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When a young slave rattled his chains, a nation's hypocrisy was revealed -- and Washington discovered that the man who wrote the national anthem had a thing or two to learn about freedom

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BODY:

THE LAMPLIGHTER CAME AROUND AT DUSK. With his long flaming pole poked skyward, he sparked the bowls of oil atop the fluted posts around Lafayette Square. In the shadowy light, a Mr. Watson, walking home at around 11 o'clock on Tuesday evening, August 4, 1835, encountered Arthur Bowen, an 18-year-old slave in the house of Mrs. Anna Maria Thornton, one of the capital's finest ladies. As Watson would later say, Arthur was "much intoxicated."

The sight of Arthur Bowen drunk on whiskey was not uncommon around Washington City during the long, hot summer of 1835. Anna Thornton had arranged to hire him out, but would later say he had been somewhat spoiled and refused to take orders from any woman.

As Anna would note in her diary, Arthur grew fond of drinking "ardent spirits" while befriending free Negroes in a debating society who talked with him about slavery, the Constitution and his rights as a human being.

As Arthur loitered in Lafayette Square that night, reminders of his plight were all around. Across the way, the president's house was dark because Andrew Jackson was away. His slaves were sleeping in bedrooms on the second floor and in the attic. On another side of the square, the bland facade of one of the rowhouses masked a slave pen -- a place where slave traders gathered their human cargo to be shipped south from the docks of Georgetown.

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Arthur's problem was less his present circumstances, which were about as comfortable as any enslaved young African in America could hope for. His problem was his dismal and uncertain future. In the debating society, organized by the Rev. John F. Cook, an energetic free Negro who ran a church and school at 14th and H streets, Arthur had learned that whatever liberty he had could vanish at a white man's whim.

Arthur went home. Inside the Thornton house, on F Street between 13th and 14th, he stumbled across an ax left on the basement stairwell. At least, that is what Anna would write in a letter months later. She concluded that Arthur had picked it up thinking to put it in its place. In the first-floor hallway, he lifted the latch to the bedroom, where his mother, Anna and her aged mother slept, and entered.

Arthur would later say that he did not remember what happened that night. Anna would never forget it.

According to Anna's account, Arthur stood in the doorway, thoroughly inebriated, with the ax in the crook of his arm. Anna, who was sleeping in the bed to his left, woke up with a start. Surprised and terrified by Arthur's extraordinary entrance, she got up wordlessly. She passed around the small table in the center of the room, not more than a step away from the young man and the ax. He just kept staring straight ahead. She hastened out the door at the far end of the room to the front parlor and fled to get help.

In the bed on the far side of the room was his mother, Maria Bowen, the longtime slave and personal servant of Anna. Maria awoke. She rushed at Arthur in her bedclothes.

"Get out, get out," she shouted, according to a witness quoted in a newspaper.

Maria snatched the ax from her son and shoved him down the passage to the back of the house, pushed him out and locked the door behind him. Anna came running back into the house with two neighbors -- Henry Huntt, the president's physician, and Walter Gibson, an attorney who lived in Huntt's house.

"I've got him out," Maria gasped. "He's crazy."

Outside the house, Arthur was furious about being locked out -- and about being a slave. He picked up a scrub brush and banged on the door.

"I've got just as much right to freedom as you," he shouted, according to the four fearful people listening on the other side of the door.

After more shouting, Arthur backed away. He stumbled back through the garden into the alley and disappeared into the night.

The nation's capital was about to explode.

ARTHUR BOWEN'S MIDNIGHT RAMBLE was followed by Washington's first race riot, an outbreak of violence that has largely been forgotten. Above all, the malign role of Francis Scott Key in the capital's first convulsion of racial violence has not been properly recognized. This American icon stood at the intersection of the racial, political and social forces that stoked Washington's unrest. Back then, the city was an embryo of the metropolis it would become. But it was growing rapidly. Once a muddy village, Washington had emerged in the 1830s as a thriving city of 20,000 people. "Recklessness and extravagance" were fast becoming the norm of city life, veteran editor Ben Perley later wrote. "Laxity of morals and the coolest disregard possible characterized that period of our existence."

In 1835, Key was a leading citizen of the capital city. He was not only the author of the lyrics to "The Star-Spangled Banner," the popular tune that was already considered the nation's anthem (although it was not officially adopted until 1931). He was also a prosperous lawyer, a vestryman at St. John's Episcopal Church and the father of 10 children. Two years earlier, President Jackson had named him the city's district attorney. Key was an able and honest

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man -- yet also a menace. In the capital city's moment of crisis and high emotion, the man who defined America as "the land of the free and the home of the brave" proved to be a determined foe of freedom of speech and a smug advocate of white supremacy.

