

A Canterbury Tale: A Document Package for Connecticut's Prudence Crandall Affair

Pardon Crandall, "Letter to Andrew T. Judson and Chester Lyon (May 5, 1833)," published in *Fruits of Colonization*, 1833.

To ANDREW T. JUDSON, and CHESTER LYON—Representatives of the town of Canterbury, in the General Assembly, now in session at Hartford

The great excitement that has been got up, and the ungenerous and unrighteous conduct that has been pursued towards my daughter Prudence Crandall, and her School, have given me extreme uneasiness and trouble. I have advised her often, to give up her School and sell her property, and relieve Canterbury from their imagined destruction. Not that I thought she had committed a Crime, or had done any thing which she had not a perfect right to do. But I wanted peace and quietness. I concluded once, to interfere and sell the property myself, of which I informed her.

She replied— 'I do not wish to sell this property until I can get a good location elsewhere. This is a commodious house, well-calculated for my school—in a convenient place—a market, where I can procure any thing I want, at the door. It is near to the Post Office, and there is a meeting_ house near at hand. Besides all this, I have been at considerable expense for the furniture of this house; if I should now leave it, and give up my school, without having any other place to go, it would be more than a thousand dollars damage to me; and if you sell the property, I will give no title, and you must abide the consequences.' Of this I informed Col. Judson, and concluded to withdraw from the scene, and let it terminate as it would. During these transactions, a private gentleman, or a man not in office, insulted me, and said, 'you had better leave Canterbury,' and intimated that they were determined to drive us away at some rate or other. And further said, that 'when Lawyers, Courts, and Jurors were leagued against us; it would be easy to raise a MOB and tear down our house!' continuing, that 'there were a number of men in Brooklyn as well as Canterbury, who said they would come any time when we would let them know.' One of the Civil Authority, in private conversation, said, that there was a gentleman in Brooklyn, that said he would be one in twelve, to tear down Miss Crandall's house, and pay for it. A few days after this, I was in Col. Judson's office, in presence of Judge Adams and other gentlemen, and was insulted. One of the Authority said to me— 'Mr. Crandall, keep away from your daughter, or I will sue you; I had rather sue you than to sue her.' The insult I swallowed as well as I could, and modestly replied— 'Esq. Judson, I do not see any need of suing any one—the powerful committee you have got to direct a petition to the General Assembly, and the pains you have taken to forestall public opinion, will probably enable you to pass a law that will destroy the school without a series of litigations,'—to which he rather assented.

I went out and found that law suits were contemplated. I said to Capt. Sanger, (one of the select men,)— 'I wish, you would not commence law suits, till after the session of the General Assembly is over. Say to the Select Men from me, that if they have no regard for any thing else, for my sake do not commence hostilities or destructive law suits, by numbering days and counting time, to continue till we are stripped of our property, and driven from our hitherto pleasant abodes in Canterbury, You have

refused bonds of indemnity oven whom your own-selves have no fear of being injured. You have collected one unrighteous fine, and bill of cost; and have unlawful suits now pending before a Justice's Court; and your suits in bundles unlawful, malicious and vexatious as they are, hang over and are ready to burst upon us.'

The spirit of a father that waketh for the daughter is roused. I know the consequence. I now come forward to oppose tyranny with my property at stake; my life in my hand. I enter the ship *Defence*. I shall reef and row as occasion may require, and try to steer so as to avoid rocks and guicksands, and if I founder at sea we will go the bottom together. At these thoughts my bosom heaves, my tears flow, and I drop my pen.

PARDON CRANDALL

May 5th, 1833.