>

⁷⁰ Wade, Senate speech, “Property in the Territories,” March 7, 1860.

<https://archive.org/details/speechofhonbfwad00wade>

⁷¹ Land, “‘Bluff’ Ben Wade’s New England Background,” 498.

through cheap land and economic opportunity.⁷² The oldest Wade brother, James Jr., moved to Watervliet, New York and became a doctor, and, in 1820, Theodore, Charles, and Samuel Wade moved west to the Western Reserve of Ohio.⁷³ Within the year Mary and James, along with Ben and younger brother Edward, ventured west and settled in the Western Reserve as well.

The Wade brothers were well suited for life on the Ohio frontier. Their years of working the farm in Feeding Hills prepared them physically for the grueling work of building a homestead. At the age of twenty-one, Ben Wade was a robust, broad-shouldered, young man who handled the work of felling trees and clearing the land for farming with determination. Farming was a full time endeavor in the summertime, but in the winter months he utilized the lessons learned from his mother to teach school in the township. His marksmanship with a rifle was another attribute that lent itself to survival on the frontier. In the wilderness, a man only ate as well as he shot, and Wade tended to eat well.⁷⁴ Within two years, the ambitious youth had tired of farming and moved on to other labors and lessons.

Reflecting a bit of wanderlust, Wade hired on as a cattle drover. Droving was big business in the frontier west of the time; beef and pork from Cincinnati and the Ohio Valley fed the eastern cities. As pastureland around the eastern cities disappeared because of urban growth, farmers were forced to move west to find pasture sufficient for

⁷² Harry Forrest Lupold, "The Western Reserve as a Section in American History," *The Great Lakes Review* 7, no. 1 (Winter 1981): 30.

⁷³ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 21.

⁷⁴ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin*, 21.

their herds.⁷⁵ Settlers from New England had experience driving large herds of cattle to market in Boston, and they carried this economic activity to the Western Reserve.⁷⁶ As early as 1804 a herd was driven from Canfield in northeastern Ohio to Philadelphia.⁷⁷ For the half century starting in 1806, cattle and droving became staples of the Ohio economy.⁷⁸

An aura of adventure and danger, similar to that of later-day “cowboys,” surrounded the men who drove the herds to the eastern markets.⁷⁹ A herding crew consisted of a “drover” on horseback who was considered the lead man, and up to five “drivers” who walked with the cattle.⁸⁰ Wade made several trips to the Philadelphia stockyards via Steubenville and Pittsburgh. On one of these cattle drives he was almost killed in a stampede. While walking the lead ox of the herd across a covered bridge the cattle spooked and charged at Wade, who quickly climbed the roof rafters to avoid being trampled to death.⁸¹

On his last drive to Philadelphia, perhaps tired of the cattle-driving life, he parted company with his fellow cowboys and traveled to Watervliet, New York. Wade embarked on new endeavors when he arrived at his oldest brother’s residence in Watervliet. Dr. James Wade took his younger brother under his wing, encouraging him

⁷⁵ Paul C. Heinlein, “Cattle Driving From the Ohio Country, 1800-1850,” *Agricultural History* 28, no. 2 (April 1954): 84.

⁷⁶ Heinlein, “Cattle Driving,” 84.

⁷⁷ Heinlein, “Cattle Driving,” 91.

⁷⁸ Heinlein, “Cattle Driving,” 84.

⁷⁹ Robert Leslie Jones, “The Beef Cattle Industry in Ohio Prior to the Civil War,” *Ohio History*, 168, <http://publications.ohiohistory.org>.

⁸⁰ Heinlein, “Cattle Driving,” 92.

⁸¹ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 21.

to undertake the practice of medicine under his guidance.⁸² In the first half of the nineteenth century medicine in America was quite rudimentary. It consisted of “heroic” methods such as bleeding, blistering, and purging a patient.⁸³ Doctors were trained by serving apprenticeships of three years or less; they had few reference books to consult, few medical specific instruments, and no medical degrees.⁸⁴ Whether from a failure to master even the limited medical reading of the time or the gruesomeness of the procedures themselves, Wade soon abandoned this occupation in favor of teaching.⁸⁵ He proved more adept at teaching, perhaps due to his previous experiences and his mother’s lessons.

