

Resistance at Christianiana

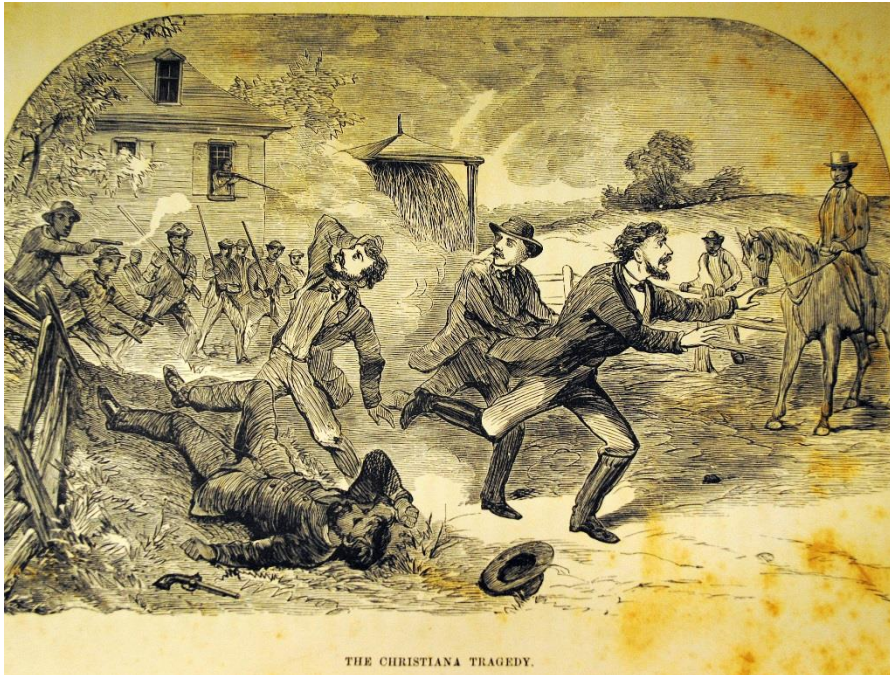


Illustration from *The Underground Railroad*, by William Still, Philadelphia, PA 1872.

The contents of this document were researched, written and originally published on the website

<http://www.millersv.edu/~jbg49633/Christiana.html>

This website is no longer available through Millersville University, Millersville, Lancaster County, PA, where it was originally maintained as a collaborative effort by four Millersville University Graduate students of Dr. Tracey Weis. The students: Jeff Butch, Tom Campbell, Jay Vasellas, and Kevin Webster were enrolled in History 610: *Slavery in Historical Perspectives*

The content presented here was excerpted from the students' original project and reproduced here with the understanding and approval of Dr. Weis and co-author Jay Vasellas, who was the only member of the team who had a paper copy of this project. It was made available to Randolph Harris, consulting historian, Lancaster, PA, for use in:

*The Underground Railroad in Lancaster County, PA
1780-1883
A study guide for teachers & students*

Produced by
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PREFACE

The resistance at Christiana on September 11, 1851 played a significant part in the battle to overcome the bondage of slavery. The nation was divided on the issue of slavery. The Compromise of 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Law allowed those Americans who had slaves to use the power of the federal government and law to recover their property. For those Africans held in slavery, the bigger question was why did the founding fathers who so eloquently penned the words: "All Men are Created Equal" allowed the institution of slavery to exist in a country that valued the rights of individuals? This question haunted people of color and the freedom they so desired for freedom they so desired for many years. How could people of color not be included in the II Declaration of Independence and the Constitution? Bondage and Slavery were slowly eroding the fabric of the nation in a time when America was trying to find its place in the world. The site is the first attempt to look at the resistance of Christiana and the issue of slavery in early

America. One of the major problems and obstacles the authors had to address was with the title of the site. The words resistance, riot, incident, and insurrection all elicit different images and meaning for those viewing the site. The goal was to address the events of Christiana in a scholarly and analytical perspective.

The purpose of the site is to allow students, teachers, historians, and others interested in the issue of slavery to further explore the topic in scholarly manner. By looking at the events on September 11, 1851, the authors hope many of the current questions can be answered and new questions about the event may be brought out for further exploration.

We hope you enjoy the site.

Jeffrey G. Butch, Tom Campbell, Jay Vasellas, and Kevin Webster

Fugitive Slaves and the Importance of the Resistance at Christiana

Introduction

The events at Christiana on September 11, 1851 were not strictly a local event. Edward Gorsuch's attempt to capture his fugitive slaves had roots in the legal support provided by the recently enacted Fugitive Slave Law which was part of the larger Compromise of 1850. This controversial compromise was the latest of several attempts to prevent the union of North and South from splitting over sectional pressures mostly related to slavery. The following links lead to a more detailed description of the Fugitive Slave Law and how it was related to the events at Christiana. Also, included below are direct links to some of the resources that are used within this component of the larger Christiana website.

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W.E.B DuBois wrote of the no-win situation facing enslaved Africans:

"If they fought for freedom, they were beasts; if they did not fight, they were born slaves. If they cowered on the plantations, they loved slavery; if they ran away, they were lazy loafers. If they sang, they were silly; if they scowled, they were impudent."

Using the enclosed documents, explore all sides of DuBois' statement relative to the events at Christiana. Compare and contrast whether or not the event was a:

"Riot" - A disturbance consisting of wild and turbulent conduct of a mob designed to terrorize the public;

Or;

"Resistance" - An underground guerilla movement opposing an occupying force.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: RIOT OR RESISTANCE?

Frederick Douglass viewed the violence at Christiana as having a special moral and political significance because the event was evidence of black manhood. African-American manhood was exhibited on a national stage. The significant nature of the resistance was that it originated with and was executed by the African-American men and women themselves. The resisters at Christiana would give agency to a growing national rhetoric of redemptive violence. The provisions of the Fugitive Slave Law focused attention on the issue and polarized the nation. If the government of the United States would not protect their natural rights of life, liberty, and property, the African-Americans would protect the rights themselves. When Edward Gorsuch violated these natural rights of the men housed within his walls, William Parker felt the only way to maintain freedom and protect liberty was by his own right arm.

RIOT

From Right or Wrong, God Judge Me: The Writings of John Wilkes Booth,
John Rhodehamel and Louise Taper, Editors:

"Edward Gorsuch's youngest son, Thomas, was a good friend of John Wilkes Booth. Young Booth must have heard from his friend how a gang of "n_ _ _ _ abolitionists" had murdered his father only to be set free by a Yankee jury. To Booth, the Christiana riot and the acquittal of the accused were injustices that called out for revenge. Throughout his speech, Booth calls again and again for "justice for the South." Among other things, "justice" meant the strict enforcement in the North of the fugitive slave law and the speedy return of runaway to their Southern masters."

An editorial from *The Daily Register* (Mobile, Alabama):

The Mobile, Alabama newspaper the Daily Register echoed the lament of the Baltimore editor when the editor stated, "Our country has been on the verge of a revolution. The elements of discord have scarcely subsided into sullen calm, the grieved and injured Southern States have barely yielded to the importunities and assurances of their own patriotic citizens, that the hand of aggression would be stayed, and that the Compromise would be observed in good faith, when all this diabolical tragedy is enacted with all its vile and insulting circumstances."

From *The Constitutionalist*, Augusta, Georgia:

Other southern editors believed the Christiana Riot would serve as the impetus to the South to seed dis-union. The editor of the Augusta, Georgia newspaper, *The Constitutionalist* could not resist a not so subtle jab at moderates who believed in the Compromise of 1850 as a vehicle to preserve the union by stating, "Our opponents are always pointing to the Fugitive Slave Law. We point you, people of Georgia, to the mangled corpses of your fellow citizens of the South. We have been fearing just such a result as this--The law will hereafter be a perfectly dead letter."

RESISTANCE

From *The Saturday Express*, Lancaster, Pa.

The Lancaster newspaper, the Saturday Express in an editorial titled, "Civil War-The First Blow Struck," states, "The fruits of slavery and of the excitement rashly gotten up by those who denominate themselves the 'friends' of the Negroes, are beginning to ripen. The first murder fruit that has fallen in our Country from this tree of civil discord and evil, is one that has thrown the people into a fever heat of indignation."

From *The National Anti-Slavery Standard*:

Sidney Howard Gay of *The National Anti-Slavery Standard* wrote, "It need surprise nobody that in the game of slave hunting-it should sometimes happen that the hunting party and not the hunted become the mark for bullets, and the law of self-preservation, and not the Fugitive Slave Law, be obeyed in triumph."

The September 18, 1851, *National Anti-Slavery Standard* crowed " ...as the love of liberty is no less powerful in men whose skins are black than in those of light complexions, it need surprise nobody that in the game of slave-hunting... it should sometimes happen that the hunted become the mark for bullets, and the law of self-preservation, and not the Fugitive Slave Law, be obeyed and triumph. September 25, 1851, *The National Anti-Slavery Standard*, continued that the revolt was a just reciprocation to the midnight incursions of man-hunters, with their treacheries, stratagem, their ruffian outrages, and blood violence ...menacing the defenceless people of colour with a 'reign of terror.'"

PERSPECTIVES

Quotes from William Parker

"The laws of this country do not protect us," he had told Sarah Pownall the night before the riot, "and we are not bound to obey them. You whites have a country and may obey its laws, but we have no country."

"Human rights are mutual and reciprocal." "If you take my liberty and life you forfeit your own."

"The laws for personal protection are not made for us, and we are not bound to obey them...(whites) have a country and may obey the laws. But we have no country."

