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Robinson Crusoe as Promotion Literature: the Reality of English

Settlement in the Chesapeake, 1624-1680

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Abstract

In the seventeenth century a minimum of one hundred thousand English indentured servants emigrated to the Chesapeake Bay of North America. Virginia and Maryland plantations used indentured servitude in the production of one important colonial crop: tobacco.

Compared to their countrymen and women at home, the English suffered extremely high mortality rates. To understand possible causes and material conditions, my method involved reviewing both historical literature and material evidence. I interviewed the Director of Education of the Godiah Spray tobacco plantation at the historic colonial capital of St. Mary's City, Maryland. The Godiah Spray is a working seventeenth century plantation that replicates the work and management of tobacco. I also drew information from archaeological studies of skeletal remains in Chesapeake colonial graves examined by forensic anthropologists of the Smithsonian.

This study examines three promotional emigration tracts written by Englishmen in that century. I also examine other monuments of literary promotion that came to embody the myth that anyone could succeed in the New World: Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*. Why was there such a large disconnect between the high mortality rates in the Chesapeake and the supreme confidence of immigrant success authored by Defoe?

I will argue that in his novels Defoe was handing his audience a script which demonstrated how to work and become rich in the New World. *Robinson Crusoe*, along with many other of Defoe's works, functioned as propaganda to counter the dismal reputation of the colonies and to convince the English to emigrate.

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Introduction

In the early seventeenth century the land around the Chesapeake Bay of North America held much promise for settlement by Europeans. The Chesapeake Bay runs two hundred miles from south to north and varies from four to thirty miles across from east to west. Several large rivers flow into it from what is now Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania: the James, the York, the Rappahannock, the Potomac, and the Susquehanna. Its shoreline totals around thirty-six hundred miles.¹ The English were enticed by this amazing amount of shoreline on navigable waters. There they could carve out plantations which would have access to English shipping and markets.

Later in the century, a minimum of one hundred thousand indentured servants emigrated.² Servants provided the majority of the labor to sustain the colonies of Virginia and Maryland as going concerns. The study of these early immigrants begins in 1624 when the colony of Virginia was taken over from the Virginia Company by the English crown. The project ends in 1680 when enslaved Africans began to be imported in large numbers, supplanting the reliance on English indentured laborers. I limit my study to the Chesapeake because it is one geographical region in which plantations used indentured servitude in the production of one important colonial crop: tobacco.

To supply the already established market in Europe, planters desperately needed cheap labor to clear land, plant, maintain and harvest tobacco. From 1615 to 1670 the market for tobacco exploded. In 1615 Virginia grew, harvested and shipped twenty-three hundred pounds of the "sotweed." In 1620 they shipped five hundred thousand pounds. In 1670, ten million pounds were sent to Europe.³

¹ Ferdinand C. Lane, "Chesapeake Bay," in *The Encyclopedia Americana: International Edition* (Danbury, CT: Grolier, 2001), 6:405.

² Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 52. Kulikoff's estimate was 116,000 to 120,000. Estimates of others are somewhat lower.

³ Henry Miller, "The Lure of Sotweed: Tobacco and Maryland History," Historic St. Mary's City, Maryland, accessed 1 July 2018, <https://hsmcdigshistory.org/pdf/Tobacco.pdf>.

Compared to their countrymen and women at home, servants who arrived from England to work these plantations suffered extremely high mortality rates. Historians recognize multiple causes for their premature deaths: malaria, dysentery, typhoid, pellagra, and general malnutrition among them. The living conditions and new environment were unexpectedly punishing, and many English did not survive even their first year in the New World.⁴ Bailyn found evidence that seventeen percent of males in one Maryland county died before they were thirty, forty-one percent by forty, and seventy percent by age fifty.⁵

Various types of promotion literature were published in England to convince poor and unemployed people, mostly young males, to sign up as servants. That over a hundred thousand did so is a testament to the lack of alternatives for this population. Indenture was a system in which a person signed a contract requiring a certain number of years of work in a colony to pay for their passage over. The contracts were signed at English ports before each voyage. Ship's captains held the contracts until they could be bid out to plantation owners. Once a servant had fulfilled their contract by working the required number of years, they were promised "freedom dues" which usually meant land.⁶

Once the contracts were signed, the servants lost control of their lives. Captains loaded their ships with this human cargo, sailed to wherever the demand for servants was highest, and offered their contracts at a port of his choosing to the highest bidder, be it Bermuda or the Chesapeake.⁷ Servants had no say about which port they sailed into or who bought their contract.⁸ They had no knowledge of

⁴ Maxmillian Novak, *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel DeFoe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 149.

⁵ Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: The Peopling of British North America: the Conflict of Civilizations, 1600-1675* (New York: Knopf, 1975), 170.

⁶ Lois G. Carr and Russell R. Menard, "Immigration and Opportunity: the Freedman in Early Colonial Maryland," in *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society*, eds. Thad Tate and David Ammerman (New York: Norton, 1979), 207.

⁷ Abbot E. Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 19-20.

⁸ Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 51.

how well or poorly they would be treated by their new master, and despite English law giving servants some rights, it was truly the luck of the draw.⁹

Once their indentures were purchased, male servants were expected to work long hours caring for tobacco. Tobacco is a delicate and demanding crop, and the labor in tending it is endless. Servants worked from sunup to sundown hoeing, transplanting seedlings to fields, topping off plants, and making sure the largest leaves grew to full size by snipping off smaller ones. And in an era where insecticides did not exist, there was the nearly constant work of pulling worms off plants by hand. This labor consumed at least six months of the year.¹⁰

To understand the material conditions of these immigrant laborers, my method involved reviewing historical primary and secondary literature from books and articles pertaining to the Chesapeake in this time period. Unfortunately, most seventeenth century immigrants left no documentation of their lives. Even if they were literate, they lacked writing implements and paper, but most especially time and energy to write. Because of this paucity of primary source material from the people who were most affected, I chose where possible to also bring in material evidence. In May 2018 I interviewed the Director of Education of the Godiah Spray tobacco plantation at the historic colonial capital of St. Mary's City, Maryland.¹¹ The Godiah Spray is a working seventeenth century plantation that replicates in every known detail the work and management of tobacco from that era. Its blueprint was taken from *Robert Cole's World*.¹² Robert Cole was a plantation owner in Maryland in 1652, and fortunately left a rich documentary record of his entire enterprise. These records were analyzed by Lois

⁹ Gloria L. Main, *Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650-1720* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 113.

¹⁰ Lois G. Carr, "Emigration and the Standard of Living: the Seventeenth Century Chesapeake," *Journal of Economic History* 52, no.2 (June 1992): 282.

¹¹ Peter Freisen, (Director of Education at Historic St. Mary's City, Maryland) in discussion with the author, June 2018.

¹² Lois G. Carr, Russell Menard, and Lorena Walsh, *Robert Cole's World: Agriculture and Society in Early Maryland* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

Carr, Russell Menard and Lorena Walsh, historians of the Chesapeake, who authored this classic monograph.

I also drew information from archaeological studies of skeletal remains in Chesapeake colonial graves examined by forensic anthropologists Douglas Owsley and Karin Bruwelheide of the Smithsonian. They co-curated an exhibit in 2011 entitled, "Written in Bone."¹³ The exhibit consisted of case histories of skeletons analyzed for age of death, probable cause of death, and general health as a way of adding data to the piecemeal puzzle of life in that place and era. I contacted Dr. Owsley, and he explained the Smithsonian continues to collect data and plans to publish the entirety of their results once they have enough skeletons to constitute a significant sample.¹⁴ For this thesis, I utilized the case studies that have been made available from the exhibit.

Finally, this study examines a monument of literary promotion that came to embody the myth that anyone could succeed in the New World: Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Defoe authored his tale of great optimism towards emigration in 1719. Why was there such a large disconnect between the reality of high mortality rates in the Chesapeake and the supreme confidence of immigrant success displayed in this literary masterpiece? This disconnect between the fiction and the reality is significant because it demonstrates the deep division between a century of experience by English immigrants, and the needs of the tract writers and traders who ignored and countered it.

Robinson Crusoe was the first English novel.¹⁵ It described how one man alone on an island, with only God to help, could thrive in the New World. It had a huge popular reception, with four editions printed in four months.¹⁶ It can be read at many levels: as a pure adventure story, as a rationale

¹³ "Written in Bone: Forensic Files of the 17th Century Chesapeake, February 7, 2009 – January 6, 2014," Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, accessed 24 January 2019, <https://naturalhistory2.si.edu/anthropology/WIB/index.html>.

¹⁴ Dr. Douglas Owsley, email message to the author, July 6, 2018.

¹⁵ Martin Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 70.

¹⁶ Francis Watson, "Robinson Crusoe: an Englishman of the Age," *History Today* 9, no.11 (November 1959): 762.

for imperialism, as a forebear of rugged individualism, justification for slavery or exemplar of the Protestant work ethic. But I will argue that in this new genre of writing Defoe was handing his audience a script. It was a script which demonstrated step by step how to work and become rich in the New World when all the odds are stacked against you. *Robinson Crusoe*, along with many other of Defoe's works, functioned as promotion literature to counter the dismal reputation the colonies had accumulated over time, and to convince the English to emigrate.

Chapter One: England in the Seventeenth Century and the Rise of Indenture

The Push and Pull

Strong “push” and “pull” factors were at work in seventeenth century England to persuade the poor to emigrate. The “push” came in the form of an inordinate growth in poverty along with food shortages. From 1550 to 1600 England’s population grew an amazing thirty-three percent, from three to four million. Another million were added by 1650. Because so many workers were available, wages declined. Food prices rose dramatically with the growth in population. Living standards for the poor inevitably declined. Food riots broke out in the southern and central parts of the country after recurrent harvest failures.¹ Bridenbaugh claimed that the entire country was at risk of starvation in 1623, and from 1630-1633 a long-lasting famine brought misery and more food riots.² By the middle of that century, it was estimated that half of the English population lived in poverty.³

England simply had too many people for their economy and food production to absorb, and social instability grew as a consequence. Large numbers of homeless wandered the country in search of work or food. Usually they migrated to the market towns or cities, such as London or Bristol, in search of work. The cities were also where recruiters for the colonies plied their trade.⁴ The fear of hunger and

¹ James Horn, *Adapting to a New World: English Society in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 49.

² Carl Bridenbaugh, *Vexed and Troubled Englishmen, 1590 – 1642* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 96-97.

³ James Horn, *Adapting to a New World*, 49.

⁴ Gloria L. Main, *Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650-1720* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 10, 97.

malnutrition was a powerful “push,” and many who normally would not have been open to the siren call of the migration promoters began to listen.⁵

The “pull” side of the equation was the demand for servants in the Chesapeake. Once planters in Virginia realized the amount of labor required to turn wilderness into plantations, they wanted bound servants to do the work. Land owners needed to sell the cash crop of tobacco in order to buy English goods and raise their own living standard.⁶ Fortunately for the planters, their outsized need for workers occurred at precisely the right time in English history. Unemployment and poverty had created a very large, untapped supply of human labor.⁷ Throughout the century, the supply of servants grew whenever English wages declined and tobacco prices rose.⁸ From the point of view of a servant, the biggest “pull” of all was the possibility offered to them, coupled with their own strong desire, to own land.⁹ The importance of land ownership cannot be overstated, especially to those who have been economically uprooted. According to Kulikoff, “Land meant everything to immigrants (and to their children). It was the bedrock of their prosperity . . . Landed property symbolized their political and class position.” Emigration promoters knew this and played this card to their advantage. They insisted that America was empty and the land was just waiting to be taken.¹⁰

⁵ Carl Bridenbaugh, *Vexed and Troubled Englishmen, 1590 – 1642* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 98.

⁶ Lorena Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press), 110.

⁷ Marcus W. Jernegan, *Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America, 1607-1783* (New York: Federick Ungar Publishing, 1960), 46.

⁸ Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 63.

⁹ Louis B. Wright, *The Dream of Prosperity of Colonial America* (New York: New York University Press, 1965), 63.

¹⁰ Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants*, 71, 74.

The Business of Indenture

Indenture was a system borrowed from English apprenticeships, except that these particular apprentices required transportation across the Atlantic. Indenture was set up as a voluntary contract between a would-be servant and a merchant or ship's captain. The buyer of the contract promised to provide passage and clothing in return for the servant's labor for a set number of years.¹¹ The more skills the servant could offer, the fewer his or her years in service. Length of service also varied by one's age. In Maryland, servants that were twenty-two and older were expected to serve five years. A servant of eighteen to twenty-two served six years, and a fifteen to eighteen year old was expected to serve seven years.¹² The contracts were sold to plantation owners upon the ship's arrival in a colony. Usually other benefits were added as an inducement to get prospective servants to sign up. These might be the promise of land, tools, or some other "freedom dues" at the end of their terms. Indenture was widely practiced after 1620 as a means of providing plantations with laborers.¹³

The middle man in this arrangement was usually a ship's captain or merchant. After the indenture was signed, all prospective servants became human cargo. Servants had no control over where a ship's captain might take them once they were on board. Someone may have understood they were going to Barbados, only to land in the Chesapeake.¹⁴ Upon arrival, servants were brought onto the ship's deck where they were inspected by plantation owners. Their contracts were sold to the highest bidder. In this way, the ship's captain or other agents profited.¹⁵ This arrangement actually resembled

¹¹ Carl Bridenbaugh, *Vexed and Troubled Englishmen, 1590 – 1642* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 420.

¹² Lorena Walsh, "Servitude and Opportunity in Charles County, Maryland, 1658-1705," in *Law, Society and Politics in Early Maryland, Proceedings of the First Conference on Maryland History, June 14-15, 1974*, eds. Aubrey Land, Lois G. Carr, and Edward C. Papenfuse (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 113.

¹³ Carl Bridenbaugh, *Vexed and Troubled Englishmen*, 421.

¹⁴ Peter Freisen (Education Director, Historic St. Mary's City, Maryland) in discussion with the author, June 2018.

¹⁵ Abbot E. Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 19.

slavery more than it did the traditional English apprenticeship. One Monsieur Durand who visited Virginia around 1680 called indentured servants “Christian slaves.”¹⁶ Todd concurred:

Like any other commodity, [a servant] could be transferred from one owner to another. He was usually bound to an English agent, but upon arrival in America, his indentures were sold to a second party, and since this was often a colonial agent, he would then be sold to a third owner. ‘My Master Atkins,’ wrote the indentured servant Thomas Best from Virginia, ‘hath sold me for 150 pounds sterling like a damned slave.’¹⁷

Kulikoff agreed and argued that because indenture involved agents who could sell the contracts at any time to anyone, normal constraints that bound the master to the servant were destroyed.¹⁸

But under Maryland law, servants did have some rights. Legal responsibilities of the master required him to provide his servants with “sufficient” food, clothing and housing. It also required masters not to burden servants beyond their strength. Any whippings given as punishment were not to exceed ten lashes per offense. Any servant who had a grievance against a master could petition the courts. Court records testify to the many who claimed their rights, and the records listed many cases of abuse. But many never went to court and chose instead another obvious solution: they ran away.¹⁹

By 1629, indenture contracts were big business. London merchants and their agents were heavily involved. Servant recruitment was widely practiced by many from ship’s captains to small tradesmen. They were hired to post notices at pubs, sing street ballads about life in the colonies, and work the streets and byways for prospects.²⁰ The contracts attracted investors who were willing to take on the risk because returns were so high.²¹ Any merchant who sent a servant to Virginia had the added inducement of claiming a “headright” of fifty acres of land in the colony to which the servant was sent.

¹⁶ Gloria L. Main, *Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650-1720* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 115.

¹⁷ Dennis Todd, *Defoe’s America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 139.

¹⁸ Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 51.

¹⁹ Gloria L. Main, *Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650-1720* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 114.

²⁰ Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants*, 51.

