

AFTERMATH SUPPLEMEN- TARY TO CHRISTIANA RIOT, 1851

Since the publication, under the auspices of this Society, sixty years after the event, of the History of the Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851, the author has obtained considerable detailed information bearing on those famous incidents in our local history. As matters of accurate record, they are fit to be preserved in our annals and to be chronicled with the transactions of the Society. On page 20 of the "History," in describing the Gorsuch homestead and estate, it is stated that certain of the slaves attached thereto were manumitted. Interesting corroboration of this is supplied by the article of manumission of Giles Wallis, of which follows a literal copy. It appears the age of thirty-one was the period of freedom:

To all whom it may concern, Be it known that I, Edward Gorsuch, of Baltimore county, and State of Maryland, for divers good causes and considerations, me thereunto moving, have released from slavery, liberated, manumitted, and set free from and after the twelfth day of February in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty-five my male slave named Giles Wallis, aged four years, or thereabouts, a child of sound constitution; and him the said Giles Wallis I do hereby declare to be free, manumitted and discharged from all manner of servitude to me, my heirs,

executors, administrators or assigns, from and after the said twelfth day of February, eighteen hundred and fifty-five.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal this eighteenth day of March, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-eight.

EDWD. GORSUCH (Seal).

Signed, sealed and delivered in the presence of

L. BALTZELL,

F. BAILEY.

State of Maryland, City of Baltimore, ss.:

Be it remembered that on this eighteenth day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty-eight, personally appeared before me, the subscriber, one of the Justices of the Peace in and for the City aforesaid, Edward Gorsuch, party to the above manumission or instrument of writing and acknowledged the same to be his act and deed for the purpose therein mentioned; and that the male slave Giles Wallis is hereby declared to be manumitted and set free from and after the said twelfth day of February, eighteen hundred and fifty-five.

Acknowledged before

L. BALTZELL.

Again on page twenty-one there is an account of "Abe" Johnson's larceny of wheat from the Gorsuch barn, to which occurrence is ascribed the escape of the four bondsmen whose attempted recapture caused the Christiana tragedy. A letter from the slave owner to Philip Francis Thomas, then Governor of Maryland, confirms this, and the statement that Governor Johnson, of Pennsylvania, had refused to honor the requisition for the fugitive. It also illustrates

the manner of obtaining requisition. The correspondence runs thus:

Baltimore County,
November 29, 1849.

Philip Francis Thomas, Esq.

Dear Sir, I wish you to send me a requisition, directed to the Governor of Pennsylvania, for the apprehension of Abraham Jonson, a free colored man, who recently left Baltimore county, Md., upon the charge of having received stolen goods, the facts in the case are as follows, viz.: Said Jonson took some wheat to one of my neighbor's mill, the miller suspecting something wrong, asked him where he got the wheat from. Johnson told him that he had received it from Gorsuch's boys, that the person who had been in the habit of receiving from them had closed up, and that they brought it to him. The miller, who is a Quaker, hence the confidence of Jonson in him, told him that he could not grind it for him till he saw more about it. He immediately called to see me, and gave me the above information. I went with him to see the wheat, and believed it to be mine, it perfectly corresponding with some that I had just before had out, and of which I had missed a quantity. I said nothing to my colored boys about it, but had a State warrant issued for said Abraham Jonson. Jonson secreted himself for a few days, till my boys found out what was going on, and he and four of my colored boys put out to Pennsylvania. I wish the requisition only for said Jonson. Not knowing what may be the cost of procuring the requisition I have not enclosed it. You will be so good as to inform me of the amount of its cost; when you send it to me, and I will immediately remit to you by mail.

The annexed affidavit will give you to understand that I have every

reason to believe that the stolen wheat was mine. Please attend to this as soon as practicable.

