

Primary Source: Chaos in Hillsborough 1770 ^[1]

By 1770, the General Assembly had done very little to address the concerns and anger of North Carolina's backcountry farmers or to appease the increasingly bitter Regulators. The situation was ripe for conflict when the colonial Superior Court met for its bi-yearly session in Hillsborough in September. In 1768 when the court had previously met in Hillsborough, a throng of Regulators had come to the court session to have their complaints heard and remedied. That session erupted when government officials many considered corrupt -- Colonel Edmund Fanning and Francis Nash -- were found guilty of extortion but fined only a single penny, while the Regulators who had accused them all along of extortion and then refused to pay their taxes as a result were fined and jailed. Violence was avoided when the nearly 4,000 Regulators left Hillsborough.

In the following year, the Regulators attempted to improve the situation by legal means. Petitions to the governor were filed and positions within the Assembly were won by Regulators. Then Governor Tryon dissolved the Assembly.

When the court met again in September of 1770, there were many cases involving Regulators on the docket, and approximately 150 Regulators arrived at the Hillsborough courthouse, many of whom were conspicuously armed. After less than an hour of proceedings, tensions between officials and Regulators boiled over. Regulators beat a local attorney and then turned to Colonel Edmund Fanning, who many -- Regulators and nonregulators alike -- felt had been dishonest and exploitive in his role as clerk of the Superior Court of Orange County. The Regulators dragged Fanning down the steps and then pummeled him outside of the courthouse; eventually Fanning escaped to safety in a nearby shop. The next day, the Regulators demolished Fanning's Hillsborough home.

The Contemporary newspaper reported about this "mob violence" in Hillsborough, North Carolina, in October 1770. This instance was only one example of violence was part of a series of protests by Regulators angry with illegal fees and corrupt officials. A transcription is below.

Newbern, October 5

On Wednesday last, a special messenger arrived in town from Granville County, to his Excellency the Governor, with the melancholy account of a violent insurrection ^[2], or rather rebellion having broke out in Orange County, among a set of men who call themselves regulators, and who for some years past have given infinite disturbance to the civil government of this province, but now have sapped its whole foundation, brought its courts of Justice to their own controul, leaped the strong barrier of private property, and audaciously ^[3] violated the laws of God and man.

These people have for a long time opposed paying all manner of taxes, have entertained the vilest opinion of the Gentlemen of the law, and often threatened them with their vengeance. Accordingly, as the Hon. Judge Henderson, and several Gentlemen of the law, were returning from Salisbury Circuit to Hillsborough, in order to hold court there, they were waylaid by a number of them with their rifles; but happily having notice of their hellish design, by taking a contrary route, eluded their bloody plot. They still gave out their threats of meeting them at Hillsborough, and wreaking their vengeance on them there.

These menaces were treated with contempt, or rather the violent ravings of afactionous ^[4] and discontented mob, than any settled and fixed resolution of men or property to commit so daring an insult to the laws of the Country, and accordingly the court was opened, and proceeded to business. But on Monday, the second day of the court, the tragical scene began; a very large number of those people, headed by men of considerable property, appeared in Hillsborough, armed with clubs, whips, loaded at the ends with lead or iron (a stroke from which would level the strongest man) and many other offensive weapons, and at once beset ^[5] the courthouse. The first object of their revenge was Mr. John Williams, a Gentleman of the law, who they assaulted as he was entering the court; him they cruelly abused with many and violent blows with their loaded whips on the head, and different parts of his body, until he by a great good fortune made his escape, and took shelter in a neighbouring store. They then entered the courthouse, and immediately fixed their attention on Colonel Fanning, as the next object of their merciless cruelty; he expected his fate, and had retired to the Judge's seat, as the highest part of the courthouse, from which he might make the greatest defence against these bloodthirsty and cruel savages; but, poor Gentleman, vain were all his efforts, for after behaving with the most heroic courage he fell a sacrifice to numbers, and suffered a cruelty the richest language can but faintly paint. They seized him by the neck, dragged him down the steps, his head striking violently on every step, carried him to the door, and forcing him out, dragged him on the ground over stones and brickbats, struck him with their whips and clubs, kicked him, spit and spurned at him, and treated him with every possible mark of contempt and cruelty; until at length, by a violent effort of strength and activity, he rescued himself from their merciless claws, and took shelter in a house. The vultures pursued him there, and gave him a stroke that will probably destroy one of his eyes. In this piteous and grievously maimed ^[6] condition they left him for a while, retreated to the courthouse, knocked down and very cruelly treated the deputy clerk of the Crown, ascended the bench, shook their whips over Judge Henderson, told him his turn was next, ordered him to pursue business, but in the manner they should prescribe, which was, that no lawyers should enter the courthouse, no juries but what they should pack, and order new trials in cases where some of them had been cast for their malpractices ^[7]. They then seized Mr. Hooper, a Gentleman of the law, dragged and paraded him through the streets, and treated him with every mark of contempt and

