

DANIEL

BORN DECEMBER 29, 1771

June 2022

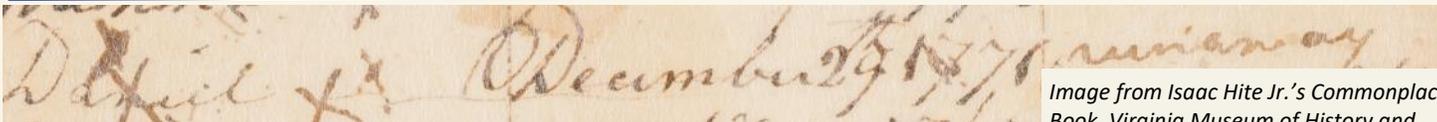


Image from Isaac Hite Jr.'s *Commonplace Book*, Virginia Museum of History and Culture (Mss5.5.H67375.1).

A man named Daniel appears as a mystery in the list of Hite enslaved people. His listing above mentions no mother, no connections, no place of origin, and no notes about his purchase. He may have come as a general laborer. Daniel catches our attention because of his apparently successful attempt to seek freedom and not be returned to enslavement.

difference. It seems he had no kin ties keeping him at Belle Grove. Socially, he might even have been the odd man out, in an enslaved quarter where two bonded groups may have ruled the roost: the group deeded by the Madisons who arrived first in 1783, and the group inherited by Isaac Hite Sr. who came in 1796. Perhaps there were no opportunities to partner with a young woman from either group. Perhaps he had been hired out, learned his skill set could earn him a living, and seen a wider world, which he then decided to make his own. His motivation to make a new life for himself was powerful enough to overcome the fear of punishments that came with recapture.

What is certain is that he carefully laid more than the usual groundwork of storing up some extra food and clothing. The "Fifty Dollars Reward" runaway ad placed by Isaac Hite Jr. in the *Baltimore American and Daily Advertiser* claims he had white allies: "having through the medium of a white man obtained from a clerk of Frederick court of Virginia, a certificate of his emancipation by Miss Sally Lane, under the name of Tom." Hite states that Daniel/Tom had left Belle Grove in earliest July, possibly the 1st, and remained locally until "about the latter end of July last."¹

Daniel/Tom was about "5 feet 9 inches tall, slender figure," a white birthmark on one of his cheeks, and "of a smiling countenance when spoken to." The ability to maintain, or be able to assume, a smiling, deferential demeanor, was a powerful adaptation of the resilient set of skills needed to survive enslavement and the act of escaping it. A jumpy, surly, or furtive traveler might well arouse suspicion.

This information comes from the ad placed four months after Daniel's escape, and others might have preceded it. The full measure of Isaac Hite's pique at his failure to reclaim him can be found in a later ad for Daniel, placed in the *Baltimore Telegraph and Daily Advertiser* "100 Dollars Reward." This ad starts out with the search for "HENRY, a likely negro man, 25 years of age, about 5 feet 9 inches high who obtained a certificate of freedom, with the seal attached of some county in Maryland, in the name of *Bannister*, which no doubt he will assume...He was seen on Friday last in Martinsburg, well dressed in a dark blue coat." Henry had also employed one of the strategies of success, taking "a variety of good clothes," allowing him to change clothing to escape detection, as the

Continued next page



Baltimore American and Daily Advertiser, December 16, 1800

Daniel was a fine, Biblical name, popular over the years; there were five at Belle Grove. One, Daniel Jackson, was bought out of slavery by his father, Emanuel Jackson Sr. in the 1830s. This Daniel also appears to have achieved a type of freedom—by his own connivance running towards freedom in Maryland, in 1799-1800 when he was 28.

About 2% of Belle Grove's enslaved people sought freedom, and the single female to do so was the only one known to be recaptured (see the entry on Suckey at virtual.bellegrove.org). The men seem to have succeeded. Daniel was young enough to still be sufficiently vigorous and healthy to make a swift journey, across long distances, through rugged terrain if need be. Being unencumbered by less-mobile companions made a

100 Dollars Reward.
ELOPED from the subscriber, living in Frederick county, Virginia, **HENRY**, a likely negro man, 25 years of age, about 5 feet 9 inches high; who obtained a certificate of freedom, with the seal annexed of some county in Maryland, in the name of *Bannister*, which no doubt he will assume. He took with him a variety of good clothes, & was seen on Friday last in Martinsburg, well dressed in a dark blue coat. Also eloped at *Baiter*, two years ago, **DANIEL**, 30 years of age, and about the height of Henry, with a remarkable white spot on one of his cheeks. He was since seen about Winchester in Maryland, and there passed by the name of *John*.
 I will give 50 dollars for either of the fellows, or 100 for both, if delivered at Belle-Grove, my place of residence, or to Jacob Baker, sign of the Black Horse, Market street, Baltimore.
ISAAC HITE.
 January 11 504 c. 4t

Baltimore Telegraph and Daily Advertiser, January 28, year uncertain 1802-1806?

runaway ads always included attire.

