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LETTERS OF AN EAST TENNESSEE ABOLITIONIST

EDITED BY W. FREEMAN GALPIN

Among the many correspondents of Gerrit Smith probably none was more informative or more colorful in his descriptions than Ezekiel Birdseye of Newport, Tennessee.¹ Ezekiel Birdseye was the son of Ebenezer Birdseye of Stratford, Connecticut, and grandson of the Rev. Nathan Birdseye of the same place. Little is known of Ezekiel's early life other than that he moved with his father from Stratford to Cornwall, Connecticut. Here he married Mary, the daughter of Rev. Timothy Stone. At a later date he moved west and settled in eastern Tennessee where he became very interested in the economic development of that section of the state. He discovered certain coal mines and devoted much effort and money to the development of the same. The following letters reveal not only this interest, but also that in the cause of abolition. Ezekiel's half brother, Victory Birdseye, was an intimate friend of Gerrit Smith, living not far from Peterboro in the historic town of Pompey. Like his brother, Victory was also concerned in the cause of the slave and it is probably due to this fact that Gerrit Smith found in Ezekiel a fruitful source for information concerning conditions in eastern Tennessee. Ezekiel provided Gerrit Smith with considerable information during the 1830's and down to the period of the Civil War. He died shortly after that contest got under way.²

I

Newport Ten Jan 25th. 1841

My Dear Sir

After about three weeks absence I found your highly interesting letter at Newport last week. I was much affected with your

¹The following selected letters were taken from the Gerrit Smith Miller collection preserved at Syracuse Library, Syracuse University. This collection was a gift by Gerrit Smith Miller of Peterboro, New York, and includes some 20,000 or more letters addressed to or from Gerrit Smith.

²These meager facts relative to the life of Ezekiel Birdseye were obtained from Rev. S. Orcott, *History of the Old Town of Stratford*, Part II (New Haven, 1886) and Donald Gordon, *The Diary of Ellen Birdseye Wheaton* (Boston, 1923).

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liberality to enable me to procure the liberation of the poor slave sold by Franklin to Woodfin.³ I had much wished that I had the means to liberate him but poverty has come on us like an armed man. I find it impossible to collect but a small part due me. Distress prevails throughout the State and I believe the whole South.

Immediately on receiving your letter I wrote the Rev D R McAnally of the Methodist Church at Ashville [sic] and stated my object. A day or two after the Rev Robert H Lea of the same church joined with me in another letter to him. I am in the daily expectation of his answer. I stated that my object was to purchase him to give him his freedom and requested him to ascertain what Woodfin would take for him and should I not be mistaken in supposing that motives of humanity would influence him he might suggest it to him. As Woodfin is an attorney he may be at a distant Court. If so I shall learn at what time I can meet with him and see him personally. The man I know is with him and comfortable provided for and receives kind treatment.

Mr Lea informs me that Woodfin's Father was a philanthropist who labored earnestly for the poor slaves; that his brother a clergyman in the Methodist Church was also one but was killed suddenly, his horse took fright and ran with his carriage by which he was instantly killed. From these circumstances I hope to find that the principles cherished by the Father and the brother will be found in the one who owns the slave. Should he refuse \$450, I will try to meet the difference if not too great. Whatever the cost of purchase may be I will pay one half or more as my means will permit or at the first convenient time with interest.

Aaron Clarke an intelligent honest laboring man who is in my employ has labored with this slave. He says that he is a man of very superior natural talents between 25 or 30 years old strong active and one of the best laborers he ever worked with. He told Mr Clarke that for more than ten years he had been making repeated efforts to get to the free states and gave him a detail of his sufferings as it would appear impossible for any man to live through. He says he is healthy and strong with one of those

³In a letter to Smith, dated April 16, 1841, Birdseye reported that Woodfin was not willing to sell the slave for less than \$800. From another letter, of June 21, 1841, it would appear that Smith decided that as Woodfin was a kind master and would not under any circumstances sell him into slavery, the matter of purchase had better be dropped.

firm constitutions that can endure incredible distress. When taken in Buncombe County he was in company with another runaway slave lying out in the Mountains. . . .

