

Runaway Slave Ad, 1860

Introduction

Runaway slave ads were a reality in America as long as slavery existed. Appearing as broadsides and in newspapers, such ads offered monetary rewards from slaveholders for the capture and return of escaped slaves.

On May 9, 1860, Enoch Duley of Kentucky offered a reward for the capture and return of his slave Manuel. Under close scrutiny, the lives of particular slaves emerge in fragmentary details, including names, physical descriptions, talents, personalities, and other hints of their individuality. This broadside describes Manuel's height, weight, and other physical characteristics as well as more subjective view of the slave as "well dressed" with a "shrewd expression of the eye." According to historian Marion Lucas, an enslaved laborer such as Manuel was then worth about \$1,000,^[1] and Duley's reward for Manuel's return was correspondingly substantial. Duley offered \$50 if "apprehension and delivery" took place within Kentucky, or \$200 if "taken in any other State," an offer that might induce people to return a slave who had escaped to a free state.

^[1] Marion Brunson Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky: From Slavery to Segregation, 1760–1891* (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Historical Society, 1992), 85.

Questions for Discussion

Read the introduction and view the image. Then apply your knowledge of American history as well as evidence from the document to answer the questions which follow.

1. Use an atlas or an on-line resource such as Google Maps to locate Livingston County, Kentucky. Use this information to answer questions (a) and (b):
 - a. Why was Livingston County a likely place from which a slave would attempt to escape?
 - b. Explain how the Ohio River might be a barrier or might serve as an aid to a slave attempting an escape to free territory.
2. Why was the posted reward significantly higher for an out-of-state capture and return?
3. By twice using the word "boy," how did E. M. Duley indicate his relationship with Manuel? Why was this word especially demeaning then to male slaves? (***) Additional question: What impact did the word "boy" have upon the more recent Civil Rights Movement?
4. In this broadside Manuel is described as having a "shrewd expression of the eye." Look up the definition of "shrewd." How does this counter arguments by owners who defended slavery by claiming African Americans were ignorant?

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Image

TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD!

Ran away from the subscriber, on the 6th inst., my boy Manuel. He is about 35 years of age, about 5 feet 7 inches high, heavy built weighing about 160 pounds. He has a shrewd expression of the eye, and has a scar on one of his thighs occasioned from a burn, is well dressed and has in his possession a figured plush carpet-bag.

I will give a Reward of \$200 for the apprehension and delivery of said boy at my house about ten miles from Berry's Ferry, or in the Livingston county Jail, if taken in any other State; or \$50 if taken within the State of Kentucky.

E. M. DULEY.

Livingston Co., Ky., May 9, 1860.

Enoch M. Duley, "Two Hundred Dollars Reward!" broadside, Livingston Co., Kentucky, May 9, 1860. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC06377.01)