Yours most respectfully,

P. S.—Please direct to Hereford, Postoffice, Baltimore county, Md. State of Maryland, Baltimore County, ss.

On this thirtieth day of November, 1849, before me, the subscriber, a Justice of the Peace in and for the said county, personally appeared Edward Gorsuch and made oath on the Holy Evangely of Almighty God, that he has every reason to believe that the wheat mentioned in the foregoing letter was stolen from his granary by his servant boys and carried to the said Abraham Johnson (colored) and received by him. He knowing that the said wheat was feloniously stolen from his granary, and that the other circumstances narrated in said letter are true to the best of his knowledge and belief,

Sworn before

E. A. R. SPARKS.

State of Maryland, Baltimore county. On this twenty-fifth day of December, in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-nine, personally appeared before the subscriber, a Justice of the Peace, of the State of Maryland, in and for Baltimore county, Elias Matthews and solemnly, seriously, and truly declared and affirmed, that on the 2d day of November last, a certain colored man named Abram Johnston, brought to his grist mill, in Baltimore county, a lot of wheat (five bushels), which wheat Abram stated he got from the Gorsuch boys, Matthews observed to Abram that he thought the boys had not come by the wheat honestly,, Abram stated that the boys had taken the wheat to an-

other place and that they were shut up. Matthews called on Gorsuch the same day and informed him that a lot of wheat had been brought to him by Abram, who stated he had secured it from Gorsuch boys. Ed. Gorsuch came to the mill and examined the wheat and said it corresponded with his wheat, and that he had lost wheat from two parcels.

JOSHUA F. COCKEY.

Then followd the requisition:

State of Maryland—To wit:

Philip Francis Thomas, Governor of the State of Maryland, to his Excellency, the Governor of Pennsylvania.

It appears by the annexed papers, duly authenticated according to the laws of this State, that a certain Abraham Johnson (colored), stands charged with the crime of receiving stolen goods, committed in the County of Baltimore, in said State of Maryland, and it has been represented to me he has fled from the justice of this State, and has taken refuge within the State of Pennsylvania.

Now, Therefore, Pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution and Laws of the United States in such case made and provided, I do hereby request that the said Abraham Johnson (colored) be apprehended and delivered to Dickinson Gorsuch, who is hereby authorized to receive and convey him to the State of Maryland, there to be dealt with according to law.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto affixed my name and the Great Seal of the State, this thirty-first day of December, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-nine.

PHILIP F. THOMAS.

By the Governor:

JOHN NICK WALKINS,
Secretary of State.

Some months later Mr. Gorsuch renews his complaint, and shows his persistence in the recapture of the runaways:

Baltimore Co., Md., Jan. 11, 1850.

Hon. Philip F. Thomas:

Sir, I must again ask of you an official favor. I wish a requisition from you to the Governor of Pennsylvania for those four negro men, who sold the stolen wheat to Johnson, for whom I received a requisition a short time since. These men are my slaves, and have been in Pennsylvania since November. Their names are George Hammonds, Nelson Ford, Noah Buley and Joshua Hammonds. I have good reason to believe they are in Chester or Berks county. I shall be obliged if you will send me this requisition as soon as possible. Address me at, therefore, Baltimore Co., Md.

I wish you to appoint Dickinson Gorsuch to go for them.

Most respectfully yours,
EDWARD GORSUCH.

Hon. P. F. Thomas,
Governor of Maryland.

On page twenty-nine of the History doubt is expressed as to whether a certain Abraham Johnson, who figured in the Riot and was for a time a guest of William Parker, was the same "Abe" Johnson, who was charged with stealing the Gorsuch wheat. This doubt has been removed by a timely vindication of the Johnson at Christiana, which comes to me from Mrs. Sarah Moore M'Fadden, of Kennett Square. She was a Moore, and lived near Christiana in 1851, her father's house being an underground railway station. She writes me:

