

**TEACHING WITH ON-LINE PRIMARY SOURCES:  
DOCUMENTS FROM NARA**

**FIRST BLOOD IN BALTIMORE:  
THE INDICTMENT OF SAMUEL MACTIER**

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President Abraham Lincoln's victory in November 1860 ended one of the most divisive elections in U.S. history, and in the months before inauguration day, seven states left the Union. The resulting conflict at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, on April 12, 1861, is generally considered the beginning of the Civil War. But the violence in Maryland between Union troops and rioters seven days later, known as the "Baltimore Riot," actually produced the first hostile casualties of the Civil War.

The teetering secession status of Maryland, pro-secessionist feeling in Baltimore, and rumors of an assassination plot against Lincoln resulted in considerable concern about security in the nation's capital. Lincoln ordered troops to be sent to protect Washington. Col. Edward F. Jones's 6<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Militia was the first to respond. Traveling by train from Boston, through New York and Philadelphia, they arrived in Baltimore on April 19, 1864 (on their way to Washington). Colonel Jones warned his troops that they would find resistance in Baltimore and made sure that they were armed and ready. According to Jones, they walked a short distance through Baltimore in order to change trains when they were pelted with "a shower of missiles" from a mob of secessionists. Soon shots were fired from both sides. By the time the 6<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts boarded their train to Washington, several soldiers and civilians were dead and many others were injured.

Later, many of the secessionists were arrested for their involvement in the riot. The featured document is the grand jury indictment for treason of Samuel Mactier, one of the rioters. He was indicted for treason, and the language of the document supports the contention that the Baltimore Riot was the first battle of the Civil War that resulted in hostile casualties.

**Teaching Suggestions**

**1. Focus Activity with Document Analysis: The Beginning of the Civil War**

Provide students with a copy of the indictment of Samuel Mactier. (A digital scan of it is available online in the Archival Research Catalog (ARC) on the National Archives website at [http://arcweb.archives.gov/arc/basic\\_search.jsp](http://arcweb.archives.gov/arc/basic_search.jsp). The most direct way to locate the document in the database is by conducting a keyword search using its ARC identifier number (278862). It may be reproduced in any quantity. Ask pairs of students to read and suggest that they write a transcription of the document. Guide a class discussion using the following questions:

- What kind of record is it?
- When was it written?
- Where was it written?
- Who wrote it and to whom?
- What was its purpose?
- What special issues and questions does it raise?

Then provide students with information on the Baltimore Riot. Ask students to discuss how this information affects their analysis of the document.

## 2. Writing Activity: Editorials from Different Locales

Inform students that the arrest of many Baltimore citizens like Mactier and the declaration of martial law in Baltimore resulted in dramatic and conflicting reaction in America. Ask students to write an editorial about the indictment for a newspaper. Remind students that the time frame for their editorial is the spring of 1861, and encourage them to write the editorial as if they lived in different cities in the United States. Some example cities are Boston, San Francisco, Atlanta, Chicago, Charleston, Louisville, Baltimore, and Washington, DC. Remind students that they should do some basic research on their assigned city to accurately represent the sentiment there. Allow class time for students to read their editorials aloud to the class.

## 3. Cross-Curricular Activity: War and the Influences of Geography

Explain to students that many wars start over issues related to geography and place. Assign individual students or small groups a different American war for research on the geographic significance of the place where each began. Direct them to determine not only the significance of the location where the war started but also its relationship to the war itself. Some examples are Breeds Hill for the Revolutionary War; the sea battle between the *Chesapeake* and the *Leopard* for the War of 1812; disputed territory between the Rio Grande and Nueces River for the Mexican War; Baltimore for the Civil War; the sinking of the *USS Maine* in Havana Harbor for the Spanish American War; Sarajevo for World War I; the invasion of Manchuria or Poland or the attack on Pearl Harbor for World War II; the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel for the Korean War; the Gulf of Tonkin for the Vietnam War; and the invasion of Kuwait for the Gulf War. Allow students class time to share their findings. Their analysis should include the role of geography and place in the cause of the war, the cultural and physical elements that led to the site's significance, and the importance of the site today.

## 4. Role Play: Grand Jury Indictment of Mactier

Supply students with a copy of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution and secondary research tools to help define and describe the origin, procedures, and characteristics of grand jury indictments. Ask them also to complete additional research on the Baltimore Riot. Then arrange for a simulation of Mactier's grand jury hearing by assigning 16-23 students (as applicable for a typical grand jury) as jurors



and the remaining students as judge and the prosecution and defense teams. After adequate prep time, allow class time for the defense and the prosecution to argue the case orally before the grand jury. Give the grand jury time to deliberate, and then announce and explain their decision to confirm or reject Mactier's indictment.

**NOTE:** The Mactier indictment is in the holdings of the National Archives Mid Atlantic Region, Philadelphia, PA, Record Group 21: Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685-1991.

Daniel F. Rulli is an Education Specialist in the Museum Programs Office in the National Archives and Records Administration. In addition to conducting video conferences with students, teachers, and administrators, Rulli has presented dozens of workshops to teachers around the country and has written various articles on "teaching with documents" for professional journals. He has a B.A. and M.A. in Political Science and retired in June of 2002 from 28 years of public high school teaching. During the course of his career he taught interdisciplinary classes in world history and American studies, in addition to classes in economics, sociology, world geography, Russian history, government, and politics.