Excerpt from the Narrative of William Parker (1866):

NOTE: William Parker was the leader of the Christiana Resistance in Lancaster County in Pennsylvania. They had an armed stand-off with slavecatchers at Parker’s home. One slave owner (Edward Gorsuch) was killed. William had to escape north to Canada. This is his account of that escape.

We stopped with him on Saturday night, and on the evening of the 14th went fifteen miles farther. Here I learned from a preacher, directly from the city, that the excitement in Philadelphia was too great for us to risk our safety by going there. Another man present advised us to go to Norristown.

At Norristown we rested a day. The friends gave us ten dollars, and sent us in a vehicle to Quakertown. Our driver, partly intoxicated, set us down at the wrong place, which obliged us to stay out all night. At eleven o’clock the next day we got to Quakertown. We had gone about six miles out of the way, and had to go directly across the country. We rested the 16th, and set out in the evening for Friendsville.

A friend piloted us some distance, and we travelled until we became very tired, when we went to bed under a haystack. On the 17th, we took breakfast at an inn. We passed a small village, and asked a man whom we met with a dearborn, what would be his charge to Windgap. "One dollar and fifty cents," was the ready answer. So in we got, and rode to that place.

As we wanted to make some inquiries when we struck the north and south road, I went into the post-office, and asked for a letter for John Thomas, which of course I did not get. The postmaster scrutinized us closely,—more so, indeed, than any one had done on the Blue Mountains,—but informed us that Friendsville was between forty and fifty miles away. After going about nine miles, we stopped in the evening of the 18th at an inn, got supper, were politely served, and had an excellent night's rest. On the next day we set out for Tannersville, hiring a conveyance for twenty-two miles of the way. We had no further difficulty on the entire road to Rochester,—more than five hundred miles by the route we travelled.

Some amusing incidents occurred, however, which it may be well to relate in this connection. The next morning, after stopping at the tavern, we took the cars and rode to Homerville, where, after waiting an hour, as our landlord of the night previous had directed us, we took stage. Being the first applicants for tickets, we secured inside seats, and, from the number of us, we took up all of the places inside; but, another traveller coming, I tendered him mine, and rode with the driver. The passenger thanked me; but the driver, a churl, and the most prejudiced person I ever came in contact with, would never wait after a stop until I could get on, but would drive away, and leave me to swing, climb, or cling on to the stage as best I could. Our traveller, at last noticing his behavior, told him promptly not to be so fast, but let all passengers get on, which had the effect to
restrain him a little.

At Big Eddy we took the cars. Directly opposite me sat a gentleman, who, on learning that I was for Rochester, said he was going there too, and afterwards proved an agreeable travelling-companion.

A newsboy came in with papers, some of which the passengers bought. Upon opening them, they read of the fight at Christiana.

"O, see here!" said my neighbor; "great excitement at Christiana; a--a statesman killed, and his son and nephew badly wounded."

After reading, the passengers began to exchange opinions on the case. Some said they would like to catch Parker, and get the thousand dollars reward offered by the State; but the man opposite to me said, "Parker must be a powerful man."

I thought to myself, "If you could tell what I can, you could judge about that."

Pinckney and Johnson became alarmed, and wanted to leave the cars at the next stopping-place; but I told them there was no danger. I then asked particularly about Christiana, where it was, on what railroad, and other questions, to all of which I received correct replies. One of the men became so much attached to me, that, when we would go to an eating-saloon, he would pay for both. At Jefferson we thought of leaving the cars, and taking the boat; but they told us to keep on the cars, and we would get to Rochester by nine o'clock the next night.

We left Jefferson about four o'clock in the morning, and arrived at Rochester at nine the same morning. Just before reaching Rochester, when in conversation with my travelling friend, I ventured to ask what would be done with Parker, should he be taken.

"I do not know," he replied; "but the laws of Pennsylvania would not hang him,--they might imprison him. But it would be different, very different, should they get him into Maryland. The people in all the Slave States are so prejudiced against colored people, that they never give them justice. But I don't believe they will get Parker. I think he is in Canada by this time; at least, I hope so,--for I believe he did right, and, had I been in his place, I would have done as he did. Any good citizen will say the same. I believe Parker to be a brave man; and all you colored people should look at it as we white people look at our brave men, and do as we do. You see Parker was not fighting for a country, nor for praise. He was fighting for freedom: he only wanted liberty, as other men do. You colored people should protect him, and remember him as long as you live. We are coming near our parting-place, and I do not know if we shall ever meet again. I shall be in Rochester some two or three days before I return home; and I would like to have your company back."

I told him it would be some time before we returned.

The cars then stopped, when he bade me good by. As strange as it may appear, he did not ask me my name; and I was afraid to inquire his, from fear he
would.

On leaving the cars, after walking two or three squares, we overtook a colored man, who conducted us to the house of—a friend of mine [Frederick Douglass]. He welcomed me at once, as we were acquainted before, took me up stairs to wash and comb, and prepare, as he said, for company. As I was combing, a lady came up and said, "Which of you is Mr. Parker?" "I am," said I,--"what there is left of me." She gave me her hand, and said, "And this is William Parker!" She appeared to be so excited that she could not say what she wished to. We were told we would not get much rest, and we did not; for visitors were constantly coming. One gentleman was surprised that we got away from the cars, as spies were all about, and there were two thousand dollars reward for the party.

We left at eight o'clock that evening, in a carriage, for the boat, bound for Kingston in Canada. As we went on board, the bell was ringing. After walking about a little, a friend pointed out to me the officers on the "hunt" for us; and just as the boat pushed off from the wharf, some of our friends on shore called me by name. Our pursuers looked very much like fools, as they were. I told one of the gentlemen on shore to write to Kline that I was in Canada. Ten dollars were generously contributed by the Rochester friends for our expenses; and altogether their kindness was heartfelt, and was most gratefully appreciated by us.

Once on the boat, and fairly out at sea towards the land of liberty, my mind became calm, and my spirits very much depressed at thought of my wife and children. Before, I had little time to think much about them, my mind being on my journey. Now I became silent and abstracted. Although fond of company, no one was company for me now.

We landed at Kingston on the 21st of September, at six o'clock in the morning, and walked around for a long time, without meeting any one we had ever known. At last, however, I saw a colored man I knew in Maryland. He at first pretended to have no knowledge of me, but finally recognized me. I made known our distressed condition