Despite his aptitude, Wade’s teaching career was short lived. He returned to manual labor, this time working on the construction of the Erie Canal. Seeking to earn funds for his return to Andover, Ohio, and too proud to ask his oldest brother for money, he hired on as a common laborer in the digging of the canal, where he worked alongside recently arrived immigrants for eighty cents a day and a ration of whiskey.

Accommodations for the workers were austere, consisting of rough timber beds *sans* mattresses, in open air cabins. The lack of screens and windows on worker’s accommodations allowed free access for mosquitos from the Niagara swampland.⁸⁶ In this endeavor, Wade learned an appreciation for the struggles and hardships of canal

⁸² Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 65.

⁸³ Andrew H. Beck, “The Flexner Report and the Standardization of American Medical Education,” *JAMA* 291, no. 17 (2004): 1.

⁸⁴ Hugh M. Ayer, “Nineteenth Century Medicine,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 48, no. 3, (September 1952): 234.

⁸⁵ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 65.

⁸⁶ John W. Percy, “The Erie Canal: From Lockport to Buffalo,” *Western New York Heritage Institute of Cansisius* (1993),

<http://www.buffaloah.com/h/erieC/percy/percy.html>, accessed 8 Feb., 2015.

laborers. Their travails went far beyond the poverty that he knew growing up in Feeding Hills. The Erie Canal project also taught him the benefits that accrued from internal improvements and investment in national infrastructure.⁸⁷ New York Senator William Seward commented about Wade: “Whence came the labor that performed that work? I know but one American citizen who worked with spade and wheelbarrow upon those works. Doubtless there are many others, but I know but one, and he, I am glad to say, is a member on this floor--Mr. Wade of Ohio--and one of the most talented senators.”⁸⁸

Wade’s labor benefitted his home district even more than it did his own wallet. The canal opened up previously isolated areas in the Western Reserve to commerce with the eastern seaboard. It facilitated economic development, trade, and immigration along the Great Lakes’ shorelines and the Ohio and Mississippi valleys.⁸⁹ By 1825, the Erie Canal was completed and Wade had earned enough money to return to the Reserve.

Upon his return to Andover, he started upon a career of law and politics. Wade found that his youngest brother, Edward, had undertaken the study of the law in preparation for the state bar exam, nurtured in the effort by such famous men as Elisha Whittlesey, Eben Newton, and Joshua Giddings.⁹⁰ As teachers, their influence on Wade may have adjusted his moral compass on the issue of slavery. Edward shared his law ambition with his older brother, and it was not long before he awakened in Wade the love of books and knowledge inherited from their mother and father.⁹¹ He and Edward were not unlike the vast majority of Reserve residents who valued education to such an extent

⁸⁷ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 22.

⁸⁸ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 65.

⁸⁹ Roy G. Finch, “The Story of the New York State Canals”, State of New York, (State Engineer and Surveyor 1925), 4.

⁹⁰ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 66.

⁹¹ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 22.

that they made schools a top priority in northeastern Ohio. Proportional to the population of the new state, the Reserve had more schools than any other section of Ohio, providing a “liberal education” for its citizens.⁹²

To study law was rare for a person, let alone two brothers, of such lowly circumstances at that time.⁹³ One thing they had in common with most attorneys of the day was a background in education. Whittlesey, Newton, and both Wade brothers had taught school upon their arrival in the Reserve.⁹⁴ Although Wade was known for his clumsiness in public speaking, the reward for becoming a professional man inspired him to overcome his speaking deficiencies and master the profession of law.⁹⁵ Legal study was crucial on the frontier to facilitate one of the essential foundations for the management of the new territories, a rigorous system of law. The people of the Reserve were an argumentative lot.⁹⁶ The need for legal services on the Reserve was steady, although not necessarily lucrative.⁹⁷ In northeastern Ohio the transplanted New Englanders brought with them their system of English common law.⁹⁸ The sketchy record keeping of land speculators and the Connecticut Land Company produced many conflicting land claims which kept the circuit courts busy.⁹⁹ The practice of law in the early nineteenth century was also generally an elite occupation. The gatekeepers of the

⁹² Cochran, “The Western Reserve and the Fugitive Slave Law,” 78.

⁹³ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 82.

⁹⁴ Kenneth Edwin Davison. *Forgotten Ohioan: Elisha Whittlesey, 1783-1863* (Cleveland: Western Reserve University, 1953), 20.

