

tell her he would kill her and said shee had sent Will Waight to her Mothers and that shee had got a master for them, but hee would bee her Master and allso said that he would not kill her if shee would let him lye with her all night and bade her goe to bed and she answered she would not and Runn in with his Rapier and bent it, then he said he woald cutt her throat but she getting [to] the dore did run out of dores and he after her and ketched [her] in the yard and as she was standing did endeavor to cutt her throat with a knife but could not and then he threw her down and did there allso indeavour to cutt her throat but she prevented it by defending her throat with her hands and bending the knife hee took her [petti]coats and threw [them] over her head and gave her two or three blows in the face with his fist and bade her get her gun and did in this act with the Knife scurrify her throat and brest and cut her right hand with six or seven cutts very much and that she with bending the Rapier and knife cut her hands and fingers very much

Elizabeth Bowen

Whereas Elizabeth Bowin Widdow did by her examination upon oath in open Court declare that Thomas Jones her servant in a most barbarous and villanous nature sett upon and most desparately attempted to murder the said Bowin with a naked Rapier and Knife to cut her throat which had been perpatrated and committed had it not be[n] Providentially and strongly prevented by the said Bowins resistance recieving severall wounds in her endeavours to prevent the sam[e] which was allso confessed by the said Jones: The Court takeing the same into their serious Considerations do order as a just reward for his said horrid offense and crime that the sheriff Forthwith take him into Custody and that he forthwith receive thirty nine lashes on the bare back well laid on: and to have his haire cutt off and an Iron Coller forthwith put about his neck dureing the Courts pleasure and after the time for which he was to serve his said mistriss is expired to serve his said mistriss or assignes one whole yeare according to Act for laying violent hands on his said mistriss and allso two yeares for his wounding her as aforesaid and after due punishment inflicted accordingly The Court do further order that the sherriff deliver the said Jones to the said Elizabeth Bowin or order (it being by her request) and the said Bownig [sic] to Pay Court Charges the said Jones makeing satisfaction for the same after his time of service is expired—

B. Bacon's Rebellion and Its Aftermath

I. The Baconite Grievances (1677)

Angry former servants, impoverished and resentful, crowded into the untamed Virginia backcountry as the seventeenth century wore on. Governor William Berkeley's

¹*The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 4 (1896): 121–122.

unwillingness to protect the hardscrabble planters on the frontier against Indian butcheries gave rise to ugly rumors of graft and helped spark a rebellion led by his wife's kinsman, the well born Nathaniel Bacon. After the uprising had collapsed, a royal commission sent out from England prepared the following report, which was not friendly to Berkeley. What were the governor's alleged shortcomings? Did they justify Bacon's defiance of his authority?

The unsatisfied people, finding themselves still liable to the Indian cruelties, and the cries of their wives and children growing grievous and intolerable to them, gave out in speeches that they were resolved to plant tobacco rather than pay the tax for maintaining of forts; and that the erecting of them was a great grievance, juggle, and cheat, and of no more use or service to them than another plantation with men at it; and that it was merely a design of the [tidewater] grandees to engross [monopolize] all their tobacco into their own hands.

Thus the sense of this oppression and the dread of a common approaching calamity made the giddy-headed multitude mad, and precipitated them upon that rash overture of running out upon the Indians themselves, at their own voluntary charge and hazard of their lives and fortunes. Only they first by petition humbly craved leave or commission to be led by any commander or commanders as the Governor should please to appoint over them to be their chieftain or general. But instead of granting this petition, the Governor by proclamation, under great penalty, forbade the like petitioning for the future.*

This made the people jealous that the Governor for the lucre of the beaver and otter trade, etc., with the Indians, rather sought to protect the Indians than them, since after public proclamation prohibiting all trade with the Indians (they complain), he privately gave commission to some of his friends to truck with them, and that those persons furnished the Indians with powder, shot, etc., so that they were better provided than His Majesty's subjects.

The peoples of Charles City County (near Merchants Hope) being devised [denied] a commission by the Governor, although he was truly informed . . . of several formidable bodies of Indians coming down on the heads of James River within fifty or sixty miles of the English plantations. . . , they begin to beat up drums for volunteers to go out against the Indians, and so continued sundry days drawing into arms, the magistrates being either so remiss or of the same faction that they suffered this disaster without contradiction or endeavoring to prevent so dangerous a beginning and going on.

The rout [mob] being got together now wanted nor waited for nothing but one to head and lead them out on their design. It so happened that one Nathaniel Bacon, Jr., a person whose lost and desperate fortunes had thrown him into that part of the world about fourteen months before. . . , framed him fit for such a purpose. . . .

*The governor feared that the settlers would attack, as they did, both friendly and unfriendly tribes.