The Christiana Riot Monument 1911

Even the stone monument, which now stands in Christiana and commemorates the insurrection, is testimony to the fact that the most prominent roles in the Resistance have been assigned to whites. The obelisk, dedicated in 1911 devotes

a whole side to the Gorsuches, saying that Edward "died for the law." Castner Hanway also received his own side. His notation reads that: "He Suffered For Freedom." William Parker is simply listed as number "30" on a List of those indicted for treason.



Underground Railroad Origins Tour-Columbia Historic Preservation Society-8-24-13

The occurrence at Christiana was a tragedy. Both Edward Gorsuch and William Parker believed that their way was right. On September 9, 1911, a commemoration sponsored by the Lancaster County Historical Society was held in Christiana. An eleven foot, three-ton shaft of Vermont marble was erected near the railroad underpass. On one face the inscription says Gorsuch "died for the law."



Poems written in Commemoration of the Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851

PA historical marker is located on Lower Valley Road near Christiana, Lancaster County

The Christiana Riot

'Twas here that first was heard the thrilling cry
Which pealed the knell of bondage thro' the land;
'Twas here that first our people took the stand
Which cleansed us from the guilt of slavery—
Ye call it Riot! Lo! It made men free!
It was a trumpet call, clear, loud and grand,
And in good time, obeying its command
We heard our Union speak for Liberty.
Here slavery first died. The blood shed here
Destroyed the chains of every trembling slave;
It bound the Nation with a link more dear
And took from us a stigma dark and grave.
So thus we mark this fair September mom,
Where bondage perished, and free men were born!

Mary N. Robinson

The Christiana Riot

Out of the strident clash of hopes and fears
The times have builded music; where of late
Passion strode fierce, and wrath and white-lipped hate
Met bitterly in agony and tears,
Meet we in kindness. Cancelled are arrears
Of debt and credit. It were ill to prate
Or rights and wrongs; may we commemorate
More than the feuds of the forgotten years.
Great God! Which one of us shall cast a stone
At bygone riot? Are no tear drops wet?
Judge of the Nations grant us to atone—
And of thy mercy teach us to forget.

F. Lyman Windolph

Quote from Frederick Douglass:

"The Christiana conflict was ...needed to check (the aggressions of slavecatchers) and to bring the hunters of men to the sober second thought." But black manhood was the most important result of Christiana: "If it be right for any man to resist those who would enslave them, it was right for the men of color at Christiana to resist...Life and liberty are the most sacred of all of man's rights ... The man who rushes out of the orbit of his own rights to strike down the rights of another, does, by that act, divest himself of the right to live, if he be shot down, the punishment is just. The Christian Resisters were justified and righteous in taking their stand.

Douglas declared of the rebels: "I could not look upon them as murderers. To me, they were heroic defenders of the just rights of man against man stealers and murderers. So I fed them and sheltered them in my house."

Quote from Thaddeus Stevens:

U.S. Congressman Stevens of Lancaster County did not favor the Fugitive Slave Law but knew its passage was inevitable. Responding to a letter from William P. Powell of New York, he advised, "I can give but little hope that the infamous Slave Law will be declared unconstitutional I can advise nothing better than that the subjects of it put themselves beyond reach."

Although Stevens attempted to downplay his presence at the trial by assigning a junior lawyer to the case, The Christiana riot engendered a backlash against (him) ...Stevens was identified with the violence of the incident.

Quote from Millard Fillmore:

"It is deeply to be regretted that in several instances officers of the Government in attempting to execute the law for the return of fugitives from labor have been openly resisted and their efforts frustrated and defeated by lawless and violent mobs; that in one case such resistance resulted in the death of an estimable citizen. I have regarded it as my duty in these cases to give all aid legally in my power to the enforcement of the laws, and I shall continue to do so wherever and whenever their execution may be resisted"

19th Century Scholars

Quote from Theodore Cuyler. Esq. in his speech for the defense:

"Do the facts of the case sustain the charge' Sir did you hear it? That three harmless, non-resisting Quakers, and eight and thirty wretched, miserable, penniless Negroes, armed with corn-cutters, clubs, and a few muskets, and headed by a miller, in a felt hat, without a coat, without arms, and mounted on a sorrel nag, levied war against the United States? Blessed by God that our Union has survived the shock?"

Quote from D. F. Magee:

D.F. Magee summarized the impact on the southern viewpoint of Gorsuch's death when he stated. "Therefore, when on that fatal morn, led on by Castner Hanway and other of the Christiana rioters, this upright man, law-abiding citizen and man of prominence in his own state, while seeking to get

into personal communication with his own slaves, hoping to persuade them to return with him, was shot down in cold blood, and after a trial had of those concerned it became evident that such a crime could be committed in the North, and go unpunished, and that a statute of the United States could be thus flagrantly transgressed and trampled under foot without punishment, the southern mind became greatly inflamed, and the Christiana riot was largely the beginning of the end that led to the firing on Sumter, and the beginning of a terrible war."

Quote from Thomas Whitson:

"While we all stand reverently at the memories (of white heroes), let us not forget to make one small niche in our tablet of heroes for this Afro-American, William Parker."

20th Century Scholars

Quote from *Bloody Dawn* by Thomas Slaughter

"Indeed, no single event before John Brown's Raid contributed more to the decline of confidence in the nation's ability to resolve the controversy over slavery without wholesale resort to arms. Were we to search for parallels between the events leading up to the American Revolution, this nation's first civil war, the Christiana Riot corresponds in some respects to the Stamp Act crisis in the same way that John Brown's Raid does to the Boston Tea Party."

Quote from Ella Forbes, author of *But We Have No Country*

"Ultimately, the Christiana Resistance was a contest of wills between William Parker, with natural law on his side, and Edward Gorsuch, armed, literally, with civil law. Their struggle encapsulated a much more immense battle—a battle about how to incorporate the institution of slavery in a so-called free society, which was waging in places much larger and more important than southeastern Pennsylvania. It was a clash that William Parker and the other valiant warrior won."

Quote from Charles Blockson (Aug. 8, 2001), author of *The Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania*

"The resistance at Christiana on Sept. 11, 1851 was a pivotal point along the tortuous road to freedom. The shots fired there had an effect, not only in Christiana, but throughout the nation. It is fitting and proper that this dramatic and tragic event be remembered and commemorated by people of all races, creeds and nationalities."

Fugitive Slave Laws and the Importance of the Christiana Riot

***Timeline of the Fugitive Slave Laws* 1787: Slavery in the**

Constitutional Convention

1793: First Fugitive Slave Law

1820: Missouri Compromise

1842: Prigg v, Pennsylvania

1850: Compromise of 1850

1851: Jerry McHenry of Syracuse

1851: The Christiana Riot

1854: Anthony Burns of Boston

The Importance of Christiana

This page will contain the description of scholarly research. This section will include an historical overview of the topic in narrative form (and contain links to another file with citations.) This section will also give a comparative analysis of Christiana to other locales (Anthony Burns, Jerry McHenry, Thomas Simms.) This component will be the "reference" material that will explain Christiana's relative significance (such as would be helpful for a teacher developing lesson activities.)

The following is an evaluation of the events at Christiana relative to other, nationally noted examples of resistance related to the recapture or protection of fugitive slaves. Such an understanding is important when considering the other information provided in this site. For the most part the Christiana Riot is relatively unknown outside the circle of local residents and professional historians. There is rarely a mention in college texts of the resistance. Even Tom Slaughter, author of one of the most recent studies of Christiana, acknowledges the scarcity of scholarship on the event. The scant treatment of the resistance that occurred near this small Lancaster county town in 1851 does not deter Slaughter from positing that:

So the lines were drawn in a fashion that pushed the Christiana Riot and the government's response to center stage in the national political drama. No other fugitive slave case, neither Jerry's in Syracuse nor those of Shadrach and Thomas Simms in Boston, had the same political significance at the time. Whatever the comparative importance of these other cases in law, whatever effect they had on firing the abolitionist movement and drawing the lines of conflict over the fugitive slave issue, no other fugitive episode struck the raw nerve of Southern honor so painfully or had the same impact on public opinion throughout the nation.

Indeed, no single event before John Brown's Raid contributed more to the decline of confidence in the nation's ability to resolve the controversy over slavery without wholesale resort to arms. Were we to search for parallels between the events leading up to the American Revolution, this nation's first civil war, the Christiana Riot corresponds in some respects to the Stamp Act crisis in the same way that John Brown's Raid does to the Boston Tea Party. Neither the Stamp Act resistance nor the Christiana Riot caused the wars that followed them by nine years; however, each galvanized public opinion in ways that made it increasingly difficult to resolve differences amicably. Neither resulted in a decisive victory for law and order: indeed, each encouraged those who acted outside the law to think that they could do so with impunity. Both were later remembered by contemporaries as the beginning of a violent process that became a war.

But what led Slaughter to put forth such a bold analogy when the chroniclers of Anthony Burns, Shadrach, Thomas Simms, and Jerry McHenry have represented Christiana as a footnote? Certainly, all the analysis of these various examples of fugitive slave escapes, renditions, and trials recognize the thin line between politics and the just execution of the law. The trials tested not those individuals who appear in the court records, but the Fugitive Slave Law and the political careers of those bent on enforcing or defying it. To an extreme, these courtroom exercises were a test of the nation's union.

The dearth of scholarship about the Christiana Riot does place Slaughter's claim of the event's importance in question. However, several points strengthen his case: There were 117 separate treason indictments charged against 38 men--the largest quantity related to a single event in the country's history.

