

HISTORIC 
ST. MARY'S CITY

For Teachers:

INDENTURED SERVANTS



PHYSICAL ADDRESS

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INDENTURED SERVANTS

For Discussion:

Most of the people who came to Maryland in the 17th century came as indentured servants. An indenture was an agreement between a person who was willing to work for another for a certain amount of time in exchange for passage to America, a place to live, and food and clothing during the length of the indenture. In Maryland, a person served as an indentured servant on average about four to five years.

Most indentured servants were men who were often poor and saw little chance to make their lives better if they stayed in England. Their lives as servants were often hard, especially if their masters did not treat them fairly. At the end of his/her term, a servant was to receive a new suit of clothing, one axe, two hoes, three barrels of corn, and the rights to fifty acres of land.

The newly-freed servant was responsible for paying for the land to be surveyed and registered with the court.

INDENTURED SERVANTS

Most indentured servants who came to Maryland had no special skills. As Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore, planned for the colony, he hoped to attract servants with specific skills but he decided that any young man who was willing to work hard even if he had no special skill would be welcome. His recommendations included a carpenter as being “of all others the most necessary” and the following:

mill-wright

boate-wright

potter

ship-wright

whee-le-wright

mason

brick-maker

bricklayer

woodworker

joyner [joiner]

fisherman

turner

sawyer

gardener

smith

cutler

mill

leatherdresser

INDENTURED SERVANTS

Activity:

Have students research and identify each of the skilled labor positions suggested by Lord Baltimore.

How many of these skills are still done today?

How many of these trades have been replaced by machines and/or other forms of technology?

Why do you think Lord Baltimore listed these particular skills? Why did he feel a carpenter was “most necessary”?

Extension:

Have students assume the roles of skilled laborers based on Lord Baltimore’s list.

Have other students assume the roles of gentlemen looking to secure the services of skilled indentured servants.

Negotiate the terms of the indenture based on how well the servant can argue his/her need in the new colony.

INDENTURED SERVANTS

INDENTURE CONTRACT

The forme of binding a servant

This indenture made the day of in the yeere of our
Soveraigne Lord King Charles, etc. betweene of the
one party, and on the other party, Witnesseth,
that the said doth hereby covenant promise, and grant, to
and with the said his Executors and Assignes, to serve him
from the day of the date hereof, untill his first and next arrivall in Maryland;
and after for and during the tearme of yeeres, in such service and
employment, as the said or his assignes shall there
employ him, according to the custome of the Countrey in the like kind. In
consideration whereof, the said doth promise and grant, to and
with the said to pay for his passing, and to find him with
Meat, Drinke, Apparell and Lodging, with other necessities during the said
terme; and at the end of the said terme, to give him one whole yeeres provision
of Corne, and fifty acres of Land, according to the order of the countrey. In
witnessse whereof, the said hath hereunto put his hand and seale,
the day and yeere above written.

Sealed and delivered in the presence of