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"A Prosperous Life and the Assurance of a Happy Departure." Indentured Servitude in Colonial Chesapeake and Pennsylvania

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Historians of early America acknowledge one common aspect of colonial development in the seventeenth and eighteenth century – an overwhelming reliance on unfree labor. The export-led agricultural economies began with indentured servants' labor and expanded into an elaborate system of servitude and slavery that persisted long into the nineteenth century. The regional and local economies in both northern and southern colonies relied heavily on male and female servants. Although the duration and restrictions on labor varied between the two regions, the common objective in both northern and southern colonies emphasized the control of that labor in a region with a high land-labor ratio. The utility of indentured servitude in North America shaped migration, culture, and society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

From its origins as a plantation economy, the Chesapeake region relied on indentured servants to meet the extreme demands of cultivating tobacco, their staple crop. Likewise, Pennsylvania adopted the institution of indentured servants, at first, to build the rural economy and then to meet the demands of an urban market economy. In time, indentured servitude declined in the Chesapeake, where planters made conscious choices to meet their labor demands with African slavery. In contrast, white indentured servitude remained a popular choice in urban Pennsylvania long into the eighteenth century. Records in both regions revealed limited rates of social mobility and economic opportunity for most servants who survived their contracts. This research relies on the models and arguments made by key historians in the field of colonial bound labor in North America.[1]

This research is organized around two major historical questions. The first question examines why although British colonies in North America increased their African slave population, white servitude continued to persist and, in some regions, expanded in the eighteenth century. The second question explores the opportunity, or lack thereof, of social mobility amongst servants in freedom. To aid my research, I analyze quantitative data from the *Historical Statistics of the United States.* HSUS provides the data to support my research of populations in the Chesapeake, reliance on specific commodities in Pennsylvania, and inadequate relief expenditures in Philadelphia. In addition to HSUS, I analyze advertisements of runaway indentured servants found in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* from 1729-1740 to compare male and female servants' experiences. Qualitative sources like letters to parents from indentured servants in the Chesapeake, diary entries from Elizabeth Drinker, excerpts from Society of Friends meeting minutes, and apprentice advertisements in Pennsylvania provide crucial context for the extreme conditions faced by the average servant population.

First, my research compares the two regions' necessity for bound labor to meet their specific economies' demands. Second, I outline the transition in the Chesapeake from indentured servitude to African slaves, contrasting those choices with Pennsylvania, where indentured servitude persisted long into the eighteenth century. Since Pennsylvania continued to demand servant labor, I use the region as a case study to analyze specific factors that facilitated or hindered freed servant's opportunity for social mobility. I utilize three categories of analysis - demographic, economic, and gender - to measure the extent to which freed servants – both male and female - prospered and achieved economic independence.

I. From Servants to Slaves in the Chesapeake

Before the adaptation of the Chesapeake's staple crop, labor demands in the region remained minimal.[2] The colony's small-scale agriculture did not necessitate the need for bound labor.[3] Family-based farms and free white workers temporarily met the region's labor demands.[4] However, with the discovery of tobacco as the staple crop, the demand for labor elevated.[5] At the time, the price of African slaves exceeded the price of servants, making indentured servants the preferred choice of bound labor. As the output of tobacco increased, the utility of white servants primarily involved around the staple crop. However, additional demand for servants for skilled labor to build farm sheds, houses, and hogshead came to prominence shortly after.[6]

A. Migration Patterns

To meet the Chesapeake's growing economy's needs, colonists relied mainly on the migration of white servants from England.[7] Indentured servants migrated for a variety of reasons. Servants made individual choices to improve their lives overseas, seeking better economic opportunity.[8] The decisions that servants made shaped the patterns and volume of the migration into the region. Additionally, servants may have also decided to migrate based on the economic conditions of Britain. When wages were low, there is evidence that servants left in increased numbers.[9] Falling wages in English society made migration appealing.[10] Lastly, there is a correlation between the rate of emigration and tobacco price – as the price of tobacco increased, eager merchants, recruited servants. When the price of tobacco decreased, the rate of immigration declined.[11] Though historians of the field have argued about what influenced servant migration into the Chesapeake, the fact remains that colonists relied on servant migration to meet the demands of the staple in a plantation economy.

B. Plantation Economy

The staple thesis supports the notion that the fortunes and decline of staple crop production dictate labor demand and urbanization rate in the region. As the Chesapeake's plantation economy prospered due to the rise in demand for the staple, labor demand increased.[12] The initial labor demands of the region called for unskilled labor. However, as staple production rose, so did the need for skilled labor to develop houses, sheds, and farmhouses associated with tobacco production.[13] Historian David W. Galenson explained, "As the level of production increased further, the demand for labor, both skilled and unskilled tended to rise sharply. The result was the investment in training of slaves to take over the skilled jobs of the plantation."[14] Moreover, due to the ongoing demand for labor, the annual rental cost of servants surpassed the cost of slaves.[15] Wage increases in England and falling economic opportunities available to migrants in the Chesapeake only added additional motivation to avoid emigration to the region.[16]

As servant migration decreased, the rising costs of indentured labor favored the utility of African slaves as a form of unskilled labor.[17] Using African slaves became increasingly more appealing as a less expensive source of unskilled agricultural labor.[18] Although the Chesapeake transitioned their reliance on unskilled labor to African slaves, planters continued to use indentured servants for skilled labor in the region.[19] Planters had the opportunity to choose between three options to fulfill skilled labor needs – free workers, skilled servants, or training slaves.[20] Training African-born slaves posed a financial burden, which continued to produce dependence on white servants for skilled positions.[21] However, David Galenson clarified that, over time, "Because of the more inelastic supply of skilled servants than of slaves, this tended to raise the relative price of skilled servants and lower the share of whites in the skilled labor force."[22]

By the early eighteenth century, Chesapeake planter's reliance on slave labor increased, "The more elastic supply of blacks than whites produced an increase in the relative price of white labor in regions in regions with high levels of demand for immigrant labor, and a consequent tendency for planters to substitute blacks for white workers."[23] The substitution of slave labor for servants in fieldwork left indentured servants to fulfill skilled labor demands increasingly. The reliance on white servants for skilled jobs resulted in a need for bound servants with occupational skills.[24] Towards the end of the seventeenth century, white servants' price increased - planters decided to train American-born slaves for skilled labor. The cost to train American-born slaves, rather than African-born stood cheaper, "The result of the rising price of skilled indentured labor, as well as of the declining cost of skilled slave labor, was the widespread investment in the training of slaves to replace servants in the skilled jobs and even in some of the supervisory work of the plantations."[25] Due to this transition, the basis of colonial labor resulted in the racial division of labor by skill.[26]

Figure 1 and Figure 2 illustrate specific populations in Maryland and Virginia. Figure 1 illustrates the comparison between Maryland's white servant and black slave populations in 1755. The figure demonstrates the increasing reliance on black slave labor in comparison to white indentured servants. While there remained a white servant population, by the middle of the eighteenth century, the black slave population increased significantly. Due to the growing black slave population, the data exposes the increasing reliance on slave labor in Maryland's plantation economy compared to a previous dependency on white servants for labor. In comparison, Figure 2 reveals an earlier data set that emphasizes Virginia's prior dependence on white servants compared to African slaves in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.

