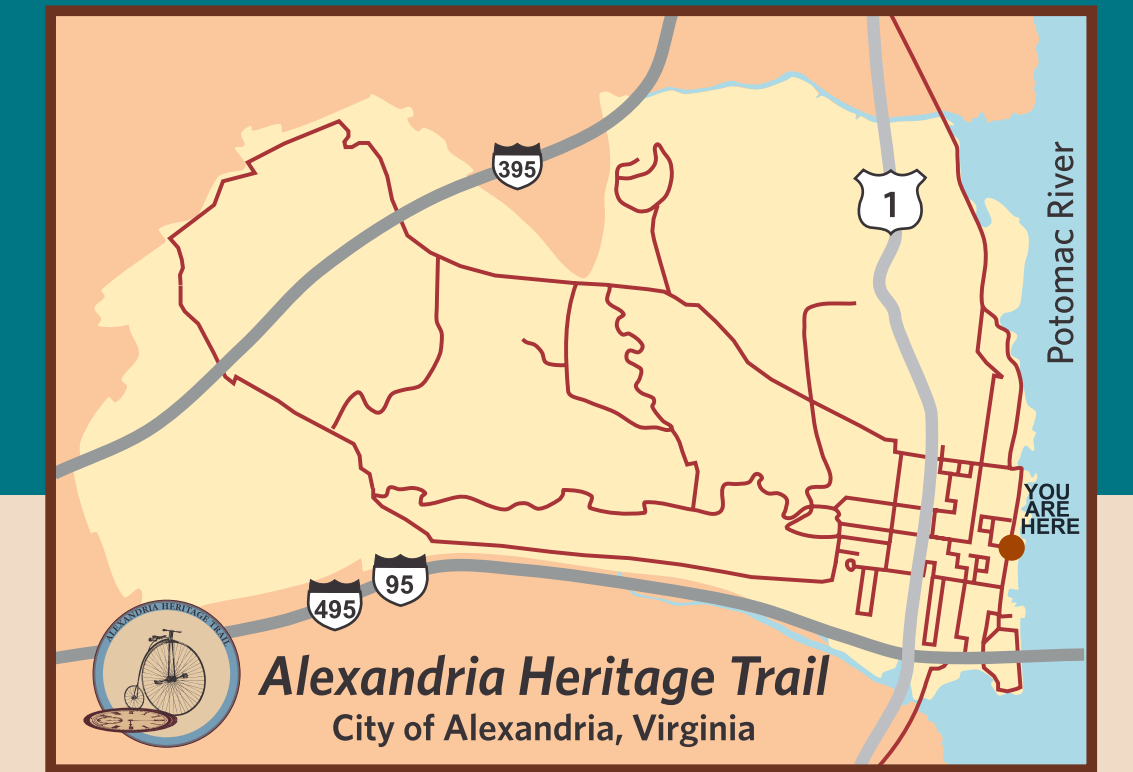


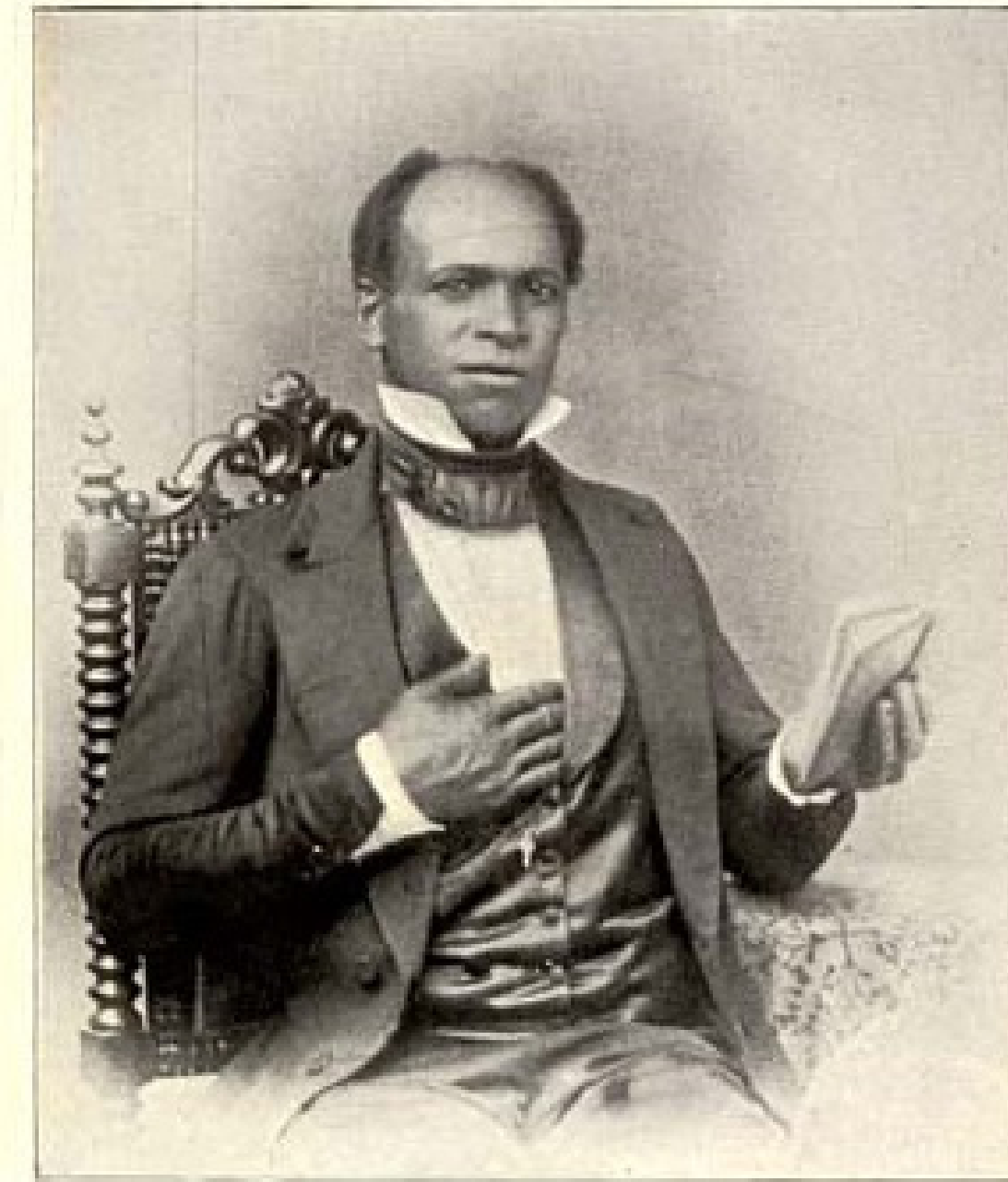
George Henry, Enslaved Ship Captain



Published in 1894, *The Life of George Henry Together with a Brief History of the Colored People in America* captures the personal experiences of the author in his own words. George Henry described himself as the enslaved captain of the schooner *Llewelyn*, which was partially owned by Alexandrian Sally W. Griffin. Henry's account, written almost 50 years after his enslavement, provides a unique perspective on the Chesapeake's waterways in the antebellum period.

By the early 1840s, Henry and his crew of five transported timber, bark, logs, and grain to Baltimore, Annapolis, Alexandria, and other ports around the Chesapeake Bay. The *Llewelyn* periodically unloaded lumber and agricultural products here in Alexandria. He also cut wood on the Northern Neck of Virginia and delivered oak piles used to build the Alexandria Canal's aqueduct that ran across the Potomac River at Georgetown.

In his memoir, Henry described an unusual amount of freedom for someone enslaved in pre-Civil War Virginia through his work on the water. He later recalled that he "was determined to let them [white slave holders] see that though black, I was a man in every sense of the word." Early in his sailing career, he witnessed enslaved people being forced on and off ships along Alexandria's harbor as slave dealers transported them to the Deep South in the domestic slave trade. He wrote from Washington D.C., "the scene was enough to bring tears into any man's eyes if he had a heart." He was told that these people were "being taken down to Alexandria to one of [John] Armfield's vessels." Armfield was one of the country's most notorious and prolific slave traders and operated out of Alexandria between 1828 and 1837.



GEORGE HENRY.

Portrait of George Henry from his memoir, *Life of George Henry Together with a Brief History of the Colored People in America*, 1894. Documenting the American South, University Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

LIFE
OF
GEORGE HENRY.
TOGETHER WITH
A BRIEF HISTORY
OF THE
COLORED PEOPLE IN AMERICA.
PUBLISHED BY GEORGE HENRY.

PROVIDENCE:
H. I. GOULD & Co., PRINTERS.
1894.

Title page, *Life of George Henry Together with a Brief History of the Colored People in America*, 1894. Documenting the American South, University Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



