

While awaiting the court's decision and his subsequent execution, 31-year-old Nat Turner spent three days telling his story to his defense attorney, Thomas R. Gray. The chilling testimonial filled twenty-two pages as Gray dictated his questions and copiously wrote down Nat's answers. Nat, sometimes referred to as "*The Prophet*," spoke of awaiting a "*sign in the heavens*" to commence his "*great work*." When an eclipse of the sun mysteriously occurred, Nat took it as a symbol that "I should arise and prepare myself, and slay my enemies with their own weapons." In a vision the mystic Nat "*saw white spirits and black spirits engaged in battle, and the sun was darkened—the thunder rolled in the Heavens, and blood flowed in streams—and I heard a voice saying, 'Such is your luck, such you are called to see, and let it come rough or smooth, you must surely bear it.'*" Nat informed only his closest associates of the plans for his bloody revolution. It was determined that the handful of blacks would begin at the home of Nat's owner, Joseph Travis. Nat's confession methodically describes the demise of his first victims:

*Hark [Travis] went to the door with an ax, for the purpose of breaking it open, as we knew we were strong enough to murder the family should they be awakened by the noise; but reflecting that it might create an alarm in the neighborhood we determined to enter the house secretly and murder them whilst sleeping. Hark got a ladder and set it against the chimney, on which I ascended, and hoisting a window entered and came downstairs, unbarred the doors, and removed the guns from their places. It was then observed that I must spill the first blood, on which, armed with a hatchet and accompanied by Will [Francis], I entered my master's chamber.*

*It being dark I could not give a death-blow. The hatchet glanced from his head; he sprang from his bed and called his wife. It was his last word. Will laid him dead with a blow of his ax, and Mrs. Travis shared the same fate, as she lay in bed. The murder of this family, five in number, was the work of a moment, not one of them awoke: there was a little infant sleeping in a cradle, that was forgotten, until we had left the house and gone some distance, when Henry [Porter] and Will returned and killed it. We got here four guns that would shoot, and several old muskets, with a pound or two of powder.*

And on they went throughout the night from home to home in Southampton County, Virginia, slaying innocent victims and building an army of revolutionaries. Within forty-eight hours the insurrection was finished, but not before at least fifty-five whites had been butchered. It had been the longest and bloodiest slave revolt in American history.

Nat Turner was hanged about noon on Friday, November 11, 1831, in the town of Jerusalem. "*For natural intelligence and quickness of apprehension,*" said Thomas Gray, "*[Nat Turner] is surpassed by few men I have ever seen.*"

This month MRRT member **Jerry Maxwell** will present "***Black Spartacus: Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion of 1831.***" Jerry has given numerous talks to the Michigan Regimental in his thirty-plus years as a member. This one promises to be a bit different—so mark your calendars now: **MONDAY, JUNE 28.**

**FALL FIELD TRIP:** Forty-six members (a full bus load) have signed up for the October 23-24 trek to Chattanooga/Chickamauga. Eight folks, however, have not paid the \$45 registration fee. PLEASE bring your check (no cash will be accepted) made out to either Jerry Maxwell or Carroll Tietz. This month marks the DEADLINE. All checks will then be turned over to the treasurer for deposit. Next month we will be collecting the money for the Saturday night dinner.

The MRRT wishes to extend its thanks to last month's speaker, **Dave Smith**, for his informative program, "*They Didn't Like Each Other Much: Joseph E. Johnston and John C. Pemberton at Vicksburg.*"



**QUIZ: All questions pertain to Slavery or Slave Revolts**

1. What was a slave called who, according to a will, could not be freed by an heir? And, what was a “griff”?
2. At the Constitutional Convention of 1787 how did the Founding Fathers determine that slaves would be counted as population for the purpose of taxation and membership in the House of Representatives? And, what decision was made on Oversees Slave Trade at the same meeting?
3. Which Virginia slave was executed in 1800 for plotting a slave revolt involving thousands of slaves? And, what 2 reasons caused his revolt to get no further than the planning stages?
4. On what basis did the slave, Dred Scott, sue for his freedom? And, who was the Chief Justice that wrote the majority opinion for the Supreme Court in 1857?
5. What was the verdict of the Supreme Court in this landmark decision? And, what was Dred Scott’s ultimate outcome?
6. Which noted Southerner owned the most slaves at the outbreak of the Civil War? And, what was the name of Jefferson Davis’ “model” plantation in Mississippi?
7. According to the 1860 census, which slave state had the largest percentage of slaves? And, which state was second?
8. Which freed slave was executed in 1822 for planning a revolt on Charleston, South Carolina? And, how had he won his freedom prior to the revolt?
9. For 50 years the U.S. brought a free state and a slave state into the Union together. Why? And, what line, drawn through the old Louisiana Purchase, outlawed slavery above the line from 1820 to 1854?
10. When Michigan entered the Union on January 26, 1837, which slave territory entered the Union as Michigan’s “Sister State”? And, when Texas entered the Union as a slave state, which free territory became her “Sister State”?

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On the night of July 1, 1839, Joseph Cinque, an African aboard the Spanish slave ship, **Amistad**, worked closely with a fellow captive named Grabeau in making preparations for an insurrection. Finding a nail he had hidden under his arm, Cinque picked the lock on the iron collar around his neck. After freeing themselves and then others from the irons, they found boxes that contained weapons: sugar cane knives with handles consisting of square pieces of steel an inch thick, and attached to blades two feet long that gradually widened to three inches at the end. Stealing up the hatchway, they prepared to storm the captain, Ramon Ferrer, where he slept on deck. Using his heavy steel blade, Cinque struck the captain to the floor, leaving the others to strangle him to death. Nearby, a ring of blacks surrounded the ship’s cook, Celestino, and angrily thudded his lifeless body with hatchet blows. A mighty struggle ensued with deaths occurring on both sides.

