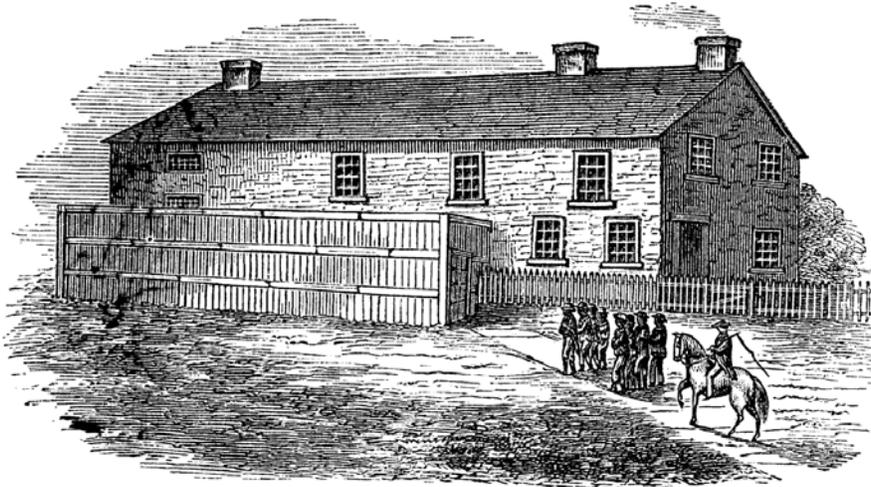


By the Kansas Historical Society

The Trials of John Doy



The St. Joseph, Missouri, jail where John Doy was held during his trials.

By 1859 the Underground Railroad was helping slaves escape through Kansas Territory. Proslavery Missourians, called “border ruffians,” continued to pursue them. A group of people in Lawrence realized it was too dangerous for formerly enslaved African Americans to remain in town. They decided to move some of them to Canada using the Underground Railroad. Dr. John Doy was one of the men who volunteered to undertake this task.

Missouri ruffians captured John Doy, his son Charles, and 13 African Americans near Holton, Kansas Territory, on January 24, 1859. Doy was taken to St. Joseph for trial and, subsequently, was imprisoned. The trial of John Doy resulted in “No verdict.” At a second trial in June he was convicted of “negro stealing” and sentenced.

The capture and pending trial of John Doy made national news. Edward H. Grant covered the story for the *St. Joseph Free Democrat*. He was against slavery and often sent news stories to the eastern newspapers telling about the abolitionist cause in Missouri. This allowed readers back East to follow the story of the conflict between pro- and antislavery groups. This newspaper article written by Grant provides details about the trials of John Doy.



\$200 Reward!

Runaway from the subscriber, living in Saline county, on the 4th inst., two Negro men, named Jim and Jack, each aged about 25 years.

Jim
is thin faced; has sore eyes and bad teeth; is of a light, black or brown color; speaks quick; is about 5 feet 7 inches high; had on when last seen, blue cotton pants, white shirt, white felled coat and new custom-made boots.

Jack
had on the same kind of clothing with shoes, has a very small foot, wears perhaps a No. 6 shoe, and has heavy boots in the heels; is about the same height and color of Jim. They are doubtless aiming for K. T.

A reward of \$100 each will be given if taken outside of the State, or \$50 each if taken in the State, outside of Saline county.

C. D. WILLIAMS,
Spring Garden, P. O., Pettis county, Missouri.
Harrisonville, Mo., June 7th, 1860.

Slaves were valuable property to their masters.

From Kansas.
PARTICULARS OF THE TRIAL OF DR. DOY.
St. Joseph, Mo.: Friday, June 24, 1859.

The Doy trial is closed, and Dr. John Doy found guilty and sentenced to five years in the Penitentiary. To say that such a finding of the jury is an outrage, and in open violation of the evidence in the case, is only a mild expression of the feelings of every unprejudiced and right-minded man who attended the former or the present trial.

The following I clip from the *Journal* of this city:

"The state has from the Court an instruction which it had not at the previous trial. It was, in substance, that the jury might infer guilt from circumstances. This, together with Doy's confession while imprisoned in Weston, to wit: that he believed he was serving both the laws of God and his country when engaged in assisting slaves in making their escape from their masters, and that he had been engaged in the business before, and if acquitted he would engage in it again with more energy than ever; also, a memoranda of a survey for an U.G.R.R. found on his person, and other circumstances elicited from witnesses when coming into conjunction with the above instances, was considered too strong evidence for the jury to find a verdict of acquittal.

... The charge against Dr. Doy was, that he enticed the Slave "Dick" from the State of Missouri. The evidence failed to show that Dr. Doy was ever in the state of Missouri; while it conclusively proved that the boy "Dick" left Missouri with a pass from his master, allowing him to come to do so, and that John Doy never saw him until after he reached Lawrence.

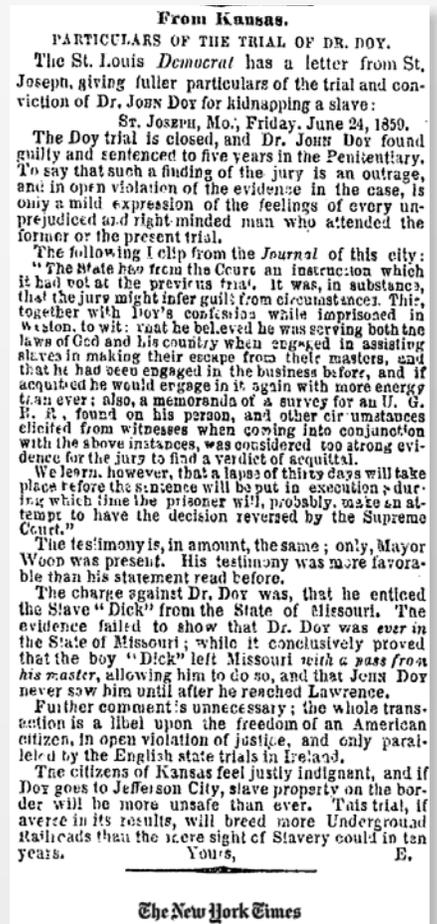
Further comment is unnecessary; the whole transaction is a libel upon the freedom of an American citizen, in open violation of justice, and only paralleled by the English state trials in Ireland.

The citizens of Kansas feel justly indignant, and if Doy goes to Jefferson City, slave property on the border will be more unsafe than ever. This trial, if averse in its results, will breed more Underground Railroads than the mere sight of Slavery could in ten years.

Yours,

E.

This article was published in the New York Times on July 1, 1859.



KANSAS HEALTH FOUNDATION