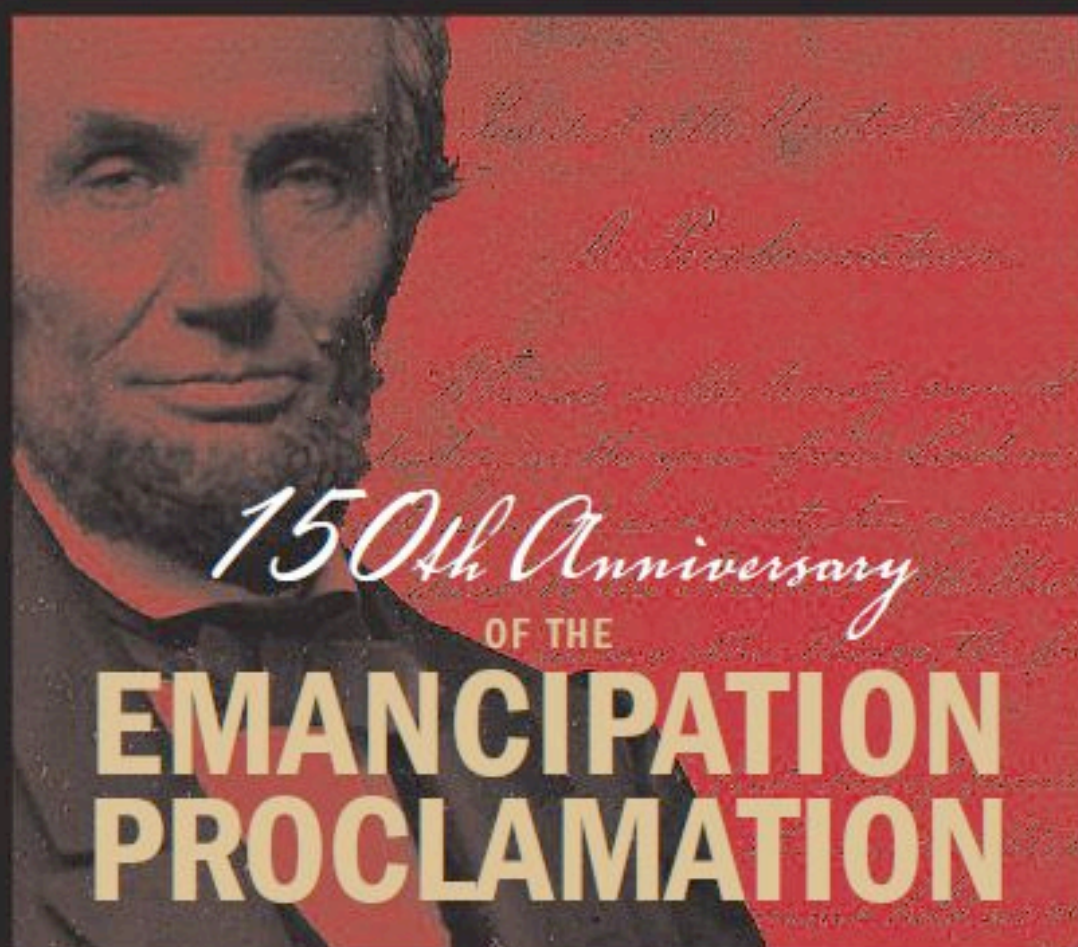


The Meaning and Making *of* Emancipation



AT THE
NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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Introduction

"When you are dead and in Heaven, in a thousand years that action of yours will make the Angels sing your praises."

Hannah Johnson, mother of a Northern black soldier, writing to President Abraham Lincoln about the Emancipation Proclamation, July 31, 1863

President Lincoln issued a Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in the midst of the Civil War, announcing on September 22, 1862, that slaves in those states or parts of states still in rebellion as of January 1, 1863, would be declared free. One hundred days later, with the rebellion unabated, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation declaring "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious areas "are, and henceforward shall be free."

Despite that expansive wording, the Emancipation Proclamation was limited in many ways. It applied only to states that had seceded from the Union, leaving slavery untouched in the loyal border states. It expressly exempted parts of the Confederacy that had already come under Northern control. Most important, the freedom it promised depended upon Union military victory.

While the Emancipation Proclamation did not end slavery in the nation, it fundamentally transformed the character of the war. After January 1, 1863, every advance of Federal troops expanded the domain of freedom. Moreover, the liberated themselves became

liberators, for the proclamation announced the acceptance of black men into the Union army and navy. By the end of the war, nearly 200,000 black soldiers and sailors had fought for the Union and freedom.

The Emancipation Proclamation added moral force to the Union cause and strengthened the Union both militarily and politically. As a milestone along the road to slavery's final destruction, the Emancipation Proclamation has assumed a place among the great documents of human freedom.

The Emancipation Proclamation served as a vital foundation for the 13th Amendment, which banned slavery, and for subsequent efforts to secure the rights of freedom for black Americans. Still later, the Proclamation inspired those who took direct action to call attention to the lingering gap between promise and reality. The Emancipation Proclamation remains an important symbol of our struggle to attain the ideal of liberty and freedom upon which our nation was founded, and upon which we base our self-government.

The preliminary and the final Emancipation Proclamation are among the more than 7,000 Presidential proclamations, and billions of other Federal records, preserved at the National Archives and Records Administration.

This book places the Emancipation Proclamation in its social and political context by presenting related documents from the National Archives' holdings. These illustrate the

efforts of the many Americans, enslaved and free, white and black, by whom slavery was abolished in the United States.

The First Calls for Emancipation

The road to the abolition of slavery in the United States was long and arduous, and it did not end until the ratification of the 13th Amendment in 1865. The quest for freedom began as early as the Revolutionary War as enslaved men served in the American military in exchange for their freedom.

A Revolutionary War Veteran's Pension Affidavit

Richard Rhodes, born in Africa and enslaved by Nehemiah Rhodes, submitted this affidavit in support of his successful Revolutionary War pension application. He served for five years and fought at the pivotal battle of Yorktown, Virginia. Rhodes wrote that he had "entered the army for the purpose of obtaining my freedom" Rhodes died in 1823. In 1838, his 82-year-old widow, Catherine, also received a pension.

I Richard Rhodes ^(a man of colour) of Warwick in the County
of ~~Providence~~ ^{Kent} and District of Rhode Island
do declare and say - that in the year 1778
I enlisted in Capt Arnold's company & Co. of
Graves regiment which regiment was of the
Continental army of the United States & in the
Rhode Island Line - In which regiment I
continued until the 15th day June 1783 when
I was discharged in manner as set forth in
Major Dexter's certificate hereto annexed -
having faithfully served in the army of the
revolution more than five years, I was
in the battles of Mounmouth & Yorktown In the
battle of Mounmouth I received a severe wound
in my arm from a musket ball - I was born
in Africa - & was a slave to Stephen
Rhodes when I entered the army - which and
I entered the army for the purpose of obtaining
my freedom - I am now old & infirm & in
indigent circumstances & stand in need of the
assistance of my Country for support -

attest
Benjamin
[Signature]

Richard Rhodes
[Signature] Mark K

Rhode Island District J-

Be it known that on this fourth day of September
- 1818. came before me the within named Richard
Rhodes - & made solemn oath to the truth of the facts
contained in the declaration & which his mark is
within affixed - Be it also known that from the
examination of the said Richard & the evidence by
him produced I am satisfied that he is entitled
to the provisions of the act of Congress passed 18th
March last ~~making~~ ~~him~~ entitled on act to provide
for certain persons engaged in the land and naval
service of the United States in the revolutionary
war - In witness whereof I have hereto set
my hand & have caused the seal of the
Court to be hereto affixed -

N.B. I know Litch &
his master before the
war - I know that he
enlisted & served - and
have seen his wound -
He is poor enough. D.H.

David Howell
District Judge.

Source: Affidavit of Richard Rhodes; Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Application File, Box 3127; Records of the Veterans Administration, Record Group 15; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

Transcript of Richard Rhodes Pension Affidavit:

[Note: Question marks represent illegible text.]

J. Richard Rhodes (a man of colour) of Norwick in the County of Kent and District of Rhode Island on oath do declare and say—that in the year 1778 I enlisted in Capt. Arnolds company & Col. Grann[?] regiment which regiment was of the Continental army of the United States & in the Rhode Island Line—In which regiment I continued until the 15th day June 1783 when I was discharged in manner or[?] act forth in Major Dexters certificate hereto annexed—having faithfully served in the army of the revolution more than five years, I was in the battle of Monmouth & Yorktown In the battle of Monmouth I received a [...?] wound in my arm from a musket ball. I was born in Africa—& was a slave to Nehemiah Rhodes when I entered the army—and I entered the army for the purpose of attaining my freedom—I am now old & infirm & in indigent circumstances & stand in need of this assistance of my Country for support

Rhichard X Rhodes

His Mark

Attest

[?]

[Note of support]

[Reverse of document]

Be it known that on this fourth day of September 1818. come before me the within named Richard Rhodes—& made solemn oath to the truth of the facts contained in the declaration to which his mark is within affixed—Be it also known that from the examination of the said Richard & the evidence by him produced I am satisfied[?] that he is entitled to the provisions of the act of Congress passed on 18th of March last entitled an act to provide for certain persons engaged in the land and naval service of the united states[?] in the revolutionary war—In witness whereof I have hereto set my hand & have caused the seal of the Court to lie hereto affixed

N.B. I knew [...?] and his master before the war—I knew that he enlisted & served—and have seen his wound—He is poor enough. B. H.

David Howell

District Judge

[End of transcript.]

"To Petition for a Redress of Grievances": A Petition Against the Slave Trade

Petitioning to end slavery was ongoing since the nation's founding. The First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees the right "to petition the government for a redress of grievances." Antislavery groups sent petitions to the newly elected Congress soon after it first met. On December 30, 1799, the Reverend Absalom Jones and other free blacks of Philadelphia sent the following petition to Congress.

To the President, Senate, and House of Representatives
of the United States—

The petitioners of the People of Colour, & Freeborn, within the City
and Subjects of Philadelphia.

Sheweth

That thankful to God our Creator and to the Government
under which we live, for the blessings and benefit extended to us in the enjoyment of
our natural right to Liberty, and the protection of our Persons and property from
the oppression and violence to which so great a number of the colour and
National Descent are subjected; We feel ourselves bound from a sense of
these blessings to continue in our respective allotments, and to lead a quiet
and peaceable lives, rendering due submission to the Laws, and exciting and
encouraging each other thereto, agreeable to the uniform advice of our able
friends of every denomination. — Yet, while we feel impressed with
grateful sensations for the Providential favour we ourselves enjoy, We
cannot be insensible of the conditions of our afflicted Brethren, suffering
under various circumstances in different parts of these States; but deeply
sympathizing with them, We are incited by a sense of social duty
and humbly conceive ourselves authorized to address and petition you
in their behalf, believing them to be objects of representation in your
public Councils, in common with ourselves and every other class of Citizens
within the Jurisdiction of the United States, according to the declared
design of the present Constitution, formed by the General Convention
and ratified by the different States, as set forth in the preamble thereof
in the following words: — We the People of the United States
in order to form a more perfect union, establish Justice, insure domestic
tranquillity, provide for the common Defence, and to secure the blessings of
Liberty to ourselves and posterity, do ordain &c. — We apprehend
this solemn Compact is violated by a trade carried on in a clandestine
manner to the Coast of Guinea, and another equally wicked practised
openly by Citizens of some of the Southern States upon the waters of
Maryland and Delaware: — Men infinitely callous as to
qualify for the brutal purposes are employed in kidnapping those of our
Brethren that are free, and purchasing others of such as claim a property
in them; thus these poor helpless victims like droves of cattle are
seized, fettered, and driven into places provided for this most horrid
traffic, such as dark cellars and garrets, as is notorious at New York

Chesler-town, Easttown, and divers other places; — After a sufficient number is obtained, they are forced on board vessels, crowded under hatches, and without the least commiseration, left to deplore the sad separation of the dearest ties in nature, husbands from wife and Parents from children thus packed together they are transported to Georgia and other places, and there inhumanly exposed to sale: Can any Commerce, trade, or transaction, so detestably shock the feelings of Man, or degrade the dignity of his nature equal to this, and how increasingly is the evil heightened when practised in a Land, high in profession of the benign Doctrines of our blessed Lord, who taught his followers to do unto others as they would that they should do unto them!

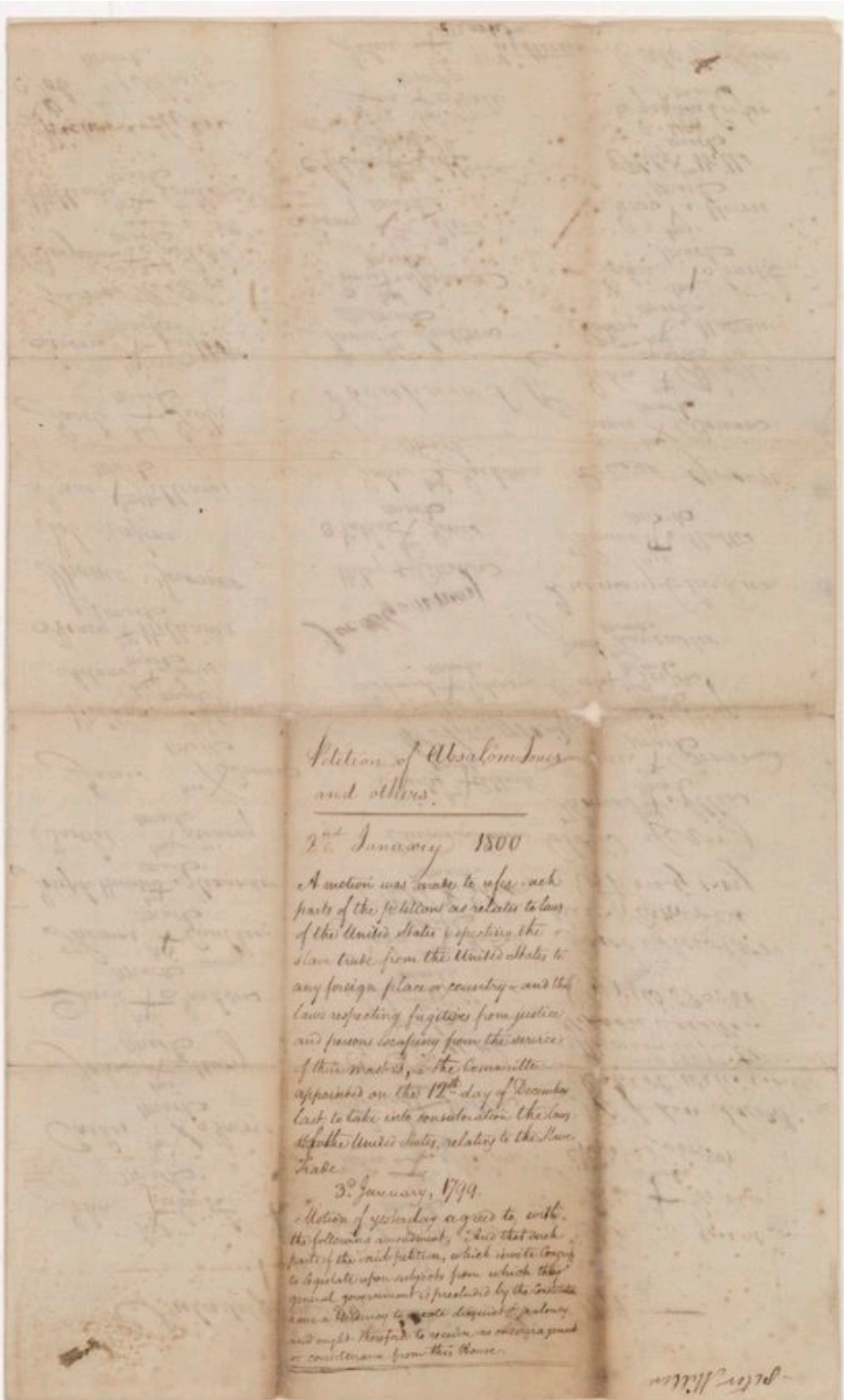
Your petitioners desire not to enlarge, the Volume might be filled with the sufferings of this grossly abused class of the human species, (100,000 of whom it is said are now in unconditional bondage in these States,) but, conscious of the rectitude of our motives in a concern so nearly affecting us and so essentially interesting to real wellfare of this Country, we cannot but address you as Guardians of our Civil rights, and Patrons of equal and National Liberty, hoping you will view the subject in an impartial, unprejudiced light. — We do not ask for the immediate emancipation of all, knowing that the degraded state of many, and their want of education, would greatly disqualify for such a change; yet humbly desire you may exert every means in your power to undo the heavy burdens, and prepare the way for the oppressed to go free, that every yoke may be broken.

The Law not long since enacted by Congress called the Fugitive Bill, is, in its execution, found to be attended with circumstances peculiarly hard and distressing, for many of our afflicted Brethren in order to avoid the barbarities wantonly exercised upon them, or thro' fear of being carried off by these Men-stealers, have been forced to seek refuge by flight; they are then hunted by armed Men, and under colour of this Law, cruelly detained, shot, or brought back in chains to those who have no just claim upon them.

In the Constitution, and the Fugitive bill, no mention is made of Black people or Slaves — therefore if the Bill of Rights, or the declaration of Congress are of any validity, we beseech that as we are men, we may be admitted to partake of the Liberties and inalienable Rights therein held forth — firmly believing that the extending of Justice and equity to all classes, would be a means of drawing down the blessings of Heaven upon this Land, for the Peace and Prosperity of which, and the real happiness of every member of the Community, we fervently pray —

Philadelphia 30th of December 1799 —

John ^{his} Smith ^{mark} +	Samuel ^{his} Wilson ^{mark}	Joseph ^{his} Jones ^{mark}
Parker ^{his} Harris ^{mark}	John ^{his} Nelson ^{mark}	John ^{his} Jones ^{mark}
John ^{his} Wang ^{mark}	Thomas ^{his} Watson ^{mark}	Charles ^{his} Johnson ^{mark}
David ^{his} Jackson ^{mark}	Edward ^{his} Matthews ^{mark}	Stephen ^{his} Sweet ^{mark}
Thomas ^{his} Caulker ^{mark}	Anthony ^{his} Williams ^{mark}	Robert ^{his} Williams ^{mark}
Joseph ^{his} Houlston ^{mark} + Alexander ^{his} Houlston ^{mark}	John ^{his} Harris ^{mark}	William ^{his} Smith ^{mark}
Bartlett ^{his} Houlston ^{mark}	Philip ^{his} Johnson ^{mark}	Stephen ^{his} Sweet ^{mark}
James ^{his} Brown ^{mark}	Edward ^{his} Johnson ^{mark}	Cyril ^{his} Porter ^{mark}
William ^{his} Brown ^{mark}	Charles ^{his} Caldwell ^{mark}	Jacob ^{his} Nicholson ^{mark}
Adam ^{his} James ^{mark}	Peter ^{his} Houlston ^{mark}	Alex ^{his} Weathered ^{mark}
Henry ^{his} Williams ^{mark}	Edmund ^{his} Robinson ^{mark}	Thomas ^{his} Gray ^{mark}
Thomas ^{his} Seamer ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}	Charles ^{his} Brown ^{mark}
Sol ^{his} Rafine ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}	Thomas ^{his} Brown ^{mark}
Isaac ^{his} Williams ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}
Jacob ^{his} Gibbs ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}
Levern ^{his} Gibbs ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}
James ^{his} Wilson ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}
Benjamin ^{his} Jackson ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}
William ^{his} Coulson ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}
Richard ^{his} Allen ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}
Rob ^{his} Albert ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}	John ^{his} Brown ^{mark}



Source: Petition of Absalom Jones, and Others, People of Color, and Freemen Against the Slave Trade to the Coast of Guinea; HR 6A-F4.2; Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Record Group 233; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

Transcript of Petition against the slave trade:

[Note: Question marks represent illegible text.]

To the President, Senate, and House of Representatives of the United States—

The petition of the People of Colour, Freeman, within the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia.

Humbly sheweth

That thankful to God our Creator and to the Government under which we live, for the blessing and benefit extended to us in the enjoyment of our natural right to Liberty, and the protection of our Persons and property from the oppression and violence, to which so great a number of like colour and National Descent are subjected; We feel ourselves bound from a sense of these blessings to continue in our respective allotments, and to lead honest and peaceable lives, rendering due submission to the Laws, and exciting and encouraging each other thereto, agreeable to the uniform advice of our real friends of every denominations.—Yet, while feel impress'd with grateful sensations for the Providential favours we ourselves enjoy, We cannot be insensible of the condition of our afflicted Brethren, suffering under various circumstances in different parts of these States; but deeply sympathizing with them, We are incited by a sense of Social duty and humbly conceive ourselves authorized to address and petition you in their behalf, believing them to be objects of representation in your public Councils, in common with ourselves and every other class of Citizens within the Jurisdiction of the United States, according to the declared design of the present Constitution, formed by the General Convention and ratified by the different States, as set forth in the preamble thereto, in

the following words—viz—"We the People of the United States "in order to form a more perfect union, establish Justice, insure domestick "tranquility, provide for the Common Defence, and to secure the blessings of "Liberty to ourselves and posterity, do ordain &c."—We apprehend this solemn Compact is violated by a trade carried on in a clandestine manner to the Coast of Guinea, and another equally wicked practiced openly by Citizens of some of the Southern States upon the waters of Maryland and Delaware: Men sufficiently callous as to qualify for the brutal purpose, are employed in kidnapping those of our Brethren that are free, and purchasing others of such as claim a property in them; thus these poor helpless victims like droves of Cattle are seized, fettered, and hurried into places provided for this most horrid traffic, such as dark cellars and garrets, as is notorious at Northwest Fork[?] Chester-town, Eastown, and divers other places;— After a sufficient number is obtained, they are forced on board vessels, crowded under hatches, and without the least commiseration, left to deplore the sad separation of the dearest ties in nature, husband from wife and Parents from children, thus pack'd together they are transported to Georgia and other places, and there inhumanely exposed to sale: Can any Commerce, trade, or transaction, so detestably shock the feelings of Man, or degrade the dignity of his nature equal to this, and how increasingly is the evil aggravated when practised in a Land, high in profession of the benign doctrines of our blessed Lord, who taught his followers to do unto others as they would they should do unto them!

Your petitioners desire not to enlarge, the Volumes might be filled with the sufferings of the grossly abused class of the human species, (700.000 of whom it is said are now in unconditional bondage in these States,) but, conscious of the rectitude of our motives in

a concern so nearly affecting us, and so essentially interesting to real welfare of this Country, we cannot but address you as Guardians of our Civil rights, and Patrons of equal and National Liberty, hoping you will view the subject in an impartial, unprejudiced light.—We do not ask for the immediate emancipation of all, knowing that the degraded State of many and their want of education, would greatly disqualify for such a change; yet humbly desire you may exert every means in your power to undo the heavy burdens, and prepare the way for the oppressed to go free, that every yoke may be broken. The Law not long since enacted by Congress called the Fugitive Bill, is, in its execution found to be attended with circumstances peculiarly hard and distressing, for many of our afflicted Brethren in order to avoid the barbarities wantonly exercised upon them, or thro fear of being carried off by those Men-stealers, have been forced to seek refuge by flight; they are then hunted by armed Men, and under colour of this law, cruelly treated, shot, or brought back in chains to those who have no just claim upon them.

In the Constitution, and the Fugitive bill, no mention is made of Black people or Slaves—therefore if the Bill of Rights, or the declaration of Congress are of any validity, we beseech that as we are men, we may be admitted to partake of the Liberties and unalienable Rights therein held forth—firmly believing that the extending of Justice and equity to all Classes, would be a means of drawing down, the blessings of Heaven upon this Land, for the Peace and Prosperity of which, and the real happiness of every member of the Community, we fervently pray

Philadelphia 30th of December 1799

[Signature page]

[Reverse of signature page]

Petition of Absalom Jones and others.

2nd January 1800

A motion was made to refer such parts of the petition as relates to laws of the United States respecting the slave trade from the United States to any foreign place or country—and the laws respecting fugitives from justice and persons escaping from the service of their masters, to the Committee appointed on the 12th day of December last, to take into consideration the laws of[?] the United States, relating to the Slave Trade.

3d January, 1799

Motion of yesterday agreed to, with the following amendment. "And that such parts of the said petition, which invite Congress to legislate upon subjects from which the general government is precluded by the Constitution have a tendency to create disquiet and jealousy, and ought therefore to receive no encouragement or countenance from this House.

[End of transcript.]

Petitioning Continues: An Antislavery Society's Petition Drive

Throughout the 19th century, Americans continued to exercise their right to petition vigorously. During each session, Congress received petitions submitted "respectfully," but "earnestly praying" for action. In 1834, for example, the American Anti-Slavery Society launched an antislavery petition drive. Over the next few years the number of petitions sent to Congress increased sharply.

ADDRESS OF THE BOSTON FEMALE ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

TO THE WOMEN OF MASSACHUSETTS:

SISTERS AND FRIENDS:

As immortal souls, created by God to know and love him with all our hearts, and our neighbor as ourselves, we owe immediate obedience to his commands, respecting the sinful system of Slavery, beneath which, 2,500,000 of our Fellow-Immortals, children of the same country, are crushed, soul and body, in the the extremity of degradation and agony.

As women, it is incumbent upon us, instantly and always, to labor to increase the knowledge and the love of God, that such concentrated hatred of his character and laws may no longer be so intrenched in men's business and bosoms, that they dare not condemn and renounce it.

As wives and mothers, as sisters and daughters, we are deeply responsible for the influence we have on the human race. We are bound to exert it; we are bound to urge men to cease to do evil, and learn to do well. We are bound to urge them to regain, defend, and preserve inviolate the rights of all, especially those whom they have most deeply wronged. We are bound to the constant exercise of the only right we ourselves enjoy—the right which our physical weakness renders peculiarly appropriate—the right of petition. We are bound to try how much it can accomplish in the District of Columbia, or we are as verily guilty touching slavery as our brethren and sisters in the slaveholding States: for Congress possesses power 'to exercise exclusive legislation over the District of Columbia in all cases whatsoever,' by a provision of the Constitution; and by an act of the First Congress, the right of petition was secured to us.

By a resolution of the Last Congress, that no petition respecting slavery, shall be printed for the information of the members, and that no vote shall be taken on it, by which we may know whether the men we call our representatives are truly such, the whole nation is made to feel the slaveholder's scourge. The best and noblest of our countrymen, thus seeing, and thus feeling these things, have spoken and acted like freemen—Oh, let us aid them to rouse the slumbering manhood of the rest! Let us rise in the moral power of womanhood; and give utterance to the voice of outraged mercy, and insulted justice, and eternal truth, and mighty love, and holy freedom; in the name and for the sake of our Saviour; and in the mountain-moving faith, that we can do all things, Christ strengthening us.

Let us petition:—petition, till, even for our impurity, we cannot be denied. Let us know no rest till we have done our utmost to convince the mind, and to obtain the testimony of every woman, in every town, in every county of our Commonwealth, against the horrible Slave-traffic, which makes the District of Columbia a disgrace to the earth, and exhibits in the centre of a Christian country, an unrebuked wickedness, for which, no other spot on earth affords a parallel.

To facilitate this, we annex a form of petition, and entreat the aid of every woman whose hand it reaches, to circulate it (or a better,) rapidly, faithfully and thoroughly, and to transmit the signatures, as soon as possible, to 46, Washington Street, Boston, addressed to the person whose name, as a member of our Executive Committee, shall be affixed to this address.

A detail of the more physical particulars involved in the arrangements of a single Slave-dealer, would show the abolition of Slavery in the ten miles square, to be 'a cause worth dying for:' but while our whole country, by deliberately sanctioning such atrocities, stands before God and the world, as the strong hold of Slavery, while the institutions of the free are daily breaking down under the operation of the Slave system; while in the best regulated parts of our country, the lives of the free are endangered by an avowal of the principles of the Declaration of Independence; and freedom itself embittered because honorable and dignifying industry is stigmatized as *slavish*—while these things are, we must devote ourselves to avert the fearful crisis to which these things are leading. Weak and wicked is the idea, that union in oppression is possible. Every nation that attempts it, 'God beholds, and drives asunder;' and has done from the foundation of the world.

Christian friends, again we conjure you, by all that woman holds dear and holy, to labor as woman has never yet done, in view of the unutterable destruction which waits visibly round about, to make our land a perpetual desolation, unless the people repent.

Leave no energy unemployed, no righteous means untried. Grudge no expense—yield to no opposition—forget fatigue—till, by the strength of prayer and sacrifice, the spirit of love shall have overcome sectional jealousy, political rivalry, prejudice against color, cowardly concession of principle, wicked compromise with sin, devotion to gain, and spiritual despotism, which now bear with a mountain's weight upon the Slave. Let but each woman in the land do a Christian woman's duty, and the result cannot fail to be his instant, peaceful, unconditional deliverance. Thus, and thus only can we hope to deliver our own souls. Only in thus doing, can we hope to hear the voice of Jesus, saying unto us, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father!—Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me!'

By Order of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society,

M. W. CHAPMAN, }
M. AMMIDON, } Corresponding Secretaries.

July 13, 1836.

