

The Christiana Riot of 1851: A Reappraisal

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THE MASON-DIXON LINE BECOMES PRONOUNCED

The Christiana Riot of September, 1851 epitomized the conflicting institutions which were already threatening the unity of the nation. The tragedy in Christiana, Pennsylvania was an outgrowth of the American Society which gradually became strained because of the conflicting institutions. These conflicting institutions of freedom and slavery caused the "Great" conflict in the American society. While freedom was synonymous with American Democracy, slavery became the "peculiar institution" in no way related to American Democracy. The conflict between freedom and slavery eventually caused the Mason-Dixon line to become as pronounced as the Berlin Wall of today. The gradual separation between the northern and southern societies was the result of the awakening to the desire to be free from bondage. The Christiana Riot was the culminating event which established the fact that the conflicting societies could not live side by side without bloodshed. The Lancaster **Saturday Express** stated it best, ". . . but we have an ominous premonition that this [Christiana Riot] is not the end, but only the beginning. . ."¹

The separation between the two societies was gradual. The corner stone of the Christiana Riot was laid in Pennsylvania in 1780. During March of that year the Pennsylvania legislature passed a law for the gradual emancipation of slaves.² With Massachusetts (1783), New York (1799), New Jersey (1804) and the remaining Northern states following suit, slavery had been abolished by the Northern states by 1820. The border between the "free" and slave states was established as the Mason-Dixon line. The abolition of slavery in the North laid the foundation for the Abolitionist attack on the "peculiar institution" of the south.

Although slavery had been abolished in the Northern states, the Fugitive Slave Bill of 1793 forced the "peculiar institution" on all the people of the north. But until the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, the north was free to make a choice as to whether or not they would aid in returning the Negro fugitives because of the lack of enforcement of the law of 1793. In defiance of the Abolitionists' attack on slave-catchers, many men advertised their ability in southern newspapers for recapturing of runaway slaves. F.

H. Pettis, a lawyer in New York City, charged a fee of \$120 for the securing of runaway chattels in the New York area.³ The Fugitive Slave Bill of 1793 gave the slave owner of one state the right to ask another state for assistance in the capture of fugitives from labor, if proof of ownership could be established. The transactions of returning the fugitives were carried on completely among states without the Federal Government becoming involved. Also the law imposed fines for violations of the bill not exceeding \$500 or one year in prison. However, agitation of the Abolitionists, discontentment in the north over the forcible returning of runaway chattels, the ineffective enforcement of the returning of runaway slaves by the state and Federal governments, virtually nullified the Federal law.⁴

The foundation of the Christiana Riot rested on the Abolitionists' agitation. Abolitionism began to grow in the Eighteenth Century out of the Christian doctrine of the "Brotherhood of Man" and the rationalists' theory of natural rights. Many of the early leaders of the movement were Quakers, of whom John Woolman and Anthony Benezet were the most distinguished. The first organized activity against slavery was initiated by the Quakers in 1775 with the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and the Relief of Free Negroes Held in Bondage. The society was inactive during the Revolution but was revived in 1787 and elected Benjamin Franklin as president.

After the Revolution, antislavery organizations became abundant. By early 1790 there were antislavery societies in all states from Massachusetts to Virginia. In 1784 a confederation was organized of the local societies at the Annual Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and Improving the Condition of the African Race. The early antislavery societies caused slavery to be debated on the national level and led to the prohibition of slavery in the Ohio Territory by the Northwest Ordinance of July, 1787. However, the greatest achievement of the early antislavery movement was the act of Congress which forbade the importation of slaves after January 1, 1808.⁵ After 1808 the activities of the antislavery societies slackened. Yet by the early 1800s the resistance to slavery in the Christiana Area had been started, which would be strengthened by the abolitionists' movements during the next forty years.

From the early antislavery movements evolved the American Colonization Society and the Underground Railroad. Both organizations developed in the first twenty years of the Nineteenth century and helped strengthen the antislavery sentiment in the north. The American Colonization Society was founded in 1817. Its purpose was to export the free Negroes back to Nigeria. It was the moderate Abolitionists' answer to the slavery problem and was a program designed by men who recognized the need for gradual emancipation. The Society was created by men who disapproved of slavery but did not want to lead a drastic attack on the institution. During the twenties the organization had the support both of Southern slave owners like John Randolph of Roanoke and of future Abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison, Arthur and Lewis Tappan, and Gerrit Smith.⁶ But the practicality of the program was doubtful due to the cost of exporting the freedmen. With the antislavery sentiment mounting in the North, the radical Abolitionists began to demand more drastic action. Thus, the

Society lost support in the thirties when it was unable to protect itself against the moral pressures of the radical Abolitionists.

For years before the Nineteenth century, fugitive slaves were guided to Canada by the Quakers. In 1804 the system for directing slaves to freedom was organized with the establishment of the first underground railroad station at Columbia, Pennsylvania, in Lancaster County, on the Susquehanna River, by Samuel Wright.⁷ Wright's idea spread quickly and numerous stations were established in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.⁸ Oswego and Rochester (New York), Cleveland (Ohio), Detroit and Chicago became focusing points for the last lap of the fugitive slave to freedom in Canada. The Underground Railroad allowed the moderates of the north an outlet for assisting the runaways in their escape from bondage. As the radicals took over the Abolitionists' movement, and Northern sentiment became more antislavery, the operations of the Underground Railroad became more open. As a result, the South desired more stringent control for the recapture of runaway slaves. Their demands were answered with the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. However, the law forced the north to make the decision as to whether or not they would obey the law and allow slavery to become part of a free society. In Christiana, Pennsylvania, the people of the north made that choice, a decision which would contribute to the "Great" conflict of the American society, the Civil War.

The radical Abolitionists began demanding more legislative action against the South in the early thirties. The leader of the radical movement was William Lloyd Garrison. During the late twenties his talents had been enlisted by Benjamin Lundy, a New Jersey Quaker; but since Lundy strove for gradual emancipation and Garrison believed immediate emancipation was the only answer, Garrison went his own way. On January 1, 1831 Garrison published the first edition of **The Liberator** in a small Boston print shop. He condemned gradual abolitionism as a sentiment of "timidity, injustice, and absurdity," and called for "the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population."⁹ With uncompromising words he set the tone for the new Abolitionists movement:

I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population On this subject I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. . . . I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD.¹⁰

With Garrison as their leader, the radical Abolitionists established the New England Antislavery Society in 1832. But the greatest accomplishment of the radical Abolitionists was the organization of the American Antislavery Society in 1833 at Philadelphia. The Society proclaimed that their aim was to convince all citizens that:

Slaveholding is a heinous crime in the sight of God, and that the duty, safety, and best interests of all concerned, require its 'immediate abandonment' without expatriation.¹¹

The radical Abolitionists had gained firm control of the anti-movement through the adoption of Garrison's theme. Another impetus to the radicals achieving control of the national movement was the death of Elijah P. Lovejoy, a Presbyterian preacher and editor of the **Alton Observer**. On November 7, 1837, after his press had been destroyed four times, he was killed while fighting off a mob determined to silence it forever. Thus, Lovejoy became the first martyr to the Abolitionist movement, and his example was to inspire a more determined resistance to slave-catchers and a more forward attack on the "peculiar institution".

The radical Abolitionists had given the antislavery movement the furthest push. However, during the forties the movement was taken over by such men as James Birney and Theodore Weld. James Birney was an Alabama Slave-holder, who was converted to the Abolitionist movement. In 1839 he manumitted the slaves left him at his father's death.¹² "This act, added to all else that he had done and said in the cause of liberty, and the invaluable contribution from his pen, and the noble traits of character that were ever manifested in all his deeds and words, raised Mr. Birney to the highest point in the estimation of all Abolitionists."¹³ His greatest contribution to the Abolitionist movement was serving as presidential candidate of the Liberal Party in 1840 and 1844. In 1844 he polled sixty-two thousand and three hundred votes. The votes that he received caused the defeat of Clay which in turn awakened the nation to the fact that the Abolitionists held the balance of power between the Whigs and Democrats. Thenceforth the wishes and opinions of the Abolitionists were more respected by politicians and their partisans.¹⁴

Theodore Weld became the evangelist of the movement. After leaving Lane Theological Seminary of Cincinnati, Weld and his followers began educating the nation about the harm of slavery to humanity and the American society. The deeds of Birney and Weld strengthen the work of the Abolitionists in Lancaster County. Finally the citizens of Lancaster County were seeing that their work had gained national prominence, after so long laboring for the abolition of slavery. When the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was passed, it served as the last stage in the development of the Christiana Tragedy. By September of 1851 the Mason-Dixon line had become the border between the two conflicting institutions whose unity had been severed by extremist attitudes of the North and South over the slavery question. In a field two miles from Christiana, Pennsylvania, a tragedy would occur which would cause the rest of the nation to choose whether or not slavery and freedom could continue to exist side-by-side. To many Americans, the Christiana Riot tested the most basic problems of slavery in the American society; the sanctity of law, the existence of peace and order, the ethical course of the country, and most important, the very existence of the Union.¹⁵

CHRISTIANA TRAGEDY

William Parker and Edward Gorsuch were the opposing leaders who met on the battlefield at Christiana. William Parker, a Negro, was the man who provided the vital leadership for the Negro resistance to slave catchers in his community.¹ Edward Gorsuch was a highly respected citizen and slave owner from Baltimore County, Maryland. These two men symbolize the conflict between slavery and freedom. Gorsuch in pursuit of his slaves had the law on his side while Parker in protecting the runaway slaves was defending the Negroes' desire for freedom. Both men stood valiantly at Christiana for the principles they believed in.