The pamphlet-Your letter to Mr Clay and the Emancipator of the 17 Dec. reached me safely for both please accept my thanks. I will give them a circulation where I hope they will do much good. The letter to Mr Clay I handed to my worthy friend Lea who read it through and expressed himself so highly pleased with it that he should esteem it a privilege to have a correspondence with the author. He is a pious clergyman who has labored much for the colored people. He had a Sabbath school of upwards of 40 most of them slaves in Jefferson County whom he taught with encouraging prospects untill threatened with a prosecution he was compelled to abandon his school. Should you find it convenient to correspond with him you may obtain much valuable information, much that I could not give. His Post office will be in Morgan County Ten. If you could send him some Antislavery publications directed to him Morgan County, they would be sent to the County seat where they would find him. I hope that great good may be done by keeping up an active correspondence with the South. An opinion is gaining ground at the South that Slavery cannot continue long.

The whole South has been in some degree influenced by the Abolitionists. Barbarous punishments are less frequent. Burning slaves alive was a barbarity that prevailed in South Carolina untill about 1830. The last instance that I heard of in that state was in Abbeville District [and was of] a young negro man said to be about twenty years old. He was Tried & sentenced by a court composed of two magistrates and five free holders and executed near the plantation of John C Calhoun and George McDuffie. Wm C Roadmon the intelligent Postmaster of Newport in this county was present at the execution. He told me that there was a very large collection of people and as near as he could judge 3000 blacks. That before the fire was kindled a sermon was preached by I think the Rev Mr Capers; that he saw the poor young man who was about to suffer distinctly; that he appeared composed so much so that he thought he did not believe that they really intended to burn him. When the dreadful sentence was about to be executed they piled pitch pine faggots around him and applied the fire. His screams were loud and piercing. No

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language could describe his agony. The plain dealing of the Abolitionists has put a stop to this mode of execution I trust forever. The Slave market was when I was in Charleston in the most public part of the city. When the Abolitionists were handling them as they thought to the [not legible] they removed it to [a] more private place. These are among the important signs of the times. Where there is shame there is hope of something better.

In the fall a planter the owner of some 50 or 60 slaves from Edgefield district which joins Abbeville on the East spent a night at the house where I am now writing. Speaking of the Abolitionists he said they made horrid pictures and exhibited them publicly of slaves chained together and of flogging them in the most cruel manner. I asked him if their pictures exceeded the reality. He said they did. I told him I thought not that I had met slaves every where chained; that while the trade continued it was an every day occurrence in the South; that in Laurens district one was whipped to death by a Baptist clergyman and more recently one burned to death in Abbeville two districts immediately adjoining the one in which he lived. He admitted the fact and that there was much cruelty on the plantations. Frequent instances of this kind have occurred which are important so far as they show that slaveholders are not wholly insensible to shame and that the pictorial representations and severe criticisms of the Abolitionists are doing much good.

Some two or three weeks since I spent a night at my friend John Caldwell in Jefferson County. I met there with a Mr Patterson the President of the Manumission Society of that part of Jefferson County. I inquired about the present condition of the Society, its numbers & he stated that the society had over 600 members; that he had a list of their names which he should be happy to show me. The society has not opened their meetings owing to the oppressive laws of the State. Mr Patterson has sold his farm and purchased in Indiana unwilling to remain longer in a state where freedom was denied him.

This excellent man gave me a pressing invitation to visit at his house which I hope to be able to do before he leaves the State. I inquired of him if during this time of trial he had kept up an active correspondence at the North. He said no but little had been done by any of the Society. It is too true that these good men become much discouraged by the mobs of the North and the

oppressive laws of the South I think too much so. I believe these societies might be openly held without any danger of prosecution and that by corresponding with the North they would soon know that there was much cause for rejoicing. Mr. Caldwell thinks that the antislavery influence is about to rise with redoubled vigor at the South. One of the most effectual means will be by extensive and active correspondence. Should my Northern friends be willing to undertake the labor I think I can do something to induce a very extensive correspondence with this part of the South.

