

Territory of the United States  
North west of the Ohio

Peter M. Nelly, of Vincennes in the County of Vincennes Knox, yeoman, being duly sworn, upon his oath deposes and saith, that he, together with his wife, a negro woman named Queen, now of the same place, were held in Kentucky, as the slaves of Anthony Thomson of that state planter; — that early in the Autumn of last year, by their deponent and his said wife absconded from the service of their master, and came into the Territory North west of the Ohio; — but that, on their way to Vincennes, they were taken and detained for some weeks by certain Indians, who afterwards brought them to and sold them at Vincennes to John Small of that place, in consideration of two rifle guns and ten dollars worth of ammunition: — that he lived with the said Small for the space of three weeks, or thereabouts, when a certain Peter Smith, of Kentucky, appeared and claimed this deponent and wife, as his, the said Peter Smith's, property, for that he had purchased them of their former master: — that accordingly the said Small put the said Smith in possession of them, on receiving reimbursement — that thereupon his deponent was confined in the guard house of Fort Knox, till the ensuing evening, when it was announced to his deponent by the said Smith, that he had sold him and wife, as slaves, to Henry Vanderburgh, of Vincennes aforesaid, esquire; — that this deponent and wife were in consequence delivered over to the said Vanderburgh, as the property of the latter: — that this transaction took place in or about the month of October last; — and since which time this deponent and his wife have ever been held in the service of the said Vanderburgh. All this deponent on his oath farther saith, that on the arrival last month at Vincennes, of the subscribing Judge, he this deponent applied to him for a writ of Habeas Corpus, ~~to~~ for the purpose of establishing his and his said wife's claim to freedom — and received for answer, that the said writ should issue. All this deponent farther saith, that the said Henry Vanderburgh now made frequent overtures, by himself and others, to this deponent, towards an accommodation, and appeared

that he and his said wife  
affirms ~~they~~ should become bound to him during  
a certain term of years — but which this deponent  
declined: — that on Tuesday, the 27<sup>th</sup> day of May  
last this deponent was ordered by the said  
Vanderburgh into the prairie adjoining Vincennes, to  
the distance of about half a mile from town,  
there to procure, as he pretended, a load of earth.  
— that accordingly this deponent proceeded with  
a horse and cart, in company with one <sup>Jonas</sup> Dutton,  
a house-carpenter in the said Vanderburgh's  
employment — and arriving at the spot, there  
suddenly appeared in view three persons, to wit  
Joseph Baird, acting prothonotary to the Court of  
Common Pleas of Knox, Joseph La Motte, Indian  
Interpreter in the Service of the United States, and  
Anthony Dwing, occasionally of Vincennes, Trader;  
that he last named three persons forcibly seized on  
this deponent, bound his arms to his sides with  
a rope, and made the rope fast to the tail of  
Baird's horse, and thus dragged him this deponent  
forward into the woods — telling him, exultingly  
and sneeringly, that he must now go before the  
Judge — that, at this time the said Dutton was  
dispatched back to Vincennes with the said  
cart and horse, and this deponent disengaged  
from the horse's tail; but his arms remained  
bound — that the said Baird now mounted  
the last mentioned horse, and after an absence  
of an hour, or thereabouts, returned on foot  
accompanied by a person named Henri Le  
Renbeau, an inhabitant of Vincennes, leading  
Baird's horse, and on which was mounted this  
deponent's wife, who ~~had~~ (as he has been told  
and verily believes) had been forcibly seized  
in the dwellinghouse of the said Vanderburgh.  
And this deponent further saith, that a certain  
Jean Baptiste Constant, junior, of Vincennes, a  
yeoman, and also an Indian, to whose name  
he is a stranger, accompanied the said Baird  
to the spot where the first party had halted —  
that the said Indian, Constant, Renbeau and  
Baird acted as a guard over the persons of  
this deponent and his wife, on the route to  
White River, which they took, and where they arrived

the same day at a point <sup>about</sup> twelve miles, or more from  
the town of Vincennes; and that here the party halted  
within about fifty yards of a stockaded settlement  
called White River Station; and the said Baird went  
to the said station and returned in company with  
the said Dutton, who bore in his hand a paper  
which he informed this deponent was an indenture  
to bind him and his wife for the term of five years and  
a half to the said Vanderburgh, who had sent it  
for execution; and that in case of refusal, the  
said Vanderburgh had determined to send both this  
deponent and his said wife to New Orleans; for  
that he had already provided a boat to convey them  
thither — that this deponent, terrified at the threat,  
agreed to sign the paper; upon which the whole party  
advanced to the station or fortified stockade, and  
entering the house of a certain Moses Decker, there  
the indenture was read to this deponent and signed  
(but not sealed) by him and his wife — and that the  
witnesses who signed their names to this instrument  
were Joseph Decker and the said Moses Decker,  
Joseph Baird and Jonas Dutton. All this deponent  
farther deposes and saith, that the said Dutton  
and Baird now mounted each a horse and  
returned to Vincennes with the indenture thus  
forcibly taken — Baird previously leaving  
orders with the party to take this deponent and  
wife across White River — that on ascending  
the opposite bank they bound this deponent to  
one tree, and his wife to another, and in this  
situation they remained from twelve o' clock at  
noon till about one o' clock in the afternoon  
of the next day — a prey to the tormenting  
mosquitoes, which, during this period, were  
so insupportable that he this deponent oftentimes  
begged his oppressors to kill him, and put him  
out of pain — that at length the whole party  
recrossed the river, and this deponent and his  
wife were lodged within the station, in the house  
of the said Moses Decker — the said Baird,  
Kenbean and Constant alternately acting  
during their ~~imprisonment~~ duress, as sentinels  
over them by night and by day: — that the day  
after the party recrossed <sup>White River</sup> as aforesaid, the said

Baird returned from Vincennes and told this deponent that the said Vanderburgh's orders were, to hold him and his wife prisoners till the said Vanderburgh should either come himself or send; and that the said Baird brought with him a pair of Handcuffs, with which he manacled this deponent, and that, in this situation, the deponent remained until near midnight on the sixth day of this instant June, when, disengaging one of his hands from the manacles, he made his escape from the fortified station aforesaid, through the roof of the said Moses Deckert's house, and the next morning presented himself before the subscribing Judge, at Vincennes. And this deponent farther saith not

his

Sworn at my Chambers in Fort Knox, Vincennes, the seventh day of June one thousand seven hundred and ninety four Before me George Turner, esquire, one of the Judges in and over the territory of the United States North West of the Ohio

G Turner

Peter M. Kelly

Mark

(89) Vincennes June 7 1794  
Attest David of the N. W. T. concerning the deponent of his wife by under known  
12 sheets 8 00 cents  
2 10 cents P. M. Kelly  
D. H. 1794