In early November of 1849, a free Negro, Abraham Johnson, went to Elias Matthews' mill to sell him some grain. Elias Matthews, a Quaker, suspected that Abe Johnson had stolen the grain since he had no farm and no means to have obtained the grain.² After an investigation, it was proven that the grain had been taken from the Gorsuch farm, which was located near Monkton in Baltimore County on the York Road. A warrant was issued for the arrest of Abe Johnson. Bill Foster, the local sheriff, pursued Johnson as far as the Pennsylvania border.³ Governor Philip Thomas of Maryland requested extradition papers for the capture of Abe Johnson; but when Dickenson Gorsuch, Edward Gorsuch's son, went to Pennsylvania to bring back Abe Johnson, Governor Johnson of Pennsylvania refused to grant him the extradition papers.⁴

The amount of grain stolen was small,⁵ but four of Edward Gorsuch's slaves had assisted Abe Johnson in procuring the grain. These men, Noah Buley, Joshua Hammond, Nelson Ford and George Hammond, fled the Gorsuch farm fearing that Edward Gorsuch would discover that they assisted Abe Johnson.⁶ They went into Pennsylvania and settled in Lancaster County near Christiana. According to Pete Woods, a Negro leader in the Christiana area, the fugitive slaves arrived in the area in late December, 1849. When the four Negroes reached the area, they were known to be escaped slaves and a Negro organization for the protection of fugitive slaves in the neighborhood promised to hide them from recapture. Pete Woods went on further to say, "We colored fellows were all sworn in to keep secret what we knew and when these fellows came they were sworn in too."⁷

For the next eighteen months Edward Gorsuch occasionally heard from his slaves. During that time he sent the slaves money for their return trip, and he told them that they would not be harmed if they returned.⁸ The four slaves were persuaded not to return to slavery by William Parker.⁹

On September 1, 1851 Edward Gorsuch received a letter from William M. Padgett.¹⁰ Padgett told Gorsuch that he knew where his slaves were hiding, and for him to go to Philadelphia, and get the necessary papers from

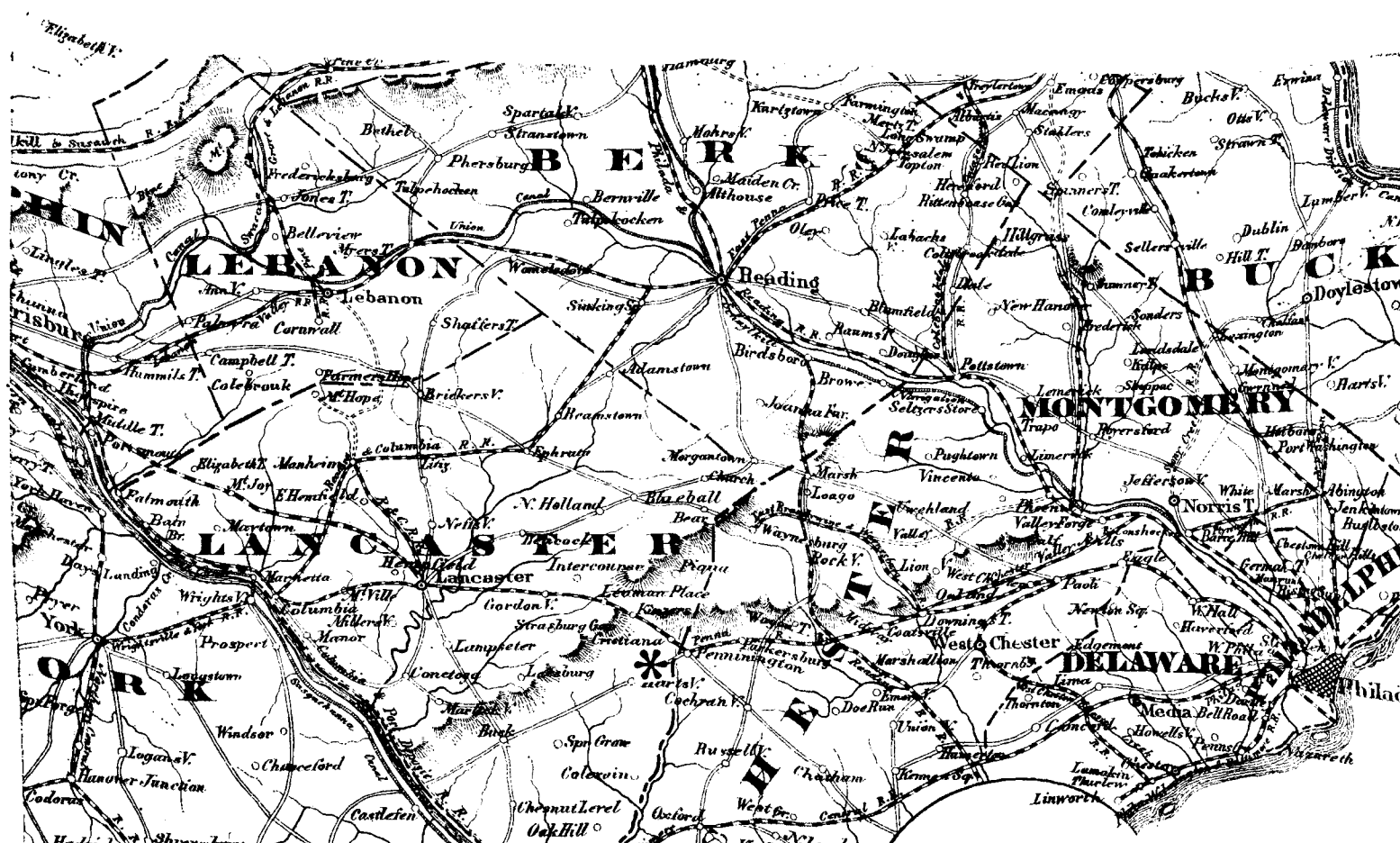
deputy marshal Negal. He should then proceed to Benjamin Clay's tavern near Penningtonville and inquire for Padgett.¹¹ On the same day that Edward Gorsuch received this letter, a traveler came to the Gorsuch farm claiming to know the whereabouts of his slaves.¹²

During the first week of September, Edward Gorsuch organized the party which would go to Pennsylvania to bring back the slaves. The party met on the 8th of September at "Ye Old Tavern" owned by Captain Joshua Gorsuch, (Edward Gorsuch's nephew).¹³ The party of six consisted of Edward Gorsuch, Dickinson Gorsuch (his son), Joshua Gorsuch (his nephew), Dr. Thomas Pearce, Nicholas T. Hutchings, and Nathan Nelson.¹⁴ Edward Gorsuch left by express train for Philadelphia on the same day, while the rest of the party proceeded to Parkesburg where they were to meet him on Wednesday, the 10th of September.¹⁵ When Gorsuch arrived in Philadelphia, he went to Edward D. Ingraham, United States Commissioner and obtained four warrants for the arrest of George and Joshua Hammond, Nelson Ford, and Noah Buley, and the warrants were directed to Henry H. Kline, Deputy United States Marshal.¹⁶ After obtaining the warrants, Edward Gorsuch set out for Parkesburg to meet the party from Baltimore County.

