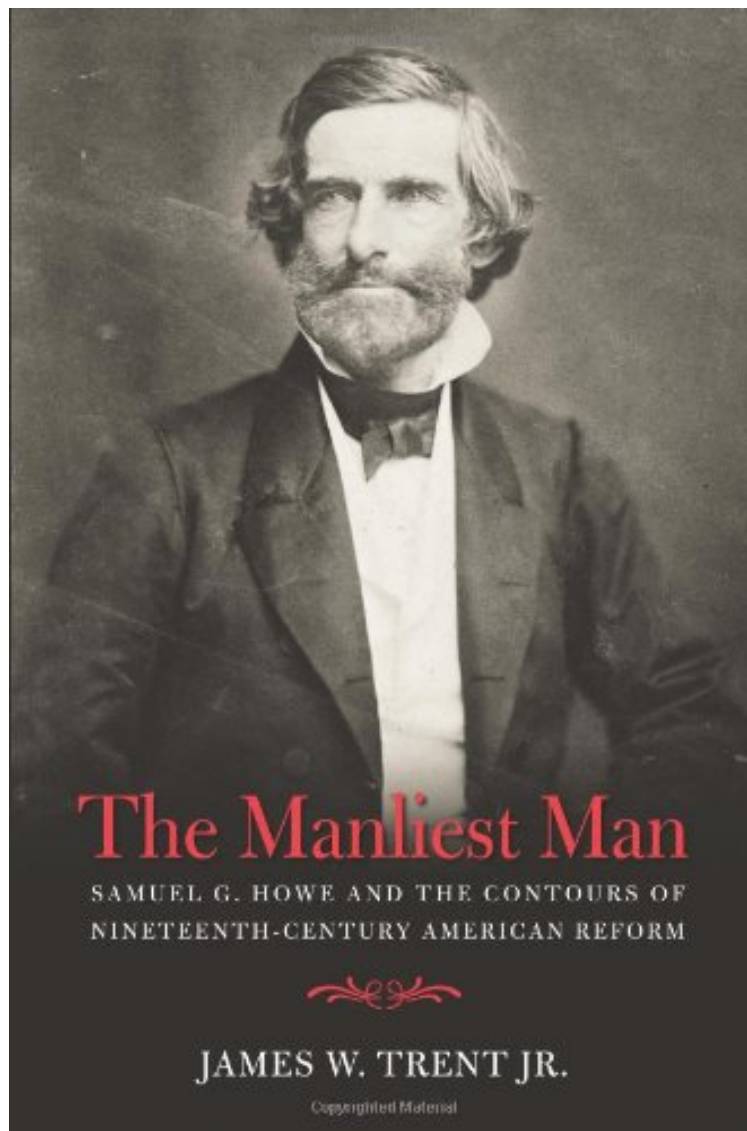


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The Manliest Man: Samuel G. Howe and the Contours of Nineteenth-Century American Reform

James W. Trent

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A native of Boston and a physician by training, Samuel G. Howe (1801-1876) led a remarkable life. He was a veteran of the Greek War of Independence, a fervent abolitionist, and the founder of both the Perkins School for the Blind and the Massachusetts School for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Children. Married to Julia Ward Howe, author of "Battle Hymn of the Republic," he counted among his friends Senator Charles Sumner, public school advocate Horace Mann, and poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Always quick to refer to himself as a liberal, Howe embodied the American Renaissance's faith in the perfectibility of human beings, and he spoke out in favor of progressive services for disabled Americans. A Romantic figure even in his own day, he embraced a notion of manliness that included heroism under fire but also compassion for the underdog and the oppressed. Though hardly a man without flaws and failures, he nevertheless represented the optimism that characterized much of antebellum American reform. The first full-length biography of Samuel G. Howe in more than fifty years, *The Manliest Man* explores his life through private letters and personal and public documents. It offers an original view of the reformer's personal life, his association with social causes of his time, and his efforts to shape those causes in ways that allowed for the greater inclusion of devalued people in the mainstream of American life.

"This biography made more vivid than almost anything else I have read the sense of a small group of idealistic friends who believed that society was perfectible and who actually managed in their lifetimes to dream up and make happen an extremely diverse range of reforms, truly changing the treatment of many of the most stigmatized segments of society. . . . This is a book that will provide pleasure and interest to general biography lovers, not just academics and historians."Karen Sanchez-Eppler, Author of *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*"Extensive notes and an index enhance this thorough biography of a passionate and dedicated man, who spent his life working for a better future for America's underprivileged and downtrodden. Highly recommended, especially for public and college library collections."Library Bookwatch"Trent's biography, while not uncritical, attempts to rehabilitate Howe by focusing on two aspects of his life: his 'manliness' and his commitment to reform. . . . Trent (sociology and social work, Gordon College) has written the best available biography of Howe.

Recommended."Choice"Trent has reintroduced one of the best-known figures of nineteenth-century Boston, and we can surely look forward to more new work on the artist of humanitarian reform previously known as Samuel Gridley Howe."New England Quarterly"Howe's first students and staff are described in wonderful detail, and researchers who are interested in the history of education of children who are blind will find much information in this book that will illuminate and delight them."Journal of Visual Impairment Blindness"Historians interested in Howe or disability in the nineteenth century will find this readable and thorough account of his life quite valuable."The Journal of American History>About the AuthorJames W. Trent is professor of sociology and social work at Gordon College. He is author of *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States and Mental Retardation in America*. For a talk Trent gave at the Perkins School for the Blind about Samuel G. Howe, please see <http://www.youtube.com/embed/Pe8tXwFfuJI>