

Thinned out text

The Stopping Stone Project

Why are the Stopping Stones important? Who were the five men represented?
What was the fate of Tom and Randolph,

Why are the Stopping Stones important in preserving the history of individuals?

Stopping Stones are simple, tangible, visual tools to recognize the history of slavery. They present an opportunity to honor, by name, those held in bondage in our community.

1. Rimus or George: March 30, 1858
2. Alonzo: August 2, 1860
3. George Scribner: August 13, 1861
4. John: May 5, 1862
5. Tom: early January 1864



The five men represented by the stones were, in fact, held twice: first as enslaved people and then as criminals, according to the laws of the time. They were incarcerated in the Leonardtown Jail between 1858 and 1864. There were undoubtedly others held here, but these are the only ones whose stories we know. What little we do know comes from local newspaper accounts about their arrest or escape. These stories refer to them as “runaways,” offer rewards and speak of them being sold. Today, we refer to them as individual men. They were “enslaved,” not “slaves;” Not “freedom seekers,” not “runaways;” not “possessions.” As Humans, and Men.

History is not a simple timeline of facts, but rather a collection of stories, which, when put together, help us understand who we are and how we got to where we are. These stones, and other monuments and memorials like them, help foster deeper connections across time and help preserve the hopes, challenges and triumphs of our predecessors – and sometimes even their failures. The Old Jail Museum is on the National Park Service's Network to Freedom Underground Railroad Trail because of one of those failures. The five men being remembered on these stones failed in their attempts to gain their freedom from bondage and were incarcerated for their efforts. But they tried. It is their courage and their desire to improve their lots in life that we remember.

ALONZO

On August 2 1860, The St. Mary's Beacon detailed the plight of a freedom seeker named Alonzo who was committed to jail. Alonzo belonged to the slaveholder H. G. S. Key of Leonardtown and had been on the run for the past nine months. Alonzo spent the greatest part of that time living in a cave in the Patuxent district, near the residence of Joseph Simms, Esquire.

The newspapers reported that Alonzo hailed Captain Tucker's vessel as the boat was headed up the Patuxent River, saying that he wished to go to Philadelphia. Tucker asked Alonzo if he was a free man and he said that he was. When Alonzo was asked to show his manumission papers, he replied that they were at home. Captain Tucker did not believe that Alonzo was the free man he claimed to be and arrested him. He was then taken to Leonardtown where he was put in jail.

GEORGE SCRIBER

On August 15, 1861, it was reported that a "likely negro man, about 25 or 30 years of age and calling himself George Scriber" had been lodged in the jail for the past two days. It was first reported that he had been arrested at Piney Point by Captain Gray, of the Federal schooner Bailey. Captain Gray stated that when first arrested, George claimed to be from Virginia, but then said he belonged to Mr. John A. Burroughs of Charles County. The report goes on to say that George answers the exact description of Mr. Burrough's advertisement for a runaway. In an update in a later edition of the paper a correction was made in the arrest. It was in fact R. J. Marshall who had arrested George. Marshall conveyed him to Captain Gray who then transported him to jail.

RIMUS OR GEORGE

A "runaway negro belonging to William B. Hill, Esq of Prince George's County" by the name of either Rimus or George was captured on Tuesday, March 30, 1858, and held at the jail in Leonardtown. The newspaper reported his escape on April 1 st , saying that he had managed to loosen the thongs that had confined his hands. At the time of the publication, he was still at large, but a liberal reward was offered by Mr. Hill for his capture so it was expected he would be returned to jail soon.

JOHN

A negro man named John was put in jail on Monday May 5, 1862, as a runaway. The newspaper notice of his committal describes him as about 21 years old. He had escaped from J. W. and Margaret E. Raley of Washington City, D.C., but had originally been enslaved in the St. George area of St. Mary's County. The notice asks that the owner of John come forward, prove ownership, pay the charges and take him away. It was plvaced by Thomas L. Davis, Sheriff of St. Mary's County. The notice goes on to say that unless claimed, John will "be disposed of according to the Act of Assembly", meaning he would be sold.

TOM

Tom escaped from Dr. Henry A. Ford, of the Leonardtown District. He was about 34 years old, six feet one or two inches tall, well-built and weighed about 160 pounds. According to the newspaper he also had a deformed or imperfect thumb on his right hand. His dress was not remembered.

Tom was charged along with a free black man by the name of Randolf Taylor in early January 1864. Both men were charged with the crime of stealing a horse and cart belonging to the estate of the late

George C. Morgan, and with "enticing" away a negro woman and children belonging to the same estate.

The newspapers reported that Tom and Randolf escaped from the jail on Sunday, January 24 th . Sheriff Philip H. Dorsey offered a reward of \$25 to the person who arrested and delivered both men to him, and half the amount for the apprehension and delivery of either.