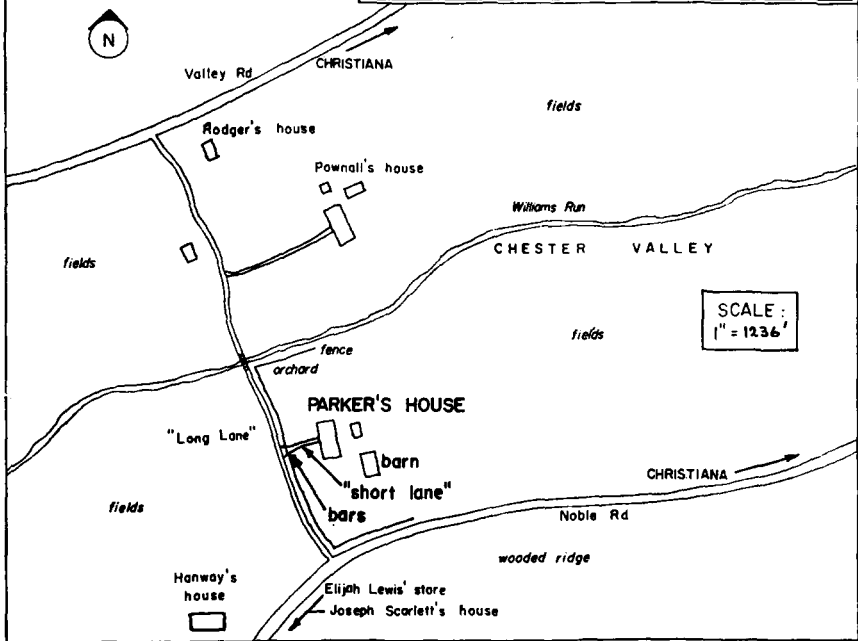
In Philadelphia a Vigilance Committee had been formed and were on the lookout for slave catchers, headed by William Still.¹⁷ Their spies found out the motive for Gorsuch's trip to the United States Commission. The Committee also found out that Henry Kline, who had a reputation as a "professional kidnapper of the basest stamp,"¹⁸ was to lead the slave catching party. Immediately, a Negro by the name of Samuel Williams, who kept a tavern in Philadelphia on Seventh Street below Lombard Street,¹⁹ was dispatched to Christiana to warn the runaway slaves of Gorsuch that a party of slave catchers was after them.²⁰

On Tuesday (September 9), at 2 P. M. Kline left Philadelphia on the West Chester Cars to meet Edward Gorsuch at Sadsbury.²¹ He went to West Chester, from West Chester to Gallagherville then to Penningtonville.²² At Penningtonville the cars broke down and Kline was delayed. While there he met Samuel Williams, and trying not to disclose the real reason why he was in the area, asked Williams if he had seen any horse thieves. Williams replied, "Your horse thief has been here and gone—I understand all your business, you will have to be a little sooner next time."²³ From Penningtonville he went to a tavern at Gap and rested before he proceeded to Parkesburg. At Parkesburg, Kline met John Agin and Thompson Tully, two officers who were to assist in the arrest of Gorsuch's slaves. They said that they would not go with him to meet Gorsuch because they had seen Samuel Williams and the area was alerted to the slave catching mission. They also said that they were waiting for the train back to Philadelphia.²⁴ Kline resumed his journey and met the Gorsuch party in Sadsbury about 9 A. M. on Wednesday the 10th of September.

Kline told Gorsuch that Agin and Tully were going back to Philadelphia. Edward Gorsuch decided to go to Parkesburg to persuade them not to return to Philadelphia. Kline proceeded to go to Downingtown and the rest of the party set out for Gallagherville.²⁵ Edward Gorsuch met Agin and Tully and they said that they would return on the evening train



LOCATION MAP 2



from Philadelphia. Gorsuch left Parkesburg for Gallagherville and about 11 P.M. went to Downingtown to wait for the evening cars from Philadelphia.²⁶ When it arrived neither Agin or Tully were on board. About 12:30 A.M. on Thursday, the 11th of September, the Gorsuch party left Downingtown for Gap, where they would meet their guide.²⁷

The guide led them the remaining six or eight miles to William Parker's house.²⁸ They traveled through the woods so that the party would not be seen approaching the house. Upon reaching the open field surrounding the house, the guide left the party. Here Edward Gorsuch decided that they should rest before going to capture his slaves.

Samuel Williams had reached Parker's the night before the Gorsuch party arrived,²⁹ and the entire area was alerted to the arrival of the slave catchers. Gorsuch's slaves had ample time to flee but Parker persuaded them to stand their ground.³⁰ Alexander Pinckney, Parker's brother-in-law, Abe Johnson, Samuel Thompson, Joshua Kite, and Parker himself spent the night awaiting the arrival of the slave catchers.³¹ Joshua Kite decided that he would go home because it was just about dawn. As Kite reached the end of "short lane" he spotted the Gorsuch party coming down "long lane". Immediately Kite ran back to the house screaming "Kidnappers, Kidnappers," with the party in pursuit.³²

Arriving at the house Kline identified himself as a Deputy United States Marshall. Parker, from the second story window, told Kline that if he took another step he "would break his neck."³³ After the court order

was read by Kline, Alexander Pinckney asked the Negroes to surrender. Scornfully, Parker told his brother-in-law to "fight until death," and warned that if he attempted to give up, Parker himself would "blow his brains out."³⁴ Meanwhile, Edward Gorsuch and Kline entered the house and tried to go up the stairs, but a shot was fired at them from the second floor. At the same time an axe was thrown out the window at Dr Pearce.³⁵

Edward Gorsuch told Parker, "I want my property." Parker replied: Go in the room down there, and see if there is anything belonging to you. There are beds and a bureau, chairs and other things. Then go out to the barn; there you will find a cow and some hogs. See if any of them are yours.³⁶

When Kline heard Parker's answer, he told the party to get some straw so he could "set the house on fire,"³⁷ but this idea did not set well with the elder Gorsuch. Gorsuch then called to Nelson Buley that if he came back with him he would forget the past. Parker answered for Buley, "If you take one of us, you must take him over our dead bodies."³⁸

Inside the house Parker's wife, Eliza, became frightened. She asked her husband if she could blow the horn for help.³⁹ When the slave catchers heard the horn, they asked Parker why it was blown, but there was no answer from the house. When Eliza blew the horn a second time, Negroes began to gather near the house. At the second call Dickenson Gorsuch shot at Eliza.

Meanwhile Castner Hanway and Elijah Lewis appeared at the "bars". When Kline noticed their arrival, he asked them to assist in apprehending Gorsuch's property. Hanway replied, "The Negroes had a right to defend themselves and I would not interfere."⁴⁰ Dr. Pearce chimed in and said all they wanted was their property. To Pearce's remark Lewis replied, "Negroes are not property."⁴¹ Hanway left Kline and proceeded to talk to some of the Negroes, and Kline then noticed the Negro force was gaining in numbers. Edward Gorsuch, determined to retrieve his property, went back to the house but Kline felt a bit uneasy with the Negroes accumulating in large numbers.⁴²

Gorsuch demanded that Parker show him the people inside the house. Parker realized that trouble was mounting with the Negroes in the crowd, and that he might not be able to control them. Parker decided to show him Pinckney and Johnson. When Johnson appeared at the window, he said, "Does such a shrivelled up old slaveholder as you own such a nice gentle young man as I am?"⁴³ Parker decided against showing Thompson and Kite to Gorsuch, because he felt that Gorsuch would recognize his slaves. After Johnson spoke to the elder Gorsuch, the assembled Negroes began chanting:

Leader, what do you say
About the judgment day?
I will die on the battlefield,
With glory in my soul.⁴⁴

Parker came out of the house followed by Pinckney, Johnson, Kite, and Thompson. Parker saw the crowd becoming more restless, and warned

the slave catchers than the people of the area would not allow them to take the runaways back to Maryland. Parker told the Gorsuch party that they had better leave before violence occurred. Kline realized the resistance was too great, and from the "bars," he entreated Gorsuch to leave with him. But Gorsuch refused to leave and said, "I will have my property or go to hell!"⁴⁵

The events which followed were not too clear to anyone, later. Thompson grabbed Pinckney's gun and began hitting the elder Gorsuch. Then the entire mob of Negroes attacked the slave catchers. "Old Mr. Gorsuch was the bravest of his party. . . . I saw as many as three at a time fighting with him. He was a fine soldier and a brave man."⁴⁶ During the confusion Edward Gorsuch was shot by one of the Negroes, whose identity was never discovered.⁴⁷ Dickinson Gorsuch tried to protect his father but was driven back and critically wounded while fleeing the scene. "Some of the Negroes' friends followed and would have most cruelly murdered Dickinson, but an old Negro, who had been in the affray, threw himself over his body and called upon them for God Sake to assist him, for he would soon die anyhow."⁴⁸ Then as Edward Gorsuch's body laid on the field, "infuriated women, forgetful of all humane instincts, revenging on a humane Christian gentleman's lifeless body the wrongs their race had suffered from masters of altogether different mould, rushed from the house with corn cutter and scythe blades hacked the bleeding and lifeless body."⁴⁹

After the melee "old Mr. Gorsuch was lying in the yard in a pool of blood, and confusion reigned both inside and outside of the house."⁵⁰ Both the corpse of Edward Gorsuch and the badly wounded body of Dickinson Gorsuch were taken to the farmhouse of Levi Pownall by Joseph Scarlett, where the younger Gorsuch was cared for and eventually recovered. Meanwhile Parker, Pinckney, Johnson and one of Edward Gorsuch's slaves left the Christiana area and made their way to Rochester, New York.⁵¹ Upon reaching Rochester the men found food and shelter at the home of Frederick Douglas. After the men rested, Douglas found them passage on a steamer bound for Toronto. Douglas referred to the men who came to his home as "defenders of the just rights of man against manstealers and murderers."⁵²

The law of the land had been resisted by men because it conflicted with their conception of their natural rights. "The Christiana Riot dramatized, as congressional debates could never do, the fundamental conflicts between diverging concepts of 'law' and 'moral right'."⁵³ A man had been killed for trying to carry out his Constitutional right to forever keep a man in chains. But as Frederick Douglas wrote, "Any law that provokes riot and bloodshed is unworthy of a civilized and Christian nation and should be wiped from its statute books."⁵⁴ The Negroes at Christiana had committed a crime, but it would have been a far greater crime if a Negro had been killed protecting his freedom. The "peculiar institution" of the south had attempted to force itself on the "free" society of the north resulting in bloodshed and murder. Thus, at Christiana, it was illustrated that the two institutions could no longer exist side-by-side.

