

Moses Ashley Curtis diary, September 1831 (page 1 of 7)

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This diary was kept by Moses Ashley Curtis, who was living in Wilmington, North Carolina, in 1831. In these entries from September 10–21, he describes the events that followed Nat Turner's Rebellion — the rumors of a uprising of enslaved people in Wilmington and the surrounding counties, the terrified reactions of white residents of the city, and the retribution they exacted on the black people they believed responsible for the plot.

fever in September is hardly desirable being frequently fatal. In writing home I made no allusion to it for fear of alarming the good folks although I had recovered when I wrote. Not much sickness yet, though a number are ailing.

Sept 9th - Horrible! A set of runaway negroes have murdered about 50 persons chiefly women & children in Southampton County Va. & left their carcasses headless & abused as a prey to the buzzards. - The extensive forests & swamps afford fine facilities for such a clasp to collect & remain concealed in depths almost impenetrable. - It is a happy circumstance that the vigorous efforts of the whites have succeeded in catching most of the offenders, & their heads are now stuck up about the country, sad warnings to their black fellows & the world. - The outrages being in the vicinity of this state created much excitement here, particularly among women & roused people to adopt measures of precaution among ourselves. - A letter from a friend in Va. states that a number of women have died from fright. The insurgents were headed by an arch negro, who, under the guise of a baptist preacher & the pretence of prophetic powers accompanied with considerable talent, has induced many to follow him in the belief that they might extirpate the whites and

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