ELIZABETH COMSTOCK

After several years of working as a teacher, Elizabeth married Leslie Wright in 1847; two years later they had a daughter, Caroline. Wright died in 1854, and, with her daughter and her sister, she emigrated to the Quaker community of Belleville, Ontario, where she began her public ministry with the Society of Friends. She married John T. Comstock (1807-1884) in 1858 and moved with him to Rollin, Michigan. Here Elizabeth began her lifelong work on behalf of former slave-refugees in the North. An ardent abolitionist, she was also involved in a number of contemporary reform movements, including temperance, peace, prison reform, and women’s rights. During the Civil War, Comstock traveled across Union and Confederate lines to minister to soldiers and freed slaves in hospitals and prisons. She met with President Lincoln in 1864 on the subject of prison reform. During reconstruction, she directed the Kansas Freedmen’s Relief Association, which aided African Americans. In the last decade of her life, Comstock became increasing critical of the Republican Party’s drift away from defending the rights of African-Americans. She settled in Union Springs, New York, in 1885, and continued to be an active Quaker minister until her death in 1891.

Comstock’s daughter, Caroline, married twice and had four children: Albert DeGreene, Caroline “Calla” Elizabeth DeGreene, Marian O’Harrow, and Francis O’Harrow. Caroline Elizabeth became a teacher and Marian attended the University of Michigan Medical School.

Submitted by Alice Goodlock