The American amnesia is perhaps understandable. It is unsettling to remember that, in the cold winter of 1836, Francis Scott Key sought the death penalty for an 18-year-old, apparently as a civics lesson to the people of Washington and the nation. It is harder, but perhaps healthier, to recall what has been lost history. Key, a founding father of the American spirit, was quietly thwarted by a better sort of woman, a Washington socialite with unsuspected political skills, driven by love and family secrets, a woman named Anna Maria Thornton.

ARTHUR FLED ON TUESDAY NIGHT. On Saturday morning, August 8, the Washington Mirror newspaper reported that he had been arrested.

In a city already on edge with racial tension, the first reports of a Negro slave entering the boudoir of a white woman with an ax in hand evoked still-fresh memories of Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion in Southampton County, Va., 180 miles south of Washington. Turner and a band of runaway slaves had killed upwards of 50 white people with axes before being rounded up and hanged by local authorities. The Washington Globe newspaper declared that Anna was "a kind and indulgent mistress" who had "just been saved from butchery in her own chamber."

The changing racial composition of the city fed those fears. During the 1830s, free blacks would outnumber slaves in Washington for the first time. Entrepreneurs of color were running restaurants, driving horse-drawn taxis and working as government messengers. To make matters even more tense, the capital was awash that week with rumors of abolitionist peril. Petitioners from up north were demanding that Congress abolish the slave trade in the federal district. In an early version of a political direct-mail campaign, abolitionists began sending their publications -- bursting with illustrated stories of slavery's cruelties -- to the president, to congressmen, to professors and to other leading citizens. The open circulation of such stories struck many white people (and more than a few Negroes) as a challenge to the law and order of the community, an incitement to slaves to slaughter their masters.

The prominence of the victim made the story all the more sensational. At 60 years of age, Anna was among the best-known ladies in Washington. Her mother, Ann Brodeau, had been an accomplished schoolteacher who had moved from England to Philadelphia when Anna was a baby. A renowned beauty in her youth, Anna had been married at age 15 to William Thornton, a brilliant architect who was on friendly terms with George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and other leaders of the new nation. After William Thornton won the 1792 contest to design the Capitol, he and his wife moved to Washington, where they became fixtures of the town's elite.

In 1804, Anna sat for her friend Gilbert Stuart, the painter who made his name portraying George Washington. Stuart's portrait of her reveals a handsome, proud woman with a strong nose and bright eyes, outward indicators of quick perception, womanly graces and determination. She and her husband had no children, so she devoted herself to the household economy, throwing dinner parties, hosting out-of-town visitors and managing the family farm in Bethesda. "In affairs of business, she was equal to a man," a friend later recalled.

Now Anna was distraught at Arthur's arrest, and no doubt regretful of her role in bringing it about. "Oh I am grieved indeed at this business," Anna wrote in her diary that Saturday night. "The people are incensed against Arthur as he is thought to be one of a party instigated by some white friends to raise an insurrection . . . Oh God protect us -- still as thou has done & give me fortitude & resolution."

Before her prayer could be answered, a crowd of angry young white men gathered around the city jail in Judiciary Square that weekend. They were mostly Irish, mostly drunk. Known as "Mechanics," these manual laborers were poor and insecure. The institution of slavery, with its low-cost labor for well-to-do whites, constantly undercut the value of their work. But they did not direct their rage at the slave masters. They turned on the Negroes and the abolitionists, seeing them as dire threats to be repelled.

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Watching the tumult in Judiciary Square was a free Negro named Michael Shiner, who worked for the Navy and kept a diary. The Mechanics, he wrote, "swore they would pull the jail down and they continued making their threats and they said their object was to get Mrs. Thornton's mulatto and hang him without judge or juror."

District Attorney Key struggled to restore order. At 56, he was, in Ben Perley's words, "a small active man, having an earnest and even anxious countenance, as if care sat heavily upon him." Accustomed to leading his family in prayer twice a day, Key was not prepared for a defiant mob shouting obscenities. And all he had to protect himself and city property was the city's police force, which consisted of exactly 10 constables. So, according to newspaper accounts, Key asked for military help. A detachment of Marines was sent from the Navy Yard. By nightfall, scores of Marines, carrying bayoneted guns, marched down Pennsylvania Avenue toward Judiciary Square, where the clamoring Mechanics were temporarily cowed but not calmed.

