

Lascivious Carriages Towards Sundry Women

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Introduction

A Case of “Lascivious Carriage”

Massachusetts Bay, like all English jurisdictions, legally required that sexual intercourse be confined within marriage. Fornication (sex with an unmarried woman) and adultery (defined as sex between a married woman and any man other than her husband) were both punishable criminal offenses. The New England colonies, including Massachusetts, also punished lesser sexual offenses which were only rarely prosecuted in either the Chesapeake colonies or England.

The records below are from two related prosecutions for “lascivious carriage.” (“Carriage” here is a synonym for “behavior.”) Lascivious carriage was a catchall category. Sometimes also called uncivil, wanton, or even adulterous carriage, the label designated behavior which stopped short of sexual intercourse but which was nevertheless transgressive and likely, if left unchecked, to lead to fornication or adultery. Prosecutions for lascivious carriage were relatively common in seventeenth-century Massachusetts and might arise out of either consensual or predatory behavior. Convictions commonly led to fines, corporal punishment, admonishment (a formal reprimand), and/or bonds for good behavior.

The Town of Billerica

Billerica was a small town in Massachusetts, founded in 1655. It was located about twenty-five miles northwest of Boston. In 1679, the town estimated that it had roughly fifty families liable for taxation and ten more “of the aged, that are Helpless, the widows & poor persons that want relief.” Given an average household size of five or six persons, the town’s population was probably between 300 and 350.

Background on Individuals Involved in the Case

John Durrant and **Susan Dutton Durrant** married 16 November 1670. The couple had at least two children, both of whom survived childhood and were probably living in the Durrant household in 1680. John Durrant’s birthdate is unknown, but we have two clues to his approximate age. He received a grant of land in Billerica in 1659, and he died in the Cambridge jail in 1692. It is unlikely that he would have been granted land before the age of twenty. It is also unlikely that he would have lived past the age of eighty. Susan Dutton Durrant was born 27 Feb 1654 so she would have been twenty-six in 1680.

Thomas Wilkinson may have been a swine-herd, and he was complained of for practicing medicine contrary to law. His wife’s name may have been Ann, but nothing is known about her.

Daniel Shed was born 30 Aug 1649. He and **Ruth More Shed** married 5 July 1670. The couple had seven children; three of whom survived childhood. In 1680, they probably had two children

living. Daniel Shed would have been 31 in 1680. Ruth was probably close in age, but her date of birth is unknown.

Simon Crosby was born in August 1637 so he was 43 in 1680. **Rachel Brackett Crosby** was born 3 November 1639. He was the step-son of a minister, and his wife was the daughter of a deacon. He kept an inn, was a large landowner, and served as a grand jurymen. The couple had nine children; seven of whom were born by 1680. There is no indication that any died in childhood.

Roger Toothaker was born in 1634; he was 46 in 1680. He married **Mary Allen Toothaker** in 1665. They had eight children, six of whom survived childhood. She probably had two children at home when she encountered Thomas Wilkinson. Mary Toothaker was born in 1644. She would have been 36 in 1680 and 24 in 1668.

Samuel Trull was married to Ann Hale Trull in 1680. The couple had no children. He may have been John Trull's brother.

Sarah French Trull was the wife of John Trull. She was 43 years old in 1680. Sarah Trull gave birth to twelve children, but at least seven of them failed to survive infancy. All but one of the children were born by 1680. She would have been pregnant with her twelfth child when she testified about Thomas Wilkinson and Susannah Durrand.

John Bracket was married to his second wife, Ruth, in 1680. He had been married to Hannah French until her death in childhood in 1674. John Bracket had thirteen children although at least three of them failed to survive childhood.

John Chamberlain was probably unmarried in 1680.

Simon was a slave in Rev. Samuel Whiting's household in 1680. In 1693, Whiting freed Simon after thirty-one years of slavery. Simon was 40 at the time. The fact that Simon willed the land he later owned to the Whiting family suggests that he had neither wife nor children.

Court Records

The court records below are from two different types of sources. The first two are from the Middlesex County Court Record book. Record books give brief summaries of court cases in chronological order. In criminal cases, these summaries usually include the name of the defendant, the charge, a brief description of the alleged crime, the court's judgment, the sentence if any, and a note of any further action to be taken. The records are often incomplete, either because portions of the books have been lost or damaged, or because the clerk failed to write down all of the relevant information.

