

Sheriff's Office

Upper Marlboro, June 20th 1863

To His Honor, A. W. Bradford

Dear Sir:

Excuse me for taking the liberty but I wish to be informed what I am to do in reference to negroes running away from and through this County. They are constantly leaving here in large crowds; I have been called on by the citizens of the County to call out on several occasions a Posse Comitatus. Some of the men who have come out under my call have been arrested by the authorities of Washington and imprisoned; the negroes are generally armed, resist their capture, and I think the laws of this State allow me to arrest them at their peril. Please inform me the proper steps to take, and you will greatly oblige

Your humble servant

Peter G. Grimes

Sheriff Pr. Georges Co. Md.

State of Maryland

Executive Department

Baltimore June 23. 1863

Peter G. Grimes Esq.

Sheriff of Prince Georges County

Sir:

Your letter of 20th Inst. enquiring of me what you shall do in regard to the large number of negroes leaving or passing through your County as Runaways, has been forwarded to me here, where I am at this time engrossed by other matters of pressing importance.

You are doubtless right in your suggestion that you have authority to arrest all fugitive slaves under the laws of our State, and if resisted in the discharge of that duty would have the right to summon to your assistance the Posse Comitatus.

Whilst however it is your right to call such a power to your aid, the exercise of such a power at such a time as this is a proceeding of very doubtful expediency —

With the War at our very doors and our State at this moment invaded, it would I think be manifestly imprudent to bring into operation in any County any such police power as might invite a collision with the Military Authorities; and therefore whilst you might arrest all such fugitives that you quietly could, I think that the interest of the owner (not less than the public peace, requires that you abstain from surrounding yourself at present with any such County force.

Yours Respectfully

A. W. Bradford