Key apparently thought he had to do more. He shared the Globe's view that Arthur Bowen's alleged attack was the "first fruit" of the circulation of abolitionist literature. This is not the modern-day view of Key. On a historical marker in Francis Scott Key Park in Georgetown, he is described as "active in anti-slavery causes." That is technically accurate but hardly the whole story. Key was an active leader of the American Colonization Society, a group popular among right-thinking members of the capital elite, which, while repudiating slavery in principle, also sought to encourage Negroes to move to Africa. The city's legally sanctioned slave trade did not stir Key to action. He was far more offended by the outside agitators from the North who sought to abolish it.

On August 10, Key persuaded a justice of the peace to write a warrant for the arrest of one Reuben Crandall, a white man who was said to be in possession of abolitionist literature. Crandall was a 29-year-old botanist and doctor from New York who had recently opened an office on High Street (now Wisconsin Avenue) in Georgetown. Crandall was a plausible suspect because of his notorious sister, Prudence Crandall. She was a Connecticut schoolteacher who had stirred controversy nationwide the year before by welcoming a free Negro girl into her classroom. (The Connecticut legislature promptly passed a law forbidding integrated schools.) According to newspaper accounts, Reuben Crandall cut a stodgier figure than his outspoken sister. He opposed slavery but not openly. As a teetotaler, he cared more about the prohibition of liquor than the abolition of slavery.

When two constables went to Crandall's office, he allowed them to search the premises. As they later testified in court, the constables found a box full of copies of the Anti-Slavery Reporter and the Liberator, the two publications that had been mass-mailed to the city's leading citizens. Crandall was arrested on charges of sedition. As the constables emerged on the street with their prisoner, one bystander later testified that someone in the crowd had said, "We ought to take the damned rascal and hang him up on one of the trees."

The constables rushed Crandall to the jail in Judiciary Square for his own safety. But, with two prisoners they loathed in custody, the Mechanics grew more agitated and refused to disperse.

"THE PUBLIC INDIGNATION IS RISING HIGH and the general impression is that the culprit will not go unpunished," one visitor wrote of Crandall's arrest. The dozens of Marines garrisoned around City Hall and the jail, however, meant the mob could not lynch either Bowen or Crandall. So, soon the Mechanics turned their fury on a new target: Beverly Snow, a free man of mixed race who ran a popular restaurant at the corner of Sixth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, the Epicurean Eating House. A rumor spread that Snow had, in the words of the Washington Mirror, "used very indecent and disrespectful language concerning the wives and daughters of Mechanics."

Snow, as his name might imply, was a cool customer who seemed to blend in with whites. His finely appointed restaurant sat amid several busy hotels on Pennsylvania Avenue. By day, Snow served Washington's better white families.

At night, he offered parlors for "gentlemen forming private parties." The newspaper advertisement that he ran that week declared that his menu included "a fine green turtle . . . a very fine Sheep's Head and every other luxury of the

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season." As the mob descended on his restaurant on August 11, Snow, in the words of one account, "escaped unharmed, through management of white friends."

When Snow couldn't be found, the fracas fizzled out. But the next day the mob returned to Snow's establishment. The rioters, the Globe reported, cut down the restaurant's sign "and broke and destroyed most if not all of the furniture in the house, not forgetting to crack a bottle of the 'old Hock' [whiskey] 'now and then.'"

Up the street at City Hall, two branches of the city government, the board of aldermen and the common council, met and approved a proclamation authorizing Mayor William Bradley to "adopt such measures as may appear to him best calculated to allay the excitement now existing amongst a portion of the population of this City." Bradley, in turn, deputized retired Maj. Gen. Walter Jones, a veteran of the War of 1812, to organize a citizen's militia to restore order.

"Some fifty or sixty persons appeared at the City Hall about sundown, armed with muskets and fixed bayonets" to volunteer for the militia and guard City Hall, reported the Globe. About 300 or 400 Mechanics remained in and around Snow's restaurant, just a stone's throw away. Both parties maintained their positions until some time in the night. Then the Mechanics left the restaurant and headed toward the Rev. Cook's church and school at the corner of 14th and H.

