Parish apprenticeship in colonial Virginia: A study of Northumberland County, 1680–1695 and 1750–1765

Barbara Lynn Doggett

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PARISH APPRENTICESHIP IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA

A STUDY OF NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, 1680-1695 AND 1750-1765

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Barbara Lynn Doggett

1981
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to Professor James Whittenburg for his patience and his invaluable advice and assistance during the past two years of my research and writing. I also wish to thank Harold Gill from the Research Department of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation for sharing with me his findings about apprenticeship in York and Princess Anne Counties, Virginia. Finally, my gratitude is extended to Professors Whittenburg, Axtell, and Tate for their final reading and criticism of the thesis.
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The purpose of this study is to examine the social institution of apprenticeship as it operated in colonial Northumberland County, Virginia. With the aid of various public records, this local historical study focuses on one of the less conspicuous elements of the colonial population: those children, mainly orphans, who were bound out as apprentices by the local courts. Inherited from England, the institution reflects both humanitarian and pragmatic concerns of early Virginians. Apprenticeship afforded indigent children immediate care in a foster home as well as the opportunity to acquire a skilled trade by which they could become productive and independent members of society. By placing children under the charge of responsible local citizens, the system relieved the parishes of a financial and social burden. Practiced extensively in colonial Virginia, apprenticeship combined fairly effectively the functions of orphanages and elementary and vocational schools. Although the nature of the relationship depended on the individuals involved, the institution generally benefited both master and apprentice. Colonial law and local governments protected the rights of each party according to the initial terms of the indenture agreement.

By the eighteenth century, trade instruction had become as important a feature of parish apprenticeship as the maintenance of children. In Northumberland County, carpentry and tailoring seemed to have been the trades most conducive to success. Despite worsening economic conditions after 1760, a majority of the former apprentices who remained in Northumberland attained a comfortable middle class status. They continued to practice their crafts or farm, acquire capital, and hold public offices. Many served as masters and guardians to parish children and bound out their own offspring, thus perpetuating the institution. Although numbers dwindled, county courts continued to apprentice orphans into the early nineteenth century.
PARISH APPRENTICESHIP IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA:
A STUDY OF NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, 1680-1695 AND 1750-1765
CHAPTER I
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE, PURPOSE AND
ORGANIZATION OF THE PRESENT STUDY

In recent years historical scholarship has reflected a growing interest in the societies of early America. Changing currents of thought and the use of new sources and methodology have led to a proliferation of "community studies" by economic and social historians. This trend is exemplified by the early research of the New England demographers such as John Demos, Kenneth Lockridge, Philip Greven, James Henretta, and Daniel Scott Smith. Although these historians focus on a small geographic region, their works are holistic in that they encompass the entire picture within a microcosm: the interrelationship between geographic, economic, and social factors which determine the nature of the society.

Sources of the new social history include county court orders, marriage, birth, probate, and vestry records, deeds, and tax lists, as well as the more traditional manuscript accounts and laws. Often borrowing their methodology from the social sciences, the new social historians examine family structure, mortality and birth rates, economic status, social mobility, migration patterns, and many other factors within the confines of a particular community and a specific period. By tapping the great wealth of information in the public records and reconstructing data about the individual members of the community, one can make meaningful interpretations of society. Beginning
at the base of society, the historian tries to view the entire community from many perspectives. He determines what conditions existed, how these changed over time in response to a variety of factors, and most importantly, how they affected the lives of the people in the society. Such studies not only allow the historian to study changes over a period of time, but they also permit him to compare and contrast different communities and to make generalizations about the larger society of which the community was a part.

Demographic and economic studies have focused on the less visible members of colonial society, often neglected by earlier historians. Undoubtedly, a certain amount of elitism contributed to the tendency to underrepresent groups such as the poor, women, blacks, Indians, and indentured servants. Most of the records themselves are biased in favor of the middle-to-upper class planters who dominated the colonial government, economy, and society. The less visible groups, however, formed the majority of the population. In order to depict accurately the life of the "ordinary people" in the colonial South, one must explore a variety of approaches, sources, and methodologies.

In recent years an intensive reexamination of the Chesapeake communities has produced a renascence of the study of southern colonial history. Changing currents in historiography, reflecting transformations in the society at large, have spurred research on the Chesapeake society by historians such as Aubrey Land, Russell Menard, Lorena Walsh, Anita and Darrett Rutman, Robert Wheeler, Kevin Kelly, and others. Their research has led to a proliferation of high-quality articles and dissertations, but few books. This group has been instrumental in the portrayal of the seventeenth-century Chesapeake as an unstable society, characterized by high mortality rates, dominance
of young males, and fluid social and political structures.

The Chesapeake historians of the 1970s relied heavily on quantification, but increasingly, social historians are recognizing the importance of combining traditional methods of research with statistical analyses. This is particularly true for the colonial historian who faces the problem of a paucity of extant—and legible—primary records. Posing innovative questions and carefully weighing their quantitative findings against their own knowledge and sense of judgment, the social historians gain new insights into their subjects. In conjunction with the best of the traditional historical accounts by Philip Bruce, T.J. Wertenbaker, and Wesley Frank Craven which emphasize political institutions, many of the new community studies provide a detailed, balanced, and accurate picture of the early Chesapeake society.

The dearth of material written on the subject of apprenticeship in this region reflects the general scarcity of histories of the colonial South. Abbott Emerson Smith's *Colonists in Bondage* (1947), James Ballagh's *White Servitude in the Colony of Virginia* (1895), and Robert S. Cope's *Carry Me Back: Slavery and Servitude in Seventeenth-Century Virginia* (1973) emphasized indentured servants who were imported to America from abroad. In *The Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century* (1910), Phillip Bruce discussed apprenticeship only briefly in relation to the systems of education and poor relief. Paul Howard Douglas's *American Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Education* (1921) provided a general account of the system from its English roots through modern times. Expressing a positive view of colonial apprenticeship, the study is basically descriptive. Another useful source is Grace Abbott's *The Child and the State* (1968) which described the legal basis and history of American apprenticeship as part of a larger
discussion of the legal position of children in early American society.  

Studies of apprenticeship and servitude in New York and New England by Robert Francis Seybolt and Lawrence W. Towner, respectively, provided interesting and useful comparisons to the institutions in the South. Seybolt's book, a more traditional work, traced the legal history of apprenticeship and described its general operation in New York. Towner viewed apprenticeship as a family institution and as a device for the socialization and education of children.

Three of the most important secondary sources on the subject include: Parish Education in Colonial Virginia (1932) by Guy F. Wells, Government and Labor in Early America (1946) by Richard Morris, and Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America, 1607-1783 (1931) by Marcus Jernegan. Studying laws and parish vestry books, Wells provided a detailed description of Virginia's parish apprenticeship after 1727. He underestimated the number of children (particularly orphans) who were bound out and adopted a negative view of the institution.

Both Wells and Richard Morris argued convincingly that, although altruistic educational concerns were certainly present, the principal motive of the men who regulated apprenticeship was to provide support for indigent children. Morris's study included a detailed description of the legal background and mechanics of the institution. Basing his study on laws and court records, he viewed apprenticeship in theoretical terms, isolated from the people whose lives were shaped by it.

Marcus Jernegan's book devoted two chapters to the subject of apprenticeship. A detailed analysis of the apprenticeship bonds of two parishes during the eighteenth century included an examination of trades, kinds of children bound, length of terms, and educational provisions. Although his study is more descriptive than interpretive, by collecting
data about the individual apprentices in order to make a comprehensive study of the system, Jernegan anticipated the approaches and methodology of later social historians.

Jane Towne's thesis, "Care of the Poor in Albemarle Parish," discussed apprenticeship as one method of poor relief. After counting and studying the poor households in Albemarle Parish, she argued that apprenticeship was an effective and important means of providing public assistance for indigent children. Evelyn Thomas adopted a similar approach in her thesis entitled, "Orphan's Court in Colonial Virginia" which focused on orphans with substantial estates who were appointed guardians. Raymond Townsend's brief paper, "Apprenticeship in Colonial Virginia" (1960), based on a study of the York County court orders, provided a summary of the laws and everyday working of the system. "The Operation of the English Old Poor Law in America" by Howard Mackey included important background information about English precedents and the establishment of the institution in the colonies. Children in English Society by Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt and The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800 afforded detailed, analytical studies of the interaction between law, practice, and ideology.

In addition to the traditional Virginia histories by Wesley Frank Craven, T.J. Wertenbaker, and Philip Bruce, I relied on the most comprehensive and important study of recent years, American Slavery, American Freedom (1975) by Edmund S. Morgan. A number of the recent Chesapeake studies by Aubrey Land, Robert Wheeler, Kevin Kelly, and Lorena Walsh were valuable for their quantitative methodology as well as for the actual content of information. The regions studied in the dissertations of Walsh and Wheeler were, respectively, Charles
County, Maryland, and Lancaster County, Virginia. Located in the same geographic region as Northumberland County, Virginia these counties undoubtedly shared many of its patterns of settlement and economic development.

The greatest problem a historian encounters in studying apprenticeship is that few books deal with the subject per se and those which do tend to be more general and descriptive than analytical. Most books stop after providing a detailed account of the legal history and a description of the features and mechanics of the institution. Focusing on the colonial statutes and on a small number of cases, they viewed apprenticeship as it related to legal and political institutions. Such studies are in danger of losing touch with the reality of the experience because they focus on abstract theory as represented by law. Although a few historians, such as Wells, Thomas, Jernegan, and Towner enriched their studies with the use of parish records, they did not utilize these sources to their greatest potential.

The major deficiency among the writings about apprenticeship, then, is a failure to examine the institution within its socio-economic context. Little is done to characterize the actual participants in the system: apprentice, father, and master. By collecting data about all apprentices and their families within certain geographic and time boundaries, one can examine realistically the institution within its social framework and assess its importance with some measure of precision. This approach is the one which will be used in the present study.

Primary sources for this research include the Court Orders and Record Books of Northumberland County, Virginia, which is located in
the peninsula between the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers in the "Northern Neck" region. Created in 1635, the County has a complete set of court records dating from its founding into the nineteenth century. These Order Books are vital to a study of parish apprenticeship because they include the directions from the justices of the county courts to bind out orphans and destitute children as apprentices. Such orders specify the names of the parties involved and all provisions of indenture. Secondly, the court records contain further information about apprentices and their families as well as accounts of problems between masters and their apprentices.

Equally valuable are the Record Books which contain wills and estate inventories of many masters, fathers, and apprentices. Not only do these sources describe patterns of inheritance, they often provide specific information about family structure, wealth, occupation, and personal property. A small number of apprentice indentures are found in these records as well. Unfortunately, thirty-two years are missing from the Record Books between 1673 and 1705. Because of this loss and because of the scarcity of apprenticeship accounts in other seventeenth-century sources, any conclusions about the institution in the seventeenth century must be more tentative than those for later years.

Deeds, the third type of information found in the Record Books, were examined only briefly. The land records are valuable because they permit one to assess a person's wealth in terms of the ownership of land. Although it is beyond the scope of this project, a systematic study of the deeds in one or two counties during the colonial period would enable a more complete evaluation of the economic and social status of its inhabitants. There are problems in this kind of study, of course, because often the records indicate only the total acreage of land and
nothing about its quality. It can be argued convincingly that a study of the personal estates and officeholding records in conjunction with an examination of the number of tithables per householder (i.e., the number of dependent laborers under one's charge) can enable a researcher to make a fairly accurate evaluation of socio-economic status.

A second problem encountered in the study of colonial Northumberland County is the absence of a complete set of tax lists or tithable rolls. Each householder was required by law to pay a tax on every male between ages sixteen and sixty and all his slaves above age sixteen. Because the number of laborers in a household determined to a large extent the amount of tobacco that a planter could produce, tax lists are a valuable economic indicator. Although the total number of taxables in Northumberland County is recorded in the court orders yearly, there is no systematic listing of the individual householders and their tithables. Nevertheless, these summaries enable one to determine population growth patterns. One seventeenth-century tax list survives for the year 1679 when the colonial government ordered such a record in order to recruit men, arms, and provisions for a fort in the county. Tithable lists also survive for the years 1782 and 1783. In addition, the county Fee Books can be obtained from the years 1718-1724, 1727-1737, 1740-1749, and 1780, listing the names and amount of money which persons in the community owed for court fees. These are useful in studying patterns of persistence and migration.

Marriage bonds and birth records are also available for parts of the county from the eighteenth century onwards. Research was facilitated by the record of births from St. Stephen's Parish, 1661-1810. Although partially illegible, the Vestry Book of Wicomico, the second parish in the county, exists for the years 1703-1795. This source
includes important information for the social historian about family structure and economic status.

Although court records provide the most information about parish apprenticeship in Northumberland, vestry records are the most valuable sources in other Virginia counties. The Vestry Books of Fredericksville Parish in Louisa County and Dettingen Parish in Prince William County contain numerous cases, offering a useful comparison with Northumberland. Records from Petsworth, Bristol, and Blisland parishes also show how local officials provided care and education for children who were public charges. Some vestry accounts, however, contain no or few orders binding out apprentices. This does not mean necessarily that few children were apprenticed. It is likely that the clerk of the court failed to copy the indenture (or orders for binding out children) into the permanent records or that separate apprenticeship books were kept, but have been lost. A review of the traditional manuscript sources uncovered only a few significant accounts about the operation of colonial apprenticeship. Perhaps other family records and plantation accounts might reveal more insights about the institution in colonial Virginia.

In the present study, I intend to provide both descriptive and analytical accounts of apprenticeship in colonial Virginia. Some of the questions which I hope to answer include: Why did the institution develop and what functions did it serve in the southern colonies? How extensive was apprenticeship in Virginia? How and why did the system change over time? Was it an effective institution of education and public poor relief? Did it benefit society and the individuals involved? Were there viable alternatives? Secondly, I will portray the practice within its colonial setting, characterizing the persons whose lives it shaped.
The thesis is arranged into five major parts. A historiographic essay is followed by an introductory section about the history and the legal and ideological foundations of English apprenticeship. Chapter III contrasts apprenticeship with indentured servitude and distinguishes between trade and parish apprenticeship. After relating the legal history of the institution and its operation in colonial Virginia, there is a discussion of the legal position of the master and his apprentice. The next chapter explores the interrelated motives and functions of apprenticeship in colonial Virginia. Although the focus of the section is on eastern Virginia, most of the observations are relevant to the larger Chesapeake region and to much of Virginia's Piedmont as well. Based on the studies of individual cases from Northumberland County and several other Virginia parishes, the final chapter attempts to describe and then to assess apprenticeship through a quantitative analysis. The study focuses on ninety-nine children bound out between 1750 and 1765 and sixty-one others bound in late seventeenth-century Northumberland County.
Notes for Chapter I


5 Paul Howard Douglas, American Apprenticeship and Industrial Education (New York, 1921).


15 See 2n.

16 Northumberland County, Order Book, 1678-1698 (7 June 1679), 37-38.


18 Wicomico Parish, Northumberland County, Virginia, Vestry Book, 1703-1795, Virginia State Archives, Richmond.


CHAPTER II
INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH APPRENTICESHIP

Originating in the towns of medieval Europe, the institution of apprenticeship provided a means by which young men could learn a skilled trade. The system was regulated by the guilds which sought to promote specific trades and to maintain high standards of workmanship. Apprenticeship was essentially a contractual relationship between a master who taught his trade and the apprentice who worked under him for a specific number of years. Originally, the system relied on private agreements between the master and the parents of the young apprentice, but increasingly, the guilds imposed regulations in order to prevent abuses. Apprenticeship was viewed by contemporaries as a normal and accepted means for a minor to receive vocational training.¹

Written in formal legal language and signed by the apprentice, his parents or guardian, and the master, English indenture contracts, required by law after 1562, were authorized by the justices of the court and recorded by the county clerks. Initially, the "indenture" referred to the jagged or indented edge produced when the two copies of the contract were torn apart, one for each party. Many indentures were printed by the late seventeenth century.²

In exchange for his apprentice's labor, the master was required by law and by the terms of indenture to give instruction in his "mystery" or art and to provide clothing, food, drink, and lodging.³ Provisions for literary education were often included in these indentures by the
late seventeenth century. Although law determined the general terms of
the relationship, individual variation in the contracts and in local
custom was typical. For his part, the apprentice promised faithful ser­
vice and obedience to his master and agreed to abstain from a number of
activities, including drinking, gambling, visiting taverns and play­
houses, committing fornication, marrying without permission, and selling
or lending his master's goods. By the eighteenth century, terms of ser­
vice generally expired at age twenty-one for male and at age eighteen
or marriage for female apprentices. These became the standard terms
for American apprentices as well. At the expiration of his or her in­
denture, an apprentice received freedom dues such as clothing, food and
livestock.

The English Statute of Artificers (1562) transformed apprenticeship
from a collection of local laws and practices into a national institu­
tion. Designed to expand industry and reduce pauperism by employing
idle persons, the law authorized justices of the peace to apprentice
any able-bodied, unemployed person under age twenty-one to a trade or
to husbandry (farming). Serving as a means of social control by the
ruling classes, this law reflected the belief that pauper children
needed to be kept busy in some useful employment for the good of society
at large.

The statute set minimum terms of service to expire after seven
years and not before age twenty-four and required apprentices to be
bound by written indentures recorded in court. During his term of ser­
vice, the apprentice was to live in the home of his master who stood in
loco parentis. The law authorized the justices of the county courts
to settle disputes between masters and servants. Any justice had the
power to punish an apprentice, reprimand an errant master, or to release
a child from his bond if he were mistreated. 7

Concern for the care of indigent children led to a second body of legislation which shaped the nature of English and American apprenticeship. In the Poor Law of 1601, Parliament consolidated previous laws into one comprehensive act designed to provide care and employment for poor, idle persons dependent on the local parishes for support. This statute served as the foundation for the practice of parish apprenticeship in both England and America until the nineteenth century. 8

Prior to 1700, public poor relief depended on the charity of the church and of private individuals. Following the example of London, several towns including Bristol, Plymouth, and Norwich established orphanages and training schools for destitute children during the sixteenth century. London officials rounded up vagrant children off the streets and carried them to Bridewell, a house of correction, to receive proper care and an education. 9 In rural areas where institutional facilities were unavailable, disadvantaged children were boarded out in foster homes.

Systematizing and nationalizing the public poor relief practices, the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 provided for a system of compulsory apprenticeship. It reflected the strong spirit of idealism and reform in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England which promoted a much more active role of the government in attacking the social problem of poverty. The Poor Law authorized justices of the peace and overseers of the poor to bind out parish children whose parents could not support them properly. It set the expiration of terms at ages twenty-four for males and twenty-one (or marriage) for females. 10 The primary motive in this kind of apprenticeship was to provide care for indigent children and to relieve the local parishes from the financial burden of supporting them. Law
transferred this responsibility to private persons who had the financial means to do so. Originally, instruction in a trade was not required in cases of parish apprenticeship, but it was often included.

In order to understand how a social institution like apprenticeship developed and changed over the years, it is necessary to examine briefly some of the basic ideas of Englishmen about child care, parental responsibility, and the role of education. Anglo-Americans inherited a common set of ideas in addition to the precedents of law and local custom. Although apprenticeship was modified in response to the changing needs of a new society, many old ideas continued to influence the actions of the transplanted Englishmen.