HE DIED FOR THE LAW

Edward Gorsuch was the pride of his community. In Baltimore County he was respected by everyone and considered a law-abiding citizen. The **Baltimore-Sun** in describing Edward Gorsuch said, "He was a dignified and courtly gentleman in his manners, a just and accurate man in his business dealings, a kind-hearted master and employer, and a man of forceful and determined temperment."¹ He was an active member of the Whig party in Maryland.² He believed, as a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, that all white men were created equal. Edward Gorsuch was a stable citizen of the United States; but when he attempted to carry out his rights, granted to him in the Constitution, he was murdered by a man defending a different conception of man's rights. With the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, the result was an irreconcilable division between the "free" and slave states since the conflicting institutions were forced upon each other.

The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was not the answer to the Southerners' problem—the runaway slave. Although the percentage of runaway slaves was small, as compared to those still held in bondage, the runaway slave served as an inspiration to the other slaves to seek their freedom. The underground railroad was the surest means of a slave obtaining safe refuge. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was an attempt to curb the practices of the underground railroad in assisting runaway slaves because the "losses to the individual [slave] owner were severe and not easily to be born, for remember his money and his property was in them, and the feeling he had for the [individual] or system [underground railroad] that took them from him was about the same as that one holds for the man who would steal [one's] horse or burn [one's] barn."³ However the South failed to realize that if the law was to be effective it must infringe on the individual's rights in the North. Failure to realize that the law must be forced upon the North, led to the brutal murder at Christiana and caused the North to decide if it would allow its rights to be trampled upon by the slave catchers.

The Fugitive Slave Law gave the slave catcher and slave owners the same rights in the free states that they could demand in their own state. The law had taken advantage of Sections One and Two of the Fourth Article of the Constitution. "The Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all Privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States."⁴ The law more clearly defined the clause in the Constitution concerning the return of fugitives from labor. Edward Gorsuch's right to bring back his slaves can be written in the words of the Constitution:

[George and Joshua Hammond, Nelson Ford and Noah Buley] held to Service on Labour in [Maryland], under the laws thereof, escaping into

[Pennsylvania], shall, in consequence of any law or Regulation therein be discharged from such Service, or Labour, but shall be delivered upon Claim of [Edward Gorsuch] to whom such Service of Labour [is] due.⁵

The use of Federal legislation in order to strengthen the rights of the South embittered the North.

Under the Fugitive Slave Act the Federal Authorities were given the jurisdiction over return of runaway slaves. It imposed the responsibility upon all United States Marshals to assist in bringing back fugitive slaves under the penalty of heavy fines (\$1000). Under the right of *posse comitatus* "all good citizens are hereby commanded to aid and assist in the prompt and efficient execution of this law, whenever their services are required . . ." The law excluded from his trial all testimony of the fugitive slave in his defense. Under no circumstances was a person permitted to "obstruct or hinder the marshal carrying out his duty, aid or abet a person owing service or labor, or harbor or conceal a fugitive so as to prevent the discovery and arrest of the person." If a person failed to comply with the provisions of the law and was found guilty before the District Court of the United States, a fine not exceeding \$1000 and imprisonment not exceeding six months could be awarded.⁶ The Fugitive Slave Law was part of the Compromise of 1850. However the law itself represented no compromise, but only imposed the "peculiar institution" of the South on the "free society" of the North, which hastened the inevitable tragedy at Christiana.

A more involved interpretation of the Fugitive Slave Law was brought about by the armed resistance to the United States Marshal at Christiana. Since Marshal Kline represented the United States Government, resistance to his authority was considered treason. The crime of treason is clearly defined in the Constitution: "Treason against the United States, shall consist in only levying War against them, or adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort."⁷ The radicals, who were in favor of seeing the Fugitive Slave Law carried out, used two previous incidents to establish their charge of treason.

First, in 1796 Vigol and Mitchell were charged with treason for their part in the Whiskey Insurrection of Western Pennsylvania in 1794. They resisted a Federal Officer in carrying out his duty, under authority which was given him by the Excise, in October of 1791. Both men were convicted but were pardoned by the President.⁸ Second, John Fries, a Pennsylvania auctioneer, headed an insurrection against a direct real estate tax in 1798. Fries, "armed with sword and pistol and wearing a French tri color cockade," led a band of men, chased the federal tax collectors out of Bucks County, and liberated the prisoners in Bethlehem jail.⁹ In the spring of 1799, President Adams sent an armed force to Bucks County to apprehend Fries. The supporters of the Fugitive Slave Law used Judge Chase's definition of treason in the Fries case as their main stand for the indictment for treason. Judge Chase said:

That if a body of people impair and mediate an insurrection to resist or oppose the execution of any statute of the United States by force, they are only guilty of a high misdemeanor; but if they proceed to carry such intentions into execution by force, that they are guilty of treason of levying war; and the quantum of the force employed neither lessens nor increases the crime; whether by one hundred or one thousand persons is wholly immaterial.¹⁰

On the basis of the previous cited incidents, the extremists in favor of the Fugitive Slave Law protested that resistance to the law, especially at Christiana, was treason. The **North American** called it an "insurrection" and "one of treason" when a group of people white or black "deliberately resist" the law of the land.¹¹

Many realized that if the Union was to be preserved, the Fugitive Slave Law must be obeyed. The South had been backed into a corner because of the northern resistance to her institution. Realizing the dangerous state of the Union, Southern sympathizers argued that the Fugitive Slave Law was not unconstitutional. They held a view that if the law was repealed, the Constitution would be nullified. Slavery as an institution gained no followers in the North itself, although the Fugitive Slave Law had some support. The Northerners who advocated upholding the Fugitive Slave Law wished only to preserve the Union. "Many sensed the danger of the 'Ship of State' and were extremely anxious to adjust matters that she might yet sail on serenely, and were steadily striving for that end . . ."¹²

At Christiana Edward Gorsuch attempted to carry out his Constitutional rights. When his rights were denied at Christiana, the rights of the Southern section to recapture runaway slaves was negated. The tragedy at Christiana not only proved that the Fugitive Slave Law had failed to bring the people of the North to uphold the "peculiar institution" in their free society, but the riot, "became a great factor in determining the course of the hot-heads both North and South."¹³

The South became inflamed that a Southern citizen's rights were flagrantly transgressed and trampled upon in the North. The efforts toward peaceful settlement of the troubles in the Union were badly weakened by the murder of Edward Gorsuch. The Christiana Riot was largely "the beginning of the end that led to the firing on Sumter and the beginning of a terrible war."¹⁴

THE SLAVERY RESISTANCE IN THE CHRISTIANA AREA

The area of the Christiana Riot was for a long time active in the Abolitionist movement. The Underground Railroad had found many stations in the area, and many freed negroes had made their way to Lancaster County and settled in the vicinity of Christiana. The Abolitionists toured the County preaching antislavery doctrine and found many supporters in both the negro and white populations. Many people of Lancaster County maintained no position on the slavery issue, but when the South attempted to infringe on what they considered their rights, they made the choice to uphold the free society of the North, and not allow slavery to trample their ideals. But many men and several incidents in the county had provoked strong feelings, if not hatred, against the attempt to forcefully return men to hopeless slavery.

William Parker, a man of stern determination, spent part of his life as a slave. He was born a slave in Anne Arundel County, Maryland in 1833.¹ During his early youth his mother and first owner died, and he was raised by his grandmother. He grew up in the "Quarters",² where he gained much respect for his rough manner. When he was thirteen some slave-traders came to the place where he lived. So not to be sold he fled with a friend, Levi. While hiding with Levi in a tree he decided to run away:

I did not care about going back home [to the plantation] How desolate I was! No home, no protector, no mother, no attachments. As we turned our faces toward the quarters where we might at any moment be sold to satisfy a debt, or replenish a failing purse, I felt myself to be what I really was—a poor friendless slave-boy.³

Levi persuaded Parker not to run away at this time. However, when Parker was seventeen his master, Major William Brogdon, decided to whip him for not going out into the rain to work.⁴ Parker grabbed the stick, beat his master and fled north with his brother. They crossed over from Maryland into Pennsylvania in 1840. Just outside York the two runaway slaves were stopped by three white men. The white men had an advertisement describing both slaves. The slave catchers demanded that the men go back with them, but Parker had felt the fire of freedom and was determined not to return. A fight broke out and the slave catchers fled for fear of their lives.⁵ The escaped slaves made their way to Columbia and settled in Lancaster County near Christiana.

