● THE COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

interpreter

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Colonial Apprenticeship

Gary Brumfield and Harold Gill answer some frequently asked questions about apprenticeship.

How long were apprenticeships?

This often asked question is difficult to answer because many apprenticeship contracts (indentures) were private arrangements between the master and the apprentice's parents and were not recorded in the public records. Apprenticeships ordered by the courts for orphans and poor children were recorded, but the length of them varied widely or were often stated only as to age twenty-one. Of the 110 apprenticeships recorded in York County from 1745 until 1789, 34 were "until twenty-one" and 64 were from four to seven years.

At what age were children apprenticed?

The ideal age might be considered fourteen so that a full seven-year apprenticeship could be served by age twenty-one, but this was seldom the actual practice. The shorter apprenticeships common in the colonies were achieved by starting somewhat later. Orphans were sometimes apprenticed quite young.

Were the lengths of apprenticeships different in different trades?

The York County records show as much difference within the same trade as from trade to trade. Differences that Europe's guild systems may have imposed were not found here because of the chronic labor shortage.

What was an indenture of apprenticeship?

It was a legal contract that expressed the obligations of the master and the apprentice. By the eighteenth century the content was fairly well standardized (occasionally printed forms were used). The body of the sample indenture is typical:

> WITNESSETH that the said John Stevens with the advice and consent of his Mother Anne Stevens doth put himself an Apprentice to the said George Charleton to learn the Trade, art, and Mistery of a Taylor and with him after the manner of an Apprentice to serve till he arrives to the Age of Twenty one Years to be fully compleat & ended During which time the said Apprentice his said Master faithfully shall serve, his secrets keep his Lawfull Commands Obey He Shall not contract Matrimoney within the said Term he shall not haunt Ordinary's nor Absent himself from his Masters Service Day or Night unlawfully but in all things as a Faithfull Apprentice he shall behave himself towards his said Master and Family during the said Term AND the said George Charleton Best means he can shall Teach and Instruct or cause to be taught and Instructed AND doth hereby Promise and oblige himself to find for his said Apprentice Good and Sufficient Meat Drink Washing Lodging & Cloathing during the Said Term and to Teach him to Read & Write and at the expiration of his term of servitude the said George Charleton obligeth himself to pay unto his apprentice what the law allows in such cases & agrements . . . At a Court of Hustings for the City of Williamsburg held the 5th Day of September 1748.

What laws governed apprenticeship in Virginia?

The basis of colonial laws of apprenticeship were the English 1562 Statue of Artificers and the 1601 Poor Law, which standardized customs long recognized and enforced by the guilds and local authorities.

The Virginia Poor Law of 1672 gave county courts the power to place all children, whose parents were unable to bring them up, as apprentices. Churchwardens were ordered to report children in this category.

The Orphan Act of 1705 empowered the Orphan's Courts to bind out all orphans whose estates were too small to support them. It also gave the court the power to hear complaints of apprentices for ill use by their master or failure to teach his trade.

Was there a guild system in Virginia?

No. By the eighteenth century the guild system was weak in England, and it was not established in Virginia.

Did apprentices have to pay for their apprenticeships?

It was not uncommon for a master to charge an apprenticeship fee, and sometimes even orphans had to pay.

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Apprenticeship, ***continued***

Were apprentices paid?

They were provided with room and board, and sometimes given a sum of money or set of tools at the end of their apprenticeship. Occasionally they were paid during the last few years of the term.

Were women apprenticed?

There are four females named in the 110 York County apprenticeships recorded from 1747 to 1789. Earlier York County records contain several others. Generally, these are for household work or textile trades (spinning, weaving, and knitting).

Were blacks apprenticed?

Yes, both free blacks and slaves were apprenticed. In the case of a slave, the legal contract was between the slave owner and the craftsman. The building trades and plantation support crafts relied heavily on skilled black labor. Crafts such as gunsmithing, cabinetmaking, baking, and bookbinding also employed black craftsmen.

What kind of work did an apprentice do?

In order to learn a trade, the apprentice eventually had to do all the various skilled work of the craft, but he might have spent a lot of time working as a semi-skilled laborer in the first years of his apprenticeship. Very little is known about this subject.

What hours did he work?

We don't have enough information to answer this question.

Where did he sleep?