The mob wanted Cook, a solemn free black man who was well-versed in Presbyterian theology and sought to educate every Negro child he could find. Cook was a firm opponent of drink and slavery. Perhaps worried that the mob would associate him with Arthur Bowen's outrage, he retrieved his horse from a friend's stable and fled to Pennsylvania.

According to one account, the Mechanics "destroyed all the books and furniture and partially destroyed the building." As night fell, roving bands of white men hunted for free blacks and abolitionists to molest.

"Some disorders took place at three or four points, in the demolition of some small wooden tenements occupied by free negroes, as dwellings or as schools, and the breaking of the windows of one of their houses of worship," said the National Intelligencer newspaper. In addition, "a house of ill fame" on Capitol Hill was torched around midnight. The flames could be seen from Judiciary Square. The militia marched toward the blaze, led by Mayor Bradley, "but before they reached the spot, the fire had burnt down, and the rioters had dispersed."

At home on F Street, Anna Thornton lay awake listening to the noise of a city in chaos. When she finally dozed, she had a nightmare, according to her diary.

The next day, August 13, Washington was quiet, not the least because of widespread shock.

"We could not have believed it possible that we should live to see the Public Offices garrisoned by the clerks with United States troops posted at their doors, and their window barricaded, to defend them against the citizens of Washington," declared the National Intelligencer on August 15.

Two days later, President Jackson returned from a tour of the South. The tall, stern former general, clad in black coat and white shirt, with a wavy halo of flowing gray locks, offered the rattled people of the city authority that neither Bradley nor Key could provide. According to the newspapers, Jackson was greeted with relief and the fanfare of a marching band. He immediately sent word to the Mechanics, saying that he hoped to address their grievances.

Beverly Snow, meanwhile, had gone to his hometown of Fredericksburg and turned himself in to the sheriff for his own protection. From his jail cell, he wrote a letter to the politically influential Globe. He denied he had spoken salaciously of the Mechanics' women and cited his reputation in Washington.

"Sirs, do me the honor to look back at my past conduct, as a citizen, for the last six or seven years," he wrote. "If anything can be produced against me, let the world know it."

When city authorities vouched that Snow was not wanted for any crime, he returned to Washington. He dissolved

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his interest in the Epicurean Eating House and left town for a country where a man might live freely: Canada. His troubles had become such a symbol of the unrest that the events of August 1835 would be remembered as "the Snow Riot."

In his City Hall office, the district attorney could not rest. Key yearned to vindicate the rule of law and common sense in the nation's capital. For the good of the city, both Arthur Bowen and Reuben Crandall had to be brought to justice.

ARTHUR'S TRIAL, on charges of attempted murder and burglary, began first, in late November. Anna testified that he had been a docile boy, perhaps spoiled, who had succumbed to drink as he got older. She said that she did not believe he had intended to kill her. Her neighbor, Henry Huntt, told a different story. Roused in the night by Anna, Huntt said that Anna had said that Arthur had come into the room "with upraised ax." Huntt described Arthur shouting abolitionist slogans while slamming his ax into the door and calling for blood.

When his turn came, Key persuaded the judges to bar the argument that Arthur's inebriation was a mitigating factor. In cross-examination, Key induced Huntt to repeat the details of the assault. On December 10, Arthur appeared in court to hear the verdict. The jury deliberated for 15 minutes and returned a guilty verdict, which meant that Arthur was to be "hanged by the neck until he be dead."

Anna Thornton fell into a deep melancholy over the prospect of Arthur's execution. She pitied her servant Maria Bowen, who was going to lose her only child. And she feared for the health of her own 88-year-old mother, who adored Arthur.

As Anna probably knew, her mother already had experienced the hanging of a loved one. Ann Brodeau, it turns out, harbored a secret. She was not, as she pretended, a French-born schoolteacher. In fact, she was the widow of a prominent clergyman from suburban London whose last name was Todd -- Anna's father. He was famous for his generosity toward the poor, and himself. To support this philanthropy, he forged a bond for 4,000 pounds. He was caught, convicted and hanged in 1777.

It is also possible that Ann Brodeau and Anna Thornton recognized in Arthur's features and headstrong ways some of the traits of the late William Thornton. Arthur was mulatto. Nothing is known of his white father, but Maria Bowen had been serving as a young woman in the Thornton household in 1816, the year before Arthur was born. There is no evidence that William Thornton had impregnated Maria Bowen via seduction or rape. But if he had, the young man about to go to the city gallows was Ann Brodeau's step-grandson. And, in a ghastly twist of family fate, he was about to die the same way Anna's father had. Anna wrote in her diary that she could not summon the nerve to tell her mother Arthur had been condemned.