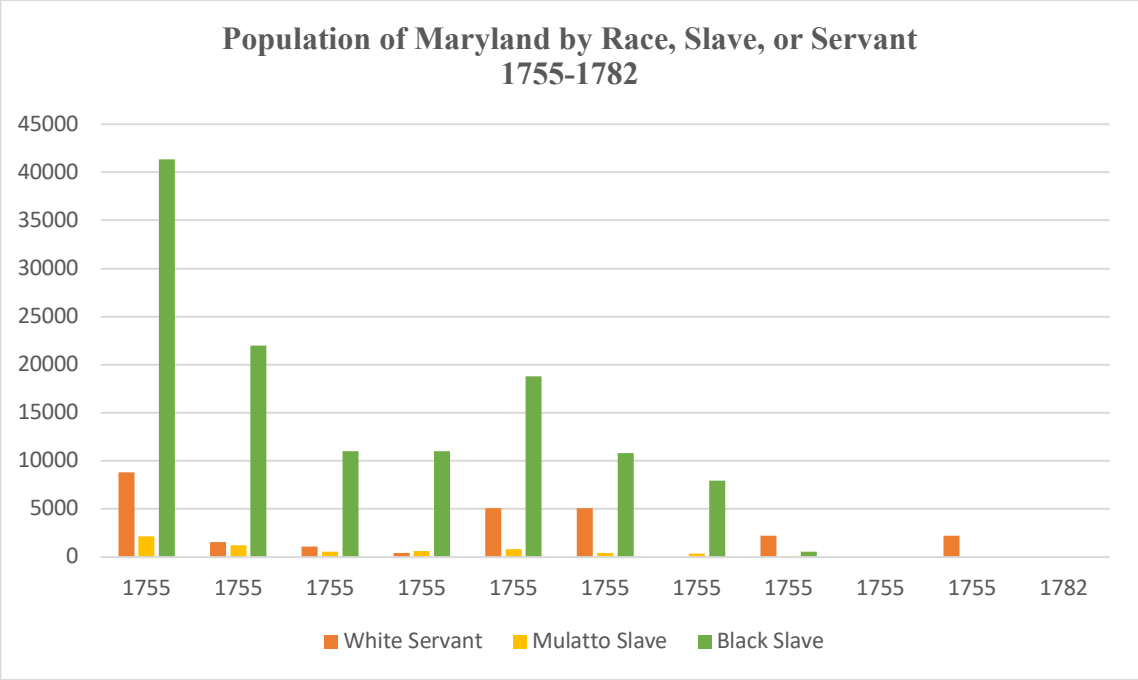

Figure 1 - Source: John J. McCusker, "Population of Maryland, by age, sex, race, slave or servant status, and taxable status: 1704–1782." Table Eg169-181 in *Historical Statistics of the United States, Earliest Times to the Present: Millennial Edition,* edited by Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, Michael R. Haines, Alan L. Olmstead, Richard Sutch, and Gavin Wright. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/ISBN-9780511132971.Eg1-19310.1017/ISBN-9780511132971.Eg1-193

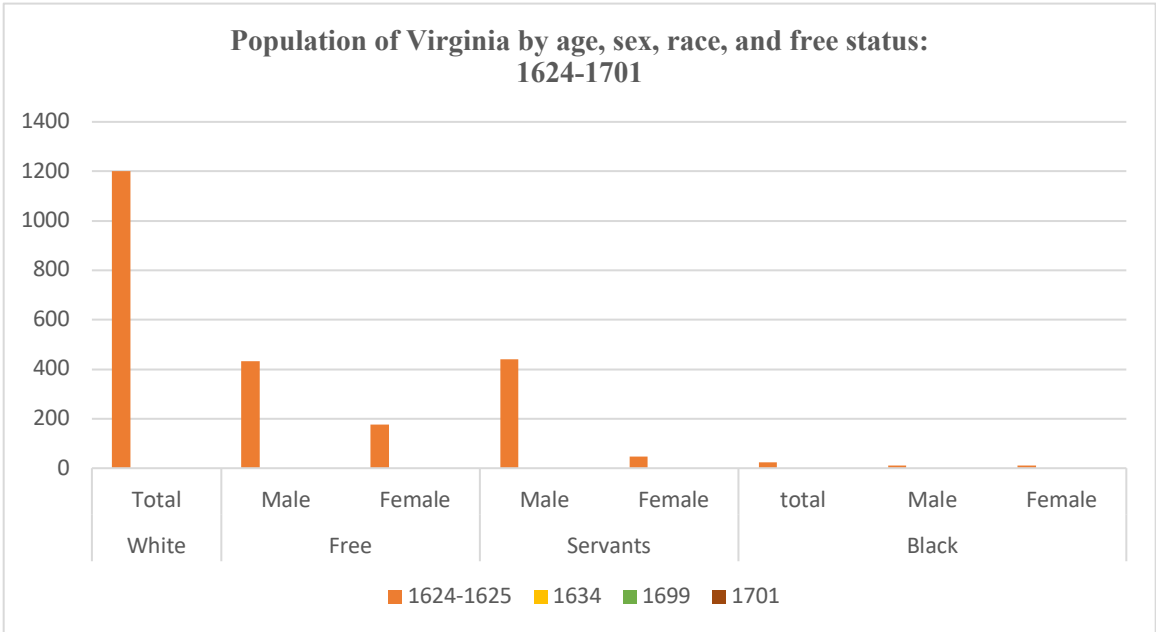

Figure 2 - Source: John J. McCusker, "Population of Virginia, by age, sex, race, and free status: 1624-1701." Table Eg182-193 in *Historical Statistics of the United States, Earliest Times to the Present: Millennial Edition,* edited by Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, Michael R. Haines, Alan L. Olmstead, Richard Sutch, and Gavin Wright. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/ISBN-9780511132971.Eg1-19310.1017/ISBN-9780511132971.Eg1-193.

