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Nat Turner Slave Rebellion - II

Lead: Even as a child, people could tell Nat Turner was exceptional. His intelligence and physical presence marked him for leadership in the slave community of south-side Virginia.

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

Content: Benjamin Turner owned a small plantation outside the town of Cross Keys in the Virginia county of Southampton, nestled on the North Carolina border 70 miles southeast of Richmond. His land was heavily

forested and only about 100 acres were under cultivation. It was enough, however, for him to afford to keep slaves, the mark of status in the South, and in 1799 he bought a slave woman freshly arrived from Africa. He named her Nancy and in the next year she gave birth to Nathaniel.

He was a precocious child and early on attracted attention of master and slave for his intelligence, but had an imagination that tended toward the fanciful. He was encouraged by the Turners, good Methodists that they were, to develop his reading and writing skills, hoping he would read the Bible and be a leader in following those scriptural precepts that commended slaves to lives of quiet

and cooperative servitude. Literacy for Nat, however, also led him to read and absorb other parts of the Bible, ominous sections that describe freedom and an end to human bondage.

When Benjamin Turner died in 1810, his son Samuel inherited many of his father's slaves and Nat went into the younger Turner's fields and spent the rest of his life in back-breaking drudgery. In the Southampton County of the 1820s the yoke of slavery was relatively light and slaves were permitted to worship in separate meetings, gatherings which were often filled with exuberant singing and preaching that, artfully disguised, on occasion, might

describe a world in which blacks could throw off their chains and be free. In those meetings Nat Turner found his calling. Next time: sounding the Jubilee.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

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