

Ona Judge: Freedom Regained

Ona Judge was owned by the family of George Washington and in 1789 was one of nine enslaved people the president brought with him to the presidential residence at the corner of 6th and Market Sts. in Philadelphia. Ona Judge was commanded to serve Martha.

In 1796, as the Washingtons prepared to return to Virginia, Ona learned that she was to be given as a wedding gift to Martha Washington's granddaughter Eliza. Her fiancé was Thomas Law, a real estate speculator with a reputation for sexual assault. So, fearing for her safety and a life of perpetual enslavement, Ona made the courageous decision to escape on May 21, 1796. She fled the President's House in Philadelphia thanks to help from Rev. Richard Allen and the capital's abolitionist community.

Judge made it to New Hampshire, married, and had three children. She lived the remainder of her life in relative obscurity, but her story, thanks to interviews she gave in 1845 have become a testament to the harsh realities of enslavement and the resilience of those who wanted freedom.

"I knew that if I went back to Virginia, I should never get my liberty. I had friends among the colored people of Philadelphia, had my things carried there before and, and left Washington's house while they were eating dinner."

Ona Judge 1

"Richard Allen ... [formed] the first mutual aid society in Philadelphia and its goals were to help widows, the poor, and fugitive slaves..." 3

Bethel A. M. E. Church, the first Colored Methodist Church in Philadelphia, Established in 1787

May 23
No. 43, Fourth Water Street.
d 101

Advertisement.

ABSCONDED from the household of the President of the United States, **ONAY JUDGE**, a light mulatto girl, much freckled, with very black eyes and bushy black hair, she is of middle stature, slender, and delicately formed, about 20 years of age.

She has many changes of good clothes, of all sorts, but they are not sufficiently recollected to be described—As there was no suspicion of her going off, nor any provocation to do so, it is not easy to conjecture whether she has gone, or fully, what her design is;—but as she may attempt to escape by water, all masters of vessels are cautioned against admitting her into them, although it is probable she will attempt to pass for a free woman, and has, it is said, whetted withal to pay her passage.

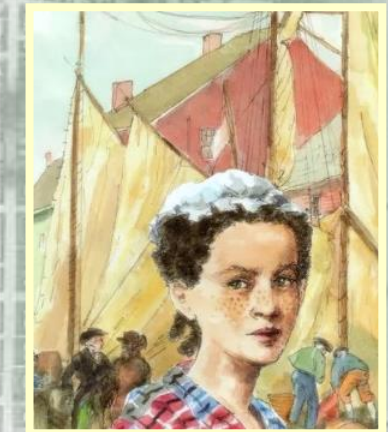
Ten dollars will be paid to any person who will bring her home, if taken in the city, or on board any vessel in the harbour;—and a reasonable additional sum if apprehended at, and brought from a greater distance, and in proportion to the distance.

FREDERICK KITT, Steward.
4 May 23
d 101



"[T]he ingratitude of the girl, who was brought up & treated more like a child than a Servant (& Mrs Washington's desire to recover her) ought not to escape with impunity if it can be avoided."

George Washington 5



"No, I am free, and have, I trust been made a child of God by the means."

Ona Judge 7

Map Three Reflection Revised

After a map review session with Dr. Kelly, I revised my original draft, which follows this updated reflection. To preserve my work process and product, I have included my original draft and reflection, but for the sake of brevity, I will just memorialize my revisions because many of the themes and engagements with the readings remain the same. The first change was to crop and fade out the basemap to make it less intrusive to Ona Judge's story. The second change was to replace the grey fog of the unknown with a blank box, further stressing the period and location of when Judge was in hiding. The third change was to move the pictures of the President's House, AME Baptist Church, and Judge to the periphery of the map. And finally, I replicated Richard Allen's (now colored blue), George Washington's (now colored red), and Judge's interaction (still green) with her path to freedom. These changes were designed to not just improve the map's visual elements, but to better replicate *Mapping Champlain's Travels: Restorative Techniques for Historical Cartography* by Margaret Pearce and Michael James Hermann to more accurately show multiple figures interacting with one specific space: Judge's path to freedom. This map of 1796 Philadelphia begins with Ona's fear about remaining in the President's House, Allen's supportive Mother Bethel AME Church, Ona's journey from the president's house, undocumented time in hiding, Washington's attempt to recapture her, and her journey aboard the *Nancy*, a ship commanded by Captain John Bolles, to Portsmouth, New Hampshire. 2 Many of the dates associated with Ona's quest for freedom are not known especially, secrecy was paramount and she left no written record, her time hiding for a short period of time before she sailed to New Hampshire.

References

1. Granite (NH) Freeman, May 22, 1845, reprinted in Frank W. Miller, Portsmouth New Hampshire Weekly, June 2, 1877. The President's House in Philadelphia. Part I. Accessed March 2, 2024. <https://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/history/pmhb/ph1.php/>.
2. John Hills and John Cooke. This plan of the city of Philadelphia and its environs showing the improved parts. Philadelphia: Published and sold by John Hills, surveyor & draughtsman, 1796. Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2007625050/>.
3. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. "Bethel A.M.E. Church, the first Colored Methodist Church in Philadelphia, established in 1787." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed March 2, 2024. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47df-9d9d-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99/>. Erica Armstrong Dunbar. *Never Caught: The Washington's Relentless Pursuit of their Runaway Slave, One Judge*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017.
4. Erica Armstrong Dunbar, *Never Caught: The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave Ona Judge*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017.
5. "From George Washington to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., 1 September 1796," Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-20-02-0397>.
6. Seacoast Online. Accessed March 2, 2024. <https://www.seacoastonline.com/story/news/local/portsmouth-herald/2017/04/03/portsmouth-s-ona-judge-is/216420210/>.
7. Erica Armstrong Dunbar, *Never Caught: The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave Ona Judge*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017.