⁹⁵ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 22.

⁹⁶ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 84.

⁹⁷ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 88.

⁹⁸ F. B. Williams, “Proceedings in Error in Ohio before the Code,” *Western Reserve Law Journal* 7, no. 4 (May 1901): 94.

⁹⁹ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 88.

legal profession allowed only a select few to practice at the bar.¹⁰⁰ Less than a fifth of the students who started down the road to a legal profession accomplished their goal.¹⁰¹ Those who earned the privilege to practice the law had demonstrated to a three judge panel an in-depth knowledge of, and aptitude for, defending a client.¹⁰²

Encouraged by his younger brother, Wade started reading law under the premiere lawyers of the Western Reserve, Elisha Whittlesey and Eben Newton. It was a family affair for the Wades, Ben and Edward both read for the firm. It was a privilege to enter the study of law with one of the few law partnerships in northern Ohio. Whittlesey and Newton were early residents of Ohio and founding members of the Ohio state bar. Their law firm produced some of the finest legal minds in Ohio. Their alumni included one of the leading political luminaries of the nineteenth century, Joshua Giddings, in addition to the Wade brothers.¹⁰³ Both Whittlesey and Newton were New Englanders, and as such, shared similar perspectives with other men from that region, as well as the common heritage and values imported from Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Elisha Whittlesey was a pioneer of northeastern Ohio. Whittlesey's fifty years of public service on the local, state, and national stages gave him the opportunity to influence public policies at all levels of government.¹⁰⁴ Born in 1783 in Connecticut, he earned his law degree in 1805 and shortly thereafter moved to Ohio with his new bride. In 1806 he was admitted to the Ohio bar and started a law office in Canfield, Ohio.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 82.

¹⁰¹ Albert G. Riddle, "B.F. Wade, the Lawyer," *Magazine of Western History* 3, no. 1 (November, 1885-April, 1886): 113.

¹⁰² Riddle, "B.F. Wade, the Lawyer," 113.

¹⁰³ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 22

¹⁰⁴ Davison, *Forgotten Ohioan: Elisha Whittlesey, 1783-1863*, 4-5.

¹⁰⁵ Davison, *Forgotten Ohioan: Elisha Whittlesey, 1783-1863*, 200.

From the beginning of his settlement in Canfield, Whittlesey was a leading figure in the public arena, participating in the civil, political, military, and religious affairs of the community. With the New Englanders' fetish for public education, and no legal prerequisite for education in the new state of Ohio, Whittlesey and a committee of Canfield citizens took it upon themselves to vet prospective teachers for employment in the local school.¹⁰⁶

Whittlesey's involvement in politics started in 1806 with his appointment by the Court of Common Pleas to the office of prosecuting attorney for the Reserve, a position he filled for sixteen years.¹⁰⁷ His nationalist political philosophies were evident in the fact that he was one of the last Federalists in Ohio and one of the first Whigs.¹⁰⁸ Riding the circuit as prosecuting attorney gave him the opportunity to cultivate lasting relationships with many important people throughout the Reserve.¹⁰⁹ In 1820, he was elected to the state house. Beginning with his brief state service he supported a program of internal improvements, with a particular interest in canals, and school programs. In 1822 he was elected to the House of Representatives, a position he would hold for sixteen years.¹¹⁰

That same year, Whittlesey invited Eben Newton, an up and coming New Englander, to form a law partnership with him.¹¹¹ Newton, like Wade, came from an impoverished background and had little formal education; however, he did acquire a substantial body of learning from home instruction, his New England upbringing, and

¹⁰⁶ Davison, *Forgotten Ohioan: Elisha Whittlesey, 1783-1863*, 20.

¹⁰⁷ Davison, *Forgotten Ohioan: Elisha Whittlesey, 1783-1863*, 200.

¹⁰⁸ Davison, *Forgotten Ohioan: Elisha Whittlesey, 1783-1863*, 40.

¹⁰⁹ Davison, *Forgotten Ohioan: Elisha Whittlesey, 1783-1863*, 23.

¹¹⁰ Davison, *Forgotten Ohioan: Elisha Whittlesey, 1783-1863*, 41-50.

¹¹¹ Davison, *Forgotten Ohioan: Elisha Whittlesey, 1783-1863*, 109.

teaching school.¹¹² Born in 1795, Newton emigrated from Connecticut in 1814.