In my acquaintance with the South I have been induced to believe that the improved communications between the North and South would contribute greatly to the overthrow of Slavery. The South are in want of manufacturers tools and implements of any kind. Agriculture is in a low state. The poor are neglected, suffered to grow up without education or educated as mechanics. Yet most are willing to work and would hail with joy any manufacturing or company that would employ them at a low price.

There is a Turnpike in a state of forwardness from Cincinnati to Lexington Ky. From there to Cumberland Gap; from which a long pike road will soon be completed to S. C. by this place. Steam now extends to Raleigh N. C. from thence a turnpike will probably be made to Asheville by this place to Knoxville which will make the communications from this to the East or West easy and direct. Judge Peck and myself own very large tracts of land in this Co., the adjoining Counties and North Carolina on which we are anxious to establish improvements wholly excluding slave labor. These lands are healthy [and] have great Natural resources. Iron ore water power timber [lime?] & rich mountain pasture grounds. We own French Broad for about 16 miles. The stream would make a fine place for a Rolling Mill or manufacturing towns. Paint Creek Brush Creek long Creek on this side Wolf Creek and Big Creek on the south side of F[rench] B[road] would all be sufficient for furnaces and abound in iron ore and good timber. Should our friends of the North think our opinions worthy of consideration I shall be happy to correspond with them on the subject. This is the most thoroughly antislavery part of the South. A press might soon be established here and much done to redeem the South which needs a practical example of the advantages of Free labor. We have the analysis of iron ores. I took the liberty to for[war]d you Dr. Troost's Geological Report

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where you will find our lands spoken of. You may assure any capitalists of the North or Europe that if they are disposed to associate with us we will put in our lands at nominal prices and invite an examination of them. I am not acquainted with Mr. Worthington but will inquire of my Miss[issippi] friends. You may do well to trace him from his last residence and probably would find the P[ost] Masters ready to give you information if you have no other acquaintances. In this way I found it generally easy to find the residence of any men much known.

In another letter I will give you some names with whom you or your friends might find it convenient to correspond or send antislavery documents and papers. I will add a few only. Rev. Josiah Rhoton[,] Tazewell[,] Claiborne Co.[] E Ten Dr J M Recca[,] Mossy Creek, Mr Kirkpatrick P[ost] master Bent Creek[,] Jefferson Co. Thomas Lane same office. These men will circulate any papers you send them. One being a P[ost] master few will be lost or destroyed. I will try to furnish the means of paying for such papers as I order for the South. Judge Wm B Reace [Reese] of the Supreme Court is an antislavery man [in] Knoxville Ten Seth J W Lucky Esq Atty at law Jonesboro E Ten an intelligent and pious man; his influence is extensive.

Yours sincerely

Ezekial Birdseye

I hope to see my Brother⁴ before he takes his seat in Congress and shall labor to convince him that cringing to the South is not the way to gain their respect or to discharge his duty to the North. (Rev Robert H Lea [,] Montgomery[,] Morgan Co E Ten)

II

Newport E Ten June 25th 1841

My Dear Sir:

I found on Monday the "*Signet of Liberty*" published at Ann Arbor Mi[chigan] which you had the goodness to for[war]d. It is gratify to me to receive this among the many evidences of the Spirit of Liberty in the Northern States. I would hope that this Spirit is progressing in all the free States. The reformation there

⁴Victory Birdseye was Congressman from New York, Mar. 4, 1841-Mar. 3, 1843.

will act directly on the South. The Temperance reformation did. All influences which extensively affect the North operate about simultaneously on the South. While these evidences are teaching me of a favorable change in the North I find them silently making progress here. The late census with the statistical information spread before the public has made an impression. The far greater increase of the North in wealth and population is soon to leave them (of the South) in a hopeless minority unless prevented by a timely change of policy. I hope it may have a good effect on the North by showing them that they are not necessarily subservient to the South.

