

III. “Live from the Courthouse” Primary Source Improv Activity

Historical Context: This is a small colonial community with a population of approximately 1,500 residents, and everyone is aware of each other's business. Community cooperation is imperative for the community to thrive and prosper, and their labor systems are anchored in gendered work assignments.

Scenario A Objective: Explore how gender roles functioned as an economic, social, and cultural organizing principle in early colonial society, the importance of the “Thomas or Thomasine” court case, and the potential impact of the court’s decision.

Scenario A Setting: Outside the Quarter Court of Virginia, Jamestown, on April 8th, 1629, immediately after the court session. The court's ruling has created confusion and curiosity among the colonists.

- **Jamie Hunter**, a modern-day reporter from Virginia’s Richmond-Times Dispatch, time-travels to interview people involved in the “Thomas or Thomasine” case as they exit the courthouse. Hunter learned about this case when they discovered the *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia* in a library archive and saw connections to news stories in today’s world. Hunter believes this is an important story to share with the newspaper’s readers.
- **Dinah Barker**, a member of the Richmond-Times Dispatch crew who is filming the interview and has a “temporal communication device” that translates 1629 English to modern English.
- **Thomas(ine) Hall**, the indentured servant at the center of the question to the court.
- **Governor John Pott**, head of Virginia General Court who was responsible for the final ruling, that Hall is both a man and a woman, and required Hall to wear both men’s and women’s apparel.
- **John Tyos**, who owned Hall’s indentured servant contract and insisted Hall was a woman and that her name was Thomasine.
- **John Atkins**, who wanted to purchase Hall’s contract and needed to know Hall’s gender know the cost of the contract, and to appropriately assign labor.
- **Captain Nathaniel Bass**, local magistrate who first investigated the case and presided over the court session. Captain Bass questioned Hall during the proceedings and provided his own testimony regarding Hall’s declaration of being both a man and a woman.
- **Dorothy (Nosey) Rodes**, a very curious community member who is pleased with the court’s decision, and wants the court to consider equal pay for women’s labor and men’s labor.

Scenario B Objective: Make connections between gender as an organizing principle in early colonial society and today, and the significance of the similarity of issues surfaced in the “Thomas or Thomas(ine) Hall” court case and today.

Scenario B Setting: The editor’s office at the Richmond-Times Dispatch newspaper, today’s date. Jamie Hunter and Dinah Barker are discussing their interviews with community members in Jamestown, from their time travel to April 8th, 1629, and making comparisons to the modern-day coverage of issues addressed in the “Thomas or Thomasine Hall” court case.

- **Jamie Hunter**, a reporter from Virginia’s Richmond-Times Dispatch, who time-traveled to interview people involved in the “Thomas or Thomasine Hall” court case as they exited the courthouse. Hunter believes this is an important story to share with the newspaper’s readers because of its connections to today’s world.
- **Dinah Barker**, a member of the Richmond-Times Dispatch crew who filmed the interview and had a “temporal communication device” that translated 1629 English to modern English.
- **Evelyn Kent**, editor in chief of the Richmond-Times Dispatch.
- **Ricky Hamlet**, a reporter for the Richmond-Times Dispatch who wants to time-travel back to April 9th, 1629, to ask follow-up questions of the community members and enhance the story.