**Document #1: Robert Beverly, The History and Present State of Virginia, 1705**

"The occasion of the Rebellion is not easy to be discovered, but there were many things that concurred toward it....First, the extreme low price of tobacco....Secondly, the splintering of the Colony into Proprieties, contrary to the original Charters; and the extravagant taxes [the colonists] were forced to undergo. Thirdly, the heavy restraints and burdens laid upon their trade by Act of Parliament in England. Fourthly, the Disturbance given by the Indians..."

**Document #2: Petition of Grievances, 1677**

A petition of grievances from the citizens of Isle of Wight County (on the frontier) to the Royal Commissioners investigating the rebellion, March 5, 1677 (note the date).

"We desire that there may be a continual war against the Indians so that we may have [finally] done with them.

"Also we desire that every man be taxed according to the tracts of land they hold.

"We desire to know for what do we pay our Levies [taxes] every year, and that it may no longer be [decided] in private but that we may have liberty to hear and see every particular for what it is raised....Some great persons...are exempted from paying Levies and the poorest inhabitants are compelled to pay the great taxes which we are burdened with."

**Document #3: The History of Bacon's and Ingram's Rebellion, by an unknown Virginian of the time**

"In a very short time [the Indians] had, in a most inhumane manner, murdered no less than 60 innocent people, no ways guilty of any actual injury done to these...brutish heathens....They devised a hundred ways to torture and torment those poor souls..."

**Document #4: A letter written by Nathaniel Bacon's wife to her sister in London, June 29, 1676**

Dear Sister,

I pray God keep the worst Enemy I have from ever being in such a sad condition as I have been in since my [previous letter to you], occasioned by the troublesome Indians, who have killed one of our Overseers at a plantation which we had, and we have lost a great stock of cattle and a good crop...which is a very great loss to us....The Indians are killing the people daily [but] the Governor is so much their friend that he would not [allow] anybody to hurt one of the Indians; the poor people came to Nathaniel to desire him to help against the Indians...and he was willing to do them all the good he could....They did destroy a great many of the Indians, thanks be to God, and might have killed a great many more, but the Governor was so much the Indians' friend and our enemy that he sent the Indians word that Mr. Bacon was out against them that they might save themselves.

**Document #5: Nathaniel Bacon's account of the Indian troubles, June 18, 1676**

"By an Act of State, it was provided for the better security of the country, That no Trade should be held with the Indians, notwithstanding which our present Governor monopolized a trade with the Indians and granted licences to others to trade with them....I fear we shall all be lost, for this commerce having acquainted the Indians...with our manner of living and discipline of war, has also brought them to the use of firearms....The Governor, who from the Neighbor Indians receives benefit by the trade, still protects them against the [white] people; and though the complaints of their murders have been continual, yet he hath...furnished them [the Indians] with ammunition (which by the Law is death)....I sent to the Governor for a [military] commission to fall upon them, but being denied, and finding that the country was for a small and sordid gain betrayed, and the lives and fortunes of the poor inhabitants wretchedly sacrificed, I resolved to stand up and expose my life and fortune than desert my post.

"Upon this I resolved to march out upon the Enemy with volunteers, but by so doing found that I had not only lost the Governor's favor, but exposed my very life and fortune...but considering the necessity, I still proceeded, and returned with a greater victory from sharper conflict than ever yet has been known in these parts of the world."

**Document #6: The Royal Commissioners' Narrative, 1677**

[Editor's note: In Sept. 1676 news of Bacon's uprising reached England. In Oct. the King appointed a commission to investigate the rebellion. A True Narrative of the Late Rebellion in Virginia, By the Royal Commissioners 1677, was presented to the King in Oct. 1677.]

"Bacon had got over the [James] River with his Forces, and hastening away into the woods, went directly and fell upon the Indians and killed some of them [who] were our best Friends.... [Bacon's] people [would not] understand any distinction of Friendly Indians and Indian Enemies, for at that time it was impossible to distinguish one nation from another, they being deformed with paint of many colors...

"So the common cry of the Vulgar was, away with these distinctions, we will have war with all Indians...we will spare none."

**Document #7: From a letter by William Sherwood, Attorney General of Virginia, to the King's Council, June 1, 1676**

"Sir William Berkeley, our honorable Governor (who hath had long experience of war with the Indians) that he might provide for the safety of this Country, caused our Assembly...to...enact that forts should be built at the heads of several rivers, being the [best] way to secure our frontier plantations...But one Mr. Nathaniel Bacon, a person of little experience and but of two years' [residence] in the country, thinking himself wiser than the law, hath stirred up a great number of indigent and dissatisfied persons, marching in warlike posture...the intent of which is the subversion of the Laws and to level all [ed. note: to 'reduce' society to a democracy, to impose equality]."

**Document #8: The Royal Commissioners' Narrative**

"[Nathaniel Bacon] was of a most...dangerous hidden Pride of heart, despising the wisest of his neighbors for their Ignorance and very ambitious and arrogant...He pretended and boasted what great Service he would do for the country, in destroying the Common Enemy, securing their Lives and Estates, Liberties, and such like frauds....He seduced the Vulgar and most ignorant People...so that their whole hearts and hopes were set now upon Bacon. Next he charged the Governor as negligent and wicked, treacherous and incapable, the Laws and Taxes as unjust and oppressive..."

