

Challenged to a Duel

Richard Denham ran into the Lancaster County court room bearing a message which challenged Mr. Daniel Fox to a duel. At this point in history, in 1653, court was held in the home of one of the justices. The challenge came from his father-in-law, Captain Thomas Hackett.

"Mr. Fox, I wonder ye should so much degenerate from a gentleman as to cast such an aspersion on me in open Court, making nothings appear but I knowe it to be out of malice and an evil disposition which remains in your hearte, therefore, I desire ye if ye have anything of a gentleman or of manhood in ye to meet me on Tuesday morninge at ye marked tree in ye valey which partes yr lande and mine, about eight of ye clocke, where I shall expect ye comeinge to give me satisfaction. My weapon is rapier, ye length I send ye by bearer; not yours present, but yours at ye time appointed.

THOMAS HACKETT. Ye seconde bringe along with ye if ye please. I shall finde me of ye like." Mr. Fox was seated on the bench with his fellow justices, and one of them, John Carter, scolded Richard, saying " that he knew not how his father would acquit himself on an action of that nature which he said he would not be ye owner of for a world." The justices proceeded to question Richard who demanded that Fox send an answer back to Captain Hackett. But everything backfired, when court then made a quick and emphatic decision that Richard was "a partye with his father-in-law in ye crime," and that for bringing the challenge, whose character he well knew, and for delivering it while the justices were sitting. They ordered that for his contemptuous manner and bold words, he was to receive six stripes on his bare shoulders with a whip, at the hands of the sheriff. The sheriff was then directed to arrest Captain Hackett and have him detained without bail until he could answer for his crimes at the next session of the General Court at Jamestown.

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