The second type of source is collections of file papers. Seventeenth-century courts rarely made courtroom transcriptions, but they did usually keep copies of papers produced in the course of pursuing individual cases. These include warrants, summonses, depositions, examinations made when questioning a suspect, and petitions. File papers were often physically small and easily

lost, and many have suffered damage or decay in the past three or four centuries since they were produced. Unfortunately, file papers rarely allow us to completely reconstruct a seventeenth-century court case as it played out in the courtroom.

Whenever possible, it is best to use record books and file papers in conjunction. In the case below, a petition in the file papers complicates the summary in the record book. If the only information we had about the case came from the record book summaries, we might assume that the two defendants, Thomas Wilkinson and Susannah Durrant, had similar experiences before the court. Both were convicted of lascivious carriage and required to post bond for good behavior. Each was required to find two “sureties” who would guarantee that they appeared for at the next sitting of the county court. (Sureties were people who paid a bond to the court which they would forfeit if the defendant failed to appear at his/her court date.) Susannah Durrant evidently found sureties, and they were released from bond at the next court four months later. (Durrant could not post bond herself because she was a married woman and so could not own property.) Thomas Wilkinson, however, ended up in jail and was still there in February of 1681 when he petitioned for a trial. It is possible that Wilkinson was in jail because he forfeited the terms of his bond, but, given his reference to the “considerable time” he had been in jail, it is more likely that he was unable to convince any of his neighbors to stand surety for him. The alternative to posting bond with sureties was to remain in jail.

The evidence about how seventeenth-century trials were conducted is sparse, and it is possible that different courts followed different procedures. Often, magistrates or grand jurymen verbally examined suspects and collected depositions from witnesses prior to trial. In some cases, they recorded what a suspect told them, and the resulting “examinations” appear as file papers. That does not appear to be the case here, but it is impossible to know whether the magistrates failed to question the defendants before trial (unlikely but possible), questioned them but failed to record their answers because they would be questioned again in court (very possible), or recorded their answers on a piece of paper which failed to survive to the present (also very possible). It is likely that the case was decided by the group of judges who oversaw the case rather than being tried by a jury. Juries were rarely used in cases of minor crimes, and, even in the case of felonies, it was not unusual for a defendant to request that the case be tried by the bench (judges) rather than by a jury.

Witness testimony could make its way into the courtroom in more than one way. Sometimes magistrates questioned witnesses, wrote down their testimony, and then forwarded it to the court. Other times witnesses wrote their own depositions independently. Those witnesses might or might not also testify orally at trial. Still others testified at trial but did not necessarily record their testimony in a deposition. In this case, we have evidence of more than one method. John Banks was summoned to attend the court as a witness, but he did not produce a deposition prior to the trial as far as we can tell. On the other hand, Mary Toothaker and Ruth Shed submitted depositions before Jonathan Danforth, but they probably did not attend the trial itself. Shed and Toothaker had young children at home, and traveling the more than twenty miles to the court at Charlestown would have been a hardship. Sometimes we know that particular depositions were used by witnesses at trial because their depositions are marked “sworn in court” or “jurat in curia.” None of the depositions below have that notation so we cannot be sure how they were used.

The records below are all that survive from an actual case tried in the Middlesex County Court in Charlestown, Massachusetts, in 1680. I have transcribed the documents, modernized the spelling and punctuation to make them easier to read, and added editorial notes to help clarify language and context. Otherwise, they are as you would find them at the Massachusetts State Archives in Boston. The file papers are in no particular order.

(This is what the original version of Sarah Trull's deposition looks like.)

The Challenges of Doing Colonial History

Every period in American history offers unique challenges to historians. One of the most challenging aspect of writing colonial history is the paucity of sources. Literacy rates were higher in colonial New England than in most of the English-speaking world, but even in New England perhaps only about half of the population could write in the seventeenth-century. (A higher proportion could read.) The combination of relatively low writing literacy and the high cost of paper in the period meant that most people did not write – and so create sources for historians – very often. Letters and diaries from the period are rare. There are no known diaries written by women in colonial America before 1750, and letters were usually the prerogative of the elite. Very few newspapers existed before the 1730s and none at all in the seventeenth-century colonies. Even government sources like censuses and tax lists have spotty coverage, and statistical surveys which might tell us what large numbers of people thought or did simply did not exist.