In a late letter I made some observations on the influences of free principles in North Carolina. Mr. Wadsworth⁶ of whom I spoke told me that he had conversed with Romulus M. Saunders and Governor Morehead—that both were opposed to slavery—both you will recollect were rival candidates for Gov. last year. A year last winter I stopped for the night at the hotel in Knoxville. A gentleman was introduced to my room whom I learned to be Mr Saunders of N. C. I had some knowledge of his public character, this was the first personal acquaintance. I found him communicative agreeable and polite. He conversed freely on the proslavery excitements of the South. He said they had one at Raleigh. Some vague reports obtained circulation of an intended insurrection. He found the court house filled with slaves undergoing examination and was requested to attend. He found no cause for excitement and expressed his opinion that the slaves were innocent. The public were excited and requested him to give the prisoners a *talk*. He addressed the slaves and endeavored to impress their minds with the necessity of a quiet peaceable demeanor, that they should carefully abstain from any thing which should lead to suspicions of bad intentions which would only tend to expose them to harsh treatment and endanger their lives. With this they were dismissed. All went off quietly. At this time a young man from the North was boarding in his family teaching. He had expressed himself openly on the subject of slavery and was apprehensive of personal violence. He consulted Mr S. as to what would be expedient. Mr S. told him to talk with him unreservedly on the subject but advised him to be guarded

⁶William Wadsworth of Carthage, Moon County, N. C.; at one time a member of the legislature of that state.

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the influences of worth of whom I mulus M. Saunders posed to slavery—for Gov. last year. hotel in Knoxville. m I learned to be of his public char- ce. I found him nversed freely on said they had one culation of an in- e filled with slaves attend. He found on that the slaves requested him to es and endeavored a quiet peaceable from any thing ions which would nd endanger their t off quietly. At rding in his family on the subject of ce. He consulted told him to talk him to be guarded

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in his expressions to others. Finding that there was excitement arising which might endanger the young man he advised him to leave. He went to the North safely. Mr S. in the course of our conversation inquired why it was that no more of our people emigrated to their state while its natural advantages were so great and so much cheaper than at the Northwestern States. I replied that it was their dread of slavery and coming in contact with slaveholding institutions. He said he had supposed that to be the reason. These public men are afraid of injuring their popularity and express themselves with caution. Mr S if I recollect correctly once presented a petition from the Friends in N C. for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. I am disposed to believe that a profitable correspondence might be carried on with him if he was assured that it should be confidential. I wish I could give grounds to hope of S Carolina. It is out of my power. There are individuals there of great moral worth but they would fear being even suspected of heresy on this subject. The great body of the Community there of both Church and State appear to unite in its support. The slaveholders are aristocratic, fond of show and living up to their means. The poor are ignorant and depressed. When I was in that State it was supposed that there was an average of 200 women at their courts in the interior of the state mixing with the crowd with an affrontery which too plainly indicated what class they belonged. Whether these evils have increased or diminished the last few years I am not informed. If there is a redeeming spirit in all that state I should suppose it to be John B O'Neal one of the Judges of the Appellate Court. He is a pious man well acquainted throughout the state. I believe would answer any respectful inquiry which might be addressed to him at Newbury S. C. It is but a few days since two men said to be from this state (S. C.) passed through Jefferson county having three runaway slaves. They were chained together around the neck, their arms fastened to each other with irons around their wrists. I did not see them, they passed the neighborhood where I was at the time. The cruelty was generally spoken of in terms of severe reprobation.

