

Journal C of Station No. 2

William Still

1852-1857

Vigilance Committee of Philadelphia, PAS Papers, HSP

1853

Nov 2nd Arrived- Robt. Jackson (Shot man) alias Wesley Harris, age 22 yrs of dark complexion and slender stature. Robt. was born in Martinsburg, Va. and by Philip Pendleton. From a boy he had always been hired out. At the first of this ~~present~~ year he commenced service with Mrs. Carroll proprietor of the U.S. Hotel at Harpers Ferry; of Mrs. C he speaks in very greatfull terms- saying that she was kind to him and all the Servants, and promised all their freedom at her death. She excused herself for not giving any their freedom on the ground that her husband had died insolvent¹, leaving her with the responsibility of his debts to settle, but while Mrs. C. was very kind to the servants- her manager was equally as cruel. About a month before Wesley left the overseer, for some trifling cause, attempted to flog him- but was resisted & himself flogged ~~by Wesley~~. This resistance by the slave was regarded by the overseer as an unpardonable offence; consequently- he communicated the intelligence to his owner, which had the desired effect on his mind, as appeared from his answer to the overseer- which was nothing less than instruction that if he should again attempt to correct W and ~~if he should again resist~~ he should repel the wholesome treatment the overseer was to put him in prison and sell him. Whether he offended again or not the following Christmas as he was to be sold without fail. Wesley's mistress was kind enough to apprise him of the intensions of his owner & the overseer and told him if he could do better he had better do so. So from that time his mind began to contemplate how he should escape the doom which had been planed for him. "A friend by the name of C. Matterson told me that he was going off – then I told him of my ~~Boss~~ masters ? to Mrs. C. concerning Selling me, and that I was going off too we then concluded to go together. These were two other Bros of Matterson, who were apprised of our plan to escape, and readily joined with us in the undertaking. So one Saturday (night) at 12 ocl². We set out for the North. After traveling upwards of two days and over 60 miles, we found ourselves unexpectedly in Tarreytown, MD. Here we was informed by a friendly col'd³ man of the danger we were in- of the bad character of the place towards Col'd people, especially escaping for their freedom, and he advised us to hide as quickly as we could. We at once went to the woods and hid. Soon after we had secreted ourselves, a man came near by and commenced splitting some wood or rails, which interrupted us. We then moved to another hiding place, in a ticket, near a farmers barn where we was soon interrupted again by a dog coming and barking at us. Consequently the attention of the owner of the dog was drawn to his barking & to where we was. The owner of the dog was a farmer. He asked us where we were going- we replied to Gettysburg to see our aunts, he told us that we were running off. He then offered kindly advise- talked like a Quaker- and advised us to go with him to his barn for protection. After much persuasion we consented to go with him. Soon after putting us in his barn, himself and daughter fixed us a nice brakefast, which cheered our spirits, as we were

hungry. For our brakefast we pd. him \$1. He next told us to hide on the mough⁶ till eve- when he would safely direct us on our road to Gettysburg. We all, being very much fatigued from traveling fell asleep (excepting myself) I could not, I felt as if all was not right- About noon men were heard talking around the barn- I woke my companions up and told them that that man had betrayed us. At first they did not believe me. In a moment afterwards the barn door was opened and in came the men- eight in no.⁵ one of the men asked the owner of the barn (Joe Reeve) if he had any long straw- yes was the ans.⁶ So up on the mough 3 of the men came when to their great surprise, as they pretended, we were discovered. The question was then asked the owner of the barn by one of the men, if he harbored runaway negroes in his barn! He answered no, and let on to be entirely ignorant of their being in his barn. One of the men replied that four negroes were on the mough, and he well knew of it. The men then asked us where we were going- we told them to Gettysburg that we had aunts & a mother there. Also, we spoke of a Mr. Haughman- a gentleman we happened to have some knowledge of having seen him in Va.- we was next asked for our pass- we told them that we hadn't any- that we had not been requested to carry them where we came from- they said then that we would have to go before a Magistrate and if he would allow us to go on well & good- the men all being armed and furnished with ropes- we were ordered to be tied. I told them if they took me they would have to take me dead or crippled- at that instant, one of my friends cried out- where is the man who betrayed us? Spying him at the same moment, he shot him (badly wounding him) then the conflict fairly began. The constable seized me by the collar or rather behind my shoulder- I at once shot him with my Pistol- but in consequence of his throwing up his arm which hit mine as I fired, the effect of ~~my~~ the load of my pistol was much turned aside- his face was badly burned besides his shoulder being wounded. I again fired on the pursuers but do not know whether I hit any body or not. I then drew a sword from a case I had brought with me and was about to cuting my way to the door when I was shot by one of the men- receiving the entire contents of one load of a double barreled gun in my left arm- that being the arm which I was defending myself with. The load brought me to the ground and I was unable to make further struggle for myself. I was then badly beaten with guns &c. In the meantime my friend Craven who was defending himself, was shot badly in the face- and most violently beaten until he was conquered and tied. The two young Bros of Craven stood still without making the least resistance.