Authority and formality characterized the sixteenth and seventeenth-century relationship between English parent and child. Afraid of being too indulgent with their children, parents treated them with severity as compared to the standards of Western society today. The belief that childhood was only a brief introduction before the assumption of serious responsibilities led parents to expect their children to think and behave like mature adults at an early age. Among most segments of society, it was a common practice to "put out" one's children in the care of a boarding school, a nurse, a relative, or a master. Many believed that a child could be raised more effectively under the care of someone else who would have less tendency to spoil him.

Historians such as Ivy Pinchbeck, Margaret Hewitt, and Lawrence Stone point out that high infant mortality rates prevented the individual child from becoming the central focus of the family or the subject of strong parental interest and affection in early English society. Given that a very large number of infants and children never attained their majority, it is no wonder that parents adopted a
detached, fatalistic attitude toward their offspring. Most children never reached adulthood before losing at least one parent. It was not at all unusual for a household to consist of a widower, a widow, their children, orphaned nieces and nephews as well as servants and apprentices. Death, orphanhood, and households consisting of combined families were all familiar to the seventeenth-century Englishman.

By the early eighteenth century a new type of family structure had evolved which was characterized by greater personal autonomy and strong affective ties among the members of a nuclear family. These changes took place gradually, reaching the lower classes by the latter decades of the century. An increasing desire for privacy in the home was reflected by the movement of apprentices and laborers from their masters' homes to separate households. As the paternal control of masters over their adolescent labor force lessened, the relationship came to resemble more closely that between the modern employer and employee.

English apprenticeship deteriorated during the eighteenth century, as signalled by a change in the nature of the institution and by a decline in the number of children bound out. According to Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, the institution had diminished into a system of boarding by the late seventeenth century. They argued that the numerous laws passed to curtail widespread neglect and exploitation of apprentices reflected a degeneration from sixteenth-century ideals. English society came to hold the poor in contempt; poverty was viewed as a state of sinfulness. Such attitudes encouraged the stereotypic image of the poor as lazy, drunken, and licentious folk. Elizabethan ideals of nurturing and educating indigent children were replaced by an emphasis on the usefulness of allowing poor children to "earn their way."

The latter half of the eighteenth century saw a decline in the
thousands of poor schools which had been set up at public expense early in the century. Although these schools were created to impart religious instruction and basic rudimentary education to disadvantaged children, they came to resemble workhouses. Increasingly, charity schools were viewed by the public as agencies of social order and sources of cheap labor rather than schools.¹⁹

Historians such as Richard Morris argue that English apprenticeship was inadequate as an agency of education: "it was less a system of apprenticeship than a system of compulsory support and guardianship in which parish funds were used to compensate masters in part for taking young children during their unproductive years."²⁰ By the end of the eighteenth century, parish apprenticeship was falling into disuse in rural areas. To survive, it needed more than local supervision; what was needed was a more centralized control from the national government as well as public support.²¹ With the gradual urbanization and industrialization in the following century, conflict developed between supporters of a laissez-faire system and philanthropic reformers. Gradually, the latter gained power; they stirred public compassion for the plight of the poor and transformed England with a new wave of social legislation.
Notes for Chapter II


8 43 Eliz. c.2 "An act for the relief of the poor" (1601), Pickering, Statutes, VII, 30-37; Guy F. Wells, *Parish Education in Colonial Virginia* (New York, 1923), 72.


10 43 Eliz. c.2 (1601), Pickering, Statutes, VII, 31.

11 Pinchbeck and Hewitt, *Children in English Society*, 298.


14 Stone, *Family, Sex, Marriage*, 58.
15 Ibid., 7-9, 255.
18 Pinchbeck and Hewitt, *Children in English Society*, 310.
19 Ibid., 289, 309.
21 Pinchbeck and Hewitt, *Children in English Society*, 258.
CHAPTER III
LEGAL FOUNDATION AND OPERATION OF VIRGINIA APPRENTICESHIP

Based on a long line of English laws and practices, the institution of apprenticeship was transferred to America in the seventeenth century and adapted to the needs of an expanding colonial society. The largest number of apprentices in colonial Virginia were parish apprentices, poor children (primarily orphans) who were bound locally to persons having the financial means to support them. Although many of the laws concerning indentured servants applied to apprentices, the two forms of labor were distinct. Law, local custom, and the individual terms of the indenture contract influenced the operation of apprenticeship in colonial Virginia. As in England, local government and church officials held the actual power of regulating the institution. They acted to fulfill the legal obligations of apprentice indentures and demonstrated concern for the welfare of young apprentices under their charge.

In 1617, the Lord Mayor of London authorized the collection of charitable funds to ship 100 poor children as apprentices to Virginia. The City paid three pounds to transport and another two pounds to equip each child. After serving as apprentices until age twenty-one, the freedmen were to receive fifty acres of public land to be held in fee simple at a rent of one shilling per year. This operation was so successful that the Virginia Company requested 2 other shipments of 100 children 12 years of age and older in 1620 and in 1622. After 1622, more of these children were shipped to New England than to the southern
colonies. It is difficult to determine precisely how many of these groups of children arrived in America through charitable contributions of Englishmen. A few English children were kidnapped or "spirited" away and transported to America as indentured servants. The great majority of apprentices, however, were born in the colonies and bound out locally.²

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between "indentured servants" and "apprentices" in the colonial records because these terms were used interchangeably and because of some similarities between them. Bound by indenture, both apprentices and servants owed obedience to their masters for a temporary period of time. After terms expired they were freedmen. Despite these similarities, the institutions were different in origin and in nature.

Indentured servitude was primarily an economic institution developed to meet the high demand for labor in the American colonies during the seventeenth century. It provided the means by which an immigrant could work for a specified number of years under any person who agreed to pay the cost of his Atlantic passage, his food, lodging, and clothing during the term of servitude, as well as freedom dues at its expiration. Like the system of Negro slavery, it was designed to produce a cheap source of unskilled labor for the expanding tobacco economy of the colonial Tidewater. Unlike slavery, it was voluntary except in the cases of transported convicts or kidnapped persons.³

Although some of the young indentured servants were called "apprentices" and were taught a handicraft, most were employed in the tobacco fields. Servitude offered the prospective emigrant a way to cross the Atlantic, become acclimated, and acquire some experience and a little capital (land and freedom dues) before attempting to make a living on
his own. Studies of the lists of servants emigrating from England in the seventeenth century indicate that they came from all social classes except the nobility; a majority of servants were yeoman farmers and craftsmen rather than laborers. Most were unmarried males between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four. Seeking better opportunities in a new land, many who had a little money of their own indentured themselves for short terms, often to another immigrant. It is estimated that more than a half of the colonists in seventeenth-century America immigrated as servants.4

Based upon medieval tradition, apprenticeship was a special form of servitude in which a master instructed a minor in a particular trade. Most indentured servants were adults; most apprentices were under twenty-one. In general, apprentices's contracts were not assignable. A master could not sell or trade his apprentice without the permission of the child, his guardian or parent and of the local courts. In the case of indentured servants, however, unexpired terms of service could be transferred from one master to another without consent.5

An apprentice's work helped compensate his master for the cost incurred in supporting and educating him. Although the colonists certainly recognized the economic advantages of apprenticeship, these considerations were secondary.6 One crucial difference between indentured servants and apprentices is the kind of work in which they were engaged. Children were to be taught a useful trade and to be kept busy, but not to be employed in hard labor. Some indentures stipulated that a child could not be put to work in the fields.7 Although they viewed children as a viable source of labor, the colonists, nevertheless, restricted the exploitation of minors.

In the case of apprenticeship, the master held an additional
responsibility to provide the child with a rudimentary education as well as religious and moral training. The apprentice was to be assimilated into his master's family as an adopted child. While indentured servitude was an international institution, apprenticeship was administered locally. The county officials who bound out a child were familiar with his family and particular circumstances. In some cases, disadvantaged children bound out by the courts, particularly females, received no trade instruction. Because their masters served as substitute fathers, responsible for their literary, religious, and moral training, the relationship may be classified as apprenticeship rather than indentured servitude. The two institutions then, were very different in origin and purpose. Apprenticeship was viewed by Englishmen in England and the American colonies as a familiar and acceptable means of training youth. In general, apprenticeship provided greater rewards and connoted a higher social status than indentured servitude.

Before examining the legal foundations of apprenticeship in colonial Virginia, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by "parish" and by "trade" or "regular" apprenticeship. Some historians include both forms in their discussions of apprenticeship; others distinguish between them. "Trade apprenticeship" refers to the practice in which a father privately bound his son to a master craftsman in order to teach him a trade. If the child were old enough he might bind himself with the permission of his parent or guardian. Except for its longer term of service, the following indenture of apprenticeship is typical in its format and provisions:

This Indenture made this 13th day in April in the year of our Lord 1761Witnesseth that Richard Corbill a bastard Child of
Judith Blundall hath of his own free & Voluntary will (or by & with the Consent of his Mother) placed & bound himself apprentice unto George Phillips of the County of Northumberland & Parish of Wiccomico Millwright to be Taught in the said Trade Science, or Occupation of a Millwright which he the said George Phillips now useth & with him as an apprentice to dwell continue and serve from the day of the date hereof untill he the said Richard Corbill Shall arrive or Attain to the Age of Twenty three Years during all which said Term the said Apprentice his said Master will & faithfully Shall Serve his Secrets keep his Lawfull Commands Every where gladly do, Hurt to his said Master he shall not do nor willfully suffer to be done but the same to his power shall let or forth with Give notice thereof to, his said Master the Goods of his said Master he shall not Imbezzle or waste nor Lend them without his Consent to any, at Cards Dice or any other unlawful Games he shall not play Taverns or Ale Houses he shall not haunt or frequent Fornication he shall not Commit Matrimony he shall not contract, from the Service of his said Master he shall not at any time depart or absent himself Without his said Masters Leave but in all things as a Good & faithfull servant shall & will Demean & behave himself toward his said Master & all his during the said Term and the said Master his said Apprentice the said Trade Science or Occupation of a Millwright which he now useth will all things thereunto belonging Shall & will Teach & Instruct or otherwise Cause to be well & Sufficiently Taught & Instructed after the best way & manner that he can & also the said Apprentice Shall be Taught to read Write & Cypher as far as the rule of three and shall & will allow unto his said Apprentice
Meat Drink Washing Lodging & Apparrel both in Linen & woolen
and all other necessaries both in Sickness & in health meet and
Convenient for Such an apprentice during the Term aforesaid...

Because many of these trade apprenticeships were never recorded by the court clerks, only a small number of indentures such as this one survives. Although they are included in this study, they comprise only a small number of the total cases.

The majority of cases which form the foundation for the present study are true "parish apprentices," disadvantaged children bound out by justices or vestrymen to local craftsmen or planters. The records of these cases are found in the county court orders or in parish vestry accounts. Most of these children were orphans who sometimes served longer terms than regular apprentices because they were bound out at earlier ages. An example of the usual provisions of parish apprenticeship can be seen in the following order from Northumberland County:

William Danks orphan of George Danks deced. is by the Court bound to William Morton until he arrives at the age of Twenty one years he being born the 11th day of Dec 1751 On Consideration of which the said Morton is to Learn his said Apprentice to read, Write, and Cypher and also the trade of a Taylor & to find and provide for him Sufficient Cloathing, Meat, Drink, Washing and Lodging. For the due performance of which the said Morton with William Taite and David Boyd his Securities Acknowledged themselves bound to the Court in the Penalty of 5,000 pounds Tobacco.

Both kinds of apprentices were bound locally to the same trades, so the differences between them seems negligible. Aside from the initial
circumstances of their binding out, the records do not differentiate between them. Both are called "apprentices" or "servants." The courts showed concern for the welfare of all apprentices and, in all likelihood, both received similar treatment in the homes of their masters. The term "apprenticeship" in this study refers to any child who was bound locally, whether by his parents or by the courts and whether or not a trade provision was included. Again, because the colonial records include many more poor apprentices (orphans, bastards, and neglected children), than the so-called "trade apprentices," the former comprise the majority of cases on which the conclusions are based.

Sometimes planters apprenticed a young Negro slave to an artisan. Unlike the case with a white apprentice, the Negro did not gain his freedom at the expiration of his apprenticeship. He returned to his master under whom he practiced a building trade, shoemaking, coopers, or some other craft needed in the everyday operation of a plantation. Masters often hired out these black artisans to their neighbors. A number of free blacks also became independent craftsmen through the apprenticeship system. They were apprenticed in almost every trade.16 Negro craftsmen, whether slave or free, played an important role in developing the mechanical arts in colonial Virginia.

* * *

Before examining apprenticeship laws it is necessary to look briefly at the system of local government in colonial Virginia. Initially, the colonists sought to reproduce the familiar English patterns of local organization, the county and parish. Yet, in response to needs which they perceived in their new environment, they often modified these institutions. As in England, the county was the basic unit of local government. Justices of the peace who comprised the county court
became a powerful and self-perpetuating body which met quarterly to
direct the activities of local government. They included some of the
wealthiest and most prominent members of colonial society. The county
courts enforced laws passed by the House of Burgesses, carried out the
orders of the General Court, Council, and Governor, heard civil cases,
and served as probate court. Once a year they met as an Orphan's Court
to supervise the care of orphans and the management of their estates.

English colonists transported the Anglican establishment to Vir­
ginia and divided the settlements into parishes, each of which was ad­
ministered by twelve-man vestries. Elected by the freeholders after
1676, these bodies had the power to fill vacancies and thereby became
self-perpetuating. Vestrymen were closely allied to and, frequently,
identical to the justices of the county court. With the absence of a
resident bishop and the scarcity of ministers, the laity, represented
by vestrymen, assumed much control over local government and church af­
fairs.

The principal responsibilities of the vestry, which met two or
three times a year, were to administer all Church business, regulate
morality in the community, and provide care to the indigent. Vestrymen
selected two of their members as churchwardens to execute their orders
and, generally, to direct parochial business when the court was not in
session. In addition to choosing a minister, this body laid the annual
parish rates, based on the number of tithables in each household and
parish expenditures for the year. This money, collected by the sheriff
after 1650, was used to pay the minister's salary, to repair church
buildings, and to provide poor relief. Vestrymen bound out poor chil­
dren and bastards and carried orphans to the county courts to be
apprenticed. With the justices of the county courts they supervised all aspects of local government; they represented the most direct, immediate presence of government to the average colonist.

Four factors determined the operation of apprenticeship and the legal status of apprentices in early Virginia: English legal precedents, legislation passed by the colonial governments, local custom, and the specific terms of the indenture contract. The guild system never developed in America; instead, local government and church officials assumed responsibility for regulating apprenticeship. The colonial courts viewed the indenture as a legal contract between two parties, each of which had certain obligations to fulfill. Although the apprentice was a minor, he was legally responsible for the terms of the indenture as if he were an adult. Church and civil authorities bound out local children from the early seventeenth century on, but the Virginia House of Burgesses did not pass any legislation to regulate apprenticeship until the middle of the century. Laws merely confirmed that which had existed in practice for many years. Virginia's apprenticeship laws were based on English statutes, particularly the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601.

Virginia law recognized three classes of children who could be bound out as apprentices: paupers/neglected children, poor orphans, and bastards. By 1646, the colonial legislature authorized justices of the peace "at their discretion" to bind out poor children to trades or husbandry. Children were apprenticed until age twenty-one for males or eighteen for females. By 1727, churchwardens were charged to bind out all children whose parents's "idle, dissolute, and disorderly course of life" led them to neglect their offspring. The Charles City County court, for example, bound out the children of Mary Evans and Richard
Bagby who "doth not take sufficient care in bringing their children in an honest way of living as in the fear of God." The courts also intervened in the case of abandoned children. When Christian Wilson petitioned that her husband had left her and three children, the Augusta County court ordered that two of the children be bound out.

The first law concerning orphan apprentices, passed in 1656, stated that an orphan be educated from his inheritance, "but if the estate be so meane and inconsiderable that it will not reach to a free education" he should be bound to "some manuall trade" until age twenty-one. In 1741 the courts appointed a guardian to orphan, James Jones. After discovering that his estate was "so small that the profits will not be able to maintain him," the court apprenticed him. Twenty years later, the Northumberland court bound out a poor orphan named Joseph Davis as a shoemaker. Davis's father's "mean and inconsiderable" estate consisted of one cow, an old pot, a bed, a few pieces of furniture and tools, and a gun, totalling $3.4.9. By 1705, law required the masters of all orphaned male apprentices to educate them and pay them the same freedom dues received by indentured servants.

An Act concerning Servants and Slaves, the compresensive statute passed in 1705, regulated the relations between masters and servants or apprentices. It required all masters to provide "wholesome and competent diet, clothing, and lodging" for their bound laborers. After listing the legal rights of servants, the law set freedom dues for male servants and apprentices at "ten bushells of indian corn, thirty shillings in money, or the value thereof in goods, and one well fixed musket or fuzee." Masters should give their female servants fifteen bushels of Indian corn and forty shillings in money or the equivalent value in goods.
As was true for the other provisions of apprenticeship, the amount and nature of freedom dues varied from one indenture to another. The most common items listed include clothing, livestock, food, and tools. In one case, the courts ordered the masters of Jonathan Duke and George Hughes to pay them upon expiration of their terms "a cow and calf, mare, sow with pig" and "two suits of apparel and a sett of Cooper's Tools," respectively. In seventeenth-century Northumberland County, only 31 percent of the apprenticeship orders, as shown in Table 1, included some provisions for freedom dues. During the following century the parishes of Fredericksville and Dettingen provided freedom dues in 71 and 86 percent of the cases, respectively. The majority of cases in which freedom dues were mentioned in Louisa, Prince William, and Northumberland counties simply designated dues "according to Law." The infrequency of cases listing any freedom dues in Northumberland (only 34 percent), as indicated in Table 1, probably reflects an assumption by the courts that this legal provision was understood by the apprentices' masters.

Laws protecting the rights of female apprentices were passed later in the eighteenth century than those for males. By 1748, law required Virginia masters to teach their female orphan apprentices to read and write and to give them freedom dues as well. Evidence indicates that these provisions were probably in effect much earlier. When the Elizabeth City County court bound out the orphan, Ann Chandler, in 1698, for example, they stipulated that her master teach her to read "a chapter in the Bible, the Lord's prayer, and ten commandments, and sempstress work."  

The laws for the compulsory apprenticeship of bastards also reflected the concern that children should not become a financial burden to the parish. Although the laws were not passed until later in the
Table 1: Freedom Dues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># Apprentices</th>
<th>% with some Freedom Dues</th>
<th>% with no Freedom Dues</th>
<th>% with Freedom Dues by Law</th>
<th>% listing Food</th>
<th>% listing livestock</th>
<th>% listing tools</th>
<th>% listing money</th>
<th>% listing clothing</th>
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<td>County, 1680-1695</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northumberland</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>66</td>
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<td>Fredericksville</td>
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<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>Parish, Louisa</td>
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<td>Dettingen Parish,</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prince William</td>
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<td>County, 1745-1782</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total-- 18th cen.</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Some indentures list specific items in addition to "freedom dues by Law."
eighteenth century, the practice of binding out bastards seems to have been common much earlier. Fining a mother twenty shillings or sentencing her to receive a whipping according to law, the courts apprenticed her illegitimate child until age twenty-one or eighteen, depending on its sex. With the permission of her parents, the Northumberland justices in 1693 bound out Jane Bressele, a bastard infant, to age eighteen. As in the cases of orphaned and neglected apprentices, illegitimate children received an education and freedom dues. Despite the laws, there seems to have been greater variation in the terms of service for bastard children than for other kinds of apprentices. In 1761, the justices of Northumberland bound out Richard Corbill, the infant bastard of a free woman, until age twenty-three. Serving two years longer than usual, he was to receive training as a millwright and to be taught to read, write, and cipher.