One of the most unhappy features in the character of the slaveholding states is their proneness to violence. The evil may be traced to the frequent examples of cruelty to the slaves and the want of parental government. Children grow up without restraint

—rather taught to indulge than govern their passions. As they become grown up frequent collisions occur of a serious nature, often fatal and seldom punished, if among the aristocracy. I am happy to be able to say they occur less frequently in E Ten than in most parts of the South, but are quite too frequent here. Nashville and the vicinity have been most afflicted with these occurrences of any part of our state and seem to arise there mostly among the aristocracy.

In Jan'y last some angry words passed between a Mr J. G. Harris I think of Newhampshire and a Mr Foster a son of the late Senator. The dispute was political. Mr Newman [not legible] of Jefferson co. was at the Hotel where Harris boarded. Standing near Foster when Harris came in to supper. Mr N. told me Foster said (if he understood him) "Gentlemen I wish to make a denunciation" He immediately raised his pistole and fired at Harris, wounded him very dangerously with two balls. Harris has recovered. Foster was recently tried and as is customary acquitted. Some few weeks since his Father Ephraim H Foster met with a lawyer by the name of Brown who had the day before refused to speak to his son who shot Harris. Brown spoke politely to the Father E. H. F. who expressed his surprise that he should condescend to speak to him when he had the day before refused to speak to his son—an conversation soon lead Foster to strike him with his cane. Brown stabbed him with his knife giving him a very dangerous wound at the same time breaking the blade of his knife. He is recovering tho his escape is a narrow one. With Mr F I have some personal acquaintance. He appears to be an amiable man in his general intercourse in society. He might have been the candidate for Governor with almost certainty of being elected. The evil is greater when good men or men in elevated stations in Society engage in such contests. Before these, several personal encounters had proved fatal, one by a brother of James K. Polk the present Governor.

Ever since the disgustful violence on Amer D Resser [?] at Nashville that city and vicinity have been distinguished for violence and assassinations. Generally they originate in some trifling matter, often ending in death to one of the parties. The same remarks would apply to Vicksburg only in a greater degree. Since the assassination of a number of persons in the summer of 1835 they have been killing off each other. In the mean time the town

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Another evil of considerable magnitude prevailing in the South which has not wholly escaped the attention of the North, is the exclusion of free colored persons from the free states or selling them into slavery under various pretences. A few weeks ago I saw a Nashville paper in the possession of one of my friends in which was [an advertisement of] a runaway in jail who said his name was Williams (or something so) who says he is free. These advertisements have been frequent at the South for some years. A year or two since I sent some to my friend J. H. Lewis P[ost] M[aster,] Terryville Con. I would have sent you this but it contained matter which the owner wished to keep. I suppose the antislavery society must be in possession of a sufficient number of them. I think they have most frequently appeared in the Mississippi papers—When a runaway slave is apprehended a minute discription of his person appears in the advertisement, the name of the owner to whom he says he belongs. In addition a letter or message is sent to him. When a free colored man is apprehended or lodged in jail the advertisement appears to be intentionally blind. Nothing appears in them to indicate the place where the man is from who his friends are or any notice to them unless some philanthropic man makes special enquiry. Tho if the unfortunate man happens to be in the hands of a kidnappers any person interfering would have notice that he was doing it at his peril.

I have been lead to suspect that a system of kidnapping was carried on by those who often appear at the North in the character of gentlemen—When last in Phila. a young man[,] col[ore]d[,] a barber asked my advice about attending a man to Mississippi as a waiter with the promise of liberal wages employment as a coachman etc. I told him the design was undoubtedly to make him a slave, not to go there. I have supposed that these credulous men were induced to go there under liberal promises—probably dismissed after a while and then thrown into jail and sold as runaway slaves. From the character and frequency of these advertisements I am led to the opinion that the subject is one requiring investigation as well as the laws in the Southern States in relation to free colored persons from free states. The free states should refuse to give up any persons claimed as a slave coming from States where the rights of free colored persons are invaded or taken from them by any unconstitutional laws. If free colored persons

have no rights in the slave states slavery should have none in the free states. The sooner the South are made to understand that the better. If the North deals with them firmly and decidedly, they will be respected accordingly. If they tamely yield their rights they will meet with insolence and insult.