²¹ Carl Bridenbaugh, *Vexed and Troubled Englishmen, 1590 – 1642* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 422.

In the port city of Bristol from 1654 through 1660, fifty-six percent of investors sending servants to the Chesapeake were merchants and mariners.²² In 1654 – 1686, servant registrations listed an amazing two thousand eight hundred and seventy-one different recruiters.²³ In a city with a population of around twenty thousand, this means that fourteen percent of its people were involved in recruitment.²⁴

Whenever high demand and high profits meet, agents tended to apply unorthodox methods to fill the need. In England's case, "spiriting" people away to fill the ships became a recognized problem. Instead of waiting for willing people to sign up, agents traveled from the ports into surrounding market towns specifically to target young apprentices, the innocent, the unemployed, or those simply looking for adventure. They were lured into taverns and plied with beer and food. The agent would hawk his stories of good wages, a chance to own land and have a better life in America. Edward Barlow's description follows:

the spirits' practice was to entice country-folk, strangers, and the unemployed aboard a ship using promises of betterment, good fortune, and even money to bind themselves as servants in the colonies. Then, once the servant was enticed aboard, the deceit became force, and 'if they repent of what they have done, they cannot get away, not one out of a hundred of them; for they will always keep them on board and will not let them land, nor send the least note to any of their friends to come and get them clear'.²⁵

Competition among agents increased as the demand exceeded the supply, even with the numerous unemployed poor.²⁶ Tales of outright kidnapping and forced migration became so notorious that, on several occasions, London mobs attacked the agents.²⁷ In 1645 Parliament stepped in with an

²² Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and Servitude in North America, 1607-1800* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 9, 15.

²³ David W. Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America: an Economic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 97.

²⁴ James Horn, *Adapting to a New World: English Society in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 137.

²⁵ John Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade from London to America, 1618-1718: 'There is a Great Want of Servants'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 143.

²⁶ Carl Bridenbaugh, *Vexed and Troubled Englishmen, 1590 – 1642* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 413-414, 417.

²⁷ Catherine Armstrong, *Writing North America in the Seventeenth Century: English Representations in Print and Manuscript* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Press, 2007), 190.

ordinance for ministers of justice to apprehend any kidnappers. Marshals of the Admiralty were required to search all ships in port for children, and Custom Houses were required to register all outgoing passengers to foreign ports. Evidently the ordinance was ignored because in 1654, the city of Bristol passed their own ordinance requiring all departing servants to be registered. All prospective servants were listed with both their destinations and indenture terms. These registrations of some ten thousand servants who departed from Bristol after 1654 provide a wealth of data for historians.²⁸

Numbers and Characteristics of Those Who Emigrated

English emigrants of that century can be divided into two groups: those who could pay their own passage over and those who could not. The vast majority could not. They probably comprised between seventy to eighty-five percent of the total.²⁹ Estimates vary of the total number that emigrated to the Chesapeake. Horn calculated the total for the entire seventeenth century to be around one hundred twenty thousand, with most arriving during the peak period of 1639-1680.³⁰ Kulikoff's estimates are much higher: one hundred sixteen thousand to one hundred twenty thousand migrating between 1630 and 1670 alone.³¹ Main published a table with estimates of the numbers per decade, with a range of seventy-five thousand to eighty-one thousand.

²⁸ Abbot E. Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 71.

²⁹ James Horn, "Servant Emigration to the Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century," in *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society*, eds. Thad W. Tate and David Ammerman (New York: Norton, 1979), 54.

³⁰ James Horn, *Adapting to a New World: English Society in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 24-25.

³¹ Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 52.

Table I Estimates of British Migrants to the Chesapeake, 1630-1680³²

Years	Total Migration
1630-1640	9,000-10,000
1640-1650	8,100-8,900
1650-1660	16,700-18,200
1660-1670	19,500-20,900
1670-1680	21,700-23,000

Most who signed the indenture contracts were quite young, between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four, with a median age of twenty-one. This is not really surprising. Plantation owners wanted young, strong laborers. Young males were most likely unable to find work in the depressed English economy. Both men and women in this age range were still highly likely to be single. In terms of social class, Horn estimated they came from the middle of the bottom ranks of society.³³ The table below shows the different occupations of those who embarked from Bristol from 1654-1686. Sixty-six percent of the total worked in agriculture or provided semi- to unskilled labor.

³² Gloria L. Main, *Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650-1720*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 10.

³³ James Horn, "Servant Emigration to the Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century," in *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society*, eds. Thad W. Tate and David Ammerman (New York: Norton, 1979), 61.

Table II

Occupations of Male Indentured Servants Who Emigrated from Bristol to the Chesapeake, 1654-1686³⁴

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Agriculture	252	46.9
Semi-skilled and Unskilled	112	20.9
Clothing/Textiles	78	14.5
Building/Woodworking	29	5.4
Leather Trades	26	4.8
Food, Drink and Supplies	15	2.8
Metalwork	14	2.6
Gentry and Professional	9	1.7
Miscellaneous	2	0.4
Total	537	100

A surprising number of young migrants were fatherless. To be fatherless meant that a normal source of family authority and guidance was missing. Fatherless youth were more likely to leave home and strike out on their own.³⁵ Menard discovered from emigration lists that those who were sixteen or under tended to be orphaned or friendless, lacking any kind of support.³⁶ Of those who left London from 1682-

³⁴ James Horn, "Servant Emigration to the Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century," in *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society*, eds. Thad W. Tate and David Ammerman (New York: Norton, 1979), 58.

³⁵ Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and Servitude in North America, 1607-1800* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 15.

³⁶ Russell R. Menard, "British Migration to the Chesapeake Colonies in the Seventeenth Century," in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, eds. Lois Green Carr, Philip D. Morgan, and Jean B. Russo (Chapel Hill, NC: published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 128.

1686, sixty-three percent had lost one or both parents.³⁷ It is safe to assume that a large number of migrants lived on the social margins, in what was a very difficult era for the country as a whole. They were highly vulnerable, and probably suffered greatly from the social and economic disruption. They were also young enough to be mobile. The offer of indenture gave them a chance for refuge from their immediate situation, whether it be unemployment, homelessness, or hunger. Many of them took it.³⁸

Because the primary demand by plantation owners was for field labor, agents preferred male over female servants. The result was a highly skewed sex ratio in the population of the Chesapeake. In the 1630s, males outnumbered females six to one upon arrival.³⁹ This ratio slowly improved over time, but even towards the end of the century, men still outnumbered women by a factor of two and a half to one.⁴⁰

London, Liverpool and Bristol were the main ports of embarkation to America. But, of course, most migrants did not originate in those cities. Many came from the surrounding countryside. Between 1654 and 1660, thirty-five percent of servants in the Bristol immigrant list came from a radius of twenty miles around the city, and seventy-seven percent from less than sixty miles away. In Liverpool, seventy percent came from forty miles away or less. In London from 1683-1684, fifty percent came from the city and the other half from all over England.

Arrival at London or Bristol was merely the last point, therefore, of a process of internal mobility; by the time emigrants arrived there they had presumably exhausted the possibilities for employment within the domestic economy . . . The geographic mobility they had experienced in England made them familiar with packing up their clothes, travelling light, and tramping the roads for work."⁴¹

³⁷ James Horn, "Servant Emigration to the Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century," in *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society*, eds. Thad W. Tate and David Ammerman (New York: Norton, 1979), 83.

³⁸ James Horn, *Adapting to a New World: English Society in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 76.

³⁹ Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and Servitude in North America, 1607-1800* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 11.

⁴⁰ Lois G. Carr and Russell R. Menard, "Immigration and Opportunity: the Freedman in Early Colonial Maryland," in *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society*, eds. Thad Tate and David Ammerman (New York: Norton, 1979), 207.

⁴¹ Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and Servitude*, 14-15.

Because so many unemployed people were on the move throughout the country, they earned a special term of notoriety: that of “vagabond.” Vagabond defines an able-bodied worker who can find only occasional labor. Kulikoff estimated a minimum of twenty-five thousand vagabonds tramped the country in the decade from 1630-1640 looking for work, or stealing when they could find none. They comprised an impressive list: “runaway apprentices, servants searching for new masters, journeymen looking for work, seasonal wage laborers, sailors and soldiers returning home, deserted, unmarried pregnant women, prostitutes, abandoned children, gypsies, and Irish.”⁴² One William Bullock wrote in 1649 that they were “idle, lazie, simple people.” In 1662 the mayor of Bristol complained,

some are husbands that have forsaken their wives, others are wives who have abandoned their husbands; some are children and apprentices run away from their parents and masters; often times unwary and credulous persons that have been tempted on board by men-stealers, and many that have been pursued by hue-and-cry for robberies, burglaries, or breaking prison, do thereby escape the prosecution of law and justice.⁴³

Numerous conditions came into play to pave the way for a very large servant migration in the seventeenth century. What these servants endured during their travel, arrival, and then found awaiting them in the Chesapeake will be considered next.

⁴² Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 24.

⁴³ James Horn, *Adapting to a New World: English Society in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 31.

Chapter Two: Transportation to, Arrival at, and Working on the Plantations

Getting There

The voyage from England to North America took anywhere from five to nine weeks in the seventeenth century, depending on ocean currents and weather.¹ Most servants who boarded the ships had never been out of sight of land, and certainly never sailed into the middle of the Atlantic. Even when the weather was good, most were seasick. They were required to stay in the ship's middle hold and allowed on deck only during certain times of the day. The hold was dark, cramped and poorly ventilated. Ventilation was supplied by the main cargo hatch, which would be completely covered over during rough weather, and other smaller hatches.² Because all were packed into the hold, over time it began to stink. There was no hygienic way of dealing with seasickness. Coming out onto the upper deck risked getting in the way of the crew, who were focused on keeping the ship under control, or worse, the possibility of being washed off out to sea.³ Some passengers inevitably were ill when they came on board, and conditions in the hold were not conducive to recovery. If one passenger had a contagious disease, by the time of arrival everyone had it. Some people died during the voyage. Bodies lay where they died until sailors could throw them overboard.⁴ A better laboratory for the spread of disease could not have been designed.

¹ Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 53.

² Susan Wilkinson, "Travel to the New World." Historic St. Mary's City, Maryland. <https://hsmcdigshistory.org/pdf/Travel.pdf>.

³ Arthur P. Middleton, *Tobacco Coast: a Maritime History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era* (Newport News, Virginia: Mariners' Museum, 1953), 3-4.

⁴ Marcus W. Jernegan, *Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America, 1607-1783* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1960), 50.

Illustration I



Typical ship of the seventeenth century reconstructed at Historic St. Mary's City, Maryland. Notice tall rigging and masts which could break off in a strong gale. Photo taken June 2018.

Food for the journey was generally a combination of ship's biscuit (flour and salt mixed with water and baked hard), dried beans and salt pork. Weevils had to be picked out of the biscuit first, then all ingredients were stewed together in boiling water. Food could only be cooked when seas were relatively calm. When seas were rough, no one could eat anyway. Water stored in oak barrels was used for cooking. It tended go stale over time until it resembled dishwater. Passengers drank "small beer" instead.⁵

Storms caused delays and could last for days. Gales in the Atlantic were brutal for a wooden vessel (see Illustration I). They could rip off topmasts, sails, and cause leaks big enough for large volumes of water to pour in. When leaks sprung in the hold, everyone had to take their turn at the pumps. The pitching and rolling of the ship would cause cargo to shift and throw it off balance, making the ship more vulnerable. Servants were captive in the hold for the duration of the storms, which could last for hours or days. If the storms delayed arrival too long, poorer passengers who could not bring much with them were in danger of running out of food or water.⁶ One servant wrote in his diary years later about his experience in the hold during an Atlantic storm, "There was some sleeping, some damning, some blasting their legs and thighs, some their liver, lungs, lights, and eyes, and for to make the scene the odder, some curs'd Father, Mother, Sister, Brother."⁷

Technically, each person was allotted a four foot by six foot space in the hold for the duration of the voyage. This was enough room for a person to lay down and perhaps keep a bag or two beside them, but that was all. Historic St. Mary's City, Maryland keeps a space of that dimension painted red

⁵ Joe Greeley (Supervisor, Maritime Lifeways, Historic St. Mary's City, Maryland) in discussion with the author, June 2018

⁶ Arthur P. Middleton, *Tobacco Coast: a Maritime History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era* (Newport News, Virginia: Mariners' Museum, 1953), 3-4, 9.

⁷ Marcus W. Jernegan, *Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America, 1607-1783* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1960), 51.

on its Chesapeake Bay pier to help visitors visualize it (see Illustration II). But since ships' captains profited per servant, they had incentive to pack as many as possible into their holds.⁸

Illustration II



Mr. Joe Greeley, supervisor of Maritime Lifeways at Historic St. Mary's City, demonstrates how a grown male would fit into the 4x6 space allotted for passengers. Photo taken June 2018.

Overcrowded, unhygienic conditions and rotted food certainly contributed to deaths at sea, and more deaths once the passengers made landfall because they were in such poor condition from the voyage. One governor of Virginia, John West, publicly blamed the avarice of merchants for a high death rate in

⁸ Arthur P. Middleton, *Tobacco Coast: a Maritime History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era* (Newport News, Virginia: Mariners' Museum, 1953), 8.

the colony in 1635-1636 because of the diseases servants brought with them and then spread to others.⁹

After five to nine weeks, eating only when the seas allowed, and being crammed into the hold without exercise and exposed to disease, most passengers were in a weakened state when they arrived at port in the Chesapeake.¹⁰

Arrival and “Seasoning”

What the English saw when they reached the New World intimidated them. It differed so much from what they had been promised. They saw incredibly large forests and mazes of unending waterways. No towns, no hint of anything civilized on the landscape. They saw no churches, barns, houses, cows or pigs. There was nothing cultivated.¹¹ In England they had known cultivated fields, market towns, and pastures. The New World seemed wild and scary, full of wolves, bears and strange people. Noises from animals they had no knowledge of filled the forests. Many of the plants they had never seen before and didn’t know what to make of them. Strong thunderstorms blew through occasionally with lightning that terrified them. Most servants arrived with no extra clothes and were unprepared for the extremes of weather: winters much colder than England’s and the hot, humid summers.

According to Kulikoff,

The North American landscape shocked colonists, especially those who had read glowing reports in the pamphlets of colonial promoters or listened to their enthusiastic agents . . . They knew America was disordered because it was so different from England. The climate was too cold and too hot; the land was too empty, but the Indians were too hostile; the forests were too deep,

⁹ Carl Bridenbaugh, *Vexed and Troubled Englishmen, 1590 – 1642* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 430.

¹⁰ Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 83.

¹¹ Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants*, 73.

but the clearings were too full of stumps. What the colonists saw was so alien that they had no words to describe it.¹²

When their ship docked, all servants were brought onto the upper deck. They could not leave it until their indentures were bought. Usually the contracts were purchased directly by planters, but a middle man sometimes appeared called a “soul-driver.” He purchased the indentures in quantity from the captains, then took the servants and “drove” them through the countryside, stopping at different plantations to offer them to the highest bidder.¹³

Ships’ captains had been forewarned to arrive with their servant cargo in the fall because the summers were so dangerous in the New World. If they arrived after summer had past, servants had more time to adjust to their new environment before the following summer set in with its dangers of disease.¹⁴ “Seasoning” was the term given to the first year that immigrants spent in the Chesapeake. More than at any other time, people died during their first year in the New World. One Dutch merchant who visited Virginia several times from 1630-1645 said, “June, July and half of August are very unhealthy for those who have not lived there a year. The English die there at this season very fast, unless one has been there over a year, by which they say he is seasoned; that is, he is accustomed to the land.” The same merchant mentioned that fifteen of thirty-six ship captains who arrived during the summer of 1636 died before they could leave for England.¹⁵

The death rate of servants during their seasoning period was brutal. There is no way to accurately measure it, but we know it was high because so many commented on it. One William Berkeley wrote in 1671, “There is not often unseasoned hands that die, whereas hereforeto not one of

¹² Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 75.

