Nat Turner's Rebellion (Intro)

In August 1831, a man named Nat Turner led an uprising of enslaved people in Southampton, Virginia, that resulted in the deaths of fifty-five white people and hundreds of black people. In the weeks that followed, the fear of further insurrections of enslaved people spread across eastern North Carolina. Newspapers reported rumors as fact. White militias and mobs hunted down black people believed to be involved in insurrection plots and arrested or murdered them.
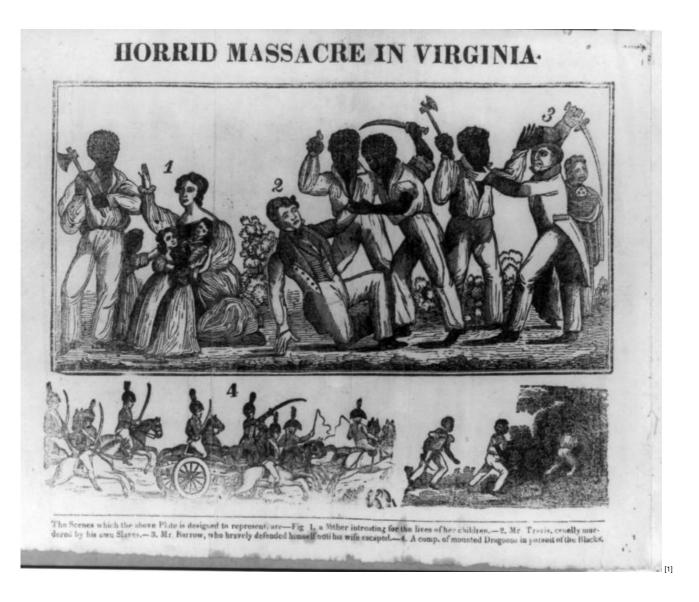
The primary sources in this chapter include newspaper articles, a letter, excerpts from a diary, and a memoir, all describing the events of Nat Turner's Rebellion and what followed in North Carolina. These sources are as interesting for what they *don't* tell us as for what they do. We'll evaluate the facts, opinions, and rumors they offer, and we'll trace the way fear and hysteria can spread through a community. We'll also consider where North Carolina stood as an enslavement society at the close of 1831.

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HORRID MASSACRE IN VIRGINIA.

The Scenes which the above Plate is designed to represent, are—Fig 1, a Mother intreating for the lives of her children.—2, Mr. Travis, cruelly murdered by his own Slaves.—3, Mr. Barrow, who bravely defended himself until his wife escaped.—4, A comp. of mounted Dragoons in pursuit of the Blacks.

[1]

These images of Nat Turner's Rebellion appeared in a book published soon after the uprising.

3 January 2018