With great respect I am Sincerely Yours

Ezekial Birseye

III

Newport E Ten Nov 27 1841

My Dear Sir

I recd a paper from you The friend of Man of Oct 5th. by which I learn that you have purchased the freedom of those colored persons in Mississippi of whose residence you inquired of me some time last spring & or I suppose them to be the same. Samuel and his family will I have no doubt feel grateful to you for your act of kindness to them and I would hope make a good improvement of their freedom.

I returned to this town from Athens two days since during my sojourn many incidents came to my knowledge which may interest the philanthropist—much that gives us additional ground to hope that the cause which interests us is making progress in East Tennessee.

You will probably recollect that I suggested the possibility some three years since that East Tennessee might be detached from the other part of the State and made a seperate and free state. I had hopes even then that such might be the result. Afterwards I was in so much doubt that I almost despaired of seeing it accomplished [not legible]. From my first arrival in this State I have endeavored to convince those with whom I became acquainted that such a decision would contribute to the well being of East Ten that the natural resources of the country were its minerals agriculture and manufacturing resources; that with free labor with well directed industry a home market for the Farmer, such legislation as would encourage improvements in the useful arts and with all protect the virtuous would insure its wealth and prosperity. During the past year this has been a great deal discussed in private circles and appeared to meet with favorable consideration by influential good citizens. It is now popular in

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all parts of East Tennessee. On Monday and tuesday of this week I attended the internal improvement convention of E Ten at Knoxville. This was discussed in the convention on both days. Not a single opponent appeared. The Convention adjourned to meet again on Monday the 13th day of Dec when a more full attendance is expected. There are three political newspapers in Knoxville all of which will now advocate the policy of seperating E from W. Ten. The other papers in East Ten will so far as I am informed give their support of the measure. Mr. [Joseph L.] Williams the member of Congress from Knox County is with us I am disposed to believe that our delegation in Congress will unitedly favor it.

Those who hope by this means to exterminate slavery in East Tennessee think it will be prudent to say but little on that subject or publicly on it untill the act of seperation is determined, then to make a united effort to carry that measure. I should suppose there could be no doubt but a very large majority of our people would vote for the termination of slavery without delay. The surrounding Slave States would take the alarm and no doubt make strenuous efforts to counteract a policy which they deem destructive to their interests.

The friends of the Slave would have an open field and an opportunity to meet the advocates of slavery in debate. In this, native citizens would have the one advantage over those from the free states. They would bee among their acquaintances, would be well acquainted with the modes of reasoning among their fellow citizens—enough of them could be found ready to engage in the cause. With these there should be some from the Northern States who could explain to them the superior advantages of free over slave labor.

As to the mode of conducting the very important measures now in contemplation there are men better qualified than my self to judge. Among the number my worthy friend John Caldwell. He is known in all parts of East Tennessee. Altho a self taught man he has talents, is honest in the cause is a man who beyond most others has the esteem and good will of the community. He expects to leave next month for Talahesse Florida to return in the spring. Quite recently the Colonization Society requested him to go to Liberia. He has consented to do so not because he has confidence that that is much to advance the cause

of emancipation, but some will liberate their slaves for that purpose who would not consent to so to have them remain here. In the first place they are objects of persecution, in the next the laws of the state make it difficult to liberate them to remain here. Mr C. thinks he shall obtain the liberation of a number who will be a great use in civilizing and christianizing Africa. It is true that many slaves in E Ten maintain excellent characters as professing Christians I should hope [they] would be very useful in Africa. Mr Caldwell stated to me that he fully united in opinion with the Abolitionists and was ready to give the cause his efficient support.