Caroline Weston
ex Recm for Franklin County

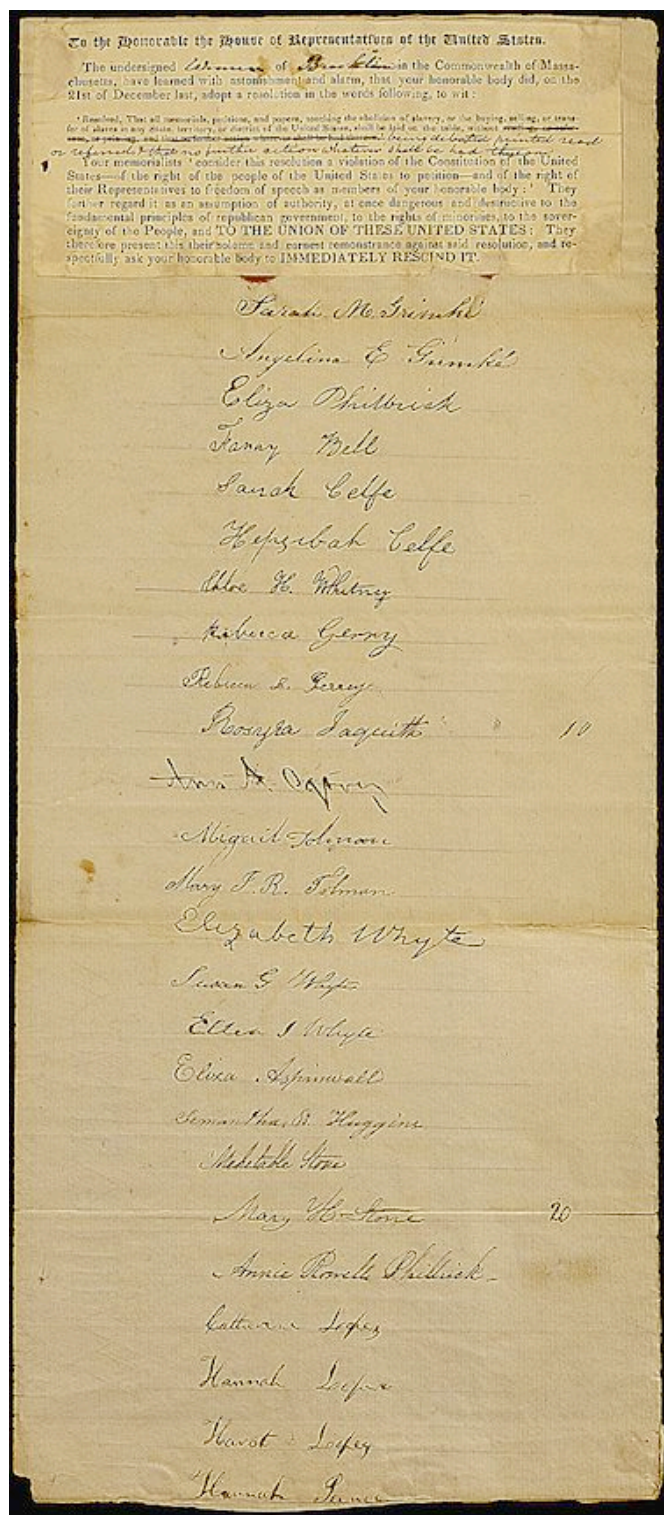
Source: Address of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, 07/13/1836; Petitions and Memorials Which Were Tabled Relating to the Rescinding of the Resolution of December 21, 1837 Tabling All Memorials, Petitions, and Papers on Slavery, ca. 12/21/1837—ca. 03/03/1839; Tabled Petitions and Memorials, 1797–1871; Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–2011, Record Group 233; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [306639](#))

A Petition to Rescind A Gag Rule

In May 1836 the House of Representatives passed a resolution that automatically "tabled," or postponed action on all petitions relating to slavery without hearing them.

Stricter versions of this [gag rule](#) passed in succeeding Congresses.

In spite of the gag rule, abolitionists continued to send petitions to Congress. In 1837 and 1838, abolitionists sent more than 130,000 petitions asking for the abolition of slavery in Washington, DC.



Source: Petition from women of Brookline, Massachusetts, praying that the gag rule be rescinded, 02/14/1838; Petitions and Memorials Which Were Tabled Relating to the Rescinding of the Resolution of December 21, 1837 Tabling All Memorials, Petitions, and Papers on Slavery, ca. 12/21/1837–ca. 03/03/1839; Tabled Petitions and Memorials, 1797–1871; Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–2011, Record Group 233; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [306638](#))

A Response to the Gag Rule in the House of Representatives

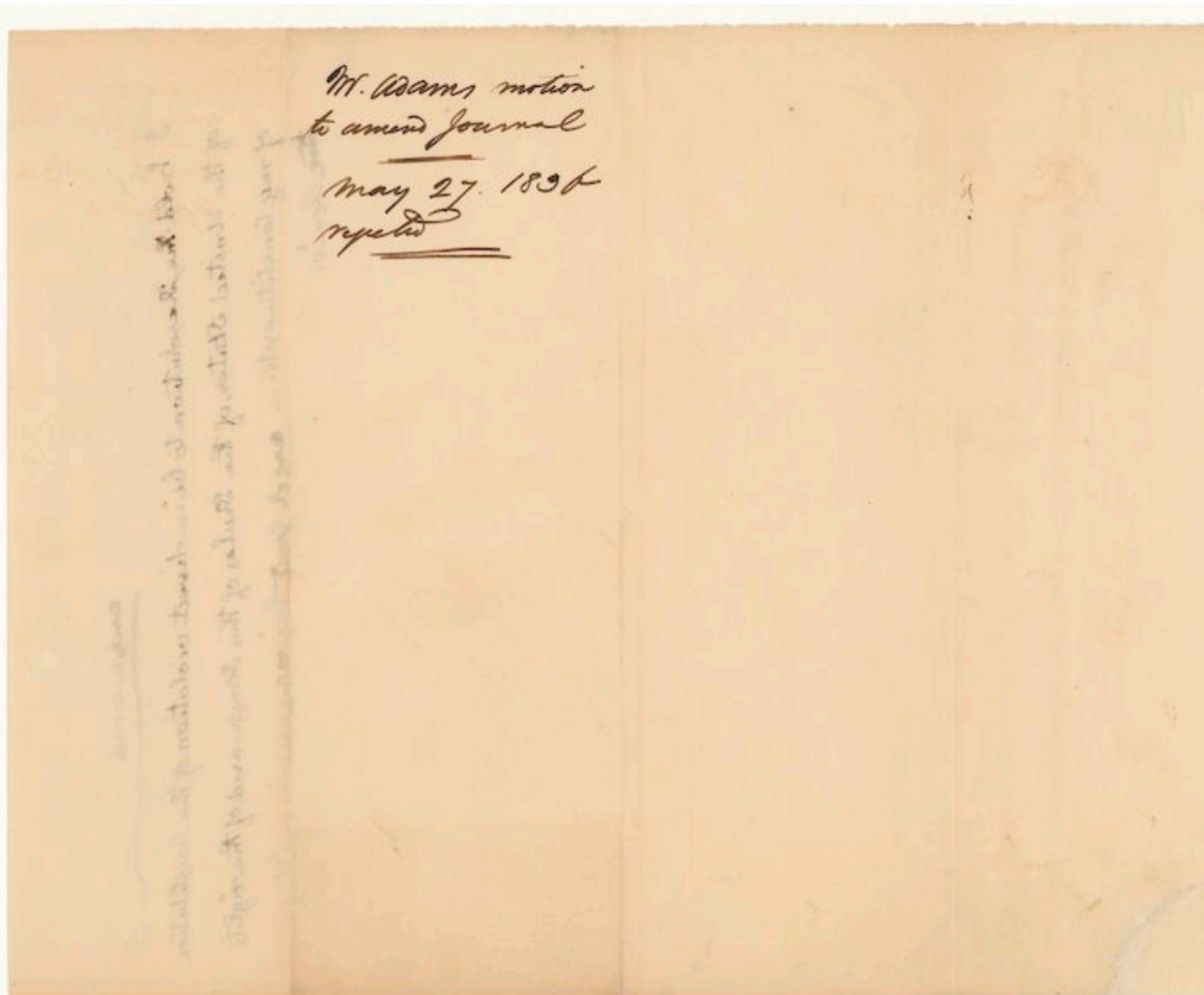
At first, only a small group of congressmen, led by Representative John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts, opposed the gag rule. Adams used a variety of parliamentary tactics to try to read slavery petitions on the floor of the House of Representatives. On May 27, 1836, he offered the following motion to amend the House Journal to include his statement that the recently passed "gag rule" was in direct violation of the Constitution, the Rules of the House of Representatives, and the rights of his constituents.

Upon the name of John Quincy Adams being
called in taking the yeas & nays on said third
resolution - answered

I hold the Resolution to be in direct violation of the Constitution
of the United States, of the Rules of this House, and of the rights
of my constituents. - and gave his answer in writing to
the Chair.

negotiated -

Adams



Source: Motion offered by John Quincy Adams to amend the House Journal to include his statement that the recently passed "gag rule" was in direct violation of the Constitution, the Rules of the House of Representatives, and the rights of his constituents., 05/27/1836; Bills and Resolutions Originating in the House of Representatives, 24th Congress, 12/07/1835–03/03/1837; Bills and Resolutions Originating in the House, 1789–1974; Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–2011, Record Group 233; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [306599](#))

Transcript of John Quincy Adams's response to the gag rule:

[Note: Question marks represent illegible text.]

Upon the name of John Quincy Adams, being called in taking, the yeas and nays [?] he answered

I hold the Resolution to be in strict violation of the Constitution of the United States, of the Rules of this House, and of the rights of my Constituents.—and gave his answer in writing to the Chair.

[Reverse of document]

Mr. Adams motion to amend Journal

May 27, 1836

[?]

[End of transcript.]

Adams's motions were unsuccessful. However, antislavery sentiment in the North gradually grew. Since the country's beginnings, Americans had never been like-minded in their opinions about slavery. Increasing numbers of Northern congressmen supported Adams's argument that, whatever one's view on slavery, stifling the right to petition was wrong. In 1844 the House rescinded the gag rule on a motion made by Adams. Anti-slavery petitions continued to be sent to Congress.

The Unavoidable Issue

Historian James M. McPherson has explained how divisive opinions within a growing nation led to the Civil War and permanently affected the institution of slavery:

"The origins of the American Civil War lay in the outcome of another war fought 15 years earlier: the Mexican-American War. The question whether slavery could expand into the 700,000 square miles of former Mexican territory acquired by the United States in 1848 polarized Americans and embittered political debate for the next dozen years.

"In the House of Representatives, northern congressmen pushed through the [Wilmot Proviso](#) specifying that slavery should be excluded in all territories won from Mexico. In the Senate, southern strength defeated this proviso. South Carolina Senator John C. Calhoun introduced instead a series of resolutions affirming that slaveholders had the constitutional right to take their slave property into any United States territory they wished.

"These opposing views set the terms of conflict for the next decade. When 80,000 Forty-Niners poured into California after the discovery of gold there in 1848, they organized a state government and petitioned Congress for admission to the Union as the 31st state. Because California's new constitution banned slavery, this request met fierce resistance from southerners. They uttered threats of secession if they were denied their

"right" to take slaves into California and the other territories acquired from Mexico. The controversy in Congress grew so heated that Senator Henry S. Foote of Mississippi flourished a loaded revolver during a debate, and his colleague Jefferson Davis challenged an Illinois congressman to a duel. In 1850 the nation seemed held together by a thread, with war between free and slave states an alarming possibility.

The Compromise of 1850

"Cooler heads finally prevailed, however. The Compromise of 1850 averted a violent confrontation. This series of laws admitted California as a free state, divided the remainder of the Mexican cession into the territories of New Mexico and Utah, and left to their residents the question whether or not they would have slavery. (Both territories did legalize slavery, but few slaves were taken there.)

IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

JANUARY 29, 1850.

Read, ordered that the further consideration thereof be postponed to and made the special order of the day for Tuesday next, and that they be printed.

Mr. CLAY submitted for consideration the following

RESOLUTIONS:

It being desirable for the peace, concord, and harmony of the Union of these States, to settle and adjust amicably all existing questions of controversy between them, arising out of the institution of slavery, upon a fair, equitable, and just basis: therefore,

1st. *Resolved*, That California, with suitable boundaries, ought, upon her application, to be admitted as one of the States of this Union, without the imposition by Congress of any restriction in respect to the exclusion or introduction of slavery within those boundaries.

2d. *Resolved*, That as slavery does not exist by law, and is not likely to be introduced into any of the territory acquired by the United States from the republic of Mexico, it is inexpedient for Congress to provide by law either for its introduction into, or exclusion from, any part of the said territory; and that appropriate territorial governments ought to be established by Congress in all of the said territory, not assigned as the boundaries of the proposed State of California, without the adoption of any restriction or condition on the subject of slavery.

3d. *Resolved*, That the western boundary of the State of Texas ought to be fixed on the Rio del Norte, commencing one marine league from its mouth, and running up that river to the southern line of New Mexico; thence with that line eastwardly, and so continuing in the same direction to the line as established between the United States and Spain, excluding any portion of New Mexico, whether lying on the east or west of that river.

4th. *Resolved*, That it be proposed to the State of Texas, that the United States will provide for the payment of all that portion of the legitimate and *bona fide* public debt of that State, contracted prior to its annexation to the United States, and for which the duties on foreign imports were pledged by the said State to its creditors, not exceeding the sum of \$—, in consideration of the said duties so pledged having been no longer applicable to that object, after the said annexation, but having thenceforward become payable to the United States; and upon the condition also that the said State of Texas shall, by some solemn and authentic act of her legislature, or of a convention, relinquish to the United States any claim which it has to any part of New Mexico.

5th. *Resolved*, That it is inexpedient to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, whilst that institution continues to exist in the State of

Maryland, without the consent of that State, without the consent of the people of the District, and without just compensation to the owners of slaves within the District.

6th. *But resolved*, That it is expedient to prohibit within the District the slave trade in slaves brought into it from States or places beyond the limits of the District, either to be sold therein as merchandise, or to be transported to other markets without the District of Columbia.

7th. *Resolved*, 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. And,

8th. *Resolved*, That Congress has no power to prohibit or obstruct the trade in slaves between the slave-holding States; but that the admission or exclusion of slaves brought from one into another of them depends exclusively upon their own particular laws.

Source: Resolution introduced by Senator Henry Clay in relation to the adjustment of all existing questions of controversy between the states arising out of the institution of slavery (the resolution later became known as the Compromise of 1850), 01/29/1850; Senate Simple Resolutions, Motions, and Orders of the 31st Congress, ca. 03/1849–ca. 03/1851; Bills and Resolutions Originating in the Senate, 1789–2002; Records of the U.S. Senate, 1789–2011, Record Group 46; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [306270](#))

"But the Compromise of 1850 compensated the South with a tough new [fugitive slave law](#) that empowered Federal marshals, backed by the Army if necessary, to recover slaves who had escaped into free states.

"These measures postponed but did not prevent a final showdown. The fugitive slave law angered many northerners who were compelled to watch black people—some of whom had lived in their communities for years—returned in chains to slavery."

Excerpted from "Out of War, A New Nation" by James McPherson

Court Documents for "Fugitive" Jane Johnson

Some northerners turned their opposition to the fugitive slave law into action, as illustrated by the story of Jane Johnson, who escaped to freedom with the assistance of Pennsylvania abolitionists.

Johnson and her two sons were enslaved by John Hill Wheeler, the U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua. While on his way to South America, Wheeler brought Jane and her sons to New York and Philadelphia. Abolitionists William Still and Passmore Williamson aided Johnson and her two sons in escaping to Boston from a ferry in Philadelphia. Wheeler petitioned the court to have Williamson return his slaves.

To the Honorable John K. Kane
Judge of the District Court of the U.S.
in & for the Eastern District of Pennsyl-
vania

The Petition of John H. Wheeler
Respectfully represents - That your petitioner
is the owner of three persons held to
service or labor by the laws of the State
of Virginia - said persons being respec-
tively named Jane - aged about thirty five
years - Daniel - aged about twenty years
and Isaac - aged about seven years.
persons of Color - and that they are
detained from the possession of your
petitioner by one Passmore Williamson
resident of the City of Philadelphia, and
that they are not detained for any
Criminal or Supposed Criminal matter.

Your Petitioner therefore prays you
Honor to grant a Writ of Habeas Corpus
to be directed to the said Passmore William-
son commanding him to bring before
your Honor the bodies of ~~them~~ the said
Jane Daniel and Isaac to do, and
obey such order as your Honor may
direct -

John H. Wheeler
Present & Subscribed
July 18. 1855.
Wm. H. Campbell
Attest

Transcript of the Petition by John Hill Wheeler:

[Note: Question marks represent illegible text.]

To the Honorable John K. Kane

Judge of the District Court of the U.S.

in and for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania

The petition of John H Wheeler respectfully represents—That your petitioner is the owner of three persons held to service or labor by the laws of the state of Virginia—Said persons being respectively named Jane—aged about thirty five years, Daniel—aged about twelve years, and Isaiah aged about seven years, persons of Color.—and that they are detained from the possession of your petitioner by one Passmore Williamson resident of the City of Philadelphia, and that they are not detained for any Criminal or supposed Criminal matter.

Your petitioner therefore prays your Honor to grant a Writ of Habeas Corpus to be directed to the said Passmore Williamson commanding him to bring before your Honor the bodies of the said Jane Daniel and Isiah to do, and abide such order as your Honor may direct.

Jno. H. Wheeler

Sworn to & Subscribed

July 18, 1855

N. S. Comm.

Though ordered to do so in the following Writ of Habeas Corpus, Williamson refused to reveal the whereabouts of Johnson and her sons. On the reverse of the document, he responded that he could not bring them in because he did not have them in his custody. He was jailed for contempt of court.



To the Hon. John K. Kane, the Judge within named.

Passmore Williamson the defendant in the within writ mentioned for return, sheweth respectfully, submit that the within named Jane, Daniel and Sarah, ~~or~~ by whatever names they may be called, nor either of them, are not now nor was, at the time of the issuing of said writ, ^{or the original writ} or at any other time, in the custody, power or possession of, nor confined nor restrained their liberty by him the said Passmore Williamson. Therefore he cannot have the bodies of the said Jane, Daniel and Sarah, or either of them, before your Honor, as by the within writ he is commanded.

P. Williamson

The above named Passmore Williamson being duly affirmed, says, that the facts in the above return, ^{and facts} are true.

P. Williamson

Affirmed and subscribed before me
the 20th day of July A.D. 1855.

John K. Kane J. C. C.

U. S. DISTRICT COURT.

W. H. C. R. L.
John K. Wheeler
Cyprian Williamson

Alias HABEAS CORPUS.

Returnable, Friday 20

July 1855 at 10 o'clock

W. H. C. R. L.

Transcript of the Writ of Habeas Corpus in *Wheeler v. Passmore*:

[Note: Question marks represent illegible text.]

United States,

Eastern District of Pennsylvania. sct.

J.K. Kane

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, To

Passmore Williamson

GREETING:

as before we commanded you,

We command you, as before we commanded you , that the bodies of Jane, Daniel, and Isaiah—persons of color under your custody, as it is said, detained by whatsoever names the said Jane Daniel or Isaiah, or Either of them, may be detained, together with the day and cause of their being taken and detained, you have before the Honorable John K. Kane. Judge of the District Court of the United States in and for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, at the Room of the District Court of the United States, in the City of Philadelphia, immediately, then and there to do, submit to and receive whatsoever the said Judge shall then and there consider in that behalf.

Witness the Honorable John K. Kane

Judge of said Court at Philadelphia, this Nineteenth day of July

A.D. 1855 and in the Eightieth year of the Independence of the said United States.

Chas Haslett [?]

[Reverse of document with Williamson's response]

To the Hon. John K. Kane, the Judge within named.

Passmore Williamson the defendant in the within writ mentioned for return thereto[?] respectfully submits that the within named Jane, Daniel and Isaiah, or by whatever names they may be called, nor either of them, are now nor was, at the time of the issuing of said writ or the original writ or at any other time, in the custody, power or possession of, nor confined nor restrained their liberty by him the said Passmore Williamson. Therefore he cannot have the bodies of the said Jane, Daniel and Isaiah, or either of them, before your Honor, as by the within writ he is commanded.

P.Williamson

The above named Passmore Williamson, being duly affirmed, says, that the facts in the above return[?] [...] are true.

P.Williamson

Affirmed and [...] before me the 20th day of July A.D. 1855

Signature [?]

U.S. District Court

USA.

Ex Lib[?]

John H Wheeler

&

Passmore Williamson

Alias Habeas Corpus

Returnable, Friday 10

July 1855 at 10 o'clock

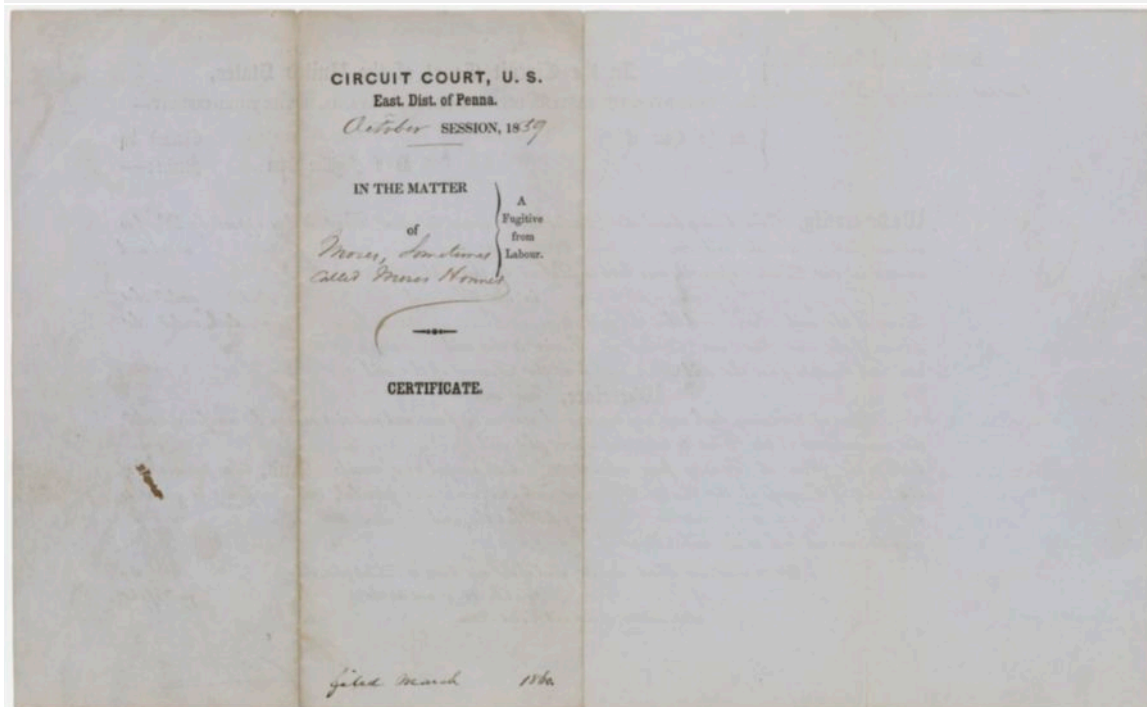
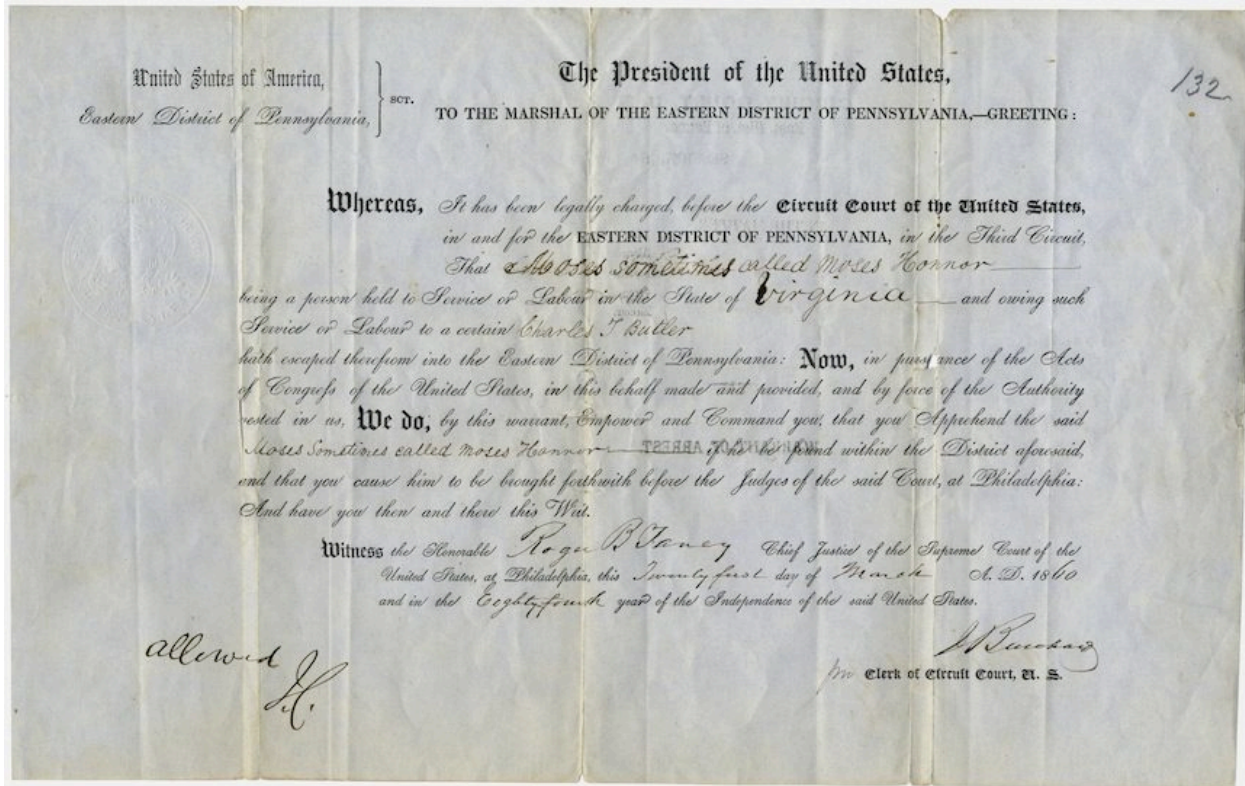
Vandyke

[End of transcript.]

The case became both an international and a national cause celebre of the abolitionist movement. Williamson was freed from prison on November 3, 1855. In one of the more dramatic moments of the trial, Jane Johnson, at great personal risk, returned to Philadelphia from Boston to testify on behalf of the men who had helped her escape from slavery. She and her sons remained free.

Warrant for the Arrest of Moses Honner

Not all enslaved people were as successful as Jane Johnson in their attempts at obtaining freedom through the law, however. Moses Honner was returned as a "fugitive from labor" according to the fugitive slave law. Honner was tried in the Third Circuit Court, Eastern District, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The court decided in favor of the claimant, Honner's owner, Charles T. Butler, and provided him with a certificate allowing removal of Moses Honner to Virginia, from where he had escaped.



Source: Warrant for the Arrest of Moses Honnor, 03/21/1860–03/27/1860; Fugitive Slave Case - Moses (Honner), 03/21/1860–03/28/1860; Fugitive Slave Case Files, 1850–1860; Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685–2004, Record Group 21; National Archives and Records Administration - Philadelphia. (National Archives Identifier: [279023](#))

Transcript of Arrest Warrant for Moses Honnor.

[Note: Question marks represent illegible text.]

United States of America,

Eastern District of Pennsylvania, sct.

The President of the United States,

To the Marshal of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania,—Greeting:

Whereas, It has been legally charged, before the Circuit Court of the United States, in and for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, in the Third Circuit,

That Moses sometimes called Moses Honnor—being a person held to Service or Labour in the State of Virginia—and owing such Service or Labour to a certain Charles T. Butler hath escaped therefrom into the Eastern District of Pennsylvania: Now, in pursuance of the Acts of Congress of the United States, in this behalf made and provided, and by force of the Authority vested in us, We do, by this warrant, Empower and Command you, that you Apprehend the said Moses Sometimes called Moses Honnor—if he be found within the District aforesaid, and that you cause him to be brought forthwith before the Judges of the said Court, at Philadelphia: And have you then and there this Writ.

Witness the Honorable Roger B Taney Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, at Philadelphia, this Twenty first day of March A.D. 1860 and in the Eighty fourth year of the Independence of the said United States.

J Buickard [?]

Clerk of Circuit Court, U. S.

[Reverse of Document]

Circuit Court, U.S.

East. Dist. Of Penna.

October Session, 1859

In the matter of Moses, Sometimes called Moses Honnor A Fugitive from Labour.

Certificate.

Filed March 1860.

[End of transcript.]

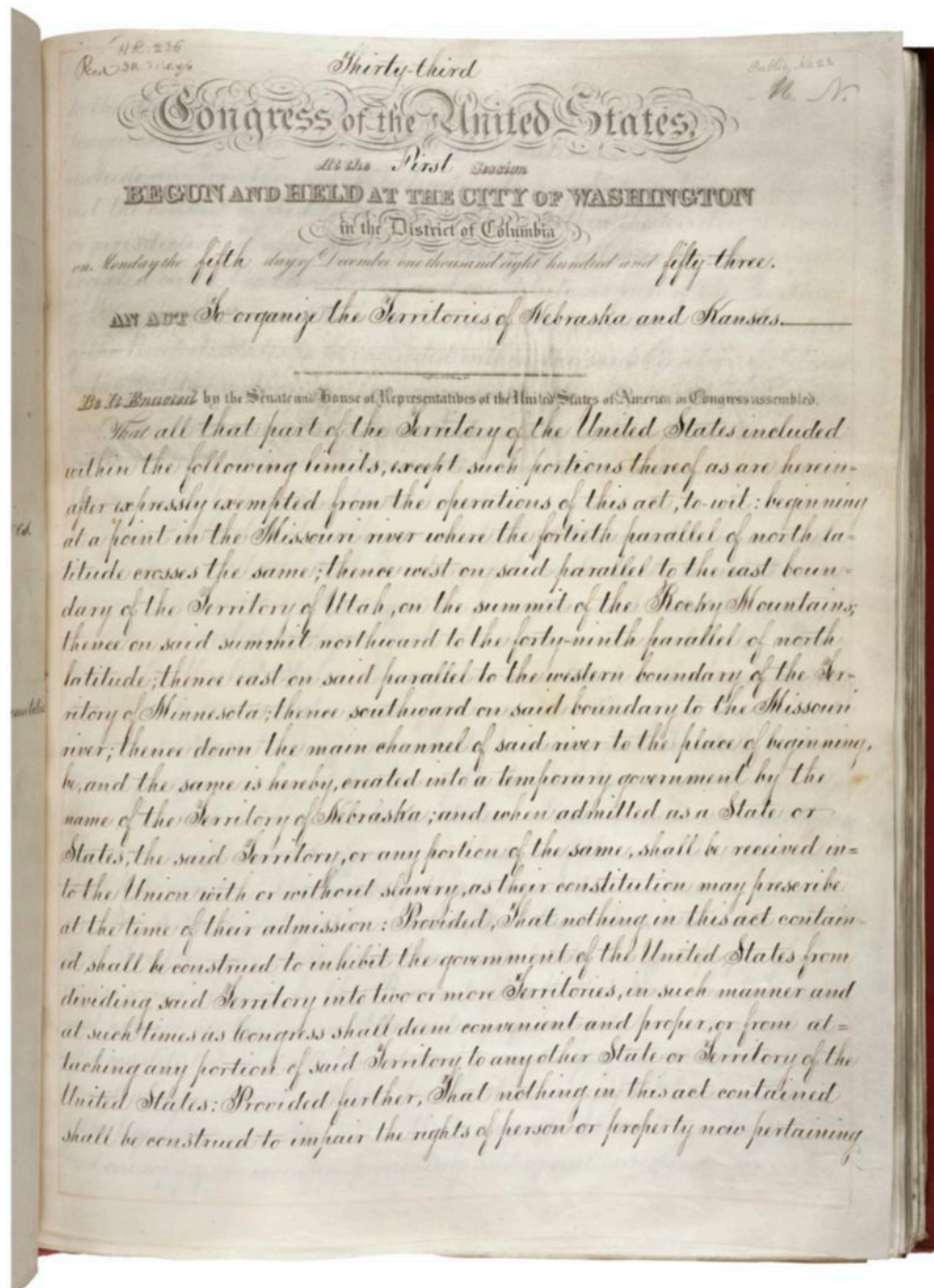
Probably the most famous case involving an enslaved person seeking freedom was that of Dred Scott ([*Dred Scott v. Sanford*](#)). His 11-year legal struggle culminated in one of the

most notorious decisions ever issued by the United States Supreme Court. In 1846 the enslaved Scott and his wife sued for their freedom in a St. Louis, Missouri, city court. They had been held in bondage for extended periods in a free territory, having lived with their owner, an army surgeon, at Fort Snelling, in the free Territory of Wisconsin. That residence, they argued, effectively freed them, but they were then returned to a slave state. On March 6, 1857, reading the majority opinion, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney stated that black people were not citizens of the United States and, therefore, could not expect any protection from the Federal Government or the courts; the opinion also stated that Congress had no authority to ban slavery from a Federal territory.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act

Tensions in the growing nation continued to escalate as settlers moved into territories in the middle of the country, and more settled in northern parts that were sure to join the Union as free states. In 1820, Congress had passed the [Missouri Compromise](#), which admitted Missouri into the nation as a slave state and Maine as a free state. The Compromise established the latitude of 36 degrees 30 minutes as the dividing line for slave and free states. Then in the early 1850s, Congress considered how to incorporate the territories of Kansas and Nebraska into the nation; this [land had been part of the Louisiana Purchase](#), acquired from France in 1803. The Kansas-Nebraska Act overturned the Missouri Compromise in 1854. Slavery had become a divisive issue, and it was decided that each territory would have the right to vote on whether or not slavery would be al-

lowed within its borders. This method, called "popular sovereignty," led to bloody conflicts between antislavery and proslavery settlers.