The Chesapeake's plantation economy remained centered around the production of the staple crop. Elite planters met the demands of tobacco cultivation and production through the adaptation and transformation of unfree labor. When white servant migration decreased into the Chesapeake, planters needed to replace servant labor with a lucrative alternative. For output to maintain, planters shifted their demand from white servants to black slaves at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

II. The reliance and expansion of Indentured Servitude in Pennsylvania

During the Pennsylvania region's developmental stages, like the Chesapeake, colonists faced high wages and a scarcity of workers.[27] Colonists required labor to establish new farms to support the region's agricultural labor, which consisted of grains, mainly wheat.[28] Unlike the Chesapeake, Pennsylvania colonists were not as readily motivated to invest inbound labor, especially without a staple crop.[29] The demand for unfree labor remained relatively low for the first quarter of the colonies' development.[30] The colony did not have staple crop like tobacco in the Chesapeake, rather Pennsylvania relied on trade.[31] Furthermore, few residents had the capital to invest inbound labor because wars and an unstable economy reduced the demand for servants.[32] In this region, the utilization and need for bound labor in Pennsylvania varied throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries due to economic demands, depressions, economic peaks, and wars.

A. Migration Patterns

Fertile land led to increased production of wheat, which improved Pennsylvania's rural economy.[33] These improvements led to an expansion in trade, which contributed to Philadelphia's

rapid development. As the economy improved with the help of wheat production and overseas trade, the demand for labor increased.[34] As trade flourished in the city, local ship building and the manufacturing of cloth, shoes, and furniture necessitated the need for labor as well. The Philadelphia economy expanded throughout the 1730s.[35] By the middle of the eighteenth century, the economy's demand for labor continued to grow. It was met with the stream of immigrant workers.[36] Pennsylvania servant migration consisted of various diverse ethnic groups migrating in waves during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The seventeenth century migrants consisted of mainly English migrants. In contrast, by the eighteenth century, an influx of Scots-Irish and German migrated to the region.[37]

Small proportions of servant migration in the seventeenth century originated from Germany and Ireland.[38] The Quakers stood the first migrants from Ireland.[39] As mentioned, German migration in the seventeenth century remained minimal. However, many of those that did migrate were followers of Daniel Pastorious.[40] Some wrote to family and friends in Germany about the new colony's promising conditions, which encouraged other German migrants to make Pennsylvania a key destination.[41] Servant and slave importation remained insignificant until the late 1720s.[42] Due to servant enlistment in the Seven Years War, the reduction of servants led to a reliance on slaves to fill their positions.[43]

B. Demography of Servants in Pennsylvania

Unfree labor increasingly fulfilled merchants and artisans' needs over the small family-based farms with dependence on rural labor. Pennsylvania's merchant class owned great numbers of servants and slaves to fulfill domestic labor and labor associated with their businesses.[44] Wealthy artisans also utilized unfree labor to assist in their trades. As domestic labor, "All of the

artisan owners purchased labor to help keep up with the demands of the expanding market in the city. A few artisans owned unfree laborers for domestic service. However, the majority of servants in Philadelphia were males owned by Philadelphia's artisan classes – constructions workers trying to meet the demands of the immigrant stream; shipbuilders who needed to needed ship carpenters; sawyers, caulkers, riggers, coopers, and joiners, and carters to fill the needs of the prosperous trading sector…"[45] Occupations in Philadelphia remained gender-specific, mostly requiring men to fulfill labor needs.[46] As the economy continued to develop, servant men remained in demand to assist the artisan class.[47] While artisan classes sought men to fulfill their labor shortages, servant women came in demand for domestic services. As the growing demand for domestic services increased in the eighteenth century, so did the servant women population.[48]

Listed below are newspaper advertisements for some of the domestic, gender-specific services that servant women satisfied according to the region's expanding domestic labor reliance. The advertisements for female apprentices reflect the gender-specific jobs for females within servitude in Pennsylvania – housewifery, sewing, reading, and writing:

> Nov. 12, 1771
> Indenture to John Kelly and his assigns, Philadelphia
> Taught to read, write, and cypher, housewifery, and to sew.
>
> Jan. 23, 1772
> Davis, Sarah
> Indenture to William Logan and his assigns, W. Nantmeal twp, Northhampton Co.
> Apprentice, taught housewifery, sew, knit, spin, read in Bible, write a legible hand.
> 11 yrs., 6 mos.
>
> June 23, 1772
> Hughes, Jane
> Indentured to William Snowden and Ann, his wife, Philadelphia apprentice, taught mantua [gown] makers trade, have three quarters' schooling, in case of her death, the indenture to be void. To be found all necessaries and at expiration have one new suit of apparel, besides the old.
> 3 yrs. 9 mos. 13 days.

June 25, 1772
Woodward, Nice
Indenture to Joseph Johnson and his assigns, Southwark
Apprentice, taught housewifery, sew, knit and spin, read and write perfectly.
11 yrs.

Oct. 5, 1772
Brockington, Mary
Captain Powell and wife, Philadelphia
Apprentice, taught housewifery and sew, time to go to school two years, the grandfather paying the expense of schooling and the master to give such further schooling as will perfect her in reading and writing. To be found all necessaries and at expiration have freedom dues.
12 yrs. 9 mos.[49]

The need for domestic services continued to increase after the development of the colony. Whereas in the earlier years, the labor demand in the region consisted of male labor to assist farmers, merchants, and artisans in building. As Pennsylvania's labor demand became more domestic, merchants sought out women over men for domestic jobs. Males had a broad spectrum of servant occupations, whereas women were mainly utilized for the jobs mentioned above. Although many indentured servants in Pennsylvania continued to consist mainly of males, advertisements emphasize female servants were used in a gender-specific manner.

Another aspect of Pennsylvania's distinct reliance on servant labor over slaves can be attributed, in some ways, to the solid moral stance of Quakers on the convention of slavery. The colony utilized slaves in small numbers but depended on the bound labor of white servants more so. Quakers practiced pacifism, which promoted equality, opposed all violence, and encouraged solving pressing issues with peace acts.[50] The Society of Friends held monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings that discussed their moral dilemmas with owning slaves.[51] A Society of Friends meeting in Philadelphia in 1693 expresses the moral dilemma that Quakers had about slaves,

> … Therefore, in true Christian Love, we earnestly recommend it to all our Friends and Brethren, Not to buy any Negroes, unless it were on purpose to set them free, and that such who have bought any, and have them at present, after some reasonable time of moderate Service they have had of them, or may have of them, that may reasonably answer to the charge of what they have laid out, especially in keeping under Age, that after a reasonable time of service to answer that Charge, they may set them at Liberty, and during the time they have them, to teach them to read, and give them a Christian Education.[52]

Interestingly, although Quakers felt moral and religious opposition to the institution of slavery, they had no moral qualms with indentured servants' utility. Regardless of the Quaker's moral stance on slavery, servants and slaves were used interchangeably throughout Pennsylvania's colonial period based on the economy's needs and fluctuations.

