



# Revised History

## The Man Who Owned the Rifles

By Al Benson November 20, 2018

Here we arrive at George Luther Stearns, another of John Brown's **Secret Six** supporters. Mr. Stearns was an industrialist and a merchant. As such, he was pretty well fixed financially. However, it had not always been so. Stearns' early life had not been easy, and he had been in a position where he had to work to support his family, starting at age 15.

Stearns was involved very early on with the Emigrant Aid Society, helping to get anti-slavery settlers into Kansas. Wikipedia noted that "Stearns was one of the **Secret Six** who aided Brown in Kansas, and financially supported him until Brown's execution after the ill-fated raid on Harpers Ferry. Stearns physically owned the pikes and 200 Sharps rifles brought to Harpers Ferry by Brown and his followers. Following Brown's arrest, Stearns briefly fled to Canada but returned to Medford (Mass.) after Brown's death..."

According to J. C. Furnas in *The Road to Harpers Ferry*, Stearns' first wife passed away and he married a second time to "a well-connected niece of Lydia Maria Child, the lady Abolitionist, who disliked her aunt personally but shared her ideas." His new wife was not always happy with Mr. Stearns. She wished that he would dress more expensively and do more entertaining. She felt that his station in life called for him to present a more elite appearance than he usually did. One thing you have to say for Stearns is that he was not overly enamored of the pomp and vanity of Massachusetts society. He was kind of like the old cattleman in Texas who dressed in faded jeans and run-down cowboy boots and who looked just like some of the rag-tag cowboys in his area. They couldn't afford to dress up, while he didn't have to. He knew what he had and wasn't trying to impress anybody. In his own way Stearns seems to have been like that old cattleman.

One of his best friends was Charles Sumner, "the pontifical slavery hater" as he was described by Furnas. Otto Scott, in *The Secret Six: the Fool as Martyr* has observed, of Senator Sumner, that he "...had a wide acquaintance among European revolutionaries." You have to be led to the conclusion that it is more than just coincidence that these abolitionists knew so many people in the Leftist, radical crowd from Europe. So we can probably assume that Senator Sumner was more than familiar with some of the socialist luminaries Donnie Kennedy and I wrote about in *Lincoln's Marxists*.

One of Stearns' sons wrote a biography of his father in which he said that his father and John Brown met "like iron and magnet." If such was truly the case, then Brown was the magnet, for he attracted more metal from Stearns, in the form of firearms, than from just about anyone else. Furnas noted that Stearns "...paid out of his own pocket for the \$1300 of revolvers for Kansas that eventually found their way to Maryland with Old Brown..." In those days, revolvers sold for around \$12-15 apiece, so \$1300 would have bought quite a slew of them. Stearns said, at one point, "I consider it the proudest day of my life that I gave good old John Brown every pike and rifle he carried to Harpers Ferry." And that's not including the revolvers!

Stearns may well not have been the elitist snob that other members of the **Secret Six** were, but he surely had his priorities skewed when he ended up supporting John Brown and his terrorist actions.

Furnas summed up George Luther Stearns this way: "Actually, the man hardly belongs among the Six. He did not have enough ego for their overweening society. He probably knew less of Old Brown's exact plans than Smith, Sanborn or Higginson."

Stearns may well not have known as many of the exact details as did some of the others. However, he knew enough to be willing to pay for the rifles John Brown needed to carry out his terrorist agenda. And when the plan turned sour and Brown blew it, he knew enough to run to Canada, so he was hardly a complete innocent.

In looking at the Secret Six as a whole, you are forced to note a group of men with both social position and resources, who somehow, thought that their position and resources gave them the right to dictate how other people should live their lives. It is no different in our day. We are beset, fore and aft with Marxist “educators” and politicians and their friends in government, big business, and the media who feel they, somehow, have the right and authority to tell the rest of us how we should live and what we should think. And if others are not especially willing to live by their standards, well, there are always a few “John Brown” types lurking about, waiting to be used to “persuade” them—if the price is right! I’m sure, in our day, that, should you put your minds to it, the names of some of these “persuasive” groups would come to mind.