

## **Newspaper ads offered rewards for lost horses ... and runaway slaves**

**Warning:** *Eighteenth century newspapers contain descriptions of women and ancestral, racial, and ethnic identities that may be offensive or harmful to individuals investigating these records, and are considered inappropriate to use in modern times.*

Before, during, and after the Redding Revolutionary War Winter encampment, newspapers frequently advertised rewards for lost or stolen goods – and for human property. At that time, horses, indentured servants, and enslaved people were considered chattel (moveable property) in Connecticut. They could be bought and sold.

The ads described the physical attributes of the lost or stolen items, be it for a horse or a runaway enslaved or indentured individual. Those descriptions would include height, color of eyes, and regarding the individuals, what they were wearing, and specific skills.

Often times, a reward for a stolen horse and runaway slave or indentured servant could generate the same monetary reward. For example, in an ad published in the Connecticut Courant on Feb. 16, 1779, the reward for a lost or stolen horse was \$20. Five months earlier, an ad published in the Connecticut Journal in New Haven offered to pay \$20 for a runaway 16-year-old boy who was an indentured servant.

The owner of the horse increased the reward to \$60 if the thief and horse were returned to him. The ad read: "Strayed or stolen from the subscriber on the night of the 4<sup>th</sup> instant, a light bay horse, coming three years old, about thirteen and a half hands high, trots and paces, most natural to a trot; a few white hairs on his forehead, a white spot on his nose; trimmed on each side of his face almost up to his ears, long brush to his tail, tail and mane darker than his body. Whoever will take up said horse and secure him so that the owner may have him again, shall have twenty dollars reward and if stolen, sixty dollars for horse and thief and all necessary charges paid by Eliakim Benedict, Danbury, Feb. 5, 1779."

Similar to the detailed description of the horse, another newspaper ad published on October 22, 1778 in the Connecticut Journal in New Haven, offered to pay \$20 for a 16-year-old boy named Obadiah, an indentured servant, who enlisted in the Continental Army. The ad read:

"Twenty Dollars Reward. Run away from the subscriber, an indented servant mulatto boy, named Obadiah, 16 years of age, about 5 feet 4 or 5 inches high, of a slender make; had on when he went away, a brown linsey woolsey jacket, a tow shirt, an old pair of tow trousers, a pair of old shoes and stockings, and took with him a rifle frock. Tis supposed he went to New Milford with an intention of enlisting in Col. Meig's regiment, which lay at

that place. Whoever will take and secure said servant, so that his master may have him again, shall receive the above reward, and all other reasonable charges paid by John Grenell, Fairfield, October 22, 1778.

As the winter encampment in Redding, Connecticut came to an end, another ad, this one published in the Connecticut Journal on March 17, 1779, offered a \$30 reward for another “runaway” who maintained he was free because he also had enlisted in the Continental Army. The ad read:

“Runaway from the subscriber in Ripton, a Negro fellow named Lively, about 32 years old, has remarkable red eyes, which were burnt when he was small, is about 5 feet, 10 inches high, round shouldered, is a fiddler, and says he is free by enlisting into the Continental Army, and hath a copy of a Pass from General Gates; It is supposed he is in Greenfield or Danbury. Whoever will take up said Negro and secure him and send me word, or return him to me in Ripton, shall have 30 dollars reward, and all reasonable charges paid, by Gideon Leavenworth, Ripton, March 9, 1779.