

## HERON COUNTY

### 12 fugitives seized at Fisherville

Oct. 1842.

[History of Herkitt Township, Heron County, Ohio

By G. H. Bailey]

In October, 1842, twelve fugitives--five men, three women, and four children--belonging respectively to three different masters, fled from Campbell county, Kentucky, crossed the Ohio river, and found passage north to Fisherville (Heron county), where Mr. S. Palmer sheltered them. The agent of the slave owners and his Ohio allies were quickly on hand with a warrant issued by virtue of the Ohio Black law of February 26, 1830, seized the negroes, and took them before a justice of the peace of Herkitt Township. By writ of habeas corpus they were transferred for their hearing by an associate justice of the Court of Common Pleas. He found the testimony relating to five of them insufficient and remanded them to slavery. The others were held to await the bringing of more evidence from Kentucky, but were discouraged by the fate of their fellow and consented to be taken back.

The sheriff of Heron county had refused to admit the ~~fugitives~~ fugitives to the jail for safe-keeping and they had been kept in the old "Jeff House," under an armed guard until the hearing terminated.

On Sunday, November 7, 1842, a meeting was held in the courthouse of Herkitt to consider attempting to purchase the twelve slaves. A committee of three was appointed to correspond with the owners regarding their purchase.

A committee of six representing Norwich, Sandusky, and Pithersville, was named to solicit subscriptions to buy the negroes if practicable. The meeting then adjourned to convene three weeks later, but the effort was soon abandoned. On November 27th, a meeting at Pithersville condemned the surrender of the fugitives and the secret harboring of the slaveholder and his Ohio hirelings in the town ~~for~~ to accomplish their nefarious purposes.

Across the front of the "Half House" stretched a lower and an upper veranda. The twelve captives were allowed to take the air on the upper deck. They were not there on the first Sunday of their confinement, and the small son of Mr. Elliot Gallup, who lived next door, was hauling apples up to them. A large negro stepped down to the railing and dropped an object that showed some bright reflections in the tall grass at the lad's feet. The <sup>boy</sup> ~~avoided~~ attracting the attention of the hotel guests on the lower porch by ignoring the object in the grass. He soon told his father what had happened, and that night Mr. Gallup picked up a silver-handled, double-edged bowie knife, encased in a silver-trimmed leather sheath. Perhaps a year later a Norwich constable called on Mr. Gallup and demanded the knife, alleging that he had a search warrant for it. Mr. Gallup took up the iron poker from the fireplace and asked if that was the knife he was looking for. He departed without further comment. However, a suit was begun later against Mr. Gallup for the value of the knife, but was dropped after he insisted on a jury trial.

MEMORANDUM

On the following Sunday morning, while the church bells were ringing for service and after the rendition order had been issued, the fugitives were armed and loaded into a stage drawn by four horses for their journey back to the land of slavery.

In the Norfolk Examiner of December 7, 1848, an anonymous communication from Pittsville <sup>related in substance</sup> stated that, according to abolitionists, there existed some "eighteen or nineteen thoroughly organized slaveholders through the State of Ohio for the transportation of runaway and stolen slaves." The route that passed through Pittsville the author declared from his certain knowledge had done a "land office business."

The seizure at Pittsville and <sup>the fact that</sup> similar affairs in other parts of Ohio created public sentiment against <sup>the Fugitive</sup> Law of 1850, and the Ohio legislature repealed it on January 19, 1848, at the same time reviving the act to prevent kidnaping of colored citizens, passed on February 10, 1848.