

*Affidavit of Peter McNelly Concerning the
Treatment of Himself & Wife by Sundry Persons*

Peter McNelly, of Vincennes in the County of Knox, yeoman, being duly sworn, upon his oath deposeth 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, he this 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 this deponent was confined in the guard house of Fort Knox, till the ensuing evening when it was announced to this deponent by the said Smith that he had sold him and wife, as slave, 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;—since which time this deponent and his wife have ever been held in the service of the said Vanderburgh. And 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 for the purpose of establishing his and his said wife's claim to freedom—and received for answer, that the said writ should issue. And 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 desirous that he and his said wife should become bound to him, during a certain term of years—but which this

deponent declined:—that on Tuesday, the 27th 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 *Jonas 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 *Nathaniel Ewing*, occasionally of Vincennes, Trader; that the lastnamed 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 lastmentioned horse, and after an absence of an hour, or thereabouts, returned on foot, accompanied by a person named *Henri Renbeau*, an inhabitant of Vincennes, leading Baird's horse, and on which was mounted this deponent's wife, she was (as he had been told and verily believes) had been forcibly seized in the dwelling house of the said Vanderburgh—And this deponent farther saith that *Jean Baptiste Constant*, junior, of Vincennes afs^d. 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 about twelve miles, or more from the town of Vincennes; and that here the party halted within about fifty yards of a stocaded 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 stoccade, 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. And this deponent farther deposeth 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 musketoos, 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 Renbeau and Constant alternately acting during their duresse, as centinels over them by night and day:—that the day after the party recrossed White River 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:—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 Decker's house, and the next morning presented himself before the subscribing Judge, at Vincennes. And this deponent farther Saith not—

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

his
Peter x M. Nelly
Mark

G. Turner