When doing colonial history, it is particularly important to wring every last bit of information possible out of the available sources – what historian Laurel Ulrich has termed getting “all the butter from your duck.” This means reading critically and interrogating sources for both what they say and what they leave out. Ask yourself what – or who – is left out of the documents. In some cases, missing information might be a sign of an intent to mislead, but more often things left unsaid were things that did not need to be said to the audience for whom the document was originally intended. The audiences in seventeenth-century New England courtrooms generally knew the deponents and their families. They shared a culture and a set of expectations, but what

was common sense or common knowledge for the document's original audience can be valuable historical information 350 years later.

As you read, try to reconstruct what happened. The best first step here is to create a timeline and a cast of characters to help you keep straight what happened when and to whom. Then try to imagine the scenes the deponents described. Look for patterns that can tell you about shared assumptions or expectations. Put the stories in the context of what was going on in the larger history of the period. For instance, might there have been a reason that Thomas Wilkinson believed Ruth Shed would not scream in the woods in the middle of the night when he attacked her?

The Assignment

Your assignment is to write a 3-5 page formal paper making an argument drawn from the sources below. The specific topic is up to you (but pick just one). You might explore the options and limitations available to women facing sexual predators. You might compare the women in the documents below to those described by Laurel Ulrich in *Good Wives*. You could explore how law enforcement worked in a seventeenth-century community. Or you might develop an argument from another topic altogether. A strong paper will have an explicit argument (thesis) supported by evidence from the primary sources and contextualized by information from lecture and course readings. Your paper should be cited using Chicago Manual of Style footnotes. For help with footnote formats, consult

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html or the Chicago Manual of Style.

Primary Sources

From the Middlesex County, Massachusetts County Court Record Book

21 December 1680

The wife of John Durrand, Susanna Durrand, appearing before the Court, & being convicted of too much frequenting the company of Thomas Wilkinson, & lascivious practices, with him & others, is ordered to find sureties for the good behavior, and that she shall abstain from Companying with the said Wilkinson, & appear at the next County Court, to make further answer to what she shall be charged with, referring hereto.

[Released from bond 5 Apr 1681.]

Thomas Wilkinson of Billerica appearing before the Court, & being convicted of Idleness, & of lascivious carriages towards sundry women, & more especially of too much familiarity with the wife of John Durand, is ordered to give bond for the peace, & his good behavior, and that he shall abstain from companying with the wife of said Durand. The said Wilkinson in 20 l. [pounds] & 2: sureties in 10 l [pounds] – a pl. [apiece] and for his appearance at next County [court] to make further answer to what he shall then be charged with, in reference to the above said complaints.

File Papers from the Middlesex Folio Collection

Thomas Wilkinson's Petition

To this Honored Court Assembled at Cambridge this 5 of Feb 1681

The humble petition of Thomas Wilkinson prisoner at Cambridge, Humbly Sheweth

That whereas you poor petitioner hath been committed here to prison, and have been here a considerable time, do humbly entreat this Honored Court that I may come to a fair trial about which I am committed, that I may not lie here, and my estate go to wrack,¹ and I am not in a capacity to look after my family and provide for them as I ought to do for which I humbly entreat this Honored Court to take my condition into consideration; that some way I may know what I am accused for, and satisfaction may be made as your Honors shall see meet that I may return to my family again

And so your petitioner shall pray:

Thomas Wilkinson

Arrest Warrant for Thomas Wilkinson and Susannah Durrant

To the Keeper of the Prison in Cambr.

In his Majesty's name

you are to take into your custody the bodies of Thomas Wilkinson & the wife of John Durand & keep them safe until orderly dismissed they being committed until they give bond with sureties for their good behavior & appearance at next County Court and in so doing this shall be your warrant. dat. 22. 10. 80. [22 December 1680]

Thomas Danforth. R.

Ruth and Daniel Shed's Deposition

Ruth the wife of Daniel Shed Junior, saith that about four years since Thomas Wilkinson having occasion to the Bay:² & being at their house heard her husband say that his wife³ was also to go to Woburn, but wanted⁴ a horse; the said Wilkinson replied, I will carry her down & bring her up again at night, so I [the] said Ruth rid⁵ down to Woburn behind the said Wilkinson. And as they were going home at evening, being gotten within a mile & half of the Wymans' farm it being then dark, the said Wilkinson turned one leg over the horse's neck & sat sidewise and said to the said Ruth Shed, that his yard⁶ was so stiff that it hindered him that he could not ride any longer, & slipped off the horse & pulled her down after him, & took her in his arms, & would have been lewd with her, & said Come let me &: she replied no, not for all the world. Come saith he, I will give you five shillings. No, she replied, though you would give me ten. He replied, Why? There is nobody seeth us. She replied God seeth us. Well, come, saith hee I will give you ten shillings. Then she replied, No, for how shall I do this wickedness and sin against god?⁷ Then he replied to her, if you will not Consent to it I can force you. She said, it is true, I know you can, but if

¹ ruin

² Massachusetts Bay, meaning that Wilkinson was planning to go to the Boston area.