Source: Kansas Nebraska Act of 1854; Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789–2008; General Records of the United States Government, 1778–2006, Record Group 11; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [1501722](https://www.archives.gov/details/1501722))

Transcript of the first page of the Kansas-Nebraska Act:

Thirty-third Congress of the United States,

At the First Session

Begun and Held at the City of Washington

In the District of Columbia

On Monday the fifth day of December one thousand eight hundred and fifty-three.

An Act To organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas.

Be It Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America a Congress assembled.

That all that part of the Territory of the United States included within the following limits, except such portions thereof as are hereinafter expressly exempted from the operations of this act, to wit: beginning at a point in the Missouri river where the fortieth parallel of north latitude crosses the same; thence west on said parallel to the east boundary of the Territory of Utah, on the summit of the Rocky Mountains; thence on said summit northward to the forty-ninth parallel of north latitude; thence east on said parallel to the western boundary of the Territory of Minnesota; thence southward on said boundary to the Missouri river; thence down the main channel of said river to the place of beginning, be, and the same is hereby, created into a temporary government by the name of the Territory of Nebraska; and when admitted as a State or States, the said Territory, or any portion of the same, shall be received into the Union with or without slavery, as their constitution may prescribe at the time of their admission: Provided, That nothing in this act contained shall be construed to inhibit the government of the United States from dividing

said Territory into two or more Territories, in such manner and at such times as Congress shall deem convenient and proper, or from attaching any portion of said Territory to any other State or Territory of the United States: Provided further, That nothing in this act contained shall be construed to impair the rights of person or property now pertaining...

[End of transcript.]

View the National Archives [online catalog](#) for the remaining pages of the document.

The issue of the expansion of slavery led to the formation of a new political party that aimed to keep slavery out of Kansas and the other territories: the Republican Party.

The following is excerpted from "Out of War, A New Nation" by James McPherson:

"An eloquent leader of this new party was an Illinois lawyer named Abraham Lincoln, who believed that 'there can be no moral right in the enslaving of one man by another.' Lincoln and other Republicans recognized that the United States Constitution protected slavery in the states where it already existed. But they intended to prevent its further expansion as the first step toward bringing it eventually to an end.

"The United States, said Lincoln at the beginning of his famous campaign against Douglas in 1858 for election to the Senate, was a house divided between slavery and free-

dom. 'A house divided against itself cannot stand,' he declared. 'I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free.' By preventing the further expansion of slavery, Lincoln hoped to 'place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction.'

"Lincoln lost the senatorial election in 1858. But two years later, running against a Democratic party split into northern and southern factions, Lincoln won the presidency by carrying every northern state. It was the first time in more than a generation that the South had lost effective control of the national government. Southerners saw the handwriting on the wall. A growing majority of the American population lived in free states. Pro-slavery forces had little prospect of winning any future national elections. The prospects for long-term survival of slavery appeared dim. To forestall anticipated antislavery actions by the incoming Lincoln administration, seven slave states seceded during the winter of 1860–1861. [They] adopted a Constitution for the Confederate States of America, and formed a new government with Jefferson Davis as president."

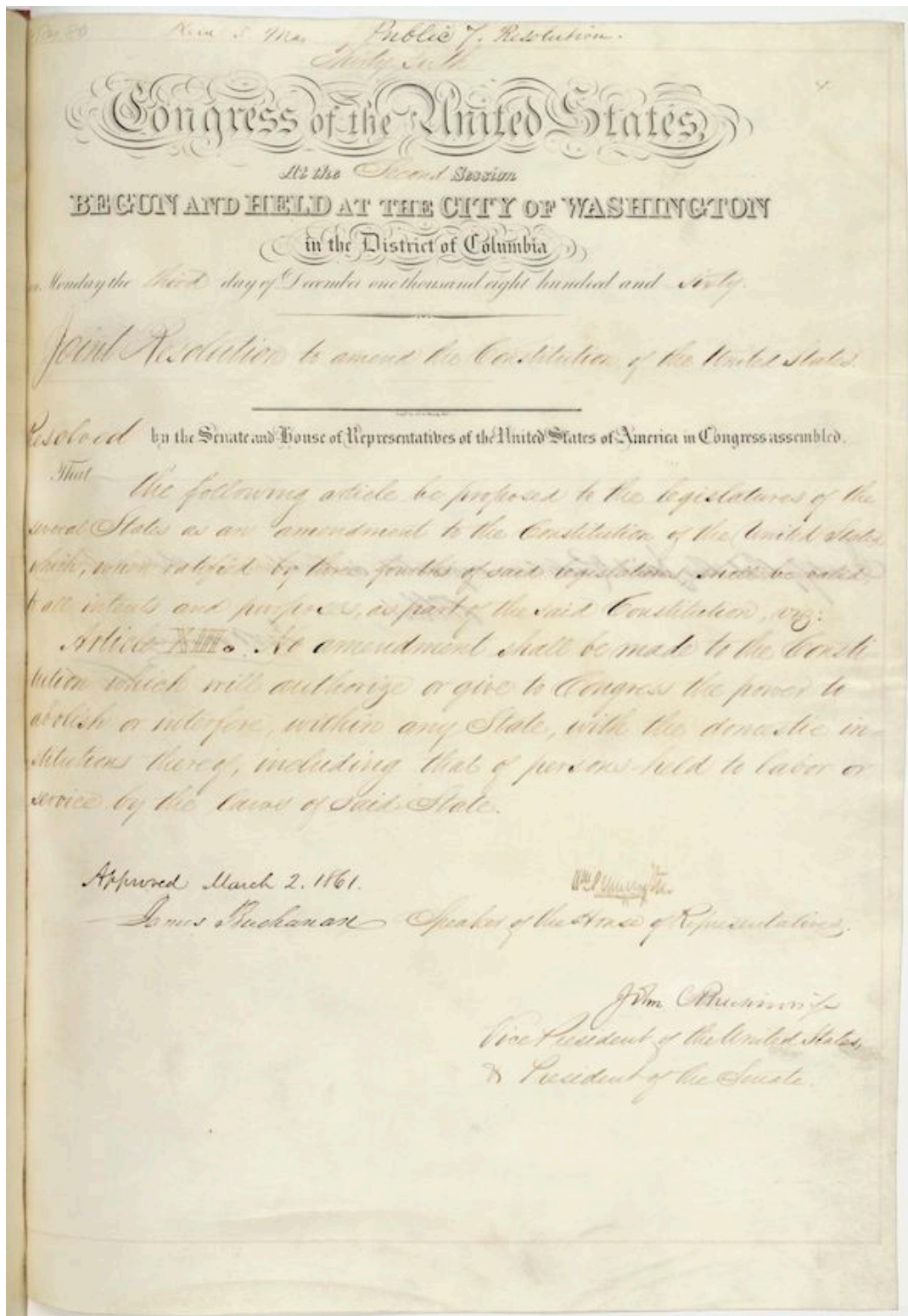
The Outbreak of the Civil War

As southern states began seceding during the winter of 1860–61, several compromises were suggested to hold the nation together.

A Proposed Thirteenth Amendment to Prevent Federal Abolition of Slavery

One was a proposed constitutional amendment that would have prevented Congress from passing legislation interfering with a state's "domestic institutions . . . including that of persons held to labor or service by the laws of said state." Supporters, including President-elect Lincoln, hoped its approval would keep the border states in the Union and reassure southerners that Republicans opposed only the extension, not the existence, of slavery.

Congress approved the resolution for the proposed amendment on March 2, 1861, but only two state legislatures, those of Ohio and Maryland, ratified it, so it did not become a part of the Constitution. Illinois passed the amendment in a constitutional convention, but that was not valid since the congressional resolution proposing the amendment specified that state legislatures alone could ratify it.



Source: Proposed Thirteenth Amendment Regarding the Abolition of Slavery, 03/02/1861; Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789–2008; General Records of the United States Government, 1778–2006, Record Group 11; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [4688370](#))

Transcript of the proposed thirteenth amendment:

Congress of the United States,

At the Second Session

Begun and Held at the City of Washington

in the District of Columbia

on Monday the third day of December one thousand eight hundred and sixty.

Join Resolution to amend the Constitution of the United States.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America
in Congress assembled.

That the following article be proposed to the legislatures of the several States as an
amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which, when ratified by three
fourths of said legislation shall be valid, to all intents and purposes, as part of the said
Constitution, viz:

Article XIII. No amendment shall be made to the Constitution which will authorize or give
to Congress the power to abolish or interfere, within any State, with the domestic institu-
tion thereof, including that of persons held to labor or service by the laws of said State.

Approved March 2, 1861

James Buchanan

William Pennington

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

John C Breckinridge

Vice President of the United States,
and President of the Senate.

[End of transcript.]

New President Lincoln's Inaugural Address

When Abraham Lincoln took office the nation was breaking apart. South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas had already seceded. In his inaugural address on March 4, 1861, President Abraham Lincoln asserted that secession was unconstitutional, that the Union of the states was perpetual, and states could not leave it at will.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES:

In compliance with a custom as old as the Government itself, I appear before you to address you briefly, and to take in your presence the oath prescribed by the Constitution of the United States to be taken by the President "before he enters on the execution of his office."

I do not consider it necessary at present for me to discuss those matters of administration about which there is no special anxiety or excitement.

Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States that by the accession of a Republican Administration their property and their peace and personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so." Those who nominated and elected me did so with full knowledge that I had made this and many similar declarations, and had never recanted them. And, more than this, they placed in the platform for my acceptance, and as a law to themselves and to me, the clear and emphatic resolution which I now read:

Resolved, That the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the States, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of power on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depend, and we denounce the lawless invasion by armed force of the soil of any State or Territory, no matter under what pretext, as among the gravest of crimes.

I now reiterate these sentiments; and, in doing so, I only press upon the public attention the most conclusive evidence of which the case is susceptible, that the property, peace, and security of no section are to be in anywise endangered by the now incoming Administration. I add, too, that all the protection which, consistently with the Constitution and the laws, can be given, will be cheerfully given to all the States when lawfully demanded, for whatever cause—as cheerfully to one section as to another.

There is much controversy about the delivering up of fugitives from service or labor. The clause I now read is as plainly written in the Constitution as any other of its provisions:

No person held to service or labor 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 labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due.

It is scarcely questioned that this provision was intended by those who made it for the reclaiming of what we call fugitive slaves; and the intention of the law-giver is the law. All members of Congress swear their support to the whole Constitution—to this provision as much as to any other. To the proposition, then, that slaves, whose cases come within the terms of this clause, "shall be delivered up," their oaths are unanimous. Now, if they would make the effort in good temper, could they not, with nearly equal unanimity, frame and pass a law by means of which to keep good that unanimous oath?

There is some difference of opinion whether this clause should be enforced by national or by State authority; but surely that difference is not a very material one. If the slave is to be surrendered, it can be of but little consequence to him, or to others, by which authority it is done. And should any one, in any case, be content that his oath shall go unkept, on a merely unsubstantial controversy as to *how* it shall be kept?

Again, in any law upon this subject, ought not all the safeguards of liberty known in civilized and humane jurisprudence to be introduced, so that a free man be not, in any case, surrendered as a slave? And might it not be well at the same time to provide by law for the enforcement of that clause in the Constitution which guarantees that "the citizen of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States?"

I take the official oath to-day with no mental reservations, and with no purpose to construe the Constitution or laws by any hypercritical rules. And while I do not choose now to specify particular acts of Congress as proper to be enforced, I do suggest that it will be much safer for all, both in official and private stations, to conform to and abide by all those acts which stand unrepealed, than to violate any of them, trusting to find impunity in having them held to be unconstitutional.

It is seventy-two years since the first inauguration of a President under our National Constitution. During that period fifteen different and greatly-distinguished citizens have, in succession, administered the Executive branch of the Government. They have conducted it through many perils, and generally with great success. Yet, with all this scope of precedent, I now enter upon the same task for the brief constitutional term of four years under great and peculiar difficulty. A disruption of the Federal Union, heretofore only menaced, is now formidably attempted.

I hold that, in contemplation of universal law, and of the Constitution, the Union of these States is perpetual. Perpetuity is implied, if not expressed, in the fundamental law of all National Governments. It is safe to assert that no Government proper ever had a provision in its organic law for its own termination. Continue to execute all the express provisions of our National Constitution, and the Union will endure forever—it being impossible to destroy it except by some action not provided for in the instrument itself.

Again, if the United States be not a Government proper, but an association of States in the nature of contract merely, can it, as a contract, be peaceably unmade by less than all the parties who made it? One party to a contract may violate it—break it, so to speak; but does it not require all to lawfully rescind it?

Descending from these general principles, we find the proposition that, in legal contemplation, the Union is perpetual, confirmed by the history of the Union itself. The Union is much older than the Constitution. It was formed, in fact, by the Articles of Association in 1774. It was matured and continued by the Declaration of Independence in 1776. It was further matured, and the faith of all the then thirteen States expressly pledged and engaged that it should be perpetual, by the Articles of Confederation in 1778. And, finally, in 1787, one of the declared objects for ordaining and establishing the Constitution was "*to form a more perfect union.*"

But if destruction of the Union by one, or by a part only, of the States, be lawfully possible, the Union is *less* perfect than before the Constitution, having lost the vital element of perpetuity.

It follows, from these views, that no State, upon its own mere motion, can lawfully get out of the Union; that *resolves* and *ordinances* to that effect are legally void; and that acts of violence, within any State or States, against the authority of the United States, are insurrectionary or revolutionary, according to circumstances.

I, therefore, consider that, in view of the Constitution and the laws, the Union is unbroken, and, to the extent of my ability, I shall take care, as the Constitution itself expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States. Doing this I deem to be only a simple duty on my part; and I shall perform it, so far as practicable, unless my rightful masters, the American people, shall withhold the requisite means, or, in some authoritative manner, direct the contrary. I trust this will not be regarded as a menace, but only as the declared purpose of the Union that it *will* constitutionally defend and maintain itself.

In doing this there needs to be no bloodshed or violence; and there shall be none, unless it be forced upon the national authority. The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the Government, and to collect the

duties and imposts; but, beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere. Where hostility to the United States, in any interior locality, shall be so great and universal as to prevent competent resident citizens from holding the federal offices, there will be no attempt to force obnoxious strangers among the people for that object. While the strict legal right may exist in the Government to enforce the exercise of these offices, the attempt to do so would be so irritating, and so nearly impracticable withal, that I deem it better to forego, for the time, the uses of such offices.

The mails, unless repelled, will continue to be furnished in all parts of the Union. So far as possible, the people everywhere shall have that sense of perfect security which is most favorable to calm thought and reflection. The course here indicated will be followed, unless current events and experience shall show a modification or change to be proper, and in every case and exigency my best discretion will be exercised, according to circumstances actually existing, and with a view and a hope of a peaceful solution of the national troubles, and the restoration of fraternal sympathies and affections.

That there are persons in one section or another who seek to destroy the Union at all events, and are glad of any pretext to do it, I will neither affirm nor deny; but if there be such, I need address no word to them. To those, however, who really love the Union, may I not speak?

Before entering upon so grave a matter as the destruction of our national fabric, with all its benefits, its memories, and its hopes, would it not be wise to ascertain precisely why we do it? Will you hazard so desperate a step while there is any possibility that any portion of the ills you fly from have no real existence? Will you, while the certain ills you fly to are greater than all the real ones you fly from—will you risk the commission of so fearful a mistake?

All profess to be content in the Union, if all constitutional rights can be maintained. Is it true, then, that any right, plainly written in the Constitution, has been denied? I think not. Happily the human mind is so constituted that no party can reach to the audacity of doing this. Think, if you can, of a single instance in which a plainly written provision of the Constitution has ever been denied. If, by the mere force of numbers, a majority should deprive a minority of any clearly written constitutional right, it might, in a moral point of view, justify revolution—certainly would, if such right were a vital one. But such is not our case. All the vital rights of minorities and of individuals are so plainly assured to them by affirmations and negations, guarantees and prohibitions, in the Constitution, that controversies never arise concerning them. But no organic law can ever be framed with a provision specifically applicable to every question which may occur in practical administration. No foresight can anticipate, nor any document of reasonable length contain,

express provisions for all possible questions. Shall fugitives from labor be surrendered by national or by State authority? The Constitution does not expressly say. *May* Congress prohibit slavery in the Territories? The Constitution does not expressly say. *Must* Congress protect slavery in the Territories? The Constitution does not expressly say.

From questions of this class spring all our constitutional controversies, and we divide upon them into majorities and minorities. If the minority will not acquiesce, the majority must, or the Government must cease. There is no other alternative; for continuing the Government is acquiescence on one side or the other. If a minority in such case will secede rather than acquiesce, they make a precedent which in turn will divide and ruin them; for a minority of their own will secede from them whenever a majority refuses to be controlled by such minority. For instance, why may not any portion of a new confederacy, a year or two hence, arbitrarily secede again, precisely as portions of the present Union now claim to secede from it? All who cherish disunion sentiments are now being educated to the exact temper of doing this.

Is there such perfect identity of interests among the States to compose a new Union as to produce harmony only and prevent renewed secession?

Plainly, the central idea of secession is the essence of anarchy. A majority held in restraint by constitutional checks and limitations, and always changing easily with deliberate changes of popular opinions and sentiments, is the only true sovereign of a free people. Whoever rejects it does, of necessity, fly to anarchy or to despotism. Unanimity is impossible; the rule of a minority, as a permanent arrangement, is wholly inadmissible; so that, rejecting the majority principle, anarchy or despotism in some form is all that is left.

I do not forget the position assumed by some, that constitutional questions are to be decided by the Supreme Court; nor do I deny that such decisions must be binding, in any case, upon the parties to a suit, as to the object of that suit, while they are also entitled to very high respect and consideration in all parallel cases by all other departments of the Government. And while it is obviously possible that such decision may be erroneous in any given case, still the evil effect following it, being limited to that particular case, with the chance that it may be overruled, and never become a precedent for other cases, can better be borne than could the evils of a different practice. At the same time, the candid citizen must confess that if the policy of the Government upon vital questions, affecting the whole people, is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court, the instant they are made, in ordinary litigation between parties in personal actions, the people will have ceased to be their own rulers, having to that extent practically resigned their government into the hands of that eminent tribunal. Nor is there in this view any assault upon the Court or the Judges. It is a

duty from which they may not shrink to decide cases properly brought before them, and it is no fault of theirs if others seek to turn their decisions to political purposes.

One section of our country believes slavery is *right*, and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is *wrong*, and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute. The fugitive slave clause of the Constitution, and the law for the suppression of the foreign slave trade, are each as well enforced, perhaps, as any law can ever be in a community where the moral sense of the people imperfectly supports the law itself. The great body of the people abide by the dry legal obligation in both cases, and a few break over in each. This, I think, cannot be perfectly cured; and it would be worse in both cases *after* the separation of the sections than before. The foreign slave trade, now imperfectly suppressed, would be ultimately revived without restriction in one section; while fugitive slaves, now only partially surrendered, would not be surrendered at all, by the other.

Physically speaking, we cannot separate. We cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build an impassable wall between them. A husband and wife may be divorced, and go out of the presence and beyond the reach of each other; but the different parts of our country cannot do this. They cannot but remain face to face; and intercourse, either amicable or hostile, must continue between them. Is it possible, then, to make that intercourse more advantageous or more satisfactory *after* separation than *before*? Can aliens make treaties easier than friends can make laws? Can treaties be more faithfully enforced between aliens than laws can among friends? Suppose you go to war, you cannot fight always; and when, after much loss on both sides, and no gain on either, you cease fighting, the identical old questions, as to terms of intercourse are again upon you.

This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing Government they can exercise their *constitutional* right of amending it, or their *revolutionary* right to dismember or overthrow it. I cannot be ignorant of the fact that many worthy and patriotic citizens are desirous of having the National Constitution amended. While I make no recommendation of amendments, I fully recognize the rightful authority of the people over the whole subject, to be exercised in either of the modes prescribed in the instrument itself; and I should, under existing circumstances, favor rather than oppose a fair opportunity being afforded the people to act upon it. I will venture to add that to me the convention mode seems preferable, in that it allows amendments to originate with the people themselves, instead of only permitting them to take or reject propositions originated by others, not especially chosen for the purpose, and which might not be precisely such as they would wish to either accept or refuse. I understand a proposed amendment to the Constitution—which amend-

ment, however, I have not seen—has passed Congress, to the effect that the Federal Government shall never interfere with the domestic institutions of the States, including that of persons held to service. To avoid misconstruction of what I have said, I depart from my purpose not to speak of particular amendments so far as to say that, holding such a provision to now be implied constitutional law, I have no objection to its being made express and irrevocable.

The Chief Magistrate derives all his authority from the people, and they have conferred none upon him to fix terms for the separation of the States. The people themselves can do this also if they choose; but the Executive, as such, has nothing to do with it. His duty is to administer the present Government, as it came to his hands, and to transmit it, unimpaired by him, to his successor.

Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world? In our present differences is either party without faith of being in the right? If the Almighty Ruler of Nations, with His eternal truth and justice, be on your side of the North, or on yours of the South, that truth and that justice will surely prevail by the judgment of this great tribunal of the American people.

By the frame of the Government under which we live, this same people have wisely given their public servants but little power for mischief; and have, with equal wisdom, provided for the return of that little to their own hands at very short intervals. While the people retain their virtue and vigilance, no Administration, by any extreme of wickedness or folly, can very seriously injure the Government in the short space of four years.

My countrymen, one and all, think calmly and *well* upon this whole subject. Nothing valuable can be lost by taking time. If there be an object to *hurry* any of you, in hot haste, to a step which you would never take *deliberately*, that object will be frustrated by taking time; but no good object can be frustrated by it. Such of you as are now dissatisfied, still have the old Constitution unimpaired, and, on the sensitive point, the laws of your own framing under it; while the new Administration will have no immediate power, if it would, to change either. If it were admitted that you who are dissatisfied hold the right side in the dispute, there still is no single good reason for precipitate action. Intelligence, patriotism, christianity, and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust, in the best way, all our present difficulty.

In *your* hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in *mine*, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail *you*. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. *You* have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the Government, while *I* shall have the most solemn one to "preserve, protect, and defend it."

I am loth to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave to every living heart and hearth-stone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

Source: Printed Pamphlet with text of Abraham Lincoln addresses [First and Second Inaugural Addresses, July 5, 1861 Message, January 1, 1863 Proclamation, and Gettysburg Address]; Papers Relating to President Abraham Lincoln, 1861–1865; Letters Received, 1809–1870 (withdrawn from main series), A1 9B; General Records of the Department of Justice, 1790–2002, Record Group 60; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD. (National Archives Identifier: [6782976](#))

Transcript of Lincoln's Inaugural Address:

INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES:

In compliance with a custom as old as the Government itself, I appear before you to address you briefly, and to take in your presence the oath prescribed by the Constitution of the United States to be taken by the President "before he enters on the execution of his office."

I do not consider it necessary at present for me to discuss those matters of administration about which there is no special anxiety or excitement.

Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States that by the accession of a Republican Administration their property and their peace and personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so." Those who nominated and elected me did so with full knowledge that I had made this and many similar declarations, and had never recanted them. And, more than

this, they placed in the platform for my acceptance, and as a law to themselves and to me, the clear and emphatic resolution which I now read:

Resolved, That the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the States, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of power on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depend, and we denounce the lawless invasion by armed force of the soil of any State or Territory, no matter under what pretext, as among the gravest of crimes.

I now reiterate these sentiments; and, in doing so, I only press upon the public attention the most conclusive evidence of which the case is susceptible, that the property, peace, and security of no section are to be in anywise endangered by the now incoming Administration. I add, too, that all the protection which, consistently with the Constitution and the laws, can be given, will be cheerfully given to all the States when lawfully demanded, for whatever cause—as cheerfully to one section as to another.

There is much controversy about the delivering up of fugitives from service or labor. The clause I now read is as plainly written in the Constitution as any other of its provisions:

No person held to service or labor 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 labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom , such service or labor may be due.

It is scarcely questioned that this provision was intended by those who made it for the reclaiming of what we call fugitive slaves; and the intention of the law-giver is the law. All members of Congress swear their support to the whole Constitution—to this provision as much as to any other. To the proposition, then, that slaves, whose cases come within the terms of this clause, "shall be delivered up" their oaths are unanimous. Now, if they would make the effort in good temper, could they not, with nearly equal unanimity, frame and pass a law by means of which to keep good that unanimous oath?

There is some difference of opinion whether this clause should be enforced by national or by State authority; but surely that difference is not a very material one. If the slave is to be surrendered, it can be of but little consequence to him, or to others, by which authority it is done. And should any one, in any case, be content that his oath shall go unkept, on a merely unsubstantial controversy as to how it shall be kept?

Again, in any law upon this subject, ought not all the safeguards of liberty known in civilized and humane jurisprudence to be introduced, so that a free man be not, in any case, surrendered as a slave? And might it not be well at the same time to provide by law for the enforcement of that clause in the Constitution which guarantees that "the citizen of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States?"

I take the official oath to-day with no mental reservations, and with no purpose to construe the Constitution or laws by any hypercritical rules. And while I do not choose now to specify particular acts of Congress as proper to be enforced, I do suggest that it will be much safer for all, both in official and private stations, to conform to and abide by all those acts which stand unrepealed, than to violate any of them, trusting to find impunity in having them held to be unconstitutional.

It is seventy-two years since the first inauguration of a President under our National Constitution. During that period fifteen different and greatly-distinguished citizens have, in succession, administered the Executive branch of the Government. They have conducted it through many perils, and generally with great success. Yet, with all this scope of precedent, I now enter upon the same task for the brief constitutional term of four years under great and peculiar difficulty. A disruption of the Federal Union, heretofore only menaced, is now formidably attempted.

I hold that, in contemplation of universal law, and of the Constitution, the Union of these States is perpetual. Perpetuity is implied, if not expressed, in the fundamental law of all National Governments. It is safe to assert that no Government proper ever had a provision in its organic law for its own termination. Continue to execute all the express provisions of our National Constitution, and the Union will endure forever—it being impossible to destroy it except by some action not provided for in the instrument itself.

Again, if the United States be not a Government proper, but an association of States in the nature of contract merely, can it, as a contract, be peaceably unmade by less than all the parties who made it? One party to a contract may violate it—break it, so to speak; but does it not require all to lawfully rescind it?

Descending from these general principles, we find the proposition that, in legal contemplation, the Union is perpetual, confirmed by the history of the Union itself. The Union is much older than the Constitution. It was formed, in fact, by the Articles of Association in 1774. It was matured and continued by the Declaration of Independence in 1776. It was further matured, and the faith of all the then thirteen States expressly plighted and engaged that it should be perpetual, by the Articles of Confederation in 1778. And, finally, in 1787, one of the declared objects for ordaining and establishing the Constitution was "to form a more perfect union."

But if destruction of the Union by one, or by a part only, of the States, be lawfully possible, the Union is less perfect than before the Constitution, having lost the vital element of perpetuity.

It follows, from these views, that no State, upon its own mere motion, can lawfully get out of the Union; that resolves and ordinances to that effect are legally void; and that acts of violence, within any State or States, against the authority of the United States, are insurrectionary or revolutionary, according to circumstances.

I, therefore, consider that, in view of the Constitution and the laws, the Union is unbroken, and, to the extent of my ability, I shall take care, as the Constitution itself expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States. Doing this I deem to be only a simple duty on my part; and I shall perform it, so far as practicable, unless my rightful masters, the American people, shall withhold the requisite means, or, in some authoritative manner, direct the contrary. I trust this will not be regarded as a menace, but only as the declared purpose of the Union that it will constitutionally defend and maintain itself.

In doing this there needs to be no bloodshed or violence; and there shall be none, unless it be forced upon the national authority. The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the Government, and to collect the duties and imposts; but, beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere.

Where hostility to the United States, in any interior locality, shall be so great and universal as to prevent competent resident citizens from holding the federal offices, there will be no attempt to force obnoxious strangers among the people for that object. While the strict legal right may exist in the Government to enforce the exercise of these offices, the attempt to do so would be so irritating, and so nearly impracticable withal, that I deem it better to forego, for the time, the uses of such offices.

The mails, unless repelled, will continue to be furnished in all parts of the Union. So far as possible, the people everywhere shall have that sense of perfect security which is

most favorable to calm thought and reflection. The course here indicated will be followed, unless current events and experience shall show a modification or change to be proper, and in every case and exigency my best discretion will be exercised, according to circumstances actually existing, and with a view and a hope of a peaceful solution of the national troubles, and the restoration of fraternal sympathies and affections.

That there are persons in one section or another who seek to destroy the Union at all events, and are glad of any pretext to do it, I will neither affirm nor deny; but if there be such, I need address no word to them. To those, however, who really love the Union, may I not speak?