Although many of these charges ended up not being pursued, the sheer number of charges is enough to prevent this event from being overlooked. Christiana was also different from other early fugitive slave rescues, renditions, or trials in that there was a direct blow to Southern honor in the murder of Edward Gorsuch. Other, early tests to the Fugitive Slave Law may have been frustrating or embarrassing to the slaves' owners, their slave catching agents, or those responsible for enforcing the law, but these situations were not murderous. Finally, the aftermath of the events at Christiana, like the other cases examined here, was the focus of significant notional political attention and this may be the factor that sets the Lancaster county case apart from the comparative events in New York and Massachusetts.

In general, the 1840s and 50s witnessed a shift in abolitionist behavior from Garrisonian ideas of non-resistance and "disunion" toward a more active and, at times, violent approach. Much of this political activity was centered in New England which perhaps provides some explanation of the significance, or at least the magnitude, of the attention that was afforded the fugitive slave cases that later occurred there. In the wake of the Mexican War and the revolutions in Europe, advocates of peaceful resistance such as Charles Sumner and Theodore Parker reluctantly underwent this shift toward violent means. Perhaps the most significant influence in this ideological shift was the Fugitive Slave Law which brought the Northern cities into direct contact with one of the more detestable features of slavery. ~Attempts to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law in the hotbeds of abolitionist activity, such as Boston and Syracuse, forced abolitionist activists to adopt methods of forcible resistance. These local efforts in turn led political officials on the federal level into a confrontation of national significance.

In the case of Shadrach Minkins, the rescue of an alleged fugitive slave from the courtroom where he was being held for trial became an early example of how the new law magnified the differences in sectional attitudes. This rescue, which occurred on February 15, 1851, resulted in the quick arrest of ten alleged conspirators and it was understood from the start that the outcome of this case would have national implications. Failure to prosecute the offending rescuers in this case would bring into question the commitment to the Fugitive Slave Law and, by extension, the entire Compromise of 1850. From a national perspective, maintaining the union of North and South depended on overcoming local opposition. From the beginning, officials at the federal level took a keen interest in the trials. President Millard Fillmore and Secretary of State Daniel Webster emphasized the responsibility of the local officials to uphold their constitutional obligations. Throughout the trials, Webster took it upon himself to monitor and, where possible, manage the efforts of the prosecution. However, as the trials progressed it became increasingly clear that federal-level political attempts to manipulate the local judicial decisions would be unsuccessful. The union which was cobbled together by a series of compromises since the Constitutional Convention was increasingly strained.

Primary Sources

1787: The Constitution of the United States

Article IV, Section 2

The Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all Privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States.

A person charged in any State with Treason, Felony, or other Crime, who shall flee from Justice, and be found in another State, shall on Demand of the executive Authority of the State from which he fled, be delivered up, to be removed to the State having Jurisdiction of the Crime. [No Person held to Service or Labour in one State, under the Laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in Consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party to whom such Service or Labour may be due.]*

*This clause, which relates to the rendition of fugitive slaves, was changed by the Thirteenth Amendment.

The Constitution of the United States with Index and The Declaration of Independence. 1986. Washington, D.C.: Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, 1991.

It should be noted that sections 1,3, and 4 of Article IV all give specific enforcement powers of the federal government, while section 2 does not. It is possible to interpret that the framers did not intend to grant Congress the power to authorize federal enforcement of this provision. Paul Finkelman has noted that the fugitive slave law, as described in section 2, was not considered to be a major clause in debate and writing of the Constitution, particularly compared to the serious and divisive debate that occurred surrounding the

three-fifths clause and the limitations on the slave trade. Finkelman posits that section 2 was almost an afterthought and was not controversial at the 1787 Convention. He states that the founders were probably unaware of the political significance that the clause would have later. Moreover, subsequent case law that related to this clause generally did not support the notion of federal enforcement (see generally Finkelman, "Prigg").

1787: Slavery in the Constitutional Convention

From the very beginning of the United States' current government system, it was clear that slavery was not going to be negotiated away. Until the Civil War, slavery was always approached as a compromise between supporters and opponents. If the Framers did not realize that slavery would become as divisive as it did, they did know that union could not be secured without both sides conceding some ground. Southern slave owners received protection for their chattel labor and Northerners were assured of Southern cooperation for the creation of the Union. In the "three-fifths clause" representation in the lower house and taxation were both affected by the population of slaves. The discussion over the importation of slaves, a practice deemed reprehensible by many in the North and South, was prohibited for twenty years. Even the choice of words in the Constitution indicate the controversial nature of this subject -- "other persons" is a euphemism for "slavery" or "slaves."

Fugitive slave laws did not receive the same vigorous debate that the slave trade and the three-fifths clause did. South Carolinians, Pierce Butler and Charles Pinckney, proposed that a clause for the extradition of fugitive slaves be attached to that for fugitives from justice. Some opposition from James Wilson of Pennsylvania, on administrative rather than moral grounds, caused Butler to withdraw his proposal. But a day later, a separate clause for the extradition of fugitive slave was included as a separate clause in Article IV, Section 2 of the Constitution.

The Fugitive Slave Law of 1793

ARTICLE 4. For the better security of the peace and friendship now entered into by the contracting parties, against all infractions of the same, by the citizens of either party, to the prejudice of the other, neither party shall proceed to the infliction of punishments on the citizens of the other, otherwise than by securing the offender, or offenders, by imprisonment, or any other competent means, till a fair and impartial trial can be had by judges or juries of both parties, as near as can be, to the laws, customs, and usages of the contracting parties, and natural justice: the mode of such trials to be hereafter fixed by the wise men of the United States, in congress assembled, with the assistance of such deputies of the Delaware nation, as may be appointed to act in concert with them in adjusting this matter to their mutual liking. And it is further agreed between the parties aforesaid, that neither shall entertain, or give countenance to, the enemies of the other, or protect, in their respective states, criminal fugitives, servants, or slaves, but the same to apprehend and secure, and deliver to the state or states, to which such enemies, criminals, servants, or slaves, respectively belong.

University of Oklahoma Law Center: A Chronology of U.S. Historical Documents, www.law.ou.edu/hist/fugslave.html. April 4, 1999.

1793: Fugitive Slave Law

The 1793 Fugitive Slave Law was written in response to a conflict between Pennsylvania and Virginia. Although the problem of fugitive slaves was addressed at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 (in Article IV, Section 2 in the final document), there was an assumption that interstate cooperation would allow this provision to be enforced. In reality, differences of moral attitudes and questions over legal responsibility for enforcement made the rendition of fugitives difficult. The particular case that forced Congress's hand in 1793 centered around John Davis. Pennsylvania's governor, Thomas Mifflin, sought the extradition of three Virginians accused of kidnapping Davis and taking him to Virginia. Virginia's governor, Beverly Randolph, refused the extradition request on the grounds that Davis was a fugitive slave subject to rendition. Mifflin objected claiming that Davis was free and should be protected. The 1793 Fugitive Slave Law that was written in response to this interstate struggle marked the first of several federal attempts to balance the rights of personal liberty and personal property.

1820: The Missouri Compromise

1842: Prigg v. Pennsylvania

1850: Henry Clay's Speech on the Fugitive Slave Law

The following is a partial transcription of Henry Clay's speech in Congress on the Fugitive Slave Law as printed in the *Pennsylvania Freeman* February 14, 1850:

It is his entire argument on the 7th of his resolutions. The next resolution is:

"That more effectual provision ought to be made by law, according to the requirement of the constitution, for the restitution and delivery of persons bound to service or labor in any State, who may escape into any other State or Territory in the Union."

Now, Mr. President, upon this subject, I go with him who goes farthest in the interpretation of that clause in the constitution. In my humble opinion, sir, it is a requirement by the Constitution of the United States, which is not limited in its operation to the Congress of the United States, but extends to every State in the Union; and I but go one step further--it extends to every man in the Union, and devolves upon them all an obligation to assist in the recovery of a fugitive from labor who takes refuge in or escapes into one of the free States. And, sir, I think I can maintain all this by a fair interpretation of the constitution. It provides:

"That no person sold to service or labor in one State under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due."

It will be observed, Mr. President, that this clause in the constitution is not amongst the enumerated powers granted to Congress, for, if that had been the case, it might have been urged that Congress alone could legislate to carry it into effect; but it is one of the general powers, or one of the general rights secured by this constitutional instrument, and it addresses itself to all who are bound by the constitution of the United States. Now, sir, the officers of the General Government and bound to take an oath to support the constitution of the United States. All State officers are required by the constitution to take an oath to support the constitution of the United States; and all men who love their country, and are obedient to its laws, are bound to assist in the execution of those laws, whether they are fundamental or derivative. I do not say that a private individual is bound to make the tour of his State in order to assist an owner of a slave to recover his property, but I do say, if he is present when the owner of a slave is about to assert his rights and endeavor to obtain possession of his property, every man present, whether by be an officer of the General Government, or the State Government, or a private individual, is bound to assist, if men at all are bound to assist in the execution of the laws of their country.

Now what is this provision? It is that such fugitives shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due."

1850: The Compromise of 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Law

More territories further west were now asking for admittance as states and again the argument arose as to whether these should be designated slave or free. Congressman David Wilmot of Pennsylvania introduced legislation stipulating that no new territories would be admitted as slave states. The "Wilmot Proviso" failed, but the debate rekindled vehement arguments in and out of Congress. The statesman Henry Clay engineered another compromise where California was admitted as a free state, the territories of New Mexico and Utah were created without reference to the "Wilmot Proviso," and slavery was abolished in the District of Columbia. This legislation also included an act that addressed the return of fugitive slaves. This portion of the Compromise of 1850 is referred to as The Fugitive Slave Act.