William Parker was a tall, muscular, light-skinned Negro. In the Christiana area he devoted his life to the protection of the Negroes' rights and in the Christiana riot he "saw his greatest moment as a defender of the rights of his race."⁶ In the early 1840's Parker began to hear of the abolitionist movement in Lancaster County. While in Lancaster one day he heard

the speeches of William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass, who condemned the wrongs against the negro race. It was here that Parker decided to join the fight to prevent further attacks on his race;⁷ he felt that the Garrison Abolitionists were "indeed" and "in truth" the poor slaves' friend.⁸ With passage of the new Fugitive Slave Law, Parker saw his opportunity to aid in the advancement of his race. In late 1850 he organized a group of negroes for "the mutual protection against slaveholders and kidnappers," and "they resolved to prevent any of their brethren being taken into slavery, at the risk of their own lives."⁹ Parker expressed his hatred for the Fugitive Slave Law:

Whether the kidnappers were clothed with legal authority or not, I did not care to inquire, as I never had faith in nor respect for the Fugitive Slave Law.¹⁰

Parker not only served as a leader, but his strength gave the rest of the colored population in his neighborhood the will to overcome their hardships. The stern example Parker set at Christiana by defending the rights of his race established the fact that the negroes had begun to realize that "liberty was too sweet, when once tasted by a southern slave, to be lost without a struggle."¹¹

The resistance to slavery in the Christiana area was well organized before the Riot. Anti-slavery meetings were held in many communities such as Gap, Lancaster, Columbia, Bart and Sadsbury. With the passage of the new Fugitive Slave Law, the antislavery societies of the area called spontaneous meetings to cope with the new situation. A meeting on October 11, 1850 in Bart Township, which was only three miles from the Christiana Riot, expressed the feelings of the people in the area by renouncing the new law and declaring open opposition to its enforcement.¹² The meeting was presided over by William Rakestraw,¹³ who maintained a station for the Underground Railroad.¹⁴ The meeting at Bart resolved:

That the highest principles of justice and humanity, as well as the fundamental principle of Christianity, require that we should not assist in the recapture and return of a fugitive from slavery, and that in a choice between our obligations to these principles and to any law in opposition to them, [the residents] can not for a moment hesitate to say [that they] will obey no such law.¹⁵

The meeting then resolved:

That [they considered] no individual, or individuals have the right to keep any other individual or individuals in bondage; and that [they would] harbor, clothe, feed, and aid the escape of fugitive slaves, in opposition to the law.¹⁶

The outright condemnation of the new law showed the hatred for the "aggression of Slavery upon the rights of the North and the welfare of the nation."¹⁷

Many prominent Abolitionists spoke in Lancaster County, but none achieved greater status as a speaker and apostle of the antislavery movement than Charles Burleigh. Burleigh traveled throughout Lancaster County preaching against slavery. Burleigh was a very dynamic speaker. In a meeting at Kennett Square "he [Burleigh] pictured slavery and liberty in such clear contrast, and depicted the Christian duty of man to his

fellow men in such glowing colors, embellished by the sublime rhetoric of which he was a master, that the latent sense of justice and antislavery emotions were stirred up in the hearts of the good people of Kennett, and organization and agitation were at once instituted."¹⁸ Burleigh cited that "the colored people of Gap, as was to be expected, were desperately resolved on self-defense against the land pirates, which have been let loose upon them by the recent Slaves Catching law," and negroes were not expected to "lament the destruction of the wolf that was tearing and devouring them."¹⁹ Burleigh substantially strengthened the antislavery sentiment in Lancaster County by his vigorous and impelling speech.

The encroachment of kidnappers upon Negroes in Lancaster County fortified the antislavery sentiment in the area.²⁰ "The local people engaged in the business of aiding in the slave hunting and slave mobbing were generally disreputable and sometimes themselves outlaws and criminals."²¹ In the Christiana area, William Baer was the leader of the "Gap Gang."²² They were a notoriously famous group of toughs, who seized Negroes and sold them into slavery. Baer and Parker became fierce enemies. The work of the "Gap Gang" was very underhanded and unlawful, and many innocent Negroes suffered because of these men. Since the "Gap Gang" carried on its business at night, "barred doors and loaded rifles greeted any after-dark visitor."²³

There were many unpleasant incidents between kidnappers and Negroes in Lancaster County in the twelve months preceding the Christiana Riot. William Smith was spotted by slave catchers and murdered after a long chase through the streets of the town.²⁴ William Dorsey, a father of three children, was being held in the Lancaster jail. Parker heard about the man and went to Lancaster to gain his release, and finally succeeded after raising much commotion.²⁵ Joel Henry Thompson was kidnapped by G. F. Alberti and J. Frisbie Price.²⁶ A negro girl, Elizabeth, came to Moses Whitson's house from Daniel Gibbons, seeking employment.²⁷ Elizabeth's owner found out where she was and came to Whitson's house early one morning. After forcing their way into the house and eating breakfast, they proceeded to take Elizabeth back.²⁸ But the kidnappers met up with Parker and some other negroes, who were informed of her capture by Benjamin Whipper,²⁹ at Gap Hill and a fight followed.³⁰ A Negro called "Tom-up-in-the-barn," residing near Gap, started one morning to Caleb Briton's to assist in the threshing,³¹ was kidnapped and never heard from.³² The most outrageous kidnapping occurred in March of 1851. John Williams had escaped from a widow in Elkton, Maryland.³³ When the widow remarried, her husband advertised for the recapture of the slave. William Baer recognized the description of John Williams who was residing at Marsh Chamberlain's farm,³⁴ and was offered \$200 for the return of Williams.³⁵ Baer and two others went to Chamberlain's farm one night when the owner was away, and forced themselves upon Williams. They beat him so unmercifully that a trail of blood was left, by which the party could be tracked through Penningtonville, Russellville, and Elkton.³⁶

Much bitterness and hatred had developed towards slave catchers in the Christiana area. The hatred was so intense that even slave owners

with legal authority were despised. The resistance to Edward Gorsuch and fellow slave catchers had developed near Christiana not only out of a strong feeling for the "higher law", which said that all men were created equal, but also out of a grave hatred for the institution of slavery. The unity between the North and South was shaken at Christiana. The outcome of the Christiana Riot would help play a major role in the domestic and political affairs of the nation for the next decade.

THE REACTION TO THE CHRISTIANA TRAGEDY

The Christiana Riot not only stirred up the emotions of Marylanders and Pennsylvanians, but created unrest throughout most of the nation. The riot occurred in one day, but the results of the riot would linger overhead for a long time. The opinion concerning the riot varied greatly throughout the country. However there was one general feeling among all who wrote or discussed the Riot: the time had come for the people to choose whether or not the Fugitive Slave Law would be recognized by the "free" states. The Riot caused the nation to realize that the peace and continuity of the Union had been strained because the two institutions, slavery and freedom, had nothing in common. Therefore, people realized that if the Fugitive Slave Law was to solve the problem between two institutions, the individual rights of the north must be partially suppressed. Meetings were called, political parties and leaders were condemned, and editorials were written which discussed the controversy caused by the Christiana Riot.

Meetings were held in both Pennsylvania and Maryland. The largest meetings were held at Philadelphia, (September 17, 1851), Baltimore City, (September 16, 1851), and Slade's Tavern in Baltimore County (September 15, 1851). The meeting at Philadelphia placed the blame of the Riot upon the prejudices and the fanatics attempting to carry out radical schemes at the price of the Union. The Riot was caused by "Abolitionists who were enemies of the Fugitive Slave Law." The Riot was a treasonable act and all involved shall be "made to feel the scorn and contempt of all intelligent and patriotic people." The appeal to the "higher law" by Abolitionists undermined "the foundations of government, and led to riot, bloodshed, treason, and anarchy." To prevent further rebellions by free negroes in Pennsylvania, restrictions would be placed upon their migration into the Commonwealth. The meeting expressed sympathy for the relatives of Edward Gorsuch who were horrified that the "Utopian Philanthropists and insane fanatics have had their doctrines exemplified in treason and blood." The Honorable Charles Brown spoke at the meeting. He felt that the men arrested in the Christiana affair should be given a "fair" trial and inflicted with the most extreme punishment. Another speaker present was the fanatic, John Campbell, author of *Negro-Mania*.¹ Thirteen resolutions were passed at the Philadelphia meeting and sent to the relatives of Edward Gorsuch.²

