

devastating to the loved ones of the condemned and are rightfully causing crises of morality and responsibility to those who participate in this machinery, crises that should affect every American.

ENDNOTES

- 1 "The Test" can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azcu8o1WP3Q&t=77s>
- 2 Sources of the details in this paragraph include court documents and interviews with Sam Oates.
- 3 Death Sentence Information Center, <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/node/2218>

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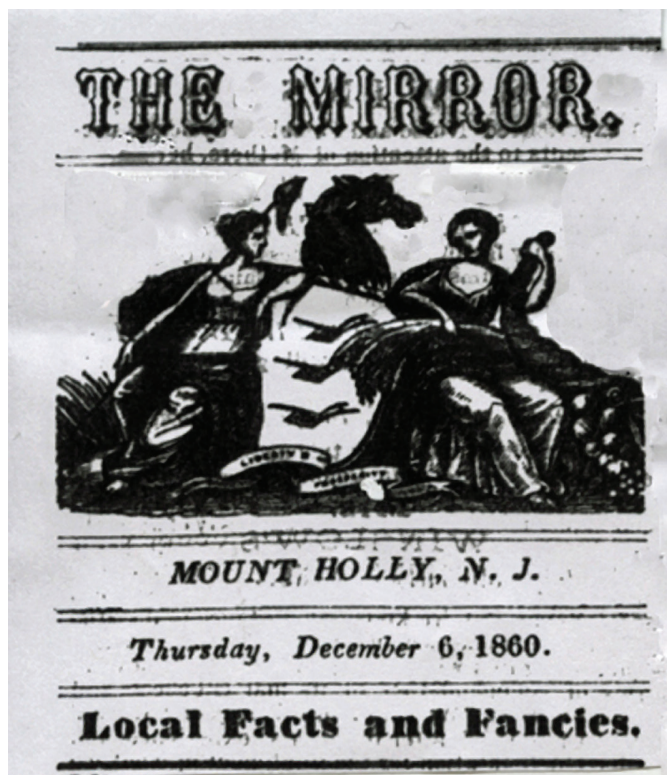
BATTLE AT PINE SWAMP

GUY WESTON

ABSTRACT

In northern states, where each legislature had taken definitive action against slavery by 1804, antebellum newspapers provide insightful glimpses into the lives and communities of free African Americans. The *New Jersey Mirror*, the predominant weekly publication of southern New Jersey, operated for over 130 years beginning in 1818. The newspaper recorded the local news of Burlington County, New Jersey, and vicinity. Overall, depiction of African Americans before the Civil War contradicts common assumptions about finding useful and positive information for our genealogical and historical research in antebellum white newspapers. Death reports of African Americans appeared together with reports of whites without fanfare, and frequently paid very flattering comments.

That's not to say there weren't pejorative and racist references. For example, African Americans are referred to as "darkies" in one article. The *New Jersey Mirror* is partially indexed and can be accessed through <http://www.bcls.lib.nj.us/newspapers/newjerseymirror>. Following is a transcription of 1860 New Jersey Mirror article "Excitement at Timbuctoo." This article reports on a failed attempt to capture a runaway slave.



Excitement at Timbuctoo

The Battle of Pine Swamp— The Invaders Forced to Retreat

New Jersey Mirror, December 6, 1860

Great excitement has been created among the colored population of Timbuctoo and vicinity, in consequence of a recent "visit extraordinary" of some officials and notorious individuals, in search of alleged runaway slaves. The contemplated visit was known to a few persons here, some weeks since. Suspicions were first excited in consequence of the notorious George Alberti, being seen in the neighborhood. He was accompanied by a Negro named Wright, a former resident of Timbuctoo. They were at the house of Elsie Jackson, a colored woman of that place, on a Sunday morning, leaving there about daylight.

On Saturday night last, the "grand descent" was made, which, unfortunately for the officers and their assistants, resulted in a "grand failure," and showed that it was no easy matter to capture a runaway slave, who has for ten or twelve years enjoyed his freedom.

The party started from Camden in four hacks, at about 8 1/2 o'clock in the evening. It comprised Deputy U.S. Marshal Schivers, George Alberti, the well-known slave-catcher who has been here before on the same business, Caleb Wright, a colored man who formerly lived in this vicinity, and some six or eight others from Camden and Philadelphia.

