

Primary Source Document Transcription

Made available through the Rhode Island State Archives

Deposition of Samuel Tompkins, July 1772

Governor Wanton took testimonies from Samuel Tompkins, to whom Aaron, Somerset, and Jack were indentured, and from Tompkins' father-in-law, Samuel Thurston, both of whom lived on Prudence Island. Tompkins and Thurston both claim that Aaron did not leave Prudence Island on the night of June 9th, and that there were no boats on the island capable of making the journey Aaron described in his testimony.

Samuel Tompkins of the Island of Prudence, in the Township of Portsmouth in the County of Newport on oath declareth and saith, that Aaron, a Mulatto Lad of about 16 years of age, now on board His Majesty's Ship the Swan, commanded by Cap. Ayscough is an indented Servant to the Deponent. That he is fully persuaded the said Aaron hath not been off from the said island more than once or twice for twelve months preceding the 2nd say of July instant, in the night of which, the said Aaron stole a boat belonging to the deponent and his father-in-law, Mr. Samuel Thurston, and went onboard His Majesty's Ship the Beaver. That particularly on the night after the ninth of June last, being the same night that His Majesty's Schooner the Gaspee was burnt, he is well assured the said Aaron remained in his house the whole of the night, he having seen him at about 9 o'clock that evening, with the rest of the servants in the family, about which time they retired to bed, and, also, very early in the morning of the tenth, the said Aaron according to his usual custom brought the cows into the yard to be milked. That at that time there was but one boat at that end of the island which was then so much out of repair that the deponent is confident she could not swim and then lay bottom upwards in order to be refitted, being the same boat the said Aaron stole after she was repaired. That he, the deponent, thinks it absolutely impossible that the said Aaron should have been that night anywhere near the place where the schooner Gaspee was burnt. And that he the said Aaron remained at home from the said ninth of June until the said second day of July and never during that time gave him the least information, suggestion or hint of his having any the least knowledge of the destruction of the said schooner.

Sam'l Tompkins
Colony of Rhode Island, &c.,
Newport July 11, 1772

Mr. Samuel Tompkins personally appeared and made solemn oath to the truth of the above deposition by him subscribed. Before J. Wanton, Gov.

This primary source comes from the Rhode Island State Archives, C#0554 – Gaspee Commission Records 1772-1773.

The Rhode Island State Archives is responsible for preserving and maintaining access to the permanent, historical records of state government. Some records may contain content that is harmful, offensive, or difficult to view, as some of the materials presented in our collections may reflect outdated, biased, offensive, and possibly violent views and opinions that do not constitute the current opinions and views of the Department of State.