

## **Christiana Resistance Collection, 1803-1971**

1 box    37 folders, 54 items, 263 scans    .5 cubic feet

Repository: Moores Memorial Library  
9 West Slokom Avenue  
Christiana, PA 17509  
[chrlib@christianalibrary.org](mailto:chrlib@christianalibrary.org)  
[www.christianalibrary.org](http://www.christianalibrary.org)

Scope and Content Note: The Christiana Resistance, commonly referred to as the “Christiana Riot” occurred in September of 1851 in Christiana, Pennsylvania, a borough in Lancaster County. The events known as the Christiana Resistance include an attack from slaveholders in Maryland on the inhabitants and home of William Parker (1822), a free black living in Christiana, Pennsylvania. The slaveholders crossed the state border, and attempted to claim and return the slave fugitives as their property, under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.

The violent confrontation resulted in the death of Edward Gorsuch, a slaveholder, and the escape of William Parker to freedom in Canada. Edward’s son, Dickinson Gorsuch, was wounded and taken to the farm of Levi Pownall, where the Pownall family nursed him back to health. Historically, this event challenged the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and is considered a precursor to the Civil War.

The collection contains 2 distinct series: documents and photographs, from 1803-1971. Documents include: land drafts and deeds, correspondence to and from the Pownall family regarding the incident, notes regarding kidnappings in the area from 1850-1851, photocopied pages of Dickinson Gorsuch’s diary, and published accounts of the event, memorializations, announcements and a radio drama related to or inspired by the Christiana Resistance event of 1851.

Contained in the photograph series are photographs of: the event place and places related to the Christiana Resistance, the Pownall farm, event monuments, daguerreotypes of key figures and survivors of the resistance.

Moores Memorial Library (Christiana, Pa.) owns some of the most significant manuscript material relating to the Christiana Resistance. The staff of Moores Memorial Library, part of the Library System of Lancaster County, and the Lancaster County Historical Society worked together to arrange and preserve the collection and create a finding aid to make the materials accessible to the public.

Creator: Moores Memorial Library

System of Arrangement:



LancasterHistory

Series 1 Manuscript and Printed Material, 1803-1955

Series 2 Photographs, 1895-1971 and No date

Conditions for Access: The digital images in the database have been provided for research. The original items are restricted for preservation purposes.

Conditions Governing Reproductions:

The digital images may be used for research purposes only.

Please contact Moores Memorial Library for permission to publish.

The digital image files stored at LancasterHistory.org are JPGs: manuscript and printed material are 300 dpi JPGs; the photographs are 600 dpi JPGs.

Language: English

Biographical and Historical Note: The Christiana Resistance, commonly referred to as the “Christiana Riot” occurred in September of 1851 in Christiana, Pennsylvania, a borough in Lancaster County. The events known as the Christiana Resistance include an attack from slaveholders in Maryland on the inhabitants and home of William Parker (1821-1891), a free black living in Christiana, Pennsylvania. The slaveholders crossed the state border, and attempted claim and return the slave fugitives as their property, under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.

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Source of Acquisition: Unknown.

Preferred Citation: Christiana Resistance Collection, Series #, Folder #, Moores Memorial Library

Subject Headings:

Anniversaries (LHo-LOC sh 85005357)

Books (LHo-LOC sh 85015738)

Christiana (Pa.) (LHo-LOC n 81013087)

Church buildings (LHo-LOC sh 85025854)

Correspondence (LHo-LOC sh 85033035)

Diaries (LHo-LOC sh 85037601)

Drama (LHo-LOC sh 85039316)

Historical markers (LHo-LOC sh 85061194)

Kidnapping (LHo-LOC sh 85072244)

Lancaster (Pa.) (LHo-LOC n 79106203)

Lancaster County Historical Society (Pa.) (LHo-LOC n 50077904)



Letters (LHo-LOC sh 85076240)  
Monuments (LHo-LOC sh 85087089)  
Pamphlets (LHo-LOC sh2008004230)  
Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society (LHo-LOC n 85323098)  
Programs (LHo-LOC sh 93005169)  
Radio plays (LHo-LOC sh 85110529)  
Riots -- Pennsylvania -- Christiana (LHo-LOC sh 85025217)  
Riots--Pennsylvania—Christiana (LHo-LOC sh 85025217)  
Treason (LHo-LOC sh 85137197)  
Trials (LHo-LOC sh 85137328)  
Trials (Treason) (LHo-LOC sh 85137400)  
Underground railroad (LHo-LOC n 94042719)

Name Headings:

