



Rebellion of 1711 against Governor Hyde of North Carolina

This is a letter I found in the Lambeth Palace Library archives. It is in a section referenced SPGXVII headed American Colonies 1667-1795 Item 55-56

A Ben Dennis writes the letter and I believe it was to the Bishop of London. I think he was sent as a minister of the Church of England but there were no notes attached with an explanation of who he was so this is merely an assumption on my part.

It was written in 1711 and refers to a rebellion against Governor Hyde. I had seen notes in a book about the rebellion whilst researching at the archives last year. This gives a personal, detailed account of what was happening at that time. Any words I have been unable to decipher I have placed in brackets with a question mark.

May 23 1711

I left Williamsburg and crossed James river. In my passage over discussing with on of your Negroes found him to be a very sensible fellow. I asked him several questions amongst which I asked him if he believed there was a God and what his notion was of him, he answered he was the maker of all things both in Heaven and Earth. I asked him if he believed in Christ the Son of God, he said he did. I asked if he professed any religion, who replied yes he did and that when he had time he went to the Church of England but that he seldom did as his master (who was your werryman of your place) not suffering him anytime either Sundays or other days. I asked him if he was baptised, he said not: his master not withstanding it, not withstanding his great desire. By this time I had got over and it being late was obliged to put forward have 7 or 8 miles to ride before I could get to any house, but I advised him to apply himself to your minister of the parish and that I was sure he would prevail with his master to permit him to be baptised, all of which the fellow thanked me for and assured me that he would find opportunity and desired God to help and be with me for my good advice.

I met with nothing worthy remark until I got into North Carolina (being the 26th) is distant about 100 and some odd miles where I found a couple all in confusion and divorced everyone getting your arms and selves in ready to go down to a place called Campshire to take one Colt Cary, who was late President and had got the Lord's money in his hands and would neither lodge it in your assemblies hands, nor give them sufficient security for your indemnifying the People from your Lords. This sent me to stand whether I had best proceed through much disordered country as I perceived yours was, or order to go back but desiring God's protection and blessings I resolved to press forward so sending my horses and guide back. I crossed Ronske River and then was obliged to travel 6 miles on foot, there being no such thing as a horse to be had, at length I got one that night reached Governor Hide where I found an abundance of men in arms. I was received very kindly and after the governor

had read a letter from your Hon. Governor Spotswood of Virginia and was in my behalf he told me he was designed to Campshire the morrow and that there was an opportunity there for my passage for South Carolina. The next day being Sunday 27th the Governor with about 80 men crossed the sound and went up the River Morrotto about 12 miles and there landed his men and (2?) pieces of small cannon. Then next morning marched his men who were then increased to about 150 but left his Guns there. We were all obliged to be in the woods that night the next day got to Hamplive (otherwise called Hampton) the place where Colt Cary lived but he having notice of our coming made his escape to a home of one Colt Daniels which was a small way down the river. The Governor did not think fit to pursue him that day but next went down with his men at that time Colt Cary had fortified the home with 5 pieces of cannon and had about 40 men. They would not bring him to any terms that was reasonable and finding that they were too well fortified marched back again without any action. There was a young gent a relation of Governor Hide killed by accident.

June 1st. The Governor with his men marched up in the country again and I remained at Hampton waiting for my passage the Vessel not being then ready during my stay there I lodged at one Mister Gales a very civil gent at whose home the people met each Sunday where a young gent, a lawyer was appointed to read prayers and a sermon they having no Minister. I understood they had a Gent sent them by the Hon. (Old?) Society, but he could not live amongst such an unaccountable sort of people and was removed up in the Country.

Colt Cary find that the Governor was gone infused into the people that that assembly was not duly elected and that Governor Hide was not Governor having no (confirmation?) sent him and therefore he could not comply with the demands and one Mr. Roach, a merchant (sent with some goods of 2 Merchants in London, 10 are (proprietary?) backing the P Colt Cary with assuring the people that Colonel Hide was not designed Governor and the affections of the people towards Colt Cary and insensed them against Governor Hide so that about 300 men (as I was informed) went up the country in order to take Governor Hide, Colt Collock and other gents of the Governor Council what the end will be I know not being obliged away for other place. My reason for insisting so long on this subject is to let you see (firstly?) the management of this Country, the inconsistency, unaccountability of this people who are of such a factious temper that they are ready to follow anyone who will head them. Let the design be so it will, and all is surely for want of sense or reason. I really think that there cannot be a people in the world like 'em with honest, just and industrious people, would excel all the places I have yet seen.

The 28th left Hampston in order for this place and the 12th July arrive at Charlestown.

I did not carry on copying verbatim the letter as he describes his work in Charlestown where he says communion of 4 black men and others. He was invited by native Americans to visit them and was puzzled and dismayed at some of their practises.