Arthur's execution was scheduled for February 26, 1836. Two weeks before that dreaded day, Anna finally acted. She drew up a petition asking for a presidential pardon and obtained the signatures of 34 friends. She wrote a note to Vice President Martin Van Buren, a social acquaintance, asking him to intervene on Arthur's behalf with President Jackson. Anna may have thought that Jackson, as a slave owner and staunch defender of white supremacy, was not likely to look with favor on her wishes. But she also might have intuited that the president had qualities that offered some hope. Jackson was just a few years older than she. Like her, he had lost a beloved spouse. Jackson always thought his wife's death in 1832 had been hastened by the abusive language hurled her way by political foes. "This made him the sworn and unyielding foe of all slanderers of women," wrote Ben Perley.

Anna composed a 17-page letter to Jackson. In elegant and unflinching handwriting, she described what she had seen that fateful night. She explained that Arthur was drunk and had never raised the ax. She tactfully suggested mob passions had driven Key's prosecution.

"The recent alarms & agitations . . . may have had an unconscious influence in determining the expediency of seizing the first occasion to make a severe and terrifying example," she wrote in the letter, now in the National Archives

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in College Park.

She pleaded for Jackson to spare Arthur's life. "The bloody execution" of the court's sentence, she told the president, "would be more horrible than the offense."

In the city jail, Arthur resigned himself to his fate. He wrote a poem, later published in the *Globe*, to his pals, whom he would not see again.

Farewell, farewell, my young friends dear; / Oh! View my dreadful state, / Each flying moment brings me near /
Unto my awful fate.

He blamed liquor, not slavery, for his impending doom.

Brought up I was by parents nice, / Whose commands I would not obey, / But plunged ahead foremost into vice, /
And into temptation's dreadful way.

And he concluded with this sad rhyme.

Good bye, good bye, my friends so dear, / May God Almighty please you all, / Do, if you please, but shed a tear /
At Arthur Bowen's unhappy fall.

In his second-floor office in the executive mansion, Jackson read Anna's final appeal, her signed petition and the legal opinion of his attorney general.

On the night of February 25, a heavy snowfall enveloped the city. The next day, Arthur Bowen woke up expecting to go to his death. Instead, the prison marshal informed him that the president had granted a respite. His execution had been postponed until June. Anna, the putative victim of his crime, had spared his life.

If Key was bothered by Jackson's act of mercy, he did not record his views in any way that has survived. Key had other business to attend to. He was prosecuting the miscreants who had led the Mechanics on their spree. And he was preparing for what he saw as his most important case, *U.S. v. Reuben Crandall*.

In Key's prosecution of Crandall, it became clear that the district attorney believed Crandall was the real culprit in the Snow Riot story. Arthur was a mere slave. But Crandall's efforts to stoke the slaves' desire for freedom in America, Key declared as the trial began in April 1836, was nothing less than a "base and demonical" effort to incite slaves, free Negroes and others to "stir up against slave owners." Crandall, in Key's view, was guilty of sedition and should pay a heavy price.

U.S. v. Reuben Crandall was the most sensational trial in Washington in years. The newspaper coverage was extensive. The courtroom in City Hall was crowded. Several congressmen took front-row seats. Crandall was defended by two of Washington's most skillful attorneys, Richard Coxe and Joseph Bradley. These crafty barristers blocked Key at every turn. After the district attorney called a witness who said he had borrowed a copy of the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* from Crandall, Coxe produced half a dozen witnesses who swore Crandall had no interest in the anti-slavery cause. Bradley handled the courtroom theatrics. He read aloud a statement on the evils of slavery. When the court demanded to know its relevance, Bradley revealed that the words had come from the mouth of Key himself years earlier.

In final arguments, Key declared that *U.S. v. Reuben Crandall* was "one of the most important cases ever tried" in the nation's capital. The issue, he said, according to the trial transcript, was "whether our institutions have any means of legal defense against a set of men of most horrid principles, whose means of attack upon us are insurrection, tumult and violence."

Key appealed to the all-white jury's sense of supremacy.

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"Are you willing, gentlemen, to abandon your country; to permit it to be taken from you, and occupied by the Abolitionist, according to whose taste it is to associate and amalgamate with the Negro?" he said. "Or, gentlemen, on the other hand, are there laws in this community to defend you from the immediate Abolitionist, who would open upon you the floodgates of such extensive wickedness and mischief?"

