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## Press Release

# The Life of James Gillespie Birney, A Key Figure in the Anti-Slavery Movement

[East Lansing, MI] – D. Laurence Rogers's new book, *Apostles of Equality: The Birneys, the Republicans, and the Civil War*, is to be released October 1, 2011 by Michigan State University Press and will be available for sale through their website at [www.msupress.msu.edu](http://www.msupress.msu.edu) and through fine bookstores.

The first biographical account of the life of James Gillespie Birney in more than fifty years, this fabulously insightful history illuminates and elevates an all-but forgotten figure whose political career contributed mightily to the American political fabric. Birney was a southern-born politician at the heart of the antislavery movement, with two southern-born sons who were major generals involved in key Union Army activities, including the leadership of the black troops. The interaction of the Birneys with historical figures (Abraham Lincoln, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Henry Clay) highlights the significance of the family's activities in politics and war. D. Laurence Rogers offers a unique historiography of the abolition movement, the Civil War, and Reconstruction through the experiences of one family navigating momentous developments from the founding of the Republic until the late 19th century.

### **About *Apostles of Equality*:**

It was so enlightening to read of the many accomplishments my ancestors went through to bring equality and justice to our great country. They have always been heroes in my eyes but this book raised them to even higher levels.

—Herman H. "Topper" Birney, III, great great grandson of James Gillespie Birney.

What a slap of reality. Here are the last years of American slavery. From the point James Birney, a rediscovered hero, purchases an African woman and her mulatto child to free them from the brutality of an innkeeper's wife, this book takes us into the heart of a darkness from which escape was doubtful. It's an inspirational reminder that political bravery mattered then, and surely matters now.

—Howard Kohn, author of *Who Killed Karen Silkwood?*

*Apostles of Equality* uses James Birney's personal life and political career as a southern abolitionist to expose the deepening national crisis over American slavery. Birney's story highlights an ever-changing nation and explains how Americans hoped to reconcile the issue of slavery before the Civil War. Rogers's exhaustive research and careful prose recreates Birney's complex life; one that started as a slave owner and ended as an abolitionist.

—John F. Kvach, University of Alabama in Huntsville

### **About the Author:**

D. Laurence Rogers is a freelance journalist and historian who has received awards from the American Political Science Association, the Associated Press, and United Press International. He is the author and editor of several books on Michigan's history and is deeply involved in its historic preservation.

**Title:** *Apostles of Equality*

**Subtitle:** *The Birneys, the Republicans, and the Civil War*

**Author:** D. Laurence Rogers

**Pub. Date:** October 1, 2011

**Binding:** Cloth

**Page #:** 250

**Trim:** 6 x 9

**Price:** \$39.95

**ISBN** 978-1-61186-015-3

**Content:** B&W Photos, notes, references, index

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