Whittlesey and Newton continued in partnership for twenty years, although Whittlesey spent sixteen of those years in Congress. His extended absences necessitated Newton performing the lion's share of the legal business for the partnership.¹¹³ Newton built the firm into one of the premiere law schools of northern Ohio.¹¹⁴

Descriptions of Judge Newton's character paint a portrait of an affable and honest man. This honesty was his signature, whether in public, professional, or private life. As a legislator, he promoted the best interests of his constituents and the state. Throughout his lifetime he was also an ardent supporter of, and contributor to, education. He took an interest in young people, always ready to assist them with his knowledge and generosity. Elected to Congress in 1850, Newton served two years as a representative of his northwestern Ohio district until he was defeated by an old student of his, Joshua Giddings, a Free Soil candidate. In 1862 Judge Newton was again seated as an Ohio state senator and served as Chairman of the Committee on Benevolent Institutions. His position as chairman allowed him to requisition funds for the establishment of an orphanage for troubled youth.¹¹⁵ They were leaders of the Western Reserve and Ohio in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Regarding the abolition of slavery, Whittlesey and Newton fell on opposite ends of the antislavery spectrum, which encompassed many sentiments i.e. colonization on the far right of the spectrum, to immediate emancipation of slaves and integration, with or

¹¹² Ohio State Bar Association, *Proceedings of Annual Meeting of the Association Held at the City of Springfield on the 28th and 29th of December, 1886* (Columbus, OH: A.C. Berlin & Co., 1887), 69.

¹¹³ Ohio State Bar Association, *Proceedings*, 70-71.

¹¹⁴ Davison, *Forgotten Ohioan: Elisha Whittlesey, 1783-1863*, 110.

¹¹⁵ Ohio State Bar Association, *Proceedings*, 70.

without Union, into American life, representing the far left of the spectrum. There were many other religious, economic, social, and moral sentiments in-between.¹¹⁶ Whittlesey was an ardent supporter of colonization and the American Colonization Society (ACS). The idea of colonization of free blacks was resurrected by Virginia state legislator Charles Mercer, a Federalist, in 1816.¹¹⁷ Mercer was neither pro- nor anti-slavery, but he was concerned about free blacks becoming a permanent lower class. This new class of poor, free blacks would never be able to better their social position because of prejudice associated with their skin color.¹¹⁸ Mercer joined with others who also desired to return the Republic to its egalitarian roots and homogeneous, self-governing communities of independent white citizens.¹¹⁹ In cooperation with Presbyterian Reverend Robert Finley of New Jersey, the nationwide ACS was formed.¹²⁰

Whittlesey was a leader of the ACS in the western states. In the early 1830s, a rift developed in the ACS between colonization advocates and immediate abolitionists, led by William Lloyd Garrison.¹²¹ In an 1833 speech to the Tallmadge, Ohio, Colonization Society, Whittlesey railed against abolitionism and the American Anti-Slavery Society as a detriment to the Union and a danger to the Constitution.¹²² In 1839

¹¹⁶ James Brewer Stewart, "Peaceful Hopes and Violent Experiences: The Evolution of Reforming and Radical Abolitionism, 1831-1837," *Civil War History*, 17, no.4 (December, 1971), 294.

¹¹⁷ Donald R. Egerton, "Its Origin is Not a Little Curious: A New Look at the American Colonization Society," *Journal of the Early Republic* 5, no. 4 (winter, 1985): 465.

¹¹⁸ Egerton, "Its Origin is Not a Little Curious," 468.

¹¹⁹ David M. Streifford, "The American Colonization Society: An Application of Republican Ideology to Early Antebellum Reform," *The Journal of Southern History* 45, no. 2 (May, 1979), 202.

¹²⁰ Egerton, "Its Origin is not a Little Curious," 472.

¹²¹ Streifford, "The American Colonization Society," 214.