The mass meeting at Monument Square in Baltimore expressed the feelings of indignation towards the outrage as a flagrant abuse of the "constitutional rights of every Southern man." The Compromise of 1850 was commended as a means of maintaining the Union. To prevent further abuses of the law, the open defiance of the government by the Abolitionists

ionists must be curbed. Marylanders would no longer permit their rights violated by the north with impunity. A committee of twenty was selected to give a list of the proceeding to the Governor. The meeting was brought to an end by Francis Gallagher who expressed his feeling towards the outrage. "The blood of an excellent man, who had been murdered by his own slave, cried for justice, if not revenge."³

The personal friends of Edward Gorsuch held a meeting at Slade's Tavern in Baltimore County. The people in the Gorsuch neighborhood had especially bitter feelings towards the occurrence at Christiana. It was decided that eight men from each district in Baltimore County would meet at Cockeysville on the last Saturday of the month in order to discuss a means for protecting the rights and property of the people of the County. Money would be raised to defray legal expenses in the prosecution of the offenders. A final resolution was passed to employ legal counsel "to assist the prosecution of the offenders in order that the guilty perpetrators of the outrage may be punished as they deserved."⁴

The tragedy at Christiana caused the condemnation of Governor Johnson of Pennsylvania. No other political leader was attacked as severely as Johnson as a result of the Riot. **The Daily Union** said:

But such an enemy as Governor Johnson, located in the interior of our system, [was] like a worm in the heart of the noble oak, which the storms of hundreds of years could not uproot, but which finally breaks, perforated by the unseen consumer of its strength.⁵

Unless Governor Johnson upheld the legal aspect of the Fugitive Slave Law "the South was defenseless against the machination of the Abolitionists."⁶ Many felt that the Christiana Riot was caused by Johnson's anti-slavery attitude. **The American Volunteer** related that the Riot was among the "first fruits of Governor Johnson, setting public opinion at defiance, endangering the peace and safety of society by pocketing the law of last session, passed to give justice to the owners of slaves."⁷ **The Pennsylvanian** wrote:

No! the brand is upon you, Governor Johnson—irrevocably fixed and it can not be removed. Your whole career shows that you have courted the very result under which the people writhe, and which is working out its expected consequence in the south.⁸

Governor Johnson and the Whigs of Pennsylvania who approved his course were "responsible for the blood thus shed, the violation of the laws, and the bloody triumph of Abolitionism."⁹ **The American Democrat** called Johnson a "reckless demagogue" and "not worthy the support of freemen . . ." in the coming election.¹⁰ William Johnson was defeated in the Gubernatorial election of 1851 by William Bigler. Bigler's majority exceeded twelve thousand votes and the **Cumberland Miners Journal** attributed Johnson's defeat by Bigler to "his association with Abolitionism."¹¹

In the South there were two stands developing relating to the riot, the moderates and radicals. For the moderates the principle importance of the Christiana Riot was its disruption of the peace established by the Compromise of 1850.¹² The moderates felt that the north would awaken to the harmful acts of the Abolitionists and carry out the provisions of the Com-

promise of 1850. **The Baltimore Patriot** felt that debate over the riot would cause the bonds of the Union to become more strained:

Let us have peace. Let the Compromise measures which the last Congress wisely passed, be upheld and supported, and those who would renew the agitation by attempting to alter or repeal, then be discarded by the good men of all parties, and we shall have peace, and take a new lease for the prosperity and perpetuity of the Union.¹³

For some moderates in the South the only way to prevent more agitation was to ship the Negroes back to Africa. The moderates argued that the Colonization Society would alleviate the problem. **The Baltimore Clipper** wrote that the American Colonization Society offered the Negro an "opportunity to provide for themselves and families safe and happy homes and should not delay to embrace it."¹⁴

The radicals in the South felt that Southern rights would continue to be trampled upon in the north since the Abolitionists were a majority there. The Christiana Riot provided the radicals with an opportunity to back their denunciation of the Compromise with an incontrovertible fact.¹⁵ **The Southern Press** wrote:

We were from the first convinced that no such law could be generally executed, and that the attempt would cause more excitement, violence and animosity between the two sections, than anything.¹⁶

The Fairfield Herald called the Christiana Riot an act of aggression upon the rights of a southern citizen and that the South must not submit to an infringement on its rights. **The Herald** exclaimed:

Let us, while we yet claim so of the rights of freemen, throw off the accused yoke which is galling us, at the risk of our fortunes, our tombs and our lives.¹⁷

Some radicals felt that the treason charge by the North was a fraud.¹⁸

The feelings of the North towards the riot were mixed. The North realized that a horrible atrocity had occurred at Christiana. There was a great awakening to the conflict with which the Union was now confronted. There were three groups of reactions to the tragedy at Christiana in the north. First, some people, who felt that the Fugitive Slave Law could preserve the Union, were horrified at the abuses of the Constitution. Second, others felt that the Fugitive Slave Law was morally wrong and were undecided over the course of action which should be taken. Third, the Abolitionists damned the Fugitive Slave Law and cheered the Christiana Riot.

Those horrified at the abuse of the Fugitive Slave Law and the Constitution built up the character of Edward Gorsuch and blamed the riot on the Abolitionists. Edward Gorsuch was described as an honest citizen and churchgoer. **The Pennsylvanian** declared that the Abolitionists were "agitators" and that they "not only prepared the way for murder and insurrection, but they are themselves the pledged assassins of the Constitution."¹⁹ **The Weekly American** felt that "these higher law men like Cuban agitators, are morally responsible for encouraging and inviting such resistance to the laws, and as such must account to God and their country."²⁰ **The Indiana State Sentinel** wrote that the Christiana Riot was the consequence of the Abolitionists' movement:

Such are the terrible consequences of preaching resistance to law and invoking the religious prejudices of the country against an institution which existed since creation, and appealing to a law above the Constitution to justify every act of blood and slaughter.²¹

Many newspapers in Pennsylvania defended the Keystone State. The **Pennsylvanian** wrote that human blood had been sacrificed, "by a fiendish resistance to the law, in a state that boasts of her devotion to the Union, and glows in her cheerful obedience to the Constitution," . . . but the wrong was "perpetrated by a few reckless men. . . ." ²²

Many of the people in the north were torn between the ethic and the law of the tragedy at Christiana. Most of the people in the group tried to avoid the issue. The **Christian Register** said that the Negroes only tried to protect their rights but violent resistance to the law was "bad, unlawful, impolitic, and mischievous . . . and the offenders will have to suffer." ²³ Many people had sympathy for the negroes but felt that they were wrong to resist the law. The **Independent** said that the Christiana Riot has taught man a lesson:

A law, the execution of which involves such fearful consequences—which exasperates the public mind and provokes riot and bloodshed—is unworthy of a civilized and Christian nation and should be wiped from its statute book.²⁴

William Cullen Bryant in the **New York Evening Post** said that the Fugitive Slave Law "violated the moral instincts of the people," and that Americans felt the law "to be an impeachment of their manhood to be asked to assist in manacling, for the purpose of reducing to slavery . . . an industrious and honest citizen."²⁵ Horace Greeley wrote in the **New York Tribune** that had two negroes been killed, "comparatively little would have been thought of it, and we presume no arrests would have been deemed necessary." Greeley continued:

They [the negroes] acted against one law it is true, but they had another on their side, and that law august and divine in origin—the law of nature. They defended an inalienable right . . . , and when that right is assailed, no human decree or enactment can amend the authority of the individual to defend it. Legislature has no right to declare who are slaves, for it is not a matter of law in the pure and elevated sense of that term,²⁶

Those in doubt considered the Fugitive Slave Law to be the evil which caused the tragedy at Christiana.

For the Abolitionists the Christiana Riot only strengthened their attack on slavery. It proved that the Negro would no longer submit without a struggle. It showed the evils of the slave-catching law. Sidney Howard Gay in the **National Anti-Slavery Standard** said:

It need surprise nobody that in the game of slave hunting . . . it should sometimes happen that the hunting party and not the hunted become the mark for bullets, and the law of self-preservation, and not the Fugitive Slave Law, be obeyed in triumph.²⁷

Gay felt that Edward Gorsuch "should have been shot down like a dog."²⁸ William Lloyd Garrison in the **Boston Liberator** called Gorsuch a "man-stealer," and described the slave catching party as a group of midnight bandits "lawlessly breaking into a private dwelling under the cover of darkness, attempted with stealth and violence, to seize and make slave

of some of the occupants.²⁹ The Worcester **Spy** said that Gorsuch and his son came "with an armed band of men to seize upon the peaceful, unoffending citizens of Pennsylvania. . . ."³⁰ Frederick Douglass wrote that that Christiana conflict was needed "to check these aggressions and to bring the hunters of men to the sober second thought."³¹ The **Pennsylvania Freeman** wrote that "instead of whining and writhing over this horrible massacre, let every citizen worthy of the name, turn to the cause of it, slavery and have manliness enough to demand the remedy."³² The Christiana Riot was well exploited by Abolitionists.