According to Virginia law, a servant who bore a bastard must serve her master one additional year. The father, if he were a servant, had to indemnify the parish for the cost of child care, usually by further service after the expiration of his own term. If the father were a freeman, he had to give security to the churchwardens for the maintenance of his child. Masters often assumed the responsibility of caring for their female servants's illegitimate offspring. The bastards of servants were subject to the same laws as other apprentices, but again the length of terms varied, particularly in the seventeenth century. In 1687, for example, the Northumberland court bound out Elizabeth and Rebecca, illegitimate daughters of Edward Maudley, an indentured servant, each until age twenty-one.

The Virginia House of Burgesses passed more stringent laws in the case of white women bearing bastards by Negroes or mulattoes. A 1691
law authorized the churchwardens to bind out mulatto bastards until age thirty; the mothers were sold into servitude for five years or charged a fine of five pounds. Despite the law, terms of servitude varied. In 1693, for example, the justices of Northumberland sentenced Hester Smyth, a servant woman, to five extra years of servitude for bearing a bastard by a Negro slave. They bound out her unnamed infant as an apprentice only until age twenty-one. By 1763, Virginia law reduced the terms for mulatto apprentices to the usual twenty-one or eighteen years. Although no educational provisions were included in the laws before, it is likely that some mulatto children received literary instruction before this date.

County courts and vestries shared the responsibility of binding out children, although the primary authority for supervising the system rested with the former. Custom varied from county to county, but by the second quarter of the eighteenth century, churchwardens assumed a larger share of the actual execution of apprenticeship laws. They bound out poor children and bastards; the justices generally oversaw orphans, although often the churchwardens carried out the orders of apprenticeship. With the disestablishment of the Anglican church following the Revolutionary War, the responsibility for binding apprentices was transferred to elected civil officers called overseers of the poor. The system continued to operate as it had before the War.

Like the indentured servant, the apprentice had a semi-free status in colonial society. He was recognized as a free adult once the terms of his indenture expired. During the period of servitude, however, many of his rights were curtailed by law. Virginia's Act concerning Servants and Slaves (1705) required that all servants shall faithfully and
obediently... do all their masters or owners just and lawful commands."

If any servant disobeyed his master or threatened him with violence, he could be required to serve an additional year beyond his term of indenture. When the courts legalized an apprentice's indenture, they delegated most of the authority of the child's natural father to his master.

Virginia law restricted the movement and activities of an apprentice. He risked heavy penalties, usually in the form of extended terms of service and corporal punishment, by absenting himself. Law required a servant or apprentice to serve his master double the time that he was absent after his term expired. Courts added additional time to this in order to compensate a master for the expenses incurred in his servant's capture, including advertising fees and a reward. Few cases of runaway apprentices are found in the court records of Northumberland County or in the Virginia Gazette. Perhaps this reflects the severity of the penalty for running away and for harboring runaway servants. An alternate explanation is that there was little reason for apprentices to flee their masters.

Many indentures prohibited apprentices from visiting taverns and ale houses, gambling, playing cards, or committing fornication. An apprentice could marry only with his master's permission. Violation of this law could result in an extended term of service and in a fine against the minister who performed the marriage ceremony. Virginia law also imposed heavy fines on persons caught buying, selling, or trading with servants or apprentices.

Although a master had the right to discipline his apprentice, he could not inflict "immoderate correction" on him. The law stipulated that servants should receive corporal punishment in lieu of fines for a breach of penal laws: "whereby persons free are punishable by fines,
servants shall be punished by whipping, after the rate of twenty lashes for every five hundred pounds of tobacco, or fifty shillings current money." If the servant could find someone willing to pay his fine, he might avoid a whipping.

An apprentice possessed a number of important rights under Virginia law, however, which, to a large extent, protected him from exploitation or abuse. The terms of the initial contract were scrutinized and approved by the county court. When the term of indenture expired, law required a master to set his apprentice free. Northumberland justices released Mary Dukes from her apprenticeship after she petitioned in 1700 that her indenture had expired. In general, the re-assignment of apprentices was illegal without the permission of the child and his parents or guardian, and without the sanction of the court. Some indentures, such as that of Frances Brittain (1682), stipulated that an apprentice should be freed if her master or mistress died before the expiration of the child's term. Others, such as that of Josias Conway of Lancaster County, specified that the child was bound to a person, "his Executors and administrators," or assignees.

Richard Morris argued that the colonists viewed the unexpired terms of a servant or apprentice as part of a master's property which could be deeded to his heirs. Although perhaps an accurate statement for indentured servants, this is too extreme in describing the position of the parish apprentice. The county courts exercised strict control over the fates of locally-bound children. They rebound one Northumberland apprentice twice, following the deaths of his first two masters. His second master, a carpenter, was the man who married the widow of the first. Genuine concern for the child as a human being rather than simply a chattel is reflected in the 1758 indenture of
Peter Conway. The contract specified that while teaching Conway the "art of Merchantdizing" his master should not take him out of the colony without the boy's approval. In 1780, the master of orphan, William Hunter, requested that the Augusta court rebind Hunter to another person to learn leather breeches making because he was leaving Virginia.\(^{54}\)

Virginia apprentices possessed the important right to petition the county court if they had a legitimate complaint against their masters. The court could reprimand and fine a master or even take away his apprentice if abused or neglected. In such cases, the justices either freed the child or re-apprenticed him to a more responsible person in the community.\(^{55}\) In 1772, for example, the Northumberland court jailed and fined John Betts twenty pounds following the complaint of his apprentice.\(^{56}\) Any master who discharged or abandoned a servant or apprentice who was ill was also subject to fine.\(^{57}\)

In almost every case of conflict or disagreement between master and apprentice, the county court enforced the terms of the original indenture contract whenever possible. After Thomas and Ellinor Thorpe sued Robert Green for neglecting to teach their son a trade, the court ordered Green to pay a bond of 4,000 pounds of tobacco "for the true performance of the said Indenture and to fulfill every clause and Article thereon expressed." The justices showed a fairness and a genuine concern for the welfare of the young orphans under their care. In 1662, for example, when Francis Little petitioned that he was "unwilling to live with" his master, the court promptly re-apprenticed him.\(^{58}\)

Meeting annually as an Orphans's Court, justices of the peace examined orphans's accounts presented by guardians or masters. These accounts consisted of double-entry ledgers in which a master recorded the
annual expenses of maintaining an orphan including boarding, schooling, food, drink, and clothing. This sum was then balanced by the annual rent of the child's plantation and the money made from hiring out his Negro slaves.59 In addition to ensuring that the orphan's plantation was improving, the courts inquired carefully into the maintenance of the orphan himself. According to Robert Beverley in 1722, "if the poor Orphan be bound an Apprentice to any Trade, then their business is to inquire, how he is kept to his Schooling, and Trade; and if the Court find he is either misused, or untaught, they take him from that Master, and put him to another of the same Trade, or of any other Trade, which they judge best for the Child."60 The annual Orphan's Court then, ensured a regular and careful investigation of the local apprenticeship system.

A final practice which protected apprentices was the custom of requiring masters to pay a bond when the indenture contract was approved in court. In 1688, for example, Jonathan Bayles paid the sum of 10,000 pounds of tobacco as security in his apprenticeship of Robert Oldis. Most eighteenth-century indentures from Northumberland included provisions for security bonds. These ranged from 50 to 10,000 pounds of tobacco; the average amount was 5,000 pounds.61 Because a master would forfeit the money if he broke the agreement, this practice provided strong economic incentives in addition to the legal sanctions for him to comply with the contract. It is likely that most masters accepted their obligations dutifully. The scarcity of cases of conflict between masters and apprentices in Virginia and the courts's diligence in punishing the offenders certainly indicates this.

Based on English precedent, apprenticeship laws were adapted to meet the needs of Virginia's colonists. Despite a few similarities,
the institution was distinct in origin and character from indentured servitude. Local officials of the county courts and vestries were authorized to bind out three kinds of children in colonial Virginia: orphans, paupers, and bastards. A large body of laws regulated every aspect of apprenticeship from the initial binding to the disbursement of freedom dues. Whenever possible, the courts attempted to fulfill the legal provisions as stated in the original contract. Laws as well as the actions of the courts attest to the protection and fair treatment afforded to apprentices in colonial Virginia.
Notes for Chapter III


2 Paul Howard Douglas, American Apprenticeship and Industrial Education in Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law, XCV, 2 (New York, 1921), 29-30; For a discussion of servants "spirited" away as well as those transported as convicts see A.E. Smith above.


5 Douglas, American Apprenticeship, 29; Morris, Government and Labor, 364.

6 Towner, "Social History of Servitude," 51.


9 Richard Morris disagrees; he argues that these children were really indentured servants. According to this author, the trade provision was the determining factor of whether or not the relationship was apprenticeship or servitude. Morris, Government and Labor, 364.

10 Towner, "Social History of Servitude," 33.


In Northumberland County from 1750-1765, only 7 out of 99 cases had actual apprenticeship indentures. In a few of these, the clerk recorded both an indenture (in the Record Book) and the orders binding out the child (in the Court Orders).

In the colonial period the term "orphan" referred to a child who had lost either his father or both parents.


In Northumberland, for example, the 1770 court included Thomas Gaskins and Newton Keene who had served as justices since 1757; one member, George Ball, had presided since 1751. NCOB, 1749-1753, 1753-1756, 1756-1758, 1758-1762, 1762-1766, 1767-1770, 1770-1773.


Amanda Jane Townes, "The Care of the Poor in Albemarle Parish, Surry and Sussex Counties, Virginia" (Master's Thesis, College of William and Mary, 1976), 21. The vestrymen of Wicomico Parish in 1771 included Mr. Kendall Lee who had served since 1752, Mr. Charles Coppedge (since 1760), and Captain Thomas Gaskins (also a justice of the peace) who had served for eight years. Wicomico Parish, Northumberland County, Virginia, Vestry Book, 1703-1795, Richmond, Virginia State Archives; William H. Seiler, "The Anglican Parish in Virginia" in James Morton Smith, ed., Seventeenth-Century America (New York, 1959), 126.


Hening, I, 336 (1646); IV, 212 (1727).

"Education in Colonial Virginia," W&Q, 1st ser. V, 4 (April 1897), 223 (Charles City County, 1737).

Lyman Chalkley, Chronicles of the Scotch-Irish Settlements in Virginia, 1745-1800, Vol. 1 (Rosslyn, Virginia, 1912-1913), 64 (Aug. 21, 1754); See also Churchill Gibson Chamberlayne, comp., The Vestry Book and Register of Bristol Parish, Virginia, 1720-1789 (Richmond, 1898), 41 (16 Feb. 1729).
26 Hening, I, 416 (1656).

27 John Frederick Doorman, comp. Caroline County, Virginia Order Book, 1740-1746 (Washington, D.C., 1971), 11 (13 March 1741); NCOB, 1758-1762, 265 (13 April 1761); NCRB, 5, 1758-1762, 366 (13 April 1761). Frequently, poor widows requested that the courts apprentice their children. The Bristol parish vestry bound out Robert Glidewell at the request of his mother in 1729. Chamberlayne, Bristol Parish, 45 (3 Aug. 1729).

28 Hening, III, 375-376 (1705). By 1727, all the provisions concerning orphans were applicable to "poor" apprentices as well. Hening, IV, 212 (1727).

29 Ibid., 448 (1705).

30 Ibid., 451 (1705).

31 NCOB, 1678-1698, 206 (19 Dec. 1683), 589 (10 May 1692).

32 Hening V, 452 (1748); "Education in Colonial Virginia," WMQ, 1st ser. V, 4 (April 1897), 222 (Elizabeth City County, 18 July 1698).

33 Hening, VIII, 376 (1769).

34 NCOB, 1678-1698, 638 (21 Dec. 1693); Hening VIII, 376 (1769).

35 NCRB, V, 1758-1762, 392 (13 April 1761).

36 Hening III, 452-453 (1705), VIII, 376 (1769).

37 NCOB, 1678-1698, 399 (18 May 1687), 408 (6 Oct. 1687). Jonathan, the "base child" of Thomas Mannan, was bound until age eighteen in 1665. The Lancaster County court requested that his master, Roger Harris, teach him to read and write. "Education in Colonial Virginia," WMQ, 1st ser. V, 4 (April 1897), 221 (6 Jan. 1665).

38 Hening, III, 87 (1691).

39 NCOB, 1678-1698, 616, 620 (1693). In 1702, the courts bound out Hannah Witter, the bastard child of Phoebe Witter and "Indian Tom," until age twenty-four. After bearing a second illegitimate child, Witter was sentenced to receive corporal punishment and to serve one year as a servant. NCOB, 1678-1698, 601 (1694), 233 (1702), 298 (1704).

40 Hening VIII, 134 (1765). The vestrymen of Fredericksville Parish bound out Bathsheba Hollaway, a mulatto bastard, in 1749; they required that she be taught to read and write and be brought up in the Christian religion. Vestry Book of Fredericksville Parish, Louisa County, Virginia, 1742-1787, Part 2, Richmond, Virginia State Archives.

41 Hening, III, 375-376 (1705); Hening IV, 212 (1727); Guy F. Wells, Parish Education in Colonial Virginia (New York, 1923), 74.

42 Hening, X, 288-290 (1780); XII, 28-29 (1785).
43 Hening, III, 451 (1705).

44 Ibid., 458 (1705).

45 Most runaway cases advertized in the newspaper were for indentured servants or Negro slaves. In 1770, Samuel Daniels offered a reward of thirty shillings to anyone who could return his apprentice, John Royston. Daniels warned persons from employing Royston who "may pretend to know something of the chairmaking and blacksmiths business." Virginia Gazette, Rind, 15 March 1770: 21 (Middlesex County, 9 Feb. 1770).

46 See the indenture of Richard Corbill, pages 25-27.


48 Ibid., II, 118-119 (1662).

49 Ibid., III, 448, 452 (1705).

50 Ibid., III, 450 (1705). This law stated that all contracts between servants and masters were void unless made in court; NCORB, 1699-1715, Part 1, 120 (16 Aug. 1700).

51 NCORB, 1678-1698, Part 1, 117 (18 Jan. 1682); Lyon G. Tyler, ed., "Current Errors," WMQ, 1st ser., VIII, 2 (Oct. 1899), 82 (Lancaster County, 10 June 1719).

52 Morris, Government and Labor, 412-413.

53 NCORB, 1678-1698, Part 1, 155 (1 Jan. 1683), Part 2, 468 (22 May 1689), 589 (10 May 1692).

54 NCORB, 1758-1762, 260 (13 Feb. 1758); Chalkley, Chronicles of the Scotch-Irish (Augusta County), 217 (19 Aug. 1780).

55 Hening, III, 448-449, 375-376 (1705).

56 NCORB, 1770-1773, 442 (1772). In 1739, Benjamin Moss, apprentice to Walker Taylor of York Town, petitioned the court that his master "doth not use and provide for him as he ought to do so." The court discharged him from Taylor and bound him for the rest of his term to Robert Raison who agreed to fulfill his responsibilities to his apprentice. York County, Virginia, Wills and Inventories, Records 18, 524 (17 Dec. 1739).

57 Hening, III, 450 (1705).

58 "Education in Colonial Virginia," WMQ, 1st ser., V, 4 (April 1897), 222-223 (York County, 26 May 1690); NCORB, 1652-1665, 156 (21 April 1662).


61 NCOb, 1678-1698, 434 (16 Aug. 1688); See also the orders binding John Cotrell, orphan, with a penalty of £ 5,000. NCOb, 1756-1758, 125 (14 March 1757).
CHAPTER IV

MOTIVES AND EFFECTS OF BINDING OUT CHILDREN AS APPRENTICES

To understand the importance of parish apprenticeship in early Virginia society it is necessary to examine the varied and interrelated motives of those persons who supervised and participated in the system. After transplanting apprenticeship from England, Virginia's colonists shaped the institution to meet the needs of a growing frontier society. Apprenticeship afforded important vocational and literary education, but its primary purpose in the rural southern colonies was to provide public poor relief for indigent children.

As an agency of public poor relief, apprenticeship reflected the desire to relieve a community of the financial burden as well as the social problems of dependent children. Local officials transferred the responsibility for rearing these children to private individuals who could afford to do so. Wealthier orphans were placed under the protection of guardians who managed their estates; poor orphans were apprenticed to craftsmen or local planters. Frequently, the motives of the local governments are expressed in the orders for binding out parish children. By apprenticing John Marvil, a child of two, the churchwardens of Petsworth Parish sought to "keep the Parish harmless from his being Any Ways Chargeable or Burdensom to them During the Said Term."¹ Laws, such as the "Act for the relief of parishes from such charges as may arise from bastard children born within the same," (1769) reflect similar motives.²
As explained in the previous chapter, the English Old Poor Law (1601) was implemented in the American colonies during the seventeenth century. Jane Townes argued that "a comprehensive cradle-to-grave system of aid" existed in eighteenth-century Virginia. Parish apprenticeship was only one means by which vestries cared for the poor. Other forms included "boarding out," public subsidies, and exemption from parish levies. According to a 1722 observer, those who could not support themselves--the infirm, aged, or very young--were boarded "very plentifully" at the "Publick Charge." In 1755, for example, the churchwardens of Wicomico Parish paid William Garner "for keeping Hannah Porter and finding a pair Shoes and Stockings for her." Elizabeth Wamock received 600 pounds of tobacco for "keeping a child six months & Burying the Same" in 1733. Local courts often compensated persons who accepted very young children as apprentices. When the Northumberland justices bound out an infant orphan to Jonathon James (who had cared for her for the past nine months), they gave him her inheritance of 1,015 pounds of tobacco "for his trouble in maintaining her hitherto." By binding out sick or destitute persons for temporary terms, the county courts responded to the immediate needs of their parishioners. In addition to the ninety-nine children apprenticed by the Northumberland courts between 1750 and 1765, another fifty-three were bound out "for the time being." Presumably, these temporarily-bound children were apprenticed later or were adopted by relatives or family friends.

Local governments disbursed subsidies to the poor in the form of goods or money. These were paid either directly to the needy or to the persons caring for the indigent. Although some money for poor support came from fines against persons committing various moral offenses, the
largest source was the parish levy. Subsidies to the poor, in one form or another, comprised the largest expense of parish funds after the salaries of the minister and other church officials. Local officers also exempted disadvantaged persons from parish levies and authorized free medical care. In 1750, the Northumberland court discharged William Walker from paying the levy because he was "very aged and Infirm."

In Virginia and other southern colonies apprenticeship became the accepted method for allowing poor orphans to "earn their way," so that the community did not bear the full cost of their support. The colonists viewed children as well as men and women as sources of labor. It was important that children, particularly poor ones, learn the value of industry. "To avoyd sloath and idleness wherewich such young children are easily corrupted," justices bound out orphans so that they could learn "good and lawfull trades" and "improve the honor and reputation of the country." Reflecting similar motives, a 1757 proposal for building a free school expressed the hopes that poor children could "be brought up in a Religious, Virtuous, & Industrious Course of Life so as to become usefull members of the Community."

