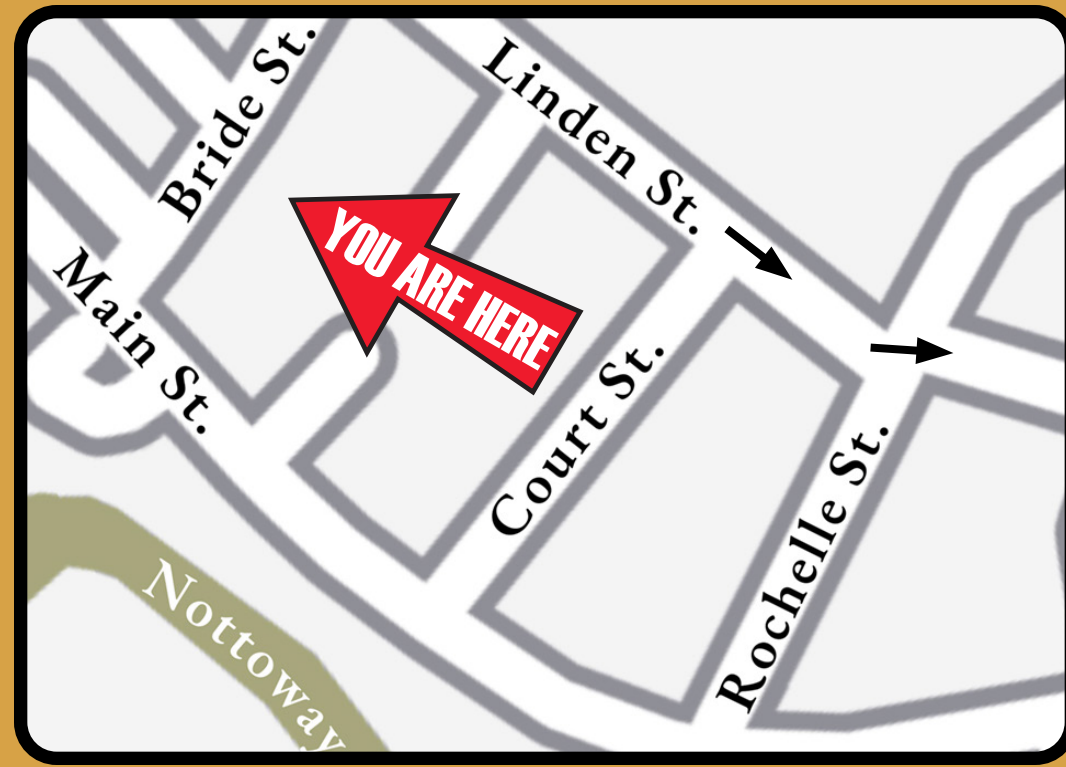


# Place of Execution

## WHERE NAT TURNER DIED



**NAT  
TURNER  
TRAIL**

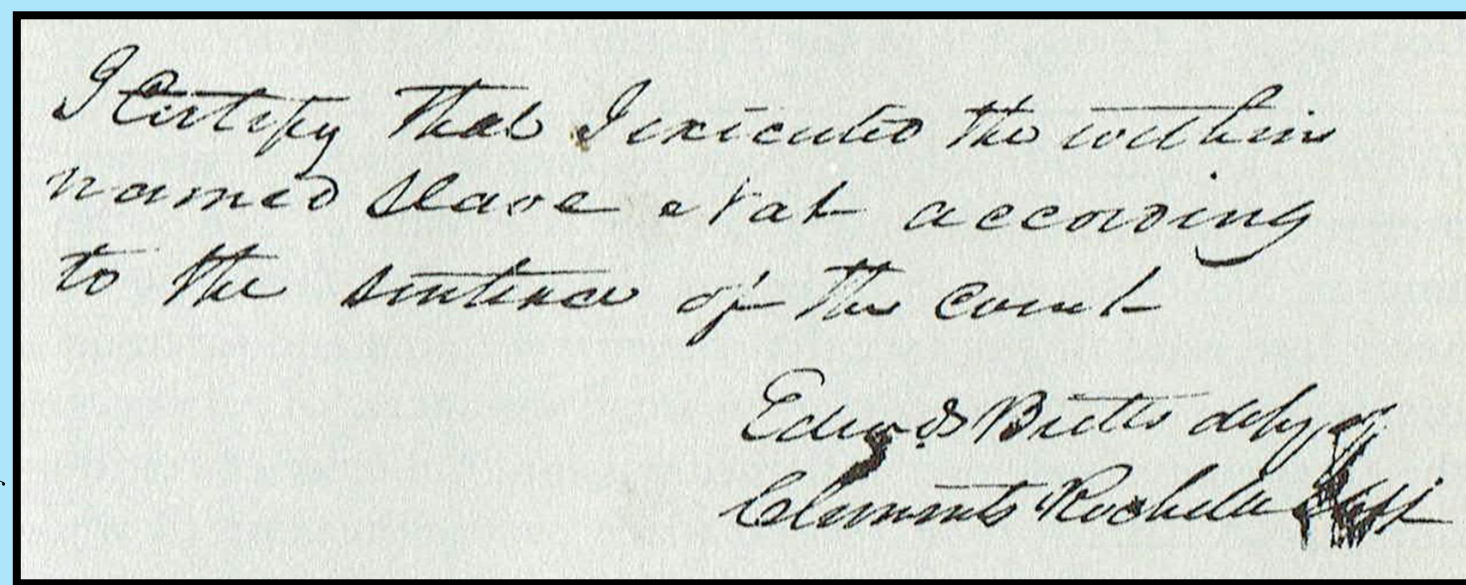
1831  
Southampton  
Insurrection

**N**ear where you are standing today once stood the so-called “Hanging Tree,” Southampton County’s “usual place of execution” for criminals, both White and Black. Nat Turner was hanged here on November 11, 1831. The executioner was Edward Butts, deputy sheriff.

### The Value of a Man

Butts wrote a certification that he had carried out the court’s sentence so that the estate of Putnam Moore, Nat Turner’s enslaver, killed during the insurrection, could be reimbursed \$375, the stated value of Turner. The Commonwealth of Virginia compensated owners or their estates for the loss of property — the enslaved persons — who were either executed or transported.

Courtesy of Virginia State Library, Archives Branch



**Certificate of Execution of Nat Turner signed by Edward Butts.**

Courtesy of Library of Congress



**Woodcut image from the American Anti-Slavery Society’s 1837 broadside publication of John Greenleaf Whittier’s antislavery poem, “Our Countrymen in Chains.” A quote at the bottom of the sheet reads: “England has 800,000 Slaves, and she has made them free. America has 2,250,000! and she holds them fast!!!” The design was originally the seal of the Society for the Abolition of Slavery in England in the 1780s and appeared on the society’s medallions made by Josiah Wedgwood, ca. 1787.**

### Virginia’s New Slave Laws, 1832

The 1831 Southampton Insurrection was one of the last major slave revolts before the Civil War. Governor John Floyd called the Virginia General Assembly into session in January 1832. The causes, events, and results of Nat Turner’s Rebellion were discussed, and several bills concerning general manumission or the sale and deportation of all chattel property were debated. None of these concepts proved to be successful.

Virginia’s first slave law was passed in 1682. New laws were legislated in 1832 and were more stringent and diligently enforced. They addressed prohibiting the movement, assembly, and education of bondsmen; restricting their travel rights; outlawing possession of weapons; forbidding the sale of alcohol; prohibiting an enslaved person from lifting a hand against a White person, even in self-defense; restricting holding religious meetings without a licensed White minister present; and establishing harsher punishments for freedom seekers. These laws also limited free Blacks’ freedom.



*Tree under which Nat. was hung.*

**The Hanging Tree**

Speech and Photographs Relating to Nat Turner’s Insurrection, Accession #10673, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.