After we were fairly captured, we were taken to Tarreytown, which was in sight of where we were betrayed. By this time I'd lost so much blood from my wound that they concluded my situation too arduous to admit of being taken further, so I was made a prisoner at a tavern kept by a man named Fisher where my wounds were dressed & thirty two shots were taken from my arm- for three days I was crazy and they thought I would die. During the first two weeks while I was a prisoner at the tavern, I raised a great deal of blood, and was considered very dangerous, so much so that individuals who desired to see me were not prevented. Afterwards, I began to get better, and was then kept very privately- was strictly watched day & night- occasionally the cook (Mrs. Smith, a col'd woman) would manage to get to see me- also James Matthews succeeded in getting to see me. Consequently, as my wounds healed and my senses came to me, I began to plan how to make another effort to escape- I asked one of the friends alluded to above how to get me a rope. He got it- I kept it about 4 days in my pocket- in the meantime I procured 3 nails – on the Friday night, Oct. 14th I fastened my nails in under the window sill- tied my rope to the nails- threw my shoes out of the window, put the rope in my mouth, then took hold of it with my well hand clambered into the window- very weak but I managed to let myself down to the ground. I was so weak that I could scarcely walk, but I managed to hobble off to a place about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the tavern where a frd had fixed upon for me to go if I succeeded in making my escape. There I was found by my friend, who kept me secure till Saturday eve, when a swift horse was furnished by James Rogers and a col'd man found to

conduct me to Gettysburg. We took a different road in order to shun our pursuers as the news of my escape had created general excitement.

My three other companions who were captured with me were sent to West Minister Jail where they were kept three weeks and after sent to Baltimore and sold for \$12.00 a piece, as I was informed while at the Tavern in Tarreytown.

¹ bankrupt

² o'clock

³ colored

⁴ mow- a place in a barn where hay and grain are stored

⁵ number

Philadelphia

He was brought to my house by
O. S. R. and was examined by him
and myself, and also next morn-
ing, by Mr. McK. at the A. S. O.
We were not as thoroughly satisfied
with this case as we wished to be but
were all agreed that it was advis-
able to send him away -

Expenses

1858

For 2nd

Arrived - Robt. Jackson (shortman)
alias Wesley Harris, age 22 Yrs of
dark complexion and of slender stature.
Robt. was born in Martinsburg Va.
and of by ~~his~~ ^{his} parents. From a boy he
had always been hired out. At the first
of this present year he commenced service
with Mrs. Carroll proprietress of the
M. S. Hotel at Harpers Ferry; of
Mrs. C. he speaks in very great full
terms - saying that she was kind to
him and all the servants, and provided

Philadelphia

told their freedom at her death. She
excused herself for not giving them
the money, then for ^{their freedom} ~~consequently~~ ^{the} ~~reason~~
on the ground that her husband
had died insolvent, leaving her with
the responsibility of his debts to settle.
But while Mrs. C. was very kind to her
servants, her Manager was equally as
cruel. About a Month before ^{Wesley} R. left
the overseer, for some trifling cause, attempt-
ed to flog him. But he resisted him-
self flogged by Wesley. This resistance
by the slave was regarded by the overseer
as an unpardonable offence; con-
sequently he communicated the in-
telligence to his owner, which had the
desired effect on his mind, as appeared
from his answer to the overseer saying
which was nothing less than instructions
that if he should again attempt
to connect him, and if he should
the whole treatment
again resist, the overseer was to put
him in Prison & sell him. Whether he

of the magazine of the North. In preparing Christmas he
 he used to be very kind and kind. Wesley's brother
 was kind enough to apprise them of the plan and
 of his own report. The Committee had told them if
 he could do better he had better do so. So far
 that time Wesley had begun to contemplate how
 I should escape the situation which had been planned
 for him! A friend by the name of Mr. M^r told
 me that he was going off. Then I told him
 my ^{Master's} plan to write to Mrs. C. concerning selling
 me, and that I was going off too. We then
 concluded to go together. There were three other
 Bros of M^r Gordon, who were apprised of our
 plan to escape, and readily joined with us in
 the undertaking. So one Saturday ^{night} we set out for the North. After traveling
 several of two days, and over 100 miles, we
 found ourselves unexpectedly in Taneytown.
 There we were informed by a friendly Col^d
 man of the danger we were in - of the bad
 character of the place towards Col^d people,
 especially escaping for their freedom; and

