

A Canterbury Tale: A Document Package for Connecticut's Prudence Crandall Affair

Prudence Crandall, "Letter to Simeon Jocelyn (April 17, 1833)," published in "Abolition Letters Collected by Captain Arthur B. Spingarn," *Journal of Negro History*, vol. XVIII, 1933, p. 82-84.

Canterbury, April 17th, 1833

Rev. S. S. Jocelyn
New Haven, Conn.

My very Dear Friend

Disappointment seems yet to be my lot. I have only two boarders and one day scholar — one girl is under warning to depart the town. Her accusation is that she is residing here against the peace of the state. A copy of the warning I gave to Mr. May to send where he chose — and he immediately commenced writing to Mr. Tappan on the same sheet therefore I forbear sending a second copy not doubting you have read it ere this.

I am informed that Miss Hammond is not to be carried home by the select men but I am to have a writ served upon me as soon as the law will allow it. Miss Hammond came here last week on Friday and was warned on Saturday evening about 7 o'clock and as the law obliges those who harbor foreigners to pay \$1.68 per week I presume I shall be subjected to that penalty next Friday. Sabbath evening I went to see my dear dear friend Mr. May. I asked him if in case a writ should be served upon me whether I should pay the fine or stand trial and he said stand trial. I wish you would answer me this question by the next mail after you receive this — it will not be in time for this week but it will for the next. I think it is best to pay the first fine when demanded but that I shall not do without first consulting Mr. May. A written offer of bonds has been presented to the selectmen by Mr. May to secure the town against any damage that shall be done by any of my pupils. I presume bonds will not be accepted by them — This is a day of trial — all who will dare venture to encounter the public feeling at all must expect to be branded with all the marks of disgrace that can be heaped upon them by their enemies.

The thought of such opposition as has been raised in the minds of the people of Canterbury and the adjoining towns never once entered into my mind while contemplating the change I am now endeavoring to effect in my school. Very true I thought many of the high-minded worldly men would oppose the plan but that christians would act so unwisely and conduct in a manner so outrageously was a thought distant from my view. I have put my hand to the plough and I will never no never look back — I trust God will help me keep this resolution for in Him only there is safety for mine own arm never brought salvation.

I have had in the Providence of Cod to pass through many trying seasons but place them all together they are of small moment compared with the present scene of adversity — yet

in the midst of this affliction I am as happy as at any moment of my life — I never saw the time when I was the least apprehensive that adversity would harm me — but I can truly say I have been many times fearful that through the blessings and mercies dispensed to me by the hand of God my heart would become hardened in the days of prosperity and I forgot to thank the Giver while I enjoyed the gift.

If this school is crushed by inhuman laws another I suppose cannot be obtained, certainly one for white scholars can never be taught by me. As for myself I think I shall fare well enough — I have sufficient property in my hands to pay my debts — to work I am not ashamed and to beg I do not fear the necessity.

April 20th — Yesterday I called on Mr. May found him very anxious to hear from you and Mr. Tappan — He says stand trial with the town if they sue me — it is his opinion they can not collect a fine. Petitions to present to the General Assembly are circulating in various towns in this region of country and I am informed by Mr. White that the petition in Canterbury is not like those that are circulating in the other towns — I have not yet been able to obtain a copy of either but think I shall soon. I have received a letter from that invaluable man A. Tappan today — he thinks it best to sustain the school where it is if it can be done without to great expense and if otherwise seek a place somewhere else — Mr. May yesterday received a letter from a friend of his informing him that in the town of Reading Mass. the people are willing to have my school established. Do not mention this to anyone until we get further information from that town — Mr. Judson and his party think Mr. May's letters are so very flat that they are not worth much notice — certainly not an answer.

The boat leaves Norwich on Monday but I have not determined whether I shall take it for New York or not.

Yours with great regard

P. Crandall