

Process Paper

This year we were looking for a good topic that would fit the theme of communicating through history. One of us read the book *Bound for Canaan* by Fergus Bordewich, about the Underground Railroad. This book shares many accounts of escapes from bondage. We were fascinated by the story of the 1851 Christiana Resistance, especially when Eliza Parker blew a horn to signal to her neighbors to come and help fight. This was a perfect example of the importance of communication in history.

For our research, we used a plethora of primary and secondary sources. We used sites like Newspapers.com and the Library of Congress to find historic newspapers. Finding primary sources like these allowed us to understand the propaganda of the time, and the differences between pro- and anti-slavery views. We also used historic maps and images, including many from the Christiana Resistance Collection digitized by the Lancaster Historical Society. In various books, we also were able to read historic letters such as a secret note from a slave-catcher. We read resistance leader William Parker's recollection and other first-hand accounts. We found the trial transcript online from the Library of Congress. We even transcribed a letter from the Christiana Resistance Collection by a defense team lawyer (with a little parental help for the cursive). We also read a dozen secondary sources, and provided over 30 quotes to give essential background knowledge. That research helped provide better context about the Fugitive Slave Law and other topics.

The highlight of our research, however, was the interviews we did and the visit we made to Christiana. We interviewed the bestselling author and renowned historian Fergus Bordewich. He provided great answers debunking the myths and realities of the Underground Railroad. We then found Michele Parker Samuels who was a descendant of William and Eliza Parker after we stumbled on a web article about her dedicating a marker in Canada. We then found her email through LinkedIn. She was incredibly generous with her time. Finally, we went to the site of the Christiana Resistance. Darlene Colon, the head of the Christiana Historical Society and a descendant of one of the resisters, led us into the vault at the Moores Memorial Library where they had an amazing collection of historical artifacts, including the original horn that Eliza Parker blew. We also got to see many diaries, letters, and recollections that we had first seen on the Christiana Resistance Collection, and some that hadn't been digitized. That experience was very memorable, especially when we got to see the horn.

The Christiana Resistance of September 11, 1851, involved the death of a Maryland slaveholder who was trying to recapture his escaped slaves in Pennsylvania. We tried to show on our website the many different types of communication that went into the Resistance. We can communicate our own values today by properly honoring that Resistance and all of the people who made sacrifices for freedom.