Often, apprentices as young as two or three years were put to work doing simple household tasks. Masters as well as fathers recognized the advantages of employing dependent children under their care. This is not to say that masters exploited children or failed to fulfill their legal obligations, but that they did view children realistically as economic assets. At a time when labor was in great demand, masters had the services of their apprentices until age twenty-one or eighteen. Young parish orphans might serve their masters for ten or more years. James Harrison, a Northumberland orphan, for example, was bound out for
thirteen years to learn the trade of a weaver in 1753. An apprentice could be clothed and fed fairly cheaply and there was usually room in the master's house for another child to sleep. If the master or mistress personally taught the apprentice to read and write, there were no schooling expenses.

In addition to the valuable labor of an apprentice for many years, a master sometimes received an apprentice fee at the signing of the indenture. This was either paid by the father of the apprentice or, in the case of poor orphans and bastards, by the parish. In 1749, Nansemond justices ordered the churchwardens to pay five pounds sterling as an apprentice fee to the master of Joseph Palmer. Mr. Lawrence Smith of Petsworth Parish received the sum of 800 pounds of tobacco for accepting a two-year-old child. Another reason that parish apprentices were often economic assets rather than burdens is that they frequently inherited some personal property, livestock, or land. Howard Mackey points out that the Virginia parishes had few problems finding a home for healthy children. It was not uncommon for planters to compete to become the guardians or masters of orphans with property.

Apprenticeship served as a means of social control because it helped to relieve the community of problems produced by large numbers of vagrant children. In eighteenth-century London, officials tried to prevent gangs of children from roaming the streets by placing them in workhouses. Although the proportion of paupers in Virginia was never very large compared to England, high mortality rates led to a high rate of orphanhood. Darrett and Anita Rutman point out that few children in the seventeenth-century Chesapeake reached their majority without losing at least one parent; more than a third lost both. In the absence of
institutions such as orphanages, colonial authorities sought to assimilate potentially disruptive forces into the community through the institution of apprenticeship.

The practice of binding out children reflects an attempt to socialize the individual by placing him under parental authority. The master or relatives who took in a child were charged to "allwaise Endeavour to Infill piety and vertue in him." It was the hope of the colonial leaders that a foster family would provide appropriate moral and religious instruction so that a child could grow up properly to the benefit of himself and the community. English treatises, such as *The Prentises Practice in Godliness* (1608) and *The Pious Prentice, Or the Prentices Piety* (1646) emphasized strict morality and submission to authority. One of the most popular set of engravings in eighteenth-century England, "The Industrious Apprentice," related a moral tale of how virtue and industry led one apprentice to fortune and fame while vice and frivolity brought misfortune to the other.

Laws and apprenticeship indentures also demonstrate a concern that the parish should not bear the responsibility and financial burden of caring for a child after his term of service. The churchwardens of Petworth Parish ordered that masters "teach or Cause to be Taught Such Lawfull way or Waies that She may be Able after her indentured time is Expired to get her own Living." The practice of providing freedom dues for an apprentice or indentured servant, then, was not only for his benefit. "Behind the colonial custom of freedom dues was the determination that servants should not become a public charge when dismissed. Masters had a responsibility to the community to see that their servants were in fit condition to support themselves at the expiration of their terms." Freedom dues for male and female apprentices were
set by law. At the expiration of their terms they received money, food, clothing, and tools to enable them to get started.24 The laws and actions of the colonial courts reflect an attempt to exercise control over the fairly homogeneous but decentralized colonial population, to alleviate the problems of vagrancy, and to prevent the public from bearing the full burden of poor support.

* * *

Laws as well as the actual operation of colonial apprenticeship also indicate humanitarian motives of masters and local governments. In general, there seems to have been greater sympathy for the poor in Virginia than in England or in the New England colonies. The high demand for unskilled labor and an abundance of food prevented the growth of a large poor class and hence, the serious vagrancy problems experienced in England. Rarely does one find the words "pauper" or "poor law" used in colonial Virginia.25 Virginia Bernhard argues that a high level of social concern for the poor existed in Virginia since the seventeenth century.26 Beyond economic considerations, the colonial courts demonstrated a genuine concern for the welfare of helpless children. As the proportion of poor rose during the late seventeenth-century economic decline, Virginians looked for practical, expedient, and humane solutions to the problem. Vestry records of Petsworth Parish in Gloucester County and Christ Church Parish in Middlesex County show a rise in poor relief spending during the 1670s and 1680s. These parishes allotted an average of 1,000 pounds of tobacco per year to support each bastard child. The amount of money given to Virginia's poor rose gradually during the eighteenth century. As indicated by the colonial records, parishioners were generous to the poor.27 Experiments with workhouses
and charity schools proved to be temporary and largely unsatisfactory because they depended on sporadic, voluntary public support. Apprenticeship offered a familiar, humanitarian, and fairly effective solution to the problem of indigent parish children.

The effect of the apprenticeship system was to bring many individual members of the community into direct involvement with the poor. It fostered both a spirit of personal responsibility and of communal obligation. The colonial gentry consciously adopted the English concept that charity was part of a gentleman's moral and social responsibility. Because parish levies taxed all able-bodied persons rather than only landholders, the cost of poor relief was better distributed in Virginia than in England. This had the effect of involving a larger segment of the population in the care of the county's poor. Detailed provisions for educating children and protecting them from neglect and abuse further illustrate the humanitarian motives of the colonists.

Concern for the welfare of orphans and abandoned children moved the leaders of colonial Virginia to attempt to assimilate them into a family structure. Often, a child remained in the care of the surviving parent who subsequently remarried. The stepfather or stepmother then assumed responsibility for the child as if he or she were the natural parent. Families formed from the union of widows and widowers with children of their own and orphaned nieces and nephews were not uncommon. When the justices of the peace bound out a disadvantaged child, they tried to place him or her in an environment where he could receive basic care as well as emotional security. By transferring a child into a substitute family, the system assuaged some of the trauma of childhood during an age of great familial instability.
Although vocational training generally was not the most immediate purpose of parish apprenticeship, it was an important motive of the local officials and fathers who bound out children and clearly an important result of the institution. Apprenticeship provided young men with the opportunity to acquire expertise in some skilled trade so that they could earn a living after their terms of service expired. At a time when skilled labor was in great demand, apprenticeship increased the number of artisans. The growth of manufacturing in colonial Virginia helped to diversify an economy which was overly dependent on the fluctuations of the tobacco market. Finally, parochial apprenticeship enabled colonial leaders to promote certain trades to the benefit of their communities.

The growth of the industrial arts and of an artisan class was a gradual process in the agrarian, frontier society of the colonial South. Although many skilled craftsmen arrived as immigrants from England and Europe during the seventeenth century, most were forced to take up farming in order to survive in the wilderness. The sparse population, decentralized settlement patterns and economy based on tobacco production retarded the development of manufacturing. As the economy stabilized and matured during the following century, a system for the manufacture and distribution of locally made goods slowly emerged.

Lamenting the "slothfulness in Handicrafts" among Virginians, Robert Beverley wrote (with exaggeration) in 1705: "they are such abominable Ill-husbands, that tho' their Country be over-run with Wood, yet they have all their Wooden Ware from England; their Cabinets Chairs, Tables Stools, Chests, Boxes, Cart-Wheels, and all other things...to the Eternal Reproach of their Laziness." According to historian Carl
Bridenbaugh, very few crafts developed in the colonial South aside from those to meet the needs of the individual plantations. He argued that the mechanical arts "languished" although the number of artisans increased rapidly during the eighteenth century. "Occasionally, of course, a cooper or a blacksmith pursued his trade, but the combination of enervating climate, Negro competition, an uncertain market for his handicrafts, cheap land, and the social status its possession afforded nearly stifled the crafts in the Old Dominion." Although the essentially rural tobacco economy of the colonial South was not conducive to the large-scale expansion of manufacturing, Bridenbaugh minimizes the importance of crafts and of the artisan class in the colonial economy and society.

Negro artisans played an important role in plantation manufacturing during the latter colonial period. By 1700, more than half of Virginia's labor force was comprised of black slaves. A 1755 estimate reveals that Negroes represented sixty percent of the tithables in Northumberland County. Although most slaves worked in the tobacco fields, some were trained by white artisans to work on the plantations of their masters. Many large planters needed full-time carpenters to build barns, servants' quarters and simple furnishings for them. Because these planters required containers such as barrels, kegs, hogsheads, and casks to market the products of their plantations, they often kept black cooper whom they hired out to their neighbors. Negroes became skillful blacksmiths, carpenters, bricklayers, tanners, millers, weavers, and tailors on the plantations of the colonial South.

Although often practicing their trades in addition to farming, free white artisans were demanded in the countryside and towns of colonial Virginia. The average wage of journeymen and young craftsmen
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Although often practicing their trades in addition to farming, free white artisans were demanded in the countryside and towns of colonial Virginia. The average wage of journeymen and young craftsmen
remained fairly constant during the eighteenth century. In 1760 this sum was fifteen shillings a week plus room and board. Generally, masons and smiths earned more than common carpenters whose incomes were higher than those of weavers and tailors. Undoubtedly, these figures varied according to local needs and the supply of craftsmen. Jackson Turner Main described the economic status of artisans as "favorable." He argued that artisans accumulated more property than common laborers, but less than planters, merchants, and professional men. Rural craftsmen earned less than their counterparts in the cities, but since the cost of living was lower in the country, the standards of living were probably comparable. They became members of the lower and middle classes in colonial society. Many were self-employed and became small property owners. Some independent craftsmen, such as Randolph Mott, a Northumberland tailor, prospered at their trades. A few craftsmen achieved considerable wealth, particularly those entrepreneurs who invested in land, slaves, mercantile ventures, and other businesses such as grist mills and taverns.

Despite competition from Negro slaves, artisans continued to be apprenticed and to practice their trades. The wills of several former Northumberland apprentices such as William Webb and Mark Harding stipulated that their sons should be bound to a trade, often to the same craft which they had practiced themselves. If these men had not found their apprenticeships and occupations as craftsmen to be satisfactory, it is highly unlikely that they would have chosen the same fate for their sons.

Former apprentices provided their services to large planters as well as to those small and middling farmers who comprised the majority of Virginia's population. John Harrower mentions a young house carpenter who was employed by a neighbor of Colonel Daingerfield for
thirty pounds a year, free bed and board. Philip Vickers Fithian notes that his employer, Robert Carter of Nomini Hall, kept 500 Negro slaves and numerous white stewards, overseers, clerks, and skilled artisans, including an Irish cooper. There were carpenter and blacksmith shops on the plantation. Although some of the white artisans may have been indentured servants, it is likely that some were native craftsmen. The will of James Jones, a prominent planter of King George County, listed thirteen Negroes, five indentured servants, and four artisans including: "a Bricklayer 3 years to Serve...20.0.0... A Plaisterer... 14 Months to Serve... 5.0.0 ... a Carpenter till ye 13th of March next [and] a Sawyer to Serve 21 Months ... 8.0.0. Many colonists must have found it cheaper and more convenient to purchase everyday items like clothing, shoes, tools, leather products, furniture, and barrels from the shops of local craftsmen rather than to import them from England. On the isolated farms of the backcountry, Virginia white artisans found their talents greatly in demand. In hopes of acquiring new lands and finding greater opportunities to practice their trades, many migrated westward.

Numerically, craftsmen comprised a significant element of the colonial population of Virginia. In his study of Surry County, Kevin Kelley found, for example, that between 1672 and 1705, 21 percent of the decedents were at least part-time artisans, particularly carpenters, tailors, and coopers. The courts bound out 127 children to 19 different trades in Princess Anne County between 1750 and 1759; from 1750 to 1765 another 88 were apprenticed to trades in Northumberland. Harold Gill found evidence of 228 craftsmen working at 44 occupations in Williamsburg from 1750 to 1775. He argued that there were probably
comparable numbers working in Richmond and Fredericksburg and more artisans in Norfolk during this period. In addition, many craftsmen practiced their trades and farmed. The artisan class was responsible for promoting manufacturing in the eastern counties and for transmitting their skills westward.

Throughout the colonial period, the demand for goods exceeded the ability of local craftsmen to produce them. Because of the paucity of skilled craftsmen they were in a position to demand high prices. According to one observer in 1697: "for want of Towns, Markets, and Money, there is but little Encouragement for tradesmen and Artificers and therefore little Choice of them, and their Labour very dear in the Country." When Alexander Spotswood wrote his cousin in Scotland in 1712, he described the opportunities available to Virginia artisans: "I am sorry the other young man, the Cabinetmaker who you recommended to me 'ere I left London did not come over, for such like Trades--men never want for work here and with good wages." Complaints about excessive prices and inferior workmanship prompted the colonial governments to scrutinize craftsmen's accounts and to regulate the quality of their products. Planters sometimes imported craftsmen from abroad to avoid the high wages demanded by local artisans. Advertisements for apprentices and craftsmen in the milling, building, and other trades are frequently found in the pages of the Virginia Gazette. Weavers, fullers, blacksmiths, coopers, and joiners were especially needed in the countryside.

Virginia apprenticeship laws and their enforcement reflect an attempt of the government to expand trades and manufacturing throughout the colony. Such motives are clearly expressed in a 1663 law: "whereas the prudence of all states ought as much as in them lies to endeavour
the propagation and increase of all manufactures conducing to the ne-
cessityes of their subsistence." A 1736 law stated that the practice of taking apprentices and "instructing them to be skillful in the trades, arts, misteries, or occupation, to which they are bound, will be very beneficial to such apprentices, and increase the number of artificers in this colony."49

Virginians experimented with workhouse for the purpose of training poor children and promoting manufacturing, but these efforts did not endure. A 1646 law authorized county courts to send two children seven or eight years of age annually to the public flax houses in James City to learn carding, knitting, and spinning. By 1663, the burgesses ordered local officials to build houses for "educating and instructing poore children in the knowledge of spinning, weaving, and other useful occupations, and trades."50 Although many proposals were made for erecting poor houses such as the ones in Talbot County, Maryland (1751) and in Bristol Parish, Virginia (1757), few were really successful. By the late eighteenth century most workhouses were abandoned because they lacked regular public funding. 51

In the absence of vocational schools, apprenticeship was the only means of securing trade education for youth during the colonial period. After years of instruction under a master craftsman, a diligent apprentice could gain the technical knowledge and dexterity needed to practice a trade on his own. Apprenticeship offered a young man of little means--the orphan or pauper--an opportunity to learn a practical skill so that he could earn a respectable living. Many craftsmen improved their status in colonial society, but some, because of economic, geographic, and other factors abandoned their trades and became common laborers.
By the eighteenth century the colonial courts ordered most male apprentices to be bound out to specific trades. As indicated in Table 2, the Northumberland justices bound out 99 percent of the male apprentices to trades between 1750 and 1765. The mean age of the eighty-eight boys was 13.5. It is likely that vocational training was at least as important a motive for apprenticing them as the need to provide maintenance. In many cases, these orphans were not bound until several years after their fathers died. The date of indenture may have coincided with the depletion of the orphan's inheritance, but it appears that, when possible, the justices deliberately waited to bind out boys until they were old enough to begin learning a trade. Often the courts apprenticed orphaned brothers several years apart in order of their births. Northumberland courts bound out the three orphans of George Danks as tailors: William in 1763, George in 1768, and John in 1771. Studies of other eighteenth-century Virginia counties, represented by the statistics in Table 2, also indicate the importance of vocational training; masters were to teach 75 percent of the boys in Louisa County (1742-1785) and 90 percent in Prince William County (1745-1782). The leaders of colonial government clearly recognized the importance of giving a young man without an inheritance the opportunity to learn a skill by which he could support himself and benefit the community.

As explained previously, the trade provision was less important in the early Northumberland indentures. The 1715 indenture of Thomas Woodward of Richmond County required his master, a local planter, to "learn him the Trade of a Carpenter and Cooper in the last Two Years that he hath to serve." The court bound Woodward for thirteen years. In many of the early cases, apprenticeship served primarily as the most humane and practical agency to support indigent children. Only
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th># Children Bound</th>
<th>% with some trade provision</th>
<th>% with no trade provision</th>
<th>% farmer/planter</th>
<th>% woodworking trades (6-9)</th>
<th>% Carpenter or House Joiner, Turner, Cabinetmaker</th>
<th>% Millwright</th>
<th>% Ship Carpenter</th>
<th>% Clothing Trades</th>
<th>% Tailors</th>
<th>% Leathermaking/ Shoemaker, Saddler</th>
<th>% Mason, Brickmaker</th>
<th>% Cooper</th>
<th>% Wheelwright or Waggonmaker</th>
<th>% Blacksmith</th>
<th>% Merchant</th>
<th>% Miller</th>
<th>% Sailor</th>
<th>% Silversmith</th>
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<td>68</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fredericksville Parish, Louisa County, 1742-1785</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dettingen Parish, Prince William County, 1745-1782</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th Century Totals</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.5 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
32 percent of the Northumberland orders from 1680–1695 required that masters teach a trade to their male apprentices. Many earlier apprentices, like Woodward, were under the age of ten and served longer terms. The apprenticeship system offered some young men the chance to gain experience in farming and the management of an estate. Although the Northumberland courts bound no boys to this trade, officers of Louisa and Prince William counties apprenticed 20 percent and 7 percent to this occupation, respectively. Billy Beale, the eighteen-year-old orphan of a Virginia planter bound himself to Landon Carter in 1776 "in order to be instructed in the Stewardship or management of a Virginia estate." Receiving the sum of ten pounds sterling for each of the three years, Beale held responsibility for surveying Carter's lands, supervising planting and milling operations, and keeping accounts of livestock. 

Another kind of apprenticeship, available to a privileged few, is represented by the 1735 indenture of Edmund Pendleton. Caroline County justices bound out Pendleton, the youngest of seven orphans, to the clerk of their court. After three years of service Pendleton was selected as clerk of St. Mary's vestry. He began practicing law at age twenty and later achieved fame as a prominent Virginia Patriot and statesman during the Revolutionary era.

Over half of the orders binding out female apprentices required that their masters teach them some useful trade or to sew, knit, spin, and other "housewifery arts." A summary of the trade provisions found in these orders is shown in Table 3. Of the orders binding out eleven girls in Northumberland between 1750 and 1765, only one omitted any kind of trade provision. The custom of requiring instruction for female apprentices seems to have varied among the Virginia counties:
Table 3: Trades of Female Apprentices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th># Bound</th>
<th>% with some TRADE</th>
<th>% with NO TRADE</th>
<th>% Farming</th>
<th>% Weaving</th>
<th>% &quot;A Trade&quot; or &quot;some suitable trade&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland County, 1680-1695</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland County, 1750-1765</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredericksville Parish, Louisa County, 1742-1785</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dettingen Parish, Prince William County, 1745-1782</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
masters were required to train 68 percent and 35 percent of the female apprentices in Prince William and Louisa Counties, respectively. Whether or not a provision was included, it is likely that a girl would learn many skills by assisting her mistress with the everyday work in the household. This enabled a woman to acquire the practical knowledge necessary to earn a living or to run her own household: preparing food, cleaning, spinning, knitting, sewing clothing and other useful items, raising livestock, dairying, and caring for children.