¹²² Elisha Whittlesey, *An Address Delivered Before the Tallmadge Colonization Society, July 4, 1833* (Ravenna, OH: Ohio Star, July 1833), 24.

he accused abolitionists of agitation for secession after reading an abolitionist sermon that threatened disunion as a solution to the slavery issue.¹²³ His support for colonization and disdain for abolition may have cost him the Ohio governorship in 1840.¹²⁴ On the Reserve, he was a delegate for the Trumbull and Portage colonization societies and was a frequent ACS speaker around the state.¹²⁵ Throughout the decade of the 1850s, Whittlesey was vice-president and chairman of the national American Colonization Society.¹²⁶

Eventually Whittlesey attempted to straddle the divide between the pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces in the ACS. In his opinion, for abolitionists to agitate against property rights as established in the Constitution was sedition.¹²⁷ But adhering to his sworn duty to represent all his constituents in Congress, he regularly presented petitions aimed at outlawing the slave trade in the District of Columbia as an attempt to diminish the slave power's influence in the national capital.¹²⁸ Whittlesey and Wade preserved their friendship and maintained correspondence, even when Wade's attitude on slavery morphed into immediate emancipation after the start of the Civil War.¹²⁹

Unlike Whittlesey, Newton's opinion of abolitionism evolved. In 1837, he and Whittlesey defended a group of men charged with the crime of tarring and feathering an abolitionist. This angered one citizen to such an extent that he offered a \$50 bounty for

¹²³ Fox, *The American Colonization Society*, 148.

¹²⁴ Davison, *Forgotten Ohioan: Elisha Whittlesey, 1783-1863*, 79.

¹²⁵ Davison, *Forgotten Ohioan: Elisha Whittlesey, 1783-1863*, 143.

¹²⁶ Davison, *Forgotten Ohioan: Elisha Whittlesey, 1783-1863*, 150.

¹²⁷ Whittlesey, *An Address Delivered Before the Tallmadge Colonization Society*, 2.

¹²⁸ Davison, *Forgotten Ohioan: Elisha Whittlesey, 1783-1863*, 144.

¹²⁹ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 148.

anyone who tarred and feathered either Whittlesey or Newton.¹³⁰ Perhaps the experience influenced Newton; by 1850 he had changed position on abolition. At an “indignation meeting” in Mahoning County, prominent citizens and political figures from the Reserve, Newton included, signed a resolution against the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Newton considered the law a violation of the Constitution and basic human rights, that people should “unceasingly agitate the question” and refuse to vote for public officials who supported the law. His fellow attorneys described him as “. . . an ardent anti-slavery man, he let the whole honesty and manliness of his soul go out in opposition to that disgrace and curse of our nation, the institution of human slavery. . .”¹³¹ With these varying views on the issue of slavery Wade was exposed to different currents of abolitionist thought.

Wade studied the law with the same determination he had shown in his other endeavors. Although lacking in formal education, he applied his courage, will power, and innate intelligence to master the legal tomes of the day.¹³² With the assistance of his brother Edward, who had already written a mathematics book, he embraced the system of English common law.¹³³ Wade’s upbringing had imbued him with a sense of the importance of fairness for the individual, and the legal precepts of *habeas corpus* and trial by jury.¹³⁴ After completing two years of intense internship with the firm, in 1828 Wade passed the bar exam and became a practicing attorney in the town of Jefferson, in

¹³⁰ Davison, *Forgotten Ohioan: Elisha Whittlesey, 1783-1863*, 144.

¹³¹ Ohio State Bar Association, *Proceedings*, 73.

¹³² Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 70.

¹³³ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 22.

¹³⁴ Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin F. Wade*, 72.

Ashtabula County, Ohio.¹³⁵ Settled down in Jefferson, Wade soon found a kindred spirit in the person of Joshua Giddings, who also shared his antislavery views.

In 1831, Wade and Giddings formed a law partnership. Having learned law under the same teachers who likely shared their antislavery viewpoints with their students, and of like mind on the slavery issue, Giddings was another son of New England. Born in 1795 in Pennsylvania of Puritan parents, he was related to novelist Nathaniel Hawthorn and Senator Rufus Choate.¹³⁶ Joshua's father was a veteran of the Revolutionary War and his mother was a member of the well-established New England Pease family. In 1805, Joshua's father and oldest brother went ahead of the family to the Western Reserve and carved out a homestead in the wilderness in preparation for the rest of the family in a manner similar to the Wades. Like Wade, Giddings had very little formal education in his youth. He taught himself to read and write and had a healthy appetite for books and the written word. Both men earned a reputation not only in court, but for also skillfully wielding an axe and being expert marksmen.¹³⁷

Their success in court made them the premiere law firm of Ashtabula and surrounding counties.¹³⁸ Comparable in temperament and background, the two were like minded when it came to law and politics. The two were also of a like mind on the slavery issue. Evidence suggests that as early as 1834 the two were associated with the "Underground Railroad" and assisted runaway slaves. One time Wade and Giddings donated \$10 to reimburse an individual who had purchased the freedom of a runaway

¹³⁵ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 23.