C. An Expanding Economy

Unlike the Chesapeake plantation economy, Pennsylvania did not have a staple crop that necessitated the need for plantation labor. The majority of rural Pennsylvania agriculture involved the production of grains.[53] These crops required rigorous labor for short periods during the planting and harvesting periods.[54] Rural farmers did not necessitate the need to invest in bound labor. In contrast, tobacco-producing Chesapeake planters were driven by increased production to utilize unfree labor.[55] Below, Figure 3 and Figure 4 shed light on Pennsylvania's rural agricultural production.

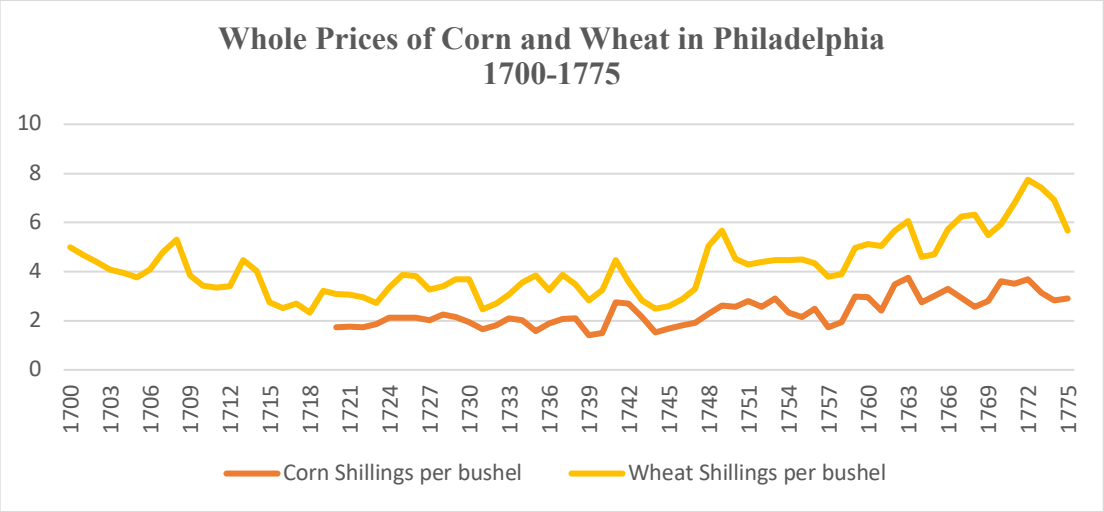

Figure 3 - Source: John J. McCusker, "Wholesale prices of selected commodities in Philadelphia: 1700–1775 [Pennsylvania currency]." Table Eg251-270 in *Historical Statistics of the United States, Earliest Times to the Present: Millennial Edition,* edited by Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, Michael R. Haines, Alan L. Olmstead, Richard Sutch, and Gavin Wright. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/ISBN-9780511132971.Eg247-30110.1017/ISBN-9780511132971.Eg247-301

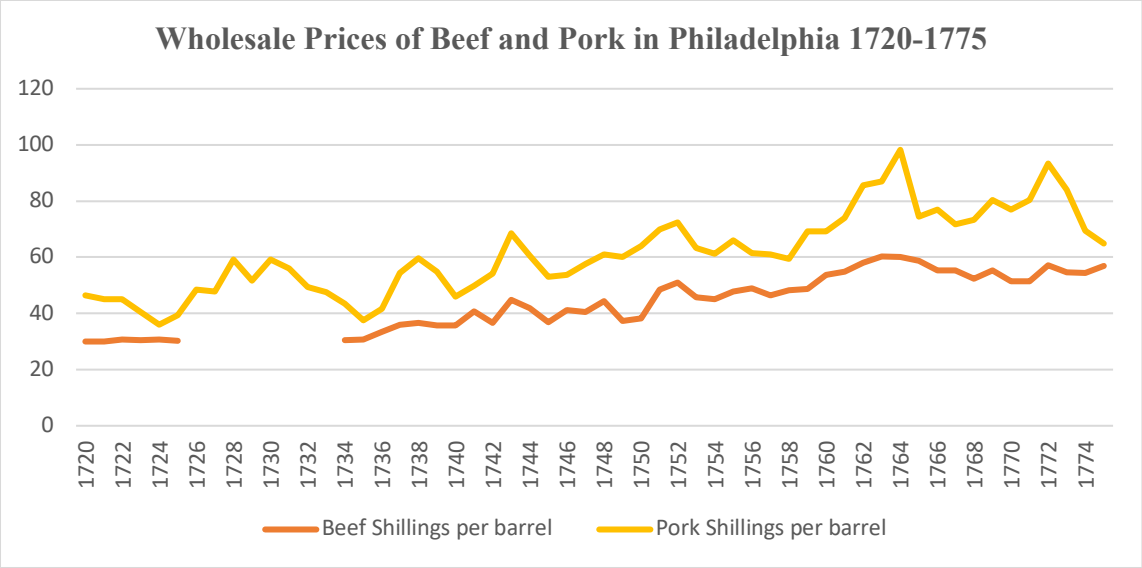

Figure 4 - Source: John J. McCusker, "Wholesale prices of selected commodities in Philadelphia: 1700–1775 [Pennsylvania currency]." Table Eg251-270 in *Historical Statistics of the United States, Earliest Times to the Present: Millennial Edition,* edited by Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, Michael R. Haines, Alan L. Olmstead, Richard Sutch, and Gavin Wright. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/ISBN-9780511132971.Eg247-30110.1017/ISBN-9780511132971.Eg247-301

Figures 3 and 4 illuminate Pennsylvania's agricultural reliance on wheat and livestock. Figure 3 illustrates Pennsylvania's wholesale prices of wheat and corn, which continued to increase in the eighteenth century. As a region that relied heavily on trade, servant labor provided the foundation for these three commodities to meet the growing demand, as indicated from the price increase in wheat, corn, beef, and pork. Pennsylvania's economic growth relied on the continued export of such commodities, while rural farmers utilized servant labor to meet the labor demand that the commodities necessitated.

Overall, indentured servants became increasingly more important to Philadelphia's urban labor sector than the rural, as the city experienced rapid growth. This dependence on servants to assist merchants and artisans emphasizes the difference in economies from that of the

Chesapeake's plantation-based economy. Historian Edward Raymond Turner best described the relationship between servants and the urban economy, "The plantation system, which is most favorable to the increase of slavery, never appeared in Pennsylvania. During the whole of the 18th century the activities of the colony developed along two lines not favorable to negro labor: small farming, and manufacturing and commerce."[56] Additionally, the price of slaves remained higher than servants in Pennsylvania.[57] Servants remained a better financial investment for merchants and artisans in Pennsylvania's market economy.[58] Historian Sharon Salinger reiterated additional reasoning for the favorability of servants over slaves - the financial risks of slaves becoming ill, dying, or aging combined with a long-term investment became uncomplimentary to masters.[59] Although at some periods during the eighteenth century, slaves were considered risky investments, it is worth noting that employers often viewed indentured servants as risky investments as well. Buyers utilized various screening methods to measure productivity.[60] Screening methods include age, ethnicity, demonstrable skill, seasonal arrival, and nationality when making the risky investment of purchasing servants.[61] If employers were going to risk their capital to buy servants, they did so in a very analytical and conscious manner.