¹³ Marcus W. Jernegan, *Laboring and Dependent Classes in Colonial America, 1607-1783* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1960), 51.

¹⁴ Lorena Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 134.

¹⁵ Russell R. Menard, “The Growth of Population in the Chesapeake Colonies: a Comment,” *Explorations in Economic History* 18 (1981): 402.

five escaped the first year.”¹⁶ Bailyn examined data on male immigrants in Maryland in the middle of the seventeenth century, and concluded during their seasoning fifteen to thirty percent died.¹⁷ Novak claimed the death rate for the ship voyage and seasoning combined to be an astounding fifty to seventy-five percent.¹⁸

During this dangerous first year, it is probable that a combination of factors were responsible for the high death rate. Nearly everyone came down with an illness which they described as fever and chills (or “ague”). This was in all likelihood malaria. People who survived it were left in chronically poor health because it tended to recur.¹⁹ Phung asserts that malaria can be fatal in almost twenty-five percent of its cases, and those who survive it are more susceptible to other diseases.²⁰ Another common illness was dysentery, which the colonists described as “bloody flux.”²¹ The third of the known infectious diseases was typhoid. Malaria, dysentery and typhoid were the horsemen of the apocalypse for the seventeenth century Chesapeake, and all three were diseases of the environment. The land around the bay was infested with mosquitoes which carried malaria. Dysentery and typhoid are both caused by drinking contaminated water.²²

Why were the immigrants so susceptible to these diseases? Professor Philip Curtin asserted, “Childhood disease environment is the crucial factor in determining the immunities of a given adult

¹⁶ Lois G. Carr and Russell R. Menard, “Immigration and Opportunity: the Freedman in Early Colonial Maryland,” in *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society*, eds. Thad Tate and David Ammerman (New York: Norton, 1979), 208.

¹⁷ Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: the Peopling of British North America: the Conflict of Civilizations, 1600-1675* (New York: Knopf, 2012), 169.

¹⁸ Maxmillian E. Novak, *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel DeFoe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 149.

¹⁹ Lorena Walsh and Russell R. Menard, “Death in the Chesapeake: Two Life Tables of Men in Early Colonial Maryland,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 69 (1974): 226.

²⁰ Thao Phung, Julia King, and Douglas Ubelaker “Alcohol, Tobacco, and Excessive Animal Protein: the Question of Adequate Diet in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake,” *Historical Archaeology* 43, no. 2 (2009): 64.

²¹ Lorena Walsh and Russell R. Menard, “Death in the Chesapeake,” 226.

²² Thao Phung, Julia King, and Douglas Ubelaker, “Alcohol, Tobacco, and Excessive Animal Protein,” 64.

population.”²³ Recently arrived English immigrants had no immunity to diseases in this new environment and were in poor condition after their arrival to fight them. They were also likely to suffer from malnutrition, which they experienced on board the ships and may have continued once they arrived. Little protein was available on the ships and they had no Vitamin C at all. Pellagra occurs when there is a deficiency of protein, and scurvy when there is a deficiency of vitamin C.²⁴

Physical Life and Work on the Plantations

Despite the seasoning period, once servants were indentured to planters they were required to work. Sick or not, malnourished or not, servants were an investment and planters bought their indentures for a reason. Even if someone were sick enough to be in bed, some kind of work was expected from each person. No one could be idle. There was simply too much work to be done.²⁵

The biggest challenge of the Chesapeake, after that of survival, was to build the infrastructure that would support life as Europeans knew it. Infrastructure is critical, but people take it for granted until it is not there. In a wilderness, where does one begin? Some kind of shelter is needed, obviously, so houses must be built. Land must be cleared and open fields carved out of the forests in order to grow crops. Barns must be built to house the crops once they are harvested. Servants were expected to provide labor for all of this.

Housing and barns were part of the infrastructure that each plantation needed, and they

²³ Russell R. Menard, “Immigrants and their Increase: the Process of Population Growth in Early Colonial Maryland,” in *Law, Society and Politics in Early Maryland: Proceedings of the First Conference on Maryland History, June 14-15, 1974*, eds. Aubrey C. Land, Lois Green Carr, and Edward Papenfuse (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 98.

²⁴ Lorena Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1773* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 63.

²⁵ Peter Freisen (Education Director, Historic St. Mary’s City, Maryland) in discussion with the author, June 2018.

were both drafty wooden boxes with dirt floors.²⁶ Because planters were trying to save labor, houses and barns were built quickly on posts instead of foundations, with unpainted clapboards made of green timber. Timber was readily available, but since it was unpainted, it rotted quickly. Termites completely ate these structures within ten years. Both houses and barns had to be continually repaired as the timber rotted, or they simply fell down (see Illustration IV).²⁷ Gary Wheeler Stone reconstructed a post and clapboard house at Historic St. Mary's City, Maryland in 2003. He and his crew managed to build it in sixteen days using frontier construction methods, but for all their work, the roof still leaked.²⁸

Illustration III



Typical clapboard barn built in seventeenth century style at Historic St. Mary's City. The clapboards are visible on the roof, which would leak unless other measures were taken to prevent it. Photo taken June 2018.

²⁶Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: the Peopling of British North America: the Conflict of Civilizations, 1600-1675* (New York: Knopf, 2012), 171.

²⁷ Peter Freisen. (Education Director, Historic St. Mary's City, Maryland) in discussion with the author, June 2018.

²⁸ Garry Wheeler Stone, "The Roof Leaked but the Price was Right: the Virginia House Reconsidered," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 99 (2004): 327.

According to Main,

Unless the chinks between the clapboards had been carefully filled or the walls sheathed from inside, the open fire on the hearth in winter sucked in great drafts of cold air from outside, making everyone indoors hug the fire. Some of the 'dwellings are so wretchedly constructed,' complained Danders and Sluyter in 1680, 'that if you are not so close to the fire as almost to burn yourself, you cannot keep warm, for the wind blows through the walls everywhere.'²⁹

After some sort of housing was built, servants were required to chop down trees to clear fields.

This can be exhausting work. But since planters were always alert for ways to save labor, they often adopted the Native American method of clearing ground. They chose acreage within their holdings with large trees and wide spaces between those trees which had very little undergrowth. They would "girdle" the trees by chopping away a large portion of the bark in a ring around each tree. The trees would slowly die, and their thick canopy of leaves which prevented sunlight from reaching the ground would wither away. Crops were planted between the tree trunks.³⁰ Over time, the limbs fell down which were used for firewood. Sometimes they fell directly on the crop and damaged it, but that was a risk some were willing to take.³¹ This method left a large amount of land covered in tree trunks and stumps.

Others invested the labor necessary to cut down all the trees. Servants complained of "working hard from Sunn rising to Sunn sett at felling of trees" and "grubbing of woods."³² "Grubbing" meant digging roots out of the ground.³³ Another Englishman wrote "This truly is the great labour in Virginia, to fell Trees, and to get up the Roots, and so make Cleare ground for the Plow."³⁴

²⁹ Gloria L. Main, *Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650-1720* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 167.

³⁰ Peter Freisen (Education Director, Historic St. Mary's City, Maryland) in discussion with the author, June 2018.

³¹ Martin Primack, "Land Cleaning Under Nineteenth-Century Techniques: Some Preliminary Calculations," *Journal of Economic History* 22 no.4 (December 1962): 485.

³² Lorena Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 70.

³³ Lois G. Carr and Russell R. Menard, "Immigration and Opportunity: the Freedman in Early Colonial Maryland," in *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society*, eds. Thad Tate and David Ammerman (New York: Norton, 1979), 276.

³⁴ Lorena Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 144.

After land was cleared, each male servant was expected to plant and tend five acres of crops: two of corn and three of tobacco. Tobacco was the cash crop, and tobacco was the *raison d'être* of the Chesapeake plantations. Each servant was expected to tend roughly six thousand tobacco plants.³⁵ Two acres of corn per person was required because it was the minimum needed to supply that person with food for a year.³⁶

Caring for tobacco is extremely labor intensive. First, the tiny seeds must be thickly scattered in a raised bed of soil near the fields. Each bed must be weeded and thinned as the plants grow, in order for the largest and strongest plants to receive sunlight. Mature plants are then transplanted to the fields by pulling up each plant by its roots and carrying it to the fields (see Illustration IV). Small hills of soil must be built for each transplant to the fields. The tobacco seedling is inserted into a small hole in the middle of the soil hill. The loose soil around each plant was needed for root development.³⁷ Obviously, much bending and stooping was required.

Illustration IV



Guide at St. Mary's City, Maryland pulling tobacco plants out of their beds to be transplanted. Photo taken June 2018.

³⁵ Jean B. Russo and J. Elliott Russo, *Planting an Empire: the Early Chesapeake in British North America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 56.

³⁶ Lorena Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 72.

³⁷ Peter Freisen (Education Director, Historic St. Mary's City, Maryland) in discussion with the author, June 2018.

Every day of the week except Sunday, servants were required to walk through the fields, check plants, and hoe weeds out of the five acres for which they were responsible. Tobacco plants had to be checked daily for worms or their eggs. This was a Sisyphean task because in this environment, insects are relatively constant. Hornworms could destroy an entire crop in a week. Any kind of infestation was a danger because contamination spread quickly.³⁸ Throughout the growing season each plant had to be “topped,” or the top leaves cut off as a kind of pruning to ensure other leaves grew strong. After months of this work, harvesting could begin in the early fall. Each plant was cut and hung to cure and dry in a tobacco barn. One month later, all cured plants were packed into a hogshead, or very large barrel. Each hogshead was packed until it held four hundred pounds of tobacco, or one acre’s worth of plants. Servants then rolled each hogshead to creeks near the plantations where ships sent small boats to pick them up. All of it was hot, nasty, dirty work.³⁹

Diet

Plantation diet was difficult for the English because the foods native to America were alien to them. Indian corn was the mainstay because planting it did not require land to be plowed. Each adult male was allowed three barrels per year, but by a judgement that seems counterintuitive to us, servants were sometimes underfed if they were too sick to work. Perhaps planters wanted to discourage anyone from faking illness. Pellagra was a danger if their diet was too dependent on corn alone.⁴⁰ Ironically, wild animals lived around them in abundance, and the Chesapeake Bay was full of fish. But they simply had no time for hunting or fishing. They were too busy caring for tobacco.⁴¹

³⁸ Jean B. Russo, and J. Elliott Russo, *Planting an Empire: the Early Chesapeake in British North America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 56.

³⁹ Peter Freisen, (Education Director, Historic St. Mary’s City, Maryland) in discussion with the author, June 2018.

⁴⁰ Lois G. Carr, “Emigration and the Standard of Living: the Seventeenth Century Chesapeake,” *Journal of Economic History* 52, no.2 (June 1992):276-277.

⁴¹ Peter Freisen. (Education Director, Historic St. Mary’s City, Maryland) in discussion with the author, June 2018.

This native diet differed greatly from what they had known at home. In England, they ate bread made of grains and porridge made with peas. They complained in Virginia not only of the monotony of the diet of corn, squash and beans, but some had difficulty digesting the corn.⁴² Harvested corn had to be pounded for seven to eight hours to turn it into cornmeal, which was used in making cakes (Illustration V). If it wasn't pounded long enough, which is a temptation when a person is hungry and gets tired of pounding, it could indeed be difficult to digest.⁴³

Illustration V



Woman pounding corn in wood bowl with metal pestle⁴⁴

Food, of course, had a major impact on their health, both physical and mental. One Virginia leader commented, “more do die here of the disease of their minds than of their body by having this country victuall over-promised unto them in England and by not knowinge they shall drinke water here.” Evidently they had some understanding of the dangers of contaminated water, which indeed played a

⁴² Lois G. Carr, “Emigration and the Standard of Living: the Seventeenth Century Chesapeake.” *Journal of Economic History* 52, no.2 (June 1992):279.

⁴³ Peter Freisen. (Education Director, Historic St. Mary’s City, Maryland) in discussion with the author, June 2018.

⁴⁴ “Hard Evidence of Heavy Toil,” Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, accessed 24 January 2019, https://naturalhistory2.si.edu/anthropology/WIB/heavy_toil.html.

role in the spread of typhoid and dysentery. At home they had drunk cider or ale which they considered safe, and it also tasted better. Apple trees were planted by colonists eventually, but it took seven years for an orchard to produce enough apples to make cider, and many orchards were needed to make enough cider to supplant water and become the common drink.⁴⁵ Immigrants longed for something more than the monotonous corn and “water gruell,” to eat, and this had a major impact on morale as well as their health.⁴⁶

The Social and Emotional Cost

The physical struggles of servants were incredibly difficult, but they also faced a large social and emotional cost. The Chesapeake plantations were widely scattered around the bay. They averaged about two hundred and fifty acres each, and each plantation required access to rivers or the bay in order to get their tobacco on board the ships.⁴⁷ Because of this broad dispersal, plantations were isolated from each other. The English in America were shocked at the social isolation.⁴⁸ There were no towns or communities, and any social activity was rare. Even William Byrd II thought Virginia was so lonely that said he felt buried alive in the “silent country.”⁴⁹ Unless fellow servants banded together on a single plantation, social support was negligible. What families they ever had, they left in England.

Another difficulty was the highly skewed sex ratio mentioned in Chapter One. When women are few, some of the traditional “women’s work” must be done by men, or not done at all. Who nursed the

⁴⁵ Lois G. Carr, “Emigration and the Standard of Living: the Seventeenth Century Chesapeake,” *Journal of Economic History* 52, no.2 (June 1992):279.

⁴⁶ Lorena Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 58.

⁴⁷ Henry Miller, “The Lure of Sotweed: Tobacco and Maryland History,” Historic St. Mary’s City, Maryland, Accessed 1 July 2018, <https://hsmcdigshistory.org/pdf/Tobacco.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Catherine Armstrong, *Writing North America in the Seventeenth Century: English Representations in Print and Manuscript* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 156.

⁴⁹ Dennis Todd, *Defoe’s America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 137.

sick or injured on these plantations? Who sewed, and how were clothes replaced when they wore out? Who provided the support normally done by women? These questions for the most part go unanswered, except we know as the century wore on, more women did arrive and the male-female ratio improved.

During the entirety of the seventeenth century, the ratio was skewed with men in the majority. When men outnumber women many times over, and most servants are in their teens or twenties, social disruption is a certainty. No servant could marry until the terms of their contract were completely fulfilled, unless their contract was bought, presumably by a prospective spouse that was free and had capital. Female servants may have had prospective husbands who served out their time and owned land to buy their contracts. But until that time arrived, it was no surprise that there were many illegitimate pregnancies. Carr discovered that at least twenty percent of female servants who arrived in Charles County Maryland between 1658 and 1705 had to come before the local court for that precise reason.⁵⁰ This imbalance in the sex ratio may have been the root cause of other socially disruptive behaviors as well, such as a higher rate of fighting between men.⁵¹

Servant “Laziness”

In multiple letters and other documents, planters complained unendingly about servant “laziness.” This perceived laziness could have been a result of chronic illness, psychological shock or depression. Walsh noted that diseases of nutritional deficiency, such as pellagra and scurvy, produce both lethargy and apathy. She also thought that “the combined effects of malnourishment and mental

⁵⁰ Lois G. Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, “The Planter’s Wife: the Experience of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland,” in *The Private Side of American History: Readings in Everyday Life*, 2nd edition, ed. Gary B. Nash (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1979), 75.

