

The 1831 Insurrection

AN OVERVIEW

**NAT
TURNER
TRAIL**

1831
Southampton
Insurrection

Nat Turner, an enslaved, self-taught preacher, believed that signs from Heaven guided him to initiate the slave revolt in which more White people were killed than in any other in American history. Born in Southampton County in October 1800, Turner was intelligent, literate, and deeply religious. He claimed he began receiving visions from God in the 1820s that prompted him to plan an uprising against slaveholders.

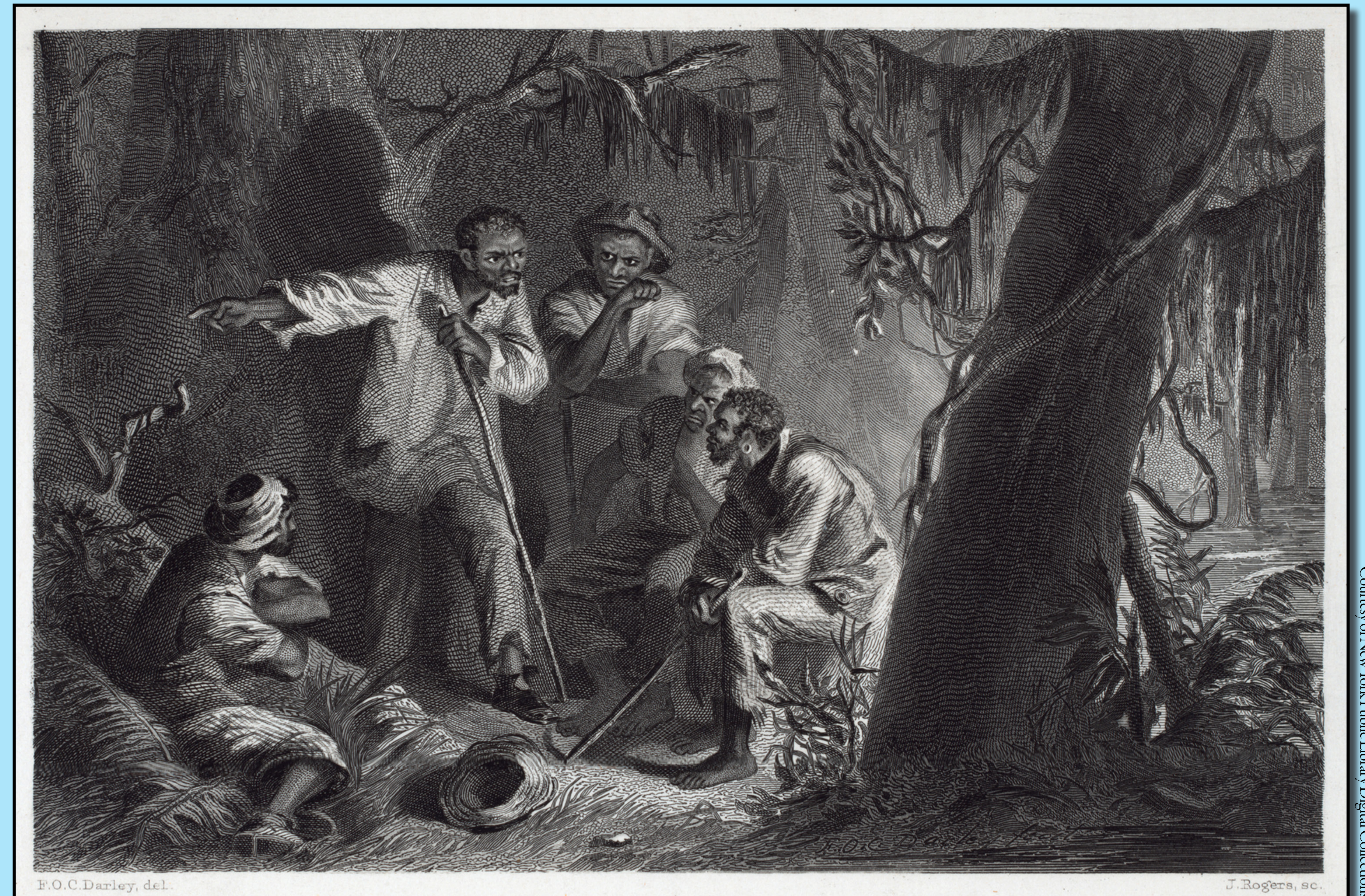
Signs from God

On February 12, 1831, Nat Turner witnessed a solar eclipse, and on August 13, he observed an

atmospheric disturbance that made the sun appear bluish green. He believed these were his signs from God to begin his rebellion. On the afternoon of August 21, he met with his closest followers at Cabin Pond, a “reptile-infested swamp.” They began traveling from house to house, offering enslaved people the opportunity to join their rebellion and promising them freedom. All enslavers that Nat Turner and his men encountered were killed.