The Fugitive Slave Law was designed to deter slaves from escaping and free citizens from aiding in escape attempts. These laws stipulated that it was illegal for any citizen to assist an escaped slave. Furthermore, the legislation demanded that if an escaped slave was sighted, he or she should be apprehended and turned in to the authorities for deportation back to the "rightful" owner down south. It was thought that the Fugitive Slave Act would diminish the incentive for slaves to attempt escape. The rationale behind this was the slaves' realization that even if they managed to escape from their plantation, they could still be caught and returned by any citizen in the United States. The Fugitive Slave Act was so severe that any United States Marshall who refused to return a runaway slave would pay a hefty penalty of \$1,000.

The law was very controversial and generally considered to favor slave owners. Abolitionists decried the fact that the burden of proof was put on the blacks (who had little legal power in the first place) and there was no provision for a jury trial. Instead, the case was decided by a federal commissioner who had a financial incentive to deliver the slave back to the south. If he sided with the black defendant the commissioner received a five dollar fee, but if the claimant won the fee doubled to ten dollars--a difference that opponents to the law viewed as a bribe. When quantified, the law certainly appears to have benefited the slave owners. Only eleven of the 344 cases heard by such commissioners during the 1850s were found in favor of the black defendant.

1851: Christiana - Correspondence in the *Pennsylvania Freeman*

The following is a transcription of a letter printed in the *Pennsylvania Freeman* on September 18, 1851. Immediately following this letter is the response from Governor Johnson.

To the Governor of Pennsylvania:

The undersigned citizens of Pennsylvania respectfully represent:

That citizens of a neighboring State have been cruelly assassinated by a band of armed outlaws at a place not more than three hours journey distant from the seat of government and from the commercial metropolis of the State;

That this insurrectionary movement in one of the most populous parts of the State has been so far successful as to overawe the local ministers of justice and paralyze the power of the law;

That your memorialists are not aware that "any military force" has been sent to the seat of insurrection or that the civil authority has been strengthened by the adoption of any measures suited to the momentous crisis.

They therefore respectfully request the chief executive magistrate of Pennsylvania, to take into consideration the necessity of vindicating the outraged laws, and sustaining the dignity of the Commonwealth on this important and melancholy occasion.

John Cadwalander, R. Simpson, John Smith, Thomas McGrath, S.R. Carnahan, Samuel Hays, Geo. H. Martin, A.L. Rounfort, W. Deal, John W. Forney, Issac Leech, Jr., C. Ingersoll, James Page, Harry Connelly, Frederick McAdams

Response from the Governor Philadelphia, September, 1851

To Messrs. John Cadwalander, A.L. Rounfort, Jas. Page, C. Ingersoll, Issac Leech, Jr., R. Simpson, W. Deal, Geo. H. Martin, Samuel Hays, S. R. Carnahan. Thos. McGrath. Jon. Swift. Fredk. McAdams.

Gentlemen: Your letter, without date was this afternoon put into my hands by one of the servants of the Hotel. The anxiety which you manifest to maintain the laws of the land and the public peace, is fully appreciated, and I have great pleasure in informing you that, more than twenty-four hours before the receipt of your letter, the parties implicated have been, through the vigilance and decision of the local authorities, arrested, and are now in prison, awaiting an inquiry into their imputed guilt. The District Attorney and Sheriff of Lancaster County, acting in concert with the Attorney General of the State, deserve especial thanks for their prompt and energetic conduct. This was all done early on Saturday morning, and duly reported to me by the local officers.

The testimony taken by the U.S. Commissioner, who arrived at a later period on the ground, a printed copy of which has accidentally reached me this afternoon, confirms me in the belief that the State authorities had vindicated the law, and to a large extent arrested the perpetrators of the crimes.

The cruel murder of a citizen of a neighboring State, accompanied by a gross outrage on the laws of the United States, in the resistance of its process, had been committed; and you may be assured that so soon as the guilty agents are ascertained, they will be punished in its severest penalty by the law in Pennsylvania. I am very proud that the first steps to detect and arrest these offenders have been taken by Pennsylvania officers.

Permit me, gentlemen, having thus removed all just cause of anxiety from your minds, respectfully to suggest that the idea of rebellion, or "insurrectionary movement" in the country of Lancaster, or anywhere else in this Commonwealth, had no real foundation, and is an offensive imputation on a large body of our fellow citizens. There is no insurrectionary movement in Lancaster county, and there would be no occasion to march a military force there, as you seem to desire, and inflame the public mind by any such strange exaggeration. I do not wish our brethren of the Union to think that in any part of this State, resistance to the law goes undetected or unpunished, or there exists such a sentiment as treason to the Union and the constitution. The alleged murderers of Mr. Gorsuch, whose crime is deep enough without exaggerating it, have been arrested and will be tried, and they and their abettors be made to answer for that they have done in contravention of the law. But in the meantime, let me invite your co-operation, as citizens of Pennsylvania, not only to see that the law is enforced, but to add to the confidence which we all feel in the judicial tribunals of the land by abstaining from undue violence of the language. and letting the law take its course. Depend upon it, gentlemen, there is in Lancaster county a sense of duty to the laws of the land, manifested in the easy and prompt arrest of these offenders, which will on all occasions show itself in practical obedience. The people of that county are men of peace and good order, and not easily led aside from the path of duty which the constitution prescribes. They and every Pennsylvanian love the constitution and the Union. They will detect, as they have done in this case, and arrest and punish all who violate the laws of the land. There is no warrant. depend on it. for representing the men of Lancaster county as traitors and participants in an "insurrectionary movement." You do them, unintentionally I have no doubt, great injustice.

I am deeply indebted to you for affording me this opportunity of expressing my views. But for your

communication I might not have been able to do so. You, and my fellow citizens at large, may be assured of my firm determination, at all hazards and under all circumstances, to maintain the supremacy of the Constitution, and enforce obedience to the laws alike of the United States and of this Commonwealth. In order that I may be sure that my answer may reach its destination, (your letter but accidentally come to my hands,) I have requested Mr. White to put it in the hands of Mr. John Cadwalader, whose signature, I observe first. I am, with great respect, Your obedient servant, Wm. F. Johnston

(From the Pennsylvania Freeman, September 18, 1851).

Perceptions & Reactions

National Newspaper Reaction to the Christiana Riot

Initial reactions

The national significance of the Christiana Riot rested in its legacy as the first direct reaction to the Compromise of 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Law. The Cleveland True Democrat, speaking of the Riot said, "This is the first horrible tragedy which has taken place under the Fugitive Slave Law. We had expected such a catastrophe before this; and, we fear, it is but the beginning of a series of riots which will end, as it has begun, in blood."

Reactions to the Riot were more immediate and emotional in Pennsylvania and Maryland than they were in the rest of the nation, but unrest was clearly created throughout the nation. The events of Christiana lasted only one day, but the results lingered much longer. Public opinion expressed was varied in reference as to who were the villains and who were the victims. However, one sentiment common in all the opinions expressed was the feeling that the Riot happened as a response to the Fugitive Slave Law. A belief was expressed by several sources that the time had come for the people to choose whether or not the Fugitive Slave Law would be recognized in the "free" states. In order for the Fugitive Slave Law to be effective, northern states would need to partially suppress individual beliefs concerning slavery because slavery and freedom have nothing in common. Public opinion on Christiana treated the event as if it were a referendum on the Fugitive Slave Law and whether or not the northern states would support it.

Southern Reaction

In the atmosphere of watchful waiting that existed in the South in 1851, the word of the events at Christiana assumed a significance of extraordinary proportions. It was the first open and violent defiance of the Fugitive Slave Law and the first indication of the willingness to defy the Compromise of 1850 with bloodshed when necessary. Southern editors expressed anger and shock. Whether or not it was true moral indignation or carefully created outrage for propaganda purposes, these editorials greatly influenced and molded southern opinion.

The initial reaction expressed tended to be of shocked disbelief. The editor of the Baltimore Clipper alleged that after the Compromise of 1850 the hostility between the sections had been subsiding, and the Fugitive Slave Law was operating successfully. He stated that, "people were generally beginning to look forward to the restoration of entire good feeling between the North and the South." He went on to say that Christiana created "such an excitement -such a feeling of indignation in Maryland -as has seldom been witnessed."

The Mobile, Alabama newspaper the Daily Register echoed the lament of the Baltimore editor when the editor stated, "Our country has been on the verge of a revolution. The elements of discord have scarcely subsided into sullen calm, the grieved and injured Southern States have barely yielded to the importunities and assurances of their own patriotic citizens, that the hand of aggression would be stayed, and that the Compromise would be observed in good faith, when all this diabolical tragedy is enacted with all its vile and insulting circumstances."

The editor felt the key word was the word "insulting". To a southerner honor was a highly-valued commodity. Christiana had deeply struck at that trait which some southerners saw as inviolate.

The Reaction of the Southern Moderates

Two clearly defined schools of thought developed in the South immediately following the Riot, the moderates and the radicals. Moderates tended to see Christiana as a flashpoint which would awaken the North to the harmful nature of abolitionists. According to the moderates, abolitionists who had incited the blacks to violence at Christiana would be ostracized by a North outraged by that violence. The Baltimore Sun of September 19 described blacks as having been "trained for the terrible deed by white neighbors." The paper went on to clearly portray the white neighbors as abolitionist Quakers. The moderate philosophy was that northern states would insist on enforcement of the Compromise of 1850 and the elimination of this divisive abolitionist influence.

