ONA JUDGE—supplemental story for the Soap Field Trip

In the 1700-1800s, sometimes freedom seekers were profiled in newspapers so their stories could be shared with the world. Ona Judge, a freedom seeker escaping from President George Washington’s household, gave one of these interviews, where she cleaned up some misperceptions about the famous man:

*From Ona Judge’s interview with William Chase in 1846 (while slavery was still legal):*

CHASE: She says that she was a chamber-maid for Mrs. Washington…She did not want to be a slave always, and when she was taken to Philadelphia, she [saw her chance to escape.] She took passage in a vessel [stowed away on a ship] to Portsmouth, New Hampshire. After she was married, and had one child, while her husband was gone to sea, Washington sent a man named Bassett to bring her back, but she utterly refused to go with him…She went to a stable, and hired a boy, with a horse and carriage, to carry her to Greenland, where she now resides, and Bassett did not find her.

ONA: I never received the least mental or moral instruction [education] while I remained in Washington’s family. *(No one taught me anything about faith, reading, the world.)*

ONA: Stories told of Washington’s piety and prayers have no foundation. Card-playing and wine-drinking were the business at his parties, and he did more of that on Sundays than on any other day*. (He has a great reputation for being such a good Christian man, but I did not see him behave like one.)*

Ona also described in other interviews how fiercely proud she was of having fought for freedom and would not trade any comfort, fine food or clothing, for being free.

Ona Judge’s biography can be read here:

<https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/ona-judge/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw8rT8BRCbARIsALWiOvRUQ5XZP6z502Gw2ykJflE5nYkUFOAU1ZNHh4ziN6TEdCz5JLkISowaAoTKEALw_wcB>

The full text of the newspaper interview is here:

<https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/_A_Slave_of_George_Washington_by_Benjamin_Chase_The_Liberator_January_1_1847>