

**November 1, 1863 - A loyal Shelbyville resident requests exemptions from Federal conscription for Damascus and William, two slaves**



Shelbyville Ten.

Novr. 1 1863.

To His Excellency

Govnr. Andrew Johnson

Dear Govnr.



I find published in the "Union" of Friday—the order of the War Department in relation to enlisting soldiers of color—and I find one clause that includes if "necessary" the servants of loyal citizens—<sup>Note 1</sup>



I do not object to the enforcement of the order, when the servants of the loyal citizen are willing to enlist—but I very much doubt the policy in those cases where the servants prefer staying with their masters—

But I write to you particularly to procure for me protection against the recruiting of my two servants Damascus and William—Of course I mean their impressment or being compelled to go in the army. If they voluntarily go into the army—I would not say a word—but [it] is to guard them against being compelled to go that I write to you—they wish to stay with me.

The policy of the Administration in regard to the arming of colored persons is fixed—and therefore we cannot alter it—but these servants of mine, have stayed with me all the time during the troubles—they are faithful, honest, trustworthy—*absolutely necessary* for my comfort and convenience—if taken away I do not know how I would supply their place—and I would be compelled to break up Housekeeping—"Damascus" is my Hostler and Blacksmith—and William is my body servant and House man—

If in you power my Dear Governor, [you will] furnish me such protection as will free them from "involuntary service" in the army—at least until all the "colored servants" of the "Secesh" and their "sympathizers" have been exhausted.

The fear I have grows out of the fact that a "recruiting station" is located at our town—and the officer being desirous of speedily filling up the ranks—may take all the colored persons indiscriminately—

I do not wish to come in contact with the "Recruiting Officer" and therefore ask your aid.

If you have no power in the matter will you be kind enough to direct me to the proper authority—with such recommendations as will accomplish my wish.

It is the first application I have as yet made to the Government in regard to my own matters—other than the exchange so kindly procured for me when held as a prisoner by the Confederate Authorities<sup>Note 2</sup>—

Hoping to hear from you soon  
I remain Govnr. Very Truly Yr. friend  
Edmund Cooper



*Papers of Andrew Johnson*, Vol. 6, pp. 446-447.

**Note 1:** According to the editors of *Papers of Andrew Johnson*, Vol. 6, fn. 1, p. 447, the "fifth clause of General Order No. 329 stipulated that 'enlistments may be made of slaves without requiring the consent of their owners,' if enough Negroes, slaves of Confederates, or slaves with consent of their owners have not been mustered within thirty days." See: *Nashville Union*, October 30, 1863.



**Note 2:** Cooper was arrested by Confederate authorities for reasons unknown and released after an exchange had been approved, as the following correspondence represents:



WASHINGTON, D. C., October 21, 1862.

Hon. E. M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

SIR:

The writer of the inclosed letter, Hon. Henry Cooper, of Shelbyville, Tenn., is judge of one of the judicial district of Tennessee appointed by Governor Johnston. His brother, Edmund Cooper, who is a prisoner in the rebel hands, is one of the first lawyers in the State and one of the best and most influential men known to me. Turner [S. ] Foster at Camp Chase in one of the persons arrested by Governor Johnston at Nashville. Knowing how all your time is occupied I content myself with submitting the letter of Judge Cooper and will call to-morrow to receive such answer as you may be pleased to give. I have the honor to be, your obedient servant, EM. ETHERIDGE.

[Inclosure.]

NEW YORK, October 20, 1862.

Hon. E. ETHERIDGE, Washington City.

DEAR SIR: I hope you will not think me troublesome but I wish you to do me a favor. My brother, Edmund Cooper, is a prisoner in the hands of the rebels and I wish to procure his release. The United States have in prison at Camp Chase Turner S. Foster, of Nashville, who writes me that if he can be paroled he can effect an exchange with the rebel Government of my brother for himself. Will you be kind enough to see the Secretary of War whether or not such an arrangement can be made. I would come to Washington myself but I am here with my family, cut off from my means of support, and feel it to be my duty to husband what few means I have left. If I can be of any service in carrying out my object I will come at any cost. I hope you will be able to effect the parole of Mr. Foster to let him to and effect the exchange he desires. I know I am troubling you too much, but I assure you should opportunity ever offer there is nothing I would not do for you. My brother

has been and would still be of great advantage to the Federal cause our State if at liberty to work for it. Direct any communication for me to care of Thomas Eakin, New York.

Very truly,

HENRY COOPER.

*OR*, Ser. II, Vol. 4, pp. 639-640.

WAR DEPARTMENT, Washington, October 27, 1862.

Adjutant-Gen. THOMAS.

GEN.: Direct the commissary of prisoners to release Turner S. Foster, a rebel prisoner at Camp Chase, on his parole to procure the release and exchange of Edmund Cooper, a citizen of Tennessee, now a prisoner in the hands of the rebels.

Yours, &c.,

EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War. *OR*, Ser. II, Vol. 4, p. 657.