“General” Nat’s Rebellion

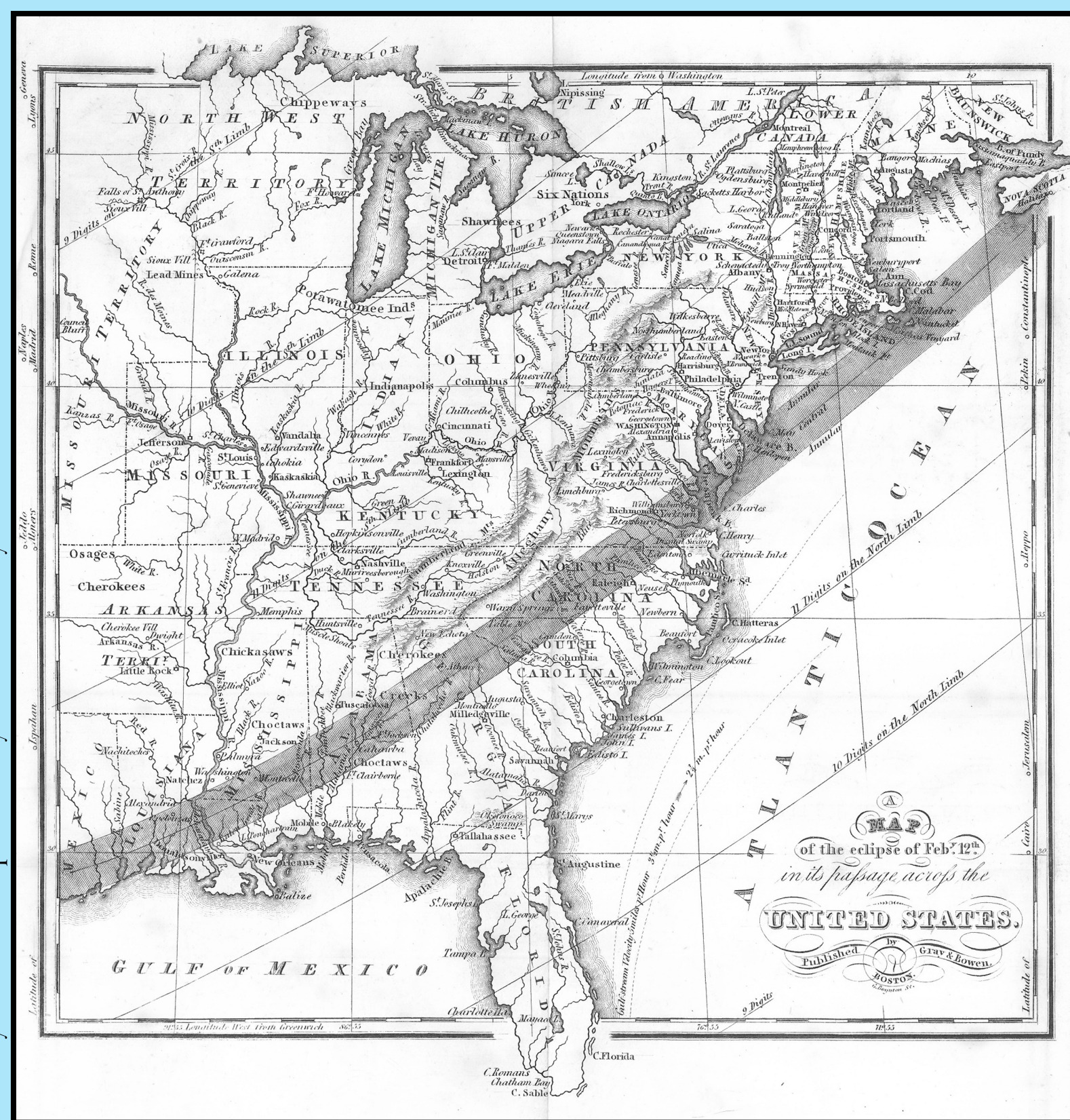
By noon on August 22, Turner’s army numbered more than 60 armed men. After killing the Rebecca Vaughan family, “General Nat” and his troops were challenged by the Southampton Militia at nearby Parker’s Field. They discovered



“Nat Turner & his confederates in conference,” 1880. John Rogers, engraver.

their path to Jerusalem (today’s Courtland) was heavily guarded by militia blocking their route over the Nottoway River at Cypress Bridge. The insurrectionists spent that evening at Major Ridley’s Quarter. The next morning, the Blunt family and their bondsmen at “Belmont” defeated Turner’s followers. Later that day,

most of Turner’s remaining supporters were scattered by the militia. Virginia and North Carolina companies violently suppressed the uprising. Turner escaped the skirmish, avoiding capture until October 30, 1831. Local officials ordered his execution, and Turner was hanged on November 11, 1831.



*Map of eclipse, February 12, 1831.
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