Many moderate southern editors yearned for a restoration of peace and called for restraint between the sections of the nation. They called for the North to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law as the constitutional law of the land as agreed to in the Compromise of 1850. Optimism was a prominent sentiment expressed immediately following the

Riot. The cold-blooded murder of a fine Christian man such as Edward Gorsuch would serve to outrage thoughtful Christian northerners who would see abolitionists as wicked fanatics. Christiana would not be repeated and Edward Gorsuch would be perceived in history as a martyr to the cause of maintaining the union in the face of abolitionist's attempts to tear it apart. Moderate northerners who loved peace, the constitution as law, and the union would see to it that Edward Gorsuch did not die in vain.

Southern Approval of the Reaction by Pennsylvania

The editor of the Memphis, Tennessee newspaper, the Enquirer fully expected the North to vindicate not only Edward Gorsuch, but also to vindicate itself. He was impressed by the arrest of the murderers on September 13th and 14th. He believed this to be a sincere effort on the part of the North to guarantee southern property rights under law. His editorial concerning the events at Christiana and the aftermath stated, "The sober-minded people of Pennsylvania, are not prepared to submit to such shameful and disgraceful violations of the law of the land in their own State, by a band of vagabond Negroes and degraded white people who unfortunately reside amongst them. This case has aroused our Northern friends to a sense of their own folly, and the Southern people have to thank them for their prompt energy which they have displayed on the occasion."

The Georgia state newspaper the Southern Recorder declared its appreciation of Pennsylvania's efforts to arrest the murderers by stating, "Federal and State authorities, as well as the people of Pennsylvania were willing to do their duty to the utmost."

The Greensborough, North Carolina paper The Patriot, editorialized that the Pennsylvanians. "seem to be alive to the enormity of the outrage" and have called numerous public meetings" to denounce it.

As stated earlier, many southern journalists believed the potential of success of the Compromise of 1850 to be directly proportionate to the northern desire to enforce it and therefore. the response of the "North to the Christiana Riot was crucial. An editor from North Carolina wrote that unless the rioters were convicted and punished the compromise will be a ' rope of sand' " which would serve the North based on the whim of the people to enforce when convenient. If this were to be the case the law "may as well be burnt up." An editor in Richmond, Virginia felt the logical conclusion of a non-conviction of the perpetrators of Christiana to be that the south was loyal to the Union but its people would not continue to live under it, if its laws may be set aside at defiance and with impunity."

Criticisms Levelled at Abolitionists

Because the reaction of the North was so important to the South, many southern newspapers printed extracts from northern papers. The editor of the Richmond, Virginia Whig. viewed the northern press as showing, almost unanimous abhorrence of these natural results of fanatical teaching." By citing sources in the Philadelphia Whig newspapers. Southern newspapers were able to create an image of the North which seemed to support the anti-abolitionist or anti-fanatical bias which the southerners claimed existed there. The Philadelphia Whig newspapers spoke as one voice to create the image of blacks as poor misled people who were mere tools of the abolitionists. Such an image was very popular in the South as an explanation of the events at Christiana. Therefore, Northern support of this image was equally popular.

Southern moderate editors weary of the disruption of the peace that they perceived existed. applauded northern efforts to criticize notables such as Horace Greeley. Greeley, a noted abolitionist was denounced by the southern press for exonerating the blacks of any responsibility at Christiana. The southern press was pleased to find support among northern editors such as the editor of the New York Express who said Greeley, "speaks only for himself and for some mad little coterie, and without any authority whatsoever from any respectable number of persons in any part of the country." Comments such as this which were carried in a number of newspapers throughout the South seemed to reinforce the accuracy of moderate philosophy concerning the cultural impact of Christiana.

The Radical Southern Viewpoint

The radicals of the South felt quite differently. They felt the abolitionists had a numerical advantage in northern elections and that southern rights would never be protected there. The Southern Press of Washington, D.C. stated that Horace Greeley and his New York Tribune, "represents the actual sentiment on the subject of the Northern masses." They felt the Christiana Riot served to support their assertions that the Fugitive Slave Law would never be enforced north of the Mason-Dixon line and the defiance exhibited at Christiana was indicative of true northern sentiment. Rather than an isolated incident, Christiana would serve as a model for future behavior throughout the North. Edward Gorsuch would be the first, but certainly not the last

innocent to die on northern soil in pursuit of property.

Southern newspapers resorted to adjectives such as, "horrible," dreadful," and "atrocious" to describe the events at Christiana. Many called for revenge. The Fairfield Herald exclaimed, "Let us, while we yet claim so of the rights of freemen throw off the accused yoke which is galling us, at the risk of our fortunes, our tomes and our lives."

The Baltimore Sun cried, "The law of the land -the very statute upon which hangs our destiny as an Union -has been wantonly and openly violated and the death of one, if not more of the best citizens of Maryland, has been the consequence."

The Baltimore Clipper openly demanded vengeance, "that a most foul and damning outrage has been perpetrated upon the highly-respected citizens of the Commonwealth, whilst honestly and lawfully endeavoring to repossess themselves of their property, and the circumstances call loudly for some prompt retributive justice upon the heads of the wretches who have instigated and committed the bloody deed."

A Methodist newspaper in Nashville, Tennessee summarized the opinion of radicals everywhere who saw the actions at Christiana as defining the northerners as a group of fanatics who were unwilling to understand a simple point of law, that slaves were property which must be returned when recovered or found. The defiance of this simple point of justice was the real significance of Christiana. It was, according to the irate editor, "a determined purpose to resist the law of the land," and in fact, "the cool and determined purpose to maltreat and murder, aye butcher, in the most savage, barbarous and cold-blooded manner, those who were seeking their constitutional rights." He also called for vengeance by stating, "A crisis has come, this affair will test the matter." Southern rights and the laws of Congress will be respected and, "the cold-blooded murder punished," or the rights of southern citizens will be, "trampled under foot. and their blood cry in vain for justice."

A South Carolina based newspaper, the Southern Standard, editorial lamented that a South Carolinian had not been killed in the Riot. He felt Maryland was too moderate in temperament to properly rally the rest of the South to the required frenzy. Other southern editors believed the Christiana Riot would serve as the impetus to the South to seed dis-union. The editor of the Augusta, Georgia newspaper, The Constitutionalist. could not resist a not so subtle jab at moderates who believed in the Compromise of 1850 as a vehicle to preserve the union by stating, "Our opponents are always pointing to the Fugitive Slave Law. We point you, people of Georgia, to the mangled corpses of your fellow citizens of the South. We have been fearing just such a result as this. The law will hereafter be a perfectly dead letter. Such is the Compromise which some of our opponents tell the people is fair, liberal, and just. We have lost all our territory and got a Fugitive Slave Law, the recovery under which of our slaves, costs us more than they are worth, and the blood of our people besides."

The ultimate Significance of the Christiana Riot for radical editors was the opportunity it gave them to back their denunciations of the Compromise of 1850, The Fugitive Slave Law, and ultimately the union. The editor of the Little Rock, Arkansas Star Gazette and Democrat believed the Christiana Riot had forced the South to the "last extremity of an injured and insulted people." The editor of the Jacksonville, Florida Floridian and Journal asked, "Is such guilt to be tolerated -are such assassinations to be repeated? If so, the sword of Civil War is already unsheathed." The Fairfield, South Carolina Herald predicted, "Tis thus the people of the South have become suppliant and fawning. God forbid Carolinians to submit or suffer their pile of grievances to be increased. Let us, while we yet claim some of the rights of freemen, throw off the accursed yoke which is galling us, at the risk of our fortunes, our tombs and our lives."

Northern Feelings and Opinions

The feelings of the North towards the Riot were dividing into three groups. Northern moderates were horrified that Constitutional Law had been so casually disregarded and that violence would cause dis-union in the South. This group believed the Fugitive Slave Law and the Compromise of 1850 would preserve the union if enforced.

The second opinion was the group which believed the Fugitive Slave Law to be morally reprehensible but didn't know what means of dissent would best defeat it. The third opinion was that of the abolitionists who applauded the black violent resistance at Christiana.

Sentiments of Northern Moderates

The moderates of the North, like their southern counterparts, blamed fanatical abolitionists for Christiana.

Those abolitionists who pointed to their resistance being based on the moral authority supplied to them by God due to "higher law" became special targets in the press. The Pennsylvanian declared that the abolitionists were "agitators" who were "not only prepared for murder and insurrection, but they are themselves the pledged assassins of the Constitution." The Weekly American felt that "these higher law men are morally responsible for encouraging and inviting such resistance to the laws, and as such must account to God and their country." The Weekly American in Waterbury, Connecticut on September 19th decried the deplorable effects of higher law" advocates. The Philadelphia Ledger of September 12 quoted Mr. Stafford of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania as calling Christiana "The Fruits of Higher Law."

Those who opposed the Fugitive Slave Law, but were in doubt as to proper opposition to it, stressed the law itself as the culprit at Christiana. They welcomed the Compromise of 1850 because it maintained the union and because it temporarily calmed the storm around slavery expansion, but they felt the Fugitive Slave Law to be unenforceable. Northern concepts of individual rights and freedoms would not be suppressed in order to enforce the law. Without northern compliance the law was unenforceable. To act as a slave catcher was so morally repugnant to some northerners that a negative stance on slavery became significantly stronger after 1850. But, because the Fugitive Slave Law was the law of the land, those who were of this opinion believed it should be enforced.

