

## ACTON AND THE FUGITIVE SLAVE ACT

**Narrator:** In Acton, as throughout New England, slavery was considered to be immoral and contrary to the Declaration of Independence and Constitution. In late 1850, in an attempt to appease the Southern states, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act. The law mandated the return of supposed slaves to those claiming to own them. Acton showed its abolitionist sentiment in a strongly worded resolution passed in the 1851 Town Meeting.

**Actor:** “Mr. Moderator, I rise to present a resolution drafted to express Acton’s opposition to that most wicked law, The Fugitive Slave Act.”

“Resolved that the act for the recovery of Fugitive Slaves with its summary process, its irresponsible tribunals, its violation of Habeas Corpus and jury trials, its disregard of ordinary rules of evidence, and its temptations to bribery is an abomination without a parallel in the annals of our government.” ...

“Resolved that a compliance with the act for the recovery of Fugitive Slaves would be in opposition to all our cherished ideas of the Declaration of Independence, our Bill of Rights, and our moral duties as accountable beings and that we would sooner suffer the pains and penalties that might be inflicted upon us for refusing it our aid than be guilty of hindering a Fugitive from oppression in regaining and sustaining that liberty which we believe to be of more value than gold.

Resolved that as friends of liberty and well wishers for the peace and prosperity of our country we believe that a rigorous enforcement of this law instead of cementing our bond of Union and stopping all agitation on the subject of slavery will and should awaken the friends of human rights to increased activity and that our duty as lovers of our country and our race should impel us to use all the means in our power for the repeal of this as we believe unwise and wicked law.”