The Christiana Riot was but one of the many incidents resulting from the conflict between two societies of the North and South. The occurrence at Christiana was a true tragedy since both Gorsuch and Parker believed that their way was the only right and justified means of solving the problem of slavery. On September 11, 1911 there was a commemoration of the Christiana Riot and treason trials of 1851. At the commemoration a poem was recited by Mary Robinson:

'Twas here that first was heard the thrilly cry,
which pealed the knell of bondage thro' the land;
'Twas here that first our people took the stand
which claims us from the guilt of slavery—
Ye call it Riot! Lo! it made men free!
It was a trumpet call, clear, loud and grand.
And in good time, obeying its command
We heard our Union speak for Liberty.
Here slavery first died. The blood shed here
Destroyed the claims of every trembling slave;
It bound the nation with a link more dear
And took from us a stigma dark and grave.
So thus we mark this fair September morn,
Where bondage perished and free men were born.³³

It was here at Christiana that the Negro first rebelled successfully against his master. Here at Christiana the first great step was taken to release the slave from bondage. Here at Christiana the rights of the Negro were established; he would no longer consider himself only property. Here at Christiana slavery and freedom met face to face, and freedom won out. Here at Christiana the fact was established that the "peculiar institution" of the South and the free society of the North could not exist side by side.

NOTES

I. THE MASON-DIXON LINE BECOMES PRONOUNCED

1. **Lancaster Saturday Express**, September 29, 1851.
2. William U. Hensel, **The Christiana Riot and the Treason Trials of 1851**, (2d ed. rev; Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Press of the Era Company), p. 7.
3. **Charleston Courier**, June 9, 1840, cited by Kenneth M. Stampp, **The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South** (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), p. 153.
4. The Fugitive Slave law was almost completely unworkable without the state co-operation. During the 1840s several Northern states passed "personal liberty laws" which practically nullified the Federal law within those states. Robert G. McCloskey. **The American Supreme Court**. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 92; and Wesley M. Gewehr et. al., **The United States: A History of a Democracy** (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1960), p. 290.
5. According to the Constitution, January 1, 1808 was the earliest that the importation of slaves could be prohibited. Article I, Section 9: "The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, . . ."
6. Nelson Manfred Blake, **A History of American Life and Thought** (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1963), p. 212.
7. Arthur D. Graeff, **The History of Pennsylvania** (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1945) p. 196; and R. C. Smedley, **History of the Underground Railroad**, (Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Printed at the Office of the Journal, 1883), pp. 28-31. Lancaster County was also the scene of the Christiana Riot.
8. The chain of stations consisted of homes of people with antislavery sentiment. The passengers (runaway slaves) were led from station to station by guides who were referred to as conductors.
9. Blake, p. 212.
10. Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, **The Growth of the American Republic**, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), I, 555.
11. Blake, p. 212.
12. Samuel J. May, **Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict**, (Boston: Fields, Osgood and Company, 1869), pp. 203-209.
13. **Ibid.**, p. 209-210.
14. **Ibid.** p. 210.
15. Roderick Nash, "The Christiana Riot: An Evaluation of Its National Significance," **Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society**, LXV, No. 2 (spring 1961), 66.

II. CHRISTIANA TRAGEDY

1. Roderick Nash, "William Parker and the Christiana Riot," **The Journal of Negro History**, XLVI, No. 1 (January 1961), 25.
2. There was a rumor in the Monkton area that Edward Gorsuch recently had had grain stolen from him. Hensel, **The Christiana Riot and Treason Trials of 1851**, p. 21.
3. **Ibid.**
4. William U. Hensel, "Aftermath Supplementary to the Christiana Riot," **Lancaster County Historical Society Papers**, XVI, (1912), 137.
5. Elias Matthews swore before the Justice of the Peace in Baltimore County that on November 2, Abraham Johnson brought five bushels of Edward Gorsuch's grain to his mill. Hensel, **Ibid.**, p. 136.
6. Hensel, **The Christiana Riot** . . ., p. 22. The four slaves were to be freed by 1855; and if it had not been for the Abe Johnson theft, they would not have run-away. Account of the Riot by Reverend J. S. Gorsuch, **Baltimore Weekly Sun**, September 20, 1851.

7. Hensel, *The Christiana Riot* . . . , p. 23.
8. Account of the Riot by Reverend J. S. Gorsuch, *Baltimore Weekly Sun*, September 20, 1851.
9. William Parker, "The Freedman's Story," *Atlantic Monthly*, XVII (February-March, 1866), 160.
10. The letter was from Penningtonville (now Atglen) and dated August 29, 1851. Hensel, *The Christiana Riot* . . . , p. 23-24. The letter was found on Edward Gorsuch's dead body after the riot.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
12. *Ibid.* The identity of the man was not known or from where the man came.
13. *The Jeffersonian* (Towson, Maryland), December 26, 1931.
14. *A History of the Trial of Costner Hanway and Others, for Treason at Philadelphia in November, 1851* (Philadelphia: U. Hunt and Sons, 1852), p. 31-32.
15. Hensel, *The Christiana Riot* . . . , p. 25.
16. *Ibid.*; and *A History of the Trial* . . . , p. 32.
17. Nash, *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, LXV, 67. The Vigilance Committee was organized by the Anti-Slavery Society of Philadelphia after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Parker, *Atlantic Monthly*, XVII, 281.
18. *Ibid.*, 282.
19. J. H. Pearsol, *A Full and Correct Report of the Christiana Tragedy in the County of Lancaster, State of Pennsylvania, September 11, 1851. As Reported [!] Verbatim et Literatim, on the Hearing and Examination, As the Same Was Represented in Evidence, Before Alderman Reigart, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1851*), p. 2.
20. Hensel, *The Christiana Riot* . . . , p. 25.
21. Pearsol, p. 2.; and Parker, *Atlantic Monthly*, XVII, 270-275.
22. Pearsol, p. 2.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. Parker, *Atlantic Monthly*, XVII, 270-275.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Pearsol, p. 2-3.
28. The identity of the guide was not disclosed by any members of the slave catching party. Several writers believed that the guide was William Padgett but it was never proved.
29. Hensel, *The Christiana Riot* . . . , p. 28.
30. Nash, *Journal of Negro History*, XLVI, No. 1, 27.
31. Parker, *Atlantic Monthly*, XVII, 283.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*, 283-286.
35. Pearsol, *A Full and Correct* . . . , p. 3.
36. Parker, *Atlantic Monthly*, XVII, 283. To Gorsuch Negroes were included in the definition of property while Parker did not include Negroes in his definition of property. Here is the real conflict of the North and South over slavery, should a man be considered property.
37. Hensel, *The Christiana Riot* . . . , p. 31.
38. Nash, *Journal of Negro History*, XLVI, No. 1, 28.
39. *Ibid.*, "It was custom with us, when a horn was blown at an unusual hour, to proceed to the spot promptly to see what was the matter." Parker, *Atlantic Monthly*, XVII, 284.
40. Pearsol, *A Full and Correct* . . . , p. 3-4. Hanway was tried for treason for not assisting a United States Marshal in recapturing a fugitive from labor and for bearing arms against the United States. Hanway was found innocent of both charges and was acquitted in the Federal Court in Philadelphia.
41. *Ibid.*
42. The number of Negroes present at the riot was never established. Some newspaper accounts had as many as two or three hundred present; but according to the people of the area there were no more than seventy Negroes living in a six mile radius of the scenes of the riot.

43. Parker, **Atlantic Monthly**, XVII, 284. The Abe Johnson present at the riot was not the same Abe Johnson who stole the wheat from the Gorsuch farm. Many accounts of the riot state that he is the same one and other accounts mention this possibility, but there are two proofs that he is not: 1) a letter written by a Mrs. Sarah Moore McFadden cited in Hensel, **Lancaster County Historical Society Papers**, XVI, 138-141; and 2) an account of Abe Johnson history in Lancaster County found in Smedley, **History of the Underground Railroad**, pp. 77, 115, 248, 251.
44. Parker, **Atlantic Monthly**, XVII, 285.
45. **Ibid.**, 285-6.
46. **Ibid.**, 287-8.
47. During the preliminary investigation, George Washington Harvey Scott swore that Henry Simms had shot the elder Gorsuch. **North American** (Philadelphia) September 3, 1851. But in the trial of Castner Hanway for treason Thaddeus Stevens, counsel for the defense, proved that Scott was no where near the scene of the riot by testimony of John Carr. **A History of the Trial of Castner Hanway** . . . , p. 64.
48. An account of the riot by Reverend J. S. Gorsuch cited in the **Baltimore Weekly Sun**, September 13, 1851. Eighty shots penetrated Dickinson Gorsuch's arms, thigh and body. Hensel, **The Christiana Riot** . . . , p. 32. Dickinson Gorsuch's recovery was not expected: "At last accounts, young Mr. Gorsuch was yet alive, though shockingly wounded and mal-treated. It was feared that his ultimate recovery was impossible. Indeed his death was hourly looked for." **North American** (Philadelphia), September 16, 1851.
49. Hensel, **The Christiana Riot** . . . , p. 33.
50. Parker, **Atlantic Monthly**, XVII, 287.
51. An account of their flight can be found in Smedley, **History of the Underground Railroad**, pp. 120-6; and Hensel, **Lancaster County Historical Society Papers** XVI, 138-41.
52. Frederick Douglas, **Life and Times of Frederick Douglas** (no. ed.; Boston: 892), p. 349-50 cited in Nash, **Journal of Negro History**, XLVI, No. 1, 30.
53. **Ibid.**, 31.
54. **Frederick Douglas' Paper**, (Rochester, New York), October 2, 1851.

