

Seven Gables

HOME OF THOMAS RUFFIN GRAY

**NAT
TURNER
TRAIL**

1831
Southampton
Insurrection

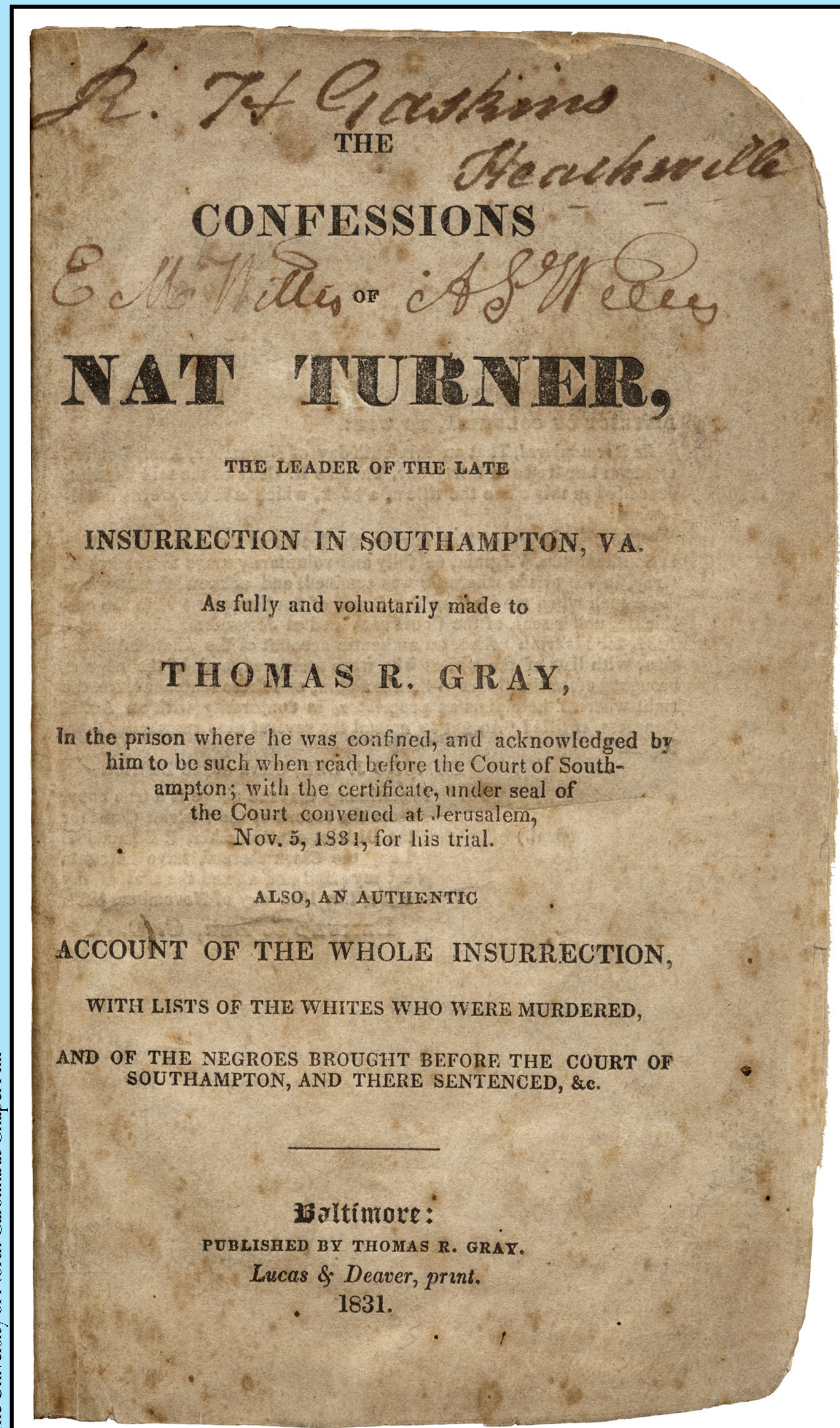
The elegant residence you see here is known as Seven Gables. Josiah Vick constructed it around 1800. By the time of the 1831 Southampton Insurrection, attorney Thomas Ruffin Gray owned this home.

Gray's Time with Nat Turner

From a prominent Southampton County family, Gray had practiced law in Jerusalem (today's Courtland) since 1829. During the hearings following the Southampton Insurrection, Thomas Gray served as a court-appointed lawyer for several of Nat Turner's followers, but not for Turner. Nevertheless, Gray took it upon himself to obtain Turner's confession. He likely transcribed and edited the document in this house, and it was later read before the county court to ensure its accuracy. Six justices signed a document certifying that Turner acknowledged his confession to be "full, free and voluntary." Gray then copyrighted and published the 24-page pamphlet, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*.



Discovery of
Nat Turner. *Wood
engraving, 1881.
William Henry
Shelton, artist.*



*Frontispiece of Thomas Gray's
The Confessions of Nat Turner.*

Gray's Motive?

Gray attested that his purpose was to create a clear and accurate record of the causes, events, and immediate aftermath of the insurrection; yet, the lawyer was in financial distress and may have published the document solely for monetary gain. Nonetheless, Gray's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* provides one of the most important primary source documents detailing the 1831 Southampton Insurrection.



*Nat Turner's sword, part of the Southampton
County Historical Society's artifact collection.*