Document Metadata

Field	Entry
Document Type Publication	Newspaper Article
Document Title	Kidnapping of Seminole Negroes
Original Publication	Fort Smith Herald
Publication Date	June 7, 1848
Location	Fort Smith, Arkansas
Historical Period	Indian Territory, before the 1850 Exodus
Related Podcast Episode	Roots in the Creek, Episode 1: Exodus
Source Reference	Origins of the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts, p. 79, Addendum
Brief Description	This newspaper reports the kidnapping of three Seminole Negroes who had been freed by General Thomas Jesup during the Second Seminole War. It describes competing claims of ownership, the involvement of federal troops, arrests, and a killing connected to efforts to apprehend those accused of kidnapping. Published ten years after Jesup's promise of freedom, the article provides evidence that the Seminole Negroes remained vulnerable to kidnapping and enslavement despite being placed under government protection.
Keywords	Seminole Negroes; Seminole; Seminoles; Negroes; General Jesup (Jessup); Fort Gibson; Fort Smith; Indian Territory; Cherokee Nation; Creek Indians; Wild Cat; kidnapping; runaway slaves; slavery; freedom; Mrs. Wilson; Ann Pinder; Seymour; Shadrach Cordery; John Rodgers; William Chisholm. *Historical newspapers used terminology that differs from today's language. These search terms are provided to help readers locate original accounts and do not necessarily reflect the Society's preferred terminology.* The original language and spelling have been preserved. Words that could not be read are identified as [illegible], and words supplied or reconstructed during transcription appear in brackets.

Historical Terminology Note	This document contains language and terminology used in the nineteenth century. The original wording has been preserved to reflect the historical record and does not necessarily represent the terminology preferred by the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts Historical Society.
Transcription Note	The original spelling, capitalization, and language have been preserved where legible. The newspaper contains several separate reports related to the Seminole Negroes. Editorial headings identifying their locations in the newspaper have been added for clarity.

BEGIN TRANSCRIPTION

Fort Smith Herald

June 7, 1848

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First Column — Murder

On Thursday last, near Fort Gibson, Cherokee Nation, John Rodgers, known in the Nation by the appellation of Little John Rodgers, was killed by Shadrach Cordery. Cordery was accused of being engaged in kidnapping some Seminole negroes, noticed in our paper two or three weeks since, and Rodgers was endeavoring to arrest him; Cordery being armed with a gun, Rodgers rushed upon him and was shot in the breast and killed instantly. The murderer made his escape.

Second Column — Creeks and Seminoles

Matters appear to be settled among the Creeks and Seminoles, but it is thought by some persons, that the Creeks will wait awhile until Wild Cat forgets the matter, when they will rise up and administer the old law in full to him, which will leave him minus nose and ears; the situation in which he has placed the young Talassee Indian. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, is the law of retaliation, and is strictly adhered to by the Creeks.

Second Column — Kidnapping of Seminole Negroes

On Sunday last, a command of soldiers arrived in this place from Fort Gibson, having in their custody two prisoners, one a soldier named Seymour, and the other a Mrs. Wilson—better

known as Ann Pinder—who lives near Fort Gibson. They are both charged with being concerned in kidnapping and running off, a few weeks ago, three Seminole negroes, freed by Gen. Jessup in Florida. Mrs. W., we understand, claims these negroes, and says she purchased them of the Seminoles, and had them in possession some time; but they were subsequently released by the U. S. Troops at Fort Gibson, and placed under the protection of the Government at that place. However, be this as it may, she is now confined here as a prisoner, under the charge of stealing and running off the negroes; and as the matter will have to undergo a judicial investigation, we refrain from making further remarks.

Second Column — Follow-up Report

Since writing the above, we have been informed that Seymour is not a prisoner, but has turned state's evidence, and has disclosed the names of the persons engaged in the kidnapping of these negroes, and every thing connected with the affair.

Mrs. W. was brought before Justice Pearson, on yesterday, and after hearing the testimony in the case she was released.

Second Column — Pursuit of Suspects

Two or three persons passed thro' this place on Monday last, in pursuit of Cordery, the murderer of John Rodgers; and Wm. Chisholm, who is charged with being concerned in the kidnapping of the Seminole Negroes.

