Newspapers by ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/366138786/

Downloaded on Feb 16, 2026

The Williams Imbroglio.

An "irrepressible conflict" is going on at present between the civil authorities of the city and the military authorities of this Department, arising out of the attempted and accomplished rescue of two or three colored men, claimed as deserters from the First Colored Regiment, by Capt. James M. Williams. The facts in the case are given by Mayor Denman substantially as follows:

On the 15th inst., R. C. Brant, a merchant on Delaware street, made complaint before the Mayor, against James M. Williams, and others, charging a violation of the following provision of our criminal law:

SEC. 259, PAGE 279—"That if three or more persons shall assemble together, with intent to do any unlawful act, with force and violence, against the person or property of another, or to do an unlawful act against the peace; or being lawfully assembled, shall agree with each other to do an unlawful act, aforesaid, shall make any movement or preparation therefor, the person so offending, on conviction thereof, shall be fined in any sum not exceeding two hundred dollars."

Upon this complaint a warrant was issued, and Captain Williams brought before the Mayor for examination.

The evidence disclosed that Capt. Williams, with four or five armed negroes, members of the First Colored regiment, went to the store of Mr. Brant, during Friday, the 14th, and demanded the body of David Holmes, a colored man, who, Williams asserted, had deserted from the regiment above referred to. Mr. Brant denied their right to seize the negro, and refused to permit a search of his premises. Whereupon, Captain Williams, with a white soldier, searched the store of Mr. Brant, against his continued and earnest remonstrance, but did not succeed in finding the negro. Upon this state of fact, the Mayor held Williams to answer at the next term of the District Court, in the sum of five hundred dollars. The trial terminated on Saturday evening, and Williams, on his request, was allowed until Sunday morning, upon his pledge of honor, to procure bondsmen. Mayor Denman took his pledge, upon his agreement to appear at 10 o'clock a. m., Sunday, to execute his bond. On Sunday morning, a few moments before the hour appointed, Captain Williams appeared at the Mayor's office, accompa-

Copyright © 2026 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.

Newspapers by ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/366138786/

Downloaded on Feb 16, 2026

hour appointed, Captain Williams appeared at the Mayor's office, accompanied by twelve soldiers and a sergeant, fully armed, and inquired for two policemen, whom he said had arrested one of his colored soldiers and taken his arms, and that he wished to arrest the policemen and get the arms. The Mayor asked him if he was prepared to execute his bond, which he refused to, when he was reminded that he had violated his pledge. Williams replied that he had complied with his promise and left with the troops.

Mayor Denman and District Attorney Fenlon immediately went to the Fort and applied to Col. Burris for assistance. While at the Fort Capt. Williams and his detachment arrested the City Jailor, William Gillon, and released a negro confined for violation of a city ordinance, Williams claiming the negro as one of his colored soldiers. Williams and his force then left the city. The Mayor at once made a requisition upon Maj. Gen. Stone, for a sfficient force to enforce the laws and preserve the peace of the city. Before the order was executed Williams returned with an increased force, and left for the Fort. A warrant was issued, upon complaint of Gillon, against Williams, for assisting the escape of a prisoner. Col. Burris saw the Mayor about this time and expressed his regret that any collision should occur between the civil and military authorities, saying that he would see Williams and try and induce him to come down and execute the required bonds. On Monday morning the Mayor sent a note to Col. Burris by Marshal Jennings demanding the body of Captain Williams, to which the Col. made no reply, but referred it to Major Weed.

Copyright © 2026 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.

Newspapers by ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/366138786/

Downloaded on Feb 16, 2026

Williams, to which the Col. made no reply, but referred it to Major Weed. The same afternoon the Mayor received a communication from Major Weed stating that he had referred the whole matter to Maj. Gen. Blunt for his decision, and had dispatched a messenger to his Headquarters with all the evidence in relation to the case. Maj. Weed at the same time inclosed a copy of an official letter addressed to him by Capt. J. M. Williams, accusing the Mayor and Policemen of Leavenworth of having entered into a conspiracy to break up and disband the 1st regiment of Kansas colored volunteers under his command, and asking that the parties to the conspiracy be arrested and the charges investigated.

Maj. Weed informed the Mayor that he requested Col. Burris to detail the force which accompanied Williams, but that he had no knowledge that Williams intended to use the force for the purpose of defying the civil authorities, but for the arrest of deserters.

Thus stands this extraordinary and exceedingly complicated proceeding. The results will be important, but as to how it will end is not yet known.

Copyright © 2026 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.



Brig. Gen.