³ In other words, Ruth heard her husband say that she (Ruth) wanted to go to Woburn.

⁴ lacked

⁵ rode

⁶ a slang term for penis

⁷ Here Ruth Shed refers to a biblical passage from Genesis 39:9. The story is about a favored slave whose mistress tried to coerce him into having sex with her.

you do I will make the woods ring.⁸ Then, said he, the Indians will hear you. She then replied, I had rather fall into the hands of the Indians than Commit this great wickedness with you, & with that slipped out of his arms & ran way before him until they came within sight of John Wyman's house, & when he saw that house, he said how a devil came I here, or where am I? She answered it is young John Wyman's house. Then said he, how a devil did I miss the way, & offered some more such language, asked her to get up again & ride home. And, upon his promises to her not to offer any more abuse to her, she got up again, & rid home behind him. Neither did he any more offer the like as before, nor spake he a word concerning what abuse he had offered.

Daniel Shed Junior, Husband to the above said Ruth, testifieth, that as soon as his wife and Wilkinson came in at his house that night aforesaid, he perceived that all was not well with his wife & said, what ails my wife? Wilkinson replied he Could not tell; but he immediately went away home; & as soon as he was gone, his wife told him of all the abuse had been offered her that night by the said Wilkinson, and the reason why he made not a public Complaint against said Wilkinson was because he feared he should do no good of it without more witnesses.

Sworn by Daniel Shed & Ruth his wife before me John Danforth.

Billerica 17. 10. m 1680. [17 December 1680]

Ruth Shed aforesaid further testifieth that this last spring in planting time she spoke to Susan the wife of John Durrant, & wished her to have a care of Goodman⁹ Wilkinson for she could assure her that he was a base¹⁰ fellow, & not to keep his Company, and that the chief¹¹ of the town spake against him. She replied that they were a Company of babbling fools, & she (that is the said Shed) had belied Wilkinson and instead of doing less, she would yet do more in doing for him.

Sworn by Ruth Shed, 20. 10. m 80. [20 December 1680] before me Jonathan Danforth.

Simon Crosby's Deposition

The testimony of Simon Crosbee, who served on the grand jury concerning Thomas Wilkinson & the wife of John Durrant,

And first of his Idleness & much mispence¹² of precious time: the neighbors around about him have been much unsatisfied with him ever since he came to town for they that lived next to him, could observe very little that he did for himself or any else & have been very suspicious of him, that he has driven a bad trade in purloining¹³ from his neighbors although not able to prove it, whereas had he kept in diligence it might have abated his temptation that way, and so this last summer his spending his time this summer at John Durrant's house, it has been intolerable, by the observation of most of his neighbors for he had but 3 acres of land to till this summer & hay to provide for one horse and as for a cellar hole he has digged to put his wife in, he has been a year about it, and made it so straight¹⁴ that there is not room to set a wheel for his maid to spin on, but she is sent over the river to Durrant's house to spin which must need be a great loss of time; & beside he is so high & surly & full of ill language that persons are not desirous to deal

⁸ In other words, she would scream.

⁹ "Goodman" was the standard honorific applied to a married man of non-elite status. We would use "Mr.," but in the colonial period "Mister" and "Master" were reserved for elite men.

¹⁰ low in the sense of immoral or impolite

¹¹ the majority

¹² in the sense of misspending

¹³ stealing

¹⁴ narrow

much with him & several of the testimonies given in to this court prove his mispence of time at Durrant's house and where as the Select men¹⁵ of the town sent for the said Wilkinson to give an account how he Spent his time, they were as little satisfied about it as before and he told some of the town, that if he did maintenance his family, he might Choose whether he did work or not, nor give an account of it to [us?], and as to his keeping Company with Durrant's wife, and their lascivious carriages the testimonies given in, will sufficient prove.

