

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 294

Recognizing the historic abolitionist events surrounding the Pearl, and
honoring its legacy in American history.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 13, 2023

Ms. NORTON submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the
Committee on Oversight and Accountability

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the historic abolitionist events surrounding the
Pearl, and honoring its legacy in American history.

Whereas, on April 16, 1848, 77 enslaved people attempted to
flee slavery in the District of Columbia and Alexandria,
Virginia, on the Pearl, a schooner waiting for them in the
Potomac River;

Whereas, on April 14, 1848, three White men brought the
ship to the District of Columbia, and Daniel Drayton, the
captain and owner of the Pearl, chartered the schooner
for \$100 and arranged for the enslaved peoples' travel;

Whereas the escape was initiated by free Blacks Paul Jen-
nings, who had been enslaved by President James Madi-
son, and Paul Edmonson;

Whereas William Chaplin, a White abolitionist, assisted in connecting the enslaved people with Drayton;

Whereas abolitionist Gerrit Smith of New York financed the escape;

Whereas 77 enslaved people, including men, women, and children, sailed on the Pearl down the Potomac River and then into Chesapeake Bay in pursuit of freedom;

Whereas, on April 17, 1848, numerous enslavers in the District of Columbia, realizing the people they enslaved had fled, sent a posse of 35 men to seek the Pearl;

Whereas the posse met the Pearl near Point Lookout, Maryland, and took the escapees and the ship back to the District of Columbia;

Whereas slavery supporters formed a mob and lashed out at both the White abolitionists involved in the escape as well as free Blacks in the District of Columbia in the Washington Riot of 1848;

Whereas the enslavers sold the escapees to traders who took them to New Orleans, Louisiana;

Whereas two of the escapees were purchased and freed in an effort led by Henry Ward Beecher's Plymouth Congregational Church of Brooklyn, New York;

Whereas Drayton and two of the other ship workers were arrested for helping in the escape and were represented in court by Congressman Horace Mann;

Whereas two of the men, including Drayton, after serving four years in prison, were released after being granted a pardon from President Millard Fillmore, based on a recommendation from Senator Charles Sumner; and

Whereas the escape is said to be the single largest known escape by enslaved persons in American history and to have inspired Harriet Beecher Stowe in her writing the novel “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives honors
2 the legacy of all those who furthered freedom from slavery
3 and all of those who were involved in the Pearl incident,
4 and recognizes their importance to the history of the Dis-
5 trict of Columbia and to American history itself.

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