⁵¹ Peter Freisen. (Education Director, Historic St. Mary’s City, Maryland) in discussion with the author, June 2018.

despair produced a fatal withdrawal from life” for many.⁵² The physical environment, inadequate or strange food, and the impact of diseases combined with the sheer amount of work required of them had a cumulative effect. Servants were just trying to survive and had no incentive to work since they were not paid. One observer noted about them, “not finding what was promised, their courage abates, and their minds being dejected, their work is according.”⁵³ One servant at a plantation in Virginia called Martin’s Hundred said he “would gladly have sacrificed an arm or a leg if that sacrifice would get them passage back to England.”⁵⁴

Mortality

Actual mortality rates are difficult to determine because of the lack of records. We know that the majority of servants did not survive their seasoning period, or first year in the Chesapeake. During the middle decades of the seventeenth century, Horn calculated that around forty percent of servants died before they finished their term of indenture.⁵⁵ When Menard examined records for one group of two hundred and seventy-seven male servants brought to Maryland before 1643, he found only one hundred and seventeen appeared in the court records later as free men. Only forty-two percent of the group survived long enough to claim land.⁵⁶ He also calculated life expectancy rates for adult male immigrants who survived seasoning: seventeen percent of those who reached twenty-two died before reaching thirty, forty-one percent died before reaching forty, and seventy percent died before reaching

⁵² Lorena Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 63.

⁵³ Dennis Todd, *Defoe’s America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 149.

⁵⁴ Lorena Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 57-58.

⁵⁵ Lois G. Carr and Russell R. Menard, “Immigration and Opportunity: the Freedman in Early Colonial Maryland,” in *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society*, eds. Thad Tate and David Ammerman (New York: Norton, 1979), 208-209.

⁵⁶ Russell R. Menard, “The Growth of Population in the Chesapeake Colonies: a Comment,” *Explorations in Economic History* 18 (1981): 402.

fifty.⁵⁷ Statistically, this meant that those who survived seasoning lived an average of ten years less than males born in that century in England.⁵⁸

Another way to examine the heavy mortality rate, as well as the imbalanced sex ratio, is to look at population totals in Virginia and Maryland for each decade. Between 1625 and 1634, the population of Virginia grew from a little over one thousand two hundred to around four thousand nine hundred. The number of immigrants that arrived during that time was approximately nine thousand. Earle calculated that over half of Virginia's population died during those nine years.⁵⁹ For Maryland, Menard estimated that twenty-three to thirty-eight thousand arrived between 1634 and 1681, yet the total population in 1681 was only nineteen thousand. Total population for both Virginia and Maryland by the end of the century stood at about one hundred thousand.⁶⁰ In 1700, the English speaking population of the Chesapeake was far smaller than the total number of immigrants who shipped over by at least fifteen thousand and maybe as much as seventy thousand.⁶¹ An English colonial administrator, Edward Randolph, asked the English Board of Trade in 1696 why so few people were in Virginia despite the massive immigration throughout the century. The Board ignored him.⁶²

Carr and Walsh agree on three causes for the negative population growth of that century: first, immense numbers of immigrants died before they could reproduce because of the disease environment;

⁵⁷ Russell R. Menard, "Immigrants and their Increase: the Process of Population Growth in Early Colonial Maryland," in *Law, Society and Politics in Early Maryland: Proceedings of the First Conference on Maryland History, June 14-15, 1974*, eds. Aubrey C. Land, Lois Green Carr, and Edward Papenfuse (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 93.

⁵⁸ James Horn, "Adapting to a New World: a Comparative Study of Local Society in England and Maryland, 1650-1700," in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, eds. Lois Green Carr, Philip D. Morgan, and Jean B. Russo (Chapel Hill, NC: published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 174.

⁵⁹ Carville E. Earle, "Environment, Disease, and Mortality in Early Virginia," in *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society*, eds. Thad W. Tate and David Ammerman (New York: Norton, 1979), 120-121.

⁶⁰ Russell R. Menard. "Immigrants and their Increase," 88, 90-91.

⁶¹ Russell R. Menard, "The Growth of Population in the Chesapeake Colonies: a Comment," *Explorations in Economic History* 18 (1981): 399.

⁶² Russell R. Menard. "Immigrants and their Increase," 88.

second, not nearly enough women immigrated; and third, those who did marry married late in life, which meant they had fewer children.⁶³ Of the women servants who had children outside of marriage, their children would have had less social support and were therefore more likely not to make it to adulthood.

The stark conclusion is that the colonies of both Virginia and Maryland would have failed in the seventeenth century without the constant replacement of people through new arrivals.⁶⁴ Only around the turn of the next century did native births begin to outpace new immigrants.⁶⁵

⁶³ Lois G. Carr and Lorena Walsh, "The Planter's Wife: the Experience of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," in *The Private Side of American History: Readings in Everyday Life*, 2nd edition, ed. Gary B. Nash (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1979), 70.

⁶⁴ James Horn, *Adapting to a New World: English Society in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 137.

⁶⁵ Lois G. Carr and Russell R. Menard, "Immigration and Opportunity: the Freedman in Early Colonial Maryland," in *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society*, eds. Thad Tate and David Ammerman (New York: Norton, 1979), 209.

Chapter Three: Skeletons of the Chesapeake

Anthropological Research

Previous chapters utilized information from historical documents and their interpretations by historians. Historians utilized ships' lists, headright lists, court records and other documents to piece together the demographics of the Chesapeake.¹ But the documents available are limited. Servants rarely recorded anything or had anything recorded about them. Some visitors conveyed what they saw and heard about their lives, but only a few of their writings have survived. One of the crucial remaining avenues of investigation is that of physical anthropology.

Anthropological teams from the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History study, analyze, and archive historic skeletal remains as they are uncovered in the United States. Evidence from colonial skeletons about the lives and work of the people who populated the Chesapeake in the seventeenth century is just beginning to be analyzed. Not enough data has been gathered yet to constitute a statistically valid sample. But what has been discovered so far is telling. In 2009 the Museum sponsored an exhibit, which displayed some of this evidence, entitled, "Written in Bone: Forensic Files of the 17th Century Chesapeake." It provided an extra window into the servant world. Drs. Douglas Owsley and Karin Bruwelheide, both forensic anthropologists, led the teams which examined the skeletons for the exhibit. They wrote,

There is nothing in the archaeological record that can tell you more than the skeleton. Nearly every interaction with our social and physical environment – what we ate, how much we

¹ Julia A. King, "Living and Dying in the 17th Century Chesapeake: Previous Research," in *Living and Dying on the 17th Century Patuxent Frontier*, eds. Julia A. King and Douglas H. Ubelaker (Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust Press, 1996), 6.

carried, how tightly we were swaddled, how roughly we were treated – ends up being recorded in our bones.²

They begin every analysis by visually inspecting a set of bones and follow with a complete bone and tooth inventory. By examining the shape, robustness, and development of areas where muscles attach to bones, they can determine an approximate age, sex, height, and body build of a skeleton. Radiography makes visible the internal structures of both bones and teeth. All of these contribute to the evaluation of the total health of an individual. Bones are often modified throughout an individual's lifetime by dental pathology, childhood illness, nutrition, disease or trauma, and all of these leave clues in the skeleton. Lastly, an analysis of bone chemistry can provide information about diet, even patterns of dietary changes because a person moved into a different environment.³

But physical evidence must always be considered in context with other evidence: the burial site, historical documentation (if any), and time period. No human ever existed in a social or historical vacuum, so all available evidence must be evaluated together. Anthropologists Phung, King and Ubelaker agreed,

Even in cases where individuals cannot be identified by name, the record of health found inscribed on a skeleton, which **combined with other archaeological and documentary evidence**, can be a powerful indicator of physical health as well as the social and cultural practices that shaped it [emphasis added].⁴

² Douglas Owsley and Karin Bruwelheide, *Written in Bone: Bone Biographer's Casebook* (Minneapolis, MN: LeanTo Press, 2009), 12.

³ Kari Bruwelheide and Douglas Owsley, "Written in Bone: Reading the Remains of the 17th Century," *AnthroNotes* 28, no.1 (Spring 2007): 3.

⁴ Thao Phung, Julia King, and Douglas Ubelaker, "Alcohol, Tobacco, and Excessive Animal Protein: the Question of Adequate Diet in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake," *Historical Archaeology* 43, no. 2 (2009): 61.

Evidence from the Smithsonian Exhibit

In earlier chapters I described some of the manual labor required of servants on the Chesapeake plantations. The skeletal evidence agrees and brings strong evidence of suffering caused by work and disease combined. Their workload they carried was obvious in their bones. “A lifetime of lifting and bending leaves skeletal markers. Bones grow denser and change at the muscle and tendon attachment sites. . . For example, bone development in the shoulders and arms shows repeated, rigorous use.”⁵ Several types of work contributed to this: chopping down trees, splitting timber for firewood, hoeing tobacco, or creating clapboards from timber for building houses and barns. The physical burden of carrying heavy materials also left its mark. Servants carried buckets of water, loads of firewood, piles of tobacco leaves to be cured in barns, or nearly anything that had to be moved from one place to another. Before draft animals were available, many loads were carried on their backs.

Traumatic and heavy loading can compress the spine, producing hollowed depressions in the vertebrae as the tissue of the disks bulges into the bone. Vertical compression, if severe enough, can also cause ‘wedging’ of the vertebrae, eventually leading to a stooped posture.⁶

Stress fractures can also occur in the vertebrae of the spine because of repetitive stress injuries, such as bending over for long periods of time. Hoeing tobacco for hours on end is only one of the chores in that environment that required “back breaking work.” In at least one case, it was literal. (See Illustration VI).

The exhibit also displayed skeletal evidence of disease. A common infection, especially for those who have been compressed in the close quarters of a ship for long periods of time, was tuberculosis. Tuberculosis is spread easily through coughing. Tuberculosis of the spine is both the most common and

⁵ “Hard Evidence of Heavy Toil,” Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, accessed 24 January 2019, https://naturalhistory2.si.edu/anthropology/WIB/heavy_toil.html.

⁶ “Proof of Burden,” Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, accessed 24 January 2019, https://naturalhistory2.si.edu/anthropology/WIB/proof_of_burden.html.

dangerous form of this infection, and it causes spinal cord depression and deformity (see Illustration VII). Weakness in the legs and pain are the result, and it can cause paralysis of the legs.⁷

Illustration VI



Badly fractured lumbar vertebrae from the spine of a woman unearthed in Calvert County, Maryland. In a normal spine, the pieces are joined. Here they are totally separated. These stress fractures occurred in the vertebrae at the waist.⁸ This type of spinal fracture causes severe pain.⁹

One perhaps unexpected finding was the extent of dental disease in the colonial population. The servant diet, as discussed in a previous chapter, relied heavily on corn. Corn is a carbohydrate that sticks easily to, and sometimes gets caught in between, teeth. Examinations of teeth found that cavities, tooth loss and abscesses were quite common.¹⁰ Sometimes the abscesses were severe enough to eat away adjacent bone.

⁷ Mehmet Turgut, "Spinal Tuberculosis (Pott's Disease): its Clinical Presentation, Surgical Management, and Outcome. A Survey Study on 694 Patients," *Neurosurgical Review* 24, no.3 (2001): 8.

⁸ "Proof of Burden," Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, accessed 24 January 2019, https://naturalhistory2.si.edu/anthropology/WIB/proof_of_burden.html.

⁹ "Ortho Info: Fractures of the Thoracic and Lumbar Spine." American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeon, last modified September 2015. <https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/diseases--conditions/fractures-of-the-thoracic-and-lumbar-spine/>.

¹⁰ "Lives Cut Short," Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, accessed 24 January 2019, https://naturalhistory2.si.edu/anthropology/WIB/lives_cut_short.html.

Illustration VII



The spine of a male aged between twelve and fourteen, bent at a right angle. It would have been impossible for this teenager to stand upright. The bone below the bend contains large holes, which weakened the support of the rest of the spine. The bone destruction was caused by tuberculosis.¹¹

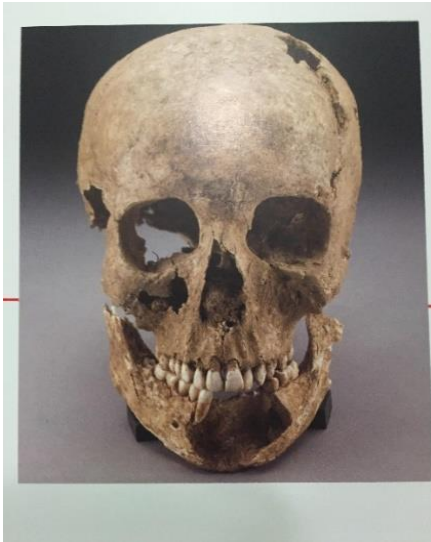
A periodontal abscess is a buildup of pus in the gums or inside a tooth caused by a bacterial infection. In the case of the young male pictured above, two of his teeth in the lower part of his jaw were broken off, so the pulp was exposed. The infection was so large it ate away part of his jawbone.¹² This abscess would have been extremely painful. It would have caused fever and swelling in his face and made it difficult for him to eat. Further examination of the skull revealed the bone in the roof of his eye

¹¹ "Lives Cut Short," Smithsonian Natural Museum of Natural History, accessed 24 January 2019, https://naturalhistory2.si.edu/anthropology/WIB/lives_cut_short.html.

¹² Sally Walker, *Written in Bone: Buried Lives of Jamestown and Colonial Maryland* (Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books, 2009), 39-40.

sockets were punctuated with small holes. These indicated he had anemia, or insufficient iron in his diet.¹³

Illustration VIII



Skull of young male killed by trauma to the top of the head unearthed in Jamestown Virginia. His quick death might have been a blessing because he had a gaping hole in his jaw from a dental abscess which would have been very painful.¹⁴

Another cause of extreme tooth loss, not surprisingly, was the heavy use of tobacco. Smoking tobacco was ubiquitous among the inhabitants of the Chesapeake. One Frenchman who traveled to Virginia in 1686 remarked, “everyone smoked both at work and at rest, including women and girls and boys down to the ages of seven years.”¹⁵ Tobacco was smoked in clay pipes gripped between the teeth. Clenching the pipe wore facets in their tooth enamel, which over time caused holes to develop.

¹³ “Tooth Abscess,” Mayo Clinic, accessed 24 October 2018, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/tooth-abscess/symptoms-causes/syc-20350901>.

¹⁴ Douglas Owsley and Karin Bruwelheide, *Written in Bone: Bone Biographer’s Casebook* (Minneapolis, MN: LeanTo Press, 2009), 39.

¹⁵ Thao Phung, Julia King, and Douglas Ubelaker, “Alcohol, Tobacco, and Excessive Animal Protein: the Question of Adequate Diet in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake,” *Historical Archaeology* 43, no. 2 (2009): 72.

Illustration IX



Skull of a male aged 25-29 years old showing tooth damage from smoking tobacco in a clay pipe. The teeth are badly stained, and completely rotted through in a circular hole where he held his pipe.¹⁶

Patuxent Point, Maryland

One site from which extensive evidence was gathered is Patuxent Point, in Calvert County, Maryland. It was the site of a one hundred acre tobacco plantation. On this site alone more than 1900 fragments of clay tobacco pipes were found, an archeological witness to the fact that everyone smoked.¹⁷ The site also contained a family cemetery where nineteen well-preserved skeletons were unearthed. Chart I shows the age of death for all nineteen individuals.