Map Three Reflection

The goal of this map, my third submission to GEO 478/678 Spatial Storytelling, marks a dramatic shift in the focus of my coursework. I have decided to no longer explore Benedict Arnold's role in the American revolution and how he has been cast as an American anti-hero through monuments because of the issues I have documented in my first and second map reflections. This new project introduces viewers to Ona Judge, an enslaved woman who was owned by the family of George Washington and charts her 1796 escape to freedom from the President's House which was located at the corner of 6th and Market Sts. in Philadelphia.

Documentation of the Mapping Process

This map, which was the easiest to construct technically, was created with Microsoft Word for the text and GIMP for the photo editing. This project offered a far richer set of sources that not only allowed me to build a map that breaks through traditional interpretations of power and position, but to read against the historical grain so I can elevate secondary voices especially an enslaved, Black, female figure. My sources included:

- T. H. Adams, "Washington's Runaway Slave, and How Portsmouth Freed Her," *Granite (NH) Freeman*, May 22, 1845, reprinted in Frank W. Miller, *Portsmouth New Hampshire Weekly*, June 2, 1877.,
- *The President's House in Philadelphia*. Part I. <https://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/history/pmhb/ph1.php/>.,
- John Hills and John Cooke. *This plan of the city of Philadelphia and its environs showing the improved parts*. Philadelphia: Published and sold by John Hills, surveyor & draughtsman, 1796. Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2007625050/>.,
- Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. "Bethel A.M.E. Church, the first Colored Methodist Church in Philadelphia, established in 1787." New York Public Library Digital Collections. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47df-9d9d-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99/>.,
- Erica Armstrong Dunbar. *Never Caught: The Washington's Relentless Pursuit of their Runaway Slave, One Judge*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017.,
- "From George Washington to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., 1 September 1796," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-20-02-0397>., and
- *Seacoast Online*. <https://www.seacoastonline.com/story/news/local/portsmouth-herald/2017/04/03/portsmouth-s-ona-judge-is/216420210/>.

The left section of the map offers viewers background about Judge, her enslavement, transference to Philadelphia, PA, support from the new capital's abolitionist community and Richard Allen, and journey to relative freedom in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The center section of the map, which was built on a 1796 map of Philadelphia, PA, is cast in a neutral, tan color to not detract from Judge's story. It also features several dark and green polygons. The three dark colored polygons, representing the crushing impact of enslavement and Washington's attempt to recapture her, dominate the map, as they dominated Judge's life. They surround two green polygons. The first green polygon is an image of the AME Baptist Church with background about Richard Allen who more than likely helped Judge escape. And the second green polygon is Judge's narrow path to the Delaware River and freedom. The first dark polygon is a quote from Judge after she decided that she was going to regain her freedom. Her words are overlaid on a dark and obscure picture of the President's House, a veritable house of horror, erasure, and sexual assault for her and the other enslaved people who lived and work there. The second polygon, also dark, is a copy of the advertisement George Washington placed in newspapers to try to recontrol Judge. And the third dark polygon is a direct quote from Washington, detailing his true perspective about why he wanted to recapture Judge. The right section of the map, which is visually obscured

by the fog of the unknown, shows the space where Judge hid before sailing north. Historians do not know how long Judge was in hiding, but we know she eventually arrived in Portsmouth, New Hampshire to continue her quest for freedom. I purposefully used only one picture of a person, Judge, because this is her story, her agency, and her flight.¹

Engagement with Core Storytelling Concepts

I begin by offering apologies to the other authors we read for week seven, but this map was completely inspired by *Mapping Champlain's Travels: Restorative Techniques for Historical Cartography* by Margaret Pearce and Michael James Hermann. I tried to emulate Pearce and Hermann's portrayal of location, elimination of details not directly related to the base narrative and highlight emotions and experiences. Granted, my map was remedial compared to theirs, but like them I used color, position, scale, and voice to cartography reimagine a historical geography and space that was inhabited by secondary figures of the American republic, namely Judge and Allen. (Many of these techniques are detailed in the documentation section of this reflection.)

Evaluation of the Mapping Technique

The lesson learned with this third map is to use technologies that I am comfortable with and integrate additional platforms as needed to enhance my technological choices and map quality. For this project, I did not have to stray far from programs that I have used before, but I recognize this may not always be easy to accomplish if I am trying a new approach. Some of examples related to this challenge are the mapping approaches detailed in *Sculpting, Cutting, Expanding, and Contracting the Map* by Lally and *Loosening the Grid: Topology as the basis for a more Including GIS* by Westerveld and Knowles. (There are additional thoughts about the use of technology for this third mapping assignment throughout this reflection.)

Power and Position

This map marks my first opportunity to deconstruct systems of power and reduce my position in the mapping process. First, there are no more battle sites, generals, nations at war, or narratives built solely from white, "great man" figures, which is why I purposefully used one picture: Judge's. Nearly all of American history, especially when dealing with the early American republic, eventually leads to George Washington, but this map does not eliminate him, it recasts him in a non-traditional light through his own words of enslavement and control. The Black, enslaved woman has the power of this map, not the first president of the United States. And my position is not that of a historian, as we saw with map one and two, but one of a cartographer. I have let the words of Judge, Allen, and Washington narrate the viewer's journey through a space that I have chosen to moderate. And second, many thanks for a great discussion with Dr. Kelly who encouraged me to take this new approach to GEO 478/678 Spatial Storytelling, I am excited to explore future mapping techniques and Ona Judge.

¹ We do not know what Judge looked like, so this image of an enslaved, black woman in a dock setting, is a representation.