

Delegates to John Brown's Constitutional Convention of May 8, 1858, in Chatham, Canada West, with Corresponding Black Conventions and Organizations, U. S. Civil War service and election to Reconstruction governments in the defeated southern states.

The following list of signators to the "Provisional Constitution and Ordinances for the People of the United States" were found when John Brown and his men were captured. They were transcribed and published as part of the documents of the Senate investigating committee in 1860 (Record Group 46) and in the *Calendar of Virginia State Papers* in 1893.

A list of signators and the Minutes of the Convention were published in Osborne Anderson's *A Voice From Harper's Ferry* (1861), which was made from the lists taken by Virginia and published in newspapers.

The location of the original list of signatures and minutes is not known; the original manuscript (in his handwriting) of the Provisional Constitution and Ordinances was on John Brown's person when he was captured at Harper's Ferry on October 18, 1859. ¹

Akin, George [or Aikens] 102nd Colored Infantry, musician

Alexander, Robinson [possibly] 102nd Colored Infantry [name transposed]

Anderson, Osborn Member of Congress; Vigilance Committee, 1858; National Convention of Colored Men 1869 (representing Michigan); Equal Rights League, 1865 Served in Civil War as recruiter and/or noncommissioned officer [unit yet undetermined] ²

Bailey, M. F. [Matisen, or Madison, F.] African Commission, 1858

Bell, James M. [Madison] African Commission, 1858; Vigilance Committee, 1858; California, 1865

Cary, Thomas F. [husband of Mary Ann Shadd; died in 1860.] Vigilance Committee, 1858

Connel, John [or Caunel] 113th Colored Infantry, Company A, private

Delany, M. R. [Martin R.] Pennsylvania, 1843; Colored National Convention, 1848; Emigration Convention, 1854; Niger Valley Exploring Party, 1858; Vigilance Committee, 1858; Major, 104th Colored Infantry, 1865; Sub-Assistant Commissioner, Freedmen's Bureau, South Carolina, 1865; Freemason

Ditten, [Dutton], Stephen, alias Chitman 102nd USCT, company H, private

Ellsworth, Alfred M. Member of Congress Illinois, 1853

Fisher, Simon [or Fislin] 1st Regiment U.S. Colored Infantry

Grant, J. C. [James C.]

Harris, J. H. ³ Vigilance Committee, 1858; 102nd U.S.C.T.

Hickerson, Thomas 13th Colored Infantry, Company D, corporal

Hobbar, Isaac [or Holler; Isaac Holden] Probably 102nd Colored Infantry.
[Isaac Horden]

Hunton, S. [Squire, aka Esquire Hunter] 109th Colored Infantry, Company H,
commissary sergeant

Jackson, Job T. 123rd Colored Infantry, Company F. Corporal

Jones, James Monroe Chatham resident, gun shop owner

Kinnard, Thomas M. Colored National Convention, 1855; 19th Colored Infantry;
Freemason

Lambert, William Michigan, 1843; African Mysteries, 1858; Equal Rights League
1865; Freemason

Lawrence, John ⁴

Munroe, William Charles [or Munro] Michigan, 1843, President of the
Chatham Convention, active UGRR leader in Detroit; minister; Freemason

Newman, Robert

Purnell, James Ohio, 1850, 1851; African Commission, 1858; Pennsylvania,
1865, nephew of William Whipper, UGRR

Reynolds, J. G. Ohio Convention of Colored Men, 1858

Richardson, Richard rescued from slavery by John Brown in Missouri, 1858;
African Mysteries, 1858; 113th Colored Infantry, Company E, private

Shadd, I. D. [Isaac D.] African Commission, 1858; Vigilance Committee, 1858
Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mississippi

Smith, A. J. [Addison J.]⁵ 28th Colored Infantry.

Smith, Charles 28th Colored Infantry, or 109th, or 127th (all include friends
of John Brown and Osborne P. Anderson)

Smith, James 113th Colored Infantry

Stringer, Thomas National Convention of Colored Men, 1869 (representing
Mississippi); Freemason (organizer of "Negro Masonry" in Mississippi
following the Civil War)

Thomas, John A.

Van Vruken, Robert [Van Ranken] Community leader in Buxton; interviewed by U.S.
Senate Committee

Whipper, Alfred [often written "Whipple"] African Commission, 1858.
Later married Frances Rollin, who wrote the definitive description of the
Convention, *Life and Public Services of Martin R. Delany*, in 1868.

