PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-05

The Kentucky raiders' bail and wagon: what the Licking Valley Register reported in September 1847

Michael Urbanski ORCID 0009-0006-8183-5828 (https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8183-5828), Project Scroll · Issued 25 October 2026 · Version 1 · doi:10.5281/zenodo.23631269 (https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23631269)

SUMMARY

Accounts of the Kentucky raid on Cass County, Michigan, in August 1847 give the raiders' bail as $2,600, and tell that the abolitionists rolled the raiders' wagon into Birch Lake. The papers of 1847 tell it differently. A letter from Niles, written within days, gives the bail as three thousand dollars. The raiders' own home paper, the Covington *Licking Valley Register* of 17 September 1847, puts it at "something over four thousand dollars" in all, and says that the wagon, its wheels taken, "was then delivered up." As far as we can find, the $2,600 first appears in the county history of 1875, and the Birch Lake story in the 1930s.

THE RECORD

1. ***Licking Valley Register*** **(Covington, Ky.), 17 September 1847, p. 2, the "fuller account"**

> *"Several gentlemen of Cassopolis and of the neighborhood, promptly stept forward and went their bail, amounting in all to something over four thousand dollars." Of the wagon: "all the wheels had been taken from it and could not be found … It was then delivered up."*

House Divided Project, Dickinson College, "Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands" · See the record (https://stampedes.dickinson.edu/document/covington-ky-licking-valley-register-september-17-1847)

2. **Howard S. Rogers, *History of Cass County, from 1825 to 1875* (Cassopolis: W. H. Mansfield, 1875), p. 140**

   > *"Their bail was fixed by the Justice at two thousand six hundred dollars."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/historyofcasscou00roge)

3. **Alfred Mathews, *History of Cass County, Michigan* (Chicago: Waterman, Watkins & Co., 1882), ch. XVII, p. 113**

   > *"Their bail was fixed by Justice Howell at $2,600," with Asa Kingsbury, Amos Dow and Daniel McIntosh as sureties.*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/historyofcasscou00wate)

4. **Letter dated Niles, 21 August 1847, *Signal of Liberty* (Ann Arbor), 28 August 1847, p. 2; reprinted as J. I. Alexander's in the *New-York Daily Tribune*, 6 October 1847, p. 1 (Library of Congress, Chronicling America: https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn83030213/1847-10-06/ed-1/?sp=1)**

   > *On "the charge of assault and battery," the Kentuckians were "held to bail in the sum of three thousand dollars, which they obtained by depositing $900 and their horses."*

   Ann Arbor District Library; Library of Congress, Chronicling America · See the record (https://aadl.org/node/38326)

5. **Cooper Wingert, "The 1847 Kenton and Boone County Stampedes: Part 2: Pursuit," *Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands* (House Divided Project, Dickinson College), 26 February 2024**

   > *"The Kentuckians had to post $2,600 bail." Of the wagon: "First, local residents stripped the wagon of its wheels; later, they reportedly pushed the wagon into nearby Birch Lake"; swimmers saw it in 1936, and a note cites the Unionville (Mich.) Crescent, 5 March 1937, on plans to recover it.*

   House Divided Project · See the record (https://housedivided.dickinson.edu/sites/stampedes/?p=3963)

WHAT IT CHANGES

Accounts of the raid repeat $2,600, first printed, as far as we can find, in the county history of 1875 and again in 1882. The papers of 1847 that we have read give more: three thousand in the Niles letter, printed in the *Signal of Liberty* of 28 August, and over four thousand in the Kentucky paper. The Kentucky account also has the wagon handed back, where the Birch Lake story is first told, as far as we can find, in the 1930s (a sighting the House Divided Project dates to 1936, and the Unionville *Crescent* of 5 March 1937). The House Divided Project at Dickinson College has transcribed the 1847 account in full, and Cooper Wingert (2024) cites it for the stripped wheels; but his history, like every other we have found, keeps the $2,600 and repeats, as "reportedly," the Birch Lake ending. David Chardavoyne printed it without qualification in 2004 ("discovered the raiders' wagon and sank it in Birch Lake"); it is not in Jane East Karkalits's *Story of the Birch Lake Quakers* (1963).

LIMITS

The Kentucky paper wrote for the raiders' side and may have overstated the bail. The figures may also count different bonds: the county histories tie $2,600 to particular charges (assault, trespass and kidnapping), the Niles letter's three thousand is the bail on the charge of assault and battery, and the Register's figure is "in all." The sources also differ on who stood bail: the Niles letter says the Kentuckians deposited "$900 and their horses," the Kentucky paper that "gentlemen of Cassopolis" went their bail, and the county histories name three sureties. This note does not decide between them; it records that the sources of 1847 differ from the figure everyone repeats. We have read the Kentucky account in the House Divided Project's clippings and transcription, not on the full newspaper page. Two articles in the *Michigan Historical Review* 48, no. 2 (2022), by Veta Smith Tucker and Déanda Johnson, are behind a paywall and were not read; they may cite the 1847 papers.

