Mapping Rumors of Nat Turner’s Rebellion

On the following pages, you’ll read about how North Carolinians responded to Nat Turner’s Rebellion. You’ll read, first, the memories of an enslaved woman named Harriet Jacobs. Then, you’ll read a series of newspaper reports about the uprising and the events that followed. White North Carolinians feared that insurrections would spread into their state, and many believed that they had done so.

How, and why, did those rumors spread? To understand that, it helps to look at a few maps

Locating the events

First, let’s locate the major events of Turner’s Rebellion and others discussed in this chapter. You can use this map for reference as you read further.

Concentration of slavery

Next, consider where slavery was most common in North Carolina. Slavery was not spread evenly throughout the state, or even throughout the eastern part of the state. Considering this map, why was white hysteria highest where it was?

Where were the roads?

It also helps to see how news traveled in 1831. Although rumors might spread from farm to farm, news would have traveled quickest along major roads. Unfortunately, the roads on this map aren’t shown extending into Virginia, you’ll have to compare it with the Google map, above, and click the “zoom in” link for a closer view. Can you trace the path of “news” from Southampton, Virginia, into northeastern North Carolina and to Raleigh?
NORTH CAROLINA is situated between 33° 53' and 36° 33' N. It is bounded north by Virginia; east by the Atlantic; south by Georgia. Its mean length is about 362 miles, and mean breadth 126 miles, or 28,032,000 acres.

FACE OF THE COUNTRY, SOIL, AND RIVERS.

SITUATION, BOUNDARIES, AND...
Along the whole coast of North Carolina is a ridge of sand, places by narrow sounds, in others by broad bays. The passage dangerous, and Ocracoke inlet is the only one, north of Cape, the counties on the sea-coast, the land is low and covered with 60 or 80 miles from the shore is a dead level. Beyond this, the most western part of the state, rises into mountains. In the land and covered with immense forests of pitch pine; in the swamp in the upper country, wheat, rye, barley, oats, hemp, and Indian

Capes, Inlets, Sounds, and

The three principal capes are, Cape Hatteras, Cape Lookout, dangerous to mariners, particularly Cape Hatteras. Numerous coast. The principal inlets are, Currituck, Roanoke, and Ocracoke Sound, in the N. E. part of the state, is 60 miles long from east communicates with Pamlico Sound and the ocean, by several narrow by a canal cut through Dismal Swamp. Pamlico Sound is 86 miles Great Dismal Swamp is in the north-east part of the state, and long from north to south, and 10 broad, and embraces about trees. In the centre is Drummond’s pond, 15 miles in circum-
tor Swamp, lies between Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds.

This contemporary map shows North Carolina as it was in 1821, including the major roads.

User Tags:
African Americans
antebellum
communication
history
North Carolina
North Carolina History
Page
slave insurrection
slaveholders
slavery
Students
Teachers
Creative Commons BY-NC-SA

From:
LEARN NC North Carolina History: A Digital Textbook
Copyright Date:
2009

Source URL: https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/mapping-rumors-nat-turners

 Links
[7] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/communication
[8] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/history
[12] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/slave-0
[14] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/slavery
[15] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/students
[16] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/teachers
[17] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/creative-commons
[18] https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/learn-nc