insult. This closed the first day, but the second day presented a scene, if possible, more tragick. Immediately on their discovering that the Judge had made his escape from their fury, and refused to submit to the dictates of lawless and desperate men, they marched in a body to Colonel Fanning's House, and on a signal given by their ringleaders, entered the same, destroyed every piece of furniture in it, ripped open his beds, broke and threw in the streets every piece of china and glass ware in the house, scattered all his papers and books in the winds, seized all his plate, cash, and [proclamation money](#); entered his cellars, and after [satiating](#) ^[8] and gorging their more than savage stomachs with his liquors stove and threw in the streets the remainder. Being now drunk with rage, liquor, and lawless fury, they took his wearing clothes, struck them on a pole, paraded them in triumph through the streets, and, to close the scene, pulled down and laid his house in ruins, Hunter and Butler, two of their chiefs, stripping in Buff, and beginning the heroic Deed. They then went to a large handsome church bell that Colonel Fanning, at the Expence of 60 or 70 £, had made a present of to the church of Hillsborough, and split it to pieces, and were at the Point of pulling down the church, but their leaders, thinking it would betray their religious principles, restrained them. Their revenge being not yet satiated on this unhappy Gentleman, they again pursued him, again cruelly beat him, and at length with dogs hunted him out of town, and with a cruelty more savage than bloodhounds stoned him as he fled. What heart but feels for the distresses of this unfortunate Gentleman! What hand that would not be uplifted in defence of such injured innocence!

When they had fully glutted their revenge on the lawyers, and particularly Colonel Fanning, to shew their opinion of courts of justice they took from his chains a negro that had been executed some time, and placed him at the lawyer's bar, and filled the Judge's seat with human excrement, in [derision](#) ^[9] and contempt of the characters that fill those respectable places. Would a [Hottentot](#) been guilty of such a Piece of brutality! or is there the most savage nation on earth whose manners are less cultivated!

A paragraph of a letter from a Gentleman, who was eye witness of the above dismal scene, says: "The merchants stores are broke and rifled, Mr. Cooke's house torn to pieces, and Mr. Edward's had not shared a better fate. The inhabitants have fled the town and the regulators live at their expense; they are in possession of their houses, and make the best use of the emergency to satiate their cursed passions, and appetites. Here my pen drops; I satiate with the painful recital".

In short, all civil government in Orange County is relaxed, the courts of justice totally stopped, and every thing reduced to the power and controul of a set of men who call them selves regulators; but are in fact no other than a desperate and cruel [banditi](#) ^[10], [actuated](#) ^[11] by principles that no laws can restrain, no honour or conscience bind.

User Tags:

[colonial](#) ^[12]

[courts](#) ^[13]

[Edmund Fanning](#) ^[14]

[Hillsborough](#) ^[15]

[North Carolina](#) ^[16]

[North Carolina History](#) ^[17]

[Orange County](#) ^[18]

[Page](#) ^[19]

[Regulators](#) ^[20]

[riots](#) ^[21]

[Students](#) ^[22]

[Teachers](#) ^[23]

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FOREIGN and DOMESTIC

LIBERAS ESSE DEBERE.

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From a New York paper.

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L O N D O N, *August 18.*

WHEN Boulder is taken, which seems an inevitable consequence of the victory of Fort, Reservoir cannot hold out a single day longer. When that is gained there will be no other place of strength to cover Boulder, the product of which Gen. Francisco Serrano has, however for the United States, proved has fortified the frontier of the province with the Colorado river, the coal, and a range of mountains, many miles in length. We were the work, in which no armed detail was sent of any defense.

It is not doubted but that the total cost of the Turkish army, near Frut, will be very soon followed by the taking of Bagdad, which that army was posted to cover. The fortifications of that city are entirely of the old construction, and would not stand the siege, with great attack, and would not secure the place.

The condemnations of the naval victory of the Russians over the Turks will be certainly very generous in the future, and very afflicting to the latter. The condition of the Turks and the various national parts were on a point, the general condemnation on the side of the Ottoman subjects, it is in the Constantinian empire is peculiar. It was of infinite general impatience to change the country made in the East Indies to only East India company. From the first moment of the Russian crossing the Turkish line, this country had been infested by the Russian army.

