

Module 02: Unthinking Decision? Why Did Slavery Emerge in Virginia?

Evidence 13: A History of Bacon's Rebellion

A

Introduction

Bacon's Rebellion erupted as a civil war in Virginia during the summer of 1676. The war led to widespread destruction before Bacon died and the rebellion fizzled. The account of the rebellion below is of unknown origin, although historians believe it was written at the time of events described by a resident of Virginia. The excerpt included here describes the surrender by part of Bacon's force at West Point, Virginia, to Governor William Berkeley through the efforts of Captain Thomas Grantham, a British naval commander.

Questions to Consider

- What kinds of men served with Bacon?
- What did Grantham promise Bacon and his men to entice them to surrender?
- What message would this account send regarding servants and slaves to potential masters in Virginia?

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The Beginning, Progress, and Conclusion of Bacon's Rebellion, 1675-1676

What number of Soulders was, at this time, in Garrison at West Point, I am not Certane: It is saide about 250, sum'd up in freemen, searvants and slaves; these three ingredience being the Compossition of Bacon's Army, ever since that the Governour left Towne. These was informed (to prepare the way) two or three days before that Grantham came to them, that there was a treaty on foote betwene there Generall and the Governour; and that Grantham did manely promote the same, we he was a parson that favoured the cause, that they were contending for.

When that Grantham arived amongst these fine fellowes, he was receved with more then an ordnary respect; which he haveing repade with a suteable deoportment, he aquaints them with his Commission, which was to

tell them, that there was a peace Concluded betwene the Governour and there Generall; and since him self had (in som measures) used his indeviours, to bring the same to pass, hee beg'd of the Governour, that he might have the honour to com and acquaint them with the terms; which he saide was such, that they had all cause to rejoyce at, then any ways to thinke hardly of the same; there being a Compleate satisfaction to be given (by the Articles of agreement) according to every ones particuler intress; which he sum'd up under these heads. And first, those that were now in Arms (and free Men) under the Generall, were still to be retained in Arms, if they so pleased, against the Indians. Secondly, And for those who had a desire for to return home, to there owne abodes, care was taken for to have them satisfide, for the time they had bin out, according to the allowance made the last Assembly. And lastly, those that were sarvants in Arms, and behaved them selves well in there imploy-ment, should emediately receve discharges from there Indentures, signed by the Governour, or Sequetary of State; and there Masters to receve from the publick a valluable Satisfaction, for every Sarvant so set free (Marke the words) proportionally to the time that they have to serve.

Upon these terms, the Soulders forsake West-Point, and goe with Grantham to kiss the Governours hands (still at Tindells point) and to receve the benefitt of the Articles mentioned by Grantham; where when they came (which was by water, them selves in one vessill, and there Arms in another; and so contrived by Grantham, as he tould me him selfe, upon good reason) the Savants and Slaves was sent home to there Masters, there to stay till the Governour had leasure to signe there discharges, or to say better, till they were free, according to the Custom of the Countrey; the rest was made prissoners, or entertain'd by the Governour, as hee found them inclin'd.

Source:

Scanned from "The History of Bacon's and Ingram's Rebellion" in Charles M. Andrews, ed., *Narratives of the Insurrections, 1670-1690* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1946), <http://www.greattradingpath.com/native-american-indian-history/>. Originally copyrighted by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915; Scribner's renewed the copyright in 1943 and transferred it to Barnes & Noble in 1946.