On my return I spent a night with Robert Bagle in Blount County. I met at his house Rev. Mr Craig a professor in the Maryville College. They with a young friend were met to concert measures to advance the cause. When I was at his house on my way down Mr B. informed me that they had a meeting appointed at one of the churches to discuss the subject of the abolition of slavery. He informed me that their meeting was well attended. No disorder or disturbance took place. Another meeting was appointed in the county for next month. The prospects there are very encouraging. I met with the P[ost] Master of Unitia P. O. Blount Co (I have his name but not convenient at this time). He is a man of ardent feelings. A good deal animated in the cause and will I have no doubt make a good use of any thing sent him on the subject Mr Fife P[ost] Master Athens Ten with whom I became acquainted is in favor of a separation of the state and for the total abolition of slavery. Through him much good may be done. He is a man of influence both in and out of the Church.

I called to see the venerable Samuel Johnstone. I had a wish to see him. His son requested me to visit his Father. I found him at work near his house clearing some new ground with a colored man that he had made free many years ago. He is now about 80 years of age active and industrious His white locks and venerable appearance must reminded me of the venerable Dr Johnson whom I used to see at Stratford in Conn when a youth myself. Mr Johnstone conversed much on the subject of slavery. He said the children of Israel were a long time in bondage but their oppressors had to let them go and were visited with many punish-

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their slaves for that purpose. They would remain here. In addition, in the next the would be them to remain here. of a number who will be coming from Africa. It is true that they are excellent characters as proposed. They would be very useful in being fully united in opinion for the cause his efficient

Robert Bagle in Blount County. I was a professor in the school. They were met to con-

I was at his house on the 1st of May. They had a meeting upon the subject of the abolition. Their meeting was well attended. Another meeting was held the next month. The prospects of the P[ost] Master of the school were not convenient at the time. A good deal animated discussion was had. A good use of any thing was made. Master Athens Ten with the separation of the state was discussed. It brought him much good. Both in and out of the

Johnstone. I had a wish to see his Father. I found him on the ground with a colored man. He is now about 70 years of age. He has white locks and venerable. Dr Johnson was with him when a youth myself. He was against slavery. He said that the bondage but their opposition with many punish-

ments. The slaves in our country would be liberated and he believed their oppressors visited with severe displeasure of the Almighty. He said much on the cruelties he had witnessed and of those transpiring now. Some years ago he saw 300 in Knoxville, a large proportion chained. There was now near him a slave dealer by the name of Upton who had collected about 30 which he had in a private prison awaiting their removal to Louisiana. Among them was one from the neighborhood of Knoxville who had been taken from his family—he escaped with the intention of going back to see his family again. They pursued him and in taking him struck him with a club across his loins so as to disable him. He was lying in a dangerous state with but little prospect of recovering. My aged friend is a member of the Seceders Church. Their clergyman lives in Blount Co. Something like a year ago he was in S. C. Duty lead him to express his sentiments on the subject of Slavery. They tarred & Feathered him and gave him much rough usage.

Mr Johnstone has a large farm. I think the best cultivated that I saw in the county. In his supplications for mercy he does not forget the poor slave. He said he was happy to hear that the Abolitionists were increasing in number and influence. He hoped that their labors might be crowned with success. The good man does not conceal his opinions but expressed them with an open undisguised frankness which testified how much he loved the cause. He spoke with ardent feelings of those who had been active in the cause. I inquired if he should not like to correspond with them. He raised his hand to show me that it was palsied. He said he wrote with difficulty but if there is any one who wish I will try. I told him I thought they would send him some pamphlets and papers. He said he should receive them with pleasure and he would wish them addressed to Madisonville Monroe County E Ten.