Pownall, Levi (LHo-LOC n 2001081667)  
Parker, William, 1822?- (LHo-LOC no 99031184)  
Jackson, W. Arthur, 1827 or 1828-1857 (LHo-LOC no2004078467)  
Hanway, Castner, 1821-1893 (LHo-LOC nr 93039311)  
Hensel, W. U. (William Uhler), 1851-1915 (LHo-LOC n 50068731)  
Lancaster County Historical Society (Pa.) (LHo-LOC n 50077904)  
Lancaster (Pa.) (LHo-LOC n 79106203)  
Kingston, Joseph T. (LHo-LOC no2005040351)  
Gorsuch, Edward, 1795-1851 (LHo-LOC n 2003031811)  
Stevens, Thaddeus, 1792-1868 (LHo-LOC n 50023914)  
Hanway, Castner, 1821-1893 (LHo-LOC nr 93039311)  
Kane, John K. (John Kintzing), 1795-1858 (LHo-LOC no 92002291)

Processing History: Finding aid prepared March 2001, updated June 2001.  
Address updated 2013. HST

Note: Funds for this project were provided by the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) in 2001.



## **Series 1      Manuscript and Printed Material**

### **Folder 1** Land Draft and Deed

**Insert 1** Land draft, for land sold by Jacob Eshleman to Levi Pownall. [Should include site of William Parker's house.] 23 March 1803.

**Insert 2** Deed. Jacob Eshleman of Strasburg Township to Levi Pownall of Sadsbury Township. 204 acres and the allowance for roads. 2 April 1803.  
(*Original housed in oversized box.*)

**Folder 2** Letter. To "Dear Sir" from W. Arthur Jackson in Philadelphia, regarding whereabouts of Nelson Ford, Joshua Hammond, and others; who occupied Parker's house; who was in Parker's house that night; and how long Parker, Pinkney, and Johnson had lived in Pennsylvania. [Possibly written to the Pownall family.] 10 November 1851.

**Folder 3** Notes on "kidnappings" in the area, 1850-1851. Also unfinished notes regarding the Christiana Riot. 11 September 1851.  
Unsigned. No date. [Referenced as "Pownall Journal" in Ella Forbes' *But We Have No Country*.]

**Folder 4** Letter, from Elizabeth Pownall to her aunt. Describes the Pownall family's experience of the Resistance and also the scene in Christiana. Written shortly after the incident. [1851].

**Folder 5** Photocopied pages from Dickinson Gorsuch's diary. 6 September to 21 September 1851.

**Folder 6** Letter, to Levi Pownall and family from [Isaac] Parrish, Philadelphia, regarding the Resistance. 15 September 1851.

**Folder 7** Book. *History of the Trial of Castner Hanway and Others for Treason at Philadelphia in November, 1851*, by W. Arthur Jackson.  
Philadelphia, 1852.

**Folder 8** Letter, from Dickinson Gorsuch, Baltimore, to Levi Pownall regarding the Pownall family nursing him back to health and asking them to visit. 18 October 1852.

**Folder 9** Printed account, "Christiana Riot." Compliments of E. P. Zane, Jeweler, Christiana, Penna. No date.

**Folder 10** Letter, to Dr. L. W. Pownall, Christiana, from W. U. Hensel, Lancaster, regarding a 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Christiana Riot. 30 January 1911.



**Folder 11** Record of financial contributions for local expenses for the 1911 "Commemoration of the Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851."

**Folder 12** Special announcement from the *Papers of the Lancaster County Historical Society* for the "Commemoration of the 'Christiana Riot' and the 'Treason Trials' of 1851." 4 August 1911.

**Folder 13** Souvenir program, "Commemoration of the Christiana Riot and Treason Trials of 1851," Lancaster County Historical Society. 1911.

**Folder 14** Newspaper article, "'Christiana Riot,' 100 Years Ago, Forerunner of Bloody Civil War," by Joseph T. Kingston. Incomplete. [1951].

**Folder 15** Program, "Commemorative Exercises of the Lancaster County Historical Society on the Centennial of the Christiana Riot." 9 September 1951.

**Folder 16** Newspaper article, "'He Died for Law' in Christiana Riot," by Benjamin Herman. *The Sun*, Baltimore. 11 September 1955.

**Folder 17** Photocopy and transcription of letter from William H. Seward, Washington, to John W. Ashmead, District Attorney of the United States, Philadelphia. 25 December 1951.

**Folder 18** Memoir, "Some Recollections of a Long and Unsuccessful Life," by George Steele. 1918.

**Folder 19** Press release and script for a documentary drama for radio, "Inquest at Christiana," by Jonathan Katz. 1967.