III. HE DIED FOR THE LAW

- 1 **Baltimore Sun**, September 11, 1955.
2. The Whig Party of Pennsylvania, was condemned for sanctioning Abolitionists movements in the Keystone State. "The Whig Party came up with Abolitionism and anti-slaveryism and it must go down through them." **The Daily Union** (District of Columbia), September 14, 1851.
3. David Francis Magee, "The Christiana Riot: Its causes and effects, From a Southern Stand Point," **Lancaster County Historical Society Papers**, XV (June 30, 1911), 204.
4. U. S., **Constitution**, Art. 4, Sec. 2.
5. **Ibid** . . .
6. U. S., **Statutes at Large**, IX, 462-465; cited in William MacDonald, **Selected Documents Illustrative of the History of the United States, 1776-1861** (New York: MacMillan Company, 1907), p.p. 386-389.
7. U. S. **Constitution**, Art. 3, Sec. 3.
8. **American and Commercial Daily Advertiser** (Ballemore), September 16, 1851; **American Volunteer** (Carlisle, Pennsylvania), September 25, 1851; Morrison and Commager, pp. 349-50.
9. **Ibid.**, p. 365.
10. **American Volunteer**, September 25, 1851.
11. September 13, 1851.
12. Magee, **Lancaster County Historical Society Papers**, XV, 207.
13. **Ibid.** . . .
14. **Ibid.** 206

IV. THE SLAVERY RESISTANCE IN THE CHRISTIANA AREA

1. Smedley, p. 108-9.
2. He was sent to the "Quarters" after his mother's death. The "Quarters" consisted of a number of low buildings in which slaves of both sexes lived. The building that he was sent to, was for single people and for children whose parents had been sold or had died. The building was one hundred feet long and thirty feet wide. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
4. Nash, *Journal of Negro History*, XLVI, No. 1, 24.
5. Smedley, p. 111-2.
6. Nash, *Journal of Negro History*, XLVI, No. 1, 24.
7. *Ibid.*, 25.
8. Parker, *Atlantic Monthly*, XVII, No. 160.
9. Nash, *Journal of Negro History*, XLVI, No. 1, 26.
10. Parker, *Atlantic Monthly*, XVII, 62.
11. The *Pennsylvania Freeman* (Philadelphia), October 9, 1851.
12. Hensel, *The Christiana Riot*. . . , p. 18.
13. *Ibid.*. . .
14. Smedley, p. 247-8.
15. *Lancaster Examiner* cited in the *Baltimore Weekly Sun*, September 20, 1851.
16. *Ibid.*. . . Soon after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, William Still organized the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee to aid in the protection of Negroes.
17. The *Pennsylvania Freeman*, March 6, 1851.
18. Smedley, p. 265. However Burleigh did not always achieve the same welcome in all places. In Oxford he was arrested, and sent to jail in West Chester. Simon Barnard, hearing of his arrest, proceeded to the jail and had him released on bail. Burleigh told Barnard that his mission in Oxford had not been completed, and he went back to Oxford where he was re-arrested for preaching anti-slavery doctrines. *Ibid.*, p. 287.
19. The *Pennsylvania Freeman*, February 20, 1851.
20. Kidnapping referred to the unlawful recapture of slaves or freed Negroes and selling them back into slavery.
21. Hensel, *The Christiana Riot*. . . , p. 18.
22. Smedley, p. 98; and Nash, *Journal of Negro History*, XLVI, No. 1, 26.
23. *Ibid.*, 27
24. Graeff, p. 196-7.
25. Nash, *Journal of Negro History*, XLVI, No. 1, 26.
26. The *Pennsylvania Freeman*, March 6, 1851.
27. Smedley, p. 96.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 96-7.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
30. Nash, *Journal of Negro History*, XLVI, No. 1, 26. In the ensuing battle three of the slave catchers were killed and the others were badly beaten.
31. Smedley, p. 132.
32. Hensel, *The Christiana Riot*. . . , p. 16.
33. Smedley, p. 97-8.
34. Smedley, p. 98; and Nash, *Journal of Negro History*, XLVI, No. 1, 26.
35. Smedley, p. 98.
36. *Ibid.*; and Hensel, *The Christiana Riot*. . . , p. 17. It was later learned that Williams had been beaten so badly that the mistress refused to pay Baer for his work. Nash, *Journal of Negro History*, XLVI, No. 1, 26-7.

V. THE REACTION TO THE CHRISTIANA TRAGEDY

1. **Negro-Mania** condemned the Negro race. In the book Campbell said that the negro has been in contact with the whites for five thousand years and has yet to produce a great man or a great work in science. "That is the history of the past, so it is of the present, and will be of the future. They can never be ele-

vated, and consequently can never live upon the terms of peace and equality in the white races, but must ever be in an inferior condition." *The Pennsylvanian* (Philadelphia), September 18, 1851.

2. *Baltimore Weekly Sun*, September 20, 1851.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *The Daily Union*, September 14, 1851.
6. *Ibid.*; *The Daily Union* accused the President and his cabinet of entertaining Abolitionists to battle and murder because Fillmore appointed Hall, Post Master General, who had introduced a bill into Congress (February 28, 1848), that would have prevented the use of United States prisons for the housing of recaptured runaway slaves.
7. *American Volunteer*, September 18, 1851.
8. *The Pennsylvanian*, September 16, 1851.
9. *The Daily Union*, September 23, 1851.
10. *American Democrat* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania), September 11, 1851.
11. *Cumberland* (Maryland) *Miner's Journal*, October 3, 1851. On the day of the riot Governor Johnson was on the train that stopped at Christiana. The passengers alighted from the train to go to the scene of the riot. Johnson remained on the train and appeared to be disinterested about the affray. When he reached Philadelphia, he ignored the riot. "He has been indifferent, torpid and inactive, when zeal, promptitude and dispatch were required." *American Democrat*, September 25, 1851.
12. Nash, *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, LXV, No. 2, 77.
13. *Baltimore Patriot*, October 4, 1851.
14. *The Baltimore Clipper* advertised that Mr. Pollard, the Emigration Agent for the Colony of Trinidad, was in Baltimore recruiting negroes. *Baltimore Clipper*, September 15, 1851.
15. Nash, *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, LXV, No. 2, 78.
16. *The Southern Press* (District of Columbia) September 13, 1851.
17. *Fairfield* (South Carolina) *Herald* quoted in the *Boston Liberator*, September 21, 1851 and cited by Nash, *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, LXV, No. 2, 79.
18. *The Sun* (Baltimore), September 25, 1851; and *The Southern Press*, September 19, 1851.
19. *The Pennsylvanian*, September 13, 1851.
20. *Weekly American* (Waterbury, Connecticut), September 19, 1851 quoted by Albert Hostetter, "The Newspapers and the Christiana Riot," *Lancaster County Historical Society Papers*, XV (1911), 299.
21. *Indiana State Sentinel*, September 25, 1851 quoted by Hostetter, *Lancaster County Historical Society Papers*, XV, 302.
22. *The Pennsylvanian*, September 13, 1851.
23. *Christian Register* (Boston), September 20, 1851 as quoted by Nash, *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, LXV No. 2, 83.
24. *Independent* as cited in the *New York Times*, September 22, 1851.
25. *New York Evening Post*, October 9 and 23, 1851, quoted by Nash, *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, LXV, No. 2, 84.
26. *New York Tribune* as cited in *The Southern Press*, September 19, 1851.
27. *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (New York) September 18, 1851 as cited by Nash, *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, LXV, No. 2, 85.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Boston Liberator*, October 10, 1851 as quoted by Nash, *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, LXV, No. 2, 85.
30. *Worcester Massachusetts Spy*, September 17, 1851 as quoted by Nash, *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, LXV, No. 2, 85.
31. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, September 25, 1851.
32. *The Pennsylvania Freeman*, October 9, 1851.
33. "Christiana Riot" by Mary Robinson found in the *Commemoration [Program] of the Christiana Riot and Treason Trials of 1851*, (Lancaster: Lancaster County Historical Society, 1911).

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