

**Volume 17**

**Number 011**

**A House Divided (27): Slave  
Fugitives III – Sims**

**Lead: One hundred and fifty years ago the Republic was facing its greatest crisis. This continuing series examines the American Civil War. It is "A House Divided."**

**Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: In the years following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, Boston established a reputation as a sanctuary for escapees and the abolitionist community stalwart defenders of their rights. As southerners became**

**more, forceful Boston became more belligerent, showing hostility to slave catchers, hiding ex-slaves and being emphatically uncooperative with legal efforts to enforce the law.**

**Thomas Sims escaped from Georgia on a Boston-bound ship in early 1851. He was waiting tables when federal agents caught up to him and sequestered him in the Boston Federal Courthouse guarded by a phalanx of deputized local police. Since they could not rescue him, abolitionists tried all sorts of legal ploys to secure his release. None worked and the Federal fugitive commissioner decided for the owner. In the 4:00 o'clock darkness on an April**

**morning Sims was swept up by hundreds of soldier's and deputies taken to the Boston Navy Yard and deposited on a ship bound for Georgia headed back to slavery.**

**Abolitionists demanded that the Fugitive Slave Act be 'trampled under our feet, denounced, resisted, disobeyed.' This northern opposition, drove southerners into paroxysms of rage. Threats of secession filled southern newspapers. Several states held conventions to consider the end of the Union. Even though wiser heads prevailed and tempers cooled, the bitterness brought by enforcement of the Act and resistance to it laid a foundation of acrimony that would**

**grow as the decade matured and patience began to wear thin.**

**In Richmond Virginia, this is  
Dan Roberts.**

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**HYPERLINK "http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/history/A0819828.html" <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/history/A0819828.html>**

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