Some contracts allowed the apprentice to live at his own home, while others required the master to provide room and board, in which case the apprentice lived in the master's house, although exact sleeping arrangements are not known.

How did he dress?

The evidence shows that apprentices dressed no differently from anyone else.

What is a journeyman?

A journeyman is one who has completed an apprenticeship and works for wages. The term comes from the French for "day man," not from traveling.

Where can I find our more about apprenticeship?

Ray Townsend's report, "Apprenticeship in Colonial Virginia," and follow-up work by Charles Bodie are available at the Craft Shops office, as is *The London Tradesman* (1747), a book valuable for an understanding of English traditions in apprenticeships.

Richard Taliaferro

Well known in Williamsburg today as the builder of the George Wythe House, Richard Taliaferro was a highly respected citizen of eighteenth-century tidewater Virginia. We know only a few things about Taliaferro's life because he lived in James City County for which the records no longer exist. (We don't even know if Richard was related to Charles Taliaferro, the local chairmaker). We surmise that the surname is pronounced "Tolliver" from variant—presumably phonetic—spellings in colonial documents.

Our Richard was born about 1705, the son of Francis and Elizabeth Catlett Taliaferro of Essex County and grandson of the Taliaferro immigrant, Robert, who owned a great deal of land along the Rappahannock River.

By 1736 at least Richard was living in James City County, for he was appointed justice of the peace that year. His nearly thousand-acre plantation was called Powhatan, probably after Powhatan Swamp, which it adjoined. The substantial brick dwelling he built there still stands, although it was gutted by fire in the 1860s. Now partly restored, it is visible from Ironbound Road.

Construction was Taliaferro's trade. A contemporary attested to his ability by calling him "our most Skillful Architect" for remodeling and enlarging the Governor's Palace in 1749. (The word *architect* was used to mean builder in this instance, rather than to describe someone formally trained in architecture.) Not long after that compliment he put up another long-lasting house now known by his son-in-law's name. We're not sure just when the Wythe House was completed, but it probably received George and Elizabeth Taliaferro Wythe as newlyweds in 1755. By Richard's will (probated in 1779) the Wythes were entitled to life right in the house on Palace Green, and Elizabeth's brother—also named Richard—inherited Powhatan.

—LP

Three Gabriel Maupins

"*Gabriel Maupain*, sa femme et 3 enfans" were among the Huguenot refugees who arrived in Virginia aboard the *Nassau* in 1700. The children's names were Gabriel, Mary, and Daniel, and their mother's Mary; thus began a confusing repetition of names.

Gabriel (I) leased a plantation near Williamsburg. By 1708 he operated a tavern there, for in that year he was brought before the county court for "retailing liquors without a lycense." The charge did no damage to his reputation, it seems, because three years later he was appointed constable for the lower precincts of Bruton Parish.

Maupin moved his tavern keeping operation to Williamsburg in the 1710s and ran it successfully until his death late that decade. His widow continued the business.

Gabriel, son of Gabriel and Mary, remains a shadowy figure. We know nothing of his occupation and very little about his personal life. He married a Judith (whose maiden name is not given in the records). Their children were, of course, Gabriel and Judith. The daughter died quite young, but the son became an affluent Williamsburg craftsman.

The third Gabriel inherited most of the estate of Mark Cosby, Williamsburg wheelwright and chaisemaker. (We suspect but can't prove a family connection between the Cosbys and Maupins.) Gabriel worked as a saddle- and harnessmaker and as a tavern keeper as well. In 1771 he bought Market Square Tavern, made additions and improvements to it, and announced he would carry on his businesses simultaneously at that location.

Gabriel married twice, first Easter, then Dorcas, and fathered two children. Mary was born in 1765, and ten years later a son was "christened by the patriotic name of GEORGE WASHINGTON." (Patriotism overrode the family tradition for repeating names.)

Gabriel (III) was appointed Keeper of the Public Magazine with the rank of captain in 1775 and held the post sixteen years. For his faithful service during the Revolution he received 4,000 acres of land.

—LP

The Carter Brothers

Among Williamsburg's prominent eighteenth-century residents were three sons of Thomasine and John Carter. (A fourth son Thomas is mentioned only once in available records; he may have died young or moved to another area.) It should be pointed out that this local family was not related to Robert "King" Carter of the Northern Neck.