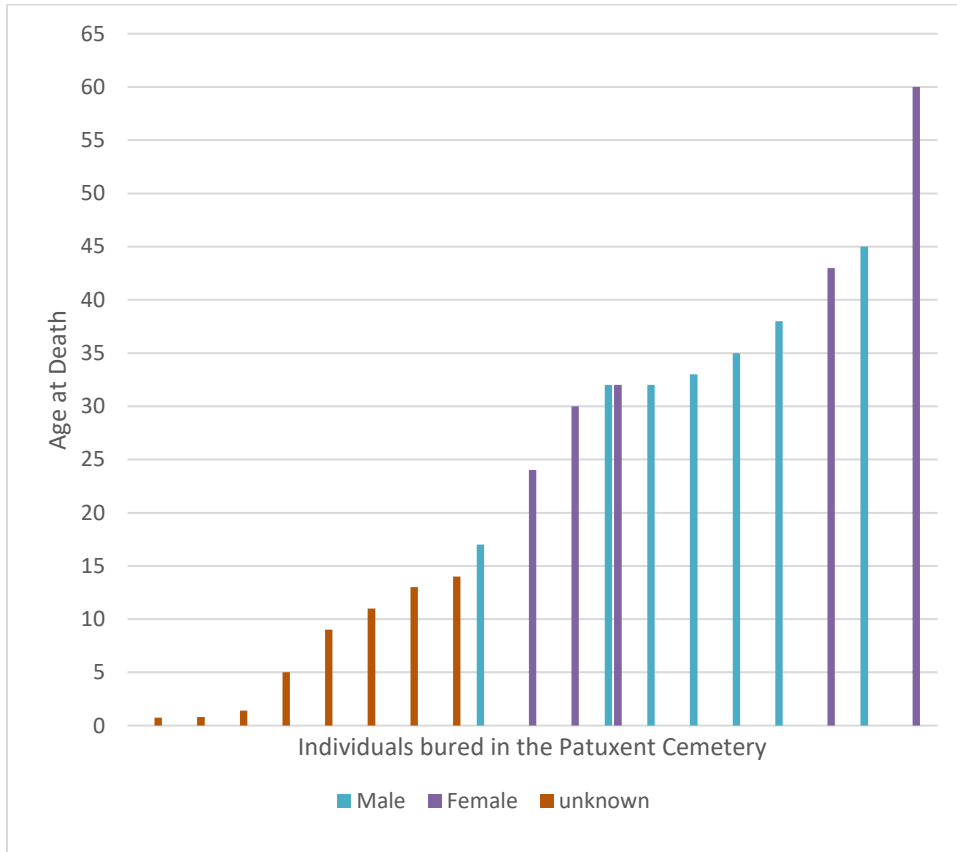
The skeletons discovered there speak of the struggle for survival. Of the nineteen, nine, or almost fifty percent, died earlier than eighteen years old. Having so many people die so early in life meant that the workload was heavier for those who survived to adulthood. In adulthood, most people peak physically in their twenties and thirties. Yet there is a cluster of deaths around age thirty. Did so many die around this age because they were worn down from the heavy labor? Was it from accidents

¹⁶“Pleasure of a Pipe,” Smithsonian Natural Museum of Natural History, accessed 24 January 2019, <https://naturalhistory2.si.edu/anthropology/WIB/pipe.html>.

¹⁷ “A Comparative Archaeological Study of Colonial Chesapeake Culture: Patuxent Point,” Maryland Archeological Conservation Lab, accessed 14 September 2018, <http://www.chesapeakearchaeology.org/SiteSummaries/PatuxentPointSummary.aspx>.

associated with farm work and tools, or from diseases they could not treat? Did poor nutrition play any role in these premature deaths?

Chart I



Ages at Death of all Individuals Buried in the Cemetery at Patuxent Point, Maryland.¹⁸ Many died before they reached adulthood. The lone female who died at age sixty is an outlier.

Examination of these skeletons showed the effects of disease and heavy labor. Five individuals had broken bones, all of which healed. Four children aged eight to fourteen had evidence of porotic hyperostosis, which is porous bone in the cranium usually caused by anemia, or lack of iron in the diet.

¹⁸ Douglas Ubelaker, Erica B. Jones and Abigail W. Turowski, "Skeletal biology of the Patuxent Point Human Remains," in *Living and Dying on the 17th Century Patuxent Frontier*, eds. Julia A. King and Douglas H. Ubelaker (Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust Press, 1996), 49. Chart composed from data contained in "Individual Information on the Patuxent Burials."

Three males aged between twenty-eight and thirty-eight had Schmorl's nodes, or herniated disks. These are caused by overuse of the back in lifting, pushing or pulling heavy objects. Their heavy labor was perhaps made worse by a lack of farm animals or proper tools. Periostitis, or inflammation of the tissue that surrounds the bone, was found in the legs of two males between the ages of thirty and forty-five. These were likely caused by infections resulting from cuts in their lower legs. Were the cuts from axes or other tools that missed their mark? The fact that cuts resulted in such harsh infections speak to the lack of effective treatment of wounds. Another adult male and female had alterations in their feet caused by habitual kneeling.¹⁹ One must kneel when transplanting tobacco plants from their initial beds to the fields or weeding if no hoes are available. Nine individuals, or almost half, showed evidence of bone loss caused by a lack of nutrition or a disease.²⁰

Why did such a high percentage of the skeletons from this site show evidence of poor nutrition and low bone density? Over time, Owsley observed a diminishment of bone density in many individuals in this area, in spite of their physically strenuous lives. Historian Henry Miller made an impressive inventory of the variety of foods consumed by colonists and concluded their diet should have been nutritionally adequate.²¹ But archeologists Phung, King and Ubelaker concluded these skeletons indicated poor nutrition. They stated, "a significant portion of the Chesapeake English population, while not precisely measurable at this time, suffered nutritional deficiencies to some extent."²² Why did the colonists have nutritional deficiencies when they were surrounded by such a wide variety of possible foods, both wild and cultivated?

¹⁹ Douglas Ubelaker, Erica B. Jones and Abigail W. Turowski, "Skeletal biology of the Patuxent Point Human Remains," in *Living and Dying on the 17th Century Patuxent Frontier*, eds. Julia A. King and Douglas H. Ubelaker (Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust Press, 1996), 59.

²⁰ Thao Phung, Julia King, and Douglas Ubelaker, "Alcohol, Tobacco, and Excessive Animal Protein: the Question of Adequate Diet in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake," *Historical Archaeology* 43, no. 2 (2009): 69.

²¹ Henry Miller, "An Archeological Perspective on the Evolution of Diet in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1620-1745," in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, eds. Lois Green Carr, Philip D. Morgan, and Jean B. Russo (Chapel Hill, NC: published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 181-183.

²² Thao Phung, Julia King, and Douglas Ubelaker, "Alcohol, Tobacco, and Excessive Animal Protein," 71.

After examining the skeletons, Phung, King and Ubelaker proposed that the colonists' ability to absorb nutrients was inhibited by their extravagant consumption of alcohol and tobacco. Once orchards planted in the mid-seventeenth century began to bear enough fruit, colonists made cider. They had a strong preference for drinking cider instead of water, which is understandable given the waterborne diseases so prevalent earlier in the century. One researcher noted that the amount of cider colonists consumed always astonished English visitors. They recorded that both young and old drank it in large quantities.²³ We do not know the alcoholic content of their cider. But alcohol has a toxic effect on the cells responsible for the formation of bone, and the mechanical properties of bones are all negatively affected by high alcohol consumption. We have already seen that the large amount of tobacco smoked was enough to damage their teeth badly. Tobacco also inhibits absorption of nutrients in the intestines, and nicotine restricts blood flow to new tissues, especially those involved in bone repair. Smoking affects the body's ability to absorb calcium.²⁴

The mean age of death at the Patuxent Point site for adult males was thirty-one, and for adult females was thirty-six.²⁵ The skeletal data support the conclusions of historians that immigrants in this century had short lives in a harsh environment. But it also suggests that either their nutrition was not adequate for the demands placed upon them, or their absorption of nutrients was blocked, or both.²⁶ King and Ubelaker conclude,

The men, women and children who died at Patuxent Point experienced a far different reality than 20th century Marylanders. These individuals could expect short and long term physiological stress, the threat of disease, and an early death. They could also expect to work hard during their lifetimes. Women and children appear to have been especially at risk. Despite evidence of apparently adequate food resources in both the documentary and archaeological

²³ Thao Phung, Julia King, and Douglas Ubelaker, "Alcohol, Tobacco, and Excessive Animal Protein: the Question of Adequate Diet in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake," *Historical Archaeology* 43, no. 2 (2009): 71-73.

²⁴ Thao Phung, Julia King, and Douglas Ubelaker. "Alcohol, Tobacco, and Excessive Animal Protein," 75-76.

²⁵ Douglas Ubelaker, Erica B. Jones and Abigail W. Turowski, "Skeletal biology of the Patuxent Point Human Remains," in *Living and Dying on the 17th Century Patuxent Frontier*, eds. Julia A. King and Douglas H. Ubelaker (Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust Press, 1996), 48-49.

²⁶ Julia A. King and Douglas Ubelaker, "Living and Dying at Patuxent Point," in *Living and Dying on the 17th Century Patuxent Frontier*, eds. Julia A. King and Douglas H. Ubelaker (Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust Press, 1996), 120.

records, the biological evidence indicates that these individuals may have indeed suffered a form of malnutrition.²⁷

The Body in the Basement

Illustration X



Skeleton unearthed at Leavy Neck in Maryland in what had been a trash pit in a former cellar. The burial is dated between 1665-1670.²⁸ The ceramic pan on top is positioned exactly as it was found. It had been used to dig the grave.²⁹

In 1991, archeologists from the Lost Towns Project of Anne Arundel County, Maryland discovered the site of a small seventeenth century farm at Leavy Neck. Leavy Neck was a part of the settlement of Providence, a group of small plantations settled by Puritans in 1649.³⁰ In 2003 an

²⁷ Julia A. King and Douglas Ubelaker, "Living and Dying at Patuxent Point," in *Living and Dying on the 17th Century Patuxent Frontier*, eds. Julia A. King and Douglas H. Ubelaker (Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust Press, 1996), 120.

²⁸ "History Detectives, Episode 12, 2004: Body in the Basement, Annapolis, Maryland," PBS," accessed 15 September 2018, http://www-tc.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/static/media/transcripts/2011-04-22/212_body.pdf.

²⁹ "The Body in the Basement," Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, accessed 24 January 2019, https://naturalhistory2.si.edu/anthropology/WIB/leavy_neck.html.

³⁰ "Providence," Lost Towns Project, Inc., accessed 15 September 2018, <http://www.losttownsproject.org/research-the-past/past-research-projects/providence-1649/>.

archeological team investigated what once was the cellar of a small house on the site. Artifacts from a trash pit under what would have been floorboards dated to 1655 to 1680. Upon excavating the pit, the team discovered a human skeleton. At that point, Dr. Owsley from the Smithsonian was brought in to examine the skeleton and remove it for further analysis.³¹

An onsite examination showed the body had been jammed into a grave too small for it, because its legs were bent at both the knees and hips. On top of it were the remainders of a ceramic milk pan, which Owsley determined was used to dig the shallow grave. In the lab it was determined that the skeleton was that of a sixteen year old male of European descent who was a recent immigrant. The vertebrae in his back were irregular. He had already developed Schmol's nodes, evidence that in life he carried loads too heavy for him. He had tuberculosis of the spinal column, which was only one of the infections in his body. He had very advanced dental decay, which meant he ran the risk of the bacteria from his teeth getting into his bloodstream.³² He had nineteen cavities, and seven of his teeth had been infected badly enough to leave signs of abscesses in his jawbone. In short, this young man was very ill. Owsley stated, "The boy's bones told a story of a short, hard life. Although he was a boy, he did a man's worth of work." The cause of his death is not apparent, although he had an unhealed wrist fracture that aligned with another unhealed fracture in the radius of his arm. Taken together, these two fractures suggest he was defending himself against a strong blow immediately before he died.³³ It was obvious he was buried hurriedly. All the evidence suggests he was an indentured servant with no ties to the family. The only person who could have dug a grave in the cellar of a house, dumped layers of trash on the grave to hide it, and made sure it remained undisturbed would have been the owner of the house.

³¹ "Leavy Neck," Lost Towns Project, Inc., accessed 15 September 2018, <http://www.losttownsproject.org/research-the-past/past-research-projects/providence-1649/leavy-neck/>.

³² "History Detectives, Episode 12, 2004: Body in the Basement, Annapolis, Maryland," PBS, accessed 15 September 2018, http://www-tc.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/static/media/transcripts/2011-04-22/212_body.pdf.

³³ Sally Walker, *Written in Bone: Buried Lives of Jamestown and Colonial Maryland* (Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books, 2009), 63-64.

In all likelihood this servant was killed by his master and his body quickly hidden in a grave dug with the milk pan.³⁴ Owsley suspected that someone was angry with the boy because he was not doing his full assignment of work. “Somehow, someone got carried away and an altercation got out of hand.”³⁵

Interviews in Chapter Two revealed that everyone on a plantation was expected to work. Even if they were sick they were expected to contribute something to the general labor. Did this boy hide in the cellar because he was too sick to work? Did his master find him hiding and kill him in a fit of temper?

Historical documents revealed that William Neale, a planter, bought the plantation in 1662. Items in the cellar’s trash suggest the house was built the same year. Neale lived there until 1677, so the time frame of the servant’s death points to him as the master of this servant. Neale was a small planter and probably a Puritan, since he settled within the Puritan settlement of Providence.³⁶ Puritans believed that everyone was pledged to obey the divine law “and were justly condemned for failure to adhere to it.”³⁷ Murder would have been a severe infraction. Was the owner hiding the body of his dead servant because of a penalty he might incur from his community or the colony? The historical record shows that Neale emigrated to Maryland with his wife, two children and two indentured servants.³⁸ It is surprising that Neale had only two servants. Two could not provide nearly enough labor for the considerable work required for a tobacco plantation to succeed, even a small one. If one of those two servants was too ill to work, would that have put the entire plantation enterprise in danger? Would this explain Neale’s deadly anger towards his servant? It also raises a much larger question. If a Puritan could kill a servant in anger, hide the grave, and never be found out, how likely was it that others could commit the same act? How common were servant deaths at the hands of their masters?

³⁴ “Leavy Neck,” Lost Towns Project, Inc., accessed 15 September 2018,

<http://www.losttownsproject.org/research-the-past/past-research-projects/providence-1649/leavy-neck/>.

³⁵ Sally Walker, *Written in Bone: Buried Lives of Jamestown and Colonial Maryland* (Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books, 2009), 66.

³⁶ Sally Walker, *Written in Bone*, 55.

³⁷ Lindsay Jones, ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion*. 2nd ed. (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005), 7519.

³⁸ Sally Walker, *Written in Bone*, 58.

Historian Richard Morris investigated colonial American courts and cases involving indentured servants. He found that “in the preponderance of trials where masters were charged with the murder or manslaughter of their servants in the seventeenth century, they were acquitted or let off lightly, often in the face of incontrovertible evidence of guilt.” In two-thirds of the cases brought before the Maryland courts charging physical abuse or overwork of servants, the result was usually only an admonishment to the master. Rarely did the court free the servant from his contract.³⁹ Not only were servants at risk because of disease, poor nutrition and heavy workloads, but they were also powerless in the social and legal hierarchy.

Servant deaths at the hands of their masters became common enough to arouse the suspicion of both the Virginia and Maryland Assemblies. Laws are always reactive, and in 1662 Virginia outlawed private burials of servants “because of much scandal against diverse persons and sometimes not undeservedly of being guilty of their deaths.”⁴⁰ In 1663 the Maryland Assembly considered a similar law but it did not pass.⁴¹ In the same year, the Virginia Assembly warned, “the barbarous usage of some servants by cruell masters bring soe much scandal and infamy to the country in generall, that people who would willingly adventure themselves hither, are through feare therof diverted.”⁴² In other words, poor treatment of servants was beginning to harm Virginia’s reputation abroad enough that the Assembly was concerned it might impact servant recruitment.

Servant recruitment was the lifeblood of the Chesapeake plantations. New servants were constantly needed to replace those who died in service or completed the terms of their contract and

³⁹ Dennis Todd, *Defoe’s America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010),140.

⁴⁰ James Horn, *Adapting to a New World: English Society in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 269.

⁴¹ “History Detectives, Episode 12, 2004: Body in the Basement, Annapolis, Maryland,” PBS, accessed 15 September 2018, http://www-tc.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/static/media/transcripts/2011-04-22/212_body.pdf.