In the eighteenth century, the reliance on servitude shifted between artisans and merchants. In a table titled "Distribution of Merchants and Artisans as Servant Owners, 1745 and 1769," Salinger's data reveals that the percentage of servant-owning artisans remained sizable in 1745 at 62.6%. However, by 1769, that percentage decreased to 42.3%. During a decline in servant-owning artisans, the percentage of merchant servant owners increased from 16.7% in 1745 to 34.7% in 1769.[62] Much of this is owed to the changing roles of indentured servants. Artisans utilized servants mainly for craft production. Over time, artisans relied less on servants. In contrast,

merchants continued to purchase servants to work on ships or as clerks, but primarily for domestic labor.[63]

In the final decades of the eighteenth century, decreased immigration into the colony, in addition to the Seven Years War, caused a back-and-forth reliance on slaves and made servants unpopular during wartime. After the American Revolution, the demand for domestic servants increased in importance in the city.[64] British officials proposed to halt servant trade to the colonies, resulting in a decline in migration numbers. Furthermore, bound labor in Pennsylvania never fully improved after the Revolution.[65] Ultimately, the end of reliance on bound white servants is attributed to changes in Philadelphia's labor market, which began to prefer wage labor over unfree labor. [66] The urban economy faced a labor surplus due to a population increase while the demand for servants in the market economy diminished.[67]

A comparison of the Chesapeake and Pennsylvania labor markets reveals that the reliance of servants versus slaves largely depended on the labor and production demands of the plantation economy of the Chesapeake and the mixed market economy of Pennsylvania. Two different regions required two different labor demands as the Chesapeake and Pennsylvania expanded. At first, indentured servants fulfilled the Chesapeake's labor demands. However, a conscious decision to transition to African slave labor proved more lucrative for a plantation economy by the seventeenth century. In Pennsylvania, rural farmers favored family-based labor over bound labor, and the growing urban sector of Philadelphia motivated employers to utilize unfree labor well into the eighteenth century.

III. Servants in Freedom

A. The Chesapeake

> In short, touching the Servants of this Province, they live well in the time of their service, and by their restrainment in that time, they are made capable of living much better when they come to be free…[68]

The above quote is from George Alsop. He served as an indentured servant early in Maryland's development in the seventeenth century. In his description of Maryland, he wrote to family and friends praising the ample opportunities presented to indentured servants in the region to encourage emigration. However, his description is an inadequate representation of all freed servant experiences. The next part of this research examined freed servant opportunity in the Chesapeake.

In the seventeenth century, most of the migration into the Chesapeake consisted of indentured servants. Servants migrated and labored in the region in exchange for a paid passage, minimal shelter, clothing, and freedom dues upon completion of the indenture.[69] Upon arrival, indentured servants lacked two crucial factors of potential success - capital and freedom.[70] Therefore, indentured servants occupied the bottom of the social ladder. However, there is evidence that until the middle of the seventeenth century, servants had some chance to gain economic opportunity in freedom.[71] In the early stages of indentured servitude in the Chesapeake, the nature of labor resembled servitude or apprenticeship in England, although the terms were longer and the work more laborious and demanding. [72] The indentured servitude system provided an opportunity in the sense that Europeans had the chance to leave a bad economic situation in England. In addition to receiving funding to migrate in exchange for labor, and eventually, freedom dues.[73] However, while employers did finance servants' opportunity to migrate out of Europe, the main concern is the overall rate of opportunity in freedom. Limited case studies and evidence

measure whether indentured servitude facilitated social mobility or a chance to live in poverty within a new world.[74]

In the article, "From Servant to Freeholder: Status Mobility and Property Accumulation in Seventeenth century Maryland," Menard analyzed the evidence of a broad group of 275 men that entered Maryland before the end of 1642.[75] To measure opportunity in Maryland, Menard examines whether servants obtained the ability to acquire land or participate in government. Menard examined the acquisition of land and participation in governmental positions to estimate social mobility 158 men out of this group survived to be freemen.[76] Missing numbers from this group may be attributed to high mortality rates due to rigorous labor, seasoning, unfamiliar climate, or ill housing.[77] The following primary sources are letters from two Chesapeake indentured servants to their parents. These letters detail the challenges that servants faced in their everyday lives. Both accounts illuminate how surviving their indenture to freedom may have been a challenge. The first letter is from Richard Freethorne to his parents:

> Loving and kind father and mother:
>
> ...This is to let you understand that I your child am in most heavy case by reason of the country, [which] is such that it causeth much sickness, [such] as the scurvy and the bloody flux and diverse other diseases, which maketh the body very poor and weak. And when we are sick there is nothing to comfort us; for since I came out of the ship I never ate anything but peas, and loblollie… we are in great danger; for our plantation is very weak by the reason of death and sickness of our company… And I have nothing to comfort me, nor is there nothing to be gotten here but sickness and death. But I have nothing at all - no, not a shirt to my back but two rags, nor clothes but one poor suit, nor but one pair of shoes, but one pair of stockings, but one cap, [and] but two bands [collars].[78]

The second letter is from Elizabeth Sprigs to her parents:

> Maryland, Sept'r 22'd 1756
> Honored Father,
>
> ...What we unfortunate English People suffer here is beyond the probability of you in England to Conceive, let it suffice that I one of the unhappy Number, am toiling almost Day and Night, and very often in the Horses drudgery, with only this comfort that you Bitch you do not halfe enough, and then tied up and whipp'd to that Degree that you'd not serve an Animal, scarce anything but Indian Corn and Salt to eat and that even begrudged nay many Negroes are better used, almost naked no shoes nor stockings to wear, and the comfort after slaving during Masters pleasure, what rest we can get is to rap ourselves up in

a Blanket and ly upon the Ground, this is the deplorable Condition your poor Betty endures, and now I beg if you have any Bowels of Compassion left show it by sending me some Relief, Clothing is the principal thing wanting, which if you should condiscend to, may easily send them to me by any of the ships bound to Baltimore Town Patapsco River Maryland, and give me leave to conclude in Duty to you and Uncles and Aunts, and Respect to all Friends.