**Document #9: A description of a battle between the English and the Indians, written by one of Bacon's followers, May 1676**

"By a word from the other side of the river, [the Indians] began and killed one of our men, which we quickly repaid them, firing at all their men so thick that the groans of Men, Women and Children were loud....Immediately we fell upon the Men, Women and Children, and disarmed and destroyed them all....The king's daughter we took prisoner, with some others....We have left all nations of Indians, where we have been engaged, in a civil war amongst themselves, so that with great ease we hope to manage the advantage to their utter ruin and destruction."

**Document #10: The Royal Commissioners' Narrative**

"The people began to draw into arms. [The Governor], to appease the Commotion of the people...came immediately back to his own house and, dissolving the assembly, gave the colony a free new election....Such was the prevalency of Bacon's Party that they chose [for their representatives], instead of Freeholders [men of property], Free men that had but lately crept out of the condition of Servants."

**Document #11: A letter by Gov. Berkeley to Henry Coventry, a Secretary of State of the King, Feb. 2, 1677**

"[No sooner had I signed Bacon's military commission] but that all his Rabble believed I had resigned all my power to their New General, and Bacon himself made them believe he thought so too, and fell to work confiscating and plundering diverse good men's houses....Hearing that Bacon intended to make me prisoner, for he had proclaimed me a traitor, [I left] and I had within three days at least forty Gentlemen of the best quality of Virginia that came over to me, and left their estates to the [rape] of Bacon's Barbarous Soldiers."

**Document #12: The Beginning, Progress and Conclusion of Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia**

[Ed. note: Thomas Mathews was a prominent merchant-planter in Virginia in 1676. He owned some property in the frontier counties that were attacked by Indians.] His narrative, The Beginning, Progress and Conclusion of Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia, was completed in 1705.

"Bacon came down from his Forest Pursuit and [landed on] the Peninsula there in Jamestown. He stormed it and took the Town....But the Governor with most of his followers fled...down the River...

"Here resting a few days [Bacon's men] concerted the Burning of the Town....The Soldiers Laid the whole Town (with Church and Statehouse) in ashes, Saying, the Rogues should harbor no more there.

"[Then] Bacon called a Convention at Middle Plantation [Williamsburg] 15 miles from Jamestown in August 1676...and Writs by him issued for an Assembly....One Proclamation commanded All Men in the Land on Pain of Death to Join him, and retire into the Wilderness upon Arrival of Forces expected from England, and oppose them..."

**Document #13: From "The Declaration of the People", composed by Bacon and issued during the convention of his Assembly**

"We accuse Sir Wm. Berkeley as guilty...and as one who hath Traitorously violated and injured His Majesty's Interest here....We demand that the said Sir Wm. Berkeley with all the Persons in this List [of 19 friends of Berkeley]...surrender themselves...or otherwise we declare that in whatsoever house, place or ship, any of the said Persons shall reside, be hid or protected, we do declare the Owners of such places to be...Traitors to the People, and the Estates of them...to be Confiscated. This we the Commons of Virginia do declare, desiring Union among ourselves....And Let not the Faults or Crimes of the Oppressors divide and separate us, who have suffered by their oppression."

**Document #14: The Royal Commissioners' Narrative**

"[After his forces put Jamestown to the torch] Bacon now begins to show a more merciless severity and absolute authority than formerly, Plundering and imprisoning many and condemning some by power of martial law.

"Finding his Soldiers' Insolence growing so great and intolerable to the People,...he not only [takes] a strict Discipline over his men but also to more moderate courses himself, Releasing some Prisoners, Pardoning others that were condemned, and calling those to account against whom any complaints came..."

**Document #15: From Gov. Berkeley's letter to Henry Coventry**

"Within three weeks after [Bacon seized and burned down Jamestown] the Justice and Judgment of God overtook [Bacon]....God so infected his blood that it bred Lice in an incredible number, so that for twenty days he never washed his shirts but burned them. To this God added the bloody flux [ed. note: a severe case of dysentery]....God has brought this most Atheistic man to his deserved end....My soldiers killed four of their most obstinate officers, two are dead in Prison, and fourteen executed....Their General gave up all their men and Arms into my hands and are pardoned. More than one hundred I had in prison before this surrender."

**Document #16: Petition of Grievances, 1677**

From a petition of grievances by the citizens of Charles City County to the Royal Commissioners in May, 1677 (note the date).

"We have of late feared that our representatives...have been overswayed by the power...of Sir William Berkeley and his council...

"Besides the great quantities of Tobacco raised and paid for the building of forts which were never finished but suffered to go to ruin...great quantities of Tobacco have been raised upon us His Majesty's poor Subjects...for erecting a [public] house for the use of the country which Colonel Edward Hill [friend of Gov. Berkeley] received and converted to his own use...

"[Last January] when the commotions were appeased and quieted, Col. Hill without any warrant or authority unlawfully...raised a company of men...whom he presumptuously did take upon him to lead out of the country at his will and pleasure...

"Col. Hill, covetously minding to enrich himself by the ruin of diverse of us His Majesty's subjects...by menaces and threats extorted diverse rewards from us...seizing persons and estates in this county...that he knew were pardoned by the Governor's and King's proclamations...

"Edward Hill, contrary to his duty...converted the goods by him seized for the use of the King to his own use..."