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978-1-107-07602-0 - The “Colored Hero” of Harper’s Ferry: John Anthony Copeland  
and the War Against Slavery

Steven Lubet

Frontmatter

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## THE “COLORED HERO” OF HARPER’S FERRY

JOHN ANTHONY COPELAND AND THE WAR AGAINST SLAVERY

On the night of Sunday, October 16, 1859, hoping to bring about the eventual end of slavery, radical abolitionist John Brown launched an armed attack at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia. Among his troops, there were only five black men, who have largely been treated as little more than “spear carriers” by Brown’s many biographers and other historians of the antebellum era. This book brings one such man, John Anthony Copeland, directly to center stage. Copeland played a leading role in the momentous Oberlin slave rescue, and he successfully escorted a fugitive to Canada, making him an ideal recruit for Brown’s invasion of Virginia. He fought bravely at Harper’s Ferry, only to be captured and charged with murder and treason. With his trademark lively prose and compelling narrative style, Steven Lubet paints a vivid portrait of this young black man who gave his life for freedom.

A leading authority on African-American resistance to slavery and notable trials in American history, Steven Lubet is the Edna B. and Ednyfed H. Williams Memorial Professor of Law at Northwestern University School of Law. He is the award-winning author of numerous books, including *Murder in Tombstone: The Forgotten Trial of Wyatt Earp*; *Fugitive Justice: Runaways, Rescuers, and Slavery on Trial*; and *John Brown’s Spy: The Adventurous Life and Tragic Confession of John E. Cook*. Lubet has been an award-winning columnist for *American Lawyer* magazine, a commentator on NPR’s *Morning Edition*, and the author of many op-ed pieces in national newspapers and on *Slate* and *Salon*.

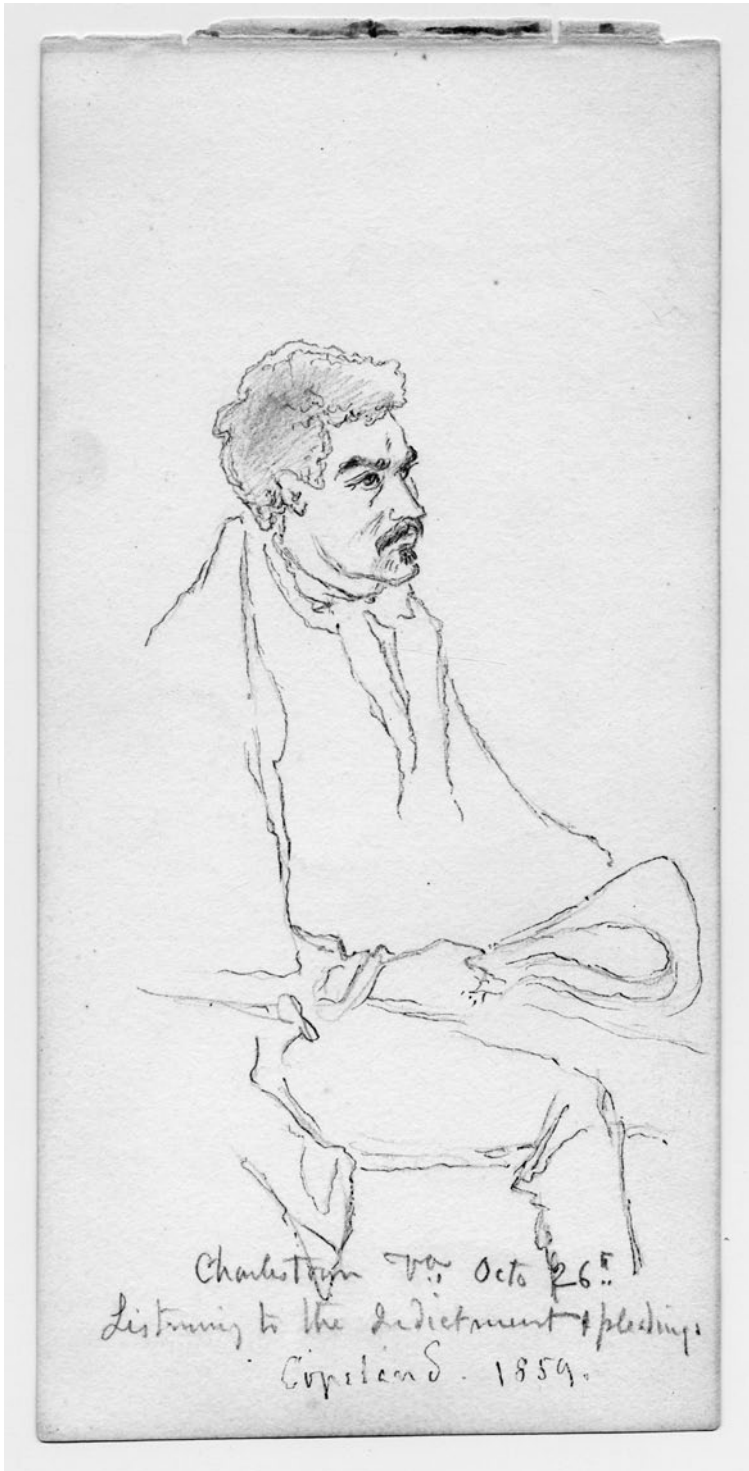
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**STEVEN LUBET**