I would only add this, that much pains has been taken by several to warn them of the same, & Reverend pastor went on purpose to speak to them, and when they saw him a coming to the house, she put Wilkinson into [the] cellar until Mr. Whiting was gone, as Durrant himself owned. Some others did solemnly warn them of the evil, told them God would discover them; & that they could not expect to be preserved from wickedness while they kept company so much unnecessarily yet they would ride abroad together, to Chelmsford to Concord, & set out in the morning only they two together, many hours before day & as late home at night. They rid down to the Bay, and kept company several days together: & if that one journey were well examined it would prove suspicious of great wickedness being alone together part of several nights. And in case this Honored Court do not take special ado to part them, we fear all will be as bad as ever for the woman will have [torn] company, let neighbors say what they will: for they say they will do more [torn]

Also I would insert this that Wilkinson upon a falling out with one of his next neighbors, carried his sword daily in his hand for several days, and he is so malicious that if authority humbles him not, it is to be feared [torn] mischief will follow after this Court, for he has given dreadful threatening words to several of the witnesses.

Constable's Warrant

To the Constable of Chelmsford.

In his Majesty's name you are to warn John Bank that he appear at the next Court to be held at Charlestown the 4. of next month then & there to give in evidence against Thomas Wilkinson for lascivious practices & hereof you are to make a true return under your hand & not to fail.¹⁶
dated. 18. 9. 1680. [18 November 1680]

Thomas Danforth R.

John Bank is warned according to this warrant

By me John Barrit Junior Constable.¹⁷

Mary and Roger Toothaker's Deposition

Mary the wife of Roger Toothaker testifieth, that about twelve years previously from February next, that Thomas Wilkinson, coming from the Bay, somewhat late in the evening called in at her Husband's house, & desired to Stay there that night because it was too dark to get home, and he sat by the fire that night. In the morning following after her Husband & herself were both risen, her Husband had occasion to go to a neighbor's house, about two miles off & after her Husband was gone; Thomas Wilkinson aforesaid (having heard her say to her Husband that she must Hasten to the weavers or else he would want¹⁸ shirt cloth) said to her, that he would help her to a

¹⁵ Selectmen, also called tithingmen, were a group of people charged with regulating town affairs.

¹⁶ The language here is formulaic.

¹⁷ John Banks would have testified orally in court, and there is no record of his testimony.

¹⁸ lack

shirt cloth for her Husband. She replied, that she knew not how to pay him for it. The said Wilkinson Answered that he would make his pay for it presently, if she were willing to it, & would lay the child out of her arms. She replied that she would see him hanged first. He replied that he would give her a cheese also, for he had great needs. She again replied that she would see him hanged first, and was not he ashamed to offer such abuse to another man's wife, whereas he had a wife of his own, and bid him if he were in such need to make haste home to his own wife. The said Wilkinson replied, be hanged to you, while the grass grow the steed starve. Look you here else, & with that came walking to her, with his Nakedness uncovered, in a most brutish manner. She again replied, are you not ashamed? Then He answered if you will neither take anything, nor give anything then adieu to you and so departed the house.

Further she testified that after her Husband came home, she told him of what abuse Wilkinson had offered to her & her Husband afterward spake of it to the said Wilkinson, but the said Wilkinson threatened him, that if he spake a word if it, it should cost him [illegible] estate.¹⁹

Also her Husband speaking of it to some of his neighbors, [several illegible] should do no good of it, unless there were more witness, & her Husband advised her, not to Speak of it publically lest she should be ensnared, for want of witness, & upon that account she has been sparing in speaking of it until now called by authority.

Billerica: 16. 10 m. 1680. [16 December 1680] Taken upon oath before me Jonathan Danforth

Roger Toothaker testifieth that the morning above said, as soon as he came home, his wife told him all the abuse that Wilkinson had offered to her that morning after himself was gone forth, and that day the said Toothaker told it again to his next neighbors.

Sworn by Roger Toothaker, 20. 10 m. 1680. [20 December 1680] before me, Jonathan Danforth John Rogers Junior, & Thomas Rogers do testify that the same day spoken with as above said, they saw Goodman Wilkinson go from the house of Roger Toothaker homeward: and the same day Goodman Toothakar, came to their house & told them of the abuse which Thomas Wilkinson had offered to his wife.

Sworn by John & Thomas Rogers. 20. 10. 80. before me Jonathan Dunforth

Letter to the Charlestown Court

To the Honored Court at Charlestown 21. 10. 80.

These may inform your Honors that when the time was appointed for these two women to give in their testimonies, I gave notice of it to Goodman Wilkinson, and desired him that he would come, at the same time, that they might speak before his face, and he should have liberty to object what he could; but hee refused to attend it.

