



BERMUDA'S MARITIME ECONOMIC, GEOGRAPHICAL, AND POLITICAL IMPORTANCE AND EXPANSION LEADING UP TO THE IMPERIAL CRISIS FROM 1740 TO 1800

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THE GUNPOWDER PLOT OF 1775

On August 14th, 1775, Bermudian elites and their slaves discreetly carried gunpowder from the island's magazine onto two Rebel ships. The magazine's robbery was organized by Colonel Tucker, the elite family's patriarch, and members of the Continental Congress, like Benjamin Franklin. Under the terms of this plot, the Bermudians would supply the Continental Army with 100 barrels of gunpowder, in exchange for exemption from Congress' trade embargo and would receive provisions such as food.

SOURCES UNCOVERED IN THE BERMUDA ARCHIVES

- Inward and outward manifests of St. George's port
- Vice-Admiralty cases, prizes, and petitions
- Letters sent from the Tucker family to their Virginia connections
- Letters of complaints sent from Bermuda's governors to British Lords
- Colonial dispatches
- House of Assembly Journals and Executive Council Minutes



I argue that Bermudians were opportunists - not insurgents. Bermudians were not obedient servants to the Empire or the Rebels next door- but, instead, obedient servants of opportunity who were motivated by the well-being and prosperity of their kin, themselves, and their island.

Reputation and maintenance of epistolary networks meant everything for the survival of the family and their island. Without their discreet negotiations and friendships, the island faced starvation, invasion, and neglect.