They arrived at Moorestown a few minutes before 10 o'clock, where we learn they procured the services of a constable, and then started on their journey. They came through Rancocas, up the Turnpike, turning into the Pine Swamp Road, proceeding cautiously on until a little after 11 o'clock, when they reached the scene of their operations—a one story tenant house, on the farm of Alan Fennimore, occupied by a colored man, named Perry Simmons. They already, doubtless, congratulated themselves upon their easy victory. They were well armed, and supplied with hand-cuffs. Twelve men thus "equipped" could certainly very soon and easily capture a negro or two. All being ready, they proceeded to the door of Perry's "castle," and gave some tremendous knocks, which aroused the family, consisting of Perry and his wife, a son aged 17, a daughter aged 21, and two small children. Perry asked who was there, when one of them said they had a warrant for Perry Simmons who was charged with stealing chickens at Moorestown. Perry at once suspected who they were and the object of their midnight errand, and very coolly answered that they could not fool Perry Simmons with any such story as that and with his family, hastily retreated to the loft, where he had two loaded guns, and an axe, and prepared himself for the worst.

The party becoming satisfied they would not admitted, broke open the door, and found that the inmates were in the attic which could only be reached by a winding stairway. They called upon Perry to surrender, but he told them "never, while he lived." The family were of course in the highest state of excitement and the alarm, but Perry, considering the circumstances, was firm and undaunted, and stood at the head of the stairway, with one of his guns, threatening to shoot the first man who attempted to come up. Two pistols, loaded only with powder, were fired up the steps thinking to intimidate him—but it was of no use.

He maintained his ground and not a man dared to approach him. Old Alberti, at one time, started up the stairway, but as he turned round, so that the top was visible, he saw that muzzle of Perry's musket was but a short distance from him, and he came down something quicker than he went up.

By this time the invading party, being quite cold, had made a fire, around which they remained all night. Perry and his family occasionally varying the entertainment by terrific screams of "murder" and "kidnappers," hoping thereby to arouse some of the neighbors.

The party remained until about half-past 6, in the morning, thinking all the while, that they would be able to adopt some plan to secure and carry off their prisoner. At an early

hour, a son of Allen Fenimore—for whom Perry worked—being on his way to the stable, heard the cry of kidnappers! Kidnappers!” and looking towards Perry’s house, saw the carriages. He hastened over, when he was ordered off by the kidnappers, and he immediately started for Timbuctoo, three quarters of a mile distant, and gave the alarm. The war tocsin was sounded, and in a few minutes, the inhabitants turned out en masse, and armed with every conceivable weapon, were soon on a “quick march” for the field of strife, yelling and screaming at the top of the voices.

The kidnappers hearing the unearthly noise, turned their eyes in the direction from whence it proceeded, and saw the negroes rapidly approaching—“terrible as an army with banners”—looking more infuriated and determined than a battalion of Zouaves, making a charge. They once concluded that “discretion was the better part of valor,” and hastily retreating to the carriages, left the scene of their brilliant achievement as though Old Satan was after them.

They undoubtedly had a great horror of the Timbuctoo warriors, for they went down the road at a rapid rate, and when they passed through Rancocas, the horses were even then being urged to their utmost speed.

This midnight attack upon the Pine Swamp Fortress will long be remembered. The heroic party came—they saw—but didn’t conquer. The foe was driven to his last

extremity, within the Fort, but not one of the plucky invaders dare close in upon him. He held them all at bay, until Timbuctoo’s Fusiliers, Reserve Guard, and Petticoat Rangers, under the command of King David, on “Old Shanks” high-mettled charger, came up, with shout and song, swept the field, and set the captives free.

Simmons has lived in this vicinity, some ten years. We presume he has left, ere this, for other parts. It is thought that the “kidnapping” party intended to carry off the entire family.

Wright, the colored spy and informer, when he lived in Timbuctoo, professed great pity, preached occasionally, and sang and shouted as loudly as any of them. He was then, doubtless, laying his plans to have some of the inhabitants captured, by which he could pocket a clever sum. If the Bucktonians should get hold of him, he would meet with rough usage, and perhaps exercise his vocal organs more powerfully than ever before.

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IF THIS CEMETERY COULD TALK

THE HODGES FAMILY BURIAL GROUNDS 1872–2007

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FOREWORD

“If This Cemetery Could Talk” is the first in a series of articles on the African American cemeteries in Bulloch County, Georgia. This series is designed to show the love and care that families took to honor their ancestors and give the reader a timeline of the creation of the family and church cemeteries in and around Bulloch County. The author will also discuss family cemeteries that have been abandoned, forgotten, and left alone with the elements.

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Introduction

As a young child, I spent many hours and summers with my grandmother, Bonnie Mae Donaldson (1901–1969), my sister Theresa and my brother Andrew (1947–1984) cleaning up the Hodges Cemetery. My grandmother used

to tell me the names of the unmarked graves and I learned them. Once we used some black shoe polish to mark the graves, but over the years, the names washed away. I also obtained information from my great uncle Buford Lee