⁴² James Horn, *Adapting to a New World*, 269.

moved on. Something was needed to counteract the rumors of “scandal and infamy,” and encourage large numbers to emigrate.

Chapter Four: Promotion Literature for Emigration

Tudor literature often expressed alarm about the social dislocation of the wandering poor,¹ and the ruling class looked on the growing numbers of homeless with horror. Too many uprooted people were a danger to the social order.² Something was needed to convince people of means to invest in plantations and sponsor the poor as servants. An entire array of literature was published to persuade them. That literature is now known as promotion literature.

Promotion literature was disseminated in various forms: sermons, pamphlets, broadsides, and tracts. Its purpose was to encourage emigration and investment by describing the bounty of the New World, and to counter damaging rumors. The rumors originated in the taverns and alehouses, and information from many people who traveled back and forth across the Atlantic was disseminated there.³ The tracts were part of an ongoing dialogue as Englishmen sought for more information about what America was really like. Traders and sailors brought back observations, information and impressions in bits and pieces that coalesced into widely held preconceptions. It was these that colonial promoters battled.

I will examine three tracts published in different decades of the seventeenth century to analyze how the New World was depicted in them and what arguments were used to promote it.

¹ Howard M. Jones, "The Colonial Impulse: an Analysis of the 'Promotion' Literature of Colonization," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 90, no.2 (May 1946): 146

² Alan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 24.

³³ Howard M. Jones, "The Colonial Impulse," 131, 133.

A Plain Pathway to Plantations by Eburne (1624)

The first tract was authored by Rev. Richard Eburne, a fervent colonial promoter. He expressed frustration that Englishmen “were wedded to their native soil like a snail to his shell,” and would “rather even starve at home than seek store abroad.”⁴ In 1624 the crown took over the colony of Virginia from the Virginia Company because of severe mismanagement. In doing so, the crown saved the colony from total failure. Eburne published his tract the same year. He evidently thought the crown would guarantee the colony’s success. Wright, who edited a version of it in 1962, concluded it must have been written “if not at the behest, at least with the tacit approval of highly placed persons directly interested in schemes to settle the New World.”⁵ Eburne proposed colonization as a remedy for the poor, assuring them they would find plenty of land and opportunity abroad. It is not known why he had such a strong interest in colonization, but he argued heavily that it would benefit the country, the crown, and commerce. Wright states,

Eburne is almost lyrical in his patriotic fervor as he reminds prospective colonists that they will carry a little of England with them wherever they go. Each new settlement will become a part of the English domain. There is no virtue in clinging to a native heath simply because one was born there.⁶

A Plain Pathway to Plantations is structured around a lengthy conversation between a farmer and, tellingly, a merchant. Merchants had great interest in promoting both trade and colonization, for the colonies produced products which merchants could trade, such as tobacco. In this narrative, the farmer expresses many doubts about settling in plantations abroad. The merchant counters with logical explanations to answer every doubt, but in doing so makes assumptions about what he does not know. Eburne wants the New World to be a suitable place for the poor to emigrate, and because he wants it to

⁴ Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 54.

⁵ Richard Eburne, *A Plain Pathway to Plantations (1624)*, ed. Louis B. Wright (Ithaca, New York: Published for the Folger Shakespeare Library by Cornell University Press, 1962), xxviii.

⁶ Richard Eburne, *A Plain Pathway*, xxix.

be so, it becomes so in his writing. For instance, concerning the Atlantic sea voyage he claimed, “Our passage to any of the places intended is very easy, open, and clear: sea room at will and, if we take time and season convenient, as navigable and pleasant as need to be desired.”⁷ It is highly likely that Eburne had no accurate knowledge about what sailing across the Atlantic was like. In effect, he creates his own reality.

All of his arguments are interspersed with heavy scripture quotations to justify leaving home.

He repeatedly argued that if the ancient Hebrews could leave home, the English could too.

Defer not to accept His bountiful riches and goodly gifts wheresoever He presenteth and offereth them unto you, no more than did Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, and many other famous, godly, and holy patriarchs and persons when God commanded them to forsake their kindred and their fathers’ house and to go into that land which He should show them.⁸

The text is cleverly arranged, and in one section entitled “Certain Objections Answered,” the farmer states all his objections to emigration. They are listed below in numerical order, along with replies from the merchant which I have abridged:

First objection: the places, the countries to be planted and inhabited by us, are very far off from hence.

Answer: If nearer places cannot be had, better a good place though far off than none at all.

Second objection: The countries themselves are wild and rude – no towns, no houses, no buildings there.

Answer: Men must not look still, . . . to come to a land inhabited and to find [it] ready to their hands. . . It must content them that God prepareth them a place, a land, wherein they may build them cities, towns, and houses to dwell in.

Third objection: The countries themselves are scarce habitable and good, and the soil thereof but barren and bad.

Answer: Experience itself, the surest teacher showeth altogether the contrary. Not one of those countries intended or attempted to be planted by us but is found to be exceeding good and fruitful.

Fourth objection: These countries of full of wild beasts, bears, etc.

Answer: Some of them have none at all. [For some] it is well there are some beasts there, wild at least, if not tame.

Fifth objection: The people of those countries are rude and barbarous.

Answer: They with whom we have to do are not so rude as some imagine.

⁷ Richard Eburne, *A Plain Pathway to Plantations (1624)*, ed. Louis B. Wright (Ithaca, New York: Published for the Folger Shakespeare Library by Cornell University Press, 1962), 60.

⁸ Richard Eburne, *A Plain Pathway*, 13.

Sixth objection: The adventures are very dangerous and liable to losses of life and goods, to troubles manifold, so that they may well be called adventurers that will hazard themselves in them.

Answer: Many forecast perils where they need not, and so many times are more afraid than hurt. Our life and state is not without perils at home.

Seventh objection: The profit is small and little the good that is likely to arise of great labors, dangers, and expenses. For, whatsoever you and some others talk of great riches there and that way to be had, we hear of none that prove rich and wealthy there.

Answer: It is not long that any have been in any of these plantations, and there must be a time for everything.⁹

The tract ends, of course, with the farmer agreeing to accompany the merchant to a plantation.

It is striking that nearly every objection put forth by the farmer, with exception of the third, was accurate. The rumors must have had a great deal of truth in them, and Eburne attacks them head-on. But in doing so, he brushes off all objections with easy answers. He seems to have little but optimism to guide him. Why did he engage in so much wishful thinking? Perhaps one reason is that in the year 1623 all of England faced the danger of starvation because of two poor harvests in a row.¹⁰ It is quite possible that Eburne pushed plantations as a hopeful solution for the growing numbers of the poor and hungry.

Lord Baltimore and *A Relation of Maryland* (1635)

Cecil Calvert, the second Baron of Baltimore, was an Irish lord who inherited the Charter of Maryland from his father. He had an active interest in seeing Maryland settled and sent his brother with the first group of immigrants to set up a stable government there in 1633.¹¹ Lord Baltimore envisioned a stable, successful colony, but needed to find willing investors and emigrants to fulfill that vision. He and

⁹ Richard Eburne, *A Plain Pathway to Plantations (1624)*, ed. Louis B. Wright (Ithaca, New York: Published for the Folger Shakespeare Library by Cornell University Press, 1962), 43-61.

¹⁰ Carl Bridenbaugh, *Vexed and Troubled Englishmen, 1590 – 1642* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 96.

¹¹ Huttenhauer, Helen G. "Baltimore," in *The Encyclopedia Americana: International Edition* (Danbury, CT: Grolier, 2001), 3:127-128.

his advisors invented the “Maryland designe” so named to avoid the mistakes made by earlier plantations. His documents and tracts “appealed to literate Englishmen who had sufficient resources to invest in the undertaking or who had reasons to venture in person,”¹² and also to younger sons of the gentry who would not inherit estates. He aimed to attract the well-educated and affluent, and the members of his own class who could bring servants with them. Land was the primary attraction. The first group of colonists who sailed with his brother totaled one hundred and forty, far short of Lord Baltimore’s goal of three hundred and twenty-five. Oddly enough, Lord Baltimore later informed his advisors that his goal had been met. Did he purposely mislead them because he thought the higher number was necessary to declare the first group of emigrants a success?¹³

His tract, entitled *A Relation of Maryland*, was published originally as a pamphlet in 1635. According to Hall, who included it in his collection of early Maryland documents, it read like a prospectus. It encouraged investors to consider Maryland as a place of opportunity and plainly said the colony was already well established in its first six months of existence. “Whosoever intends to goe thither, shall finde the way so trodden, that hee may proceed with much more ease and confidence than these first adventurers could, who were ignorant both of Place, People, and all things else.”¹⁴

A Relation of Maryland describes a recent journey to the colony undertaken by three gentlemen with two hundred servants. Upon landing, the English immediately encounter a local tribe of native Americans called the Yoacomacoes and their prince, Werowance. Their response to the English, whom they had never seen before, is one of astonishing liberality.

At their comming to this place, the Governour went on shoare and treated friendly with the Werowance there, and acquainted him with the intent of his coming thither, to which hee made little answeare (as it is their manner to any new or suddane question) but entertained him, and his company that night in his house, and gave him his own bed to lie on . . . and the next day,

¹² John D. Krugler, *English and Catholic: the Lords Baltimore in the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 134.

¹³ John D. Krugler, *English and Catholic*, 140-149.

¹⁴ Clayton Colman Hall, ed., *Narratives of Early Maryland 1633-1684* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), 76-77.

went to shew him the country, and that day being spent in viewing the places about that towne.¹⁵

Later in an extraordinary gesture of hospitality, the Yoacomacoes invite the English to move into their town.

Those Indians that dwelt in that part of the Towne, which was allotted for the English, freely left them their houses, and some corne that they had begun to plant. It was also agreed between them, that at the end of harvest they should leave the whole town; which they did accordingly. . . . Their [The English] coming thus to seate upon an Indian Towne, where they found ground cleared to their hands, gave them opportunity . . . to plant some Corne, and to make them gardens which they sowed with English seeds of all sorts, and they prospered exceeding well.¹⁶

It is unclear how much of what was reported to have taken place actually happened. This is a published English interpretation, probably made in order to reassure investors that local tribes in Maryland were peaceful. Given the bloody and violent history of immigrant American clashes with native Americans in the following centuries, this account sounds too good to be true. Native Americans certainly would have been curious about the English and would have been interested in what they offered to trade. However, what the English thought was being offered to them as a gift, houses and a village, was probably misinterpreted. We cannot know the intention of the local tribe, but we may gain a glimpse of understanding through a phrase that has entered the American lexicon, that of “Indian giver.” Indian giver is a deprecatory term meaning “a person who asks back a present he or she has given or expects an exact equivalent in return.”¹⁷ Native American hospitality may have expected something in return which the English either did not understand or did not report. Part of this encounter was probably redacted to put forward the best possible view for English audiences.

¹⁵ Cecil Thomas, “A Relation of Maryland, 1635,” in *Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633-1684*, ed. Clayton Colman Hall (New York: Scribners, 1910), 73.

¹⁶ Cecil Thomas, “A Relation of Maryland, 1635,” 73-74, 76.

¹⁷ Lesley Brown, ed., *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 1:1348.

The remainder of the tract describes Maryland in ways that read like real estate marketing for an English country estate. The “temper of the Ayre” is said to agree with the English and is good for their health, the land is full of rivers, springs, creeks, and “pretty small hills and risings.” Readers are assured that a man on horseback could travel anywhere through the woods because of the lack of underbrush, and hunt for recreation if they so desired. The next section lists various commodities that could be harvested, and reads like a catalog: herbs, different kinds of timber and their uses, fruits and the months they ripened, animals that could be hunted for meat, the fertility of the soil and the various crops that could be grown in it.¹⁸

In the business section of his tract, Lord Baltimore makes multiple offers to investors who agree to emigrate. Krugler, who included a chapter entitled “Selling Lord Baltimore’s Vision” in his biography on the Lords Baltimore, concluded that the conditions for land in his offers were quite generous.¹⁹ The number of acres granted correlates directly with the number of people one agrees to ship over. The offers state: if a man agrees to transport himself and five servants between the ages of sixteen and fifty, along with proper tools, stores and food, he will be granted one thousand acres. Any man that transports less than five servants of any age is guaranteed one hundred acres. If a man takes only himself and his family, he will receive one hundred acres. Also of note, any woman who transports herself and her children under the age of six is granted one hundred acres. Any woman who transports only herself and her women servants is granted fifty acres.²⁰ Lord Baltimore must have had young widows in mind, for if a woman has children under the age of six, she is quite likely marriageable and can have further children.

¹⁸ Cecil Thomas, “A Relation of Maryland, 1635,” in *Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633-1684*, ed. Clayton Colman Hall (New York: Scribners, 1910), 79-83.

¹⁹ John D. Krugler, *English and Catholic: the Lords Baltimore in the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 135.

²⁰ Cecil Thomas, “A Relation of Maryland, 1635,” 91.

The same passage reveals Lord Baltimore's thinking that America would be a replication of England.

. . . for every five men which he shall so transport thither, a proportion of good land within said Province, containing in quantity 1000 acres of English measure, which shall be erected into a Mannor, and be conveyed to him, his heires, and assignes for ever, with all such royalties and privileges, as are usually belonging to Mannors in England; rendring and paying yerely unto his Lordship, and his heires for every such Mannor, a quit rent of 20 shillings . . . ²¹

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the late sixteenth century definition of manor is "a unit of English territorial organization, originally of the nature of a feudal lordship, now consisting of a lord's demesne and lands from whose holders the lord may extract certain fees."²² Lord Baltimore expected the "manors" to be settled, cultivated, and established as plantations with servants working on them.

He ends with instructions and a list of provisions for those who agree to his offer. "The best time of the yeere for going thither is to be there by Michaelmas, or at furthest by Christmas, for he that comes by that time shall have time enough to build him a house, and to prepare ground sufficient to plant in the spring following." Michaelmas was September 29. This small paragraph of advice demonstrates his advisors' total lack of knowledge regarding the wilderness that his investors and servants were facing. No reason is given for the recommendation of arrival in the fall or early winter, and no mention is made of malaria. But the expectation of building what the English would understand as a house in four to six months was unrealistic, as was the claim that land would be fully ready for planting, in other words cleared and plowed, by the following spring.²³ Here the tract tried to encourage investors by stating their first crop could be in the ground within the first year of arrival and so begin to

²¹ Cecil Thomas, "A Relation of Maryland, 1635," in *Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633-1684*, ed. Clayton Colman Hall (New York: Scribners, 1910), 91.

²² Lesley Brown, ed., *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 1:1689.

²³ Cecil Thomas, "A Relation of Maryland, 1635," 92.

see a return on investment. That was overly optimistic. The expectation that America was like England seeps through, and like in all prospectuses, obstacles are left unmentioned.

Leah and Rachel by John Hammond (1656)

That Mr. John Hammond was entangled in the affairs of Maryland and Virginia there can be no doubt. He claimed to have lived nineteen years in Virginia and two in Maryland. He was elected a burgess from Isle of Wight, Virginia in 1652, but the Assembly of Virginia dismissed him. Puritans in Virginia wrote of him, "We find Mr. John Hammond returned a Burgesse for the lower parish of the Isle of Wight, to be notoriously knowne a scandalous person, and a frequent disturber of the peace of the country, by libel and other illegall practices, and conceive it fit he be expelled the house. . ." ²⁴

In Maryland, Hammond was involved in the Battle of the Severn on the side of Lord Baltimore and his appointed governor, Governor Stone. The Battle of the Severn took place in 1655 between the forces of the Governor and a larger Puritan force near the Severn River of Maryland. Stone lost half of his men to the Puritans and was forced to surrender. The Puritans put four of their captives to death and held Stone as a prisoner. ²⁵

The full title of his tract is *Leah and Rachel, or, The Two Fruitfull sisters Virginia and Mary-Land*.