Local governments took the trade provisions of parish apprenticeship seriously; laws authorized the county courts to free any child whose master failed to teach him his trade according to indenture. Colonial records indicate that the courts enforced these laws and required a master "to use the utmost of his endeavours" to instruct an apprentice in his trade. The Northumberland justices immediately released Thomas Petty from his indenture following his complaint that his master had failed to teach him the carpenter's trade. When the parents of Richard Gilbert petitioned that their son's master, Robert Greene, "without regard to the said Indenture Dayley keeps the said Apprentice to Labour in the Ground from year to year and omitts giving him Learning or teaching him his trade which is to the said Apprentice utter Rewing and undoing," the justices ordered Green to pay 4,000 pounds of tobacco for security for the fulfillment of his obligations.

Finally, the administration of apprenticeship reflects a deliberate attempt by local officials to diversify the economy and to promote certain trades in their county. Table 2 contains statistical summaries of the various occupations to which the apprentices of Northumberland, Louisa, and Prince William Counties were bound. By assigning orphans to craftsmen practicing a particular trade, justices of the peace and
churchwardens could encourage the expansion of promising industries which would benefit the local economy. During the third quarter of the eighteenth century, for example, the Northumberland court apprenticed 34 percent of the boys bound to the clothing trades (27 tailors and 3 weavers), 32 percent to the building trades (carpenters, joiners, turners, millwrights, and shipwrights), and 13 percent as shoemakers. The will of one Northumberland farmer stipulated that in the event of his early death, his four sons should be apprenticed as tailors and his daughter as a weaver. During the 1760s and 1770s many Northumberland orphans were bound out as tailors. After the middle of the century there was also much experimentation with raising new crops and with grist mills in the Tidewater county of Northumberland. This coincided with a decline in the tobacco yield and in the price of the staple. Perhaps these changes and the assignment of apprentices to the clothing trades represent an attempt by the local government to diversify the economy by developing new industries for local consumption and for export.

In coastal Princess Anne County the justices bound out 24 percent of the orphans to maritime occupations between 1750 and 1759, including sailmakers, pump makers, and ship carpenters. The single largest group (36 percent) was apprenticed to the clothing and leather trades (tailors, shoemakers, and hatters). York County justices bound out 41 boys between 1750 and 1759, 58 percent of these to the building trades. As indicated in Table 2, the courts of Louisa County apprenticed boys to the carpentry (22 percent), planting (20 percent), clothing (14 percent) trades and a few others as blacksmiths. The settlers who moved into this frontier county during the middle eighteenth century needed skills which could help them to establish farms and build homes in the
Like the courts in Northumberland, those of Prince William, another older county bordering the Potomac River, apprenticed no children to farming trades. Here, the churchwardens bound out 17 percent of the male apprenticed to the woodworking trades, only 7 percent to the clothing trades and a surprising 35 percent (twenty-five boys) to the leather trades (shoemaking and tanning). Because the demand for shoes was high and the cost of obtaining leather low, cordwaining (shoemaking), like carpentry, was a craft by which a journeyman craftsman could earn a living in many areas. Some of the shoemakers may have been itinerant craftsmen; others had small shops, producing their wares for local consumption and for trade with nearby towns and countryside of Virginia and Maryland.

Instruction in a skilled trade, then, was an important motive behind parish apprenticeship as well as one of the results of this institution in colonial Virginia. The system reflected the pragmatic approach of the colonists: apprenticeship afforded disadvantaged youth the opportunity to learn a useful trade which would benefit himself and the community in the future. It enabled local authorities to promote trades for local use and for commerce. Many boys were bound out by the local courts and many craftsmen practiced their trades despite competition with black artisans. With economic prosperity and diversification during the eighteenth century, the industrial arts and the artisan class became increasingly important in the towns and countryside of colonial Virginia.

Another important motive of Virginians for perpetuating parochial apprenticeship was to provide basic education--both literary and religious--for children whose parents could not afford to send them to
private schools. Colonial law, enforced by the local courts, and most of the apprentice indentures themselves required some form of education. The lower and middle classes of Virginia as well as the more well-to-do placed much value on the education of children. As an early form of compulsory education, apprenticeship taught many children to read and write. Along with home instruction, it provided the only elementary education for many early Virginians.

The sparse population, isolation of individual plantations and economic necessity of constant labor which characterized the early Chesapeake society deterred the growth of educational institutions. Only a small minority of planters could afford to send their children to private schools in England or in the colonies. Some wealthy men, such as Robert Carter of Nomini Hall, hired tutors who lived with the families and taught their children, those of other kin, and frequently those of neighboring planters.

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, schoolmasters who received their licenses from the Governor upon recommendation from the local justices or vestrymen, were often members of the clergy. Like their English predecessors, the colonists believed that the Church should play an active role in educating children. As early as 1631, the Virginia Assembly required ministers to teach children to read and to provide religious instruction. One of the important responsibilities of the ministers sent to the southern colonies by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, chartered in England in 1701, was to instruct children in morality and to teach them to read the Bible.

Sometimes a group of small farmers would hire a schoolmaster, often
an indentured servant, to teach in an "old field school." Children received training in English and writing either in an abandoned field or at their teacher's home. These "public schools" admitted only those children whose parents could pay the cost of tuition. Although certainly important as an early effort to educate youth, they served only a minority of the children in colonial society. Most children, the sons and daughters of small farmers, received their education informally at home or from a master through the apprenticeship system.

The church's emphasis on teaching children to read, colonial legislation, educational provisions of apprentice indentures, and the active role of the justices in enforcing these provisions all indicate the value placed on education by early Virginians. Religious motives and concerns about the education of poor children often prompted gentlemen to leave money in their wills to establish free schools. In 1652, for example, the Northumberland court approved a petition from justice Hugh Lee to create a free school at his own expense. Private philanthropy generated gifts for endowed schools in the counties of Isle of Wight (1655), Gloucester (1675), Middlesex (1685), and Nansemond (1731).

The Symmes and Eaton schools, located in Elizabeth City County, were the first and most famous permanent free schools in Virginia. An endowment of two hundred acres of land from the estate of Benjamin Symmes permitted the school named after him to be in full operation by 1647. Established in 1759, the Eaton school instructed resident poor children in English, Latin, grammar, reading and arithmetic. Early efforts to establish educational institutions for poor children, however inadequate they might have been, indicate a recognition among Virginians of the importance of providing education for all members of
society. According to Marcus Jernegan, "the attitude of Virginia toward education was evidently one which recognized that the state was responsible for the education of only those children whose parents who were not likely to attend to the matter themselves. The assumption was that education was a private affair and that capable parents would voluntarily attend to the education of their own children."  

Probate records indicate that, despite their limited means, middling and small planters and craftsmen valued education as did the more affluent members of colonial society. The will of Cornelius Sullivan, small farmer-craftsman of Northumberland County, specified that his sons should learn to read, write, and cipher and his daughter to read and write. At his death in 1754, John Flynt of neighboring Lancaster County, left his family a modest estate of ninety pounds, including two Negroes whose labor was to help pay for the cost of "bringing up and schooling my children." The apprentice indenture of his son, John, bound as a joiner and carpenter at age sixteen, required the master to give him half a year of schooling.

Concern for the education of their children prompted a number of former Northumberland apprentices to insert specific instructions into their wills. The 1792 will of ex-apprentice, John Cottrell, for example, stipulated that his two older sons should use the cash from their annual crops to give their younger brother, James, a classical education such as Latin or Greek. If schooling were not available at home, they should send James away to school at their own expense. Richard Routt, another former apprentice, left his son William much land, half his grist mill, and $150 "for the purpose of educating him."

By 1705, law required all masters to educate their male apprentices.
In addition, most eighteenth-century indentures or orders binding out children specified that an apprentice receive instruction. Typical is the order by the Augusta County court in 1773 apprenticing Francis Dunn: "Francis Dunn, son of Elinor Dunn, to be bound to Andrew Russell Jr., to have a trade of a weaver, and to read, write and cypher as far as the rule of three." The indenture of James Harper of Northumberland County stated that he would be freely discharged if his master failed to teach him to read and write.

An examination of the orders binding out orphans, paupers, and bastard children in colonial Virginia reveals much variation in the percentages of those including educational provisions. Table 4 contains statistical summaries of the educational provisions found in the apprenticeship orders of children from Northumberland, Gloucester, Louisa, and Prince William Counties. By the early 1700s, the apprentice orders of Petsworth Parish, Gloucester County required a standard three years of education of both sexes. The proportion of orders containing educational provisions in Virginia counties during the eighteenth centuries ranged from 92 percent of the children bound in Fredericksville Parish, Louisa County (1742-1785), to 64 percent in Dettingen Parish, Prince William County (1745-1782), to 55% in Northumberland County (1750-1765). The paucity of education provisions in Northumberland after 1758 may indicate an assumption on the part of the local courts that masters would follow the law and instruct their apprentices. Some indentures simply state that a master should educate the child "as the Law Directs." For these reasons and because older children may have already learned to read and write prior to indenture, apprenticeship orders most likely underestimate the number of children who actually received instruction.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># Children</th>
<th>% with some Educ'l Provisions</th>
<th>% with no Educ'l Provisions</th>
<th>% with religious provisions or &quot;schooling&quot;</th>
<th>% Read</th>
<th>% read and write</th>
<th>% read, write, and cypher</th>
<th>% ½ year</th>
<th>% 1-1½ year</th>
<th>% 2 year</th>
<th>% 3 year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland County</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County, 1680-1695 males</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>females</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petsworth Parish 1677-1729</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>males</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>females</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northumberland County</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County, 1750-1765 males</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>females</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredericksville Parish</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1742-1785 males</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>females</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dettingen Parish</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1745-1782 males</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>females</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th-c Males</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th-c Females</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th-c Totals</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most male apprentices were taught reading, writing, and sometimes arithmetic, but the educational requirements as recorded in the indentures varied considerably from those specified by law. As shown in Table 4, the orders charged masters to teach reading and writing to 28 percent, 43 percent, and 51 percent of their male apprentices in Northumberland, Louisa, and Prince William Counties, respectively. Female apprentices, on the other hand, learned to read and, less often, to write. As shown in Table 4, 91 percent, 94 percent, and 60 percent of the orders binding female apprentices in Northumberland, Louisa, and Prince William Counties, respectively, stipulated that the children should receive some education. Although law did not require masters to teach their female apprentices to read until 1748, many early orders binding out girls provided for such instruction. For example, in 1691, Jonathon Boaz and his wife Ann were charged to teach their apprentice, Ann Towers, "to read the Bible thoroughly.

The dearth of cases involving illegitimate children precludes a comparison with poor orphans. Since law did not require masters to educate bastard apprentices until 1769, this practice was left to the discretion of the local courts. Custom varied widely: Dettingen Parish churchwardens rarely required education for bastards, but the Fredericksville vestry usually did so. As early as 1664, Lancaster justices ordered the master of a bastard apprentice, Jonathan Mannan, to teach him to read and write.

The vigilance of the colonial courts in enforcing the educational provisions of apprenticeship also demonstrates a genuine concern that the less fortunate members of society be given the opportunity to learn to read and write. In response to the petition of Richard Williams
against his master, George Smyth, the Princess Anne court summoned Smyth to "shew the court reasons why he does not Teach him [Williams] to read as by Indenture he is Oblig'd." The justices rebuked Smyth and ordered him to fulfill his obligations. Sympathetic to a petition by young William Bell against his master, the York County court required his master to put Bell in school the following year so that he could learn to read and write. Vestrymen of Petsworth Parish were so determined to enforce the educational provisions of apprenticeship that they declared in 1724 that if orphan children bound out by the parish "canot Read at thirteen years old that they Shall be Sett free from there then Said Mastr or Mistrs or to be taken from them." Perhaps this reflects a widespread neglect by the masters in Prince George County. In any case, the orders show that the requirements to instruct an apprentice in the rudiments of education were not to be taken lightly. Financial incentives (the loss of a master's bond and a possible fine) and fears of additional legal repercussions evidently induced masters to comply with their responsibilities.

Some orders binding out apprentices, particularly in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries also reflect the belief that apprentices should receive religious and moral instruction. When the Elizabeth City County court apprenticed Ann Chandler in 1698, the justices required that she be taught to read a chapter in the Bible, the Lord's Prayer and the ten commandments. Similarly, the justices of Northumberland ordered the master of Henry Oague, age twelve, to give him a "good and Christianlike Education, to read in the Bible." Approximately 62 percent of the orders binding out children in Petsworth Parish from 1677 to 1729 included similar religious provisions.
Parish apprenticeship played an important role in providing elementary education for many children in the colonial South. As an early system of compulsory education, it enabled many children to receive instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic as well as religious and moral training. It was a class-oriented system of education; colonial officials sought to ensure that lower and middle-class children, specifically, poor orphans, bastards, and neglected children, receive at least a rudimentary education. In a rural, agrarian society in the days before public schools, the institution was an effective agency for providing elementary education for many colonial Virginians. It is important to remember, however, that although literary education was an important feature, it was not the primary motive behind parish apprenticeship.

Some critics argue that apprenticeship was largely unsatisfactory as a means of educating children because it served only a small proportion of the population and because it relied on the individual efforts of indifferent masters. In the past, historians have underestimated the number of children who were orphaned and subsequently bound out as apprentices. As has been explained, colonial courts which were comprised of the leaders of local government, required basic education provisions in the indentures as specified by law and enforced these in the few cases in which masters neglected their duty. It is true, of course, that many children of the lower and middle classes who were not apprenticed may not have received elementary education. The "failure" of the apprenticeship system as a means of education reflects instead the problems of a decentralized, agrarian society as well as the general lack of public commitment to institutions such as public schools during this period.

In examining the reasons why the English apprenticeship system was
transplanted to the colonial South and continued to operate into the nineteenth century, then, one finds a variety of interrelated motives. Apprenticeship provided important vocational training for many poor children who gained the opportunity to rise above the class of laborers and tenant farmers. Fathers and colonial officials who bound out children selected trades which they believed would most benefit the child and the community. By the middle of the eighteenth century vocational training was as important a motive in Northumberland County as was the need to provide maintenance. The institution also afforded elementary education to boys and girls from families who could not pay to send them to private schools. In addition to humanitarian concerns, apprenticeship reflects a pragmatic approach to welfare by early Virginians; the system provided immediate relief to the parish and was designed to contribute to the future development of the county. The single most important reason for the perpetuation of parochial apprenticeship in Virginia, however, was that it continued to provide care for poor children and relieved the public from much of the financial burden and social problems caused by large numbers of dependent children. It represented a transitional step (in terms of governmental organization as well as public attitude) from a total dependence on private charity to a greater dependence on public funding for institutions of poor relief and education, changes which occurred during the nineteenth century. Benefiting both child and master and society in general, apprenticeship offered a familiar, practical, humanitarian, and fairly effective solution to the problems of indigent children during the colonial times.
Notes for Chapter IV


5 Wicomico Parish, Northumberland County, Vestry Book, 1703-1795, Richmond, Virginia State Archives, 127 (27 Aug. 1755); Churchill Gibson Chamberlayne, *The Vestry Book and Register of Bristol Parish, Virginia, 1720-1789* (Richmond, 1898), 67 (12 Nov. 1733). In December 1788 for the first time the court records listed the poor rates. The court appointed local persons to care for 47 children and 12 adults. Each guardian was compensated for the expenses of keeping the indigent person. Northumberland County, Virginia, Order Book, 1786-1790, 442-443 (Dec. 1788), Richmond, Virginia State Archives. (hereafter cited as NCOB).

6 NCOb, 1678-1698, 435 (16 Aug. 1688).

7 See, for example, the orders for the churchwardens of St. Stephens Parish to bind out Elizabeth Pugh in 1756. NCOb, 1756-1758, 20 (14 June 1756).


10 NCBO, 1756-1758, 24 (14 June 1756); Marcus Wilson Jernegan, *Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America, 1607-1783* (New York, 1931), 186.


12 Hening, I, 336 (1646).


15 NCBO, 1753-1756, 50 (10 Sept. 1753). The following year the courts apprenticed Judy Care, an orphan, for twelve years. NCBO, 1753-1756, 99 (8 April 1754).


20 An example is the indenture of James Kernute in Churchill Gibson Chamberlayne, comp., *The Vestry Book of Blisland Parish, New Kent and James City Counties, Virginia, 1721-1786* (Richmond, 1935), 7 (13 March 1730).

21 Pinchbeck and Hewitt, *Children in English Society*, 259.


24 Hening, III, 451 (1705).


27 Ibid., 150.

28 Ibid., 149, 153.


30 Rutman, "Parental Death" in Tate and Ammerman, eds., *Chesapeake*, 167.


38 Main, *Social Structure*, 74-75; 77-81, 112-113, 274-275; Northumberland County, Virginia, Record Book, 14, 1787-1793, 308 (11 Oct. 1789). (hereafter cited as NCRB); NCOB, 1790-1794, 400 (1794).

39 NCRB, 1766-1770, 443 (Jan. 1770); NCOB, 1773-1783, 253 (Feb. 1776), 1770-1773, 73 (March 1771), 442 (1772).


41 King George County, Virginia, Inventory Book 1, 1721-1744, 306-316.

42 Kevin P. Kelly, "Economic and Social Development of Seventeenth-Century Surry County, Virginia" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Washington, 1972), 133.

Gill, "Craftsmen," 15.


Gill, "Craftsmen," 3; Bridenbaugh, Colonial Craftsman, 12.

See, for example, Virginia Gazette: PD 14 N 71:32, PD 24 S 72:22; Main, Social Structure, 76.

Hening, II, 266-267 (1663); Hening, IV, 482 (1736).

Hening, I, 336 (1646); Hening II, 266-267 (1663).

Virginia Gazette 25 Jl 51:31; Chamberlayne, Bristol Parish, 165-166 (23 Feb. 1757).

The seventeenth-century study is based on the years 1680-1695 in Northumberland County.

NCOB, 1762-1766, 189 (Aug 1763); NCOB, 1767-1770, 290 (Sept. 1768), 1770-1773, 245 (Dec. 1771). See the cases of John and William Cooke, NCOB, 1758-1762, 48 (9 April 1759), 367 (12 April 1762). Also see case of John Flynt, NCRB, 3, 1753-1756, 154 (11 Nov. 1754), NCOB, 1756-1758, 335 (11 Sept. 1758).


In 1719, for example, the Lancaster court apprenticed Mary Collins until age eighteen to learn "such housewifery exercises as may tend to her future advantage." Lyon G. Tyler, ed., "Current Errors," WMQ, 1st ser. VIII, 2 (Oct. 1899). Similarly, the Northumberland justices bound out Imma Tycer, an orphan, to learn "some suitable trade and Imployment." NCOB, 1758-1762, 18 (13 Feb. 1759).
59 Hening, III, 375-376 (1705). See, for example, the indenture of James Jones of Caroline County (1741) in John Frederick Doorman, comp., Caroline County, Virginia, Order Book, 1740-1746 (Washington, D.C., 1971), 11.

60 NCOR, 1678-1698, 544 (18 March 1691); "Education in Colonial Virginia," William and Mary Quarterly, 1st ser., V, 4 (April 1897), 222-223. (York County, 26 May 1690). A few years later, the courts ordered Henry Hayward to pay his apprentice, Stephen Clark 1,000 pounds of tobacco for his apprentice's loss of time while working in the fields instead of learning his craft. York County, Court Orders, 1691-1694, 210 in Robert S. Cope, Carry Me Back; Slavery and Servitude in Seventeenth-Century Virginia (Pikeville, Kentucky, 1973), 66.

