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Testimony of Jack and Somerset, 1772

On July 11, 1772, Jack and Somerset, indentured servants working in the same household as Aaron, are brought in to testify. Their account of Aaron's whereabouts the night of the Gaspee attack contradicts Aaron's own testimony. In their final report to the King, the commissioners cite this contradictory evidence as the central to their inability to accuse anyone of the crime.

Somerset, a mulatto, and Jack, a negro, indented servants, living with Samuel Thurston and Samuel Tompkins, on the island of Prudence, in the township of Portsmouth, in the county of Newport, of lawful age, on oath severally depose and say: That to their certain knowledge, Aaron, a mulatto lad, who is also an indented servant to the said Samuel Tompkins, and now, as they are informed, on board of a man-of-war, has not been off from said island for many months preceding the 2d day of July inst.; in the night of which the said Aaron stole a boat belonging to the said Samuel Thurston and Samuel Tompkins, and went on board a man-of-war; that the said Aaron has slept with the deponents in the same bed for several years, and particularly on the night the schooner called the Gaspee was burnt the said Aaron was at home, at the dwelling house of the said Thurston and Tompkins, and that he, the said Aaron, lay in the same room and bed with the deponents the whole of that night, having retired to bed together between nine and ten o'clock in the evening; and the deponents severally say that they have never had the least hint, or information, from the said Aaron of his having any knowledge of the burning of the said schooner Gaspee, and that they are well assured that he knows nothing of the transaction. And the deponents further say not.

The mark of [X] SOMERSET.

The mark of [X] JACK.

Colony of RHODE ISLAND, & c.,

Newport, July 11, 1772.

In their proper persons came and appeared the above named Somerset and Jack, and after being cautioned to tell the truth, and nothing but the truth, made solemn oath to the above deposition to which they have made their respective marks, before

J. WANTON, Governor.

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

This transcript is intended to capture the substance of the document.

For details of capitalization, punctuation, spelling and spacing, we recommend consulting the original document.

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