Honored Father
Your undutifull and Disobedient Child
Elizabeth Sprigs[79]

The accounts of Richard Freethorne and Elizabeth Sprigs emphasize the disparity in which servants labored. There are apparent consistencies between the two letters that offer additional evidence of the hardships of indentured servitude labor in colonial Chesapeake. Both servants mention their lack of clothing, food, and disease. Richard Freethorne's letter is from 1623, and Elizabeth Sprigs' letter is from 1756. From the letters' dates, it can be concluded that the nature of labor of indentured servants never improved. A century later, indentured servants in the eighteenth century were still facing the same challenges. Because Freethorne composed his letter, he would be a part of the servant group in which servitude might facilitate some level of social mobility and economic opportunity. However, as presented in his letter, survival seemed bleak. The unfamiliarity of the New World, on top of limited resources, disease, and new dangers, contributed to high mortality rates. To merely touch the surface of social mobility and economic stability, servants had to survive conditions such as the ones that Freethorne and Sprigs wrote home about. Servant letters provide first-hand insight into the attitudes that servants had toward the system of indentured labor. The personal experiences of servants suggest that it should be avoided, if possible, despite the opportunity for migration.

For the 158 servants that survived their indenture in Menard's case study, Maryland provided ample opportunity.[80] About fifty percent of 158 freed servants eventually attained land.[81] Menard further explained, "To be properly interpreted, however, this figure must be understood within the context of the careers of those who failed to acquire land."[82] Less than ten percent of

freed servants from this group lived for more than a decade in Maryland as freemen without owning land.[83] The land that the group acquired remained smallholdings, especially since the time it took to obtain land after freedom varied significantly from two years to seven years.[84] There is additional evidence that former servants from this group participated in the Maryland government as either juror, justices of the peace, burgesses, sheriffs, officers in the militia, and officeholders.[85]

This specific group of freed servants in Maryland may have had the opportunity for social mobility based on the acquisition of land and governmental involvement. However, this likely was not the case for all freed servants. In 1640, officials passed an act promising servants a year's provision of corn and fifty acres of land after serving their indenture.[86] Nevertheless, the custom only required masters to give servants the rights to fifty acres of land, requiring the former servant to find fifty acres of vacant land and pay the clerk and surveyors fee himself.[87] Presumably, this is difficult to attain with no capital. Additionally, "actual acquisition of a tract during the first year of freedom was simply impracticable, and all former servants who eventually became freeholders were free for at least two years before they did so."[88]

Overall, Maryland seemed to offer some free servants' social mobility in the 1640s and 1650s. In contrast, the opportunity for mobility declined abruptly after 1660.[89] By the second half of the seventeenth century, the chances of acquiring land and serving governmental positions decreased.[90] Furthermore, some men gained the ability to utilize servitude as a steppingstone for mobility. At the same time, most found that providing labor for large planters as servants transitioned to labor for large planters as tenants.[91]

B. The Mixed Market Economy of Pennsylvania

Understanding the evolution of Pennsylvania's economy and rising urban poverty is essential to comprehending servant mobility. During the first half-century of Pennsylvania's development, poverty remained insignificant in the seventeenth century.[92] Poverty remained a non-critical social issue.[93] However, by the eighteenth century, the rate of numbers in poor houses increased, and the first almshouse was built in 1732 to relieve the poor.[94] Charitable groups built the almshouse to house the increasing numbers of disadvantaged people in the region. At first, the demography of the poor generally consisted of disabled, aged, and abandoned people.[95] The incidence of poverty remained modest until the Seven Years War.[96] The Seven Years War had an enormous impact on colonial society, which ultimately altered the nature and extent of urban poverty and produced new attitudes towards the impoverished.[97] At first, the beginning of the war offered an economic boom for the region with full employment opportunities.[98] However, an economic depression ensued, and hospitals and almshouses had trouble handling the influx of poor, which no longer only consisted of the aged, disabled, and abandoned.[99] Additionally, poverty transitioned from an occasional problem to a systematic one.[100]

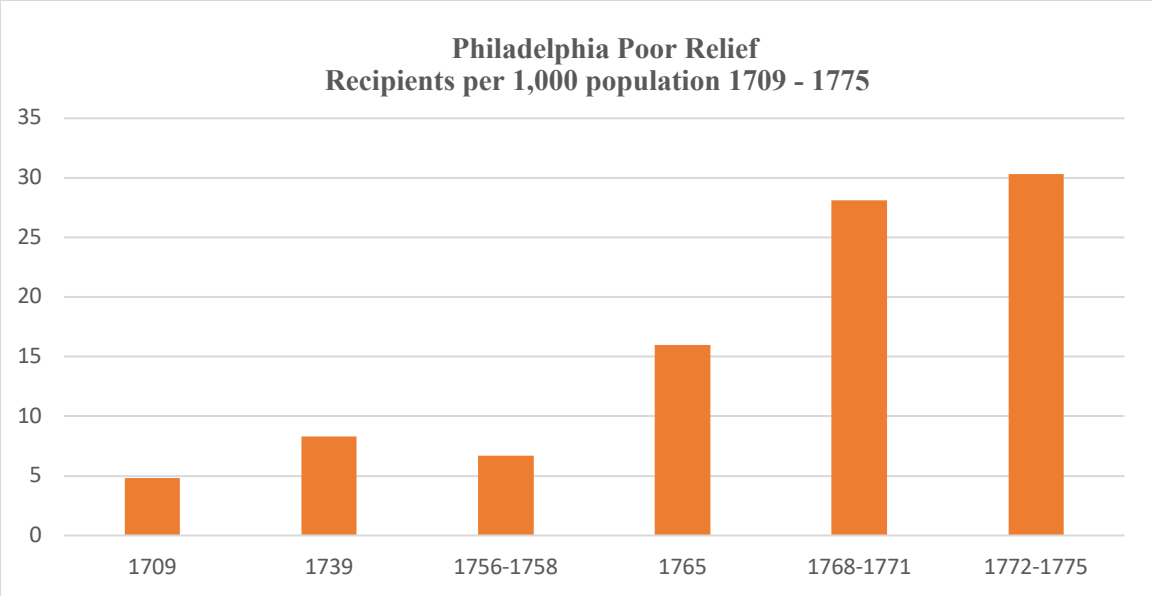

Figure 5 - Source: Stephen T. Ziliak,, "Poor relief in Philadelphia – recipients, expenditures, and tax levied: 1709–1775." Table Bf1-7 in *Historical Statistics of the United States, Earliest Times to the Present: Millennial Edition,* edited by Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, Michael R. Haines, Alan L. Olmstead, Richard Sutch, and Gavin Wright. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/ISBN-9780511132971.Bf1-18710.1017/ISBN-9780511132971.Bf1-187

Figure 5 reveals the increasing inadequate relief expenditures required to aid the poor in Philadelphia in the eighteenth century. The data supports historian Gary Nash's research. After the Seven Year War, growing poverty required the city to spend more money on poor relief to aid those in need. Poverty became a more defining issue of the city after the Seven Years War and through the Revolution. Figure 5 is utilized in this research to emphasize Philadelphia's economy's growing poverty, which may have impacted mobility for servants in freedom depending on when their contract ended.

