

Nat Turner's Grave

'BURIAL PLACE OF THE CONDEMNED'

NAT
TURNER
TRAIL

1831
Southampton
Insurrection

Two newspapers reported that Deputy Sheriff Edward Butts executed Nat Turner at either high noon or one o'clock p.m. on November 11, 1831. Most sources agree that a large crowd gathered on the day of the execution. Yet only a few were permitted to witness close at hand the last moments of Nat Turner's life.

The Execution

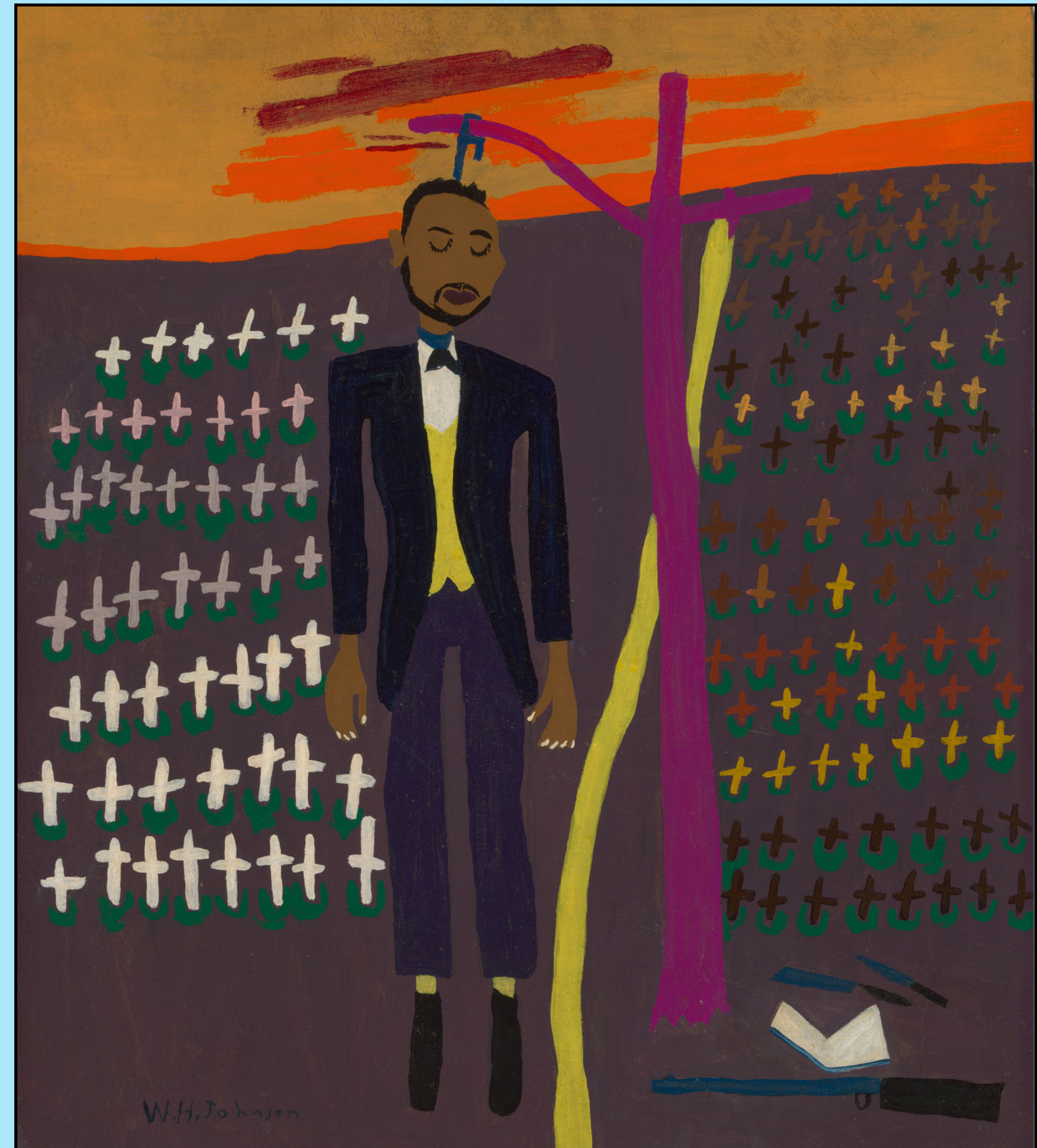
The *Petersburg Intelligencer* reported that Turner "exhibited the most utmost composure throughout the whole ceremony; and although assured that he might, if he thought proper, address the immense crowd assembled on the occasion, declined, availing himself of the privilege, and told the Sheriff in a firm voice, that he was ready. Not a limb or muscle was observed to move."

Nat Turner's Remains

After Turner was hanged and pronounced dead, his remains were turned over to surgeons who illegally dissected and decapitated him. A doctor from Norfolk, Virginia, kept his skull. The July 21, 1860, edition of the *New York Times* included news from the *Petersburg (VA) Express* of July 17th: "Mr. William Mallory, an old citizen of Southampton County, died a few days ago..."

Mr. Mallory was 80 years of age and figured in the suppression of the Southampton massacre. He was the identical "Buck Mallory" who skinned Nat Turner, the leader of the rebellion, and the hide having been tanned, portions of it are now extant in the "curiosity shops" of many residents in and about Southampton."

In 1920, John W. Cromwell wrote in the *Journal of Negro History*, "Turner was skinned to supply such souvenirs as purses, his flesh made into grease, and his bones divided as trophies to be handed down as heirlooms." What was left of his body was buried in Jerusalem's "burial place of the condemned" without ceremony or benefit of clergy. Nat Turner's remains purportedly lie buried near where you stand today.



"Nat Turner," ca. 1945. Painting by William H. Johnson.

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