But Daniel merited the second half of this ad, more than two years after his escape. "**DANIEL**, 30 years of age and about the height of Henry,² with a remarkable white spot on one of his cheeks. He was since seen around Winchester in Maryland and there passed by the name of *John*."³

Daniel/Tom/John had now accomplished another feat on the road of successful freedom seekers: he had been gone a long time. Normally, the longer away, the less chance of being recaptured by slave hunters, bounty men, and greedy opportunists. It

seems Daniel was by that point established in a rural area of Baltimore, knew his way around, had supported himself, and perhaps even helped Henry with paperwork. Yet, the danger of being snatched from anywhere never abated, which is why even false papers were useful.

1 *Baltimore American and Daily Advertiser*, December 16, 1800, no page number but ads normally ran on page 1 or 2.

2 It is not necessarily a coincidence that both men had the same stature. Unless an enslaved person was remarkably tall or short, many enslavers didn't know their heights and 5' 9" or 5' 10" is often listed as an average.

3 *Telegraphe and Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), January 28, 1806, p. 1. The scan of this ad says it was run in 1806 but the ad notes "two years ago," which puts this date into question.

WHERE IS WINCHESTER, MARYLAND?



Part of the reason for Daniel's success was the strategy to head for Baltimore, a seaboard city whose population doubled from 1790 to 1800, up to 27,000 souls. Known as the "city of transients," settled on its waterways, Baltimore had a fluid labor market consisting of free white, free black, and escaped enslaved people. Jobs in shipping, fishing, the fiber industry, flour milling, hauling, the printing industry—there were twelve printshops—provided paid employment. It was far easier to be anonymous or unrecognized, especially with an assumed name, in Baltimore than walking along the Great Wagon Road to Martinsburg. Furthermore, Maryland was a border state, from which people could flee to Northern States. With labor plentiful, Maryland was already implementing "term enslavement, or bondage," where freedom was gained after a period of years. This provided a mix of people and faces, and while it was also a slave trading center, and the city of

business for many from western Virginia, it not as easy to spot a person missing from Belle Grove in the crowds.¹

Better yet, Daniel is attested "about the Winchester area of Maryland." In the northwest of the state, it is a short five miles from the Pennsylvania border to which he could race to freedom in a couple hours if in danger. In the latter ad, Isaac instructs anyone finding either man should contact Jacob Baker at The Black Horse Tavern, Market Street, Baltimore. This tavern is well attested on a main road, at a trading crossroads, into Pennsylvania. George Washington even slept here, which a road sign headlines. Jacob Baker may not be the owner, as a different name appears in Maryland legal records for the period, but he may have been lead villain of a gang of professional slave catchers who regularly patrolled these areas so close to the border. They may have headquartered at the Black Horse Tavern hostelry, where messages could be left

for him. This infers Isaac Hite Jr. was in direct contact with professional slave catchers 150 miles away.

Maps have been added to this story at www.virtual.bellegrove.org.

1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Baltimore#Free_and_enslaved_labor

WHAT WERE THEIR FATES?



Neither Daniel nor Henry re-enter history at Belle Grove. If Henry made good his escape north from Martinsburg, now West Virginia, he could have made it to Pittsburgh, where Shenandoah Valley former enslaved families bought land and built a community. Daniel, so close to the Pennsylvania border, was situated on a known escape route of the Underground Railroad into York County, which already had a vibrant network of conductors operational in 1800. This raises the possibility that Daniel used it for himself, or might have been a conductor to help others to freedom.

1 Interview with York County Historical Society 6/16/22

NEXT MONTH WE WILL HONOR Judah born 1794

This issue produced by Robin Young and Kristen Laise with proofreading by Craig Morris.

Research is underway about the 276 men, women, and children enslaved by the Hite family at Belle Grove Plantation in Middletown (Frederick County), Virginia. Enslaved individuals made the plantation a success. Since 1967, Belle Grove has been a 501c3, nonprofit historic site and museum. [Understanding and uplifting the contributions of the enslaved community is an ongoing effort and priority.](#) If you wish to help, consider volunteering or donating to Belle Grove, Inc. at P.O. Box 537, Middletown, VA 22645 or online at www.bellegrove.org/support/donate.

Belle Grove Plantation

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