

Life of an Indentured Servant

Annotation Station

○ Circle words you don't know, and take a moment to find the definition.

Highlight in **YELLOW** phrases that confuse you. Use context clues to try and figure out their meaning.

Highlight in **RED** examples of the dangers or restrictions faced by the individuals.

Highlight in **GREEN** examples of rights and freedoms enjoyed by the individuals.

☆ Star the items that make you wonder and wish to explore further.

Exhibit 1

WANTED

To go to Virginia, under indentures for a few years.

A Young Man, who understands LATIN, GREEK and MATHEMATICS, to serve as a Tutor in a gentleman's family.

A lad who has served an apprenticeship as a surgeon, to live with one of his own profession.

Two Gardeners, who understand their business well, particularly the work in a garden.

These properly recommended will meet with suitable encouragement, on applying to Buchanan and Simson merchants in Glasgow.

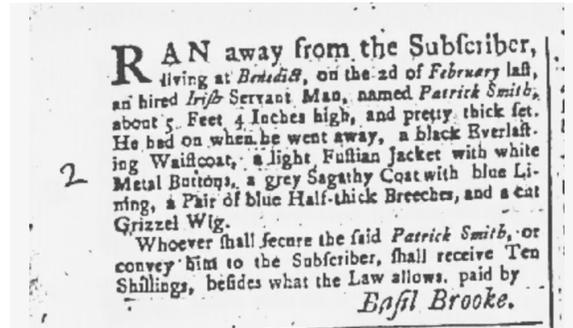
An advertisement from the newspaper in Great Britain called the *Glasgow Courant* on September 4, 1760.

Source: [TheGlasgowStory: Indentured servants](#)



Exhibit 2

Ran away from the Subscriber, living at Benedict, on the 2nd of February last, an hired Irish Servant Man, named Patrick Smith, about 5 Feet 4 Inches high, and pretty thick set. He had on when he went away, a black Everlasting Waistcoat, a light Fustian Jacket with white Metal Buttons, a grey Sagathy Coat with blue Lining, a Pair of blue Half-thick Breeches, and a cat Grizzel Wig. Whoever shall secure the said Patrick Smith, or convey him to the Subscriber, shall receive Ten Shillings, besides what the Law allows. paid by Basil Brooke.



An advertisement from the newspaper in the colony of Maryland called the *Maryland Gazette* on May 21, 1755.

Image Source:
[Maryland State Archives](#)

Background

An indentured servant is a person who is bound to work without pay in the service of another person for a specified length of time in exchange for the cost of travel, food, and lodging. Indentured servants first arrived in the American colonies soon after the settlement of Jamestown by the Virginia Company in 1607. The need for cheap labor was at the root of indentured servitude. The colonists wanted to capitalize on the land they claimed and the needed laborers to work that land. It is estimated that nearly 300,000 European workers immigrated to the American colonies as indentured servants during the 1600s to 1700s.

During colonial times, indentured servants might be female or male and White or Black. In general, indentured servants were disadvantaged, uneducated, or impoverished individuals coming from a lower socioeconomic background. An indentured servant might be as young as 12 years old. They were contracted to work for a period of usually 5 to 7 years and often suffered harsh working conditions while completing dangerous tasks.

Indentured servants had little to no rights. An indentured servant's contract could be extended as punishment for breaking a law, running away, or becoming pregnant. Physical punishment was often brutal and sometimes even resulted in disfigurement or death.

At the end of their service, when the work contract was complete, some indentured servants were given a land grant. However, as they had little to no income, many were forced to be contracted into another round of service.