¹³⁶ George W. Julian, *The Life of Joshua R. Giddings* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1892), 12.

¹³⁷ Julian, *The Life of Joshua R. Giddings*, 12-16.

¹³⁸ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 24.

slave.¹³⁹ There are two stories as to how Giddings and Wade came by their abolitionists feelings. One that highlights the environmental influence the Reserve is that Giddings and Wade attended a religious revival to hear a speech in 1837 given by the well-known abolitionist Theodore Weld, and were instantly converted to the cause.¹⁴⁰ Another story underlines the religious heritage influence. It relates how Giddings and a pastor friend asked Wade to help substantiate that slavery was accepted Christian doctrine. Wade answered that he could only prove it by insinuating that the Bible was false. They went on to establish the first antislavery society in Jefferson, Ohio.¹⁴¹

These lessons, influences, and associations contributed to Wade's ideological, humanitarian, and political principles. His father had influenced him with a revolutionary reverence for the rights of man and the Founding Fathers. His mother instilled the value of education, religious mores, and Enlightenment thinking in young Wade. Elisha Whittlesey and Eben Newton had underwritten his study of law and politics. In Giddings he had a stable ally in his antislavery efforts. They all provided him the experiences that enlarged his natural openness to learning by education and experience. Their lessons affected his conscience and thinking about the issue of slavery. Wade's life had been influenced by many people and experiences; family heritage, his mother and father's lessons, his New England upbringing, his laborer's experiences, all left their mark on him. Edward Wade, Joshua Giddings, Elisha Whittlesey, and Eben Newton all

¹³⁹ "In the Days of the Underground Railroad When the Jefferson House Garret Hid Runaway Slaves," Letter of Reminiscence, 1927, E. C. Lampson Papers, Ohio History Center, Columbus, Ohio.

¹⁴⁰ Julian, *The Life of Joshua R. Giddings*, 25.

¹⁴¹ Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 30-31.

contributed to Wade's view of the world he lived in.¹⁴² An abolitionist had been made.

¹⁴² Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade*, 31.

V. CONCLUSION

Modern researchers in the field of human development have benefited from advances in genetics and better environmental research. They understand that the study of human behavior is an interdisciplinary field that unifies the power of both nature and nurture to fully explain human behavioral development.¹ Psychologist Donald Hebb stated that to give more weight to nature over nurture or vice versa was akin to studying what affected the area of a rectangle more, length or width.² To measure Wade's abolitionist "rectangle" we explored his nature and nurture, length and width. This allowed us to look at Wade's antislavery ideology through a unified lens of nature and nurture, tinted by New England culture, to better understand their influences on his antislavery motivation and humanitarianism.

Measuring Wade's life using Donald's profile of abolitionist leaders, he did share many things in common with other abolitionists. He was of New England heritage with famous ancestors, with parents who valued education and political activism. He was a nonconformist in religion and distinctly rural in his character. He lived in a culture that frowned upon slavery. His work on the Erie Canal instilled in him an appreciation for the value of labor. His legal tutelage imbued him with a sense of justice and fair play that was contrary to slavery's existence.

¹ Sameroff, "A Unified Theory of Development: A Dialectic Integration of Nature and Nurture," 19.

² Michael J. Meaney, "Nature, Nurture, and the Disunity of Knowledge," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 935 (May 2001): 50.

Wade's antislavery convictions were likely the results of his family's heritage, his education, and the New England culture of the Western Reserve. All provided an element of opportunity to incorporate an abolitionist viewpoint in his character. His ancestors were, in some fashion, participants in the self-governing reform movement enshrined in our Declaration of Independence and Constitution. His parents, law professors, colleagues, and friends were active participants in his education. His environment on the Western Reserve, a hot-bed of abolitionism, reinforced and fueled his evolution from antislavery sentiment to national abolitionist principles. These influences combined to color his abolitionist sentiments.

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