61 See Table 2.

62 NCOR, 5, 1758-1762, 304-305 (1761); NCOR, 1762-1766, 189 (1763); NCOR, 1767-1770, 290 (1768), 1762-1764, 269 (1764), 1758-1762, 353 (1762).


64 Vestry Book of Fredericksburg Parish, Louisa; Vestry Book of Dettingen Parish, Prince William.

65 Philip Vickers Fithian served as a tutor for Robert Carter of Nomini Hall, 1773-1774.


71 NCOR, 1652-1655, 16 (20 Jan. 1652); Bruce, Institutional, 357-358; Knight, History of Education, 299-300, 313.


73 Jernegan, Laboring and Dependent, 153.

74 NCOR, 5, 1758-1762, 304-305 (9 Feb. 1761).

75 Ibid., 3, 1753-1756, 154 (11 Nov. 1754); NCOR, 1756-1758, 335 (11 Sept. 1758). The will of William Cooke (1759) provided that his Negro slave, Adam, should be used to support his widow and educate his five orphans. NCOR, 5, 1758-1762, 87 (12 March 1759).
The will of Norman Appleby also instructed the executor of his estate to see that the profits of his land were used to educate his children.


A fifth of the apprenticeship orders from Fredericksville Parish contain such provisions.

These figures are based on the studies of Northumberland County from 1750-1765, Fredericksville Parish in Louisa County (1742-1785), and Dettingen Parish in Prince William County (1745-1782).

Mary Peacock, bound by the Petsworth Parish churchwardens in 1707, was to receive three years of schooling. Chamberlayne, *Petsworth Parish*, 91 (Oct. 1707).


Philip A. Bruce, ed., *"Extracts from Princess Anne Court Records, " Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, II, (1895), 345 (May, June 1717).

York County Court Orders 1, 1746-1752, 200 (15 May 1749).


"Education in Colonial Virginia," *VMQ*, 1st ser., V, 4 (April 1897). 222 (Elizabeth City County, 18 July 1698); *NCOB*, 1678-1698, 394 (18 May 1687).
CHAPTER V

THE APPRENTICE AND HIS MASTER: CHARACTER OF APPRENTICESHIP

IN NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, VIRGINIA: 1680-1695 AND 1750-1765

Northumberland County, formed in 1648, is located in the "Northern Neck" region of Virginia where the Potomac River converges with the Chesapeake Bay. It borders Richmond and Lancaster Counties to the south and Westmoreland County to the west. Today, as in the colonial period, the land is covered with forests, fields, and a few scattered towns. The Great and Little Wicomico Rivers and numerous creeks provide easy access to the Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

Despite a 1646 Indian treaty which stipulated that the Northumberland territory would not be open to settlement until after 1649, colonists from Kent Island, Maryland, moved into the region during the early 1640s. In 1648, it officially became a county of the colony of Virginia, possessing the rights to elect representatives and to obtain land patents. More than 55,000 acres of land had been issued by 1650. Three other counties were created out of the original territory: Lancaster (1651), "Gloster" (1651), and Westmoreland (1653).¹

In response to the high demand for labor and to the lure of abundant, cheap land, tides of immigrants poured into the Chesapeake during the 1650s and 1660s. By 1661, there were 585 tithables in Northumberland.² This frontier society was dominated by a rapidly expanding tobacco economy which depended primarily on the labor of indentured
servants from abroad. It was a volatile society composed mostly of young male immigrants from abroad.\(^3\)

High mortality rates and a shortage of women prevented any real growth of the existing population until the early eighteenth century. Death was an "omnipresent fact of life" in the seventeenth-century Chesapeake; high mortality rates resulted in disruption of family life and high incidence of orphanhood.\(^4\) Few children reached maturity without losing one parent and more than a third lost both before they were twenty-one.\(^5\) The pervasiveness of parental loss and a rise in poverty resulting from economic distress during the 1670s and 1680s were the two principal reasons why parish apprenticeship became such a significant institution in the Chesapeake. Clearly the most important function of apprenticeship was to provide immediate care for needy children and to relieve the community of the further burden of supporting them. Death and subsequent disruption of family life increased the insecurity of colonial children. With death as a constant reality they learned to be adaptable and probably matured early. Youthful inheritance and early autonomy (to marry, establish one's household, and assume public office) characterized this seventeenth-century society.\(^6\)

Throughout the 1600s the fate of the average farmer depended on the fluctuations in the tobacco market. As more former servants began to cultivate the staple, tobacco prices plummeted. When freedmen entered into competition with their former masters an over-abundance of tobacco and a deterioration in its quality resulted.\(^7\) A depression began in the late 1660s and continued (with brief periods of prosperity in 1685, 1686, 1698-1702) into the early eighteenth century. Throughout this period, population growth rate declined as fewer immigrants arrived in
the Chesapeake region. Small farmers faced lessening opportunities for advancement as economic conditions worsened and as arable land became scarce. The future of the freedman appeared bleak; little credit was available to him and there was little chance to accumulate capital. By the late seventeenth century the number of middling planters declined while the number of single-tithable households rose. As the economy contracted, freedmen found it increasingly difficult to establish independent households and to acquire additional labor. Frustrated by a loss of economic and social status, many migrated to the western frontiers. Those who were unwilling to leave the settled community often became tenant farmers to wealthy planters.

A dramatic shift in the colonial labor force took place by the late seventeenth century. As the number of white indentured servants dwindled, planters met growing demands for unskilled labor with Negro slaves imported from Africa. The population of Virginia in 1700 was approximately 55,000 and it is estimated that a half of the labor force was composed of black slaves.

During the latter decades of the seventeenth century the social structure of Chesapeake society became more stratified, whereby the gap between small and large planter widened. Supplementing their wealth from tobacco with land speculation and various mercantile activities, a group of "great planters" came to dominate local politics and society. They were allied by ties of kinship and by a common set of ideals and interests. As the social structure and basic institutions became more solidified a stronger sense of community emerged in colonial Virginia. Many families became permanent residents, adding an element of stability to society.
It was in this early society that the Northumberland county courts apprenticed sixty-two children between 1680 and 1695, or about 4.1 per year. Because of illegibility and incompleteness in the early records it is likely that the numbers of children bound could have been considerably higher. As indicated by the statistics in Table 5, about 60 percent of the children were male; the average age for both sexes was 5.6 (5.9 for boys and 5.3 for girls).\(^{13}\) Although there was some variation in the length of terms, most children served until age twenty-one (males) or eighteen (females) by the late seventeenth century. Because the apprentices were bound out so young, they served their masters and mistresses for longer terms than the traditional seven years associated with "trade apprenticeship." The average length of terms for boys was 14.4 years and, for girls, 12.1.

Little information could be obtained about the fathers of the children who were bound out during this period. Records do show that almost one half of the children were orphans. Frequently several siblings were bound out at once, although generally not to the same master. Fifteen percent of the children were bound out by their fathers; nine percent were illegitimate; and five percent apprenticed themselves.\(^{14}\) The estate inventory of Jonathan Pendrill, father of three apprentices, totaled 9,286 pounds of tobacco. It is the only estate of an apprentice's father which survives in the Northumberland court records during this period.\(^{15}\) High mortality rates and early ages at which children were bound suggest that many were the offspring of young men who had died before they could accumulate enough capital to provide security for their families. The single tithable list surviving from seventeenth-century Northumberland (1679) includes only sixteen fathers who were
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th># Children Bound</th>
<th>Average # Bound per Year</th>
<th>% Males Bound</th>
<th>% Females Bound</th>
<th>Mean Age Bound (All)</th>
<th>Mean Age Bound Males</th>
<th>Mean Length of Term (All)</th>
<th>Mean Length of Term Males</th>
<th>% Bound Self</th>
<th>% Poor, Neglected Child</th>
<th>% Bastard</th>
<th>% Mulatto</th>
<th>% Bound by Father</th>
<th>% Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland County 1680-1695</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petsworth Parish, Gloucester County 1677-1729</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles County, Maryland 1662-1705</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>17th Century Totals</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland County 1750-1765</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredericksville Parish, Louisa County 1742-1785</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dettingen Parish, Prince William County, 1745-1782</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>14.2</td>
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<td>42%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th Century Totals</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
householders. These men held an average of 1.6 tithables, compared to the county average of 3 tithables per household. The father of apprentices, Richard, John, and Ann Booth, was a landholder and constable. It is likely, however, that most fathers were poor laborers or tenant farmers. At least three were indentured servants.

Court records indicate that a few of the parents were particularly unsavory characters. The father of Joseph and Sarah Oldis, a notorious debtor, was jailed for a felony in 1684 and subsequently escaped from prison. Ann Towers was bound out by Dorothy MacClanichan, her mother, who was charged with fornication and with slander against a prominent local planter, Jonathan Webb. After confessing to threatening to burn Webb's house and mill and accusing him of fathering her child, MacClanichan was sentenced to receive eleven lashes following the delivery of her child. The mother of mulatto bastard, Ann Witter, was punished for having two more illegitimate children by "Indian Tom." In the most serious case, one apprentice's father was found guilty of murdering his wife.

The beginning of occupational specialization in colonial Virginia coincided with the tobacco depression during the late seventeenth century. At this time, most counties faced the problems of an increasing number of paupers. Virginians may have viewed apprenticeship as a means of enabling their sons and daughters to learn a skill besides farming so that they would not be so dependent on the fluctuations of the tobacco market. Most fathers who lived to see their children reach maturity, however, did not bind them out to trades. The single most important purpose of parish apprenticeship during this early period was to provide security for disadvantaged children and to
relieve the community of the financial and social burden of maintaining them. Only 32 percent of the Northumberland orders binding out children from 1680-1695 specified a trade; most boys were probably employed in tobacco farming.

The masters of the sixty-two Northumberland apprentices were a much more visible group than the fathers. Most were householders; eleven had five or more tithables. They had an average of 3.6 tithables, compared to the county average of 3.0. The records indicate that many imported indentured servants and Negro slaves to work on their tobacco plantations. Several masters were small farmer-craftsmen who served on local juries and two were sheriffs. A significant number appear to have been larger planters who were prominent officeholders; Richard and Rodham Kenner, Thomas Hobson, and Thomas Barnes served as justices of the peace; two other masters were churchwardens. Despite the incompleteness of the records it is clear that some disparity existed between the socio-economic status of the apprentices's fathers and masters in seventeenth-century Northumberland.

Following the lives of the sixty-two apprentices after their terms of indenture expired proved to be a most difficult task. Because of the absence of marriage records it was impossible to trace the female apprentices. The great majority of male apprentices disappeared from the records after their initial indenture. Only two of these former Northumberland apprentices, Richard Booth and Joseph Wall, are included in the enumerations of persons paying court fees from 1718-1724. Another apprentice, John Wall, became a farmer and died in 1711, leaving a personal estate valued at about £40. A fourth apprentice, Jonathan Thomas, the illegitimate son of an indentured servant, became a small craftsman,
whose personal estate equalled £ 63,780 in 1719. The most "successful" apprentice (according to available records) was Richard Booth, who probably inherited some property from his father, a landholder and local constable. At Booth's death in 1739, he had accumulated a plantation, seven Negroes, an indentured servant, and an undetermined amount of personal property.

The apparent disappearance of the former apprentices in Northumberland and in other Chesapeake counties during this period can be attributed to incomplete records, high mortality rates and emigration. The depression in tobacco prices during the late seventeenth century and the growing scarcity of land in the eastern counties made it increasingly difficult for freedmen to acquire property, establish households, accumulate wealth, and to integrate themselves into colonial society. Two results of this depression were a rise in tenancy and emigration. Of the 362 indentured servants registered in the records of neighboring Lancaster County between 1669 and 1679, only 9 percent became householders. Perhaps the greatest testimony to the bleak prospects facing the freedman (former indentured servant or apprentice) was the flood of emigration from the eastern counties of Virginia and Maryland.

In the late seventeenth century when tobacco cultivation predominated and manufacturing was underdeveloped, apprenticeship was not (especially during periods of depression) particularly successful in providing opportunities for employment and for social advancement. With little capital, the freedman could choose between living at subsistence level or migrating westward where land was plentiful and greater opportunities awaited those who were venturous.
Better records for the eighteenth century provide the historian with a more complete picture of colonial apprenticeship. In Northumberland County most apprentices were male orphans, the sons of men who died young before they could leave sizable estates for their families. Most were children of yeoman farmers; some were younger sons of more well-to-do men who inherited a little property. The two central motives of parish apprenticeship in eighteenth-century Northumberland were to provide care (maintenance) and vocational training for children. Although the masters of the apprentices were a little wealthier and older than the fathers, both were members of the middle class in terms of wealth and social status. While living in the homes of their masters, apprentices took their places like other members of the family. In general, the relationship between master and apprentice was a friendly and mutually beneficial one. Although some apprentices disappeared from the colonial records, many remained in Northumberland and became independent craftsmen or artisan-farmers. Most joined the ranks of the middle class. Despite the economic decline experienced by the Tidewater counties after 1760, many former apprentices achieved some prosperity; they acquired land, homes, a few Negro slaves, and secured minor public offices.

The period 1720-1750 was characterized by slow growth and economic prosperity which brought higher standards of living to the small planters who comprised the majority of Virginia's colonial population. Mortality rates declined as the population achieved greater stability and developed resistance to disease. As the number of property holders increased, the average size of holding diminished. Subsistence farming characterized much of colonial Virginia. The majority of planters had
estates valued between £ 100 and £ 1,000. By 1755, the total number of tithables in Northumberland was 2414; 59 percent of these were Negroes. In seventy-five years the county had become a stable community dominated by a few families who controlled most of the wealth, ran the local government, and were the acknowledged gentry class.

During the fifteen year period, 1750-1765, Northumberland justices bound out more children and from a broader spectrum of society than from an equal time during the preceding century. As indicated in Table 4, the average child was 13 or about 7.4 years older than those of the previous century. The courts apprenticed more male children and almost all were orphans for whom specific vocational training was required. From 1750 to 1765, ninety-nine children or 6.6 per year were bound out in Northumberland. Shown in Table 4, apprenticeship studies in Fredericksville Parish, Louisa County, and Dettingen Parish, Prince William County revealed that sixty-five (1.3 per year) and ninety-seven children (2.6 per year), respectively, were apprenticed. Local custom varied; generally the county courts and vestries divided the duties of binding out children. In any case, local governments regularly apprenticed a large number of disadvantaged children. These numbers increase when one takes into account the undetermined number of boys who were bound out privately by their fathers to local craftsmen for the sole purpose of learning a trade. As explained earlier, such indentures frequently failed to appear in the colonial records.

At least 75 percent of the apprentices were male; in Northumberland the figure is almost 90 percent. The colonial records indicate quite a disparity in the mean age of Virginia apprentices in the eighteenth century. As shown in Table 4, the average age was 13.0 in
Northumberland (13.5 for boys and 9.8 for girls), but the comparable ages in Louisa and Prince William Counties were 6.0 (6.4 for boys and 5.1 for girls) and 6.8 (6.9 for boys and 6.4 for girls), respectively. The Northumberland figure approximates the traditional seven-year-term of indenture for trade apprenticeship. Similar to the seventeenth-century Northumberland figures, the lower ages seen in Louisa County could be attributed to similar environmental conditions. In a newly settled "frontier" community, higher mortality rates and an unstable population prevailed. The low ages of children in Prince William, an older, settled county, are less easily explained. An examination of its socio-economic base and demography would be required. In general, lower ages for apprentices emphasize the motive of maintenance, while higher ages (particularly in conjunction with a high number of male apprentices) emphasizes the motive of vocational training.

A majority of the children who were bound apprentice in eighteenth-century Virginia were orphans. In Northumberland this figure is probably higher than 90 percent, in Louisa and Prince William Counties, 60 percent. As indicated in Table 4, the other categories of apprentices included bastards (15 percent), children binding out themselves (2 percent), poor or neglected children (8 percent), and children bound by their fathers (2 percent). 34

In examining the background of the ninety-nine Northumberland apprentices bound out between 1750 and 1765, one sees that they represent families from the lower levels of society to a few members of the gentry class. These assessments of economic wealth and social status are based in part on the estate inventories of the apprentices' fathers. There are some problems, of course, in making such evaluations to determine wealth categories. The first is the incompleteness of the public
do not contain the wills or inventories for men who appeared in court, held local offices, paid taxes, and owned land and slaves in the county. These records were either damaged or lost. Also, law did not require the appraisement of all estates. A second problem is that many inventories of older men and women represent estates which had diminished in value over the years. Frequently, a man gave away land, slaves and household property to his children in the years before his death. Sometimes the widow's third was already subtracted from the estate, but this information was omitted from the records.

One cannot assume that inventories form a representative sample of the population of living persons who owned property at any given time. For one reason or another, the estates of the wealthy or of the very poor may have been inventoried and recorded less frequently than those of the average yeoman farmer. Because of such biases in the records, changes in the wealth patterns of decedents do not always reflect patterns of the entire population. It is very difficult to predict the many factors which led local officers to measure estate inventories and record them or to omit such actions.

Another major problem is that estate inventories generally did not include an assessment of land. According to Harold Gill and George urtis: "any attempt to judge individual wealth in any Virginia locality will tend to underrate total wealth by significant amounts. Wealth was concentrated in improved and unimproved land. Land was the principal legacy of decedents who believed that land was the most profitable 3-term investment for the future interest of heirs." Although the appraisals do not represent an accurate measure of actual worth, use they do not include land evaluations), they are useful in
comparing a man's personal estate with those of his neighbors. Even if one determined the total number of acres owned by each decedent, this information would not necessarily reveal the land's actual value. In addition to providing a numerical value of each personal estate, inventory appraisals afford the historian innumerable details about decedents. For example, the presence of certain items such as fine silver, imported ceramics and cloths or of extensive libraries indicate something about their owner's economic and social status. While one needs to be cautious about making generalizations concerning wealth and status based on estate inventories, these evaluations can be made. If one thoroughly examines the court records for evidence about a person's occupation and office-holding record and the wills, tax lists, and estate inventories for enumerations of the number of slaves in conjunction with land records, one can assess the colonist's position in relation to his neighbors with considerable accuracy.

Estate inventories survive for 68 percent of the ninety-nine fathers, most of whom died between 1749 and 1765. In order to evaluate these inventories (as well as those of the masters and apprentices), three wealth categories were devised, based on 547, or 61 percent of the inventories listed in the Record Books from 1745-1795. The sample taken consisted of those estate appraisals which were summed. Those inventories which were untotalled included poor, middling, and wealthy estates, although there were a greater proportion of the first, as in the case of the summed inventories. In general, the untotalled inventories represent estates which were financially sound; the decedent owed no debts to his neighbors.\(^{36}\)

Since the values fluctuated widely over the forty-five year period,
(particularly during the inflationary War years), five-year moving wealth categories were established. If an estate fell below the median value for the five-year period, the category is "low." If the estate is above the median value and below the value equivalent to the mean plus one standard deviation above the mean, the category is "middle." Estates valued greater than one standard deviation above the mean are classified as "high."