John Carter, brother of James and William who were both apothecary-surgeons, was one of several men in eighteenth-century Williamsburg by that name. His father, also John, had been the Keeper of the Public Gaol; another kept tavern near the Capitol at midcentury; and a third did saddlery work in the 1780s.

The merchant John Carter was in business by 1755. Ten years later he and his brother James built a brick store-and-shop combination near the Raleigh, where John sold general merchandise for many years. He and his wife and children lived across the street from the store in what we know as the King's Arms Tavern, and later they bought a house at the corner of Francis and England streets.

John must have been ready to retire from storekeeping by 1772, since he advertised his place of business for rent that year. Eventually he sold his half of the Duke of Gloucester Street building to James Davis, a tailor.

Active in civic affairs, John served as chamberlain (like a treasurer) of the Common Council and was appointed to the committee supervising the building of the Williamsburg-James City County Courthouse.

A successful tradesman and respected lifelong citizen of Williamsburg, John Carter died here in 1793.

James Carter practiced medicine and sold drugs in town for about thirty years. He called his shop the Unicorn's Horn and operated it at two or three locations before settling in the western half of the brick building he and his merchant brother built. James took partners into his apothecary business, first Andrew Anderson (his former apprentice) for three years and later his brother William Carter, who eventually bought him out. Together the two attended ailing prisoners at the Gaol and students and Indian boys at the College. For their diligent attention during a smallpox

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Carter Brothers, *continued*
epidemic, the College made them a generous reward.

James, his wife, and children lived in several houses around town over the years; at one point he owned the entire block bounded by Scotland Street, Boundary Street, Henry Street, and a lane to the Palace lands. Dr. James Carter also held land in York and James City counties, including a "plantation...about three miles from the city."

Like his brother John, James Carter was a leader in town; they served together in directing the construction of the Courthouse of 1770.

William Carter seems to have been less attached to his hometown than were his brothers. He moved to Gloucester County in 1771 but stayed only a few years; by 1774 William was back in Williamsburg and in partnership with James at the Unicorn's Horn. In 1779 William took over the whole business, having paid James £1,000 for the western half of the building with all the drugs and equipment for the shop.

Seven years later he was living in Richmond where he had an apothecary shop near the Eagle Tavern. Evidently William still owned and operated the shop here too; his newspaper advertisement in 1786 announced his interest in a manager for the Williamsburg business and mentions his problem with deafness. Having been repeatedly offered for sale without result, the Carter property near the Raleigh was auctioned off in 1795.

William died in 1799 at Richmond.

—LP

Occurrences

The Geddy House parlor will be the site of a new interpretive program in needlework this summer. From June 9 to August 13, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00 to 5:00 P.M., Liz Ackert of the research department and some young ladies of the town she has instructed in eighteenth-century stitchery will demonstrate their skills. The girls, who were part of the children's apprenticeship program this spring, will choose their own designs and stitches from examples of the period. Ms. Ackert will work a teaching sampler based upon two antique Virginia samplers, one the work of Ann Pasteur Maupin of Williamsburg, who was ten years old when she made it in 1791, and the other done by Sellah Fulgham of Isle of Wight County in 1761.

Needlework will also be part of the characterization of "Ann Blair" by Tori Eberlein, actress, in this summer's living history program.

We hope you'll design to see these needlework interpretations this summer, and get the point.

The King's English

Once again, many of these words were suggested by interpreters during in-service training:

Arrack—liquor distilled from fermented sap of the coco-palm (coconut tree) or from rice and sugar fermented with the coconut juice. This liquor was very expensive. It was always used in mixed beverages, especially punches. Arrack punch was served at the most festive occasions in colonial Virginia.

Cocoa—a corruption of the Spanish word *cacao*, the Mexican name of the cacao-seed. By 1604 a beverage made from the seeds of the cacao-tree was called *chocolate.*

Commissary—an officer exercising jurisdiction as the representative of the bishop. The Reverend James Blair was Virginia's first commissary of the bishop of London.

Cresset—an iron basket to hold pitched rope, wood, or coal to be burned for light.

Hustings—the name given to the municipal courts of Williamsburg and Norfolk. The mayor, recorder, and six aldermen sat as judges with jurisdiction over misdemeanors and civil suits up to a limit of £20. Provision was made for appeal to the General Court from the hustings court.

Glebe—a portion of land assigned to a clergyman for his use to produce additional income.

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