**Folder 20** Newspaper article, "Anniversary of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society." *The New York Herald*. Whole no. 6926. 12 October 1851. (*Original housed in oversized box.*)

**Folder 21** Newspaper article, "The Christiana Rioters," *Portland Daily Advertiser*. Portland, Maine. Vol. 22, no. 5. 6 January 1852. (*Original housed in oversized box.*)

**Folder 22** Newspaper article, "The Christiana Treason Trials," *New York Daily Times*. Vol. 1, no. 65. 2 December 1851. (*Original housed in oversized box.*)



## **Series 2      Photographs**

**Folder 1** Historical marker, "Site of Christiana Riot 700 Yards South." No date.

**Folder 2** Christiana Riot Monument

**Insert 1**

1. Christiana Riot Monument.
2. Christiana Riot Monument, "Wm. L. Jackson with some boys who were playing nearby." (William L. Jackson is the grandfather of G. Walter Jackson and sister of Mary Louise J. Maule.) *(These two photographs were donated by Mary Louise J. Maule)*

**Insert 2** Postcard. "New Subway and Riot Monument." Printed by Andrews, Christiana, Pa. *(Donated by Mrs. Barnard (Jean) Pownall)*

**Folder 3** "Christiana Riot House." 2 originals printed by Harry's Studio, No. 210 Locust Street, Columbia, Pa. Also 3 copies. *(Donated by Mrs. Barnard (Jean) Pownall)*

**Folder 4** "Christiana Riot House"

**Insert 1** "Christiana Riot House." No date.

**Insert 2** "Christiana Riot House." [1895]. Original printed by Howard C. Moore, Christiana, Pa. Also 1 copy. *(Original donated by Mrs. Barnard (Jean) Pownall)*

**Insert 3** "Christiana Riot House." No date. Also 2 copies. *(Original donated by Mrs. Barnard (Jean) Pownall)*

**Insert 4** "Christiana Riot House (South View)." No date. Also 1 copy.

**Insert 5** "Christiana Riot House" with unidentified woman standing by tree. No date.

**Folder 5** Ruins of the "Christiana Riot House"

**Insert 1** Ruins of the "Christiana Riot House." [1896, 1898].

**Insert 2** Ruins of the "Christiana Riot House" with the Pownall farm in the background. [1896, 1898].

**Insert 3** The Pownall farm. 1971. *(Photograph owned in 1990 by Ms. C. Ammon of Christiana)*

**Folder 6** Home of Levi Pownall

**Insert 1** "Home of Levi Pownall 2 miles SW of Christiana, It was to this house that Dickinson Gorsuch was brought to recuperate after the Christiana Riot, South View. W.R.M. 8/10/69"

**Insert 2** Home of Levi Pownall, East View, "W.R.M. 8/10/69"

**Folder 7** Dickinson Gorsuch. No date.

2 photographic copies of daguerreotype. 1 photograph of Dickinson with a dog.

**Folder 8** Zercher's Hotel, where the body of slave owner Edward Gorsuch was taken for viewing and inquest before it was returned to his



home in Maryland. Harrar's Store in 1895. Later, Christiana Machine Company offices. Photograph [1895].

#### **Folder 9**

**Insert 1** Castner Hanway, in his later years. No date.

**Insert 2** Castner Hanway, Elijah Lewis, Joseph P. Scarlet. "Taken soon after the Treason Trials." No date.

#### **Folder 10**

**Insert 1** John W. Ashmead, "U.S. Attorney who conducted the prosecution." No date.

**Insert 2** Thaddeus Stevens, "In the days of his Congressional Leadership." No date.

**Insert 3** Hon. John K. Kane, "United States District Judge at the time of the Treason Trials." No date.

**Folder 11** Samuel Hopkins and Peter Woods. "Survivors of the Christiana Riot taken at the scene—1896."

#### **Folder 12**

**Insert 1** Peter Woods and family, survivor of the Christiana Riot and Treason Trial defendant. 9 September 1911.

Front Row, left to right: Mrs. Peter Woods, Peter Woods, Aunt Mary

Back Row, left to right: Howard Woods, Susan Woods, James Woods, Annie Woods, Percy Woods, Harry Woods, Leora Woods, Eugene Woods.

Note: Other children of Peter Woods not shown are: Jacob, Sumner, Ida, Tillie and Peter Woods Jr. (*Information by Mrs. Lillian Speed of Parkesburg, Pa.*)

**Insert 2** Centennial Commemoration Ceremony, 9 September 1951.

**Folder 13** Mount Zion AME Church, "Located between Atglen and Christiana. The congregation of the church was organized in 1817.

Church was built in 1820. It was a station on the 'Underground Railroad.' It observed its 116<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1936. Destroyed by fire in 1937 and was immediately rebuilt with various changes in construction."

**Folder 14** Gorsuch Tavern, Hereford, Maryland. [1971].

"At '19 Mile Stone' on York Road built in 1810 by Capt. Joshua Gorsuch, a shipbuilder. The tavern was the meeting place of the Baltimore Countians who went to Pennsylvania to reclaim their slaves. Thus bringing on the Christiana Riot of 1851."

**Folder 15** Daguerreotype of Dickinson Gorsuch. No date. Corresponds with Series 2, Folder 7.

