

Advertising for slaves

Selected advertisements from the *Carolina Watchman* (Salisbury, North Carolina), January 7, 1837.

As you read...

The advertisements here are reprinted from a single issue of the *Carolina Watchman* of Salisbury, North Carolina, for January 7, 1837. In antebellum North Carolina, newspapers printed classified advertisements written by slave holders searching for runaway slaves, as well as ads posted by those wishing to buy or sell slaves. Although most of these ads are no more than a few lines long, they can tell us a great deal about slavery and society in the antebellum era.

For an in-depth look at these ads, see Reading primary sources: Newspaper advertisements.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What can we tell from these advertisements about the people who placed them? Who were they? What kinds of lives did they lead, or might they have led?
2. What can we learn about the slaves referred to in the ads? What kinds of information about the slaves did the advertisers include? Why do you think they chose to include these pieces of information, and not others?
3. How do the advertisers try to get people's attention?
4. In what ways are the slaves described as people? In what ways are they described as property?
5. What can we tell, or guess, about the relationships between the slave owners who placed these ads and the slaves they describe?
6. What do you think might have been going on in the second advertisement? Why would a sale take place "pursuant to [following] a court order"?



Figure 1.

The issue of the Carolina Watchman from which these advertisements were taken, page 1 of 2.



Figure 2.

Page 2 of 2.

\$20 reward

RANAWAY from the subscriber on 19th of November, a negro man, named TIM about 45 years of age, black complexion, about five feet four or five inches high, has a stoppage in his speech. He professes to be a very devout Baptist. Having purchased him in Montgomery county, not far from Stokes' Ferry, my opinion is, that he is in that neighborhood. I will give the above reward for his apprehension and delivery to me.

HENRY S. GORMAN.

Concord, Dec 17, 1836 — 4w22

. . .

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA, SURRY COUNTY

Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, November Term, 1836

William Davis, Adm'r & Ex'r Expartae

Pursuant to an order of Court, the subscriber will expose to public sale, at Mount Airy, Surry Co. on the 6th day of January next, on a credit of six months,

TWELVE LIKELY^T

Negroes,

Consisting of a likely fellow,

two women, and nine well

grown children

The purchasers will be required to give bond with approved security.

WM. DAVIS Adm'r of James
McCraw, dec's, and Ex'tor of
Matthew Davis, deceased

December 17 — 3w 22

. . .

\$50 REWARD

RANAWAY from the subscriber two negro slaves, viz TONEY and JOHN. Toney is about 35 years of age, five feet nine or ten inches high, dark complexion, square and stout build and had on when he left, a bright drab Petersham² overcoat. He was purchased by me of Mr. Richard Brasley of Wilmington, and calls himself Toney Montague. John is about twenty years of age, of rather lighter complexion than Toney, about five feet 10 inches high, and is quite stout b_____ — he has a full round face, and has lost two front teeth above and below

which is his most distinguishing mark. He had on when he left, a light grey woolen round Jacket and pantaloons.

The above slaves left the camp of the subscriber while on his way to the Western country, eight miles above Lincolnton, on 28^t of last month, and will no doubt endeavor to make their way back to Wilmington. The above reward will be given for their apprehension, so that I get them again.

JAMES MOORE.

Dec 10, 1836 — __21

. . .

CASH FOR NEGROES

THE Subscriber will purchase any number of likely young NEGROES during the next six months, for which liberal prices in cash will be given.

I wish all letters on business, addressed to me at Germanton, Stokes County.

TYRE GLEN.

July 18, 1836 — __52

. . .

NOTICE.

IN pursuance of an order of the Cabarrus County Court, made at October Sessions 1836, I will sell at the Courthouse door in Concord, on the 3^d Monday in February next a Negro Boy named NATHAN, the property of W.P. Stackton, dec'd, for cash.

W.H. ARCHIBALD, Shff.
Of Cabarrus County N.C.

Dec 3 1836 — tf20

. . .

STOP THE RUNAWAY.

RANAWAY from the subscriber living near Liberty Hill, in Iredell county, N.C., a negro man named

PETER,

Formerly owned by James Cunningham. He is between forty and fifty years old; of a yellowish complexion — round face and small eyes. He is marked with a scar in one of his ears, which has not grown together; also with a scar on the underside of his heel; which has not _____; he has also a small scar on one of his cheeks and is about five feet, five or six inches in height.

Any one taking up this negro and lodging him in jail or delivering him to me, shall be reasonably compensated.

HUGH CUNNINGHAM.
Liberty Hill, Iredell co. N. C.

June 11th, 1836 — 47

On the web

Reading newspapers: Advertisements

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/4185>

A learner's guide to reading and understanding advertisements in historical newspapers.

Teaching about slavery through newspaper advertisements

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/4120>

In this lesson for grades 8 and 11, students will analyze a selection of advertisements related to slavery from an 1837 newspaper in order to enhance their understanding of antebellum North Carolina, U.S. history, and the history of American slavery.

Stealing a Little Freedom: Slave Runaways in North Carolina

<http://www.sog.unc.edu/programs/civiced/resources/docs/slaverunaways.pdf>

In this lesson plan from the North Carolina Civic Education Consortium, students will explore the perspective that in actuality, those enslaved were resilient in many ways, some by making the risky choice to run away. Through the exploration of runaway ads from the 1700s, students will gain an understanding of the individual lives affected by slavery during the 1700s as well as the skills and characteristics possessed by such individuals.

More from LEARN NC

Visit us on the web at www.learnnc.org to learn more about topics related to this article, including North Carolina, advertising, antebellum, history, newspapers, and slavery.

Notes

1. *Likely* in this sense meant that the person appeared strong, capable, or vigorous.
2. Petersham was a rough, knotted woolen cloth.

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