Historians have argued whether Pennsylvania offered an abundant opportunity for mobility and a high standard of living or increased poverty.[101] It is argued that diligent labor led to an ascent up the economic ladder.[102] However, limited information of servants in freedom contradicts the notion that mobility remained prevalent.[103] The lack of records of former servants from deed books, tax lists, and probate data has shaped a probability of minimal mobility.[104] A comparison

of seventeenth and eighteenth century groups of servants is necessary to address the impact of Pennsylvania's economy on freed servant mobility.[105]

Historian Sharon Salinger studied three groups of servants traced through their post-servitude occupations. Group, I servants labored in the late seventeenth century, while Group II and III labored in the eighteenth century. Group, I arrived in the developmental stages of the colony of the seventeenth century. Indication of social mobility is attributed to freed servant participation in Pennsylvania's government and limited property accumulation. As in the Chesapeake, Pennsylvania servants faced rigorous labor. Sometimes, they either did not survive to freedom or died shortly after their indenture ended. A long journey combined with primitive housing, disease, and limited resources in a new environment contributed to servant mortality.[106] However, many of the surviving former servants in Group I participated actively in government.[107] This may attribute to the openness of early Pennsylvania's government which may have contributed to potential freed servant participants.[108] However, in the eighteenth century, Group II and Group III servants may not have had the same opportunity for governmental participation due to the changing ethnic and class background developed in the century.[109] Additionally, in the decades leading up to the American Revolution, the government remained solely in the wealthy classes' hands.[110]

Group II arrived in the second and third decades of the eighteenth century, and Group III arrived between 1745 and 1746. [111] Tax records reveal that former servants encountered limited mobility and remained around the lowest tax assessments.[112] Salinger composed a table titled "Distribution of Taxable Wealth After Servitude Among Former Servants Indentured in Selected Period and Age Mates, 1718-1746." According to Salinger's data, more than 65% of Group II never accumulated more than twenty pounds of taxable property.[113] Additionally, 80% of Group III were taxed on property valued at twenty pounds or less.[114] Although tax lists do not provide the

most accurate measure of mobility, from Salinger's data, it is concluded that servant mobility remained low for both groups based on taxable property accumulation.

The decades in which Group II and Group III entered Pennsylvania society as free servants impacted economic and social mobility. Group II entered society during a time of economic growth in Pennsylvania, which may have offered modest mobility.[115] Salinger explained, "this economic expansiveness may have helped them in their initial stages of mobility. Two and three decades after gaining freedom, however, during continuing colonial prosperity, these former servants made no further advances up the scale of property accumulation."[116] Group III served their indenture during the mid-eighteenth century and also rarely appeared on tax records.[117] Former servants in Group III rarely acquired land, which suggests that although Pennsylvania experienced economic expansion, servants remained unable to move upward in society.[118] Servants did not own land in significant numbers. Additionally, land ownership did not provide a feasible means of mobility for servants that served their terms in the eighteenth century.[119]

Although there is limited evidence of analyzing mobility through land ownership and tax assessments, poor relief numbers also support that servants struggled in society and required some public assistance.[120] Records of Group II are somewhat unreliable as there is little evidence of reliance on poor relief. However, Group III provides more solid evidence of servant poverty.[121] Servants indentured in the mid-eighteenth century struggled - more than three-quarters were forced to rely on public aid at some time in their lives.[122] Twenty to fifteen years after freedom, Group III's data reveals that the number of former servants reliant on aid increased to more than four times the amount.[123] Moreover, Group II and III indentured servants labored under harsher conditions than Group I. Eighteenth century servants essentially became merchandise in a business enterprise. The level of social conflict measure by runaway advertisements increased.[124] Group I

mainly consisted of servants from England that accompanied their owners to the New World and served moderately shorter terms combined with minimal conflict.[125] Pennsylvania did not have newspapers until the eighteenth century. However, even so, Group I only had a few instances of runaways presented before Pennsylvania magistrates.[126] Below is a table representing the growing instances of runaway servant advertisements in The Pennsylvania Gazette from 1729-1740. Table 1 represents two aspects of eighteenth century indentured servitude in Pennsylvania. First, the institution of servant labor in Pennsylvania remained disproportionately male. Females hardly appeared in runaway servant advertisements. Second, the incidence of male runaways continually increased over the decade, according to the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. This may be attributed to the increasingly rigorous labor and evidence of a change in the nature of indentured labor from the seventeenth century to the eighteenth century. By the mid-eighteenth century, the nature of indentured labor changed in response to Pennsylvania's commercial expansion.[127] Most of Pennsylvania's first servants were indentured in England. They migrated with their owners and labored with less conflict as servitude still followed a similar husbandry model as they did in England.[128]

Percentage Distribution of Runaway Servants from the Pennsylvania Gazette 1729-1740					
	1729	**1732-1734**	**1735-1737**	**1738-1740**	**Total**
Male	18 (86%)	233 (100%)	276 (95%)	367 (97%)	894
Female	3 (14%)	0	13 (5%)	12 (3%)	28
Total N	**21 (100%)**	**233 (100%)**	**289 (100%)**	**379 (100%)**	

Table 1 – Source: Benjamin Franklin, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, *The Pennsylvania Gazette Reprinted,* Philadelphia: Microsurance, 1968. Special thanks to Sarah Serna for assistance with this table.

A comparison of the three groups can only offer speculation on hindrance or facilitation of mobility for servants. As the eighteenth century progressed, starting costs and land prices of farms continued to increase.[129] Group I servants had to accumulate the capital required to register their freedom. In contrast, eighteenth century servants needed to raise capital to buy land, supplies, tools, provisions, and deed registration.[130] The majority of Group I servants who served their indentures in the city moved to rural sectors. The cost of land combined with their freedom dues worked in their favor.[131] By 1769, the distribution of wealth in Philadelphia was exceptionally skewed.[132] Most of Philadelphia's capital wealth remained in the hands of a small number of wealthy residents, "The wealthy became wealthier, but mobility on the lower end of the economic scale was grossly restricted. This is critical because it limited the opportunities of freed servants."[133] Servants lacked few if any, personal resources - any friends consisted of others in similar situations and their family lived on another continent.[134] Furthermore, most of Group III consisted of Scot-Irish servants, and mobility may have been hindered by anti-Irish sentiment in Philadelphia.[135]