The commonest heresies mentioned in *Paradise Lost* are those of the Turkish world (from such lands) fall into the category of "superstition." These are dismissed with the vagueness of the English church divines, who at a glance, the strongest and best light of reason, that, if they were wrong, the best light in the world. The "superstition" in the *Arabian Nights* is a very common one, and is of the most important type, and must have been the very first of the kind. The people beyond all suspicion, for it will be long before a man of a Turkish world to appear, without the most common sense of a man, and then who can be conversant with this doctrine of superstition, and have some little knowledge of the Eastern doctrine, very well know that they understand very little more of our knowledge of the "Paradise" to say thing like a decisive and unimpeachable, and that their own view in taking out this moral argument (the substance, not the view) forces themselves forward than the substance of the whole.

It is thought a reinforcement will very soon be sent to Admiral Preby's squadron, to the Mediterranean, the British fleet in that sea being of inferior force to the French, Spanish, Dutch, Danish, or even American.

April 26, 1936, the cabinet of the Ottoman fleet in the Archipelago from a war, but he confirmed his own position. The fleet commander, alarmed at the prospect of the Turkish armament, is taking every precaution possible for the defence of Constantinople. The Turkish Grand Vizier, Mehmed Riza Pasha, has been instructed, in order to take upon him the government of the Dardanelles, which are the chief lifeline of that capital. He is to command an army of 15,000 men, furnished with heavy artillery, in order to frustrate any attempt — such the Russian may make against those important straits, and to seek the Russian ships that may endeavor to pass them. On the contrary, it is said that Admiral Byrdine, in having accomplished the destruction of the Turkish fleet, has now of Constantinople, and is preparing to march on the city, in order to force the Turkish government to accept the Russian terms.

Letters from Madrid advise that the King of Spain has given orders to equip, with all possible expedition, a very formidable squadron in the Mediterranean, which is to be employed against the Emperor of Morocco, who has threatened to besiege Ceuta and Oran in Africa, belonging to Spain.

A letter from Magdeburg says that his Prussian Majesty is now preparing to march to see men to the frontiers of Poland, but on what design is not yet known. His Majesty, it seems, never tells his eround until he is at the end of his journey.

We are assured that, in confidence of a free trade with the colonies, goods are now shipping for America by the merchants

All the regiments of horse, foot, and dragoons, being now arrived at their respective quarters for the remainder of this year, orders are given to the commanding officers of these regiments that have not got their full complements of men to complete them forthwith.

It is felt a demand has been made by a great trading company from the Dutch, which, if successful, will be another

A letter has been sent to the Admiralty Office, filed to be found on the road leading from Washington bridge to the water gate on the busy side, the purpose of which is to let the soldiers had been converted to let fire to the dock in Dept. 344.

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APR 10

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October 24. By Captain Cook, who arrived here last Friday evening, in four days from Halifax, we have it positively stated that all the troops now in that place, would be ready to start for the front in a few days.

On Friday last his Majesty's armed schooner the

Here from Hali'ng. Li and ichang came from the north, going to the royal capital of arduity.

PHILADELPHIA, October 2.
On Saturday it was reported that the ship London Packet, Captain Cook, for London, by which would be the purchase of cotton in the British trade, had been ordered to stop at all ports of call.

from Great Britain except tea, and such other articles as may be subject to duties for the purpose of raising an American revenue.

revenue; conflict with the laboratory alteration made on the subject, in the non-imposition of a agreement, by a considerable number of the subjects themselves. And it is imposed that they, instead of the laboratory of America will discontinue the subject of extension of united articles from England, and thereby defect the subject of our science.

CONSTANTINOPLE, JULY 3.

A LETTER from the Grand Vizier to his brother Osman Bey, a member of the Divan, is handed about here, and contains that the Ottoman empire is at present in its critical position that it is absolutely necessary he should make it known. Not only to the Sultan, but to all the members of the Divan, in order to induce them to inquire the Grand Seigneur with peaceful intentions, and not expect him to fail his endeavours to come to an accommodation with the enemy.

PHILADELPHIA, OCT 2

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<https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/audacious> [4] <https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/factious> [5] <https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/beset> [6] <https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/maim> [7] <https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/malpractice> [8] <https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/satiate> [9] <https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/derision> [10] <https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/banditi> [11] <https://www.ncpedia.org/glossary/actuate> [12] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/colonial> [13] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/courts> [14] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/edmund-fanning> [15] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/hillsborough> [16] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/north-carolina-5> [17] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/north-carolina-6> [18] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/orange-county> [19] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/page> [20] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/regulators> [21] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/riots> [22] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/students> [23] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/teachers> [24] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/user-tags/creative-commons> [25] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/anchor-north> [26] <https://www.ncpedia.org/regulator-movement-k-8-students> [27] <https://research.colonialwilliamsburg.org/DigitalLibrary/va-gazettes/VGSinglePage.cfm?issueIDNo=70.PD.31&page=1&res=LO> [28] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/digital/custom/regulator-movement>