



It Happened Near Me: Enslaved Workers in Loudoun

County: Loudoun

Date: 1859

Background: In the years before the Civil War, a typical small-town newspaper like Leesburg's Democratic Mirror was four pages, filled with news from a variety of correspondents in other places or borrowed from other newspapers, opinions along the line of the political party with which they sided, and small advertisements. Personal and commercial advertisements were intermingled on the advertising pages, including the sale and rental of enslaved people. Here are two such newspaper advertisements—one from 1858, the other from 1860.

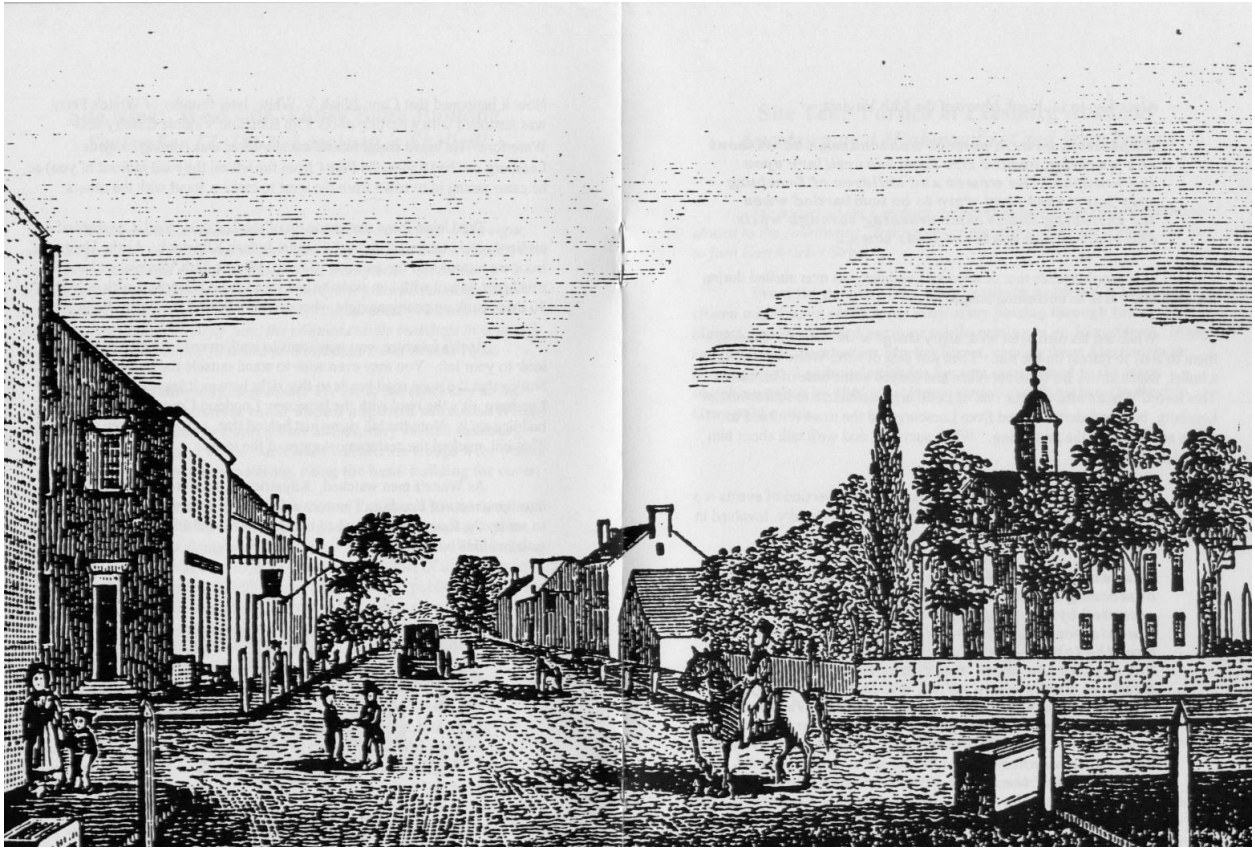
COMMISSIONERS' SALE
at LEESBURG, LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA.
of VALUABLE SLAVES!

among whom are Blacksmiths, Farm-Hands, House Servants, &c.
Under a decree of the Circuit Court of Loudoun County,
rendered in the suits of Alnutt vs. Mead, Trustee and
others, and Stewardson vs. Hixson, Sheriff, Administrator
of J.W. Gover and others, we will sell at public auction
to the highest bidder on
Wednesday, the 29th of December, 1858,
in front of the Court-House, in Leesburg, Va.,
NINE VALUABLE SLAVES,
formerly owned by the late John W. Gover.
They are ISAAH, about 29 years old, who is a good
BLACKSMITH--ISAAC, about 35--HARRIETT, about 22 and her
two children, JIM about 7 and EMMA about 2--ELIZA, about
14--JOHN about 12--MARIA about 10--and MARY about 7.
Sale to begin about 11 o'clock A.M.
TERMS--CASH!

SLAVES FOR HIRE.

The undersigned will have for hire on the 1st day of January, 1861,
a number of good slaves.

J. EDWIN YOUNG, Leesburg, Va.



Above, a ca. 1840 woodcut view of the Loudoun County Courthouse along North King Street in Leesburg. The sepia-tinted photograph at left below shows the courthouse just after the days of slavery. Slave auctions took place on the courthouse steps. At right below, the modern Loudoun courthouse. There are also many additions off camera. All three pictures look at the same location, the very center of law and government in Loudoun county. Like all Virginia counties before the Civil War, the Loudoun County government and courts accepted and worked with slavery and slave sales.



Making Sense of Evidence from the Past.

1. Slave sales are done as an auction. Where are slave auctions held in Loudoun?
Why there?
2. How old was Harriet when she had her first child?
3. John Gover is referred to as “the late John W. Gover.” What does this mean?
4. Will these slaves be sold as a group or individually—or in small groups?
What evidence or logic do you have for your conclusion?
5. What requirements will there be for someone to purchase a slave?
6. Before the age of each slave is given appears the word “about.” Why is this?
What does it tell us about the nature of slavery?