The opening paragraph boldly states that this publication is,

impartially stated and related, with a removal of such imputations as are scandalously cast on those countries, whereby many deceived souls, chose rather to beg, steal, rot in prison, and come to shamefull deaths than to better their being by going thither, wherein is plenty of things necessary for humane subsistence. ²⁶

²⁴ J.A. Lemay, *Men of Letters in Colonial Maryland* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1972), 35.

²⁵ Spencer C. Tucker, James Arnold, and Roberta Weiner, eds., *The Encyclopedia of North American Colonial Conflicts to 1775: a Political, Social, and Military History* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC Clio, 2008), 121.

²⁶ John Hammond, "Leah and Rachel, or, the Two Fruitfull Sisters Virginia and Mary-Land," in *Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633-1684*, ed. Clayton Colman Hall (New York: Scribners, 1910), 281.

Hammond's background with the Puritans and the Battle of the Severn caused the editor of *Narratives of Early Maryland* to suspect his claim of impartiality. Hall wrote,

The protestation of the author that he wrote this pamphlet without reward may perhaps be regarded with doubt, unless it be assumed that, having been condemned to death once, he deemed that he was under obligations to those through whose agency he had escaped execution, and whose protection or assistance he might yet need.²⁷

It is likely that Hammond wrote the tract because he was under obligation to new masters, and those masters had a strong interest in promoting emigration.²⁸ He addressed his postscript to the governor of Virginia and pled, "As I have done your country of Virginia justice in standing up in its defence, so I expect and entreat the like from you."²⁹

In *Leah and Rachel*, Hammond argued strongly against the poor reputation that Virginia and Maryland had attained. He claimed that "odiums and crueel slanders" had been made against them. But he intends in this tract to set things right. He states, "I have undertaken in this book to give the true state of those places, according to the condition they are now in; . . . that they need not doubt because of any rumour detracting from their goodnesses."³⁰

Hammond then attacked the rumors. "The country is reported to be an unhealthy place, a nest of Rogues, whores, desolute and rooking (cheating) persons; a place of intolerable labour, bad usage, and hard Diet, etc." He admits that at first Virginia deserved its poor reputation. But now he claims its wealth is increasing and the country is "wholesome, healthy and fruitful." Virginia's inhabitants now see the fruits of their labor, they observe the Sabbath, orchards are planted, and they

²⁷ Clayton Colman Hall, ed., *Narratives of Early Maryland 1633-1684* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 279-280.

²⁸ Clayton Colman Hall, ed. *Narratives of Early Maryland*, 280.

²⁹ John Hammond, "Leah and Rachel, or, the Two Fruitfull Sisters Virginia and Mary-Land," in *Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633-1684*, ed. Clayton Colman Hall (New York: Scribners, 1910), 307.

³⁰ John Hammond. "Leah and Rachel," 283-284.

are a model of industry. He explains the former sicknesses occurred because of lack of “good drinks and wholesome lodgings” but these are now amended.³¹

He advises prospective emigrants that they “may expect some sickness, yet little danger of mortality.” He describes the sea voyage as rough at first, but “washes off when at Sea [beyond Land’s End], where the time is pleasantly passed away.” Concerning servants he writes, “The labour servants are put to is not so hard or of such continuance as Husbandmen . . . in the summer they rest, sleep, or exercise themselves five hours in the heat of the day.” He also stated that women were not expected to work in the fields, and that both men and women each had “times of recreations, as much or more than in any part of the world besides.” Curiously, he then states, “yet som wenches that are nasty, beastly and not fit to be so impolyed are put into the ground (work in the fields).” Concerning rumors of poor bedding, he counters “and whereas it is rumored that Servants have no lodging other than on boards, or by the Fire side, it is contrary to reason to believe it. First, as we are Christians, next, as people living under a law, which compels as well the Master as the Servant to perform his duty.”³²

He asserts all servants are given enough clothing, diet and housing, that theft rarely happens, that hedges hang full of washed clothes, and there is a good store of plate in the houses. Again, this description sounds like England, not the Chesapeake. In the Chesapeake, servants had few clothes, and there were no hedges. It is likely the only plate in existence would have been in the house of the governor. He described the houses in Virginia as “pleasant in their building . . . and built of wood, yet contrived so delightfull, that your ordinary houses in England are not so handsome.”³³

In a desperate plea to encourage emigration, he concluded,

now having briefly set down the present state of Virginia not in fiction, but in realitie, I wish the juditious reader to consider what dislike can be had of the Country, or upon what grounds it is so infamously injured. I only therein covet to stop those blackmouthed babblers, . . . [and] in

³¹ John Hammond, “Leah and Rachel, or, the Two Fruitfull Sisters Virginia and Mary-Land,” in *Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633-1684*, ed. Clayton Colman Hall (New York: Scribners, 1910), 284-288.

³² John Hammond, “Leah and Rachel,” 289-292.

³³ John Hammond, “Leah and Rachel,” 292, 294, 297.

perswading many souls, rather to follow desparate and miserable courses in England, then to ingage in so honourable an undertaking as to travile and inhabite there.³⁴

Hammond wrote this tract to please the governor of Virginia. He obviously had a very poor reputation among Puritans which he tried to amend.

Conclusion

Although written at different times by different men with different backgrounds, all three tracts have commonalities. They tried to dispel rumors about plantations in America, and this characteristic placed all three into the mainstream of promotion literature of the time. Jones argued, “one of the principal purposes of ‘promotion literature’ was to combat the flood of slander and malicious gossip about the colonies, of which almost every important writer complains.”³⁵ Sea travel, native Americans, and conditions of life are topics that came up repeatedly. All three emphasized the bounty of the New World while making it sound in some respects like England. Making a foreign place sound like home would have been encouraging to those considering emigration.

In the cases of the first two tracts, wishful thinking and optimism abounded. Eburne would have had very little solid information about the New World, but probably thought the crown would ensure the colony’s success. Lord Baltimore’s advisors had partial information about Maryland but eliminated the negative from their prospectus. The final tract was written by a man who claimed to have lived in the colonies for twenty years, so he should have had a great deal of accurate knowledge. His tract does

³⁴ John Hammond, “Leah and Rachel, or, the Two Fruitfull Sisters Virginia and Mary-Land,” in *Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633-1684*, ed. Clayton Colman Hall (New York: Scribners, 1910), 299-300.

³⁵ Howard M. Jones, “The Colonial Impulse: an Analysis of the ‘Promotion’ Literature of Colonization,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 90, no.2 (May 1946): 131.

not reflect this. It goes beyond wishful thinking and optimism into what he must have known was untrue.

The majority of promotion literature was published to boost a particular enterprise³⁶ and that held true with these cases. All three writers examined here had underlying reasons to publish their tracts. Eburne most likely wanted to help the English poor, and perhaps the crown as well. Lord Baltimore wanted to populate the land he owned by charter so that it would produce income and satisfy his vision of a colony. Hammond owed something to Virginia's governor, and the tract was a way of gaining political favor. All made vastly overstated claims about life in America. None of what was published was drawn from anyone's experience, least of all indentured servants.³⁷

³⁶ Howard M. Jones, "The Colonial Impulse: an Analysis of the 'Promotion' Literature of Colonization," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 90, no.2 (May 1946): 132.

³⁷ Howard M. Jones, "The Colonial Impulse," 134.

Chapter Five

Daniel Defoe, Robinson Crusoe and Moll Flanders

Defoe (1660-1731) is widely remembered as an English writer of adventure novels. But his writings bear a strong similarity to the promotional tracts published in the seventeenth century. Both *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, which I will examine here, overstate the positive and make great assumptions about what was possible in the New World. Even though Defoe published them both around 1720, the tales are set in the preceding century. *Robinson Crusoe* was said to take place in 1659, and *Moll Flanders* in 1683. By setting them in an earlier century and claiming that they were true accounts, Defoe attempted to reset the conversation towards a positive frame of experience in America.

Robinson Crusoe

Robinson Crusoe was first published in London in 1719. It quickly became enormously popular and went into four editions in its first year. Shinagel thought that Defoe “had an uncanny talent for reaching an audience.”¹ That talent proved itself long after Defoe’s death because *Robinson Crusoe* has been pirated, adapted and dramatized endlessly.² It is widely considered a literary masterpiece. The full title of the first edition is,

“The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner: Who Lived Eight and Twenty Years, All Alone in an Un-inhabited Island on the Coast of America, near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoke, Having Been Cast on Shore by Shipwreck, Where-in All the Men Perished but Himself with an Account How He was at last as Strangely Delivered by Pyrates, **Written by Himself**” (emphasis added).

¹ Michael Shinagel, *Daniel Defoe and Middle-Class Gentility* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 101.

² Martin Green, *The Robinson Crusoe Story* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 20.

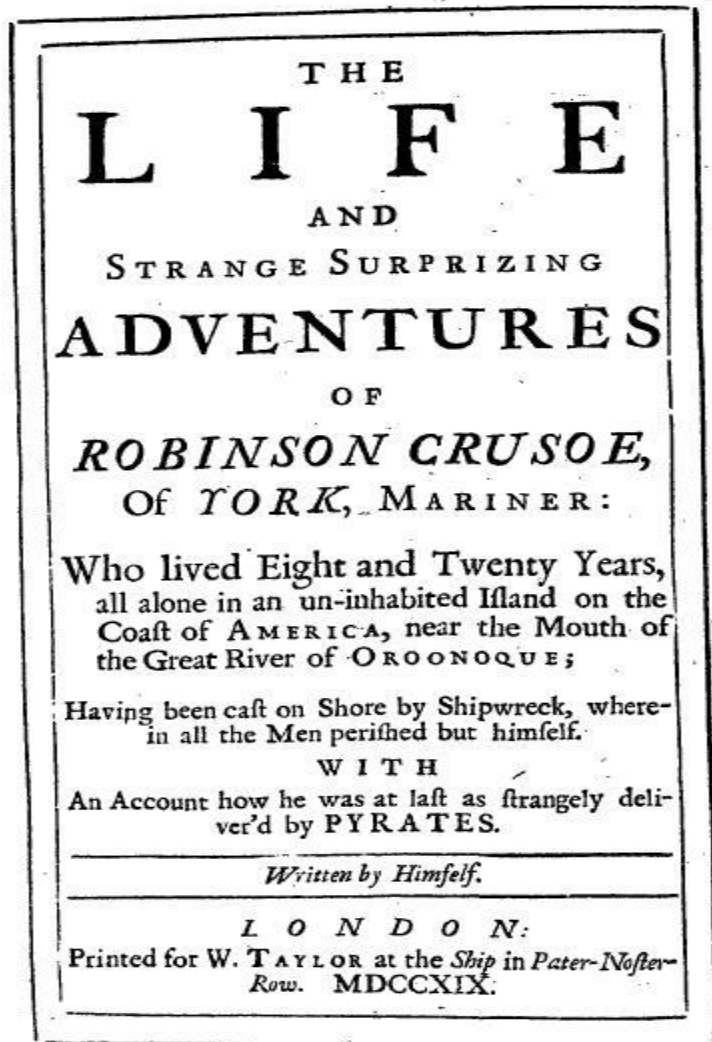


Illustration XI ³

Title page of the original edition of *Robinson Crusoe*

Defoe presented the Crusoe narrative to the world as a biography, and in his preface to the original edition stated, "The Editor believes the thing to be a just History of Fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it."⁴ We do not know why Defoe labelled it as true when he authored it entirely as fiction. The Crusoe story could have been based on the life of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish sailor who

³ Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe: an Authoritative Text, Contents, Criticism*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael Shinagel (New York: Norton, 1994), 2.

⁴ Daniel Defoe. *Robinson Crusoe*, 3.

was marooned on an island off the coast of South America for four years. In 1711 an English ship picked him up and ended his isolation. His clothes had completely worn out, and as a consequence he wore goat skins, as did the character of Robinson Crusoe. He had nearly forgotten the English language “for want of use” and the sailors had difficulty understanding his speech.⁵ Watson argued that Selkirk’s story provided Defoe with the raw material he needed. Indeed, Defoe may have met him in Bristol in 1713.⁶

Whatever Defoe’s reasons, he presented the Crusoe story as true and the English public would not have had any reason to disbelieve it. It begins when the protagonist is shipwrecked on an island he called “The Island of Despair.” Despite Crusoe’s grief at his predicament, it is key that he immediately begins to work, for it is through work that he overcomes his environment. Within the Crusoe text the word “labor” is repeated a total of thirty-eight times. Crusoe is always working and solves every problem he encounters. He rations the amount of time he spends on tedious projects but never gives up. He devotes himself to improving all that he does and always acts with prudence.⁷

Crusoe keeps a journal into which he enters his accomplishments each day. It reads like a litany: made a table, stored his gunpowder, dug a cave, made shelves, killed a goat for food and tallow which provided fuel for a lamp, found and saved ears of corn to sow later, constructed a ladder, made a fishing line and caught fish.⁸ One is immediately impressed with Crusoe’s diligence and self-discipline. In reading about Crusoe’s constant endeavors, one tires before Crusoe does. Even the corn seed he saves is an amazing example of delayed gratification.

⁵ Woodes Rogers, “Account of Alexander Selkirk’s Solitary Life on Juan Fernandez Island for Four Years and Four Months,” in *Robinson Crusoe: an Authoritative Text, Contents, Criticism*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael Shinagel (New York: Norton), 231, 234.

⁶ Watson, Francis, “Robinson Crusoe: an Englishman of the Age,” *History Today* 9, no.11 (November 1959):762.

⁷ Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe: an Authoritative Text, Contents, Criticism*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael Shinagel (New York: Norton, 1994), 105, 107.

⁸ Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 52-60.

I carefully sav'd the ears of this corn . . . and laying up every corn, I resolv'd to sow them all again, hoping in time to have some quantity sufficient to supply me with bread; But it was not till the 4th year that I could allow my self the least grain of this corn to eat.⁹

Not many people would have the self control to wait four years before eating the harvest of a crop.

Crusoe exemplifies this virtue.

Remarkably enough, before he plants his corn he creates everything he needs to make use of future crops. Green claims this passage is famous for its description of the complicated process and tools required to bake a loaf of bread.¹⁰ Crusoe creates a spade, makes a clay pot for storage of future corn, clears grassland for planting, makes a stone mortar and sieve, and fashions an oven. At every turn he is extremely pragmatic and tenacious. Crusoe says of himself, "I seldom gave anything over without accomplishing it, when I once had it in my head enough to begin it."¹¹

Early on Crusoe suffers from fever and chills, the only time he is sick during his long tenure on the island. His illness causes him to fear and repent of his former life. He remembers that Brazilians used tobacco as medicine and chews a leaf hoping it will help him recover. In the next paragraph he reads his Bible for the first time.¹² Did Defoe align them to purposely connect tobacco as physical medicine and the Bible as spiritual medicine in the minds of his readers?

When Crusoe recovers physically from the sickness and spiritually by repentance, he begins to explore the island he once regarded as a prison. He finds "pleasant savannas," "melons on the ground in great abundance," "clusters of grapes just now in their prime, very ripe and rich." There are cocoa trees as well as orange, lemon and citron trees.¹³ Before his repentance he confined himself to his shelter. Only afterwards does he venture out to explore the island. Defoe has Crusoe doing what he

⁹ Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe: an Authoritative Text, Contents, Criticism*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael Shinagel (New York: Norton, 1994), 59.

¹⁰ Martin Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 75.

¹¹ Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 87-90, 122.

¹² Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 69.

