

Jenner Township, Somerset Co. Pa
Jan. 27, 1837

Oliver Johnson to Rowland T. Robinson, Rokeby, Ferrisburgh, Vermont

My Dear Friend,

I have not forgotten my promise to write you.... I am induced to write you at this time, on account of circumstances which I shall proceed without further introduction, to communicate. If you will look a map of the U.S...you will perceive that this county lies very near Maryland. I am now, perhaps, 30 miles from the line. There are in this region at all times no small number of runaway slaves, but they are generally caught unless they proceed farther north. I saw yesterday, in this township a stout man who ran away from Maryland. He is 28 years old, and appeared to me to be an honest, likely man. He says he was sold with several others to a soul-driver for \$1,000; consequently he must have been considered very valuable. When he came here (some time in December I think it was) he was destitute of decent clothing, and unable to proceed, as he intended when he left Maryland, to Canada. A man in this place by the name of William C. Griffith, the son of a Friend, who has often rendered assistance to runaways, kindly offered to keep him until spring. A reward of \$200 has been offered for his apprehension, and it is not considered safe for him to remain here after winter has gone by, as search will no doubt be made for him. I was so well pleased with his appearance, and with the account given of him by Griffith, that I could not help thinking he would be a good man for you to hire. Mr. Griffith says he is of a kind disposition, and knows how to do all most kinds of farm work. He is used to the neighborhood where he lived, in Maryland, at mowing, cradling, or pitching. He has intended going to Canada in the spring, but says he would prefer to stay in the U.S., if he could be safe. I have no doubt he would be perfectly safe with you. Would you not like to have him go to you in the spring? I fear that, if he goes to Canada, he may fall into bad company; but if he is under your guardianship, I think he may become a useful man. The project struck my own mind so pleasantly that I resolved to write you on the subject. It will be a great way for him to walk, but not worse than going to Canada. He can be furnished with the names of abolitionists on whom to call upon the way, and I think may reach Vermont in safety. I wish you would think of the case and write me your conclusions. If you say, "let him come" I will endeavor to make the best possible arrangements in regard to the journey....

I am yours affectionately,
Oliver Johnson

R.T. Robinson

Courtesy of Rokeby Museum