Northwestern University School of Law



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32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

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 education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

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Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107076020](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107076020)

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First published 2015

Printed in the United States of America

*A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Lubet, Steven.

The “colored hero” of Harper’s Ferry : John Anthony Copeland and the war against  
 slavery / Steven Lubet, Northwestern University School of Law.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-07602-0

1. Copeland, John A. (John Anthony) 2. African American abolitionists – Biography.  
 3. Brown, John, 1800–1859 – Friends and associates. 4. Harpers Ferry (W. Va.) –  
 History – John Brown’s Raid, 1859. 5. Antislavery movements – Ohio – Oberlin –  
 History – 19th century. 6. Abolitionists – Biography. I. Title. II. Title: John Anthony  
 Copeland and the war against slavery.

E451.L829 2015

326/.8092–dc23 [B] 2015002308

ISBN 978-1-107-07602-0 Hardback

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*To Sarah and Willard*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



MARCIA LEHR, OF NORTHWESTERN’S PRITZKER Legal Resource Center, provided me with outstanding support for many years. She recently retired, and I am deeply grateful that she was able to help me on one last project. Thankfully, Ann Miller is still at Northwestern, and she has enthusiastically continued to assist me in everything I have undertaken. None of this would be possible without Ann.

Special mention is due Louis DeCaro, whose vast store of knowledge and collegial generosity are unmatched in the field of John Brown studies. I cannot imagine a better editor than Deborah Gershenowitz, or a better agent than Katherine Flynn. And Molly “Meticulous” Abbattista deserves great thanks as well.

Sources concerning John Anthony Copeland are scattered among many archives and collections, but the two most important are at Columbia University and Oberlin College. I am grateful to archivists Eric Wakin and Thai Jones (Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library) and Ken Grossi and Louisa Hoffman (Oberlin College Archives) for making their materials so readily available. Thanks also to Nicola Singleton Strathers, Thomas Thurman, Paris Gravley, Kim Baker, Linda Freeman, Diane Rapaport, Gloria Brown, Ceceile Kay Richter, Maribel Hilo Nash, Pegeen Bassett, Margaret Lynn Kincade, Mimi Katz, Caleigh Elizabeth Hernandez, and David Turk for research assistance. I am also grateful to Walter Stahr, Brian McGinty, Paul Finkelman, Robert Baker, Andy Koppelman, and Al Brophy for suggestions and encouragement.

Mornings at the Unicorn Symposium have sustained me throughout this project, and I have also been propped up as needed by Christel Bridges, Steve Simmons, Bill Haydasz, Ping Ng, Jeff Rice, Jim Foody, Rich Tye, Kurt Mitenbuler, Jim Ford, and Madhu Gorla.

I am grateful for the support of Dean Daniel Rodriguez and the Spray Trust Fund of the Northwestern University School of Law. Since

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*Acknowledgments*

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1975, my intellectual and professional home has been in Northwestern’s Bluhm Legal Clinic, where I have benefited from the wise counsel and warm friendship of Tom Geraghty (for the entire forty years) and Bob Burns (since 1980). More recently, my corner of the legal clinic has been brightened by the good cheer of Shericka Pringle, Eraena Hart, Brianne Williams, Joe Hayes, George Geiger, Nancy Flowers, and many others. And also Ann Miller – who is mentioned above, but cannot be mentioned enough.

I still treasure every day that I spend with Linda. Natan and Sarah know what I mean.

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE



IN 1859, HARPER’S FERRY was located in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The town is now in West Virginia, and the apostrophe has been dropped from its name. I have opted to use the original orthography, however, for the sake of consistency with antebellum sources, and I have done likewise with Charlestown (which is now known as Charles Town). Speaking of antebellum sources, I have retained original spellings, punctuation, emphases, and capitalizations in all quoted material, even though the results may at times seem jarring.

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