Cinque and 48 others had seized power on the **Amistad**, which was headed from Havana to Puerto Principe, Cuba. On August 26, the **Amistad** was spotted off the coast of New York and taken to Connecticut. Although the institution of slavery itself was legal in Cuba, it was a violation of Spanish law to import slaves to the island. Spain demanded her slaves back, but the United States determined to try Cinque and the others for “*murder and piracy.*” The case was held before the U.S. District Court of Connecticut with Judge Andrew T. Judson presiding. District Attorney William S. Holabird, with the blessing of President Martin Van Buren, prosecuted the rebelling blacks. Abolitionists hired the services of Joshua Leavitt and ex-President John Quincy Adams for the defense. The two-month trial lasted from November 19, 1839, to January 13, 1840. Finally, Judge Judson ruled that the blacks were “*not guilty.*” The prosecution appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, where five of the nine justices, including Chief Justice Roger Taney, owned



slaves. The Supreme Court, however, upheld the decision on March 9, 1840. Abolitionists donated money to send Cinque and the others back to Africa.

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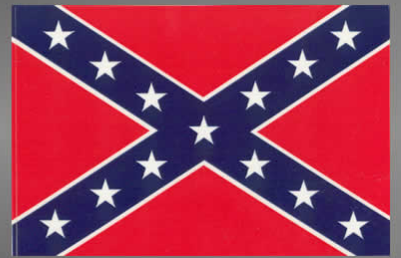
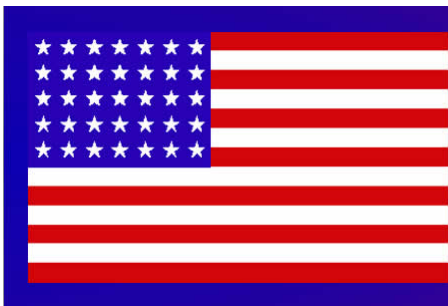
On the night of October 27, 1841, a United States slave ship, **Creole**, was hauling 135 slaves from Hampton Roads, Virginia to New Orleans—a perfectly legal transport since the slaves were not being imported, but merely moved from one slave city to another. That same night 19 of the slaves, armed with knives and head spikes, violently seized the **Creole** by killing one passenger and wounding numerous officers and crewmen. Demanding that the ship’s captain sail to a British port, the slaves commandeered it to Nassau in the Bahama Islands. Once arrived, the British authorities turned down the pleas of the captain and the American consul to return the ship and its cargo to the U.S. Furthermore, while detaining the 19 insurrectionists, the British government freed the remaining 116 slaves. John Calhoun labeled England’s action “*a gross outrage*” and urged President John Tyler to demand indemnity for the freed slaves and surrender for the mutineers. Secretary of State Daniel Webster, who had favored the freedom of the slaves in the **Amistad** case and was a friend of the abolitionist movement, demanded the return of the slaves, stating that slaves are “*recognized as property by the Constitution of the United States, in those states where slavery exists.*” Great Britain ignored our demands, but finally paid us \$110,330 in 1855.

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Andrew Durnford, a black New Orleans planter, owned 77 slaves. Born in 1800, Durnford was the son of a free black mother and an English aristocrat. He bought his first black slave, Noel, for \$500 in 1828 when he began work on his sugar cane plantation, called “St. Rosalie.” By 1829, Durnford had accumulated 19 slaves. Durnford often fretted about slave prices but treated his slaves quite well. Concerning the institution of slavery, Durnford’s attitude appeared ambivalent: he did not actually believe it was right, but he felt slaves provided the best and cheapest plantation help. “*Self-interest is a la mode,*” he wrote. He supported the effort to help freed slaves colonize in Liberia. According to his biographer, Durnford “*regarded slaves with respect for their humanity, treating their bondage more as a state of being than a measure of human quality.*” During his lifetime, Durnford emancipated only four slaves. When he died, he owned 77 slaves valued at \$71,550. In his will he freed one of them, Albert, probably his son by his black mistress, Wainy, a house servant 27 years younger than he. In addition, Albert inherited \$2000 for his education.

**QUIZ ANSWERS:**

1. An “entailed” slave and a mulatto
2. The 3/5 Clause and any decision on Overseas Slave Trade was postponed for 20 years [It was outlawed in 1808 with the death penalty for smuggling.]
3. Gabriel Prosser and a violent thunderstorm postponed the revolt while other blacks informed the whites of the plan allowing them to crush the revolt before it actually started
4. Dred Scott had lived on free soil with his owner for five years and Roger B. Taney
5. Supreme Court voted 7-2 against Scott’s freedom and he was eventually freed by his owner, worked in a St. Louis hotel as a janitor, and died of tuberculosis on September 17, 1858
6. Wade Hampton (owned over 3000 slaves on three plantations) and “Brierfield”
7. South Carolina (57%) and Mississippi (55%)
8. Denmark Vesey and he purchased his freedom in 1800 with \$1500 he won in a lottery
9. Since the North controlled the House of Representatives based on population, this “Gentleman’s Agreement” kept the Senate evenly balanced and the 36 30 line
10. Arkansas and Iowa [Texas was 267,339 square miles or 220 times larger than Rhode Island’s 1214 square miles]



Make certain you circle the date on your calendar for this month's meeting: **MONDAY, JUNE 28**—for "*Black Spartacus: Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion of 1831*" as presented by **Jerry Maxwell**. The meeting at the Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road) will begin at 6:30 P.M. Show up early for the added fellowship.

Also have you tried our website? <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.