

Vaughan's Tavern

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

NAT
TURNER
TRAIL

1831
Southampton
Insurrection

Crowds gathered at Jerusalem's taverns, attracted by the trials of Nat Turner and his followers. Ideally located across the street from the Southampton County Courthouse, these taverns served as the hub of social and business activity during court sessions. Built in the late 1790s, Vaughan's Tavern is no longer standing. Next door to Vaughan's establishment was Kello's Tavern, later known as Mahone's Tavern.

Curiosity Seekers

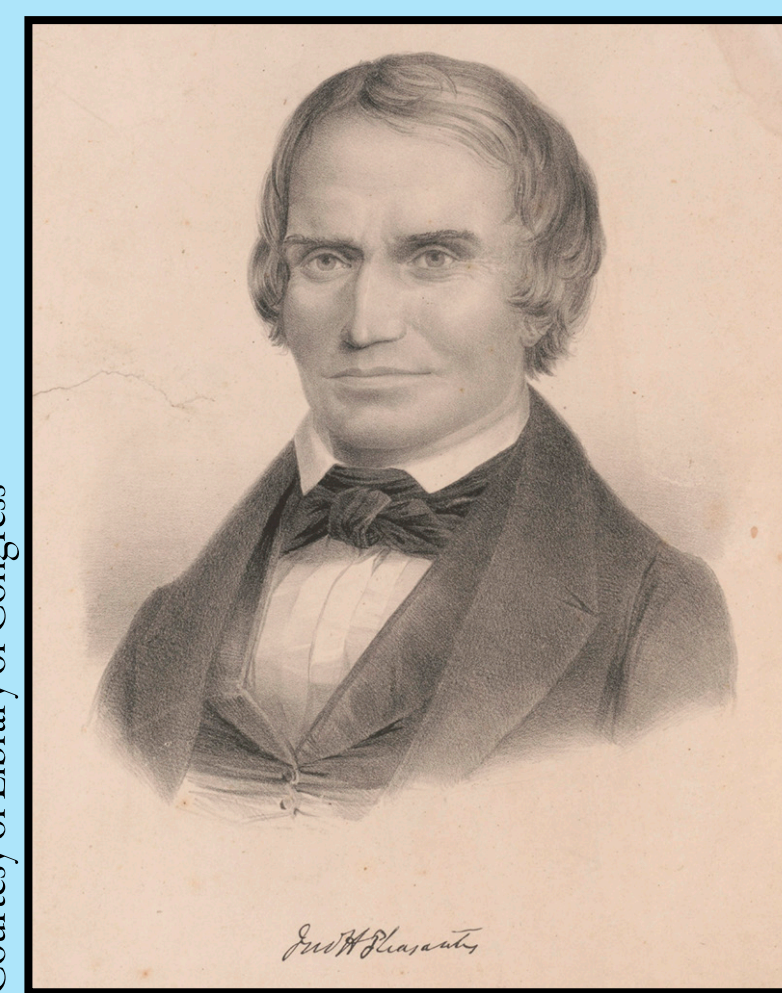
Turner's trial and execution attracted much attention, but only a few could see the execution. However, many stayed in these taverns and witnessed the climax of the 1831 Southampton Insurrection. The *Petersburg Intelligencer* stated that when Nat Turner was hanged, he "betrayed no emotion, he exhibited the utmost composure throughout the whole ceremony." By late November 1831, the insurrectionists' trials and executions were over, and Jerusalem returned to normal as the quiet, rural county seat.

A Tavern's Legacy

In 1831, the town's taverns were refuges for the county's frightened White families and headquarters for the assembled militias arriving to quell the rebellion. Owner Henry Briggs Vaughan was accused of profiting from the militia's use of the tavern. His sister-in-law Rebecca Vaughan, nephews George and Arthur Vaughan, and niece Anne Eliza Vaughan were killed during the revolt. Vaughan was chastised by John Hampden Pleasants, a

member of the Richmond Dragoons and editor of the *Richmond Whig*, for producing a bill exceeding \$800 for the feeding and housing of Richmond militia units. Baltimore's *Niles' Weekly Register* decried that Henry Vaughan was the "publican, who speculated on the bones of his kindred, which dragoons went to bury and avenge." In truth, Vaughan did not overcharge the Commonwealth as his rates were specified by

Southampton County. The militia's general dislike of Vaughan was more likely because the meals he served were the "coarsest and sometimes, stinking food."



Courtesy of Library of Congress

Outspoken journalist John H. Pleasants. He died after participating in a duel with Thomas Ritchie, editor of a rival newspaper, the Richmond Enquirer, in 1846.



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"Merrymaking at a Wayside Inn," watercolor, ca. 1812. Attributed to Pavel Petrovich Svinin, artist. The painting depicts travelers dancing in a typical roadside tavern in the early 1810s.