White delegates to the Chatham Convention, May 1858

Anderson, J[eremiah]⁶ Killed in Harpers Ferry, October 18, 1859 burial unknown
body seized and taken to Winchester, Virginia, medical school

Brown, John Commander-in-Chief executed by Virginia, Dec. 2nd, 1859
Convention of Radical Political Abolitionists, 1855, Kansas
Volunteer Regulars, 1856 (captain), interred in North Elba Dec. 10,
1859

Brown, Owen Escaped from Maryland, October 17, 1859

George B. Gill Secretary of the Treasury Kansas Volunteer Regulars, 1856
Captain in Missouri Rescue, 1859

John E. Cook Escaped from Harpers Ferry October 17, 1859, captured and
executed by Virginia on Dec. 16, 1859

Kagi, John Henry Secretary of the Convention killed in Harpers Ferry,
October 17, 1859, Second Kansas militia, 1856, interred in North Elba, 1899

Moffit, C[harles]. W.

Parsons, L[uke] F. Kansas Volunteer Regulars, 1856
Civil War service, Kansas unit

Realf, Richard Testified to Mason Committee, 1860 5th Ohio Infantry, U.S.C.T.
(captain)

Taylor, Steward Died at Harpers Ferry, October 17, 1859
interred in North Elba, 1899

Tidd, Charles P. Escaped from Maryland, October 17 1859
21st Massachusetts Volunteers; Died in North Carolina, 1862

Whipple, C. [Aaron Stevens] Executed by Virginia, 1860 Second Kansas militia,
1856 (captain), interred first in Perth Amboy, N.J., then in North
Elba, 1899

W[illiam] H. Leeman Died at Harpers Ferry, October 17, 1859
interred in North Elba, 1899 Kansas Volunteer Regulars, 1856

Sources:

Benjamin Quarles cited delegates in narrative form in *Allies for Freedom* (1974). Correlation with the National Black Conventions are from the minutes edited by Howard Holman Bell and the State Conventions from the minutes edited by Philip Foner. The African Commission members are from *Life and Public Services of Martin R. Delany* by Frances Rollin; the Vigilance Committee were African Americans in Chatham who rescued Sylvanus Demerest in September 1858. The list was published by Gerrit Smith in *Banner* on 28 October 1858.

Civil War service is correlated from the Civil War Soldiers & Sailors NPS database. The largest number of delegates were in the 102nd U.S.C.T., which was formed in Michigan by George DeBaptiste and included many men from Chatham. Convention delegate William Lambert of Detroit was closely associated with

DeBaptiste. Ronald Palmer of Washington D.C. has done extensive research and publication on George DeBaptiste.

The 28th U.S.C.T. was formed in Indiana, recruited by Willis Revels, first cousin of Lewis Leary, who died in the Harpers Ferry raid. The chaplain of that regiment was Garland White, who lived in Chatham. Mary Ann Shadd was a recruiter for the 28th U.S.C.T. in Indiana, see Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary; The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (1998); James Henry Harris of Cleveland (in 1859) was a recruiter for the 28th U.S.C.T. Osborne Anderson was identified as a recruiter "for the western regiments" by his father, Vincent Anderson, in 1872. The 28th U.S.C.T. is of special interest because over half the number were recruited in Ellicott Mills, Maryland, near the location of John Brown's farmhouse headquarters. William R. Forstchen gathered the statistics of area of recruitment and birthplace (most in Maryland and Delaware) for his Ph.D. thesis at Purdue University, *The 28th United States Colored Troops: Indiana's African Americans Go to War 1863-1865* (1984).

For the association of the 19th Infantry with Harpers Ferry in the Civil War, see Hannah N. Geffert, "The Guns of October" in *John Brown Mysteries by Allies for Freedom*, (1999); the relationship of Hiram and Willis Revels with Lewis Leary and John Copeland (all from North Carolina) is in *John Brown Mysteries*, pp. 72-74.

For the most complete narrative on the black Chatham delegates since *Allies for Freedom* (Quarles, 1974), see Gwendolyn Robinson and John Robinson, *To Seek the Truth; A Story of Chatham's Black Community* (1989). In May 2003 Mrs. Robinson provided documentation of the Vigilance Committee to Susheel Bibbs of California, who shared the materials with me. The Vigilance Committee included Mary Ellen Pleasant of California, then in Chatham and Windsor, providing a firm connection of Pleasant with John Brown. See DVD *Meet Mary Pleasant* with Bonus Material by Susheel Bibbs, www.mepleasant.com, 2007.

The organizations correlated are the African Commission of 1858, organized by Martin M. Delany for emigration to the African continent; a Vigilance Committee in Chatham and Windsor in September 1858; and the African Mysteries, a secret defense group in Michigan that had several members associated with John Brown. Masonic membership among the African Americans is listed as known.