Bradley replied that Key's case was based on a tissue of supposition and that punishing Reuben Crandall for sedition would set a dangerous precedent that would endanger every American's constitutional rights.

The jury deliberated for three hours and delivered a stinging rebuke to Key: The defendant was not guilty.

William Lloyd Garrison, the crusading editor of the anti-slavery newspaper the Liberator, hailed Crandall's acquittal and scorned the prosecutor. Key, he wrote, "seems to have cherished deep malignity of purpose" toward this "excellent but suffering man."

The sad truth was that Reuben Crandall, even though acquitted, already had been condemned to die, if only inadvertently. During his incarceration in the squalid city jail, he had contracted tuberculosis. After his release, he set sail for Kingston, Jamaica, to recuperate. It was no use. As he grew sicker, he welcomed God's grace. He never mentioned Key in final fond letters to his family. He would die in January 1838.

BY THE SUMMER OF 1836, some normality had returned to the community of free blacks of Washington. The Rev. Cook had come back from self-imposed exile to rebuild his church and school. Absalom Shadd, a free black man from Canada, would soon take over Snow's restaurant. The city imposed some new restrictions on free Negroes, but life would go on. (And on and on. Today, the church founded by Cook, 15th Street Presbyterian, is still going strong. The corner where Beverly Snow served dinner is occupied by a pricey steakhouse that caters, as he did, to the political class.)

In June 1836, President Jackson dealt another blow to Key's vision of justice in the nation's capital. He ordered another respite for Arthur Bowen, this one lasting until August. Perhaps sensing advantage, Anna Thornton pressed on. She asked one of the judges in Arthur's trial, Buckner Thruston, to intercede with the president. It was a savvy choice because Thruston was a former senator from Kentucky and a political ally of Jackson's. Thruston wrote a letter to Jackson telling him that Arthur was inebriated and "temporarily insane" on the night of the alleged assault. Thruston said he supported Anna Thornton's petition for a pardon.

And then tragedy struck Francis Scott Key.

His son Daniel had just returned from a tour of duty with the Navy in the Mediterranean. Like Arthur Bowen, Daniel Key was 19 years old and a world of trouble to his elders. On the voyage home, he had quarreled with a fellow sailor named Sherburne and challenged him to a duel. Back in Washington, Daniel Key encountered Sherburne and challenged him again. In late June, they met at a dueling ground in Bladensburg, and Sherburne shot young Key dead.

When the body of Daniel Key was brought back to the Key house on C Street, the father faced a severe test of his religious faith. People who were there reported a scene of utter emotional desolation.

"This melancholy affair has caused a very deep sensation in our community," reported the Metropolitan newspaper. Sympathy for the Key family was said to be "strong and universal."

Maybe it was coincidence, or maybe it was pity. Perhaps he just wanted to be done with it. But three days after the duel, Andrew Jackson finally relented. He took up his pen and scrawled an order: "Let the Negro boy John Arthur Bowen be pardoned." Thinking his gesture should have patriotic impact, the president added that the pardon should "take effect on the 4th of July."

What Francis Scott Key thought of Anna Thornton's improbable victory is not known, but he seems not to have

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been proud of his actions in 1835 and 1836. In an admiring 1911 biography, a descendant of Key's made no mention of the pardon of Arthur Bowen or of the acquittal of Reuben Crandall.

Perhaps even Key came to recognize, before his death in 1843, that he had erred. Certainly, his twin defeats in 1836 constituted a modest victory for American justice.

Anna attended to the necessary final details to secure Arthur's safety. In return for the pardon, she agreed to sell Arthur to a friend of the president who promised to get Arthur training to become a servant on a steamship. A practical woman, Anna wanted to be paid \$800 for Arthur. She reluctantly settled for \$750.

On July 4, 1836, the day Arthur's release took effect, Ann Brodeau, Anna's long-suffering mother, finally expired. She died unaware that Arthur, the beloved boy whom she had watched grow to manhood, was going to live.

In the face of such cascading emotions, Anna wrote of her hopes for Arthur:

"I never intended to sell him for life, but could not now avoid & hope & pray that he may lead a new life and be happy."

A few days later, Arthur Bowen left Washington and embarked on his future in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Jefferson Morley is a Washingtonpost.com staff writer. He will be fielding questions and comments about this article Monday at 1 p.m. at washingtonpost.com/liveonline.

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