The conflicting pangs of conscience and law were deeply disturbing to members of this belief. Those who were torn between obeying the law while also obeying their consciences were extremely upset by news of the Riot. It dramatically illustrated the need to make a choice between what was morally right and what was legally right.

The Abolitionist Viewpoint

The third belief system existing in the North was the group who damned the Fugitive Slave Law as a moral evil and defied federal authorities to enforce it. They described the Compromise of 1850 as a "pact with the Devil" and relied only on the "higher laws of God." These were the abolitionists who cheered the resistance at Christiana and hoped the success of the resistance there would inspire further resistance everywhere. For the abolitionists, Christiana strengthened their attacks on the institution of slavery. Sidney Howard Gay of the National Anti-Slavery Standard wrote, "It need surprise nobody that in the game of slave hunting, it should sometimes happen that the hunting party and not the hunted become the mark for bullets, and the law of self-preservation, and not the Fugitive Slave Law, be obeyed in triumph." Gay goes on to state that Edward Gorsuch should be, "shot down like a dog." William Lloyd Garrison in the Liberator calls Gorsuch a "manstealer", and described the slave catchers as "lawlessly breaking into a private dwelling under the cover o' darkness, attempted with stealth and violence, to seize and make slave some of the occupants."

Frederick Douglas wrote that Christiana was needed "to check these aggressions and to bring the hunters of men to the sober second thought." The Pennsylvania freeman wrote that "instead of whining and writhing over this horrible massacre, let every citizen worthy of the name, turn to the cause of it, slavery and have manliness enough to demand the remedy."

The Life of William Parker and His Impact on the Christian Riot

William Parker's narrative published in 1866 in The Atlantic Monthly is the only personal account of the resistance. It was contested by some as unauthentic because Parker only learned to read and write after he fled to Canada following the incident. There is a wealth of information which does not allow its dismissal, even if he had only dictated it to an admittedly sympathetic editor. While other primary sources include newspapers and magazines which covered the event, it remains the only eye-witness account.

The "sympathetic editor" Signed only as EX, either directly or indirectly impacted Parker's narrative because those who wish to question the validity of the document find his role as just cause to do so. The Atlantic Monthly article was written to show blacks to be ready for suffrage in 1866. Was it factual or was it embellished to serve the propaganda intention of E.K.?

Other questions exist surrounding the narrative. Was William Parker the man most responsible for the Riot? Was William Parker the most conspicuous man in the Riot? Was William Parker heroic and desperate as he describes himself. or is he exaggerating events to feed his own ego and legacy? Was William Parker a "good citizen" violating a "bad law"?

Life as a Slave

William Parker, the principal actor in the Christiana Riot was an escaped slave. He was born in Anne Arundel County, Maryland on Rowdown, a plantation owned by a wealthy master named Major William Brogdon. Major Brogdon had two sons William, a doctor, and David, a legislator. Major Brogdon died when William Parker was still a child. As a master, Major Brogdon had been described by William Parker as "middle of the road -not too lenient or strict,"

William Parker's mother was named Louisa Simms. She also died when William Parker was very young. William Parker was raised by his grandmother. He lived in the "quarter". It was a rickety dwelling one hundred feet long by thirty feet wide. Seventy slaves lived on Rowdown. When Major Brogdon died, his sons divided the land and the slaves. William Parker, his brother, and his uncle went to their new home called Nearo which was owned by Master David. William Parker carried his reputation for strength and toughness with him to Nearo. His fighting prowess was born by the necessity of fighting older boys for a warm place by the fire. Later, William was a combatant in prize fights arranged by the master. William Parker used this analogy to explain his desire to be free. "My Rights at the fireplace were won by my child-fists; my rights as a freeman were, under God, secured by my own right arm."

The overseer at Nearo was named Robert Brown. He was fired for beating a slave girl so severely she almost died. A black man named Bob Wallace became foreman. William Parker described himself at this point of his life as, "contented as it is possible for a slave to be." While slaves were treated reasonably well and were not beaten on Nearo, they were being sold off gradually. Approximately 12 percent of Maryland's slave population was sold annually by 1840. William Parker estimated his age at approximately ten or eleven years old when he and fellow slave Levi Storax hid from slave traders. William Parker hid to avoid the emotional pain of separation. He described the extent to which families grieved separation. Sales were equivalent to funerals, people would be "meeting no more in the flesh".

While hiding, William and Levi discussed running away for the first time. They didn't go because they were afraid of freezing to death. Obviously, the boys understood the concept of Canada and freedom. Separation by sale was a part of the system. Both cruel and mild slaveholders took part. To William Parker and his fellow slaves, selling was the cruelest punishment. Slaves were especially afraid of sale to estates in states located farther south than Maryland. The masters there had reputations among the slaves for cruelty and no hope for escape existed.

It was the sale of his friend and fellow slave Levi who had been sold through deception that inspired William Parker to once again consider running away. Levi was told to take a letter to Henry Hall who was actually Levi's new master. William Parker lamented that, "there was no time to say goodbye." William learned of Levi's tale in a chance meeting two months after the sale and the discussion of the two running away was renewed. Levi chose not to join William if he ran away.

William had become attached to another slave named Alexander Brown. After many more slave sell-offs, including Alexander's mother, William approached Alexander concerning running away. Alexander refused, but William made the decision to be free. William was approximately sixteen or seventeen at the time. In May, his decision to run away became final. A nearby planter named Jeffrey Dorsey was butchering. He told William Parker that he had gotten approval for William to help him. No such permission had been given. According to William Parker, an angry Master David threatened to "pay me for the new and the old." William Parker decided to run away at the first opportunity. William had decided to run away at a younger age. Why he waited to leave had nothing to do with the master. The misconception of slaves running away only from "bad masters" has been shown to be a myth. Frederick Douglas believed more slaves ran away from "good masters" than bad. Douglas advised masters to, "Beat and cuff your slave, keep him hungry and spiritless, and he will follow the chain of his master like a dog; but, feed and clothe him well, work with him moderately -surround him with physical comfort, and dreams of freedom intrude. Give him a bad master, and he aspires to a good master; give him a good master, and he wishes to be his own master."

The Escape

Parker decided to create his own event to necessitate that he run away. One day William refused to go to work in the fields. When the master demanded he go to the fields, William provoked an incident by his refusal.

Reasons such as rain and weariness were not valid excuses for a slave to miss his daily labor. William knew what the reaction would be. The master attempted to hit him with a stick, they grappled and William injured the man. He ran into the woods to hide for the remainder of the day. Under cover of darkness he returned to the slave quarters in order to retrieve his brother and they began their way north.

The Parker's reached Baltimore the following evening between seven and eight o'clock. They stayed one week, using a trick of brick dust on their clothes to create the illusion that they were local workers. From Baltimore they moved on to York, Pennsylvania. An incident at Loganville, Pennsylvania in which it was necessary for William to break a white man's arm with a stick caused concern that the fugitives were not safe in York.

With the help of two prominent black anti-slavery workers in Columbia, William Parker and his brother crossed the Susquehanna River by boat into Columbia. They were probably rowed across the river by Robert Loney who had done the same for fugitives before: They rested four days in Columbia, most likely at the home of the wealthy William Whipper which was the first home to which fugitives came before moving on to live and work in the farm country five miles east of Lancaster. Their lives there consisted of constant vigilance and looking over their shoulders. Eventually William's brother moved fifteen miles further to the east.

Life as a Free Man Committed to Resistance

Upon a visit to his brother in Bart Township, William stayed for thirteen months. While there, he worked for Dr. Dengy. The significance of this time rested in William's becoming part of an alliance of refugees who vowed to prevent re-capture of fugitives at the price of their own death. There were known kidnappers in the area. A black named William Dorsey was taken by slaveholders and placed in the Lancaster jail to await trial. William Parker and others tried to free Dorsey. A brawl ensued and bricks, sticks, and clubs were used as weapons.

William Parker developed a greater disrespect for enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law as the alliance became more involved in its resistance. The Fugitive Slave Law meant nothing to Negro haters who used any means possible to return slaves. Using direct retaliation and violence to resist the kidnappers became a common means of resistance. The case of Moses Whitson, a member of the Society of Friends near Chester, Pennsylvania and a colored girl he had living there with him ended violently. Slaveholders came to capture her and tied her up as they fled. A black named Benjamin Whipper, put out an alarm and the alliance sprang into action. They caught the kidnapping party at the Gap. They recovered the girl and beat the kidnappers. Two of the kidnappers died from neglect of their injuries, a local doctor named Dr. Lemmon refused to help them.

William Parker's involvement with the secret committee did not diminish following his marriage to a fellow fugitive named Eliza Ann Elizabeth Howard. He was shot in the ankle in Chester County while saving a fugitive from capture. As the vulnerability of fugitives became increasingly more apparent, the group formed to prevent capture resorted to vengeance on anyone assisting in their capture. Allen Williams betrayed a fugitive and was nearly beaten to death. It was into this atmosphere that Edward Gorsuch and the Maryland slave catchers came. The special resistance committee was well prepared for Gorsuch's arrival due to the efforts of an agent named Samuel Williams of Philadelphia. As William Parker described in his primary source account, "by walking directly into their camp, watching their plans as they were developed, and secretly testing every inch of ground on which they trod, they discovered enough to counterplot these plotters, and to spring upon them a mine which shook the whole country, and to put an end to manstealing in Pennsylvania forever."