"I do not know whether this will be too late, or of any account, to thee,

but just feel like telling thee, that the Abraham Johnson who made his home for a short time with Wm. Parker, and in his house at the time of the Riot, is not the Abraham Johnson who fled from Gorsuch's warrant in 1849. The man Abraham who was in the house at Wm. Parker's was a runaway slave who came to my father's (Jeremiah Moore's) with his mother, sister and sister's child, when he was but eighteen years of age, and lived with us continuously for six years. He told us the name of his master, who died a short time before he ran away, and Abraham was to be sold. We found him a very nice, good, faithful young man, very particular and conscientious in every respect. Judge for thyself, when I tell thee, toward the last of his living with us, my parents went to Bucks county on a visit of several weeks; the kidnappers came to our place to take him, but failed in their attempt; we were afraid they would come again when we were alone, and tried to persuade Abram to go away to some of the neighbors. He said: 'No, I promised Jerry I would take care of the stock and things until he came home,' and he would and did run the risk. Few white men would have done it under similar circumstances. Father at last thought best for him to go somewhere else; for we had neighbors who were continually watching to get him and did come several times; but he was protected by my parents. He at last went to the neighborhood of Parker's, and, therefore was in the house at the time of the Riot. He went with Parker to Canada. We lived within a mile of Christiana; knew all the white people and most of the colored ones imprisoned, and I recall many incidents connected with the riot. We were in-

timately acquainted with Pownalls. Twenty-two 'kidnappers,' or Southern sympathizers, came to father's to take a colored man working for him, who had not been near the Riot. He heard of their coming and was hidden under a pile of straw. They searched the premises over, and threatened to shoot father because he didn't tell where the man was. He put down his hands, straightened himself up, and told them to shoot. They didn't dare to do it, for they hadn't even a warrant for searching. With pitchforks they at last found the man and dragged him off.

"After Abram Johnson got to Canada he wrote to father; he had a little property and some stock. The Abraham we knew would not be guilty of stealing, and I thought it but justice to clear his name of the crime. My father's house was a station on the Underground Railroad; and many of the colored people were there given assumed names."

Slave-catching in those old days, however legal it may have been, technically, was evidently no more pleasant than it was profitable and popular. It seems that the party who accompanied Edward Gorsuch to Christiana—some of whom retreated rather ingloriously—were not animated wholly by a spirit of philanthropy and patriotism. Thrift was their portion; and even long after his death and burial and the event of the treason trials, they rendered bills of expenses to his estate that are not without interest—especially the charge of Joshua Gorsuch for his lost pistol and hat. Evidently he did not come into the realm of anti-slavery inspired by the Spartan commission to return "with his shield or on it." At best he does not cut any very

heroic figure, and in the accounts rendered to the Gorsuch estate his details are, to say the least, most practical and unsentimental.

Baltimore Co., January 1st, 1852.
Estate of Edward Gorsuch.

To NICHOLAS HUTCHINS, Dr.
1851.

Sept. 7.	To expenses incurred in accompanying the late Edward Gorsuch to Pennsylvania and back—	
	To supper at York...	\$.37½
	To fare for 5 fm. York to Wrightsville	2.50
	To fare 1 from Wrightsville to Lancaster50
	To breakfast at Galaghersville25
	To fare from Pennytonville to Phila. ..	.75
	Expenses in Phila. ..	.50
	To fare from Phila. to Baltimore	3.00
	Expenses in Baltimore	.37½
	To fare from Baltimore to Monkton ..	.60
		<hr/>
		\$8.84

Received the above in full,
NICHOLAS T. HUTCHINS.

Estate of Edward Gorsuch, Dr.
To GEORGE GORSUCH.

1851.

Sept. 13.	To passage from Columbia to York ...	\$.50
" "	To passage for 4 from York to Midcalfe's ...	3.80
" "	Refreshments25
		<hr/>
		\$4.55

Received payment,
GEORGE F. GORSUCH.

Estate of Edward Gorsuch.
To JOSHUA GORSUCH, Dr.

1851.

Sept. 10, 11 & 12th.	To expenses incurred in accompanying him to Pennsylvania and returning.	
	To fare from Columbia to Pennytonville	\$1.02½
	To fare from Galaghersville to Gap37½
	To fare from Pennytonville to York ...	1.83¾
	To pistol, and hat lost	12.00
	To medical attendance	5.50
		<hr/>
		\$20.73¾

February 21st, 1852, received payment.

JOSHUA M. GERSUCH

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