C. Female Servants in Freedom

In particular, the lives of female servants after servitude are more so obscure.[136] Although there is little supporting evidence of social mobility amongst freed female servants in the seventeenth century, of the sixteen female indentured servants that arrived from 1683-1686, all ended up married.[137] Ten out of sixteen married former servants.[138] A few women married other servants before completing their indenture.[139] Research shows an advantage to marrying another servant – the ability to combine the fifty acres owed from their freedom dues.[140] Another six women from the same group that did not marry indentured servants lived somewhat better.[141] One married a

man who accumulated four hundred acres. Another married a man who was later sent as a representative to the Provincial Assembly.[142]

Analyzing female servants in the eighteenth century proved to be even more difficult. The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker reveals that one of her former servants seemed to have come into some mobility after freedom:

> March 4… Polly Noble, formerly Nugent call'd Afternoon with two of her Children, she has had four, all Daughters, I am pleas'd to see her look so fat and fair, hearty and reputedly – she served her time with us, four years, has, as she says, and I believe, an industrious husband.[143]

As pleased as Elizabeth Drinker seemed to be about her former servant's hopeful endeavors, not long after Polly's visit, she returned to ask for work for her husband, "Polly Noble called to scilicit business for her husband who a blacksmith…"[144] Less than a year after this incident, Polly called once again and complained that she still could find no work for her blacksmith husband.[145] Furthermore, Drinker's diary included other instances in which other former servants returned years later asking for help.[146] Working for the Drinker household represented one of the best-case scenarios for female indentured servants. Indeed, being a servant consisted of its own share of problems in any household but working for a Quaker family rather than a non-Quaker family had some benefits.[147] As Quakers, the Drinker's treated the servants as they would their own children, in addition to paying fair wages for labor.[148] The Drinker's did not enforce their religion on their servants. The servants remained unoppressed in the household. Although servants were not exempt from discipline, the Quakers did not impose discipline with anger.[149] Elizabeth Drinker in particular played a maternal role in her servants lives.[150] Nevertheless, the few cases of former servants asking for work reflect that women carried a large share of the burden of poverty and did not have much opportunity for social mobility without assistance.[151]

Female servant vulnerability is emphasized by examining admission dockets from the Guardians of the Poor, which documented that servant women throughout Philadelphia shared the same hardships

as Drinker's returning servants.[152] Female servants fared worse than males - they required more public assistance and remained at a disadvantage for various reasons.[153] Female servants constituted a disproportionate number of the population in Philadelphia poorhouses.[154] In general, poor women with illegitimate births ended up in poorhouses due to a lack of financial and familial support. Female indentured servants had even less familial support and had no choice but to turn to poorhouses, "Women who had illegitimate births were usually the poorest members of the community, the most vulnerable, the least likely to be able to force their partners to share support, and, if they had been indentured servants, the least likely to have families to aid them."[155] Large numbers of women in poorhouses reveal the difficulties many indentured servants faced with no support or place to go once free.[156]

In general, servants in both regions faced rigorous labor in a new environment. Simply surviving to freedom remained a challenge. Evidence of social mobility and economic independence of white servants in the Chesapeake and Pennsylvania remains limited. However, by examining the little evidence provided, historians gain the ability to estimate the challenges and probability of social mobility amongst white servant groups. Analyzing the limited case studies of freed servants in the Chesapeake and Pennsylvania, it can be estimated that indentured servitude did not facilitate economic independence for most servants in freedom.

IV. Conclusion

The unfree labor of indentured servitude remained a vital aspect of colonial development in North America. However, the Chesapeake and Pennsylvania economies' varied demands altered the reliance and duration of the utility white servants. The increasingly favorable utility of African slaves over white indentured servants in the Chesapeake reflects the region's labor demand for producing the staple crop, tobacco. Indentured servants fulfilled that demand at first, but by the

end of the seventeenth century, planters became reliant on the labor of African slaves. Indentured servant contracts limited the duration of their labor, whereas slaves became life-long property or chattel. Planters made the conscious decision to transition to slaves based on their specific economic needs. Over time, indentured servitude no longer remained a less expensive form of unfree labor. African slaves increasingly became the region's preferred choice of bound labor to produce the maximum output of tobacco cultivation. By the eighteenth century, the Chesapeake's plantation economy required a labor demand that planters felt would be better fulfilled with slaves. The institution of indentured servitude dwindled.

Pennsylvania's mixed market economy necessitated different labor demands. The rural economy fulfilled most of their labor demands with family-based labor and some indentured servants. However, Philadelphia's expanding urban economy in the eighteenth century required most of the region's servant labor. Although Pennsylvania utilized both slaves and indentured servants, the region lacked a staple crop that required cultivation on large plantations, and slaves remained expensive compared to servants. Additionally, artisans and merchants in the urban sector utilized servants as apprentices and domestic servants further into the eighteenth century. It was not until after the Revolution that employers began to favor the utilization of free wage labor over unfree labor.

After servitude, prospects for social mobility amongst servants in freedom were limited in The Chesapeake and Pennsylvania. Russel Menard produced the most comprehensive case study of freed servant men in seventeenth century Maryland. According to Menard, although some servants attained small holdings of property and participated in government, most provided labor for large planters as servants. It then transitioned to providing labor for large planters as tenants. White servants lacked the capital and resources to attain economic stability and independence in

their post-servitude lives. Based on Sharon Salinger's case study of the three groups of indentured servants in Pennsylvania, the seventeenth century servants of Group I seemed to have received the most opportunity for mobility in freedom. Servants Group I participated in government more than Group II and Group III. However, this may be attributed to the developmental stages of Pennsylvania in the seventeenth century. Participation in government had less restriction in the early stages of the region. By the time Group II and Group III came into freedom in the eighteenth century, government participation remained reserved for the wealthy. The urban economy went through various stages of economic highs and lows. Servant women remained a disproportionate number of the servant population. Although servant labor became more domestic in the middle of the eighteenth century, in freedom, females managed worse than males. Evidence in poorhouses revealed a significant number of women in need of financial assistance.

For indentured servants migrating to the Chesapeake and Pennsylvania, the arduous voyage and demanding labor may have seemed worth it for an opportunity to own land and gain economic stability. However, research proved that if servants survived their contract, most servants in freedom lacked the resources, capital, and social status to gain sufficient economic independence. I conclude my research with the statement that indentured servants migrated to the Chesapeake and Pennsylvania as hopeful migrants, bound by contract, fulfilling the labor demands of the growing regions in return for freedom dues and a chance to build their own lives. However, after their contracts ended, freed servants remained dependent and unable to advance within society's social and economic stratus. Although early migrants, such as George Alsop, wrote letters home describing advantageous opportunities and prosperous life, indentured servitude hardly facilitated social mobility. Instead, indentured servitude provided a chance for migrants to live in poverty within a new world.

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