The Escape to Canada

When Gorsuch and his party came to William Parker's home on September 11th, the combatants on each side were placed in an extraordinary situation. Following the extraordinary events of September 11, William Parker and his family set out for Canada. The way to Canada was long and dangerous so William went on without his family. Newspapers contained the accounts of Christiana and stores of reward money for William Parker required William to go on to Canada alone. In Rochester, New York William received assistance from Frederick Douglass. They had

known each other from their days as Maryland slaves. From Rochester, the party crossed over into the freedom of Canada.

The party landed at Kingston on the 21st of September. From Kingston, William Parker moved on to Toronto. Upon his arrival in Toronto, William Parker learned of Pennsylvania Governor Johnston's demand for his return under the Extradition Treaty. He was assured by Canadian officials that he would not be returned to Pennsylvania. His wife joined him in Toronto. She had experienced a difficult period following the Riot and William's escape to Canada. She had been arrested twice and her master had pursued her. They settled together, free on fifty acres in a Canadian village named Buxton.

The Legacy of William Parker

The legacy of William Parker is one of heroism. But for current scholarship, William Parker and the resistance of Christiana had almost been lost to the history of African-Americans. He is mentioned, but rarely as the hero of the resistance, in historic annals. White observer Castner Hanway, not William Parker, was portrayed as the hero of the event. David Forbes, a Quaker, wrote in 1898 that Hanway was, "the hero of the riot, by reason of his trial for treason." The stone monument which stands at Christiana to commemorate the resistance lauds Edward Gorsuch as, "dying for the law" and Castner Hanway who, "suffered for freedom." William Parker is a nondescript name lost in the category of names indicted for treason. His name is listed as number thirty.

In 1951, when Lancastrians commemorated the one hundredth anniversary of the Riot, the heroes were still seen as being the white participants. Even African-American speakers applauded the efforts of the white participants. Dr. Horace Mann Bond broached a different hero. He introduced William Parker as a heroic yet tragic symbol of his generation, "This is the Centennial of the violence engendered by great passions and forces, but also by one man. It is the story of A Man Without A Country; it is the tragedy of mankind everywhere who would be free, but must resort to violence to obtain their freedom."

Current scholarship shows William Parker in the light of heroism as a man who refused to be debased by Slavery. His story began as a slave boy at the fires where he showed a youthful resistance to tyranny. He developed a combative nature in prize fights arranged by his master. His legacy culminated in his refusal to allow Edward Gorsuch to claim his prize. He was a man who exhibited courage and bravado in the face of oppression and danger. If he exhibited pride in his resistance, it was a justifiable pride. He was admired by those who knew him. He was twenty-nine years of age when the resistance at Christiana changed his life forever. An abolitionist described him as being as, "bold as a lion, the kindest of men, and the most steadfast of friends." Local blacks considered him to be their leader.

It was this man, William Parker, who provided the courage and strength to the resistance. His resolve was a fountain from which the fugitives at Christiana drank. Thomas Whitson best summarized William Parker's contribution to history when he called him, "the real hero of the Christiana tragedy." Whitson goes on to describe his vision of the legacy of William Parker by stating, "While we all stand reverently at the memories (of white heroes) let us not forget to make one small niche in our tablet of heroes for the Afro-American, William Parker.

Commentary and Analysis

The events of Christiana cannot be explained by a simplistic, static explanation of an evil slave owner's pursuit of a runaway slave into an enlightened North which universally despised the evil institution of slavery. Edward Gorsuch was not an evil man. Evidence suggests that he was a man who possessed traits of kindness and benevolence. He saw himself as being the wronged party because of his self-image as a kind and benevolent master.

The paternal viewpoint of slavery, as espoused by men like Gorsuch, served to re-enforce a patriarchal view of society. By seeing themselves as father figures relative to their slaves, masters viewed themselves as protectors and benefactors to those people held as slaves. Patriarchy justified slavery as being a positive good for a childlike race of people desperate for the leadership and guidance provided by the father.

A fatal combination of factors including patriarchy and a southern gentleman's emphasis on honor, brought Edward Gorsuch to his death at Christiana. He believed that, given his influence as father to his childlike ex-slaves, he could convince them to peacefully return with him to Maryland. Patriarchy, along with the powerful value honor held for him, caused Gorsuch to blindly enter the yard of William Parker's home. Edward

Gorsuch had no ability to culturally understand the concept of resistance which he would confront at that home. For the childlike dependent blacks to confront him and refuse his desires not only confused his perception of the race but also challenged his manhood and the role of honor in his system of values. Confrontation and preservation of honor was preferable to retreat. Death was the result.

Following the Riot, Southerners would charge Castner Hanway with treason because he was white. The thought of childlike black men and women resisting Violently seemed degrading. The resistance must have been organized by a white man. Pennsylvania was an unlikely state in which to suspect violence to occur. With the notable exception of a strong community of abolitionist Quakers in the Philadelphia area, Pennsylvania was perceived to be a state without radical anti-slavery views. Pennsylvania was noted for having a diverse population of people who held diverse opinions on slavery.

A confused man in an unlikely place makes a static definition of good and evil insufficient to explain the occurrence of September 11, 1851. When Edward Gorsuch and his party approached the home of William Parker in an effort to recover fugitives from slavery, the first shots of the Civil War were the answer. Tensions which had been unsuccessfully suppressed by compromises in 1820 and 1850 culminated in the death of Edward Gorsuch.

The focus of my research dealt with the perspectives of opinion following the Christiana Riot and the role of William Parker. The examination of perspectives included the viewpoint and Southern perspective which had been espoused by a Maryland lawyer named D.F. Magee on September 9, 1851 at a commemoration of Christiana. The political perspective was included by examining the effect of the tragedy at Christiana on the race for governor of Pennsylvania in 1851. A plethora of newspaper reactions in the North and South were available to give perspective to national editorial reactions. The primary source perspective by the principle figure of Christiana, William Parker, was published in an 1866 Atlantic Monthly article.

The Southern perspective as espoused by D.F. Magee employed the rhetoric of a courtroom lawyer. Magee was an attorney. Magee attempted to retroactively justify Slavery in two fashions. The one manner of justification was an attempt to present pieces of evidence which showed slavery to be a misunderstood institution which

benefited blacks. At the same time that the rise of a market economy in the North created a form of industrial wage slave for whom no industrialists took responsibility, southern slaves were provided with all necessities of life by the father figure masters. Magee claimed the slave returned the love and care of the master by bestowing on the master a childlike affection and loyalty misunderstood in the North.

The second technique Magee used to justify slavery was by using the relative nature of laborers in the North and South. Magee attempted to prey upon the dynamic of racism and isolation of the "other" race. Magee's transparent attempts to enlist support from Northerners was based on the racist concept of Africans as jungle barbarians. Their importation into the civilized world exposed them to religion and culture unknown in the jungles of Africa. While treated equally well or even in a superior manner in relation to northern laborers, African American slaves were inferior by race. The combination of the two techniques by Magee was an attempt to create a dynamic in which an inferior race of people was treated well by a group of benefactors who owned them. While superior racially, Northern workers did not enjoy the paternal relationship with their industrial employers that slaves enjoyed with their masters. The hoped-for image would be one in which Southern slavery would be viewed as the morally superior institution.

Magee's perspective as it applied to Edward Gorsuch and the events at Christiana, was of a kind and benevolent master who was shot down in cold blood as he legally sought to reclaim his property. The trial which followed was a farce and gross miscarriage of justice. The implication of Magee was that Slavery as an institution was put on trial, not the men and women who Violently had disobeyed the law.

Politically, the Christiana Riot became the catalyst to the end of the career of William Johnston, Governor of Pennsylvania at the time of the incident. The simplistic view of Christiana was to blame radical abolitionists for inciting the blacks to violence. Abolitionism was seen as a radical minority movement. Democrats recognized the desires of Pennsylvania voters to be centrist and moderate on the slavery issue. Democrats successfully tied the incumbent Governor Johnston to the radical abolitionist movement. Whig newspapers desperate attempts to distance Governor Johnston from the death of Edward Gorsuch and to denounce attempts to implicate Johnston as being an abolitionist failed. He lost the election to Colonel William Bigler. The Democratic gubernatorial victory in 1851 became a significant victory. A Democratic party affiliated Governor supported fellow Pennsylvania James Buchanan in his successful presidential bid in 1856. The selection of a Democrat in the governor's race of 1851 could be viewed as a reflection of moderate opinion nationwide. The moderate viewpoint was prominently expressed in national newspapers. The ability to create the image of William Johnston as a radical and to defeat him in Pennsylvania by using that strategy was illustrative of the overall popularity of the moderate viewpoint. Moderates were fearful of the events at Christiana and the implications of those events. The Fugitive Slave Law and the Compromise of 1850 had exaggerated Northern reservations concerning the institution of slavery. The higher level of tensions which existed seemed to culminate at Christiana. Both Northern and Southern moderates sought a restoration of peace. They saw efforts to maintain peace as including a repudiation of abolitionism. They were hopeful that the Pennsylvania governor's race was an indication of that repudiation.