Before entering upon so grave a matter as the destruction of our national fabric, with all its benefits, its memories, and its hopes, would it not be wise to ascertain precisely why we do it? Will you hazard so desperate a step while there is any possibility that any portion of the ills you fly from have no real existence? Will you, while the certain ills you fly to are greater than all the real ones you fly from—will you risk the commission of so fearful a mistake?

All profess to be content in the Union, if all constitutional rights can be maintained. Is it true, then, that any right, plainly written in the Constitution, has been denied? I think not. Happily the human mind is so constituted that no party can reach to the audacity of doing this. Think, if you can, of a single instance in which a plainly written provision of the Constitution has ever been denied. If, by the mere force of numbers, a majority should

deprive a minority of any clearly written constitutional right, it might, in a moral point of view, justify revolution—certainly would, if such right were a vital one. But such is not our case. All the vital rights of minorities and of individuals are so plainly assured to them by affirmations and negations, guarantees and prohibitions, in the Constitution, that controversies never arise concerning them. But no organic law can ever be framed with a provision specifically applicable to every question which may occur in practical administration. No foresight can anticipate, nor any document of reasonable length contain, express provisions for all possible questions. Shall fugitives from labor be surrendered by national or by State authority? The Constitution does not expressly say. May Congress prohibit slavery in the Territories? The Constitution does not expressly say. Must Congress protect slavery in the Territories? The Constitution does not expressly say.

From questions of this class spring all our constitutional controversies, and we divide upon them into majorities and minorities. If the minority will not acquiesce, the majority must, or the Government must cease. There is no other alternative; for continuing the Government is acquiescence on one side or the other. If a minority in such case will secede rather than acquiesce, they make a precedent which in turn will divide and ruin them; for a minority of their own will secede from them whenever a majority refuses to be controlled by such minority. For instance, why may not any portion of a new confederacy, a year or two hence, arbitrarily secede again, precisely as portions of the present Union now claim to secede from it? All who cherish disunion sentiments are now being educated to the exact temper of doing this.

Is there such perfect identity of interests among the States to compose a new Union as to produce harmony only and prevent renewed secession?

Plainly, the central idea of secession is the essence of anarchy. A majority held in restraint by constitutional checks and limitations, and always changing easily with deliberate changes of popular opinions and sentiments, is the only true sovereign of a free people. Whoever rejects it does, of necessity, fly to anarchy or to despotism. Unanimity is impossible; the rule of a minority, as a permanent arrangement, is wholly inadmissible; so that, rejecting the majority principle, anarchy or despotism in some form is all that is left.

I do not forget the position assumed by some, that constitutional questions are to be decided by the Supreme Court; nor do I deny that such decisions must be binding, in any case, upon the parties to a suit, as to the object of that suit, while they are also entitled to very high respect and consideration in all parallel cases by all other departments of the Government. And while it is obviously possible that such decision may be erroneous in any given case, still the evil effect following it, being limited to that particular case, with the chance that it may be overruled, and never become a precedent for other cases, can better be borne than could the evils of a different practice. At the same time, the candid citizen must confess that if the policy of the Government upon vital questions, affecting the whole people, is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court, the instant they are made, in ordinary litigation between parties in personal actions, the people will have ceased to be their own rulers, having to that extent practically

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before? Can aliens make treaties easier than friends can make laws? Can treaties be more faithfully enforced between aliens than laws can among friends? Suppose you go to war, you cannot fight always; and when, after much loss on both sides, and no gain on either, you cease fighting, the identical old questions, as to terms of intercourse are again upon you.

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provision to now be implied constitutional law, I have no objection to its being made express and irrevocable.

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haste, to a step which you would never take deliberately, that object will be frustrated by taking time; but no good object can be frustrated by it. Such of you as are now dissatisfied, still have the old Constitution unimpaired, and, on the sensitive point, the laws of your own framing under it; while the new Administration will have no immediate power, if it would, to change either. If it were admitted that you who are dissatisfied hold the right side in the dispute, there still is no single good reason for precipitate action. Intelligence, patriotism, christianity, and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust, in the best way, all our present difficulty.

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[End of transcript.]

President Lincoln made clear his administration's position that slavery would be protected where it existed but not allowed to expand. One of his first acts as President was a Presidential order on May 2, 1861, charging the Secretary of the Interior with the responsibility for administering laws designed to suppress the slave trade. He also tasked the Department of the Interior with directing colonization plans: to settle recaptured Africans and free blacks in Liberia on the west coast of Africa. The Lincoln administration also initiated several plans in conjunction with the American Colonization Society. However, these met with little support and received considerable criticism from governmental officials, the abolitionists, and black communities around the country.

News from Fort Sumter Announcing the First Shots

As the first states seceded, they seized most forts, arsenals, and Federal property inside their borders. The Civil War began in earnest on April 12, 1861, when the Confederate militia fired on Fort Sumter in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina, which had remained under Federal control. Major Robert Anderson, commander of the Union garrison at Fort Sumter, notified Secretary of War Simon Cameron of the outcome of the battle by telegram five days after he surrendered to Confederate Brigadier General Pierre G.T. Beauregard. The battle had started at 4:30 a.m. and ended 34 hours later.

S.S. BALTIC. OFF SANDY HOOK APR. EIGHTEENTH. TEN THIRTY A.M. . VIA

NEW YORK. . HON. S. CAMERON. SECY. WAR. WASHN. HAVING DEFENDED

FORT SUMTER FOR THIRTY FOUR HOURS. UNTIL THE QUARTERS WERE EN

TIRELY BURNED THE MAIN GATES DESTROYED BY FIRE. THE GORGE WALLS

SERIOUSLY INJURED. THE MAGAZINE SURROUNDED BY FLAMES AND ITS

DOOR CLOSED FROM THE EFFECTS OF HEAT . FOUR BARRELLS AND THREE

CARTRIDGES OF POWDER ONLY BEING AVAILABLE AND NO PROVISIONS

REMAINING BUT PORK. I ACCEPTED TERMS OF EVACUATION OFFERED BY

GENERAL BEAURECARD BEING ON SAME OFFERED BY HIM ON THE ELEV

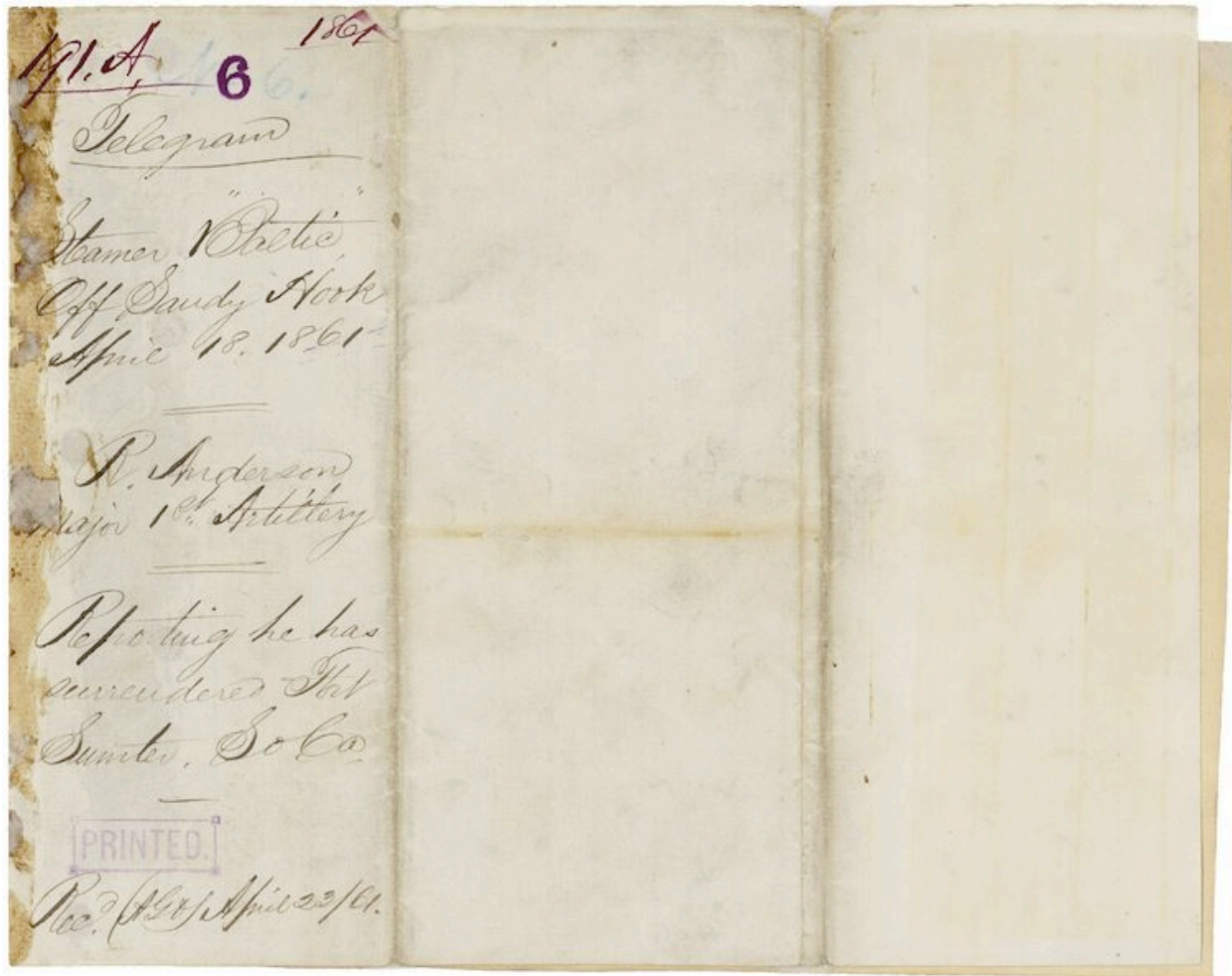
ENTH INST. PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES AND MARCHED

OUT OF THE FORT SUNDAY AFTERNOON THE FOURTEENTH INST. WITH

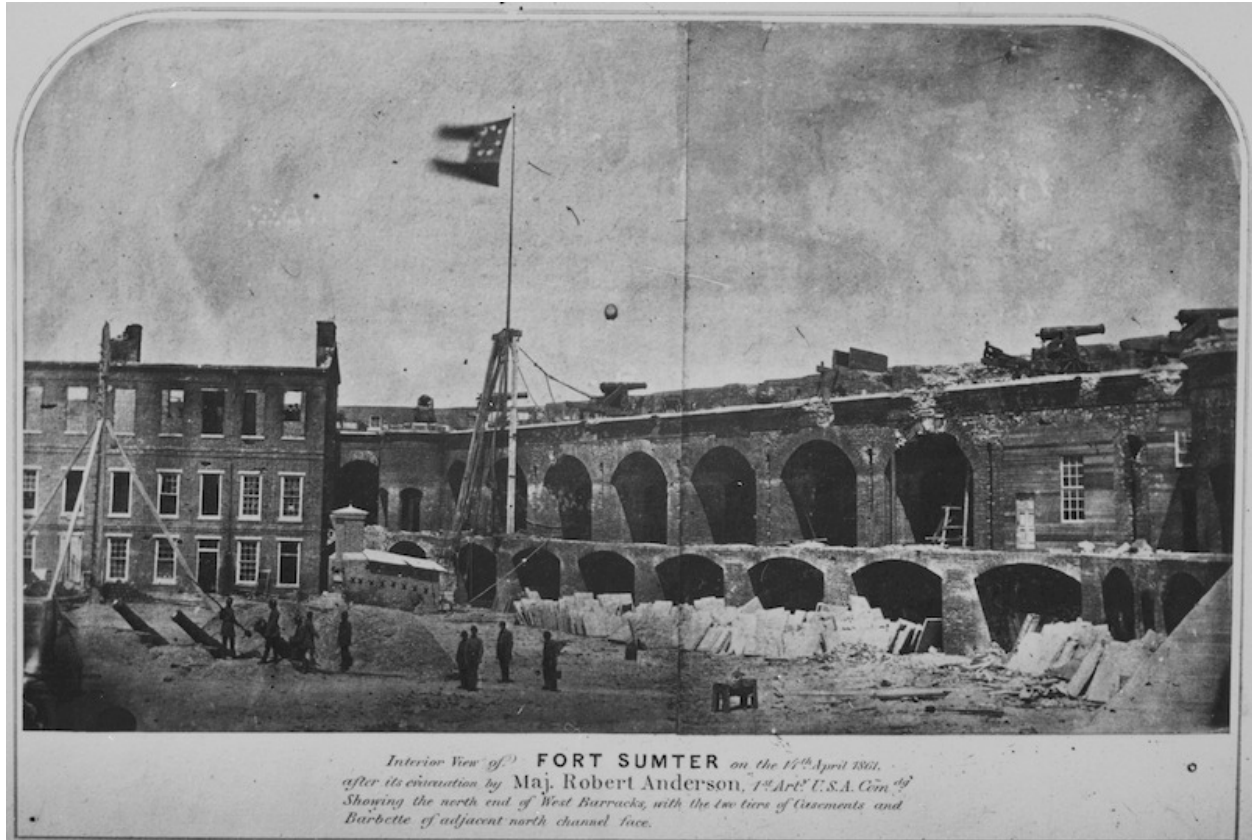
COLORS FLYING AND DRUMS BEATING. BRINGING AWAY COMPANY AND

PRIVATE PROPERTY AND SALUTING MY FLAG WITH FIFTY GUNS. ROBERT

ANDERSON. MAJOR FIRST ARTILLERY. COMMANDING.



Source: Telegram from Major Robert Anderson to the Secretary of War, 04/18/1861; Union Battle Reports, 1874–1899; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1762–1984, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [594525](#))



Source: Photograph No. 121-B-A914A; "Interior view of Fort Sumter on the 14th April 1861, after its evacuation by Major Robert Anderson, 1st Artillery. U.S.A. Commanding., 1857–1942"; Photographs of Federal and Other Buildings in the United States, 1857–1942; Records of the Public Buildings Service, 1801–2000, Record Group 121; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD. (National Archives Identifier: [532292](#))

Citizens' Protest Against the Rebellion

Citizens of Preston, Minnesota, sent a fiery petition to Congress during the winter of 1861, demanding that the United States recapture the forts, arms, and other Federal property seized by Southern states. The Minnesotans called the secessionists "rebels and traitors" and urged that the United States reject the "extension of human slavery." Any compromise would amount to "buying off the perpetrators."

MEMORIAL.

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America,
in Congress assembled.*

The undersigned citizens of the State of Minnesota, respectfully represent to your honorable body that several States of this Union have rebelled against the Government of the United States, have captured forts, arsenals, cannon, small arms, and other property of the United States, to the amount and value of several millions of dollars; that within those States, citizens of the Free States, who have gone thither for health, pleasure, or business, relying upon the guaranty of our National Constitution, that "the citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States," are, by the score and hundred, tarred and feathered, banished, and many even murdered by lawless mobs without judge or jury, indictment or trial, and their property confiscated without any process of law; that the authorities of the States wherein these crimes are perpetrated take no measures to prevent or punish them, but rather encourage and approve them; that among those who have been so maltreated are citizens of Minnesota; that within said rebellious States the constitution and laws of the United States are a dead letter and the authority of the General Government defied; that an American vessel, bearing the flag of the United States, and in government employ, has been by rebels and traitors fired upon and by force prevented from entering a port of the United States; that the channels leading into some of the ports of the United States have been by the authority of the rebellious States aforesaid blocked up and obstructed; that conspiracies have been set on foot to take possession of the capital of the United States by an armed foe in open rebellion against the government; that the navigation of the Mississippi River has been and is impeded and prevented by means of a battery or batteries planted on its shores by authority of one of the said rebellious States; and that your petitioners cannot learn that the constituted authorities of the government have taken, or are taking, efficient measures to put a stop to or punish such proceedings, or to prevent their repetition and indefinite extension.

Your petitioners also learn that certain measures have been urged upon your honorable body, having mainly in view the extension and perpetuation of slavery, as a means of buying off the perpetrators of the above stated outrages from continuing and aggravating them.

Your petitioners are convinced that such measures will not have the desired effect, and that it is due to the integrity of our government as well as to the law-abiding citizens who claim its protection, that the laws should be enforced, "and that THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION, THE RIGHTS OF THE STATES, AND THE UNION OF THE STATES, SHALL BE PRESERVED."

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honorable body will place at the disposal of the President of the United States such means, in men and money, as may be necessary for the purpose, and that you call upon him to enforce the laws, to reinforce the forts threatened by rebels, to recapture (if not peaceably delivered up on demand) the forts and munitions of war of which the government has been robbed, to take measures to bring traitors to trial and punishment, and generally to see to it that the Republic receives no detriment at the hands of rebels and traitors.

And your petitioners respectfully but firmly protest against the consideration by your honorable body of any proposition for amending the Constitution, with a view to conciliate States which are in open rebellion, or which threaten rebellion if their demands be not complied with, until such States shall have returned to their allegiance and have withdrawn their threats of rebellion. And especially do your petitioners protest against the enactment of any law, or the adoption of any proposition for amending the Constitution, which has in view the extension of human slavery.

Names
A. B. Colburn
Ephraim McMurtrie
J. M. S. Mank
W. J. Wilkins

Names
H. C. Wheeler
J. B. Munn
Jacob Schmeidler
H. W. Buller

L. H. Marsh

J. M. Smith

Lorn Clark

E. A. West

R. E. Bowden

A. H. Goss

R. S. Burnap

C. Thompson

Charles H. Hox

L. M. Little

J. F. Wilson

J. R. Lonsby

George H. Eddy

G. H. Organ

L. M. Roney

Corren West

S. N. Starbuck

W. H. Mc Gowan

Alex. Regua

Volney Burgess

M. Carpenter

Peter M. Erickson

Daniel H. Balch

D. B. Stent

B. H. Boonist

Wm. H. Sawyer

J. B. Benson

Asaac Johnson

David Wood

James W. Tedman

R. H. King

C. M. Ballis

Silas Saylor

David B. Freeman

William R. Hobb

James Lathrop

Edwin C. Wilson

J. H. Truitt

Morgan Work

Thomas Johnson

Anna Sall

W. R. Underwood

A. L. Phipps

Aza H. Phipps

S. S. Workman

H. H. Palmer

Louisa Helgerson

H. M. Knight

D. M. Smith

M. H. Billings

J. W. Green

G. W. Eady

S. A. Brown

L. M. Brown

D. R. Smith

36 Cong. 3
2 Sept. 3

Memorial
of Citizens of Preston
Main. protesting against
the enactment of
any law, or the
adoption of any
proposition which
has in view the
extension of Slavery

1861 March 1, Ordered to
lie on the table.

7
Mr. Wilkinson

Source: Memorial to the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives , ca. 02/1861; SEN 36a-J3; Petitions and Related Documents That Were Presented, Read, or Tabled, 1789–1966; Records of the U.S. Senate, 1789–2011, Record Group 46; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [4534649](#))

Between April 17th and May 20th 1861, four more slave states—Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina—seceded and joined the Confederate States of America.

With the onset of hostilities, Lincoln held firm to his conviction that the Union must be preserved and that secession was impermissible. The war that would ultimately decide this question lasted four years, destroyed much of the South, killed over 620,000 soldiers and sailors, and freed 4 million slaves.

Changes Weaken Slavery

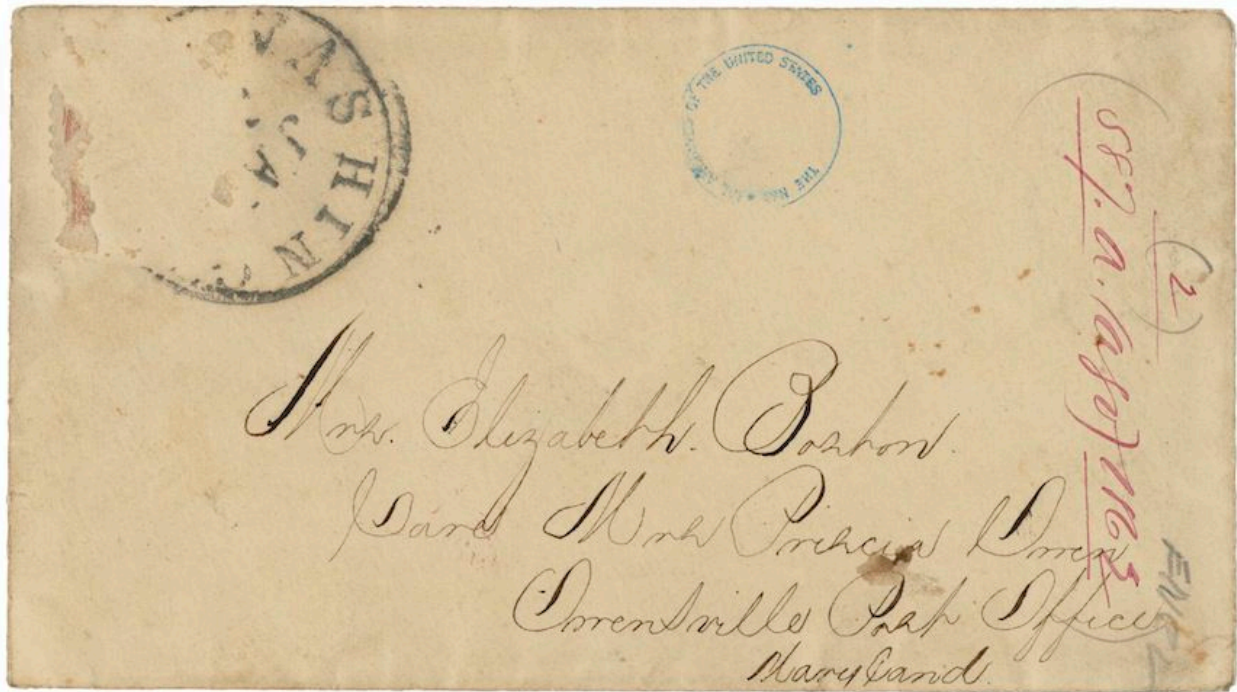
During the war, the Government moved slowly but consistently from an affirmation of the Constitutional protection of slavery to its outright abolition. This development was in part forced upon the Federal Government by the increasing numbers of enslaved people who fled and sought protection behind Union lines.

A Man's Letter Home about Running Away

Fleeing slavery in Maryland, a man named John Boston found refuge with a New York regiment in Upton Hill, Virginia, where he wrote to his wife who remained in Owensville, Maryland. At the moment of celebrating his freedom, his highest hope and aspiration was to be reunited with his family.

(3) (ENCL.)

Upton Hill January 12th 1862
My Dear Wife it is with grate joy
I take this time to let you know where
I am i am now in Safety in the 154th
Regiment of Brooklyn this Day i can
address you thank god as a free man
I had a little trouble in getting away
But as the lord led the Children of
Israel to the land of Canaan So he led me
To a land where freedom will rain in spite
Of earth and hell Dear you must make your
Self content i am free fromal the Slavers
Lash and as you have chose the Wireplan
Of Serving the lord i hope you will pray
Much and i will try by the help of god
To Sero & him with all my hart
I am with a very nice man and have
All that hart can wish But my Dear
I cant express my grate desire that i
Have to see you i trust the time
Will come when We shal meet again
And if we dont met on earth we will
Meet in heven where Jesus runs



Source: Letter from John Boston to His Wife Elizabeth, 01/12/1862, enclosed in a letter from Major General George B. McClellan to the Honorable Edwin Stanton; Letters Received, 1805–1889; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1762–1984, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [783102](#))

Transcript of John Boston's letter to his wife:

"My Dear Wife it is with grate joy I take this time to let you know Whare I am i am now in Safety in the 14th Regiment of Brooklyn . . . this Day i can Adress you thank god as a free man I had a little truble in giting away But as the lord led the Children of Isrel to the land of Canon So he led me to a land Whare fredom Will rain in spite Of earth and hell Dear you must make your Self content i am free from al the Slavers Lash . . . I am With a very nice man and have All that hart Can Wish But My Dear I Cant express my grate

desire that i Have to See you i trust the time Will Come When We Shal meet again And
if We dont met on earth We Will Meet in heven Whare Jesus ranes"

[End of transcript.]

There is no evidence that Elizabeth Boston ever received this letter. It was intercepted and eventually forwarded to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton by Major General George B. McClellan, providing evidence to the War Department and Lincoln administration of the refugee issue.

Camps for “Contraband”

In August of 1861, Congress had passed and President Lincoln signed the First Confiscation Act stating that the Union could seize and confiscate property used in the Confederate war effort. The Army set up camps to provide relief, including shelter, rations, clothing, medical attention, education, and even employment. The term "contraband"—property confiscated in war—was given to slaves who escaped or came into advancing Union lines.



Source: Photograph No. 111-B-75; "Contraband camp, Richmond, Va, 1865, ca. 1860–ca. 1865"; Mathew Brady Photographs of Civil War-Era Personalities and Scenes, 1921–1940; Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, 1860–1985, Record Group 111; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD. (National Archives Identifier: [524494](#))

An Annual Report of the Secretary of War from 1863, two years into the war, contains evidence that the military actively addressed the needs of the thousands of people looking for help. Their presence helped President Lincoln arrive at the conclusion that emancipation and the loss of enslaved labor would weaken the Confederacy.

"The fortunes of war have brought within our lines a large number of colored women, children, and some aged and infirm persons. Their care, support, and protection rest a solemn trust upon the government. Their necessities have to some extent been supplied by the order of this department, but a general and permanent system for their protection and support should be speedily adopted by Congress. Even if they are to be regarded as in some degree a burden upon the government, they are a greater loss to the enemy. Every woman and child, from nine years old to sixty, has to the rebel planter a high market value. Their labor in the cotton field is a source of profit to him. Is it not better that we should feed them than that they should support the rebel master who is in arms against us?"

From the Report of the Secretary of War, 38th Cong., 1st sess., 1863, H. Ex. Doc. No. 1, 8 (Serial 1184).

Lincoln's Proposal for Gradual, Compensated Emancipation

President Lincoln also planned to weaken the Confederacy by dashing its hopes that the border states would join it. Lincoln thought that ending slavery in these states would ensure that they would remain loyal to the Union. Accordingly, on March 7, 1862 President Lincoln sent a message to Congress proposing a system of gradual, compensated emancipation in Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. Congress passed the fol-

lowing resolution in response to Lincoln's suggestion, but no border state accepted the proposal.

1
Follow citizens of the Senate
and House of Representatives:
I recommend the adoption of a
Joint Resolution by your honorable bodies
which shall be substantially as follows:
"Resolved, that the United States ought
to co-operate with any State which may adopt
gradual abolishment of slavery, giving to such
State pecuniary aid, to be used by such State, in
its discretion, to compensate for the inconven-
iences, public and private, produced by
such change of system.
If the proposition contained in the re-
solution does not meet the approval of Congress
and the country, there is the end; but if it
does command such approval, I deem it
of importance that the States and people
immediately interested, should be at once dis-
tinctly notified of the fact, so that they may
begin to consider whether to accept or reject it.
The federal government would find its highest
interest in such a measure, as one of the most
efficient means of self-preservation. The
leaders of the existing insurrection entertain
the hope that this government will ultimately
be forced to acknowledge the independence of
some part of the disaffected regions, and that
all the slave states north of such part will
then say, "the Union for which we have

struggled, being already gone, we now choose to go with the southern section." To deprive them of this hope, substantially ends the rebellion; and the initiation of emancipation completely deprives them of it, as to all the States initiating it. The point is not that all the States tolerating slavery would very soon, if at all, initiate emancipation; but that, while the offer is equally made to all, the more northern shall, by such initiations, make it certain to the more southern, that in no event will the former ever join the latter in their proposed Confederacy. I say "initiation" because in my judgment, gradual, and not sudden, emancipation is better for all. In the mere financial or pecuniary view, any member of Congress, with the census-tables, and Treasury-reports before him, can readily see for himself how very soon the current expenditures of this war, would purchase at fair valuation, all the slaves in any named State. Such a proposition on the part of the general government, sets up no claim of a right by federal authority to interfere with slavery within State limits, referring as it does, the absolute control of the subject in each case to the State and its people immediately interested. It is proposed as a matter of perfectly free

choice with them.

In the annual message last December I thought fit to say, "The Union must be preserved; and hence all indispensable means must be employed." I said this, not hastily, but deliberately. War has been made, and continues to be an indispensable means to this end. A practical re-acknowledgement of the national authority would render the war unnecessary, and it would at once cease. If, however, resistance continues, the war must also continue; and it is impossible to foresee all the incidents which may attend, and all the ruin which may follow it. Such as may seem indispensable, or may obviously promise great efficiency towards ending the struggle, must and will come.

The proposition now made, though an offer only, I hope it may be esteemed no offence to ask whether the pecuniary consideration tendered would not be of more value to the States and private persons concerned, than are the institution, and property in it, in the present aspect of affairs.

While it is true that the adoption of the proposed resolution would be merely initiatory, and not within itself a practical measure, it is recommended in

4

the hope that it would soon lead to
important practical results. In full view
of my great responsibility to my God
and to my country, I earnestly beg the
attention of Congress and the people to
the subject.

March 6, 1862. Abraham Lincoln

Source: Message of President Abraham Lincoln recommending a resolution to encourage the gradual emancipation of slaves, 03/07/1862; Presidential Messages to the Senate in the 37th Congress Suggesting Legislation, ca. 1861–ca. 1863; Presidential Messages, 1789–1875; Records of the U.S. Senate, 1789–2011, Record Group 46; National Archives, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [306438](#))

Transcript of Lincoln's Proposition of Gradual Emancipation

[Note: Question marks represent illegible text.]

Fellow citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives:

I recommend the adoption of a Joint Resolution by your honorable bodies which shall be substantially as follows:

"Resolved, that the United States ought to co operate with any State which may adopt gradual abolishment of slavery, giving to such State pecuniary aid, to be used by such State, in its discretion, to compensate for the inconveniences, public and private, produced by such change of system."

If the proposition contained in the resolution does not meet the approval of Congress and the country, there is the end; but if it does command such approval, I deem it of importance that the States and people immediately interested, should be at once distinctly notified of the fact, so that they may begin to consider, whether to accept or reject it.