And in reference to these & the rest of the testimonies, I have taken them with as much care & strictness in examination as might: and they are ready to own²⁰ the same again when ever called to it.

your humble servant Jonathan Danforth.²¹

¹⁹ Probably "a good estate" or "his whole estate." Wilkinson threatened to sue Roger Toothaker for slander.

²⁰ swear to

²¹ This document would have been enclosed with Mary Toothaker and Ruth Shed's depositions. Jonathan Danforth, a magistrate, wrote the depositions in Billerica and sent them to the court at Charlestown. It is possible neither Toothaker nor Shed could write. It is possible that the women traveled to the court to testify in person, but it is unlikely because there is no notation on the documents indicating that they were "sworn in court."

Samuel Trull's Deposition

Samuel Trull aged about 45, testifieth that this last summer he hath often observed Thomas Wilkinson to frequent the house of John Durrant: and the said Trull being his next neighbor, did observe that he spent a great part of many days at that house for he could easily observe when the said Wilkinson went over the vines²² to his work and when he came back again, and that he has found the said Wilkinson several times at the said Durrant's house, when her Husband has been from home, nor none about the house, but two little children, & one time he found Wilkinson, & the said Durrant's wife all alone in the house, & they two sat sporting²³ together, and she had her hand in Wilkinson's lap. Also that he hath seen her several times over the vines with Wilkinson & sometimes none but he & she could be seen there & sometimes the 2 little children with them.

John Bracket's Deposition

John Bracket aged about 44 testifieth that he has observed Thomas Wilkinson very much to frequent the house of John Durrant the last Summer and that he often times gone to the house & found Wilkinson there and the woman; her Husband not being at home, but never observed any wanton or lascivious carriage between them.

Sworn by John Bracket, & Samuel Trull, 18. 10 mo. 1680 [18 December 1680]
before me Jonathan Danforth

Sarah Trull's Deposition

Sarah the wife of John Trull, testifieth that about the latter end of last April, she took occasion to speak to the wife of John Durrant, concerning her keeping of company so much with Thomas Wilkinson, and suffering²⁴ him to keep so much at their house, and riding up and down behind him so much as she did; and told her that it was a great scandal to her name, & it was of a very bad report amongst her neighbors. The said Durrant's wife, manifested much displeasure at what she said & told her that she would yet do more for the said Wilkinson than she had before and would ride up and down with him, for they had no horse of their own and presently came Wilkinson to the house, & Durrant's wife went away with him & got upon Wilkinson's horse behind him, & they two rid thus the road towards her father Dutton's house: also the said Durrant's wife said that there was none would have such thoughts of them, but those that were lustily minded themselves.

Sworn by Sarah Trull, 20. 10 m. 80. [20 December 1680] before me Jonathan Danforth.
[written at left margin] Also she saith her husband can testify to the same.

John Chamberlain's Deposition

John Chamberlain, aged about 30, testifieth that he having heard much talk of Thomas Wilkinson keeping Company with John Durrant's wife & having occasion to go that way, called at Durrant's house and the door be in²⁵ but, the first time he knocked no body made answer, but Continuing knocking somebody bade him come in and there he found Wilkinson & Durrant's wife in the house and nobody else (the children he saw at a neighbor's house before he got thither), but he saw them doing nothing but sitting by the fire & he left them.

²² This probably refers to Vine Brook.

²³ Playing, particularly in a flirtatious or sexual way.

²⁴ allowing

²⁵ ajar

Sworn by John Chamberlain, 20. 10m. 1680. before me Jonathan Danforth.

Simon's Deposition

Simon Negro, servant²⁶ to the Reverend Mr. Whiting, aged about 2[?] testifieth that he being sent of an errand to John Durrant's, when he came there he found Goodman Wilkinson in the house Sporting & playing with John Durrant's wife: & her Husband being in the house bid them be quiet, but they still Continuing Goodman Durrant went out a door and left them, & the said Simon saith, that he then saw Wilkinson hug & embrace Durrant's wife in his arms & kissed her several time. The said Simon asked Goodman Wilkinson, if he would go home along with him, & he said by & by but having waited a while on him & he would not go, the said Simon came away & left them two playing together. Sworn the 20. 10 m. 80: before me Jonathan Danforth.

²⁶ Seventeenth-century colonists sometimes referred to slaves as "servants." Simon was a slave in 1680.