Judge Peck with myself have determined to try the entire exclusion of slave labor on our land here. At his plantation he has some 4 or 5. They are a family who enjoy much freedom. He would gladly make them entirely free but [not legible] wish to have all free. He will give his influence to effect the separation of E. Ten and then to make it a free State. The situation is such that if the object can be accomplished, the early downfall of slavery in all the Slave States may be confidently anticipated. Our informa-

tion is continually more favorable from Kentucky and North Carolina. It is favorable even from Middle and West Tennessee. I meet with men frequently from there who express their abhorrence of the institution. More who admit that it [is] an evil and slave labor unprofitable. I have requested Judge Peck to assist me in making an estimate of the extent and resources of E. Ten I have the following estimate which is principally his—

East Ten contains 18,000 square miles, 11,450,000 acres. One half[,] 5,728,000[,] may be profitably applied to agricultural purposes or arable lands. 3,000,000 acres limestone land. 3,000 square miles produce bituminous coal none better. Some anthracite is found but none extensively explored. Navigable streams, Tennessee Holston Fr Broad Nollichucky Clinch Hiwasse [not legible] Rivers Powel Emery Tellico Wattauga. With more than a 1,000 streams suitable for driving machinery of every description with any power. Iron ore of every quality found every where. Lead Zinc copper Mangonese Marble Gypsum Gold Silver Salt Petre in Caves. Allum Copperas Epsum Nickel. We have specimens of all of the above and can readily give further information as to their localities. The mines are but little wrought. Those of gold and silver are in the Ocoe district. Gold has been found to some profit. Some silver, but none has been extensively worked. Further up the mountain large specimens of silver ore have been found united with lead and antimony. The iron coal marble and Lime are the most useful and so abundant that they add nothing to the market value of lands or very little. To all the motives the Philanthropist should urge [for] the abolition of slavery that of Religious and moral obligation will have great influence. But with these who are most influenced by such motives but few own slaves and as a general Rule they are not slaveholders from principle; but either hold them by decent or have purchased to save them from a worse fate. Many have done so who believed they were doing an act of humanity. Whether mistaken or not in that opinion they will give aid in abolishing the Institution. To those who own slaves as a matter of gain a candid argument to prove to them that it is not profitable will be listened to with attention. Now in the extreme depression that prevails at the South, particularly in this State, is a favorable time to bring this to their attention. Every movement made to introduce

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manufacturers will be received with encouragement and appre-
ciation. I commenced this letter after nine oclock after much
fatigue and must ask you to make allowances for errors and a
host of mistakes. It would not be expedient to say much about
the object of seperating E from W Ten but I will advise you from
time to time

With great respect I am your Most Obdt

E Birdseye

THE EXECUTIVE JOURNAL OF GOVERNOR
JOHN SEVIER

Edited by SAMUEL C. WILLIAMS

(Continued from EAST TENNESSEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S PUBLICATIONS, No. 1,
pp. 95-153, and No. 2, pp. 135-149)

Mr. Speaker of the Senate, and of the House of Representatives:

I have the honor of laying before you an act passed by the legislature of North Carolina, for appointing Commissioners to settle the boundary line between that State and the State of Tennessee, also a letter from his Excellency Governor Ashe, accompanying the same.⁵²

I beg leave to remark to your honorable body, that I am aware the situation of our finances does not enable us at the present to undertake a business that may appear involved in expensive operations; however, I hope it will not be thought improper in me to suggest the propriety in this State, to have some proper persons appointed to fix upon the place, at least, where the line should cross French Broad river. That would determine whether the settlements from Laurel creek downwards is above or below the line. There are several large tracts of land belonging to Love⁵³ and others, on which large sums may be collected by the taxes arising thereon; likewise, there are some families settled in the vicinity of the Warm Springs, and more about to settle. It will be of great importance to this State to have the line properly and fairly settled, otherways it may be materially injured, by improper constructions, and suffer considerable loss in territory, and other lucrative advantages. I submit it to your consideration, whether or not the expenditures for such a purpose only would be by any means greater burthensome; and when we compare the expence with the benefits that in all probability may arise by the taxation

⁵²See Williams, "North Carolina-Tennessee Boundary Line Survey, 1799," *Tenn. Hist. Mag.*, VI, 46.

⁵³Probably Robert or Wm. Love, of Haywood County, N. C., formerly residents of Washington County. See Williams, *Lost State of Franklin*, 195, 198, 327.