The federal government would find its highest interest in such a measure, as one of the most efficient means of self-preservation. The leaders of the existing insurrection entertain the hope that the government will ultimately be forced to acknowledge the independence of some part of the disaffected region, and that all the slave states north of such part will then say, "the Union for which we have struggled, being already gone, we now choose to go with the southern section." To deprive them of this hope, substantially

ends the rebellion; and the initiation of emancipation completely deprives them of it, as to all the states initiating it. The point is not that all the states tolerating slavery would very soon, if at all, initiate emancipation; but that, while the offer is equally made to all, the more northern shall, by such initiation, make it certain to the more southern, that in no event will the former ever join the latter in their proposed confederacy. I say "initiation" because in my judgment, gradual, and not sudden, emancipation is better for all. In the mere financial or pecuniary view, any member of Congress, with the census-tables, and Treasury-reports before him, can readily see for himself how very soon the current expenditures of this war, would purchase at fair valuation, all the slaves in any named State. Such a proposition on the part of the general government, sets up no claim of a right by federal authority to interfere with slavery within the State limits, referring as it does, the absolute control of the subject in each case to the State and its people immediately interested. It is proposed as a matter of perfectly free choice with them.

In the annual message last December I thought fit to say, "The Union must be preserved; and hence all indispensable means must be employed." I said this, not hastily, but deliberately. War has been made, and continues to be, an indispensable means to this end. A practical re-acknowledgement of the national authority would render the war unnecessary, and it would at once cease. If, however, resistance continues, the war must also continue; and it is impossible to foresee all the incidents which may attend, and all the ruin which may follow it. Such as may seem indispensable, or may obviously promise great efficiency towards ending the struggle, must and will come.

The proposition now made, though an offer only, I hope it may be esteemed no offence to ask whether the pecuniary consideration tendered would not be of more value to the States and private persons concerned, than are the institution, and property[?] in it, in the present aspect of affairs.

While it is true that the adoption of the proposed resolution would be merely initiatory, and not within itself a practical measure, it is recommended in the hope that it would soon lead to important practical results. In full view of my great responsibility to my God and to my country, I earnestly beg the attention of Congress and the people to the subject.

March 6, 1862.

Abraham Lincoln

[End of transcript.]

The District of Columbia Emancipation Act

In a successful attempt to provide compensated emancipation, President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill on April 16, 1862, ending slavery in the District of Columbia. The act

brought to conclusion decades of agitation aimed at ending what antislavery advocates called "the national shame" of slavery in the nation's capital.

The law provided for immediate emancipation, compensation to loyal Unionist masters of up to \$300 for each freed slave, voluntary colonization of former slaves to colonies outside the United States, and payments of up to \$100 to each person choosing emigration. Over the next nine months the Federal Government granted almost \$1 million for the freedom of approximately 3,100 former slaves.

The District of Columbia Emancipation Act became the only example of compensated emancipation in the United States. Though its three-way approach of immediate emancipation, compensation, and colonization did not serve as a model for the future, it was an early signal of slavery's death. Emancipation was greeted with great jubilation by the District's African-American community. For many years afterward, black Washingtonians celebrated Emancipation Day on April 16 with parades and festivals.

Rev. H. H. P.

Public 50.

Thirty-seventh Congress of the United States of America;

At the — second — Session,

Begun and held at the city of Washington, on Monday, the — second — day of December, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-one.

AN ACT

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all persons held to service or labor within the District of Columbia by reason of African descent are hereby discharged and freed of and from all claims to such service or labor, and from and after the passage of this act neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except for crime, whereof the party shall be duly convicted, shall henceforth exist in said District. Sec. 1. And be it further enacted that all persons loyal to the United States holding claims to service or labor against persons discharged therefrom by this act may, within ninety days from the passage thereof, but not thereafter, present to the Commissioners hereinafter mentioned their respective statements or petitions in writing, verified by oath or affirmation setting forth the names, ages and personal description of such persons, the manner in which said petitioners acquired such claims, and any facts touching the validity thereof, and declaring his allegiance to the government of the United States; and that he has not borne arms against the United States during the present rebellion, nor in any way given aid or comfort thereto; provided that the oath of the party to the petition shall not be evidence of the facts therein stated. Sec. 2. And be it further enacted, that the President of the United States with the advice and consent of the Senate, shall appoint three commissioners residents of the District of Columbia, any two of whom shall have power to act who shall receive the petitions above mentioned, and who shall investigate and determine the validity and value of the claims therein presented, as aforesaid, and of course and upon the provisions annexed, the value in money of the several claims by them found to be valid; provided however, that the entire sum so ascertained and ascertained shall not exceed in the aggregate an amount equal to three hundred dollars for each person shown to have been so held by lawful claim.

subpoena and compel the attendance of witnesses, and to receive testimony and enforce its production, as in civil cases before courts of justice, without the exclusion of any witness on account of color; and they may summon before them the persons making claims to service or labor, and examine them under oath, and they may also for purposes of identification and appraisement, call before them the persons so claimed. Said commissioners shall appoint a clerk, who shall keep files and complete record of all proceedings before them, who shall have power to administer oaths and affirmations in said proceedings, and who shall issue all lawful process by them ordered. The Marshal of the District of Columbia shall personally, or by deputy, attend upon the sessions of said commissioners, and shall execute the process issued by said clerk. Sec. 6. And be it further enacted, that said commissioners shall receive in compensation for their services the sum of two thousand dollars each, to be paid upon the filing of their report; that said clerk shall receive for his services the sum of two hundred dollars per month; that said marshal shall receive such fees as are allowed by law for similar services performed by him in the circuit-courts of the District of Columbia; that the Secretary of the Treasury shall cause all other reasonable expenses of said commission to be audited and allowed and that said compensation, fees, and expenses shall be paid from the treasury of the United States. Sec. 7. And be it further enacted, that for the purpose of carrying this act into effect there is hereby appropriated out of any money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated a sum not exceeding one million of dollars. Sec. 8. And be it further enacted, that any person or persons who shall kidnap or in any manner transport or procure to be taken out of said District any person or persons discharged and freed by the provisions of this act, or any free person or persons with intent to re-enslave or sell such person or persons into slavery, or shall re-enslave any of said freed persons, the person or persons so offending shall be deemed guilty of a felony, and on conviction thereof in any court of competent

And provided further, That no claims shall be allowed for any slave or slaves brought into said District after the passage of this act nor for any slave claimed by any person who has borne arms against the government of the United States in the present rebellion or in any way given aid or comfort thereto; or which originates in or by virtue of any transfer heretofore made, or which shall hereafter be made, by any person who has in any manner aided or sustained the rebellion against the government of the United States. Sec. 4. And be it further enacted, That said Commissioners shall, within nine months from the passage of this act, make a full and final report of their proceedings, findings and appraisement, and shall deliver the same to the Secretary of the Treasury, which report shall be deemed and taken to be conclusive in all respects, except as hereinafter provided; and the Secretary of the Treasury shall, with like exception, cause the amounts so appraised to said claims to be paid from the treasury of the United States to the parties found by said report to be entitled thereto as aforesaid, and the same shall be received in full and complete compensation: Provided, That in cases where petitions may be filed presenting conflicting claims or setting up a lien, said Commissioners shall so specify in said report, and payment shall not be made according to the award of said Commissioners until a period of sixty days shall have elapsed, during which time any petitioner claiming an interest in the particular amount may file a bill in equity in the circuit court of the District of Columbia, making all other claimants defendants thereto, setting forth the proceedings in such case before said Commissioners and their action therein, and praying that the party to whom payment has been awarded may be enjoined from receiving the same; and if said court shall grant such provisional order a copy thereof may, on motion of said complainant, be served upon the Secretary of the Treasury, who shall thereupon cause the said amount of money to be paid into said court subject to its orders and final decree, which payment shall be in full and complete compensation as in other cases. Sec. 5. And be it further enacted, That said Commissioners shall hold their sessions in the City of Washington, at such place and times as the President of the United States may direct, of which they shall give due and public notice. They shall have power to

all acts of Congress and all laws of the State of Maryland in force in said District, and all ordinances of the cities of Washington and Georgetown inconsistent with the provisions of this act are hereby repealed.

Salustia A. Groom
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Solomon Foot,
President of the Senate pro tempore.

Approved, April 16, 1862

Abraham Lincoln

Source: An Act of April 16, 1862 [For the Release of Certain Persons Held to Service or Labor in the District of Columbia], 04/16/1862; Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789–2008; General Records of the United States Government, 1778–2006, Record Group 11; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [299814](#))

Transcript of the D.C. Emancipation Act:

An Act for the Release of certain Persons held to Service or Labor in the District of Columbia

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all persons held to service or labor within the District of Columbia by reason of African descent are hereby discharged and freed of and from all claim to such service or labor; and from and after the passage of this act neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except for crime, whereof the party shall be duly convicted, shall hereafter exist in said District.

Sec. 2. And be it further enacted, That all persons loyal to the United States, holding claims to service or labor against persons discharged therefrom by this act, may, within ninety days from the passage thereof, but not thereafter, present to the commissioners hereinafter mentioned their respective statements or petitions in writing, verified by oath or affirmation, setting forth the names, ages, and personal description of such persons, the manner in which said petitioners acquired such claim, and any facts touching the value thereof, and declaring his allegiance to the Government of the United States, and that he has not borne arms against the United States during the present rebellion, nor in any way given aid or comfort thereto: Provided, That the oath of the party to the petition shall not be evidence of the facts therein stated.

Sec. 3. And be it further enacted, That the President of the United States, with the advice and consent of the Senate, shall appoint three commissioners, residents of the District of Columbia, any two of whom shall have power to act, who shall receive the petitions above mentioned, and who shall investigate and determine the validity and value of the claims therein presented, as aforesaid, and appraise and apportion, under the proviso hereto annexed, the value in money of the several claims by them found to be valid: Provided, however, That the entire sum so appraised and apportioned shall not exceed in the aggregate an amount equal to three hundred dollars for each person shown to have been so held by lawful claim: And provided, further, That no claim shall be allowed for any slave or slaves brought into said District after the passage of this act, nor for any slave claimed by any person who has borne arms against the Government of the United States in the present rebellion, or in any way given aid or comfort thereto, or which originates in or by virtue of any transfer heretofore made, or which shall hereafter be made by any person who has in any manner aided or sustained the rebellion against the Government of the United States.

Sec. 4. And be it further enacted, That said commissioners shall, within nine months from the passage of this act, make a full and final report of their proceedings, findings, and appraisement, and shall deliver the same to the Secretary of the Treasury, which report shall be deemed and taken to be conclusive in all respects, except as hereinafter provided; and the Secretary of the Treasury shall, with like exception, cause the amounts so apportioned to said claims to be paid from the Treasury of the United States to the parties found by said report to be entitled thereto as aforesaid, and the same shall

be received in full and complete compensation: Provided, That in cases where petitions may be filed presenting conflicting claims, or setting up liens, said commissioners shall so specify in said report, and payment shall not be made according to the award of said commissioners until a period of sixty days shall have elapsed, during which time any petitioner claiming an interest in the particular amount may file a bill in equity in the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia, making all other claimants defendants thereto, setting forth the proceedings in such case before said commissioners and their actions therein, and praying that the party to whom payment has been awarded may be enjoined from receiving the same; and if said court shall grant such provisional order, a copy thereof may, on motion of said complainant, be served upon the Secretary of the Treasury, who shall thereupon cause the said amount of money to be paid into said court, subject to its orders and final decree, which payment shall be in full and complete compensation, as in other cases.

Sec. 5. And be it further enacted, That said commissioners shall hold their sessions in the city of Washington, at such place and times as the President of the United States may direct, of which they shall give due and public notice. They shall have power to subpoena and compel the attendance of witnesses, and to receive testimony and enforce its production, as in civil cases before courts of justice, without the exclusion of any witness on account of color; and they may summon before them the persons making claim to service or labor, and examine them under oath; and they may also, for purposes of identification and appraisal, call before them the persons so claimed. Said commissioners shall appoint a clerk, who shall keep files and [a] complete record of all

proceedings before them, who shall have power to administer oaths and affirmations in said proceedings, and who shall issue all lawful process by them ordered. The Marshal of the District of Columbia shall personally, or by deputy, attend upon the sessions of said commissioners, and shall execute the process issued by said clerk.

Sec. 6. And be it further enacted, That said commissioners shall receive in compensation for their services the sum of two thousand dollars each, to be paid upon the filing of their report; that said clerk shall receive for his services the sum of two hundred dollars per month; that said marshal shall receive such fees as are allowed by law for similar services performed by him in the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia; that the Secretary of the Treasury shall cause all other reasonable expenses of said commission to be audited and allowed, and that said compensation, fees, and expenses shall be paid from the Treasury of the United States.

Sec. 7. And be it further enacted, That for the purpose of carrying this act into effect there is hereby appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, a sum not exceeding one million of dollars.

Sec. 8. And be it further enacted, That any person or persons who shall kidnap, or in any manner transport or procure to be taken out of said District, any person or persons discharged and freed by the provisions of this act, or any free person or persons with intent to re-enslave or sell such person or person into slavery, or shall re-enslave any of said freed persons, the person or persons so offending shall be deemed guilty of a fel-

ony, and on conviction thereof in any court of competent jurisdiction in said District, shall be imprisoned in the penitentiary not less than five nor more than twenty years.

Sec. 9. And be it further enacted, That within twenty days, or within such further time as the commissioners herein provided for shall limit, after the passage of this act, a statement in writing or schedule shall be filed with the clerk of the Circuit court for the District of Columbia, by the several owners or claimants to the services of the persons made free or manumitted by this act, setting forth the names, ages, sex, and particular description of such persons, severally; and the said clerk shall receive and record, in a book by him to be provided and kept for that purpose, the said statements or schedules on receiving fifty cents each therefor, and no claim shall be allowed to any claimant or owner who shall neglect this requirement.

Sec. 10. And be it further enacted, That the said clerk and his successors in office shall, from time to time, on demand, and on receiving twenty-five cents therefor, prepare, sign, and deliver to each person made free or manumitted by this act, a certificate under the seal of said court, setting out the name, age, and description of such person, and stating that such person was duly manumitted and set free by this act.

Sec. 11. And be it further enacted, That the sum of one hundred thousand dollars, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, is hereby appropriated, to be expended under the direction of the President of the United States, to aid in the colonization and settlement of such free persons of African descent now residing in said Dis-

trict, including those to be liberated by this act, as may desire to emigrate to the Republics of Hayti or Liberia, or such other country beyond the limits of the United States as the President may determine: Provided, The expenditure for this purpose shall not exceed one hundred dollars for each emigrant.

Sec. 12. And be it further enacted, That all acts of Congress and all laws of the State of Maryland in force in said District, and all ordinances of the cities of Washington and Georgetown, inconsistent with the provisions of this act, are hereby repealed.

Approved, April 16, 1862.

[End of transcript.]

The Petition of a DC Slaveowner

On Thursday, May 22, 1862, one month after the act "For the Release of Certain Persons Held to Service or Labor in the District of Columbia," slaveowner Margaret C. Barber, of Washington, DC, presented a claim to the Board of Commissioners for the Emancipation of Slaves in the District of Columbia. She wanted to be compensated by the Federal Government, which had freed her 34 slaves, since the legislation provided for owner compensation with the amount to be determined by the Board. She was not

alone in making such a request; more than 1,000 District residents filed similar documents, but hers was the second largest.

In 1860, Margaret C. Barber had owned 29 slaves ranging in age from 2 to 75. By 1862, she had "acquired her claim" to 5 additional slaves through inheritance both from her father and from her late husband. While the 1860 census listed only the age and sex of Barber's slaves, her compensation claim provided names, descriptions, and monetary value, including the following examples. Peter Jenkins, listed as a "slave for life," who 65 years old, 5 feet, 8 1/2 inches tall, was a "number one farm hand." Barber was able to hire him out for \$70 a year. She listed him as worth \$250. Ellen Jenkins, 60 years old and 5 foot 7 inches, was also a slave for life, a "good cook" who could earn \$82 a year in wages for Barber. Jenkins was also listed as worth \$250. Richard Williams was 25 years old and 5 feet, 10 inches tall. He was valued by Barber at \$1,500. She noted that Williams was a "slave for life," a shoemaker, a carpenter, and a first-rate farmhand. Susan Carroll was 36 years old and 4 feet, 11 7/8 inches tall, a seamstress and house servant but not a "slave for life." She was to "serve till 44 years of age." Barber listed her as worth \$400. In a number of wills cited in claims to the Commission, slaves were bequeathed for a limited number of years, after which the slave was to be freed.

[Form of the Oath for the Verification of the Petition.]

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,

Washington County, ss.

I, *Margaret C Barber* being duly sworn,
do depose and say, that all the several matters and things which are set forth and stated in
the foregoing petition, as of my own knowledge, are true in substance and in fact; and that
all the several other matters and things therein set forth and stated, as from the information
of others, I believe to be true in substance and in fact.

(Signed by)

M. C. Barber.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this *21st* day of *May*, 1862

A. D. 1862.

(Signed by)

Samuel S. Loughton
Justice of the Peace in
for said District & County

316

Petition of Margaret C. Barber.

Filed May 22, 1862

*U. S. - la. given
George Green
deposited by the
James Bennett*

PETITION.		Statement of Schedule, M.C.B.						Particular Description	Remarks
No.	Name	Sex	Age	Color	Height	Value			
1.	Peter Jenkins	Male	45	Black	5.8	\$250		For life, 4 months on farm hand. Price for 70¢ a year.	
2.	Mary Jenkins	Female	38	"	5.3	200		At 1 Cosh. For life. Price for 70¢ a year.	
3.	Ellen Jenkins	"	60	"	5.7	250		For life. Price for 82¢ a year.	
4.	Laura Carroll	"	36	Dark mulatto	4.9	400		Good Cook. At home. Household and house work. To serve till 44 years of age. 8 years to come.	
5.	James Carroll	Male	7	Light mulatto	3.10	300			
6.	John Carroll	Female	8	"	"	150		Unknown mulatto	
7.	John Carroll	Male	3	"	"	100			
8.	Richd Williams	"	25	Dark mulatto	5.10	1800		For life. Domestic, carpenter, and a first rate farm hand. To serve till 44 years of age. Price for 100¢ a year.	
9.	Chap. Towner	Male	45	Black	6	1000		At home. To serve till 44 years of age. Price for 100¢ a year.	
10.	Laura Towner	Female	51	"	5.1	600		For life. Domestic, carpenter, and a first rate farm hand. To serve till 44 years of age. Price for 100¢ a year.	
11.	Mary Young	"	59	"	5	400		Good Cook. To serve till 44 years of age. Price for 100¢ a year.	
12.	Kelly Solaps	"	37	Light mulatto	5.3	1200		At home. To serve till 44 years of age. Price for 100¢ a year.	
13.	John Solaps	Male	8	"	4.3	300		At home.	
14.	W. Solaps	"	5	"	3.10	300			
15.	Philip Solaps	"	8	"	"	25		Unknown mulatto	
16.	Leah Yates	"	24	Dark mulatto	5.3	120		At home. To serve till 44 years of age. Price for 100¢ a year.	
17.	John Yates	Female	31	"	5.3	600		At home. To serve till 44 years of age. Price for 100¢ a year.	
18.	John Thomas	Male	41	Black	5.8	1200		At home. To serve till 44 years of age. Price for 100¢ a year.	
19.	Mary Towner	"	25	Dark mulatto	5.10	1400		At home. To serve till 44 years of age. Price for 100¢ a year.	
20.	Joe Towner	"	24	Black	5.8	1600		At home. To serve till 44 years of age. Price for 100¢ a year.	
21.	Laura Towner	Female	23	"	5.7	1200		Good Cook. To serve till 44 years of age. Price for 100¢ a year.	
22.	John Towner	Male	4	"	"	25		Unknown mulatto	
23.	John Towner	Female	18	Dark mulatto	5.1	1000		At home. To serve till 44 years of age. Price for 100¢ a year.	
24.	John Towner	"	36	"	5.1	1200		At home. To serve till 44 years of age. Price for 100¢ a year.	
25.	Mary Thomas	"	38	Light mulatto	5.7	800		At home. To serve till 44 years of age. Price for 100¢ a year.	
26.	John Thomas	"	16	Dark mulatto	5.2	1400		At home. To serve till 44 years of age. Price for 100¢ a year.	
27.	John Thomas	"	11	"	4.6	400			
28.	Mary Thomas	"	2	Black	"	150		Unknown mulatto	

Source: Petition of Margaret C. Barber, 05/21/1862; Account Number 158299, 1862–1863; Settled Treasury Accounts, 09/06/1790–09/29/1894; Records of the Accounting Officers of the Department of the Treasury, 1775–1978, Record Group 217; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [4644520](#))

Altogether, Margaret Barber estimated that her slaves were worth a total of \$23,400. On June 16, 1862, 28 of Barber's slaves were examined by slave trader Bernard Campbell so that their value might be assessed by the Commission. Ultimately, Barber received \$9,351.30 in compensation to [emancipate them](#). Five of the 34 did not await the Commission's deliberations, though. "[S]ince the United States troops came here," said Bar-

ber, they had "absented themselves and went off and are believed still to be in some of the Companies and in their service."

Lincoln's Proclamation Revoking a General's Military Emancipation

Supposing authority to seize and confiscate property under the First Confiscation Act of 1861, two Union generals—John C. Fremont in Missouri and David Hunter in South Carolina—issued proclamations that emancipated slaves in their military regions and permitted them to enlist. President Lincoln believed only he could give such orders, though, and issued proclamations revoking the generals' edicts. In revoking General Hunter's order of military emancipation, he scolded Hunter for exceeding his authority, but also warned slaveholders that such an order might "become a necessity indispensable to the maintenance of the government."

May 9, 1862
Specimen
By the President of the United States of America,
A Proclamation.

Whereas there appears in the public prints, what purports to be a proclamation, of Major General Hunter, in the words and figures following, to wit:

Head Quarters Department of the South,
Hilton Head, S. C. May 9, 1862.

General Orders N. H. - The three States of Georgia, Florida and South Carolina, comprising the military department of the south, having deliberately declared themselves no longer under the protection of the United States of America, and having taken up arms against the said United States, it becomes a military necessity to declare them under martial law. This was accordingly done on the 25th day of April, 1862. Slavery and martial law in a free country are altogether incompatible; the persons in these three States - Georgia, Florida and South Carolina -

heretofore held as slaves, are therefore declared
forever free.

(Official)

David Hunter,
Major General Commanding.

Ed. M. Smith,

Acting Assistant Adjutant General.

And whereas the same is producing some
excitement, and misunderstanding; therefore

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the
United States, proclaim and declare, that the
government of the United States, had no knowl-
edge, information, or belief, of an intention on the
part of General Hunter to issue such a procla-
mation; nor has it yet, any authentic information
that the document is genuine. And farther,
that neither General Hunter, nor any other com-
mander, or person, has been authorized by the
Government of the United States, to make procla-
mations declaring the slaves of any State free;
and that the supposed proclamation, now in
question, whether genuine or false, is altogether
void, so far as respects such declaration.

I further make known that whether it be

competent for me, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, to declare the slaves of any State or States, free, and whether at any time, in any case, it shall have become a necessity indispensable to the maintenance of the government, to exercise such supposed power, are questions which, under my responsibility, I reserve to myself, and which, I can not feel justified in leaving to the decision of commanders in the field. These are totally different questions from those of police regulations in armies and camps.

On the sixth day of March last, by a special message, I recommended to Congress the adoption of a joint resolution to be substantially as follows:

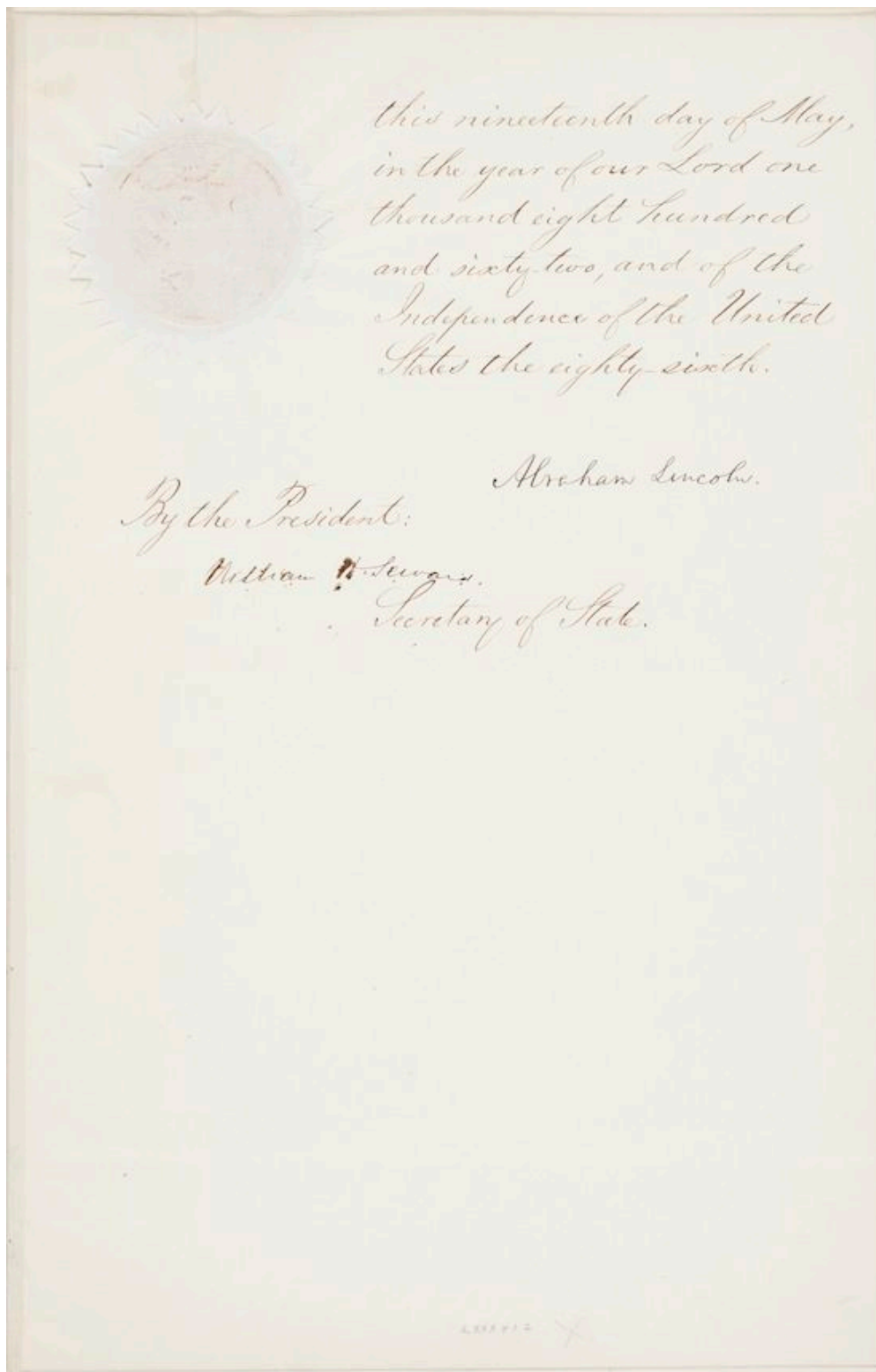
Resolved, That the United States ought to cooperate with any State which may adopt a gradual abolishment of slavery, giving to such State pecuniary aid, to be used by such State in its discretion, to compensate for the inconveniences, public and private, produced by such change of system.

The resolution, in the language above quoted, was adopted by large majorities in both branches

of Congress, and now stands an authentic, definite, and solemn proposal of the nation to the States and people most immediately interested in the subject matter. To the people of those States I now earnestly appeal - I do not argue. I beseech you to make the arguments for yourselves - You can not if you would, be blind to the signs of the times. I beg of you a calm and enlarged consideration of them, ranging, if it may be, far above personal and partizan politics. This proposal makes common cause for a common object, casting no reproaches upon any. It acts not the pharisee. The change it contemplates would come gently, as the dews of heaven, not rending or wrecking anything. Will you not embrace it? So much good has not been done, by one effort, in all past time, as, in the providence of God, it is now your high privilege to do. May the vast future not have to lament that you have neglected it.

In witness whereof, I have herewith set my hand, and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

(Done at the City of Washington



Source: Presidential Proclamation 90 by President Abraham Lincoln Revoking General David Hunter's Order of Military Emancipation, 05/19/1862; Presidential Proclamations, 1791–2007; General Records of the United States Government, 1778–2006, Record Group 11; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [4656009](#))

Transcript of President Lincoln's Proclamation Revoking General Hunter's Order:

By the President of the United States of America.

A Proclamation.

Whereas there appears in the public prints, what purports to be a proclamation, of Major General Hunter, in the words and figures following, to wit:

Head Quarters Department of the South, Hilton Head, S.C. May 9, 1862.

General Orders No. 11.—The three States of Georgia, Florida and South Carolina, comprising the military department of the south, having deliberately declared themselves no longer under the protection of the United States of America, and having taken up arms against the said United States, it becomes a military necessity to declare them under martial law. This was accordingly done on the 25th day of April, 1862. Slavery and martial law in a free country are altogether incompatible; the persons in these three States—Georgia, Florida and South Carolina heretofore held as slaves, are therefore declared forever free.

(Official)

David Hunter,

Major General Commanding.

Ed. W. Smith,

Acting Assistant Adjutant General.

And whereas the same is producing some excitement, and misunderstanding; therefore

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, proclaim and declare, that the government of the United States, had no knowledge, information, or belief, of an intention on the part of General Hunter to issue such a proclamation; nor has it yet, any authentic information that the document is genuine—And further, that neither General Hunter, nor any other commander, or person, has been authorized by the Government of the United States, to make proclamations declaring the slaves of any State free; and that the supposed proclamation, now in question, whether genuine or false, is altogether void, so far as respects such declaration.

I further make known that whether it be competent for me, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, to declare the slaves of any State or States, free, and whether at any time, in any case, it shall have become a necessity indispensable to the maintenance of the government, to exercise such supposed power, are questions which, under my responsibility, I reserve to myself, and which I cannot feel justified in leaving to the decision of commanders in the field. These are totally different questions from those of police regulations in armies and camps.

On the sixth day of March last, by a special message, I recommended to Congress the adoption of a joint resolution to be substantially as follows:

Resolved, That the United States ought to co-operate with any State which may adopt a gradual abolishment of slavery, giving to such State pecuniary aid, to be used by such State in its discretion, to compensate for the inconveniences, public and private, produced by such change of system.

The resolution, in the language above quoted, was adopted by large majorities in both branches of Congress, and now stands an authentic, definite, and solemn proposal of the nation to the States and people most immediately interested in the subject matter. To the people of those States I now earnestly appeal—I do not argue. I beseech you to make the arguments for yourselves—You can not if you would, be blind to the signs of the times—I beg of you a calm and enlarged consideration of them, ranging, if it may be, far above personal and partizan politics. This proposal makes common cause for a common object, casting no reproaches upon any. It acts not the pharisee. The change it contemplates would come gently as the dews of heaven, not rending or wrecking anything. Will you not embrace it? So much good has not been done, by one effort, in all past time, as, in the providence of God, it is now your high privilege to do. May the vast future not have to lament that you have neglected it.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington this nineteenth day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty-sixth.