He advised us to hide as quickly as we could. We
at once went to the woods and hid. Soon after
we had secreted ourselves, a man came near by
and commenced splitting some wood on rails,
which interrupted us. We then moved to another
hiding place, in a thicket, near a farmer's barn,
where we was soon interrupted again by
a dog bark coming and barking at us. Con-
sequently the attention of the owner of the
dog was drawn to his barking & to where we
was. The owner of the dog was a Farmer. He
asked us where we were going - we replied to
Gettysburg, to see our Aunt, &c. He told us that
we were running off. He then offered friendly
advice - talked like a Quaker - and advised
us to go with him to his barn for protection. After
much persuasion we consented to go with
him. Soon after putting us in his barn, himself
and daughter fixed us a nice breakfast,
which cheered our spirits, as we were hungry.
For our breakfast we had from the Farmer.
He told us to hide on the Mangle till even - when
he would help us out, as we were afraid.

to Gettysburg. We, all, being very much fatigued from traveling fell asleep (excepting myself). I could not, I felt as if all was not right. About noon when we heard talking around the barn. I woke my companions up and told them that that man had betrayed us. At first they did not believe me. In a moment afterwards the barn door was opened and in came the men - eight in no. One of the men asked the owner of the barn (the Reever) if he had any long straw. Yes was the answer. So up on the Mough 3 of the men came when to their great surprise, as they pretended we were discovered. The question was then asked ^{the owner of the barn} by one of the men, if he had any Negroes in his barn! He answered no, and let on to be entirely ignorant of there being any in his barn. One of the men replied that our Negroes were on the Mough, and he would see of it. The men then asked us where we were going. We told them to Gettysburg that we had Aunts & a Mother there.

When we spoke of a Mr. Haughman -
a group we happened to have some know-
ledge of, having seen him in Va. - We was
next asked for our Pass - we told them that
we had none - that we had not been reques-
ted to carry them where we came from - They
said then that we would have to go before
a Magistrate, and if he would allow us to
go on well & good - The men all being armed and
furnished with ropes, we were ordered to be tied,
I told them if they took me they would
have to take me dead or crippled - at that
instant, one of my friends cried out - where
is the man who betrayed us? Spying him at
the same moment, he shot him (badly wounding
him) Then the conflict fairly began - The Con-
stable seized me by the collar, or rather be-
hind my shoulder - I at once shot him with my
Pistol - but in consequence of his throwing up his
^{which hit mine} arm, as I fired, the effect of ^{the} ~~my~~ load of my Pistol
was much turned aside - his face was ~~badly~~ ^{badly} ~~burned~~ ^{burned}
besides his shoulder being wounded. I again
fired on the pursuers - but do not know whether

shot any body or not. I then drew a sword
from a case I had brought with me and
was about to cutting my way to the shore
I was shot by one of the men - receiving the
entire contents of one load of a double barreled gun
in my left arm - that being the arm which I
was depending myself with. The load brought
me to the ground - and I was unable to make
further struggle for myself. I was then lead
together with Gundersen. In the meantime my friend
O'ranen who was defending himself, was
shot badly in the face - and most violently
wounded, until he was conquered and tied.
The two young Bros of O'ranen stood still
without making the least resistance.
After we were fairly captured, we were
taken to Larnierstown, which was in
where we were betrayed. By this time
I lost so much blood from my wound
that they concluded my situation too
serious to admit of being taken further, so I
became a prisoner at a Tavern kept by a man
named Latham where my wounds were dressed.

Thirty two shots were taken from my arm -
From those days I was perfectly crazy, and they
thought I would die. During the first two weeks
while I was a prisoner at the Panern; I raised
a great deal of blood, and was considered very
dangerous, so much so that individuals who desired
to see me ^{were} ~~was~~ not prevented. Afterwards I began
to get better, and was then kept very private -
was strictly watched day & night - Occasionally
however, the Cook (a ^{Mrs. Smith} woman) would manage
to get to see me. Also James Matthews succeeded in
going to see me. Consequently, as I improved in
my wounds healed, and my senses came to me,
I began to plan how to make another effort to
escape - I asked one of the friends alluded to
above to get me a rope. He got it - I kept it
about 4 days in my pocket - In the meantime
procured 3 nails - On the ^{Friday} Night, Oct. 14th, I fastened
nails in under the window sill - Tied my rope
the nails - Threw my shoes out of the window;
put the rope in my mouth, then took hold of
with my left hand, clambered into the
^{from break}
place - ~~gave~~ ^{pushed} myself over the fence - but did not succeed.

to let myself down to the ground. I was
so weak that I could scarcely walk, but I
managed to hobble off to a place about $\frac{3}{4}$ of
a mile from the Tavern - where a friend had fixed up
for me to go, if I succeeded in making my escape.
There I was found by my friend, who kept me
secure till Saturday eve, when a swift horse
was furnished by James Roger, and a cold
man found to conduct me to Gettysburg -
instead of going direct to Gettysburg we took
a different road, in order to shun our pursuers.
At the news of my escape had created general
excitement.

My three other companions who
were captured with me were sent to West
Minister Jail, where they were kept three
weeks and after sent to Baltimore and
sold for \$12.00 a piece, as I was informed
while at the Tavern in Tanneytown.