END TRANSCRIPTION

Source: *Fort Smith Herald*, June 7, 1848. Reproduced in *Origins of the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts*, pp. 78–79, Seminole Negro Indian Scouts Historical Society.

FORT SMITH HERALD June 7, 1848

for the Western Superintendency, arrived here on Sunday last, on board the *J. T. Doswell*, from New Orleans, having in his charge the money for the 'Treaty Party' of Cherokees, amounting to forty-three thousand dollars. He left on Monday evening for the Choctaw Agency.

☞ *Mitchell Sparks*, on Garrison Avenue, has opened a beautiful stock of *new goods*. Bargains can certainly be had at his *new store*. Do not take our word for it but go see for *yourselves*.

☞ W. H. & M. MAYERS have just received an assortment of every article in their *line*. To assure all that their goods are of the best *kind*, we need only mention that they were selected by our friend *Henry*, whose *exquisite* taste in such matters is too well known in this place, to require any commendation from us.—The *Doctor* is at his place as usual, quite cheerful at present, and looks like —— just *walk* in and see for yourselves.

☞ We have received the 4th No. of the *Batesville Eagle*, published at Batesville in this State. It is edited by C. F. M. Noland, Esq., and devoted to the whig cause.

☞ We learn from the passengers who came up on the *J. T. Doswell*, that it is reported and generally believed that the Democratic Convention at Baltimore, have nominated *Lewis Cass* of Michigan, for President, and *Wm. O. Butler* of Kentucky, for Vice President.

Murder.

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Matt. Gerring and Ellis Starr Killed.

On last Monday, Deputy Marshal LATTY arrived in town, and we were informed by him that, learning the whereabouts of *Matt. Gerring*, he proceeded, with a company of men, to the house of Ellis Starr, about four miles from Evansville, on Saturday morning last, about day-light. On arriving at the house, Gerring attempted to make his escape, when he

at Fort Washita, Chickasaw nation, and also the troops at Fort Gibson, Cherokee nation during his absence. We call this dispatching business the right way.

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Foul Murder.

☞ *Creek Starr*, and *Isaac Gann*, two half-blood Cherokees, killed a Cherokee woman, by beating her, near Evansville, on Saturday the 27th ult. Gann is a de-

pretendingly thrust at another, but claim the right of bing met in proper person, denying to any opponent, the right to select for me a representative; and make the issue between my representation so selected and myself.

I shall adopt the same course which has been proposed by others; that of meeting the people and discussing such questions as may be called for by the occasion. Although the electing of senators, constitutionally belonging to the legislature, the members of that body, are but the representatives of the people, whose will should at all times be truly reflected and spoken. It recoguizes the people as the primary source of all political authority.

An expose of my political sentiments is not called for in this address. I flatter myself, that I am sufficiently known to the people of the State, to render it unnecessary, to make any declaration of principles on the occasion. I leave it to my public acts as a member of the legislature, and as a candidate on the electoral ticket, in the presidential campaign of 1844, "to define my position." I may remark, that during the present administration, I have been withdrawn from an active participation in politics, and it may therefore not be improper, to say, that no act has been committed by the administration, that is disapproved of by me, but that its whole course demands the highest degree of approbation, and fully justifies the confidence, reposed by the American people in the wisdom and sagacity, of James K. Polk, for whom I, as the humble instrument in the hands of the people of Arkansas, cast one of the electoral votes which they were entitled to give.

W. S. OLDHAM.

Fayetteville May 26th, 1848.

Terrible Steamboat Catastrophe.

The Steamer Clarksville Burnt—Great loss of life—We are informed by Mr. Stowbridge of the 'Swallow,' that the Clarksvile was burnt in sight of Napoleon on last Friday or Saturday, and that from eighteen to twenty lives, or perhaps even more, were lost in the conflagration. It appears, that the woodpile caught fire, and the flames spread with such rapidity over the vessel that all efforts to extinguish them were unavailing. The Boat was run ashore on the bar just above Napoleon, and it should seem that all might have been saved, but for some cause, which we do not know, an awful loss of life occurred.

The Captain went once on shore, with his wife, and another lady, then returned to the Boat, threw