Abraham Lincoln.

By the President:

William H. Seward.

Secretary of State.

[End of transcript.]

A Certificate of Freedom in the Wake of Union Troops

In July 1862, acting on Lincoln's warning that freeing slaves in areas occupied by Northern troops might "become a necessity," and moving to cripple the Confederacy, the Government passed the Second Confiscation and Militia Act. It gave the U.S. military authority to seize and confiscate the property of persons engaged in armed rebellion against the United States—to seize their slave "property" in occupied areas. The advance of Union troops, therefore, meant the promise of freedom for many, effectively

freeing slaves belonging to members of the Confederate military or Confederate sympathizers in those areas.

A pass issued by the Army to Wally Caruz and his family amounted to a certificate of freedom and declared them "forever emancipated."

HEAD QUARTERS ARMY OF THE SOUTH WEST,

McLennan Ark Aug 15 1862

SPECIAL ORDERS, }
NO. 1251 }

Wally Camp family a colored formerly a
Slave; having by direction of ~~the~~ owner been engaged in the rebel service, ~~and~~ hereby confiscated as
being contraband of war, and not being needed in the Public Service ~~and~~ permitted to pass the pickets of
this command northward, and ~~and~~ forever emancipated from a master who permitted ~~the~~ to assist in
an attempt to break up the Government and Laws of our Country.

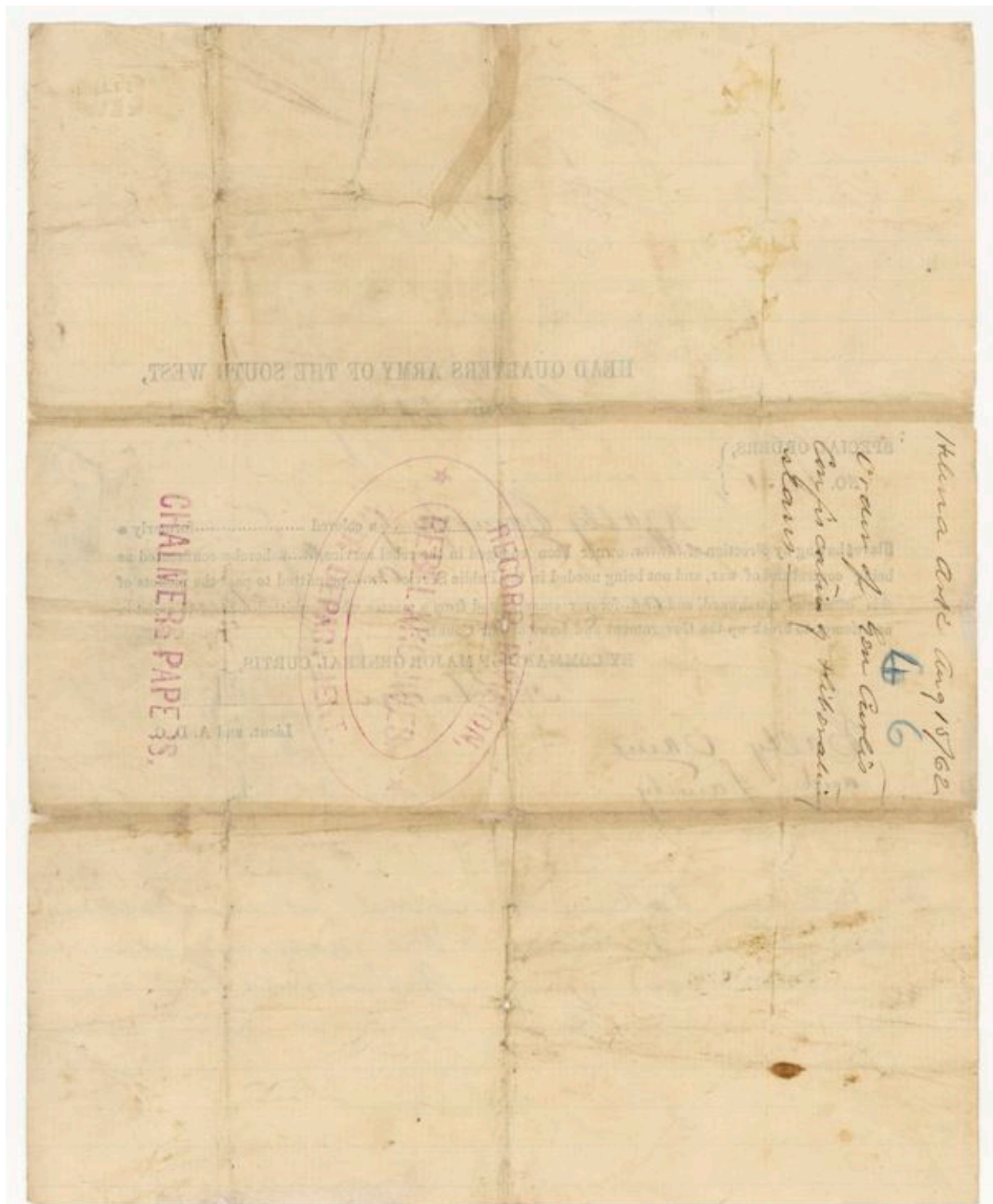
BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL CURTIS,

A. L. Hays

Lieut. and A. D. C.

*Wally Camp
and family*

*I have taken several such papers
as this from the negro slave
J. R. Amula.*



Source: Order Granting Freedom to Wally Caruz and Family, 08/15/1862; General James R. Chalmers' Papers, 1874–1899; War Department Collection of Confederate Records, 1825–1927, Record Group 109; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [3854715](#))

The Emancipation Proclamation

On Sunday, July 13, 1862, in the midst of the Civil War that had torn the nation apart, President Abraham Lincoln rode his carriage to the summer residence of Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to attend the funeral of Stanton's baby son, James. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles and Secretary of State William Seward accompanied the President. During that ride, Lincoln revealed that he had arrived at a momentous decision: "We must free the slaves," he said, "or be ourselves subdued." That decision to expand emancipation to areas of the Confederacy not yet occupied by U.S. troops "was a military necessity absolutely essential for the salvation of the Union," he explained. Both Welles and Seward were stunned.

Throughout the war, when President Lincoln needed to concentrate—when he faced a task that required his focused and undivided attention—he would leave the White House, cross the street to the War Department, and take over the desk of Thomas T. Eckert, chief of the military telegraph staff. The hub of the Union's military communication center had become an unlikely refuge for the President. Anxiously awaiting the latest reports from the front, hovering over the shoulder of an operator, he would enjoy the easy banter of the telegraph staff and, somehow, find relief from the great strains of his office.

The Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation

A couple of weeks before his carriage ride with Secretaries Welles and Seward, President Lincoln had asked the telegraph chief for some paper, explaining that he had something "special" to write. Slowly, putting down just one or two lines at a time, Lincoln began to work. During the next several weeks, he continued writing in the telegraph office—a little bit each day—charging Eckert with the safekeeping of his papers at night.

Only when a draft was finished did Lincoln reveal that he had composed an order "giving freedom to the slaves in the South, for the purpose of hastening the end of the war." In the congenial getaway of the telegraph office, amid the clattering of the telegraph keys, the President had composed the earliest draft of the Emancipation Proclamation.

By the President of the United States of America.

A Proclamation.

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America, and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy thereof, do hereby proclaim and declare that hereafter, as heretofore, the war will be prosecuted for the object of practically restoring the constitutional relation between the United States, and each of the States, and the people thereof, in which States that relation is, or may be, suspended or disturbed.

That it is my purpose, upon the next meeting of Congress to again recommend the adoption of a practical measure tendering pecuniary aid to the free acceptance or rejection of all slave States, so called, the people whereof may not then be in rebellion against the United States ^{and which States} may then have voluntarily adopted, or thereafter may voluntarily adopt, immediate or gradual abolishment of slavery within their respective limits; and that the effort

to colonize persons of African descent, with their consent, upon this Continent, or elsewhere, with the previously obtained consent of the Governments existing there, will be continued.

That on the first day of January in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

That the executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States, and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof shall, on that day be, in good faith

represented in the Congress of the United States, by members chosen thereto, at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States.

That attention is hereby called to an Act of Congress entitled "An Act to make an additional Article of War" approved March 13, 1862, and which act is in the words and figure following:

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That hereafter the following shall be promulgated as an additional article of war for the government of the army of the United States, and shall be obeyed and observed as such:

"Article — All officers or persons in the military or naval service of the United States are prohibited from employing any of the forces under their respective commands for the purpose

of returning fugitives from service or labor, who may have escaped from any persons to whom such service or labor is claimed to be due, and any officer who shall be found guilty by a court martial of violating this article shall be dismissed from the service.

"Sec. 2. And be it further enacted, That this act shall take effect from and after its passage."

Also to the ninth and tenth sections of an act entitled "An Act to suppress Insurrection, to punish Treason and Rebellion, to seize and confiscate property of rebels, and for other purposes," approved July 17, 1862, and which sections are in the words and figures following:

"Sec. 9. And be it further enacted, That all slaves of persons who shall hereafter be engaged in rebellion against the government of the United States, or who shall in any way give aid or comfort thereto, escaping from such persons and taking refuge within the lines of the army; and all slaves captured from such persons or deserted by them and coming under the control of the government of the United States; and all slaves of such persons found on (or) being within any place occupied

by rebel forces and afterwards occupied by the forces of the United States, shall be deemed captives of war, and shall be forever free of their servitude and not again held as slaves.

"Sec. 10. And be it further enacted, That no slave escaping into any State, Territory, or the District of Columbia, from any other State, shall be delivered up, or in any way impeded or hindered of his liberty, except for crime, or some offence against the laws, unless the person claiming said fugitive shall first make oath that the person to whom the labor or service of such fugitive is alleged to be due is his lawful owner, and has not borne arms against the United States in the present rebellion, nor in any way given aid and comfort thereto; and no person engaged in the military or naval service of the United States shall, under any pretence whatever, assume to decide on the validity of the claim of any person to the service or labor of any other person, or surrender up any such person to the claimant, on pain of being dismissed from the service."

And I do hereby enjoin upon and order all

persons engaged in the military, and naval
service of the United States to observe, obey, and
enforce, within their respective spheres of service,
the act, and sections above recited.

And the executive ^{in due time} will recommend that
all citizens of the United States who shall
have remained loyal thereto throughout the
rebellion, shall (upon the restoration of the con-
stitutional relation between the United States,
and their respective States, and people, if that
relation shall have been suspended or disturbed)
be compensated for all losses by acts of the
United States, including the loss of slaves.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set
my hand, and caused the seal of the United
States to be affixed.

Done at the City of
Washington this twenty-second
day of September, in the
year of our Lord, one thousand,
eight hundred and sixty-two,
and of the Independence
of the United States the

eighty seventh.

Abraham Lincoln

By the President:

Willie H. Seeward,
Secretary of State.

Source: Presidential Proclamation 93 (Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation); Presidential Proclamation 93 (vault), Box 2; General Records of the U.S. Government, Record Group 11; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. ([Available on "American Originals,"](#) an online exhibit from the National Archives.)

Transcript of the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation:

By the President of the United States of America.

A Proclamation.

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America, and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy thereof, do hereby proclaim and declare that hereafter, as heretofore, the war will be prosecuted for the object of practically restoring the constitutional relation between the United States, and each of the States, and the people thereof, in which States that relation is, or may be, suspended or disturbed.

That it is my purpose, upon the next meeting of Congress to again recommend the adoption of a practical measure tendering pecuniary aid to the free acceptance or rejection of all slave States, so called, the people whereof may not then be in rebellion against the United States and which States may then have voluntarily adopted, or thereafter may voluntarily adopt, immediate or gradual abolishment of slavery within their respective limits; and that the effort to colonize persons of African descent, with their consent, upon this Continent, or elsewhere, with the previously obtained consent of the Governments existing there, will be continued.

That on the first day of January in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of a State,

the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

That the executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States, and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof shall, on that day be, in good faith represented in the Congress of the United States, by members chosen thereto, at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States.

That attention is hereby called to an Act of Congress entitled "An Act to make an additional Article of War" approved March 13, 1862, and which act is in the words and figure following:

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That hereafter the following shall be promulgated as an additional article of war for the government of the army of the United States, and shall be obeyed and observed as such:

"Article—All officers or persons in the military or naval service of the United States are prohibited from employing any of the forces under their respective commands for the purpose of returning fugitives from service or labor, who may have escaped from any persons to whom such service or labor is claimed to be due and any officer who shall be found guilty by a court martial of violating this article shall be dismissed from the service.

"Sec. 2. And be it further enacted, That this act shall take effect from and after its passage."

Also to the ninth and tenth sections of an act entitled "An Act to suppress Insurrection, to punish Treason and Rebellion, to seize and confiscate property of rebels, and for other purposes," approved July 17, 1862, and which sections are in the words and figures following:

"Sec. 9. And be it further enacted, That all slaves of persons who shall hereafter be engaged in rebellion against the government of the United States, or who shall in any way give aid or comfort thereto, escaping from such persons and taking refuge within the lines of the army; and all slaves captured from such persons or deserted by them and coming under the control of the government of the United States; and all slaves of such persons found on (or) being within any place occupied by rebel forces and afterwards occupied by the forces of the United States, shall be deemed captives of war, and shall be forever free of their servitude and not again held as slaves.

"Sec. 10. And be it further enacted, That no slave escaping into any State, Territory, or the District of Columbia, from any other State, shall be delivered up, or in any way impeded or hindered of his liberty, except for crime, or some offence against the laws, unless the person claiming said fugitive shall first make oath that the person to whom the labor or service of such fugitive is alleged to be due is his lawful owner, and has not borne arms against the United States in the present rebellion, nor in any way given aid and comfort thereto; and no person engaged in the military or naval service of the United States shall, under any pretence whatever, assume to decide on the validity of the claim of any person to the service or labor of any other person, or surrender up any such person to the claimant, on pain of being dismissed from the service."

And I do hereby enjoin upon and order all persons engaged in the military and naval service of the United States of observe, obey, and enforce, within their respective spheres of service, the act, and sections above recited.

And the executive will ^in due time recommend that all citizens of the United States who shall have remained loyal thereto throughout the rebellion, shall upon the restoration of the constitutional relation between the United States, and their respective States, and people, if that relation shall have been suspended or disturbed be compensated for all losses by acts of the United States, including the loss of slaves.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington this twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord, one thousand, eight hundred and sixty two, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty seventh.

Abraham Lincoln

By the President:

William H. Seward

Secretary of State

[End of transcript.]

Victory at Antietam

On July 22, 1862, President Lincoln read his "preliminary proclamation" to his Cabinet, then decided to wait for a Union military victory to issue it. On September 22, following the victory at Antietam, two months after that carriage ride, President Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. It announced that slaves in those states or parts of states still in rebellion as of January 1, 1863, would be declared free. In this document President Lincoln formally alerted the Confederacy of his intention to free all persons held as slaves within the rebellious states.



Source: Photograph No. 111-B-2933; "Photograph of President Abraham Lincoln and His Generals After Antietam, 1862"; Mathew Brady Photographs of Civil War-Era Personalities and Scenes, 1921–1940; Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, 1860–1985, Record Group 111; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD. (National Archives Identifier: [527118](#))

President Abraham Lincoln's Message to Congress on the State of the Union

Three months after issuing the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, President Lincoln delivered his State of the Union address to Congress in writing, as was the custom in the 19th century. The Union lay in shambles; slavery had been abolished in Washington, DC, and in the territories of the United States. Lincoln reflected on saving the Union, ending slavery, and how the two were connected, thus preserving the United States— "the last best, hope of earth."

Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do. We know how to save it. We - even we here - hold the power, and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave, we assume freedom to the free - Honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best, Hope of earth. Other means may succeed;

this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful,
generous, just - a way which, if followed, the
world will forever applaud, and God must forever
bless.

Abraham Lincoln

December 1, 1862.

37 Cong. Senate & Doc
2 Sess.

Message
of the President of the
United States to the two
houses of Congress at the
Commencement of the third
session of the thirty-seventh
Congress.

1862 December 1 Read. Referred
of the Judiciary Committee

1862 March 3 Resolution referred
" " 12 Report Committee
in form of printing extra
Copies of House and Senate
manuals ordered to

In the inaugural address I briefly pointed out the total inadequacy of disunion, as a remedy for the differences between the people of the two sections. I did so in language which I cannot improve, and which, therefore, I beg to repeat:

"One section of our country believes slavery is right, and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong, and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute. The fugitive slave clause of the Constitution, and the law for the suppression of the foreign slave trade, are each as well enforced, perhaps, as any law can ever be in a community where the moral sense of the people imperfectly supports the law itself. The great body of the people

abide by the dry legal obligation in both cases, and a few break over in each. This, I think, cannot be perfectly cured; and it would be worse in both cases after the separation of the sections, than before. The foreign slave trade, now imperfectly suppressed, would be ultimately revived without restriction in one section; while fugitive slaves, now only partially surrendered, would not be surrendered at all by the other.

"Physically speaking, we cannot separate. We cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build an impassable wall between them. A husband and wife may be divorced, and go out of the presence, and beyond the reach of each other; but the different

Source: Message from President Abraham Lincoln to Congress ("...we cannot escape history...the fiery trial through which we pass..."); (SEN 37A-F1), Box 43; Records of the U.S. Senate, Record Group 46; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. ([Available on "The Charters of Freedom,"](#) an online exhibit from the National Archives.)

Transcript of selected pages of President Lincoln's State of the Union, December 1, 1862:

In the inaugural address I briefly pointed out the total inadequacy of disunion, as a remedy for the differences between the people of the two sections. I did so in language which I cannot improve, and which, therefore, I beg to repeat:

"One section of our country believes slavery is right, and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong, and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute. The fugitive slave clause of the Constitution, and the law for the suppression of the foreign slave trade, are each as well enforced, perhaps, as any law can ever be in a community where the moral sense of the people imperfectly supports the law itself. The great body of the people abide by the dry legal obligation in both cases, and a few break over in each. This, I think, cannot be perfectly cured; and it would be worse in both cases after the separation of the sections, than before. The foreign slave trade, now imperfectly suppressed, would be ultimately revived without restriction in one section; while fugitive slaves, now only partially surrendered, would not be surrendered at all by the other.

"Physically speaking, we cannot separate. We cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build an impassable wall between them. A husband and wife may be divorced, and go out of the presence, and beyond the reach of each other, but the different...

[Excluded pages]

Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We—even we here—hold the power, and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best, hope of earth. Other means may succeed, this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless.

Abraham Lincoln

December 1, 1862

[End of transcript.]

The Emancipation Proclamation

On the first day of the new year—January 1, 1863—the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect, a declaration of freedom for slaves in rebellious areas not yet under Union control. Historian John Hope Franklin described the day:

"[It] was a bright, crisp day in the nation's capital. The previous day had been a strenuous one for President Lincoln, but New Year's Day was to be even more strenuous. So he rose early. There was much to do, not the least of which was to put the finishing touches on the Emancipation Proclamation. At 10:45 the document was brought to the White House by Secretary of State William Seward. The President signed it, but he noticed an error in the superscription. It read, 'In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my name and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.' The President had never used that form in proclamations, always preferring to say 'In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand....' He asked Seward to make the correction, and the formal signing would be made on the corrected copy.

"The traditional New Year's Day reception at the White House began that morning at 11 o'clock. Members of the Cabinet and the diplomatic corps were among the first to arrive. Officers of the Army and Navy arrived in a body at half past 11. The public was admitted at noon, and then Seward and his son Frederick, the Assistant Secretary of State, returned with the corrected draft. The rigid laws of etiquette held the President to his duty for 3 hours, as his secretaries Nicholay and Hay observed. 'Had necessity required it,

he could of course have left such mere social occupation at any moment,' they pointed out, 'but the President saw no occasion for precipitancy. On the other hand, he probably deemed it wise that the completion of this momentous executive act should be attended by every circumstance of deliberation.'

"After the guests departed, the President went upstairs to his study for the signing in the presence of a few friends. No Cabinet meeting was called, and no attempt was made to have a ceremony. Later, Lincoln told F. B. Carpenter, the artist, that as he took up the pen to sign the paper, his hand shook so violently that he could not write. 'I could not for a moment control my arm. I paused, and a superstitious feeling came over me which made me hesitate.... In a moment I remembered that I had been shaking hands for hours with several hundred people, and hence a very simple explanation of the trembling and shaking of my arm.' With a hearty laugh at his own thoughts, the President proceeded to sign the Emancipation Proclamation. Just before he affixed his name to the document, he said, 'I never, in my life, felt more certain that I was doing right than I do in signing this paper.'"

Excerpted from "The Emancipation Proclamation: An Act of Justice," by John Hope Franklin

By the President of the United States of America:

A. Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to deprive such persons, or any of them, in any effort to they may make for their actual freedom.

"That the Executive will, on the first day

"of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate
"the States and parts of States, if any, in which the
"people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion
"against the United States; and the fact that any
"State, or the people thereof, shall on that day, be, in
"good faith, represented in the Congress of the United
"States by members chosen thereto at elections
"wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such
"State shall have participated, shall, in the absence
"of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed con-
"clusive evidence that such State, and the people
"thereof, are not then in rebellion against the
"United States."

Now, therefore, I, Abraham
Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue
of the power in me vested as Commander-in-
Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United
States in time of actual armed rebellion against the
authority and government of the United States,
and as a fit and necessary war measure for sup-
pressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of
January, in the year of our Lord one thousand
eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance
with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed
for the full period of one hundred days, from the

day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans), Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Prince Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth, and which excepted parts are, for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued).

And by virtue of the power, and for the purposes aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive

government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

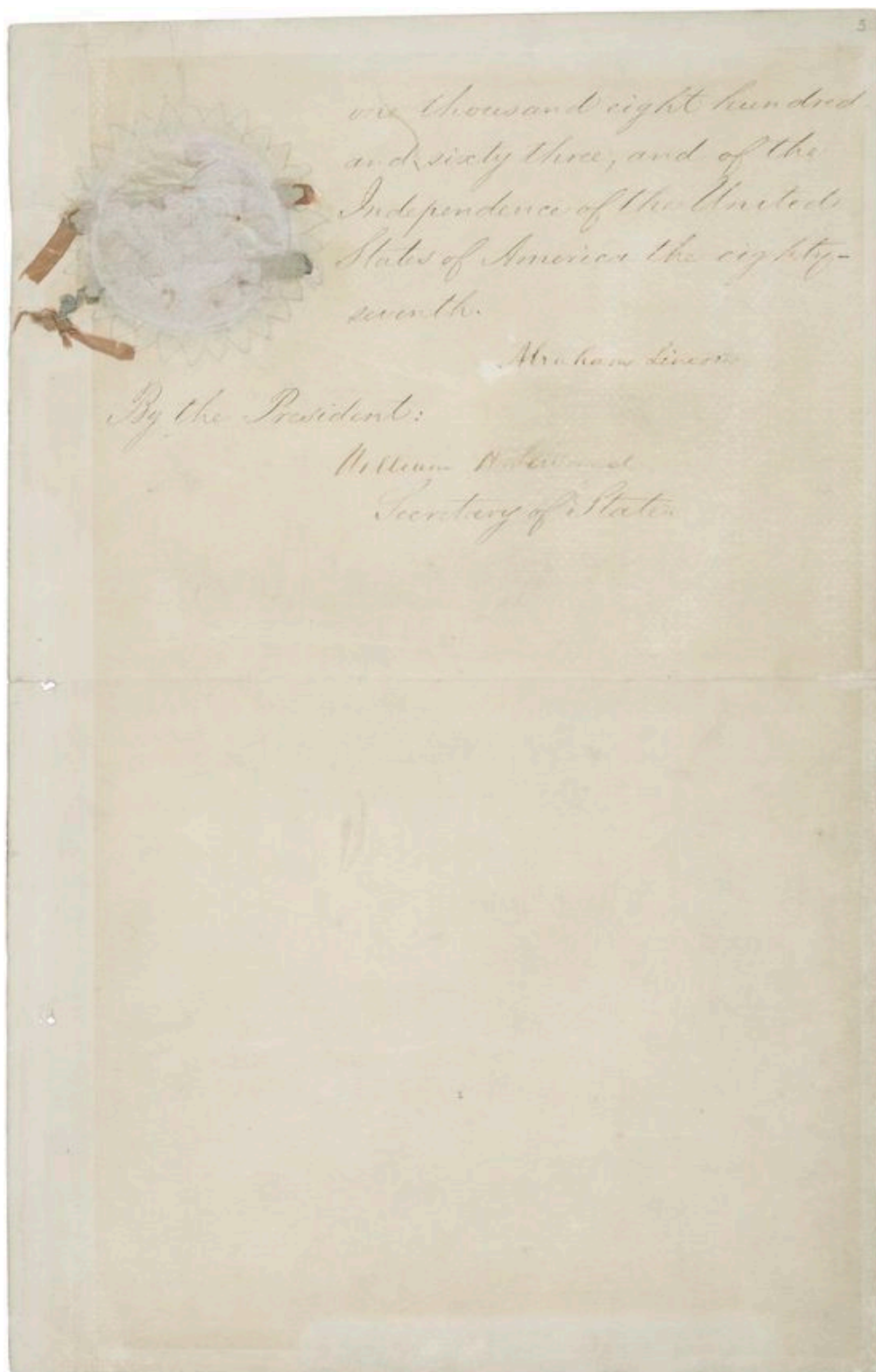
And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord



Source: Emancipation Proclamation, 01/01/1863; Presidential Proclamations, 1791–2007; General Records of the United States Government, 1778–2006, Record Group 11; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [299998](#))

Transcript of the Emancipation Proclamation:

The Emancipation Proclamation

January 1, 1863

By the President of the United States of America:

A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

"That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the

people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States."

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of

Norfolk and Portsmouth[]], and which excepted parts, are for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

By the President:

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.

[End of transcript.]

Historian John Hope Franklin wrote:

"...[T]here was no mention, in the final draft, of ...compensation [or] colonization, [as] in the Preliminary Proclamation.... Perhaps Lincoln was about to give up on such impracticable propositions. In the Preliminary Proclamation, the President had said that he would declare slaves in designated territories "thenceforward, and forever free." In the final draft of January 1, 1863, he was content to say that they "are, and henceforward shall be free." Nothing had been said in the preliminary draft about the use of blacks as soldiers. In the summer of 1862 the Confiscation Act had authorized the President to use blacks in any way he saw fit, and there had been some limited use of them in non-combat activities....

It was late afternoon before the Proclamation was ready for transmission to the press and others. Earlier drafts had been available, and some papers, including the Washington Evening Star had used those drafts, but it was at about 8 p.m. on January 1 that the transmission of the text over the telegraph wires actually began.

...[T]he celebrations were not considered official until word was received that the President had actually signed the Proclamation....At Israel Bethel Church, Rev. Henry McNeal Turner went out and secured a copy of the Washington Evening Star that carried the text of the Proclamation. Back at the church, Turner waved the newspaper from the pulpit and began to read the document. This was the signal for unrestrained celebration characterized by men squealing, women fainting, dogs barking, and whites and blacks shaking hands. The Washington celebrations continued far into the night. In the Navy Yard, cannons began to roar and continued for some time.

In New York the news of the Proclamation was received with mixed feelings. Blacks looked and felt happy, one reporter said, while abolitionists "looked glum and grumbled . . . that the proclamation was only given on account of military necessity." Within a week, however, there were several large celebrations in which abolitionists took part. At Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, the celebrated Henry Ward Beecher preached a commemorative sermon to an overflow audience. "The Proclamation may not free a single slave," he declared, "but it gives liberty a moral recognition."...

A veritable galaxy of leading literary figures gathered in the Music Hall in Boston to take notice of the climax of the fight that New England abolitionists had led for more than a generation. Among those present were John Greenleaf Whittier, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Francis Parkman, and Josiah Quincy. Toward the close of the meeting, Ralph Waldo Emerson read his "Boston Hymn" to the audience. In the evening, a large crowd gathered at Tremont Temple to await the news that the President had signed the Proclamation. ...Finally, it was announced that "It is coming over the wire," and pandemonium broke out! At midnight, the group had to vacate Tremont Temple, and from there they went to the Twelfth Baptist Church at the invitation of its pastor, Leonard Grimes. Soon the church was packed, and it was almost dawn when the assemblage dispersed."

Excerpted from "The Emancipation Proclamation: An Act of Justice," by John Hope Franklin

The Meaning of Emancipation

Limitations of the Proclamation

The Emancipation Proclamation's limited nature, and the fact that it specifically exempted areas already in Union hands, created confusion. Emancipation did not apply to all of the parishes in Louisiana, for example. Nevertheless, Captain Alanson B. Long, provost marshal and commander in the town of New Iberia, St. Martin Parish, Louisiana, tried to implement Federal policy toward the emancipation of slaves in April 1863.

On April 24, 1863, Long issued a one-page "Circular" to the community outlining his understanding of the Federal Government's position. Although Long was trying to clear up public confusion with his circular, he—like many Northern soldiers—was uncertain about what he was supposed to do. He wrote letters inquiring about official policies "with regard to citizens, property, and slaves" and outlining "the perplexities of my position." He admitted he "perhaps" failed to understand the Federal policy. He had always "encouraged the idea of freedom among slaves," but he had not realized that the Emancipation Proclamation had exempted St. Martin Parish from its provisions.

For Long, freedom-seeking slaves had become "a continual source of anxiety and trouble." For example, the Confederate government had brought in many slaves from the outside the area to work "on gunboats and arsenals etc." Now free, they wanted to go

home. Long was letting them leave. But he knew that the Union needed their labor to "prosecute govt works that can not be completed with out their aid." He asked, "are they to be advised to return to their masters or compelled"? Furthermore, those who stayed to work for the Government needed food and shelter.

In his first request for instructions, Long asked, "What policy shall be pursued now towards the hundred who come flocking here?" It was a question with no simple answer. That may explain why the captain never received a response.

CIRCULAR.

New Iberia, La., April 24. 1863.

The generally received impression, that the slaves of this Parish, are free, by force of the presence of the Union army, is *erroneous*.

This Parish, (St. Martin) is excepted by name, in the Emancipation Proclamation, of President Lincoln, issued at Washington, D. C., January 1, 1863.

No farther interference, with the institution of slavery will be allowed by the Army Authorities, than may necessarily result from the police regulations.

United States Army Officers, are forbidden, by law of Congress, to use force in the restoration of slaves to masters.

If slaves flee from their masters, they must work on Government works, receiving therefor, full rations, for full day's work.

If slaves voluntarily return to their masters, they will not be molested.