See Katherine DuPre Lumpkin, "The General Plan was Freedom, A Negro Secret Order in the Underground Railroad" in *John Brown Mysteries by Allies for Freedom*, Jean Libby, editor, 89-90). The African Commission built on the ideas of Martin R. Delany in establishing "the making of a colored nationality." See also Jimica Akinloye Kenyatta, "The Nationalist and the Revolutionary: Martin R. Delany and John Brown" in *John Brown Mysteries by Allies for Freedom*, 76-80.

The Radical Political Abolitionists were organized in Convention in Syracuse, New York in June 1855 by Gerrit Smith, James McCune Smith, and Frederick Douglass. John Brown addressed the group asking for money for arms after Gerrit Smith read letters from Kansas from John Brown's sons. The group did not officially provide funds; the minutes indicate that there was support and a collection outside. Those funds were brought to Ohio to purchase weapons which were brought to Kansas by John Brown in 1855.

Appreciation is extended to Bryan Prince of the Buxton Historical Association; Gwen Robinson of the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society; Ronald Palmer of

George Washington University (emeritus), Ser Seshs Ab Heter-CM Boxley of the Network to Freedom Project in Natchez, Mississippi; Susheel Bibbs of the University of California, Berkeley, historian of Mary Ellen Pleasant; and to Jimica Akinloye Kenyatta of Charles Town, West Virginia for his nationalist emigrationist perspective.

Endnotes

¹ The original handwritten Provisional Constitution and Ordinances by John Brown which was captured in the engine house in Harpers Ferry on October 18, 1859, is now at the Beinecke Rare Books Library at Yale University.

² Osborne Anderson was the only black delegate from the Chatham Convention to go to Harpers Ferry in 1859, and the only member of Brown's forces who fought in the battles in town on October 17, 1859, and successfully escaped. He does not list himself as a delegate in *A Voice From Harper's Ferry*. See Jean Libby, *Black Voices From Harpers Ferry* (1979) for a transcription of Anderson's narrative and that of his father, Vincent Anderson, in 1872, the year Osborne P. Anderson died in Washington, D.C. Photocopy reprint available.

³ James Henry Harris of North Carolina is correlated with the Chatham Convention in Oswald Garrison Villard, *John Brown* (1910, 331,413) through correspondence from Cleveland in 1859 closely associating him with John Brown, and assistance to escaping raiders. See *Paths Toward Freedom; A biographical history of Blacks and Indians in North Carolina by Blacks and Indians*, with illustrations by James and Ernestine Huff, page 156, for his Civil War service in the 28th U.S.C.T. and his career in North Carolina that includes representation as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1868 as the first black alderman from Raleigh.

James H. Harris of Chatham is described in Gwendolyn Robinson and John Robinson, *To Seek the Truth; A Story of Chatham's Black Community* (1989): 41. He married the daughter of Addison J. Smith and Mary Anderson, a cousin of Osborne P. Anderson. Although Villard states J. H. Harris of Cleveland and North Carolina was the delegate, the author concludes the Harris of Chatham is the correct delegate and James H. Harris of Cleveland in 1859 was another Brown associate.

⁴ Lawrence was an officer of the Provisional Constitution whose name appears in the Convention minutes, and in Osborne Anderson's list, but not on the Virginia list of signators. He was a member of Congress of John Brown's Provisional Government, as was Osborne P. Anderson.

⁵ Addison J. Smith was the husband of Mary Anderson, O. P. Anderson's cousin. See Gwendolyn Robinson and John Robinson, *To Seek the Truth; A Story of Chatham's Black Community* (1989).

⁶ Jeremiah Anderson was tortured following his surrender at the capture of the engine house at Harpers Ferry on October 18, 1859. He was identified as a mulatto (confused with Osborne Anderson, who had escaped), his body mutilated and sent to the medical school in Winchester, as was that of Watson Brown, who died of his wounds on October 19th, and those of Shields Green and John Copeland (Africans) who were executed on December 16th.

Jeremiah Anderson is listed on the reburials from Virginia in 1899. It is the opinion of the author, concurred in interview with the late Edwin Cotter in

October 2000, that his remains were not among those found on the banks of the Shenandoah River. The additional person is possibly a local slave. See *New England Magazine* April 1901, "The Final Burial of the Followers of John Brown" by Thomas Featherstonhaugh. Watson Brown's skeleton was recovered during the Civil War, and interred in North Elba in 1882 in the presence of his mother, Mary Brown.

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