

### **Documents from the trial of Cesar and Lewis**

Hebron, CT September 27 and November 10, 1787

Courtesy, Hebron Historical Society, Hebron, CT

Having sworn out a warrant for the arrest of Cesar Peters and his family and having successfully rescued them from the slave-catchers, the case was brought before Elihu Marvin, Hebron's Justice of the Peace. Judge Marvin found in favor of Elijah Graves, and the Peters family and, as payment for the purported damages, were bound over to Graves for a period of two years. While at first glance two years of servitude seems a harsh sentence for what had begun as an elaborate ruse to prevent the Peters family from being carried away into slavery, it should be remembered that from a legal standpoint the family remained the property of their absentee owner, who could have attempted to reclaim them again. By legally bounding them over to Elijah Graves, the Peters family received the protection of influential members of the community. During the Revolutionary Era, Connecticut African Americans, both free and enslaved, often were compelled to rely upon the limited security of "benevolent paternalism."

The original manuscript version of this document appears to have been lost. This transcription was done around 1890 by F.C. Bissell, Hebron's Town Historian. Bissell's own account of the Peters story, "The Rev. Samuel Peters, L.L.D. of Hebron, Conn. Loyalist. His Slaves and Their Near Abduction" is an example of the sort of town histories common during the last half of the nineteenth century.