

February 17, 1863 - ". . . these laws are about to be enforced in earnest. . . " State and local laws regulating slaves and free persons of color



Slaves and Free Persons of Color.

City Laws in Regard to Them.

The charge of Manson M. Brien, Judge of the Criminal Court of Davidson county, to the grand jury empanelled last week, is fresh in the minds of our readers, and particularly that portion of it in relation to the enforcement of the State and City Laws regulating slaves and free persons of color. The frequent allusions to the same subject in our daily reports of the proceedings in the Recorder's Court, and the instructions of Recorder Shane to the members of the Night Police, seem to indicate that these laws are about to be enforced in earnest, and we therefore feel it incumbent on us to publish an abstract of laws upon the subject, in order to enable our readers to post themselves on the subject and regulate themselves and servants accordingly.



Section 2 of an act to incorporate the inhabitants of the town of Nashville, page 34 of City Laws, gives the Corporation full power and authority to pass all by-laws and ordinances necessary for the restraint and government of slaves.

The laws passed by the Corporation of Nashville, pursuant to the authority granted by the General Assembly of the State, make it the duty of the city Marshal and the City Watch to see that the laws are enforced within the limits of the Corporation, and when no person will appear to prosecute, it is the duty of the City marshal or some one of the city watch to become prosecutor.

All free persons of color must have his or her name registered by the City Recorder. Should any be found in the public places or streets of this city without a Recorder's certificate of such registration, they are deemed to be slaves and must be dealt with as such.

Free persons of color found without visible means of support must be arrested as vagrants.

Free persons of color are not permitted to entertain slaves during the Sabbath day, or between sunset and sunrise, without permission of the owner or employer of said slave, under a penalty of \$10 for each offence.

Collections of slaves are forbidden, except for public worship, and the Marshal, City Watch, and Patrols, are required to disperse all such collections.

Slaves who do not reside, or who are not employed within the corporate limits, are not permitted to remain in the city after sunset or on Sunday, without permission from the owner.

It is unlawful for any slave to hold, occupy, reside, or sleep in any house, out-house, building, or inclosure, other than the premises upon which their owner or employer resides, without written permission from said owner or employer. Any owner violating this order incurs a penalty of \$10.

Any person renting by the day or month, or otherwise, to any slave, any lot, house, out-house, tenement or room, incurs a penalty of from \$10 to \$50 for each offence.



It is unlawful for a slave to hire his time, under penalty of \$20.

It Is Unlawful For Slaves

To go off the premises of their masters without leave.

To carry arms.

"Sell liquors.

"Sell articles not manufactured by himself.



It Is Unlawful for White Persons

To give a forged pass to a slave.

"Secrete or harbor a runaway.

"Receive and carry from one place to another without authority from the owner.

To trade with, or give or sell liquor.

"Emancipate, without assent of State.

"Marry with.



Free Persons of Color Are Forbidden

To remove from any State or Territory into this State, under a penalty of not less than ten or more than fifty dollars, and hard labor in the Penitentiary not less than one nor more than two years.

To keep grocery, to sell drugs and medicines.

To marry a slave without the owner's consent.

To harbor slaves, or entertain them on the Sabbath day.

We have alluded only to such portions of the State Code and City Laws as bear more immediately upon the evils under which our city is at present suffering, and such as may be readily enforced to the benefit of our community and to the moral and social benefit of our colored population. Drunkenness, prostitution, idleness, and theft are the prevailing occupations of hundreds of negroes about town. We do not allude to our own colored population, although some of them are becoming a curse to the community and themselves, but to the numerous runaways who have "squatted" among us; to officers' servants; to families of negroes working for the army, and similar cases. It is the duty of the police to enforce all these laws, and in many cases it is made the duty of any white citizen to bring criminals to justice.

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