In a case in which no will survives, an inventory generally did not explain into how many parts and in what proportion an estate was to be divided among the heirs. Although one can make an evaluation of the father's status in society, it is often more difficult to determine the status of his individual offspring (i.e., the apprentice). The average value of the sixty-eight fathers' estates was £ 117.6.0, an amount which falls within the middle range for the period 1750-1765 during which most of them died. Table 6 contains summaries of the estate values, slave holdings, and occupations of Northumberland fathers, masters and apprentices. Of the known estate values, 40 percent fell into the low range, 44 percent into the middle, and 16 percent into the high range. Thirty-one fathers who were known to be slaveowners showed an average holding of five Negroes. Thirty were farmers; two owned taverns; three owned stores.

The origins of the eighteenth-century apprentices varied considerably. Edward Barret's father was a poor farmer-craftsman who died in 1751, leaving a personal estate of £ 13.5.3, including five cows, eleven hogs, two horses, three beds, some household items, a spinning wheel, and a loom and gear. John Mott, on the other hand, was the eldest son of a planter whose personal estate equalled £ 364.14.2. After inheriting his father's plantation and two Negro slaves, Mott was apprenticed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Value of Estates</th>
<th># Estates Known</th>
<th>% Low Estates</th>
<th>% Middle Estates</th>
<th># Slaveholders</th>
<th># with less than 5 slaves</th>
<th># with 5-9 slaves</th>
<th># with more than 10 slaves</th>
<th># Small Farmers</th>
<th># Middle to Larger Planters</th>
<th># Tavernkeepers</th>
<th># Storekeepers</th>
<th># Grist Mill</th>
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</thead>
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<td>FATHERS</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>MASTERS</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPRENTICES</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>10</td>
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</table>
for three years as a bricklayer. An example of a more typical father was Rodham Hudson, a farmer whose personal property was valued at £ 111.8.0, including one slave.  

Most of the Northumberland apprentices were the children of small to middling farmers or farmer-craftsmen. Many were younger sons. The principle of primogeniture operated to a limited extent in eighteenth-century Northumberland. Despite the tendency to divide property among all one's children after subtracting the widow's third, fathers generally left the home plantation to the eldest son (frequently with the provision that he care for his mother until her remarriage or death). Older sons usually received several of the most expensive Negro slaves. Younger sons and daughters received (in descending order of birth) tracts of unimproved land, the rest of the Negroes, livestock, and personal property such as beds. Swanson Lunsford, a Northumberland farmer, divided his estate of £ 326.11.7 (including five slaves and much livestock) among his nine children. After the older sons received the home plantation and other property, the youngest son, Edwin, had as his inheritance only half a Negro slave. The older brothers and sisters were appointed guardians, but the two youngest children were apprenticed.

Some apprentices had an inheritance which was placed in their masters's care. Law required the master to appear annually at the Orphan's Court so that the justices could scrutinize the orphan's accounts and inquire into his welfare and education. In 1755, for example, the guardian of John Hornsby reported to the Court that the rent of his ward's plantation came to 450 pounds of tobacco. The uncle and guardian of young Mark Harding who was bound apprentice as a tailor in 1758 held his modest estate of £ 16.6.1.
Although the masters generally had larger estate values than the fathers, no great disparity existed between the two groups, as shown in Table 6. For the 48 percent of the masters for whom an estate inventory survives, the average value (excluding land evaluations) was $330.20, an amount which also falls into the middle range of Northumberland estates. The masters' estates varied as much as did those of the fathers. Although the masters were, on the average, older, wealthier, and more firmly established than the fathers (most of whom died young, leaving children who had not yet reached maturity), they were certainly not the "great planters" of colonial Virginia. Based on five-year moving wealth categories, 31 percent of the masters for whom estate values were known were in the low category, 56 percent ranked middle and 13 percent were high. Although only slightly less than half of the inventories survive, these figures suggest that masters represented all segments of the social strata, particularly the middle class.

As shown in Table 6, thirty-one fathers owned an average of five slaves, compared to thirty-seven masters who owned an average of approximately six Negroes. Of these slaveholders, seventeen fathers and thirteen masters held less than five slaves; eleven and twenty, respectively, owned between five and less than ten Negroes, and three and four, respectively, owned more than ten slaves. Fifty-two masters were at least part-time craftsmen; seven were small or middling planters; twelve appear to have been large, prosperous planters. Both groups included men who owned and operated taverns and retail stores. Both served as jurors and appraisers of estates. The differences between their social statuses, with a few notable exceptions, do not appear to have been particularly significant.
In most cases, the life of the apprentice in the home of his master resembled that of an adopted child living with foster parents. Except perhaps in the cases of illegitimate (particularly mulatto) children, there was no social stigma attached to apprenticeship; it was viewed as a normal method to socialize and educate children. Although the interplay of personalities certainly determined the nature of the relationship between master and apprentice, generally it was positive and mutually beneficial.

Justices of the peace bound children to responsible men who would care for them properly. Often, a child was bound to relatives or family friends --to persons with a special interest in him. Apprenticeship was essentially a local institution. In a relatively small community such as Northumberland it is likely that a master knew or at least was acquainted with the child's father or family. The apprentice, then, was generally not a stranger in his master's home. After serving for an average of seven years (or fifteen years in Louisa or Prince William Counties) he or she certainly became a member of the household. The apprentice probably took his place in the home on a basis of equality with the other children. Many must have become companions of children close to their ages and received instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic along with them.

Although consciousness of an apprentice's social status should not be overemphasized, this factor was present to the extent that masters were expected to clothe and educate apprentices and wards according to the children's status (that is, their inheritance). Poor orphans may have received superior maintenance than they would have in their own
homes, but law obliged masters to maintain propertied children "according to their estates and qualities." The order binding Mary Chankerett of Northumberland, for example, specified that she be "well-clothed" in linen and cotton "according to here Station and degree." In some cases, a younger son of a prosperous planter who had a large family received practically no inheritance. The quality of maintenance which such a child received depended largely on the financial means and generosity of his master.

Orphan accounts provide an important and often detailed record of the types of clothing and personal items provided for apprentices. In 1755, for example, William Baysie recorded the expenses for young John Hornsby: "1 pair Stockings 4/1 To making one Coat 4/ To 1 pair Shoes 4/ To Makeing 2 Shirts 2/ To making one Jackcoat 2/... To 6 yds of Linnen at 14d £ of Brown 1/.

A second source of information about the clothing of a typical apprentice is the records of runaways in the Virginia Gazette. In 1770, the master of John Royston, a nineteen-year-old apprentice from Gloucester County, offered thirty shillings reward for his apprentice's return. When last seen Royston was riding away on his master's horse, wearing "a light coloured frize coat with a small cape to it, and bound with ferreting, a new broad cloth waistcoat and breeches, I think blue or blue grey of pretty fine cloth." In a similar notice, John Richardson of Yorktown described the clothing of his runaway apprentice, Hugh Campbell: "a double-breasted Pembroke Cloth Jacket, a dark coloured Fustian Jacket and Breeches, two new Brown Linen shirts, and a Pair of Trowsers."
The rarity of cases of neglect or abuse in the court records and of runaway apprentices in the Virginia Gazette suggest that the relations between most masters and apprentices were satisfactory. When serious conflicts arose, the courts responded promptly to apprentices's complaints.45 The quality of the relationship between master and apprentice depended, to a large extent, on the affluence and other responsibilities of the master as well as on the personalities of each. A planter of considerable wealth with many business responsibilities might entrust the vocational instruction of his apprentice to a plantation artisan. His apprentice might learn to read and write at a nearby private school or from a tutor living in the household. Because most Northumberland masters were at least part-time craftsmen, they taught their apprentices personally and worked with them throughout the day. As a result, the relationship was a more intimate one. Female apprentices worked under close supervision of the mistress of the household along with the daughters.

Colonial documents testify to an occasional case of conflict between master and apprentice. Landon Carter, planter of Richmond County, apparently had many problems with his apprentices. Billy Beale, the younger son and orphan of a planter, was bound to Carter for three years "in order to be instructed in the Stewardship or management of a Virginia estate." Berating Beale's "want of spirit and accursed indifference," Carter blamed the "ungrateful brute" for "retarding almost every work" on the plantation.46 His second apprentice, Raleigh Christian, the thirteen-year-old son of Carter's dancing master, proved to be no improvement over the hapless Beale. Raleigh "borrowed" his master's horse, and then returned home intoxicated one day. After running away a second time, the boy was dismissed by Carter because he
"shewed no good Principle." The third candidate, Tom Parker, Carter's "graceless godson," proved to be a disappointment to his master as well.

The nature of the relations between apprentices and their masters was generally positive. Many must have worked well together and become friendly. An example of such closeness can be seen in the 1760 bequest of craftsman, Dennis Swanson, to his apprentice of four years, Ezekiel Coffey. Having no children of his own, Swanson willed Coffey: "all my coopers and shoemakers tools and four hundred and seventy four pounds of crop tobacco, one of my guns, my mare, bridle, and saddle...[and] corn and one feather bed and furniture." Following his master's death, the courts rebound Coffey to another Northumberland cooper to complete his term of service. Clearly, in cases such as this, master and apprentice must have become like father and son.

The fates of the ninety-nine Northumberland apprentices varied as much as did their origins. Some freedmen were practically invisible in the colonial records; others achieved social prominence and wealth. Of those who remained in the county, most belonged to the middle class and led comfortable lives, accumulated modest estates and held minor public offices. As planters and part-time craftsmen, many served as guardians and masters to orphaned children, thus perpetuating the institution of parish apprenticeship.

Approximately one half of the male children bound out by the Northumberland court vanished from the records following their initial binding. Because of the inadequacy of the marriage records, it was impossible to trace the eleven female apprentices. Forty-three of the eighty-seven males either died, migrated out of the county, or lived in such obscurity that their names did not appear in the Court Orders or Record
Books for more than forty years after their indentures. Almost all whose names disappeared were the sons of men about whom either no information could be obtained or whose estate inventories were considerably below the county average. The trend was for apprentices who inherited no property and who had no family to disappear, while those with some property and some kin tended, for the most part, to remain in the county.

An examination of the original trades of those forty-three men whose names vanished reveals that eight were shoemakers (out of a total of eleven bound to this trade) and four were coopers (out of five children bound). Apparently, neither trade enabled craftsmen to find sufficient employment in Northumberland during this period. The single cooper and shoemaker among the original apprentices who continued to practice their trades in Northumberland had estate inventories which, when combined, totalled less than the average apprentice's inventory. Many of the cordwainers (shoemakers) must have become itinerant craftsmen who traveled from area to area in search of work. Twelve other men whose names disappeared were carpenters, joiners, or turners and four were bricklayers. About fifty percent of the males bound to these trades disappeared from the records and only a few who continued to practice these trades prospered in the county. It is likely that some craftsmen in the wood-working trades migrated westward to the frontier settlements where their skills in building homes and furniture would be in greater demand. With twenty-nine boys bound to the wood-working trades between 1750 and 1765, it is likely that there was a surplus of these artisans in Northumberland.

Despite the general prosperity and rise in standards of living during the eighteenth century, a slow, but perceptible decline began after 1760 in the Tidewater region. Low tobacco prices, soil exhaustion,
and extravagant living produced a "debt-ridden, declining economy;" the economic center shifted from Tidewater to Piedmont. Attempts to diversify agriculture after 1750 led to the cultivation of corn and wheat and to a proliferation of grist mills. During this period, the Tidewater region experienced a gradual rise in tenancy and a loss of small farmers through emigration. 50

The Northumberland tithables lists reflect a slowing in population growth rate from about 1762-1769, compared to the growth of the previous ten years and the subsequent years until the outbreak of the American Revolution. 51 As indicated in Figure 1, the number of tithables actually decreased for several years during the late 1760s. During this same period the Record Books show a decline or a leveling off in the number of estate inventories. Barring any change in the criteria for making and recording estate appraisals, this would suggest that emigration rather than high mortality rates led to a diminishing population. These trends were most likely in response to general economic stagnation in the Tidewater region. It is difficult to follow any patterns after 1775 because of incomplete records during the Revolutionary War years.

A reduction in the population growth rate in Northumberland during the 1760s coincided with a rise in inequality. All summed estate inventories between 1745 and 1795 were examined in order to study patterns of change in the County. For greater accuracy in measurement both mean and median values were calculated and compared. A study of the five-year moving means and medians of inventories, as shown in Figure 2, reveals that the measures followed similar courses before 1760 and after 1775, indicating a fairly stable distribution of wealth. Between 1760 and 1775, however, the median (representing the non-affluent) declines while the mean (representing the more affluent) mostly rises. This
Figure 2  
Five-Year Moving Mean and Median  
Estate Inventories, Northumberland County, 1750-1795
divergence indicates an increase in inequality among the members of Northumberland society. There is also a drop, particularly in the median, just before the Revolution, a change which shows a general loss of wealth in society. After 1775, inflation accounts for the sharp rise in estate values.

Economic decline and the rise in inequality occurred during the critical period in which the ninety-nine apprentices were attempting to begin their occupations, establish households, and accumulate capital. Despite their technical training, many without means and family faced bleak prospects during this time. The fact that a significant number stayed in the county and attained a comfortable life attests to their tenacity and to the merits of the apprenticeship system itself.

Incomplete colonial records makes it difficult, if not impossible, to trace those apprentices who vanished from Northumberland County. In one case, a craftsman bearing the name as a former Northumberland apprentice was listed in the court records of Fredericksburg in 1787 and in a Richmond newspaper in 1807. Richard Garner, freed from his five-year indenture in 1769, could well have been this same carpenter. Perhaps Garner was persuaded by one of the many advertisements which appeared in Virginia newspapers such as the following: "any discreet Tradesman (especially a Carpenter) content if he can make a genteel Provision for himself and Family by an Industry, and not ambitious to rank as a Gentleman, simply in the Qualifications, Extortion, Insolence, and Laziness, may expect Encouragement by settling at Richmond Town." Some of the former apprentices who remained in Northumberland became small farmers and craftsmen, living at subsistence level. These men owned no slaves and left personal estates less than the median value. Some owned land; others were landless laborers. The subsequent
occupations, slaveholding patterns and estate rankings (low, middle, and high) of the former Northumberland apprentices are contained in Table 6. Apprenticed as a carpenter in 1761, Joseph Bridgeman died in 1774, leaving an estate of £ 9.11.0 which consisted of "1 Chest of Joyners and Carpenters Tools 1 bed sheet and blanket, 1 large Barrow and four small ditto 1 small read Heffer 4 Barrels of Corn 1 Frying pan and one small hyde." Although Joseph Bridgeman represents an extreme case of poverty, thirteen other former apprentices died in Northumberland with estates below the median value. Four men, such as Joseph Beetley, became small farmers. He was a landholder, juror, and guardian and headed a household which consisted of ten white persons. At his death in 1792, Beetley's personal estate totalled only £ 81.12.1. 

A second group of poorer ex-apprentices combined farming with the practice of their trades. Norman Appleby, a small farmer-tailor, died in 1788, leaving an estate which equalled £ 52.0.8. Listed in 1782 as the head of a household consisting of six persons, Appleby served as a guardian, appraiser of estates, and patroller. The son of a poor farmer, John Cornish, was bound out for six years to learn the trades of a carpenter and joiner. Eventually he gained his freedom, acquired land, and served in several unpaid officers, including surveyor of the road. This entailed responsibility for organizing one's neighbors to maintain roads and bridges. When the small farmer-craftsman died in 1805 he had an estate of £ 50,18.3 to will to his heirs. 

On the other end of the scale, several of the apprentices were very successful in terms of attaining wealth and political and social prominence. Seven out of eight of these were the sons of men who had estate inventories above the average value. In general, those Northumberland apprentices who inherited property had a definite advantage over
those who did not. A second important characteristic of these "successful" apprentices was that most came from families which were well-established in the County (two to three generations). Although they were orphaned, relatives, neighbors, or family friends could look out for their welfare.

Only one of the former apprentices who achieved considerable prosperity continued to practice his trade. Another became a successful doctor and businessman, but the majority were planters with large property holdings and many Negro slaves. Several of the wealthier artisans were probably viewed as "middle class" by their neighbors; they worked actively in their trades and held only minor public offices.

More representative of the well-to-do ex-apprentice are John Gaskins, John Cottrell, and Richard Routt. The first, a younger son of a wealthy planter, was bound apprentice to a carpenter for eight years. Called "Gentleman," Gaskins became a prosperous planter with nineteen black slaves. He served as a justice of the peace and died in 1782, leaving to his heirs much land and a personal estate of almost $700. Bound as a carpenter and joiner in 1757, John Cottrell acquired a large personal estate of more than 500 acres of land and 12 slaves. He served as Lieutenant in the militia, vestryman, Overseer of the Poor, and guardian to several children. Richard Routt was also a carpenter's apprentice and the younger son and orphan of a wealthy planter. He served as Lieutenant in the Virginia Militia, tobacco inspector, and as Overseer of the Poor, the latter, a position of considerable local prominence. By the time of his death (1790), he had built a water grist mill, acquired much land, fifteen Negro slaves, and personal property valued at $665.6.0.

As a former apprentice, Doctor Walter Jones of Northumberland
represents an exceptional case. Although the records do not contain the will or inventory of his father, it is likely that he was a wealthy man. The orphan was apprenticed to Richard Thompson in 1761 as a shop joiner. Thompson, who instructed at least one other orphan, provided a bond of 5,000 pounds of tobacco for the indenture. By the 1780s Walter Jones had become a prominent doctor and wealthy planter who served as a justice of the peace for thirteen years and as a vestryman and as Coroner of the County. It is not known when or where he acquired his medical training. Jones owned twenty-six Negroes, much land, and a grist mill. His personal estate was greater than 6 3,000 and included a library valued at more than $300 and plate worth $200. His will stipulated that the estate be divided equally among his seven children. After emancipating a faithful older servant, Jones instructed that five particular Negroes be sold immediately because of their "faithlessness and disobedience under Equitable treatment on my part." Finally, he made a special request that his "dear friend," Daniel Harrison, should receive "my set of plains, saws, and every other article of carpenters tools."60

Since all but two of the most financially successful former apprentices became planters, it is likely that, at least in rural areas, the life of the planter offered greater profit incentives as well as social prestige to ambitious young men. Aspiration toward the life of the gentry--the acquisition of large tracts of land farmed by Negro slaves and other visible signs of wealth--continued to dominate Northumberland society during the late eighteenth century. It was from this group, often called "Gentlemen," that local political and social leaders emerged. Seven of the wealthy former apprentices owned a total of 130 slaves; two served as justices of the peace and four as vestrymen and
churchwardens; several were military officers. Although only one or two could be considered part of the real colonial elite, this group of freedmen represented a prominent group in Northumberland County, both in terms of wealth and social and political prestige.

Despite the dominance of agriculture, several former Northumberland apprentices invested in mercantile activities, taverns, retail stores and other businesses. Court records indicate that a number of Northumberland citizens experimented with grist mills during the late seventeenth century. The proliferation of grist mills at this time was not just a local phenomena. Carl Bridenbaugh notes that millers were in demand and often became prosperous in neighboring counties such as Westmoreland. Millers, using water or wind power, could grind grain to make flour for local consumption and trade. No doubt the central location of Northumberland on the Potomac River and the Atlantic Ocean made this county a likely area for some enterprising freedmen to expand such an industry.