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

The county histories of 1875, 1882 and 1906; the House Divided Project's narrative of the 1847 stampedes; D. G. Chardavoyne, "Michigan and the Fugitive Slave Acts," *The Court Legacy* (2004); Wikipedia; the Underground Railroad Society of Cass County's pages; the Clio entry; the State Bar of Michigan's milestone pages; web searches for the bail figure, the wagon and Birch Lake; the Internet Archive's and Chronicling America's full text, 1936–38; Karkalits (1963). The Unionville *Crescent* of 5 March 1937 is held by the Library of Michigan, and the Cassopolis *Vigilant* of 1935–37 is on microfilm at the Cass District Library's Local History Branch; we have not yet read either. We also searched the research repositories Zenodo, OpenAlex and Crossref, with Google Scholar, JSTOR, Academia.edu and ResearchGate through web searches (OSF, Semantic Scholar, CORE, SSRN and arXiv could not be searched from our tools).

Our standard for calling a finding new is set out in How we research (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/).

"New" means new to print as far as we can tell. If you know of an earlier publication, tell us and we will credit it here and raise the note's version.

WORKS CITED

Earlier work, catalogues and databases named in this note, besides the records quoted above.

1. "Cassopolis," *Crescent* (Unionville, Mich.), 5 March 1937, as cited by Cooper Wingert, "The 1847 Kenton and Boone County Stampedes: Part 2: Pursuit," n. 10.
2. L. H. Glover, ed., *A Twentieth Century History of Cass County, Michigan* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1906), pp. 289–290. Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/twentiethcentury00glov

3. Cooper Wingert, “The 1847 Kenton and Boone County Stampedes: Part 1: Escape,” *Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands* (House Divided Project, Dickinson College), 25 February 2024 (Part 2 is in the record), accessed October 2026. https://housedivided.dickinson.edu/sites/stampedes/the-1847-kenton-and-boone-county-stampedes/
4. David G. Chardavoyne, “Michigan and the Fugitive Slave Acts,” *The Court Legacy* (Historical Society for the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan) 12, no. 3 (November 2004), pp. 1–11. https://www.nkyviews.com/carroll/pdf/crosswhite_affair.pdf
5. Wikipedia, “Kentucky raid in Cass County (1847)” and “James O’Dell.”, accessed October 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kentucky_raid_in_Cass_County_(1847)
6. Underground Railroad Society of Cass County, “1847 Kentucky Raid,” and Cindy Yawkey, *The Kentucky Slave Raid of 1847, Cass County Michigan* (Vandalia: Underground Railroad Society of Cass County, c. 2019), accessed October 2026. https://urscc.org/1847-kentucky-raid.html
7. Carrie Eldridge, “1847 Kentucky Raid: The Underground Railroad and Fugitive Slave Law in Cass County, Michigan,” Clio entry 85110 (created 29 August 2019, last updated 31 December 2020), accessed October 2026. https://theclio.com/entry/85110
8. State Bar of Michigan, “Michigan Legal Milestones: 30. Freedom Road” (dedicated 16 August 2005); and “A Stop on the Long Road to Freedom,” *Michigan Bar Journal* (July 2005), accessed October 2026. https://www.michbar.org/programs/milestone/milestones_freedomroad
9. Jane East Karkalits, *The Story of the Birch Lake Quakers* (1963). Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/the-story-of-the-birch-lake-quakers
10. Veta Smith Tucker, article in *Michigan Historical Review* 48, no. 2 (2022), not read (its title could not be reached from our tools). https://doi.org/10.1353/mhr.2022.0034
11. Déanda Johnson, article in *Michigan Historical Review* 48, no. 2 (2022), not read (its title could not be reached from our tools). https://doi.org/10.1353/mhr.2022.0029
12. Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress, accessed October 2026. https://www.loc.gov/collections/chronicling-america/
13. Internet Archive, full-text search. https://archive.org/

THE FULL STORY

The finding is set out in context, with the rest of its sources, in The Kentucky Raid of 1847 (projectscroll.com/news/the-kentucky-raid-of-1847/). In the discoveries register:

- `raid-bail-four-thousand` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#raid-bail-four-thousand)
- `raid-wagon-delivered-up` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#raid-wagon-delivered-up)

HOW TO CITE THIS NOTE

Michael Urbanski, “The Kentucky raiders’ bail and wagon: what the Licking Valley Register reported in September 1847,” Project Scroll Research Note 2026-05, version 1 (25 October 2026), https://projectscroll.com/discoveries/notes/2026-05/. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23631269.

BibTeX

```
@techreport{urbanski202605,
  author      = {Urbanski, Michael},
  orcid       = {0009-0006-8183-5828},
  title       = {{The Kentucky raiders' bail and wagon: what the Licking Valley Register reported in September 1847}},
  institution = {Project Scroll},
  type        = {Project Scroll Research Note},
  number      = {2026-05},
  year        = {2026},
  month       = {oct},
  url         = {https://projectscroll.com/discoveries/notes/2026-05/},
  doi         = {10.5281/zenodo.23631269},
  note        = {Version 1}
}
```