

Transcription

"We will all be free pretty soon"

At a County Court for Mecklenburg County, held at the Courthouse thereof, on Tuesday the 21st. day of May one thousand eight hundred and Sixty one.

Present James T Walker, Samuel G Johnson, Anderson Overby, A G Boyd, and William H. Harriss Gent. Justices

Sam, a slave, the property of John H Winckler of Mecklenburg County, who stands charged with a felony by him committed in the County of Mecklenburg and within the jurisdiction of this court, in this, that he did on the day of 1861 in the said County, plot and conspire to rebel and make insurrection, was this day set to the bar of the Court in custody of the Sheriff of this County, and E. R. Chambers being assigned by the court his counsel and doth fix his fee at Fifteen Dollars; and the said slave Sam being thereupon arraigned, pleaded not guilty; and the court having hard the evidence are unanimously of opinion that the said Slave Sam is guilty of the offence wherewith he stands charged, and doth order that the said slave Sam be transported and sold beyond the limits of the United States, and that the Sheriff of this County so soon after the adjournment of this Court remove and safely convey the said slave Sam from the Jail of this County to the City of Richmond to be delivered to the executive of the state. And the said slave Sam is remanded to Jail. And the court proceeding to value the said slave Sam as the law directs, each of the Justices present in Court affixed to him such value as in his opinion the said slave would bring if sold publicly under a knowledge of the circumstances of his guilt. Whereupon James T Walker valued the said slave at \$500:— Samuel G Johnson at \$600:— Anderson Overby at \$500:—A G Boyd at \$500:—and William H Harriss at \$600.—from which the legal value of the said slave Sam is ascertained to be Five Hundred and forty Dollars.

The following is a copy of the certificate of the committing Justice, by virtue of which this trial was had, viz:

Mecklenburg County, to wit.

To the Clerk of the County Court of said County. I, O H P Corprew a Justice of the said County, do hereby certify that I have this day committed to the Jail of your County, a negro slave Sam the property of John H Winckler to be tried before the County Court of said County for a felony by him committed, in this, that he did on the day of 1861 in the said County, plot and conspire to rebel and make insurrection. Given under my hand this 9th. day of May 1861.

O. H. P. Corprew J.P.



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The following are copies of the depositions of the witnesses examined, taken down in Court and filed, viz:

Robert A Adams being sworn testifies that on a Sunday in April 1861 at the residence of Sally Adams in this County, he heard the prisoner Sam, speak as follows— Sam said that I suppose we will all be free pretty soon, I replied that I did not know. Oh yes, he said, from what I can find out, Old Lincoln is coming down the Mississippi river and will free every thing as he goes, and I think if we be pretty keen we will get our freedom too, that he heard that four or five hundred negroes in South Carolina had volunteered their services to go to fight for the South, and he said if he had his way with them he would cut all their heads off, and he said that if his master were to tell him that he had to go to fight for the South that he would not go, and that if he had to fight it would be a different way to that, that most of the white folks thought he was a fool, but that he had as much sense as most of the white folks and had as good leaders. Mrs Adams told him that he had better hush talking, and he replied that if they prosecuted him, they could not prosecute all that were left behind, that he knew there were no negroes in his district that would join the South—that if he could get his wife and children free at Tom Jones' he would be satisfied, he also said that if he could see every southern man's head cut off, he would not put his hand near to save their lives, he also asked me if I would fight against the north, and I asked him what was that to him and he muttered ~~out~~ some words as he walked off, which words I did not understand, in all of this conversation the prisoner spoke as if he was in earnest, he did not appear to be at all under the influence of ardent Spirits.

William D Adams being sworn testifies that on a Sunday in April 1861 at the residence of Sally Adams he heard the prisoner Sam speak as follows. I asked him if his Master (Mr Winckler) would make any tobacco this year, and he said yes, even if he could get only a cent a pound for it, and he added, but thank God we will all be free after a while, for old Lincoln is going to free us all and he hoped he would make haste and do it, for he meant to get his freedom as quickly as he could. Mrs Adams told him that he had better hush talking such talk as that, and he replied that what he said then he could say again and that what was in his head was in it, he also said other things which I do not now remember, there was no person present at this conversation except the prisoner, Sally Adams and myself, the prisoner spoke as if he were in earnest, and I do not think from his appearance and conversation that he had taken a drink of ardent Spirits that morning.



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John Adams being sworn testifies that in February 1861 he heard the prisoner Sam speak as follows, he said that he wished they would make haste and get through the war, that he might have his freedom, that there was some likelihood that he would get his freedom.

A transcript of the record

Teste

R. F. CLACK, Clerk.

Citation: Transcription of trial record in the case of the *Commonwealth v. Sam (a slave)*, Mecklenburg County, May 21, 1861, Executive Papers of Governor John Letcher, Pardons, May 1861, Acc. 36787, State Government Records Collection, Record Group 3, Library of Virginia.