The largest and most diverse group of ex-apprentices who remained in the County became landholders with modest estates. As shown in Table 6, 55 percent of the individual apprentices for whom such information exists had estates in the middle or high range of Northumberland estates (1770-1795). The average apprentice's estate equalled $316.7.0, a value within the middle range. Many of these middle class freedmen owned Negro slaves and held minor public offices. Some made their living as planters; a few continued to practice their trade full-time (two carpenters and two tailors); another group combined farming and the tailor's trade. Representing the first group, Henry Hurst who had inherited a very modest estate from his father in 1756, became
a landholder and owner of ten slaves. He served as a juror and also helped to appraise estates. By his death in 1798, he had accumulated property worth approximately £300.62

At a time in which the great majority of men were yeoman farmers, six former Northumberland apprentices in this middle class group continued to practice their trades, at least on a part-time basis. Agriculture did enable many men to acquire capital, but in colonial Virginia, there was also opportunity for an industrious craftsman. According to T. J. Main, artisans generally accumulated more property than common laborers, but their incomes were less than those of the average man and less than those of planters, merchants, and professional persons.63 The Northumberland records indicate that fourteen former apprentices had inventories below the median value of estates from 1770-1795; these men had a difficult time supporting themselves and their families.

A larger number of Northumberland artisans, however, were among the "middling sort" who lived in relative comfort and comprised the majority of the colonial population. Contrary to Main's argument, it does not appear that the middle class artisan (particularly the artisan-planter) of Northumberland was generally below the yeoman farmer in terms of wealth, social prestige, and political prominence. Many were self-employed, enjoying considerable independence. One such man was Mark Harding, the orphan of a poor farmer. Mark and his older brother, John, were bound to local craftsmen to learn the tailor's trade. John incurred many debts and absconded in 1767.64 Mark, however, became a successful tailor who evidently gained public respect. When three orphans were bound to him to learn the tailor's trade, several prominent members of the community placed bonds totalling 25,000 pounds of tobacco
as security for Harding's obligations. Following his death, his children were appointed guardians and inherited an estate that included four Negroes. A second example of the middle class craftsman was John Hornsby who established his carpentry business and acquired seven slaves by 1782. He served as a juror, surveyor of the road, and as guardian-master to at least one young man.

The wealthiest of the middle class ex-apprentices were those who combined farming and a trade. Some were entrepreneurs who invested in other businesses. Randolph Mott, another poor farmer's orphan, acquired enough capital by 1794 to build his tailor's shop on the court house grounds at an annual rent of twenty-five shillings. Master of ten slaves, and of another ten apprentices, Mott owned an estate valued at £ 385.7.3. Perhaps the best example of the entrepreneur planter-craftsman was George Smither. He was a third son and would receive no land according to his father's will unless his older brothers died before him. Smither owned eight Negroes in 1782 and served as surveyor of the road and as sheriff. In 1780, the county court granted him a license to operate a tavern at his home. Serving as guardian to two children, he taught three boys the tailor trade. A third apprentice, Haynie Townsend, operated a tavern and a store during the 1790s. He served as surveyor of the road, and owned seven slaves. This freedman left to his children a personal estate which equalled more than £ 300.

Despite the presence of a distinct social hierarchy, a great deal of social fluidity existed in colonial Northumberland. There was little movement into the upper gentry class; most prosperous apprentices, as planters, merchants, or craftsmen, remained in the upper ranks of the middle class. For the industrious man there were few obstacles in the movement to a comfortable existence as one of the "middling sort." This
mobility is evidenced by the careers of George Smither, Haynie Townsend or by Charles Haynie, the son of a poor craftsman who became a trader, landholder, owner of four slaves and guardian to several children. Haynie owned two boats and in 1773 took an orphan apprentice whom he agreed to teach "to Sail and Manage a Vessel in the Bay and Rivers." 70

Many apprentices achieved positions comparable to those of their masters, both in terms of economic wealth and social status. As indicated in Table 6, the average estate inventory for masters was £330, while that of apprentices was £317; both fall within the middling range of Northumberland estates. 71 Many of the apprentices held offices and became land and slave holders as their masters had been. There is no indication of any social distancing between masters and former apprentices; the opposite was true. In 1775, for example, the orphan of former master, James Templeman, was bound out by the courts to former apprentice, Randolph Mott, also a tailor. 72

The patterns of guardianship and apprenticeship indicate that a close-knit community of craftsmen existed in colonial Northumberland. Families of craftsmen frequently intermarried and fathers bound their children to fellow craftsmen. The younger brother of apprentices, Aaron and Spenser Nelms was bound to former apprentice, John Hornsby as a carpenter and joiner in 1769. Former apprentice, William Webb, who had served an eleven-year term to a tailor married an heiress, the ward of another tailor, Randolph Mott. Webb was killed in military service and left money to his friend, George Smither, another freedman and tailor. The courts bound one of his orphans to Smither to learn tailoring. 73

No single pattern characterized the lives of the eighty-eight male apprentices. Despite the advantages of their vocational training, some
could not find gainful employment. Forty-three vanished from the re-
cords. Most of these probably migrated to towns or frontier settlements
to seek better opportunities. In spite of the economic decline in the
Tidewater after 1760, many industrious ex-apprentices achieved a com-
fortable position in the County. A small group attained substantial
wealth and social and political prominence. Most who stayed entered
the ranks of the middle class whether they farmed, pursued their trade,
combined the two, or invested in taverns, stores, or grist mills. The
two trades most conducive to success in Northumberland during the 1770s-
1790s were tailoring and carpentry. Linked by ties of marriage and
friendship, craftsmen formed a self-conscious community within Northum-
berland society. Their labor was in demand and they formed a vital part
of the local economy. The lives of many of the former apprentices dem-
onstrate economic and social mobility and the success of apprenticeship
as an agency for vocational instruction.

During and after the American Revolution, local governments con-
tinued to collect and disburse funds for poor relief in Virginia as they
had before 1775. Civil officials, called Overseers of the Poor, were re-
sponsible for binding out children, particularly orphans, after the War.
This practice continued into the early nineteenth century although the
number of children gradually dwindled. Since the new State government
did not significantly alter the institution, it appears that parish ap-
prenticeship was viewed favorably by Virginians. The institution re-
presented a transitional step between a total dependence on private
charity and an increased public spending for poor relief along with a
rise of institutions such as orphanages and public schools, changes
which occurred during the nineteenth century. Such shifts in public at-
titude concerning the role and responsibilities of federal and local
governments continue to be the subject of much controversy today.

* * * *

In conclusion then, this social history study employs both traditional and quantitative methodologies and sources in order to characterize apprenticeship within a particular socio-economic context. It focuses on individual cases of children apprenticed in Northumberland County during the late seventeenth and the third quarter of the eighteenth centuries. Modified in response to the needs of the colonists, the institution was inherited from England and based primarily on the English Statute of Artificers (1562) and the Poor Law of 1601. Apprenticeship and indentured servitude were distinct in origin and nature. Administered locally by church and civil officials, apprenticeship was a social institution which served to restore the family structure— to reestablish parental authority over orphans. Justices and vestrymen took an active role in apprenticing youth, responded to any problems which arose, and demonstrated a genuine concern for the welfare of the children. Law protected the rights of both apprentice and master; local courts generally acted to enforce the legally-binding provisions of the indenture contract. It appears that most masters fulfilled their obligations whether out of a sense of duty or because of the fear of economic and legal repercussions if they did not. Generally, the relations between masters and apprentices appear to have been mutually beneficial and satisfactory.

The primary motive for binding out apprentices, particularly in the seventeenth century, was to provide immediate care for indigent children and to relieve the community of this financial and social burden. By the eighteenth century, however, trade instruction had become as important a motive as maintenance in Northumberland County. Justices and
vestrymen bound out most boys to trades so that as craftsmen they could become productive and independent members of the community. Throughout the colonial period, the laws and actions of the local governments reflect both humanitarian and practical considerations. Legal provisions and actions of local officials, fathers, and former apprentices themselves demonstrate a belief that all members of society (including penniless orphans) should receive rudimentary education. Parish apprenticeship represented the earliest form of compulsory education in the days before public schools.

Apprenticeship developed extensively in colonial Virginia, providing a familiar and socially acceptable means for maintaining and educating youth. The institution mitigated some of the trauma experienced by children in an era when high mortality rates left many parentless. While living with his master's family, the apprentice held a position similar to that of an adopted child.

Any attempt to generalize about the features of parish apprenticeship leads one to recognize the great variety from one county to another. Incomplete records prevent one from forming anything except rather tentative conclusions about seventeenth-century Northumberland apprenticeship. It does appear that most former apprentices either died within a relatively short period of time, lived in obscurity, or migrated to the west. A depression in tobacco prices during the late seventeenth century and the underdeveloped state of manufacturing were two factors which deterred freedmen from prospering. During the first half of the eighteenth century, however, the economy and population grew rapidly and occupational specialization increased. Industrious persons of modest means who acquired a skilled trade through the apprenticeship system could attain independence and prosperity.
Eighteenth-century Northumberland apprentices were primarily orphaned boys of an average age of 13.5. Their fathers, many of whom died at an early age, were largely middle class, although all segments of the social strata were represented. In general, their masters were middle class artisans who were a little wealthier and older than their fathers. Both groups owned land and Negro slaves. Emigration in response to economic stagnation and increased inequality in Chesapeake society after 1760 was probably the most important factor responsible for the disappearance of almost 50 percent of the apprentices. Of those that remained, some became poor farmers or farmer-craftsmen, but a majority joined the ranks of the middle class. A few attained considerable prosperity. Although conditions were less favorable to economic and social mobility than before 1760, many former apprentices achieved independence, acquired capital and practiced their trades, often in conjunction with farming. Tailors and carpenters seemed to have fared the best in Northumberland. Several apprentices built grist mills, engaged in trade, or established businesses such as taverns or retail stores. Most were jurors and appraisers of estates and accepted unpaid local offices as surveyors of the highway, patrollers, and constables.

A community of craftsmen emerged in eighteenth-century Northumberland society. Artisan families frequently intermarried and placed their children as wards or apprentices to other craftsmen. As seen from the Northumberland cases, Virginia's apprenticeship system provided an effective means of caring for indigent children and affording them educational and vocational instruction at a time when there were no orphanages or public schools. The institution benefited master and apprentice and despite an economic decline after 1760, permitted economic and social mobility.
Notes for Chapter V


6. Ibid., 169-170; Daniel Blake Smith, "Mortality and the Family in the Colonial Chesapeake," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, VIII, 3 (Winter 1978), 424. The court records contain many examples of orphans petitioning for their share of a deceased father's estate. In 1684, for example, the Northumberland justices granted young Thomas Hughes's petition by ordering the division of his father's estate between Thomas and his younger brother Jonathan who had been apprenticed the previous year. NCOB, 1678-1698, 158 (17 Jan. 1683), 262 (19 Feb. 1684).


10. Walsh, "Charles County, Maryland," 167; Carr and Menard, "Freedman in Colonial Maryland," in Tate and Ammerman, eds., Chesapeake, 235-236.

12 Wheeler, "Lancaster County, Virginia," 72, 82; Walsh, "Charles County, Maryland," 465.

13 Primary records include NCOB; Northumberland County, Virginia, Record Books (Richmond, Virginia State Archives), (hereafter cited as NCRB); Vestry Book of Fredericksville Parish, Louisa County, Virginia, 1742-1787, Part II (Richmond, Virginia State Archives); Vestry Book of Dettingen Parish, Prince William County, Virginia, 1745-1782, Part II (Richmond, Virginia State Archives); Churchill Gibson Chamberlayne, comp., The Vestry Book of Petsworth Parish, Gloucester County, Virginia, 1677-1729 (Richmond, 1933).

The records do not specify the status of approximately 21% of the children.

15 NCOB, 1678-1698, 650 (21 March 1693).


17 *Ibid.*, 41 (18 June 1679). For cases in which parents were indentured servants, see 399, 408 (18 May 1687), (6 Oct. 1687), 653 (16 May 1694).


20 *Ibid.*, 601 (3 Nov. 1694), NCOB, 1699-1713, 233 (19 Nov. 1702), 290 (25 June 1704); 1678-1698, 436-437 (16 Aug. 1688). The father of Henry Oage was a confessed thief. NCOB, 1678-1698, 88 (March 1681). Hester Smyth, an indentured servant and mother of a mulatto apprentice, was called a "dissolute person" by the county court. The justices sentenced her to a whipping and ordered her to serve her master another five years following the delivery of her second bastard by a Negro slave, NCOB, 1678-1698, 21 (19 Feb. 1679), 616, 620 (1693).


23 In 1683, for example, Rodham Kenner imported 27 persons into the county including 5 Negro slaves, NCOB, 1678-1698, 162 (1683), 38 (June 1679).

24 Northumberland County, Virginia Fee Books, 1718-1724 (Richmond, Virginia State Archives).
Although there are complete sets of court records for the County, the Record Books which contain deeds, wills, and inventories of estates fail to survive for the years 1673-1705 and 1730-1737.

Wheeler, "Lancaster County, Virginia," 67. According to the Northumberland tithables listing of 1679, approximately 34% of the householders had only 1 tithable; 55% had between 2 and 5; and 11% had more than 5. NCOB, 1678-1698, 37-38 (7 June 1679). This list was the result of a law which required the County to raise 1 soldier per every 44 tithables. Edmund Morgan determined the proportion of tithables for other Virginia counties during this period. Morgan, American Slavery, 228. It appears that Northumberland and Lancaster were two of the wealthiest counties. In Northumberland, 34% of the householders had one tithable; 54.97% had between 2 and 5; and 10.67% had more than 5. The average number of tithables per household was 3.2 for the year 1679 in Northumberland.


Green and Harrington, American Population, 150-151.

Vestry Book of Fredericksville Parish, Louisa County; Vestry Book of Dettingen Parish, Prince William County.

The percentages refer to averages taken from Northumberland, Louisa, and Prince William Counties.


Ibid.

NCRB, 2, 1751-1753, 289 (8 April 1751); 4, 1756-1758, 110-112 (8 Aug. 1757); NCOB, 244 (9 Feb. 1761); NCRB, 5, 1758-1762, 180 (11 Feb. 1760).

39. NCRR, 3, 1753-1756, 233 (8 Sept. 1755); 5, 1758-1762, 194 (10 March 1760), NCBO, 1756-1758, 272 (13 March 1758).

40. Number of cases = 42.


42. William Waller Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large, A Collection of the Laws of Virginia (Richmond, 1809 (1823), I, 260-261 (1642); NCBO, 1678-1698, 711 (16 Oct. 1695).

43. NCRR, 3, 1753-1756, 233 (8 Sept. 1755).

44. Virginia Gazette, Rind, 15 March 70s: 21; Hunter, 41 Aug. 52: 32.

45. NCBO, 1767-1770, 385 (June 1769), 1770-1773, 111 (April 1771).


47. Ibid., 753, 783, 795, 931, 1020, 1062.


49. NCRR, 17, 1803-1807, 47-48 (12 Sept. 1803); 29, 1815-1816, (14 Aug. 1815).


51. The annual tithables summaries are found in the Northumberland County, Virginia, Order Books.

52. Virginia Hustings Court Order Book, 22 (5 Nov. 1787); The Virginia Argus (Richmond, 30 Oct. 1807), Richmond, Virginia State Library.


54. NCRR, 9, 1772-1776, 375 (11 April 1774).


56. NCRR, 14 1787-1793, 201, 265 (April 1789); NCBO, 1773-1783, 438 (Dec. 1780), 474 (Dec. 1781), 79 (Aug. 1783).
57 NCBO, 17, 1803-1807, 531-532 (8 Sept. 1806), NCBO, 1783-1785, 140 (March 1784).

58 NCBO, 1758-1762, 94 (14 Aug. 1759), NCBO, 16, 1799-1803, 225 (9 Feb. 1801), NCBO, 1773-1783, 437 (Dec. 1780); NCBO, 14, 1787-1793, 576 (9 July 1792, NCBO, 1773-1783, 461 (May 1781), 1786-1790, 219 (June 1787).

59 NCBO, 5, 1758-1762, 134 (8 Oct. 1759), 382 (29 April 1790), 406 (Feb. 1791); NCBO, 1783-1785, 34 (May 1783), 478 (May 1789), 541 (Aug. 1789).

60 NCBO, 1758-1762, 321 (14 Sept. 1761); 1773-1783, 437 (Dec. 1780), 453 (March 1781), 464 (May 1781), 1786-1790, 282 (Sept. 1787); NCBO, 19, 1811-1816, 363 (March 1816), 213 (Feb. 1816).


63 Main, Social Structure, 79-81.

64 NCBO, 1, 1749-1751, 317 (13 May 1751), 5, 1758-1762, 122 (10 Sept. 1759), NCBO, 1749-1753, 312 (12 May 1753), 1756-1758, 272 (13 March 1758), 1767-1770, 68 (May 1767).

65 NCBO, 1767-1770, 154 (Feb. 1768), 1773-1783, 453 (March 1781), NCBO, 9, 1772-1776, 593-595 (Oct. 1775).

66 U.S. Bureau of the Census. Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States taken in the Year 1790... Virginia (1782) (Baltimore, 1966), 37; NCBO, 1773-1783, 365 (April 1779), 90 (Sept. 1782), 1767-1770, 332 (Feb. 1769).

67 The Northumberland justices apprenticed a child named Randolph Mott as a tailor in 1750 and in 1757; both were called "orphans of Randolph Mott." Between them, the two tailors (cousins?) became master and/or guardian to at least eleven children. One man died in 1798; the second continued to practice his trade and take apprentices during the 1790s. NCBO, 1, 1749-1751, 375-376 (14 Aug. 1749), NCBO, 1749-1753, 35 (24 May 1750), 1756-1758, 172 (11 July 1757), 1767-1770, 447 (March 1770), 1790-1795, 400 (March 1790), NCBO, 14, 1787-1793, 308 (11 Oct. 1789), 280 (14 Sept. 1789).

68 NCBO, 4, 1756-1758, 240 (19 March 1756), 250-252; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Heads of Families... Virginia (1782), 38; NCBO, 1762-1766, 616 (June 1766), 1770-1773, 102 (March 1771), 1773-1783, 250 (1776), 422 (June 1780).

69 NCBO, 1773-1783, 403 (Jan. 1780), 1786-1790, 596 (March 1789), 1790-1795, 327 (June 1793), NCBO, 16, 1799-1803, 421 (12 July 1802).

70 NCBO, 1773-1783, 67 (Aug. 1773), NCBO, 11, 1780-1782, 99 (9 July 1781).
Number of masters's estates for which values are known = 48.
Number of apprentices's estates for which values are known = 31.

72 NCOB, 1773-1783, 270 (Oct. 1775).
73 NCOB, 1767-1770, 332 (Feb. 1769); NCOB, 1758-1762, 355 (9 Feb. 1762), NCRB, 10, 1776-1780, 164 (11 March 1776), 236 (May 1777), NCOB, 1773-1783, 76 (June 1777), 443 (Jan. 1770). In his will of 1790, Richard Routt asked his friend, former apprentice, John Murphey, to serve as guardian to his only son, William, NCRB, 14, 1787-1793, 382 (April 1790).
Primary Sources


____________• The Vestry Book of Petsworth Parish: Gloucester County, Virginia, 1677-1793. Richmond: The Library Board of the State of Virginia, 1933.

____________• The Vestry Book and Register of Bristol Parish, Virginia, 1720-1789. Richmond, C. G. Chamberlayne, 1898.


"Extracts from Princess Anne Court Records." Virginia Magazine of History and Biography II (1895): 345.


Secondary Sources


VITA

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