¹³ Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 72-73.

wants the English to do: mend your relationship with God, go out and explore a new environment and all kinds of natural riches will be waiting there for you. Unlike most emigrants, it notable that Crusoe never goes hungry. "I had no want of food, and of that which was very good too; especially these three sorts, viz. goats, pigeons, and turtle or tortoise; which, added to my grapes, Leaden-Hall Market could not have furnished a table better than I." He not only eats well, he eats extravagantly well. Defoe makes the point that Crusoe eats better than the average Englishman. He comes to believe that he is "lord of the whole manor," and "possessed infinitely more than I knew what to do with."¹⁴ The almost infinite resources of the New World, on his island, were at his disposal. The novel's end has Crusoe returning to England after twenty-eight years on his island a wealthy man, not from his island, but from co-ownership of a plantation in Brazil.

In *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe hands his readers a script. This script is, as far as we know, the first of its kind. It tells its readers specifically what they should do to succeed in the New World. To labor diligently, to be prudent, to tackle every problem thoughtfully and with ingenuity, to be thrifty, to be inventive, and to delay gratification are all segments of the script. Promotion literature of the previous century simply described the resources of the New World like a catalog. *Plain Pathway to Plantations* attempted to overcome negative rumors. *Leah and Rachel* gave rosy interpretations of the land. *A Relation of Maryland* assured investors that natives were friendly and offered contracts to those who decided to emigrate. But in *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe tells his readers of the lower and middle classes what they really wanted to know: how to succeed in the New World. Defoe's genius lay in taking what the promotion tracts attempted to do in a general way and turning it into a narrative to which his readers could relate. Defoe says in effect, Crusoe is one man, and this is how one man from a humble background just like you succeeded. Follow this script and you will thrive in the New World. Shinagel

¹⁴ Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe, Robinson Crusoe: an Authoritative Text, Contents, Criticism*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael Shinagel (New York: Norton, 1994), 80, 94.

wrote, “Defoe employed the colonial theme as a means of showing his middle and lower-class readers how they could better their fortunes, regardless of their ancestry or birth, through industry in the already established colonies in America, specifically Virginia and Maryland.”¹⁵

Moll Flanders

Defoe published another novel in 1722, a few years after *Robinson Crusoe*. The full title demonstrated his flair for the dramatic:

*The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, Who was Born in Newgate, and during a Life of continu'd Variety for Threescore Years, beside her Childhood, was Twelve Year a Whore, five times a Wife (Whereof once to her own Brother), Twelve Year a Thief, Eight Year a Transported Felon in Virginia, at last grew Rich, liv'd Honest, and died a Penitent: **Written from her own Memorandums.***¹⁶ (emphasis added).

Moll Flanders follows the same trajectory of success as *Robinson Crusoe*. Moll is born into the lowest of social classes in London and her life, as might be guessed from the title, takes many twists and turns before it resolves into success. When she is confined to Newgate prison for stealing, she repents of her former life. To avoid being hung she agrees to be transported to Virginia. She discovers her brother in Virginia, and together they purchase a plantation. She has a joyful reunion with her son, who did not know she was alive. Everything that happens to Moll in America, both relationally and materially, benefits her greatly. In the last page of the novel she describes how rich her plantation has made her.

In a word, we were now in very considerable circumstances, and every year increasing, for our new plantation grew upon our hands insensibly; and in Eight year which we lived upon it, we

¹⁵ Michael Shinagel, *Daniel Defoe and Middle-Class Gentility* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 132.

¹⁶ Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, ed. J. Paul Hunter (New York: Crowell, 1970), 1.

brought it to such a pitch, that the Produce was, at least, 300 pounds sterling a year, I mean, worth so much in England.¹⁷

Success after success comes to Moll after her repentance, and all of it occurs in the New World. But Defoe's descriptions of Moll's success with her plantation are unrealistic. His optimism and lack of knowledge are betrayed in the details. For example, Moll describes how they came to settle their early plantation:

Here we bought us two servants, (viz.) an English Woman-Servant just come on Shore from a Ship of Liverpool, and a Negro Man-Servant; things absolutely necessary for all People that pretended to Settle in that Country. . . . [And] about two Months, or thereabout afterwards by his [a friendly Quaker's] Direction we took up a large piece of Land from the Governor of that Country, in order to form our Plantation, and so we laid the thoughts of going to Carolina wholly aside, have been very well received here, and Accommodated with a convenient Lodging, till we could prepare things and have Land enough cur'd and Timber and Materials provid'd for building us a House, all which we manag'd by the Direction of the Quaker; **so that in one Years time, we had near fifty Acres of Land clear'd, part of it enclos'd, and some of it planted with Tobacco.**¹⁸ (emphasis added)

Long before the early eighteenth century it was established practice that one male servant could work five acres of land, not fifty. One servant could not have cleared, enclosed, and planted fifty acres of land in one year. Such a claim would have been laughable to anyone in the Chesapeake. But then, Defoe is writing to an audience in England. Why did he make such a vastly overstated claim? Either he wrote in ignorance, or accuracy was not a concern. Alam concluded, "Since ideology, notoriously, tends to distort or create false images or employ knowledge duplicitously, realism is not an issue in Defoe's handling of colonial settings; his conscious/unconscious distortion of facts in order to promote his projects is."¹⁹

¹⁷ Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, ed. J. Paul Hunter (New York: Crowell, 1970), 259.

¹⁸ Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, 258.

¹⁹ Fakrul Alum, "Daniel Defoe as a Colonial Propagandist," (Ph.D. diss, University of British Columbia, 1984), 276.

Daniel Defoe

As early as 1690, the age of thirty, Defoe was already a successful merchant who became an unofficial advisor to King William III and Queen Mary.²⁰ He was also a prolific writer of essays and pamphlets which he used as a platform to spread his ideas. Indeed, Defoe had an “almost obsessive repetition of policy positions and plans in his voluminous journalism.”²¹ One of those policy positions encouraged England to form colonies in the New World in order to bolster trade. His enthusiasm concerning it was relentless. He tried to influence the crown to set up English colonies in the Caribbean, and even presented to King William a detailed plan for England to supplant Spain in South America.²² Defoe published his own periodical, entitled *The Review*, from 1704 through 1713. There he made his views known on a number of wide-ranging topics: freedom of the press, economics, trade, politics, and morals. In the issue dated February 3, 1713, Defoe authored an article entitled “On Divinity in Trade.” As a Puritan he argued that Providence had prepared the world for commerce.

Shall any tell me that God in His infinite providence did not guide nations by invisible directions into trade, and lead them by the hand into the methods, manner, and consequences, to render commerce both easy and useful? . . . The increase of this commerce, therefore, receives its rise from the daily discoveries more and more of what lies treasured up in the bowels of the earth, or in the remote parts of uninhabited climates, and unnavigated seas, bays, channels, and retreats of the waters. The search after these things has met with wonderful success, and the finger of Providence has been more than usually visible in the bringing things to light, in these latter ages of trade. . .²³

Defoe was convinced that an increase of trade would benefit the country, the crown, and the poor. But he knew that colonies had to first develop their resources in order to have something to trade. For this, investors, laborers and servants were required. All were intertwined in Defoe’s grand strategy. In his *Plan of English Commerce*, he describes the inevitable result if his plan is adopted.

²⁰ Michael Shinagel, *Daniel Defoe and Middle-Class Gentility* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 3, 30.

²¹ Michael Seidel, *Robinson Crusoe: Island Myths and the Novel* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1991), 40.

²² Francis Watson, “Robinson Crusoe: an Englishman of the Age,” *History Today* 9, no.11 (November 1959): 764.

²³ Daniel Defoe, “Of Divinity in Trade,” in *The Best of Defoe’s Review: an Anthology*, ed. William L. Payne (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), 110.

The manufactures support the poor, foreign commerce supports the manufactures, and planting colonies supports the commerce. Here you dispose of your increasing numbers of poor; there they go poor, and come back rich; there they plant, trade, thrive, and increase; even your transported felons, lent to Virginia instead of Tyburn; thousands of them, if we are not misinformed, have, by turning their hands to industry and improvement, and which is best of all to honesty, become rich substantial planters and merchants, settled large families, and been famous in the country; nay, we have seen many of them made magistrates, officers of militia, captains of the good ships, and masters of good estates.

This way, therefore, I say, we dispose of the growing numbers of the poor to inexpressible advantage . . . Tis really a benefit to the poor that go . . . I am not moving you to transport the poor, that would be sending them away because they are poor, but those being destitute of employment here, are willing to seek it abroad, would have a viable advantage, and would soon give encouragement to others to follow them, and thousands of such families would raise themselves there by their industry, and grow rich; and the consequence of the diligent laboring man there is always this, that from a meer laborer he becomes a planter, and settles his family upon the land he gains, and so grows rich of course.²⁴

Defoe was wonderfully optimistic about what colonies and trade could do for everyone involved, especially the English poor. He generalized from a few examples of success in the colonies and applied them as a rule. But to read Defoe's *Plan* is to come under its spell. It all sounds eminently logical and possible. Alam stated,

What Defoe chooses to include or leave out about the countries and peoples of Asia, Africa, and the Americas is almost always determined by his plans for commerce and colonization . . . It does not matter to Defoe that such an approach involves stretching the truth or even outright falsification.²⁵

It is worthwhile to note that Defoe never traveled to any of England's colonies. His knowledge came from seventeenth and early eighteenth century travel literature, newspapers, maps, and contacts with various people.²⁶ Some of his information must have come from promotion tracts published in the earlier century as well. All of the information he acquired was filtered through others. Defoe's piecemeal knowledge of the New World, mixed with his assumptions and ideology, informed his writing.

²⁴ Daniel Defoe, *A Plan of the English Commerce. Being a Compleat Prospect of the Trade of This Nation, as Well as the Home Trade as the Foreign* 3rd ed. (London: J. and J. Rivington, 1749), 364-365. Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

²⁵ Fakrul Alam, "Daniel Defoe as a Colonial Propagandist," (Ph.D. diss, University of British Columbia, 1984), 271.

²⁶ George Gifford, Jr., "Daniel Defoe and Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, no. 52 (December 1957): 307.

Conclusion

Readers would have taken both Crusoe's and Moll's experiences to be true. They stand in stark contrast to the experiences of those who went to the Chesapeake. We know that servants did not overcome obstacles through work. Their endless labor instead may have contributed to their early deaths. In *Defoe's America*, Todd also investigated servitude in the Chesapeake, but focused on servant suffering caused by social marginalization and deracination. In this thesis I have focused on the physical experiences of servants and their concomitant early deaths. But in the end, Todd and I ask the same question. How could Defoe be so optimistic about the chances of the poor in the New World, in spite of evidence to the contrary lived out for over a century? The English investment in the Chesapeake began in 1607 with Jamestown, and Defoe published *Robinson Crusoe* one hundred and twelve years later. Why did he ignore all of the many difficulties and failures that had gone before, and express such confidence in English emigration?

More knowledge was available in the early eighteenth century about colonies in America than the tract writers in the seventeenth had access to. Defoe must have encountered negative information in his search for that knowledge. Did he simply ignore what he disagreed with? The vast majority of servants who survived their time of indenture did not "grow rich of course." When Lorena Walsh researched the fortunes of two hundred and sixteen freed servants in Charles County, Maryland, she found that only five percent achieved wealth.²⁷ Even if they labored diligently as Defoe encouraged, all the evidence unearthed thus far indicates they were worn down by labor and disease in a difficult environment. Defoe's claims, like those of the tracts, are unrealistic. For most servants, it was not to their "inexpressible advantage" to emigrate, since recent calculations figured the average immigrant

²⁷ Lorena Walsh, "Servitude and Opportunity in Charles County, Maryland, 1658-1705," in *Law, Society and Politics in Early Maryland, Proceedings of the First Conference on Maryland History, June 14-15, 1974*, eds. Aubrey Land, Lois G. Carr, and Edward C. Papenfuse (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 118.

died ten years earlier than a comparable population in England.²⁸ Alam was convinced that Defoe's ideology overrode his realism.²⁹ What drove Defoe's ideology? Likely it was his desire to increase trade, since he wrote about God's hand in that subject.

An article purportedly by Defoe was published in *Applebee's Journal* in 1723, in which he expressed dismay that felons transported to Virginia had made their way back to London. His writing describes his incredulity at their refusal to work as servants:

In a Word, their labour is not harder, or their usage worse, than many hired servants in England on yearly wages; . . . But here, their time being out, which generally is not more than seven or fourteen years, they are sure of being free, and not only so, but have an opportunity of planting for themselves, and that with such encouragement, that nothing but a stated aversion to an honest life, or to a diligent application to business, can prevent their accepting it with the utmost thankfulness This is a fair offer of heaven to such creatures to begin, not only a new condition of life, but even a new life itself.³⁰

There is some debate about authorship of the article.³¹ If Defoe wrote it, it demonstrates his blindness to the fate of most servants. He stubbornly held to the belief that emigration to plantations was a viable solution for the poor, and they would grow rich if they only applied themselves. If this article was written by a gentleman other than Defoe, it is evidence that the blindness extended to others in the same social class.

Defoe, Rev. Eburne, Lord Baltimore and his advisors, and John Hammond had one thing in common: they were all gentlemen. Gentlemen in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries did not perform physical labor. That was left to a lower social class. Yet they all made claims about life and

²⁸ James Horn, "Adapting to a New World: a Comparative Study of Local Society in England and Maryland, 1650-1700," in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, eds. Lois Green Carr, Philip D. Morgan, and Jean B. Russo (Chapel Hill, NC: published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 174.

²⁹ Fakrul Alam, "Daniel Defoe as a Colonial Propagandist." (Ph.D. diss, University of British Columbia, 1984), 201.

³⁰ William Lee, "On the Return to England of Transported Felons" in *Daniel Defoe: his Life and Recently Discovered Writings: Extending from 1716 to 1729* (London: John Camden Hotten, 1969), 3:95-96.

³¹ Maxmillian E. Novak, "Daniel Defoe and *Applebee's Original Weekly Journal*: an Attempt at Re-Attribution," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 45, no.9 (Summer 2012): 585.

work on America's plantations. They made claims about something that, as gentlemen, they had no experience of and knew little about.

Defoe wanted his plan for English commerce to be enacted and his grand strategy to work, so he ignored anything that might compromise it. He ignored what must have been, by 1719, many reports of disease and death on American plantations. He was at heart a merchant and he wanted to increase trade. Not just for the benefit of the growing merchant class, but for the crown and the nation. Defoe focused on the immense natural resources of the New World and what they could do for England. Like many others, he engaged in wishful thinking about developing and utilizing them. What the tract writers and Defoe didn't realize was the vast amount of physical labor required to do so. Resources weren't just lying around waiting to be picked up, as Crusoe did with the melons and exotic fruit on his island. Even if someone like Crusoe worked constantly, it would not have been enough. Forests had to be cleared, ground had to be plowed, crops planted and maintained. Natives had to be dealt with, wild animals driven away and local food sources developed.

The English greatly underestimated the physical challenges of the Chesapeake and of the wilderness. A prime example was William Neale, the planter in Maryland who killed his servant and buried him in his basement. Neale was angry enough to beat his ill servant to death. What caused his deadly anger? Neale had two servants, and he could not afford for one to be sick. There was too much work to be done, and work left undone would have endangered his investment. Someone badly miscalculated the amount of labor required. How could a planter buy contracts for only two servants and expect his plantation to succeed? Where did he get information that this was possible? Quite possibly from the promotional tracts, including the one by Lord Baltimore, who offered one hundred acres of land to any gentleman who transported fewer than five servants. I doubt Neale was the only master who became desperate in an effort to make it all work, and the servants paid the price of that desperation.

The English betray in their writings that they thought the Chesapeake would be similar to England. They were mistaken. Many planters and servants discovered firsthand how badly they were mistaken. But after the crown took over the colony of Virginia from the Virginia Company in 1624, after Lord Baltimore made an offer to prospective planters in 1635, and after plantations began to be established, it was too late for England to withdraw its investment. They had to make their foothold in the New World work. For over a hundred thousand servants who worked and died there in the seventeenth century, it was a heavy price.

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