If masters use force, in abducting run-away slaves, the masters will be arrested.

If masters inhumanly punish or whip their slaves, they must be arrested.

No punishment of slaves, will be permitted, except such as are practiced in the Army.

A. B. LONG,
Capt., & Provost Marshal,
Commanding Post,

Source: "Circular, New Iberia, Louisiana, April 24, 1863..."; Part 1, Entry 1845 Provost Marshal, Dept. of the Gulf, 1863, Box 2 (letter has no endorsement, only pencil date April 10, 1863, 1/4 way from front of box); Records of U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Record Group 393; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. ([Available on the Our Archives Wiki](#), the Public Researcher Wiki of the National Archives and Records Administration.)

A Letter Expressing “It is my desire to be free”

The Emancipation Proclamation also failed to apply to the slave-holding border states that had remained loyal to the Union. On April 25, 1864, Annie Davis, an enslaved woman living in Maryland, wrote a brief but touching letter to President Abraham Lincoln. In it, she asked if she was free.

No reply from the President has been located. The answer to Davis's question, however, would have been "no." As Maryland was a border state loyal to the Union, slavery existed there until November 1, 1864.

Belair Aug 25/864

Mr President

It is my
Desire to be free to go
to see my people on
the eastern shore. my
mistress wont let me
you will please let me
know if she are free and
what I can do. I write
to you for advice. please
send me word how
thek. or as soon as poss^{ble}
and oblige.

Annie Davis
Belair Thapad
County, Md D.

Belair Thapad
Cu

Transcript of Annie Davis's letter:

[Note: Question marks represent illegible text.]

Belair Aug 25th 1864

Mr. President

It is my Desire to be free. to go to see my people on the eastern shore. my mistress wont let me you will please let me know if we are free. and what I can do. I write to you for advice. please send me word this[?] week. or as soon as possible. and oblidge.

Annie Davis

Belair Thaford

County. Mt D.

Belair Thaford

Cu[?]

[End of transcript.]

A General's Letter Asking for Guidance for Runaways

The year 1863 was a turning point in relations between the Federal Government and the formerly enslaved population. The Emancipation Proclamation moved the Government to a moral position it had long avoided, and in effect encouraged slaves to seek

the protection of the Federal Government. A steady stream had been running to Union lines even before the Proclamation. It now swelled to a flood.

General W. Sooy Smith, who commanded Union troops in Tennessee, faced a dilemma. Men loyal to the Union, who would not have been affected by the Second Confiscation Act, wanted their property returned. But Smith's orders were to refuse such requests now that Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation. He wrote to his superiors asking how to avoid "the charge of furnishing Asylum to the Servants of loyal men." The War Department usually advised that runaways be employed by the Army.

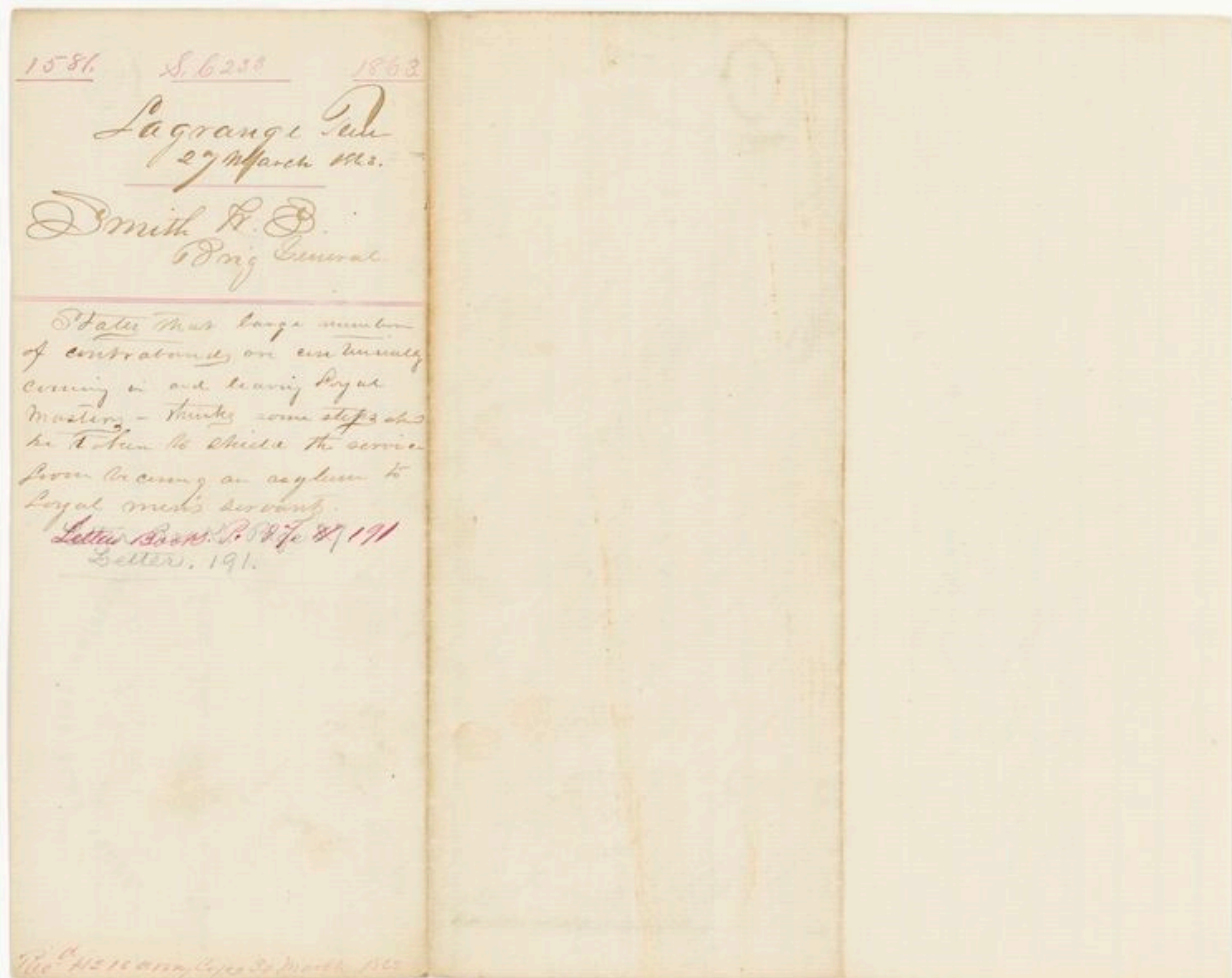
HEAD-QUARTERS, 1st DIVISION, 16th ARMY CORPS.

Lagrange, Tenn., March 27th 1863.

Lieut Col Binsmore A. H. Col.
Ch of Col Huntbats Staff.
Sir

I wrote a few days ago asking instructions with regard to the large number of contrabands now finding their way into our camps - The evil is a most perplexing one. Whole families of them are stampeding and leaving their masters, and I am applied to daily for the return of those belonging to loyal Masters. I know that our General Orders do not permit me to yield to such applications: but something should be done to shield our service from the charge of furnishing an Asylum to the servants of loyal men living in districts not affected by the emancipation proclamation.

Very Respectfully
Your obedt Servt.
Wm. J. Smith Brig Gen
Comdg 1st Div

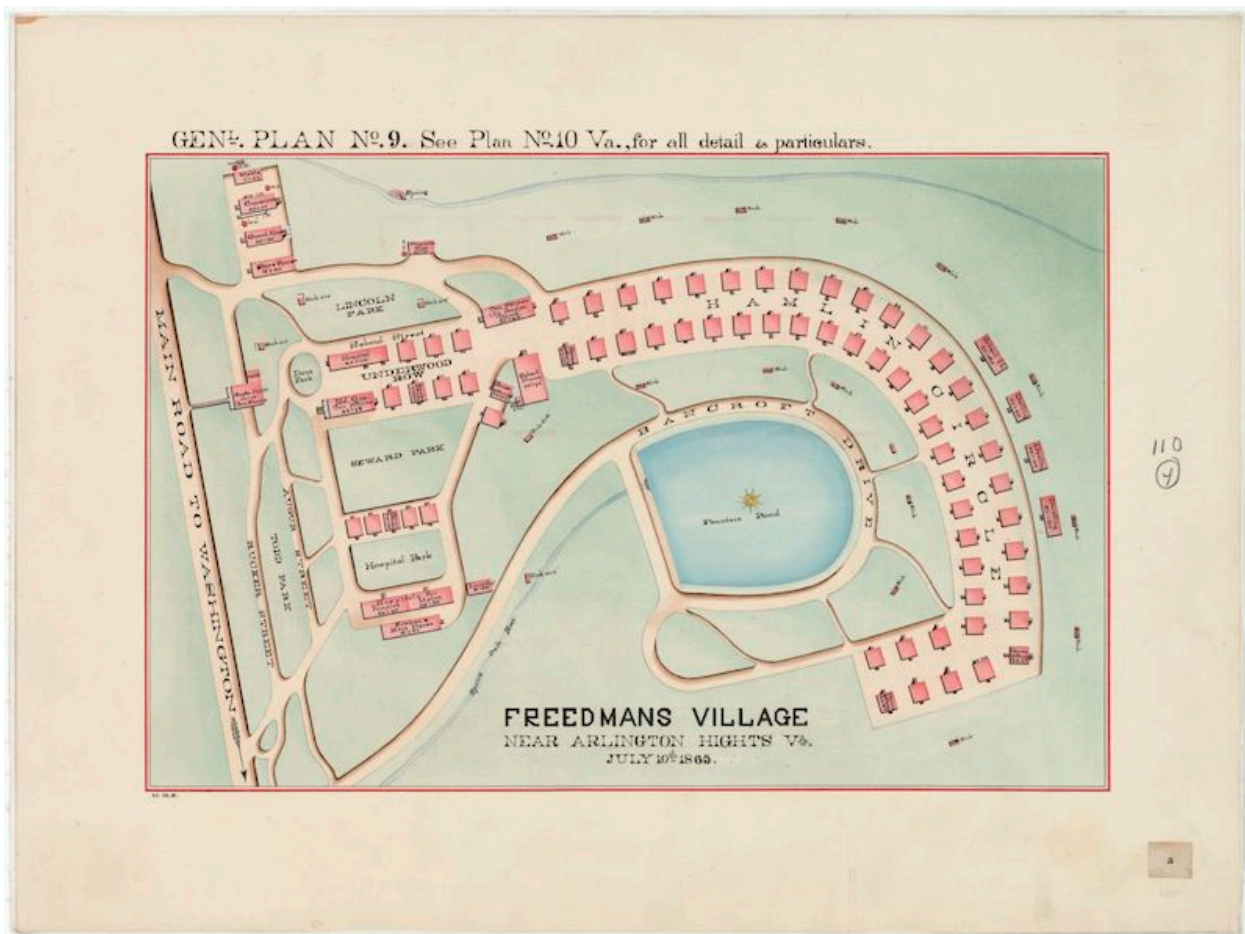


Source: Letter from Brigadier General W. Sooy Smith to the Commander of the 1st Division of the 16th Army Corps, 03/27/1863; Letters Received, 1863–1865; Records of U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1817–1947, Record Group 393; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [4662544](#))

The War Department had established freedmen's camps and other services in the early 1860s. However, a more formal, systematic process of providing assistance proved necessary. The response was the creation of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly referred to as the Freedmen's Bureau. Between 1865 and 1870 the Bureau helped recently freed slaves with basic humanitarian assistance as well as the ability to achieve education and enter into legally recognized marriages.

A Freedmen's Village

In 1863 the U.S. Army established Freedmen's Village on Robert E. Lee's former Arlington estate, just across the Potomac River from Washington, DC. The village provided housing and work opportunities so that former slaves could begin their lives as free men and women. It was home for hundreds of people until 1900.



Source: Map No. 92-PR-MAP110(5); "Freedmans Village near Arlington Hights, Va., July 10th, 1865. Genl. [ground] Plan No. 9., 04/10/1865"; Post and Reservation Maps, 1820–1905; Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, 1774–1985, Record Group 92; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD. (National Archives Identifier: [305826](#))

Reunification and Marriage for Freedmen

Edmund Chick mustered into military service on August 2, 1864. By 1866 he was stationed at Freedmen's Village. There he met and married Mary Camerie on September 11, 1866.

and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh.


CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE.

This Certifies, that *Edmond Chick* of *107 Co E NSG* and *Mary Camerie* of *Arlington Heights* have this day ~~renewed their~~ ^{renewed} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ MARRIAGE vows, covenanting to live together as husband and wife, after God's holy ordinance of MARRIAGE, until separated by death.

Dated *Arlington Heights Sept 11th 1866*

WITNESSES: *J. K. Johnson* Officiating Minister.

C. Collier
J. V. Collier



What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. Mat. 19: 5, 6.

For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh.

Source: Certificate of Marriage for Edmund Chick, 107 Co E and Mary Camerie/Campbell, Arlington Heights, VA; WO 181843; Case Files of Disapproved Pension Applications for Widows and Other Veterans, Box 426; Records of the Veterans Administration, Record Group 15; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. ([Available on the Our Archives Wiki](#), the Public Researcher Wiki of the National Archives and Records Administration.)

Transportation was provided for refugees and freedmen who were unable to provide their own, according to General Order No 138, passed in 1865 by the War Department. In December 1866, Mary Chick, wife of Edmund, requested transportation to Louisville, Kentucky, to see him where he was stationed.

Brigd Gen C. H. Howard:
General:

I have the honor to report—
that some soldiers of the 107 N. S. C. G.—
have returned to their wives: some
have sent money to pay for the
transportation of their wives.

I do not know how many remain
wishing to obtain free transportation
to their husbands.

Last Friday I found two who wished
to go together—and desired free
transportation: their names—

Mrs Jennie Mickens (freedwoman)
wife of Benj Mickens—to ^{Louisville} Brandenburg Ky
Mrs Mary Chick (freedwoman)
wife of Edmund Chick. to Louisville Ky

After arriving at Louisville, these
persons will not be of any additional
expense to the Govt.

Yours respectfully—

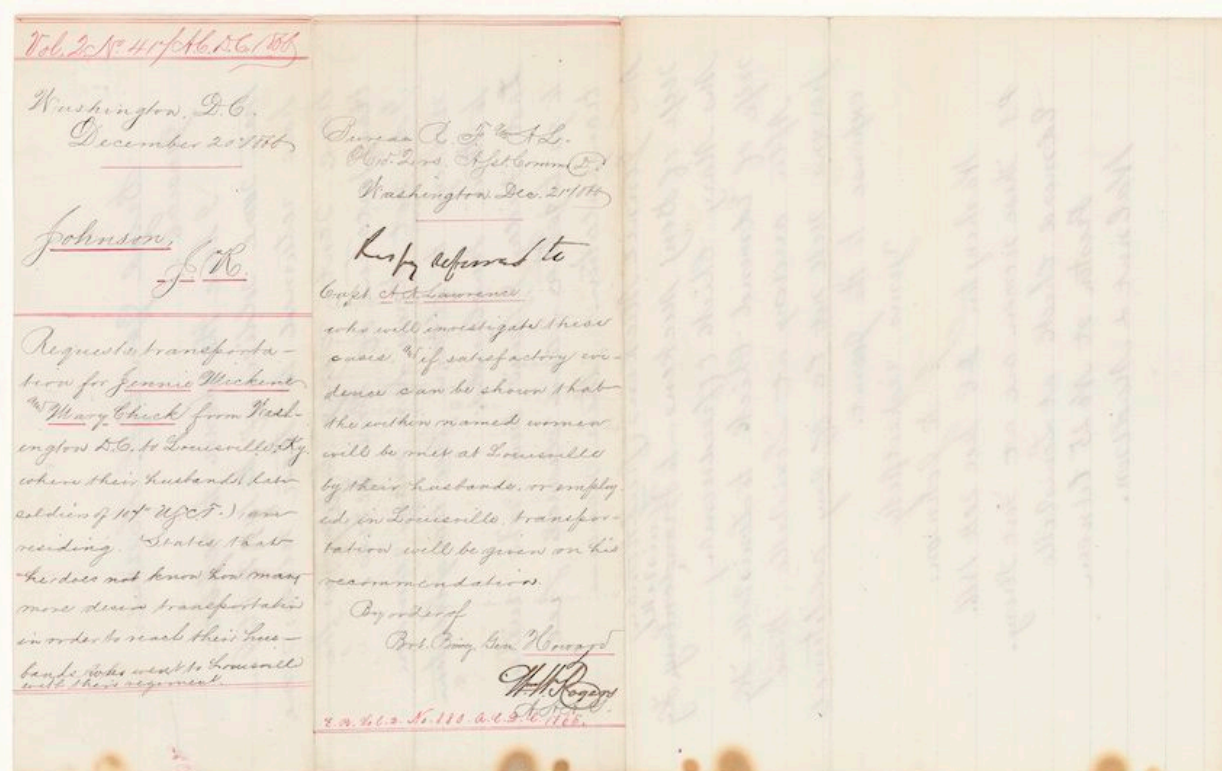
J. R. Johnson:

Washington D. C. Dec 20th 1866.

P.S. These women are at Fort Strong.

Edmund Chick at Louisville

Preston st No 25 between
Walnut & Madison.



Source: Letter from J.R. Johnson to Brig. Gen. C.H. Howard regarding the transportation of Mary Chick to her husband Edmund Chick in Louisville, Kentucky; Letters Rec'd: 1864–12/1868, Entry 573, Box 52, Folder: "DC Assistant Commissioner Letters Received, Sept.–Dec. 1866"; Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, RG 105; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. ([Available on the Our Archives Wiki](#), the Public Researcher Wiki of the National Archives and Records Administration.)

Transcript of the transportation request:

[Note: Question marks represent illegible text.]

Brigd Gen C. H. Honard[?]:

General:

I have the honor to report that some soldiers of the 107 NSCG—have returned to their wives: some have sent money to pay for[?] the transportation of their wives.

I do not know how[?] many remain wishing to obtain free transportation to their homelands:

Last Friday I found two who wished to go together—and desired free transportation: their names—Mrs. Jennie Mickens (freedwoman) wife of Benj Mickens—to Louisville Ky
Mrs Mary Chick (freedwoman) wife of Edmund Chick to Louisville Ky

After arriving at Louisville, these persons will not be of any additional expense to the govmt.

Yours respectfully

J. R. Johnson:

Washington DC Dec 20th 1866.

P.S. These women are at Fort String.

Edmund Chick at Louisville

Preston A No 25 between Walnut and Madison.

[Reverse of document]

Vol. 2 No. 41 / A.C.D.G. 100[?]

Washington, D.C.

December 20, 1866[?]

Johnson, J.R.

Requests transportation for Jennie Mickens and Mary Chick from Washington D.C. to Louisville Ky. where their husbands are[?] soldiers of 107th U.S.C.T.) and residing.

States that he does not know how many more desire transportation in order to reach their husbands who went[?] to Louisville with their regiment.

Capt. A.A. Lawrence who will investigate these cases. And if satisfactory evidence can be shown that the within named women will be met at Louisville by their husbands, or employed in Louisville, transportation will be given on his recommendation.

By order of

Brs[?] Brig. Gen. Howard

[End of transcript]

Documents for Employment

In an effort to help newly freed people find employment, the Army helped arrange labor contracts. Children living in Freedmen's Village in Arlington were expected to work, and some became apprentices or domestic servants through indenture contracts. With the Freedmen's Bureau serving as intermediary, a girl named Cornelia Lewis became a servant for a woman named Mrs. Spaulding in October 1864. The contract them shows that Cornelia, age 10, would be indentured until she was 18.

These Articles of Agreement, made the 12th day of October, Anno Domini one thousand eight hundred and sixty 4, between Lt. Col. Elias M. Greene, Chief Quartermaster of the Department of Washington and the 22d Army Corps, in charge of the "Government Farms" and the "Freedman's Village," Va. and Mrs. H. S. Spaulding, resident of Georgetown, D. C. Witnesseth:



first. That the said Lt. Col. Elias M. Greene, for and on behalf of the United States of America, has placed and bound out, and by these presents does place and bind out, as an ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice~~ ^{servant} Cornelia Lewis to learn the trade of ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice~~ ^{servant} duty of a servant and to continue with the said Mrs. Spaulding until the day of when she, the said ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice~~ ^{servant} shall have attained the age of 18 years, and to continue subject, during that period to the conditions and covenants hereinafter mentioned.

Second. The said ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice~~ ^{servant} Cornelia Lewis shall well and faithfully serve the said ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice~~ ^{servant} Mrs. Spaulding in all such lawful business as the said ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice~~ ^{servant} shall be put unto by the said ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice~~ ^{servant} Mrs. Spaulding according to the best of his ability and honestly and obediently, in all things, shall behave himself towards the said ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice~~ ^{servant} Mrs. Spaulding and orderly towards the rest of the family of the said ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice~~ ^{servant} Mrs. Spaulding.

Third. And the said ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice~~ ^{servant} Mrs. Spaulding, on his part, does hereby promise and agree to teach and instruct the said ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice~~ ^{servant} or cause him to be taught and instructed, in the art and mystery of the trade of ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice~~ ^{servant} duty of a servant by the best means he can, and also to teach and instruct the said ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice~~ ^{servant} or cause him to be taught and instructed, in reading and writing; and shall provide for the said ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice~~ ^{servant} good and sufficient meat, drink, clothing, and lodging, fit and convenient for such an ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice ^{servant} during the term aforesaid; and, at the expiration thereof, shall give the said ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice~~ ^{servant} two suits of strong clothing—one suitable for week-days, and the other for Sundays—and the sum of five dollars current money of the United States.~~

Fourth. That upon the failure of the said ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice ^{servant} Mrs. Spaulding to execute and fulfill the conditions set forth in the third section of this agreement, he shall pay, or cause to be paid, to an authorized agent of the United States, a forfeiture of one hundred dollars in current money of the United States, and shall reimburse the United States for all expense it may be made to incur in consequence of the failure of the said ~~servant~~ ^{apprentice} ~~apprentice ^{servant} Mrs. Spaulding to execute and fulfill any of the conditions contained within this agreement, in addition to any penalties which may be prescribed, for violation of articles of indenture, by the laws of the State in which the parties are residing at the time. And further, that the expenses of attesting and delivering these presents shall be paid by the party to whom the said apprentice is hereby bound.~~~~

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF the said parties hereto have hereunto set their hands and affixed their seals, this 12th day of October, 1864

  *Wm. A. Graham*
Lt. Col. and Chief Quartermaster,
Dep't of Washington and 22d Army Corps.

Signed and delivered in presence of—
E. A. Holman
W. A. Hitt

H. S. Spaulding

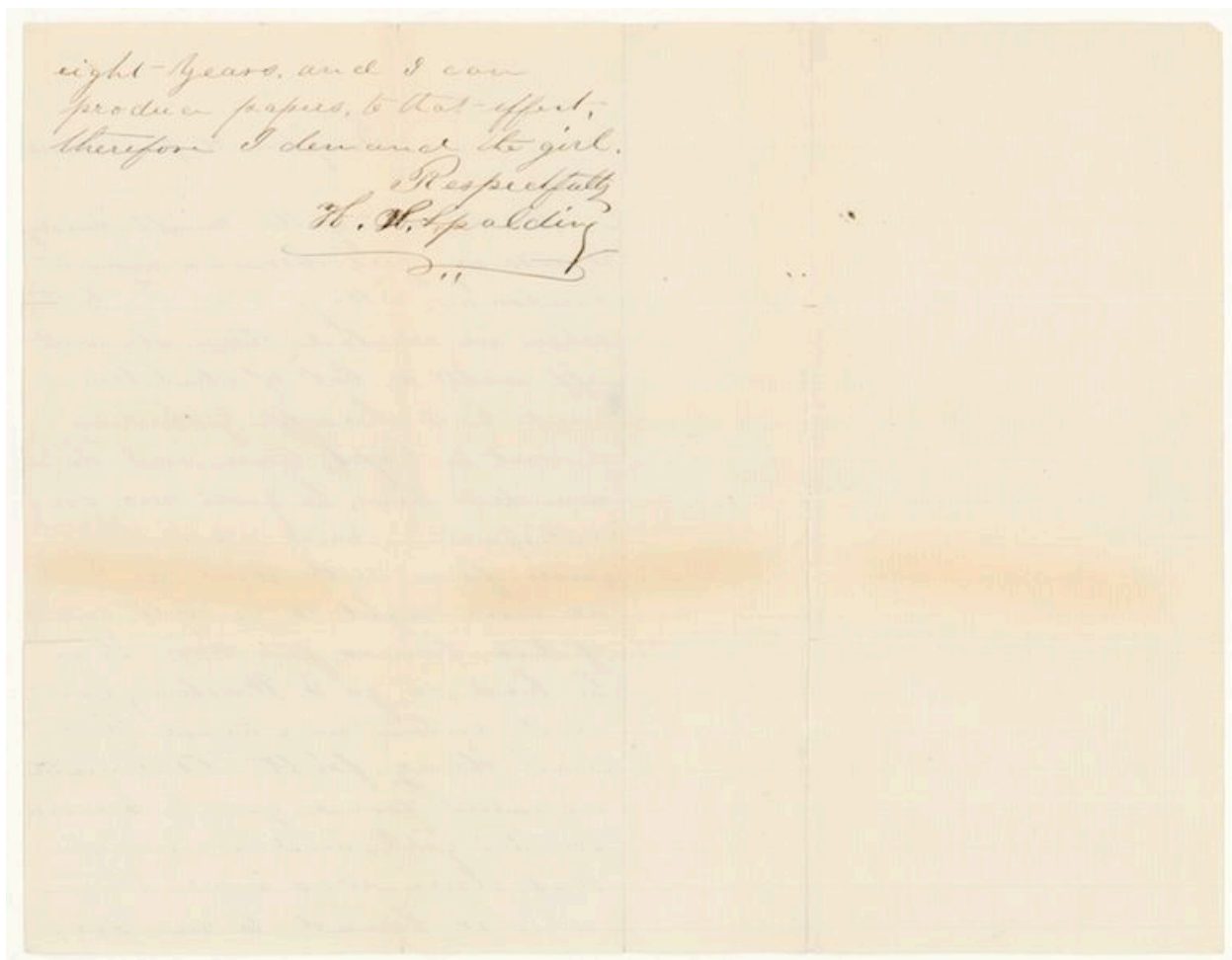
Source: Indenture contract for servant Cornelia Lewis to serve Mrs. Spaulding until 18 years of age; DC Freedman's Village: Labor Contracts 1864, Entry 577, Box 54; Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Record Group 105; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. ([Available on the Our Archives Wiki](#), the Public Researcher Wiki of the National Archives and Records Administration.)

Not long after the indenture, while Cornelia and Mrs. Spaulding visited Freedmen's Village, Cornelia ran off "and hid herself." When an Army officer wouldn't help, Mrs. Spaulding wrote to the Freedmen's Bureau demanding Cornelia's return to fulfill her contract.

Georgetown H. June 29th 1848

Sir

On the 25th of the month, Sunday,
I took my girl; Cornelia Lewis, to
Freedman's village to see her Mother.
when we reached there, she went
off with a lot of children
and hid herself. Yesterday
I went to Capt. Carr, and de-
manded her, he gave me no
satisfaction, and said they
were free, and that he had
no more right to go into one
of those houses for her, than
he had to go to Washington
and enter any house there
and drag forth its inmates.
we called for a guard to search
for the girl, and he said
that, there was none there.
she is bound to me for



Source: Letter from Mrs. Spaulding demanding girl back that is bound to her for 8 more years; DC Freedman's Village: Labor Contracts 1864, Entry 577, Box 54; Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, RG 105; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. ([Available on the Our Archives Wiki](#), the Public Researcher Wiki of the National Archives and Records Administration.)

Transcript of Mrs. Spaulding's letter:

[Note: Question marks represent illegible text.]

Georgetown H. June 28th 1865

Sir,

On the 25th of the month, Sunday, I took my girl; Cornelia Lewis, to Freedman's village to see her mother. when we reached there, she went off with a lot of children and hid herself. Yesterday I went to Capt. Care, and demanded her, he gave me no satisfaction, and said they were free, and that he had no more right to go into one of those houses for her, than he had to go to Washington and enter any house there and drag forth its inmates. we called for a guard to search for the girl, and he said that, there was none there. she is bound to me for eight-years, and I can produce papers, to that effect, therefore I demand the girl.

Respectfully

H. I.[?] Spalding

[End of transcript.]

School

Before the war, most Southern states had laws against educating slaves. The Freedmen's Bureau and Northern benevolent societies invested heavily in education. They established and supported day, evening, Sunday, and industrial schools. Education was also a high priority within black communities. Even poor communities often provided land and pay for schools and teachers.



Source: Photograph No. 111-B-5240; "Contraband School, ca. 1860–ca. 1865"; Mathew Brady Photographs of Civil War-Era Personalities and Scenes, 1921–1940; Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, 1860–1985, Record Group 111; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD. (National Archives Identifier: [529344](#))

The Creation of the U.S. Colored Troops

The issues of freedom and military service had been intertwined from the onset of the Civil War. News from Fort Sumter had set off a rush by free black men to enlist in U.S. military units. They were turned away, however, because a Federal law dating from

1792 barred them from bearing arms for the U.S. army (although they had served in the American Revolution and in the War of 1812). The Lincoln administration wrestled with the idea of authorizing the recruitment of black troops before the issuance of the Proclamation, but was concerned that such a move would prompt border states to secede.

While Lincoln had failed to call specifically upon slaves and free blacks to serve as combatant troops in the war, his Emancipation Proclamation did include mention of military service. He wrote, "And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable conditions, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service."

This statement directly applied to slaves in the slave states, and many moved to free themselves. Despite the restriction of the Emancipation Proclamation in loyal border states, Tennessee, and portions of Union-occupied Louisiana and Virginia, slaves found their way to the Union armies and U.S. recruitment stations while their families remained in slavery. From February to June 1863, the War Department established procedures for the selection, recruitment, and training of blacks, regardless of status, to serve in the U.S. Army, and for a selection process for white officers to lead the troops. On May 22, 1863, the War Department issued General Order 143, establishing a Bureau of Colored Troops and authorizing the raising of regiments of "U.S. Colored Troops."

GENERAL ORDERS, }

No. 143.

WAR DEPARTMENT,

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,

Washington, May 22, 1863.

I..A Bureau is established in the Adjutant General's Office for the record of all matters relating to the organization of Colored Troops. An officer will be assigned to the charge of the Bureau, with such number of clerks as may be designated by the Adjutant General.

II..Three or more field officers will be detailed as Inspectors to supervise the organization of colored troops at such points as may be indicated by the War Department in the Northern and Western States.