Ship similar to the schooner *Llewelyn*, sailed by Captain George Henry. Revenue cutter, 1861, by Alfred R. Waud. Library of Congress

MARINE LIST.	
PORT OF ALEXANDRIA, D. C.	
ARRIVED OCTOBER 7.	
Schr. Victory, Pennfield, New York; to S. Shinn and freight for the District.	
Schr. Port Deposit, —, Port Deposit; Lumber to Master.	
Schr. Llewelyn, —, Nomoni; Wheat and Corn to Wm. Bayne.	
Schr. Independance, Palmer, Nomoni; to Master.	
Schr. Repeater, Traverse, Baltimore; to Lambert & McKenzie and freight for the District.	
Schr. Daniel Webster, in the river bound up.	
Steamer Columbia, Guyther, Baltimore; freight for the District.	
SAILED, OCTOBER 7.	
Schr. Frank, Baker, New York; by S. Shinn.	
Schr. Henry Clay, Wilson; Portsmouth N. H. by Lambert & McKenzie.	
MEMORANDA.	
Brig Edward, Janney, of this port, arrived at Rio de Janeiro August 21st from Georgetown.	
Schr. Cassius, Eldridge, hence at Boston 3d inst.	
Schr. Oneko, Rogers, from Boston for this port, at Newport 2d inst.	
Brig Virginia, Dexter, of and from this port at Halifax, 26th ult.	
Schr. Watchman, Crowell, from this port for St. John N. B. at Newport 2d inst.	
Brig Betsey, Burnham, from this port for Boston, at Newport 3d inst.	
Brig Treaty, Bernard, hence at Barbadoes, Sept. 7, for Antigua in a few days.	

A List of Ships entering and leaving Alexandria, including the schooner *Llewelyn* from Nomoni, VA with no captain listed. *Alexandria Gazette*, October 8, 1844

Sometime around the mid-1840s, Henry sought his freedom. He wrote in his memoir, he had been "making money for [Sally Griffin], just the same as if you were shaking it off a tree." Yet "I went up one day in a hurry to pay her the money [proceeds from sale of the ship's cargo], and she knocked my hat off." Apparently, in his hurry he failed to be what Griffin considered properly respectful. Henry continued, "I declared by all the Gods in creation that she should never take another cent out of my hands."

On a trip to Baltimore, he docked his schooner loaded with grain as usual. Then, instead of waiting for the grain to be sold and pocketing the proceeds, Henry simply left the boat, grain, and crewmen at the dock. He took only what belonged to him, one suit of clothes and fifty cents in his pocket. He traveled by boat and railroad, arriving in Philadelphia where he found himself "with the wide world before me, [now only] to look out for myself as any other free man."