There were moderates in the north who were moderates due to an ambivalence concerning constitutional law and the morality of certain laws. They found the Fugitive Slave Law provision requiring northern assistance to be morally reprehensible but felt it needed to be obeyed because it was the law of the land. They were hopeful that peace could be restored following Christiana. As was true of other moderates, the repudiation of radical abolitionism was necessary. Southern and Northern radicals both believed that the only interpretation appropriate following Christiana was that the Fugitive Slave Law had violently failed. Southerners blamed Northern defiance while Northerners blamed Southern immorality. Both sides felt the need to demonize the opposing viewpoint. Southern radicals demanded secession immediately from a group of states which refused to obey constitutional law. Northern abolitionists believed only God's "higher law" was applicable in dealing with the morally bankrupt institution of slavery. Because they believed northern abolitionists to have a numerical advantage, Southern radicals believed the North wouldn't ever enforce the Compromise of 1850. Therefore, rather than an isolated incident, the death of Edward Gorsuch was an event doomed to be repeated. It would also be an event with no southern vindication or justice from northern courts.

The role of William Parker and his significance at Christiana has been questioned historically. Was Parker's personal account valid as printed in the Atlantic Monthly of 1866, or was this account embellished by the sympathetic editor who wrote it? Was Parker the man responsible for and the most conspicuous participant in the riot? Was Parker the hero? The legacy of William Parker was clouded by the issues of the validity of the primary source narrative he claimed to have dictated. William Parker was a man unconquered by slavery. He decided at a young age to run away from bondage. He brought about the incident which made escape necessary when he refused to go to work in the fields and then physically confronted his master. By precipitating this event, Parker relinquished any opportunity to change his mind concerning escape. He would hide during the day and return to the slave quarters during the evening to retrieve his brother with whom he escaped.

The ingenuity and commitment of William Parker would exhibit itself numerous times as he traveled north to Baltimore and into York and Columbia, Pennsylvania. The heroic resistance shown at Christiana was forged as William Parker trekked northward into Pennsylvania. Neither he nor anyone else he could protect would ever be returned into captivity.

William Parker was not an educated or literate man in 1851. He used the gifts given him to resist re-enslavement. Had he been a lawyer such as Thaddeus Stevens, he may have chosen other means of resistance to the intrusion of Edward Gorsuch. The gifts of courage, physical strength, and charismatic leadership were the means of resistance at his disposal. Those were the gifts he used to the detriment of Edward Gorsuch and other supporters of the Fugitive Slave Law.

William Parker saw himself as an average man who was desperate to resist an immoral and bad law. He used the means at his disposal for that resistance. The violence which was the result of that resistance and the perspectives drawn by a vast array of opinion defined Christiana's impact. Whether it merely reflected a national trend towards violent resistance or influenced a trend which became the Civil War, Christiana defined a man of courage within the context of his times.

Conclusion

Following September 11, 1851 a nation sought to find its perspective on the death of Edward Gorsuch. Opinion immediately focused on assigning blame and placing responsibility. With the exception of radical abolitionists, people saw the death of Edward Gorsuch as a tragedy. The immediate targets on whom to assign responsibility were the abolitionists of the North and the Quakers of Pennsylvania. Northern and Southern journalists wrote of the role played by abolitionists who were blamed for inciting black violent resistance. Quakers were assigned equal responsibility, although documentation of specific actions by Quakers was not reported.

The reaction of Pennsylvania Governor William Johnston to the events of September 11, 1851 led to the end of his political career. Johnston was described by the rival Democratic Party as negligent in his reaction to Christiana. He was described as an abolitionist sympathizer who delayed the search for the killers of Edward Gorsuch in order to allow them time to escape. Newspapers in both the North and the South, as well as Pennsylvania Democratic newspapers, charged Johnston with not responding quickly enough or with enough intensity to locate the killers. By successfully implicating Governor Johnston, the Democrats won the Pennsylvania Gubernatorial election in 1851.

Opinion about the meaning of Christiana divided into moderate views and radical views. Those who were moderates in the North and those who were moderates in the South saw the events at Christiana in the same manner. They were concerned that the violent attack would inspire future violence and would destroy the sectional peace as promised by the Compromise of 1850. The worst fears of the Northern and Southern moderates would be realized a decade later. The bullets at Christiana spilled the first blood of the Civil War.

Radicals on both sides were polarized in their opinions of what the bloodshed at Christiana symbolized. Northern radicals and Northern abolitionists considered God's "Higher Law" to be the only appropriate legal authority. The killing of Edward Gorsuch was the justifiable act of fugitives defending their freedom. Edward Gorsuch had attempted to use coercion to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law, the fugitives at Christiana had employed equal violence to enforce moral resistance to this tyranny. Southern radical fire-eaters described Edward Gorsuch as a kind and benevolent man conducting a constitutionally protected search for his lost property. For this act, he was shot down in cold blood. The Northern response at Christiana demanded the secession of the Southern slave holding states. A concrete secessionist element grew gradually in the South following Christiana, as the Southern radicals successfully created the image of abolitionist dominance in the North. They portrayed Christiana not as an isolated incident, but as a prophesy of events yet to come. The most dominant personality and the hero of the resistance at Christiana was William Parker. A runaway slave from Maryland who had escaped to Pennsylvania. Parker was the physical and emotional strength of the resistance movement in Christiana on September 11, 1851. William Parker and the secret committee of people, who had vowed to defend fugitives even unto their deaths, were not going to allow Edward Gorsuch to return to Maryland with his ex-slaves in tow.

As a Southern man by both birth and conviction, Edward Gorsuch was incapable of understanding the resistance before him. Seeing himself as a patriarch of superior honor to the childlike black fugitives before him, he did not comprehend the abilities and attributes of William Parker. Gorsuch would not have attributed the organizational skills necessary for organized and planned resistance to Parker. Nor would he have assumed the blacks to have been courageous enough to resist a group of whites. Northerners also assumed an abolitionist white influence was responsible for the successful resistance.

While a white man named Castner Hanway was placed on trial for treason, the level of heroism attributed to him was more reflective of society's desire for a white hero or villain than it was a reflection of Hanway's actions on the day in question. Castner Hanway was more of an observer than he was a contributor. The legacy of William Parker is one of heroism. The same boy who employed forceful resistance to removal from his rightful place at the fireside, became a man who employed forceful resistance to removal of fugitives from freedom in the Lancaster County, Pennsylvania countryside.

TRIAL:

The trial of Castner Hanway was held in Circuit Court of the United States for the Eastern District of Philadelphia in the Third Circuit on Monday, November 24, 1851. The indictment against Castner Hanway listed five specific charges:

1. That he, with a large number of armed persons forcibly prevented the execution of the United States Fugitive Slave Law and levy treason against the United States.
2. That he, and others forced resisted arrest by Marshal Henry H. Kline, a United States Officer in the process of executing the Laws of the United States.
3. That he liberated from Marshall Kline the custody of the fugitive slaves of Edward Gorsuch.
4. That he and others did meet, conspire, and consult to resist the laws of the United States.
5. That he acting on his treasonous intentions, distributed various books, letters, and other material inciting fugitive slaves and others to resist the laws of the United States.

The trial concluded on December 11, 1851 with a decision by the jury after deliberating for less than fifteen minutes. The verdict of not guilty of the charges of Treason.

The results of the Grand Jury Inquest for the United States in the August 1851 found the following persons held over for the charge of Treason:

DEFENDANTS:

Castner Hanway - Collister Wilson
Joseph Scarlet - John Jackson
Elijah Lewis - William Brown
James Jackson - Isaiah Clarkson
George Williams - Henry Simms
Jacob Moore - Charles Hunter
George Reed - Lewis Gates
Benjamin Johnson - Peter Woods
Daniel Caulsberry - Lewis Clarkson
Alson Pernsley - Nelson Carter
William Brown, 2nd - William Parker

Henry Green - John Berry
Elijah Clark - William Berry
John Holliday - Samuel Williams
William Williams - Josh Hammond
Benjamin Pindergast - Henry Curtis
John Morgan - Washington Williams
Ezekiel Thompson - William Thomas
Thomas Butler - Nelson Ford

Prosecution

The following individuals were representing the Prosecution in the Treason Trial against Castner Hanway:

For the United States

John W. Ashmead: United States Attorney for the Eastern District Court
George L. Ashmead: Attorney from Philadelphia and cousin to John Ashmead
James R. Ludlow: Attorney from Philadelphia

For the State of Maryland

Robert J. Brent: Attorney General of Maryland
James Cooper: United States Senator from Pennsylvania
R. M. Lee: Philadelphia City Recorder

Defense

The following individuals represented the Castner Hanway and others charges in the Treason Trial:

John M. Read: Attorney, Respectable Democrat and Titular Chief Counsel

J.J. Lewis, of West Chester: Leading Chester County Attorney

Theodore Cuyler: Prominent Philadelphia Attorney

Thaddeus Stevens of Lancaster: A Whig and Member of the House of Representatives

W. Arthur Jackson: Young Defense Attorney

Jurors

Court opened at 11:00a.m. on Monday November 24, 1851. Seventy-eight jurors answered the call out of a potential one-hundred sixteen jurors. The jury selection continued until twelve men were selected that were satisfactory to both sides.

The list below represents the twelve men chosen for the jury in the Treason Trial of Castner Hanway:

1. Robert Elliot, Farmer from Perry County age 69
2. James Wilson, Gentleman from Adams county age 73
3. Thomas Connelly, Carpenter from Carbon County age 54
4. Peter Martin, Surveyor from Ephrata age 46
5. Robert Smith, gentleman from Gettysburg age 57
6. William R. Saddler, Farmer from Adams County age 41
7. James M. Hopkins, Farmer from Drumore age 50
8. John Junkin, Farmer from Perry County age 56
9. Solomon Newman, Smith from Milford County age 48
10. Jonathan Wainwright, Merchant from Philadelphia age 66
11. Ephraim Fenton, Farmer from Montgomery County age 52
12. James Cowden, Merchant from Columbia age 36

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