III..Boards will be convened at such posts as may be decided upon by the War Department to examine applicants for commissions to command colored troops, who, on application to the Adjutant General, may receive authority to present themselves to the board for examination.

IV..No persons shall be allowed to recruit for colored troops except specially authorized by the War Department; and no such authority will be given to persons who have not been examined and passed by a board; nor will such authority be given any one person to raise more than one regiment.

V..The reports of Boards will specify the grade of commission for which each candidate is fit, and authority to recruit will be given in accordance. Commissions will be issued from the Adjutant General's Office when the prescribed number of men is ready for muster into service.

VI..Colored troops may be accepted by companies, to be afterwards consolidated in battalions and regiments by the Adjutant General. The regiments will be numbered *seriatim*, in the order in which they are raised, the numbers to be determined by the Adjutant General. They will be designated: "— Regiment of U. S. Colored Troops."

VII..Recruiting stations and depôts will be established by the Adjutant General as circumstances shall require, and officers will be detailed to muster and inspect the troops.

VIII...The non-commissioned officers of colored troops may be selected and appointed from the best men of their number in the usual mode of appointing non-commissioned officers. Meritorious commissioned officers will be entitled to promotion to higher rank if they prove themselves equal to it.

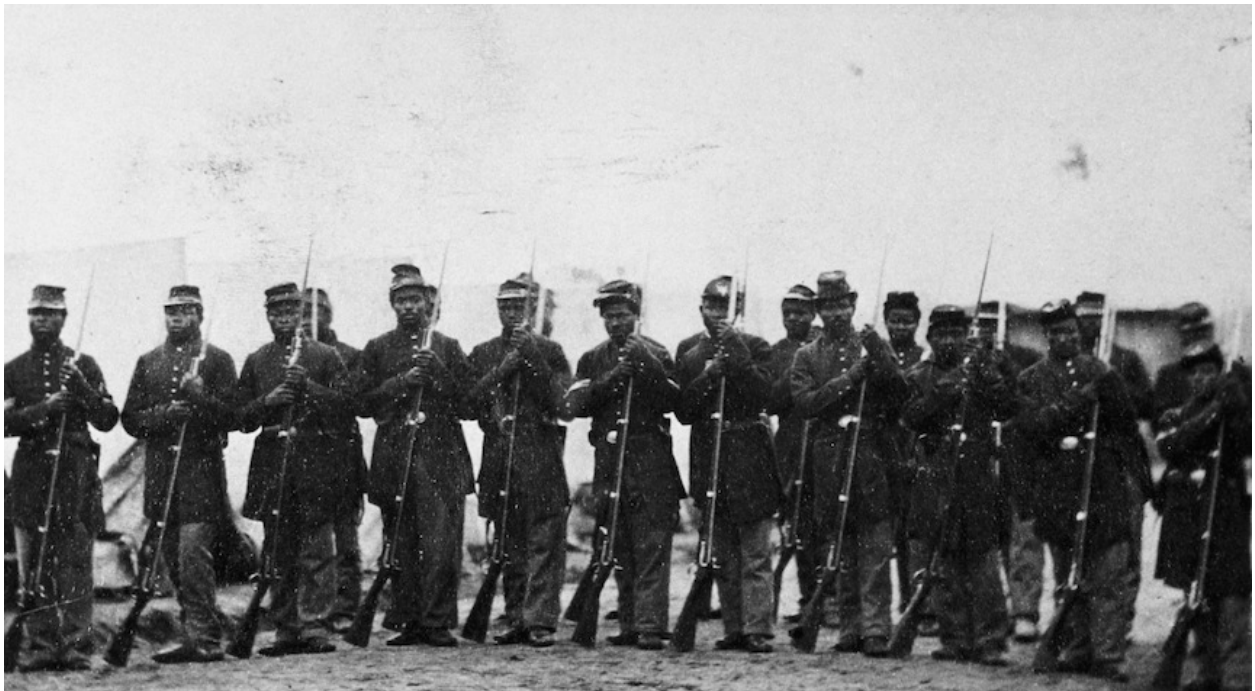
IX...All personal applications for appointments in colored regiments, or for information concerning them, must be made to the Chief of the Bureau; all written communications should be addressed to the Chief of the Bureau, to the care of the Adjutant General.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

E. D. TOWNSEND,
Assistant Adjutant General.

The Corps d'Afrique

Union General Nathanael Banks organized the Corps d'Afrique in the spring of 1863. The unit was made up largely of former slaves from southern Louisiana. The officers were all white. Some of the officers and men were drawn from the Louisiana's Afro-Creole community and had earlier served in a Confederate unit known as the Louisiana Native Guards. A photograph of them was taken in Port Hudson, Louisiana, around 1864.



Source: Photograph No. 165-JT-433B; "Photograph of United States Colored Troops at Port Hudson, Louisiana, 1864"; Photographic Prints in John Taylor Album*, ca. 1861–ca. 1865; Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, 1860–1952, Record Group 165; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD. (National Archives Identifier: [594179](#))

A Letter Home to a Still-Enslaved Family

Samuel Cabble, had escaped from slavery at the age of 21 and made it to Iowa, where he enlisted in the Union army. He was then sent to Massachusetts, where he joined the state's 55th Infantry. He wrote the following letter to his wife Leah and mother. Cabble informed his wife, Leah, who was still in slavery, of his whereabouts.



Dear mother i now take up
my pen to write you a few lines
in hopes that they may come
safe to hand and find you
well i am well at this time and
have been ever since i came here
i have wrote you a letter about
3 weeks ago and have been looking
for an answer ever since but it
has been in vain and i have now
taken the opportunity of writing
to let you now that the regiment
to which i belong is going to leave
here shortly for North Carolina
we are going to newbern. i want
you if ever you receive this letter
to take or send it to my wife also
tell me in your letter if jayn still
looks for me tell me all about her
write immediately to me yours
obdiently Samuel Seabell

Dear Wife i have enlisted in
the army i am now in the state
of Massachusetts but before this
letter reaches you i will be in
north Carolina and though
great is the present national
difficulties yet i look forward to
a brighter day when i shall have
the opportunity of seeing you in
the full enjoyment of freedom
i would like to see if you are still
in slavery if you are it will not
be long before we shall have crushed
the system that now oppresses you
for in the course of three months
you shall have your liberty
great is the outpouring of the
colored people that is now rally-
ing with the hearts of lions against
that very curse that has separated
you and me yet we shall meet
again and oh what a happy time
that will be when this ungodly
rebellion shall be put down
and the curses of our land is
trampled under our feet i am
a soldier now and i shall use my
utmost endeavors to strike at
the rebellion and the heart of this
system that so long has kept us in
chains. Write to me just as soon
as you get this letter tell me if you
are still living in the cabin where
you use to live. Tell eliza i send
her my best respects and love
like an auncy likewise i would send
you some money but i now it is
impossible for you to get it
i would like to see little jenkins now
but i no it is impossible at present
so no more but remain your own
affectionate husband until death
Samuel Cabble

Source: Letter from Samuel Cabble to His Wife and Mother, 06/1863; Compiled Military Service Record of Samuel Cabble of the 55th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, ca. 1861–ca. 1865; Carded Records Showing Military Service of Soldiers Who Fought in Volunteer Organizations During the American Civil War, 1890–1912; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1762–1984, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [5757351](#))

Transcript of Samuel Cabble's letter:

[Note: Questions marks represent illegible text.]

Dear mother I now take up my pen to write you a few lines in hopes that they may come safe to hand and find you well I am well at this time and have been ever since I came

here I have wrote you a letter about 3 weeks ago and have been looking for an answer ever since but it has been in rain and I have now taken the opertunity of writing to let you now that the regiment to which I belong is going to leave here shortly for North Carlinia We are going to newbern. i want you if ever you recieve this letter to take or send it to my wife also tell me in your letter if jayn[?] still looks for me tell me all about her write immediately to me yours obediently

Samuel Cabble

Dear Wife i have enlisted in the army i am now in the state of Massachusetts but before this letter reaches you I will be in north Carlinia and though great is the present national difficulties yet I look foward to a brighter day When i shall have the opertunity of seeing you in the full enjoyment of freedom I would like to no if you are still in slavery if you are it will not be long before we shall have crushed the system that now opreses you for in the course of three months you shall have your liberty. great is the outpouring of the colored people that is now rallying with the hearts of lions against that very[?] curse that has separated you an me yet we shall meet again and oh what a happy time that will be when this unGodly rebellion shall be put down and the curses of our land is trampled under our feet i am a soldier now and i shall use my utmost endeavors to strike at the rebellion and the heart of this system that so long has kept us in chains. write to me just as soon as you git this letter tell me if you are still living in the cabin where you use to live. tell eliza I send her my best respects and love [...?] an surely likewise I would send you some money but I now it is impossible for you to git it I would like to see little

Jenkins now but I no it is impossible at present so no more but remain your own affectionate husband until death

Samuel Cabble

[End of transcript.]

Cabble's former owner confiscated the letter before it reached Cabble's wife and used it to apply for compensation, since the Union Government was providing up to \$300 to loyal border state slaveholders for each slave released to the U.S. army. There is no evidence that Robert Cabble ever received compensation, though, probably because he failed to prove his loyalty to the Union and to meet other requirements.

Cabble's regiment was sent to South Carolina, where he suffered a leg injury from a cannon discharge. He remained with the regiment, despite his injury, and served for three years until the 55th was mustered out in August 1865. After being discharged, Cabble at last reunited with Leah. Both free, they could now be legally married. They had a son and headed west to Denver, Colorado.

By the war's end, the U.S. Colored Troops Bureau had recruited hundreds of thousands black soldiers, more than two-thirds formerly enslaved, and tens of thousands as naval personnel. In contrast to the Revolutionary War, black men could now fight for both their

own and others' freedom. The Emancipation Proclamation meant that their military victories resulted in the liberation of others.

A Letter From a Still-Enslaved Wife to Her Husband in the Army

An enslaved woman named Ann from Paris, Missouri, wrote to her "dear husband" through a proxy on January 19, 1864. She told him about her worsening situation and her need for money to feed and clothe herself and their daughter. Even though her husband was in the army and she was enslaved, she expressed hope that she too, would soon be free.

Paris Mo Jan'y 19th
1864

My Dear Husband

I recd your
letter dated Jan'y 9th also
one dated Jan'y 1st but have
got no time till now to write
for one. You do not know
how bad I am treated.
They are treating me worse
and worse every day. Our
child cries for you. Send me
some money as soon as you
can for me and my child
are almost naked. My cloth
is yet in the loom and ~~there~~
there is ^{one} telling when it
will be out. Do not send
any of your letters to
Hogsett especially those hav-
ing money in them as
Hogsett will keep the money.
George Combs went to Hdn
Mital soon after you did

so I did not get that money
from him. Do the best
you can and do not fret
too much for me for it
won't be long before I will
be free and then all we
make will be ours.

Your affectionate wife

Ann

P.S. Send our little girl
a string of beads in your
next letter to remember
you by.

Ann

And if you send me
any more letters for your
wife do not send them in
the care of any one. Just
direct them plainly to
James A. Barnes Paris
Monroe County Mo.
Do not write too often
Once a month will be
plenty and when you write
do not write as though
you had need any letters
for if you do your wife
will not be so apt to get
them. Hoggatt has forbid
her coming to my house so
we cannot read them to her
privately. If you send any
money I will give that
to her myself.
Yrs &c
Jas Barnes

Source: Letter from Ann (a slave) to her soldier husband; E2593, Part 1, P-91, 1864, Box 15; Records of U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Record Group 393; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. ([Available on the Our Archives Wiki](#), the Public Researcher Wiki of the National Archives and Records Administration.)

Transcript of Ann's letter to her husband:

[Note: Question marks represent illegible text.]

Paris MO Jany 19th 1864

My Dear Husband

I r'ced your letter dated Jany 9th also one dated Jany 1st but have got no one till now to write for me. You do not know how bad I am treated. They are treating me worse and worse every day. Our child cries for you. Send me some money as soon as you can for me and my child are almost naked. My cloth is yet in the loom and there is no telling when it will be out. Do not send any of your letters to Hogsett especially those having money in them as Hogsett will keep the money. George Combs went to Hannibal soon after you did so I did not get that money from him. Do the best you can and do not fret too much for me for it wont be long before I will be free and then all we make will be ours.

Your affectionate wife

Ann

P.S. Sind our little girl a string of beads in your next letter to remember you by.

Ann

[Next page of document]

Andy if you send me any more letters for your wife do not send them in the care of any one but direct them plainly to James[?] A Carney Paris Monroe County Mo[?]. Do not write too often Once a month will be plenty and when you write do not write as though you had read any letters for if you do your wife will not be so apt to get them. Hogsett has forbid her coming[?] to my barracks[?] we cannot read them to her privately. If you send any money I will give that to her myself.

[...?]

Jas A Carney

[End of transcript.]

Letter to a Former Owner

Formerly enslaved people drew confidence from the advance of Union troops. This was the case for Spotswood Rice who wrote an angry letter to his former owner who still enslaved his daughter.

Providence, N.H.

I received a letter from Caroline
telling me that you say I tried
to steal to plunder my child away
from you ~~now~~ more I want you to
understand that Mary is my
child and she is a God given rite
of my own and you may hold on
to her as long as you can but
I want to ^{you} remember this one thing
that the longer you keep my
child from me the longer you
will have to burn in hell and
the swifter you'll get there for
we are now ~~making~~ making
up a bout one thousand black
troops to come up through
and won't it come through Ge-
orgia and when we come we
to Copperhead rebels and to the
slave holding rebels for we
don't expect to leave them

in there root near branch but we
think however that we that
have children in the hands
of you devils we will tie
your creature the day that
we enter Glasgow I want
you to understand ~~the~~ that they
diggs that where ever you
and I meet we are enmays to
each other I offered once to
pay you forty dollars for
my own child but I am
glad now that you did not
accept it Just hold on
now as long as you can and the
worse it will be for you
you never in your life before
if I came down here did you give
children any thing not anything
what ever not even a dollar
worth of expenses now you
call my children your property
I want so with me my

Children is my own and
I expect to get them and
when I get ready to come
after many I will have both
the power and authority to
bring her away and to
prevent any dangers on them
that holds my child you
will then know how
to talk to me I will
assume that and you will
know how to talk to
her I want you now to just
hold on to her if you want
to off your conscience tells
that's the road go that road
and what it will bring
you to Pittsburg diggs
I have no fears about get-
ting many out of your hands
as this whole Govern-
ment gives cheer to me and
you cannot help your self

Source: Letter from Spotswood Rice to slave owner Kitty Diggs; A1-1 2593 Colored Troops Division Correspondence, Department of the Missouri, Letters Received, Series 2593, Pt. 1 [C-154], D-296, Enclosure to Diggs to Rosencrans, Sept 10, 1864; Records of U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Record Group 393; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. ([Available on the Our Archives Wiki](#), the Public Researcher Wiki of the National Archives and Records Administration.)

Transcript of selections of Spotswood Rice's letter to his former owner:

"I received a leteter from Cariline telling me that you say I tried to steal to plunder my child away from you now I want you to understand that mary is my Child and she is a God given rite of my own and you may hold ont hear as long as you can but I want you to remember this one thing that is the longor you keep my Child from me the longor you will have to burn in hell and quicer youll get their for we are now making up a bout one throughsand blacke troops to Come up thrarough and wont to me through Glasgo wand when we come wo be to Copperhood rabbles and to the Slaveholding rebbles for we dont expect to leave them there rott neor branch."

[End of transcript.]

The End of War and Slavery

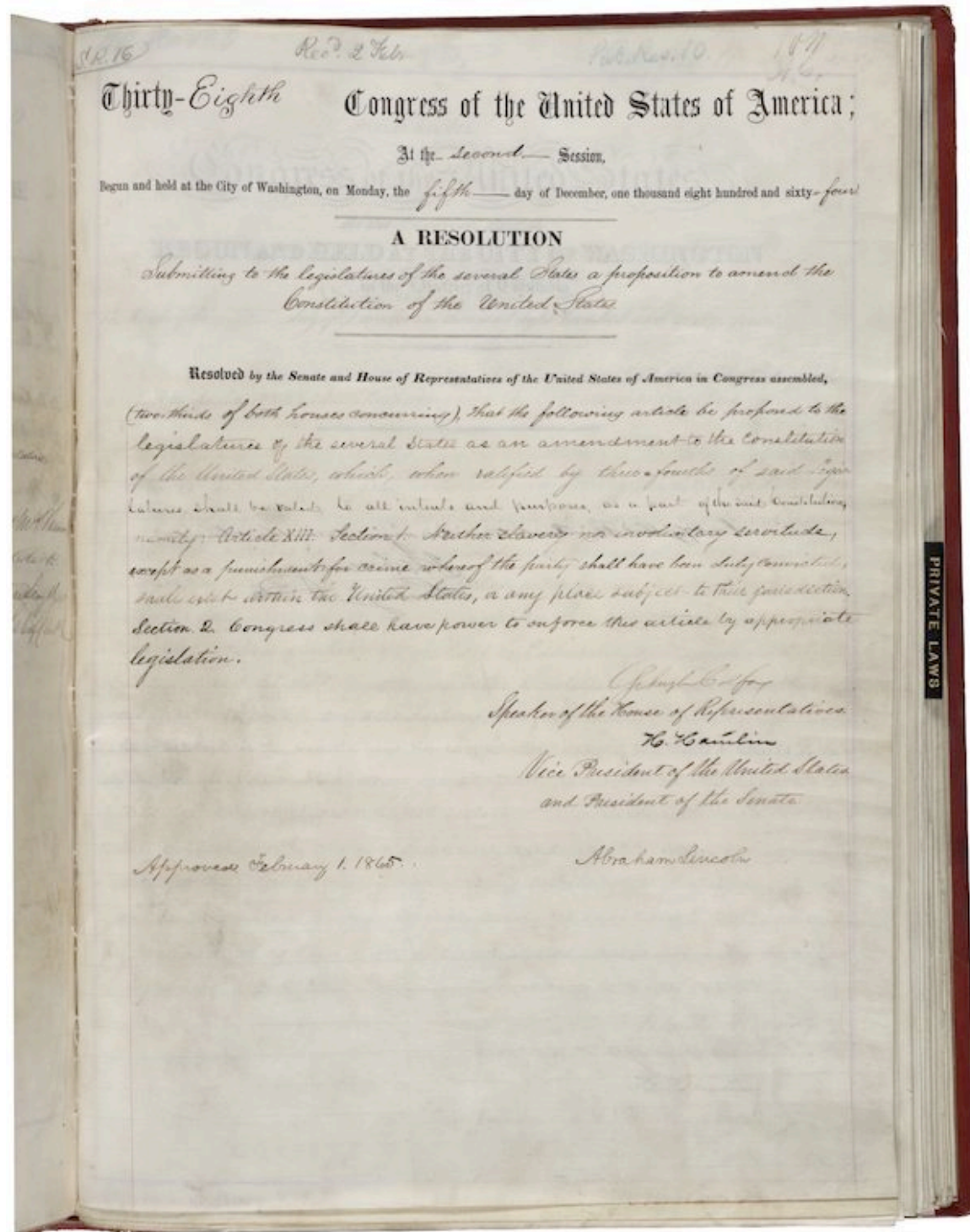
On April 9, 1865, Union General Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee, commanding officer of the Confederate forces, met in the Appomattox Court House in Virginia to discuss the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia under Lee. The terms were generous: The men of Lee's army could return home in safety if they pledged to end the fighting and deliver their arms to the Union Army. Just days before Lincoln's assassination by John Wilkes Booth in Washington, DC, the infantry of Lee's army surrendered their arms, folded their battle flags, and received their parole papers, which guaranteed them safe passage home.

The 13th Amendment

President Lincoln had recognized that the Emancipation Proclamation would have to be followed by a constitutional amendment in order to guarantee the abolishment of slavery. After the Senate passed a bill for an amendment in April 1864, but the House of Representatives did not, Lincoln proposed that it be taken up by the Republican Party in its 1864 platform for the upcoming Presidential elections.

His efforts met with success when the House passed the bill in January 1865. On February 1, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln approved the Joint Resolution of Congress submitting the proposed amendment to the state legislatures. The necessary number of

states ratified it by December 6, 1865. The 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution formally abolished slavery in the United States. It provides that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."



Source: Joint Resolution Proposing the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, 01/31/1865–01/31/1865; Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789–2008; General Records of the United States Government, 1778–2006, Record Group 11; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [1408764](#))

A Letter from the War Department: “You have no right to his services without...pay.”

With the adoption of the 13th amendment, the United States found a final constitutional solution to the issue of slavery. But even after emancipation and a constitutional amendment abolishing slavery, some white southerners could not accept that their former slaves were free. U.S. Army Lieutenant E. G. Manning wrote this letter—entry 165 in a record of letters sent from the War Department—to a woman named Mrs. Adams in response to a complaint made by her former slave, Louis Jones. Lieutenant Manning reminded Mrs. Adams that she had no claim on Jones and no right to withhold wages from him.

one for the Adj. Gen. USA. and one for the office
accountable for the property inspected.

I am Colonel

Very Respectfully

Your Obedient Servant

W. H. McLaughlin

1st A.D.C. & A.A.A. Gen.

164
McCord

Head Quarters Dept of Art Hudson
Fort Hudson La June 22nd 1865.
Major W.B. Combs
50th U.S. G. Inf.

Major

The General Commanding
directs me to call your attention to the fact of the
Company of your Regiment now on Provost Guard at
the Landing. The exigencies of the service requiring
that Lieut Daskow 2nd Lt Battery Light Art. should be
retained. Lieut Rop is left alone to fulfill the duties
of officer of the Guard, which are too arduous for one
man. you will therefore order one more Officer to
join Lieut Rop. and assist him in the performance of
his duties.

I am Major Very Respectfully

Your Obedient Servant

W. H. McLaughlin

1st A.D.C. & A.A.A. Gen.

165

Head Quarters U.S. Force

Fort Hudson La June 23rd 1865.

Mrs. Adams

The General Comd. directs that I call your
attention to the case of colored man Louis Jones formerly your
slave. He reports that you demand half of his wages from
this date as your right and that you have taken all the
money earned by him during the past three years. He also
states that you claim this money on the ground that he is not
free. In order that you may not longer entertain such
erroneous ideas or again attempt to take or claim the wages
of a man over whom you have no control you are hereby informed
(See next page)

that by the Proclamation of the President of the United States the late Henry Lincoln all the slaves men women and children in the port of Louisiana were declared Free from the 1st day of January 1863. This with the advice and consent of the Senate & House of Congress.

By the recent amendment of the Constitution Congress abolished all Slavery and your pretended rights over the said Louisianians ceased on the 1st day of January 1863. In regard to the money you have already taken from him no action will be taken at present. But you will please to understand that you have no right to his services or any other person without you pay them an equivalent for their labor.

I am, Madam

Very Respectfully

Your Obedt Servant

E. G. Manning

1st Lt. A. A. C. & 20000

166 Head Quarters U. S. Forces
Fort Hudson La. June 26-1865.
Officer Comd'g Guard
at Jackson Sally Port

Sir: The Commanding General directs that on and after this 26th day of June 1865, all citizens be allowed to pass in and out of this Port between Louisiana and New York without any pass or permit whatever.

Very respectfully

Your Obedt Servant

Edw. C. Hatchell

Capt. & A. A. C. & 20000

167 Head Quarters 2^d Corps
Fort Hudson La. June 26-1865.
Commanding Officer
92^d U. S. Col. Inf.

Sir: The enlisted men of your Regt. have been accustomed to use the ground in front of your camp for a spring. The Commanding General directs that you

Source: Letter from 1st Lieutenant E. G. Manning to Mrs. Adams, 06/23/1865; Letters Sent, 07/1863-05/1866; Records of U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1817-1947, Record Group 393; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. (National Archives Identifier: [4688410](#))

Transcript of 1st Lt. Manning's letter to Mrs. Adams:

[Note: Question marks represent illegible text.]

Headquarters of the U.S. Forces

Fort Hudson La June 23th 1865

Mrs. Adams

The General Comdy[?] directs that I call your attention to the case of a colored man Louis Jones formerly[?] your slave. He reports that you demand half of his wages from this date as your right and that you have taken all the money earned by him during the past three years. He also states that you claim this money on the ground that he wasn't[?] free. In order that you may not longer entertain such wrong[?] ideas or again attempt to take or claim the wages of a man over[?] whom you have no control you are hereby informed (see next page) that by the Proclamation of the President of the United States the late Abraham Lincoln all the colored men women and children in this part of Louisiana were declared Free from the 1st day of January 1860.[?] This with the advice and consent of the Senate a House of Congress.

By the recent amendment of the Constitution, Congress abolished all slavery and your pretended rights over the said Louis Jones [...?] on the 1st day of January 1863. In regard to the money you have already taken from him no action will be taken at present. But you will please to understand that you have no right to his services or any other person without you pay them an equivalent for their labor[?]

I am Madam

Very Respectfully

Your [...?] servant

E.G. Manning

1st St. A.D.C. & A.A.A.D.

[End of transcript.]

Conclusion

In the Emancipation Proclamation, President Abraham Lincoln declared "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious areas "are, and henceforward shall be free." That freedom, however, depended upon Union military victory. And while it freed enslaved people in states that had seceded from the Union, it left slavery untouched in the loyal border states and expressly exempted parts of the Confederacy that had already come under Northern control.

Although it did not end slavery in the nation, the Emancipation Proclamation captured the hearts and imaginations of millions of Americans and fundamentally transformed the character of the Civil War. From the first days of war, slaves had acted to secure their own liberty. The Emancipation Proclamation confirmed their insistence that the war for the Union must become a war for freedom. It added moral force to the Union cause and strengthened the Union both militarily and politically. After January 1, 1863, every advance of Federal troops expanded the domain of freedom. Moreover, the Proclamation announced the acceptance of black men into the Union Army and Navy, enabling the liberated to become liberators. By the end of the war, almost 200,000 black soldiers and sailors had fought for the Union and freedom.

Along with the 13th Amendment, the two subsequent amendments to the Constitution started newly freed slaves on the path to equal rights. The 14th Amendment, ratified in

1868, extended liberties and rights granted by the Bill of Rights to former slaves. Ratified in 1870, the 15th Amendment granted African American men the right to vote. Struggles for political, social, and economic equality continued, however, through the next century.

The Emancipation Proclamation was a milestone along the road to slavery's final destruction. From documents in the National Archives, we know that the path to emancipation was a gradual and uneven one. It was shaped by military events, by Government policies, and by the actions of enslaved people who pursued and fought for their freedom.

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"Discovering the Civil War," an exhibition by the National Archives Experience exhibition team, <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/civil-war/>. On April 30, 2010, the National Archives peeled back 150 years of accumulated analysis, interpretation and opinion to reveal a Civil War that is little known in an exhibition in the Lawrence F. O'Brien Gallery of the National Archives Building in Washington, DC. The "Discovering the Civil War" exhibition presented the most extensive display ever assembled from the incomparable Civil War holdings of the National Archives, and will take a fresh look at the Civil War through little-known stories, seldom-seen documents, and unusual perspectives. The exhibition will be [displayed at the Tennessee State Museum, Nashville, TN, from February 12 through September 2, 2013.](#)

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Cover image designed by Ellen Burns.

Additional Resources

Celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation

The National Archives will commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation with a special display of the original document at the National Archives Building in Washington, DC, from Sunday, December 30, to Tuesday, January 1. The commemoration will include extended viewing hours, inspirational music, a dramatic reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, and family activities and entertainment for all ages.

<http://www.EP150.com>

"American Originals" Online Exhibit

Original documents are the most precious artifacts of our national and cultural history and they form the record of our nation, written in the hand of the people who shaped it. Some of America's most interesting and famous documents are presented.

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/american_originals/original.html

"Discovering the Civil War" on the Our Archives Wiki

The Public Researcher Wiki of the National Archives and Records Administration features records relating to the Civil War that were included in the "Discovering the Civil War" exhibit at the National Archives Building in Washington, DC.

<http://www.ourarchives.wikispaces.net/Discovering+the+Civil+War>

DocsTeach

Docsteach.org, an online teaching tool from the National Archives, invites educators to explore thousands of documents in a variety of media from the holding of the National Archives. On the site, teachers can use the seven tools available to combine primary source materials in engaging online activities that teach students historical thinking skills.

<http://docsteach.org>

For an online teaching activity related to the Annie Davis letter featured in this book, visit: <http://docsteach.org/activities/7678/detail>

"Documented Rights"

Documents in the National Archives give voice to our national struggle for personal rights and freedoms. From the Emancipation Proclamation to the five cases that comprised *Brown v. Board of Education*, this exhibit features a sampling of documents from all regions of the National Archives.

<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/documented-rights/exhibit/>

Featured Documents

For more information regarding the Emancipation Proclamation and the experiences of former slaves, visit the Featured Documents exhibit.

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/

Prologue Magazine

Prologue brings readers stories based on the rich holdings and programs of the National Archives across the nation. Access our articles online, in print, or download high-quality issues for your e-reader or iPhone on our Scribd and Zinio sites. Many issues of *Prologue* feature articles relating to the Civil War and slavery.

<http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/>

"The Charters of Freedom—A New World is at Hand."

This exhibit features the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, along with other important documents in the founding of our nation. The exhibit features documents relating to the Emancipation Proclamation in "The Civil War—The Union Sealed in Blood" and "The End of Slavery in the United States—The Thirteenth Amendment."

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters_of_freedom_10.html

The Digital Vaults

A portal into the heart of the National Archives, the Digital Vaults uses visual records such as documents, photographs, and popular media, and illustrates how these materials can come together in unexpected ways to tell the story of our country.

<http://www.digitalvaults.org>

Connect with us!

Facebook

You can stay connected to the National Archives through Facebook! Several organizations within the National Archives maintain Facebook accounts to share information with the public about our activities. We encourage your input, but please be aware of our policies concerning comments on Facebook.

<http://www.archives.gov/social-media/facebook.html>

Twitter

You are welcome to "follow" and reply to any National Archives Twitter accounts.

<http://www.archives.gov/social-media/twitter.html>

Follow the Twitter account for the "Discovering the Civil War" exhibition:

<https://twitter.com/discovercivwar>

Follow the Twitter account for DocsTeach: <https://twitter.com/docsteach>

Tumblr

The National Archives maintains tumblelogs, or micro-blogs hosted on Tumblr, in the interest of sharing more information with the public about our activities. We encourage your input, but please be aware of our policies concerning comments on our tumblelogs.

<http://www.archives.gov/social-media/tumblr.html>

Today's Document

The National Archives features a different document each day.

<http://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/todays-doc>

Find the Mobile App for Today's Document, along with links to the Today's Document on Tumblr, Facebook and Twitter at:

<http://www.archives.gov/social-media/todays-doc-app.html>