PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-35

The Kentucky raid at Cassopolis in the papers of 1847: a messenger on the Sabbath, Charles E. Stuart for the Kentuckians, and a South Bend report

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SUMMARY

In August 1847 a party of Kentuckians raided the Quaker settlements of Calvin and Penn townships, Cass County, Michigan, for freedom seekers, and were themselves arrested; at a hearing at Cassopolis the nine captives were set free. Three reports of 1847 that the county histories and modern accounts do not use bear on it. A Centreville report reprinted in the *Signal of Liberty* of 4 September says "A messenger arrived in this village on Sabbath evening last, to procure the legal services of C. Gurney Esq.," and that "the Kentuckians were still brandishing their bowie-knives": the case was undecided on a Sunday. The *Jackson Patriot*, quoted in the *Signal* of 6 November, says Charles E. Stuart of Kalamazoo, newly elected to Congress and later a United States senator, "got into his buggy, went over to Cassopolis," "held a consultation with the Prosecuting Attorney," and "the complaint of kidnapping was dismissed"; the 1882 county history knows him only as the lawyer in whose office the Kentuckians' spy read law. And the South Bend *Register* of 27 August, reprinted on the front page of the *New-York Daily Tribune* of 11 September, reports that at Cassopolis "another lot of these hunters" had to "back out and call it a drawn game, leaving their slaves to the liberty they had achieved."

THE RECORD

1. **"Slaveholding Outrages," *Signal of Liberty* (Ann Arbor), 4 September 1847, p. 2, quoting a Centreville paper**

> *"A messenger arrived in this village on Sabbath evening last, to procure the legal services of C. Gurney Esq."… "the Kentuckians were still brandishing their bowie-knives and making terrible threats."*

Ann Arbor District Library · See the record (https://aadl.org/node/38371)

2. **"Charles E. Stuart," *Signal of Liberty* (Ann Arbor), 6 November 1847, p. 2, quoting the *Jackson Patriot***

> *"Mr. Stuart got into his buggy, went over to Cassopolis"… "held a consultation with the Prosecuting Attorney"… "and the complaint of kidnapping was dismissed."*

Ann Arbor District Library · See the record (https://aadl.org/node/38684)

3. ***New-York Daily Tribune*, 11 September 1847, p. 1, "Runaway Slaves," from the South Bend (Ind.) *Register* of 27 August 1847**

> *"At Cassopolis another lot of these hunters were stopped in their efforts to take back some runaways, and were obliged, to save themselves from trouble, to back out and call it a drawn game, leaving their slaves to the liberty they had achieved."*

Library of Congress, Chronicling America · See the record (https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn83030213/1847-09-11/ed-1/?sp=1)

4. ***History of Cass County, Michigan* (Chicago: Waterman, Watkins & Co., 1882), the Kentucky raid**

> *"Early in 1847, a young man who gave his name as Carpenter, arrived in Kalamazoo, and entered the law office of Charles E. Stewart, for the alleged purpose of studying law."*

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

WHAT IT CHANGES

The Kentuckians are shown with a lawyer of standing, Charles E. Stuart, whose part at Cassopolis no county history records; the case is shown still undecided on a Sunday, which, read with the Niles letter of 21 August that already reports the nine freed, points to Friday 13 August for the raid and Monday 16 August for the hearing; and an Indiana paper is shown reporting the outcome within two weeks.

LIMITS

The Centreville report is undated and its paper unnamed; by itself its “Sabbath evening last” could be 15 or 22 August, and the dating rests on the Niles letter. The *Jackson Patriot* printed its account as a charge against Stuart in an election season. The South Bend report gives no day and names no one at Cassopolis. The South Bend item was also reprinted in the New-England Religious Herald (18 September) and the Green-Mountain Freeman (23 September 1847).

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

The county histories of 1875, 1882 and 1906; the House Divided Project’s stampede pages (Wingert); Chardavoyne (2004); Marty (2022, 2026); the Underground Railroad Society of Cass County’s pages and Yawkey’s book; Wikipedia; the Clio; full-text searches of the *Signal of Liberty* at the Ann Arbor District Library and of Chronicling America (October 2026).

Our standard for calling a finding new is set out in How we research (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/), and how we weigh each kind of record in Scrollsigns (projectscroll.com/scrollsigns/).

"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.

Project Scroll is independent research and does not speak for the Underground Railroad Society of Cass County. Its name is used here only to identify it; the history on this page is drawn from the published record cited below.

WORKS CITED

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

1. Michael Urbanski, "The Kentucky Raid of 1847," *Project Scroll* (2026). https://projectscroll.com/news/the-kentucky-raid-of-1847/

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-sabbath-messenger` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#raid-sabbath-messenger)
- `raid-stuart-kalamazoo` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#raid-stuart-kalamazoo)
- `raid-south-bend-register` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#raid-south-bend-register)

HOW TO CITE THIS NOTE

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