

## Documents: Life in the Chesapeake Colonies

### Document 1:

*Sir William Berkeley Governor of Virginia, A DISCOURSE AND VIEW OF VIRGINIA 1663*

It must be confessed, that Barbados sends a better commodity [sugar] into England than Virginia yet does; but withall it must be acknowledged that one Ship from Virginia brings more Money to the Crown than five Ships of the same burthen [ship's carrying capacity] do from the Barbados... the Foundation of our wealth and industry has been built on this vicious habit of taking Tobacco [that] possess the English Nation...

Though Virginia now only produces Tobacco for the bulk of her trade, it also has produced Silk, Flax, Hemp, Iron, Rice, Pitch, Tar, which are Commodities more lasting and necessary than Sugar or Indigo of the Carolina and Caribbean colonies can...and as our Numbers increase, so will our Wealth...[and] our industry and trade shall equal theirs [Carolina and Barbados] who are already forced to trade 1/3 of their Merchandise to provide Victuals [food] for themselves and Servants.

### Document 2:

*Indentured Servant Contract & Letter on the State of the colony*

John Pory was a Secretary of Virginia and wrote this report on the conditions in Virginia for the English government.

“We are to enjoy two crops [corn and wheat] in one year from the same field...All our riches for the present do consist in Tobacco...Our principal wealth (I should have said) consisteth in servants: But they are required to be furnished with arms, apparel and bedding and for their transportation...But if they survive, they prove very hardy, and sound able men.”

### Document 3:

*“Our Plantation Is Very Weak”: The Experiences of an Indentured Servant in Virginia, 1623*

Poor English adults were recruited as servants to provide much needed labor. These young men and women signed indentures, or contracts, for four to seven year terms of work in exchange for their passage to North America. Richard Frethorne came to Jamestown colony in 1623 as an indentured servant.

We must work hard both early and late for a mess of watery gruel (watery cereal) and a mouthful of bread and beef...which is most pitiful...And I have nothing to comfort me, nor is there nothing to be gotten here but sickness and death...I have nothing at all—no, not a shirt to my back but two rags, nor clothes but one poor suit, nor but one pair of shoes, but one pair of stockings, but one cap...I have not a penny, nor a penny worth...

### Document 4:

*The Maryland Act of Toleration, 1649*

And whereas the inforcing of the conscience in matters of Religion hath frequently fallen out to be of dangerous Consequence in those commonwealth's where it hath been practised, and for the more quiet and peaceable government of the Province, and the better to preserve mutual Love and amity amongst the inhabitants thereof. Be it Therefore enacted that noe person or (persons) whatsoever within this Province, or the Islands, Ports, Harbors, Creekes, or havens thereunto belonging professing to believe in Jesus Christ, shall from henceforth bee any ways troubled, Molested or discountenanced for or in respect of his or her religion nor in the free exercise thereof within this Province.

### **Document 5:**

*Robert Horne, Promises to Settlers of Carolina, 1666*

In 1663, Charles II granted a charter for religious freedom and limited self government for the Carolina colony. Robert Horne then created a pamphlet to attract settlers.

The chief of the Privileges are as follows.

1. No man is to be molested or called in question for matters of Religious Concern; but every one to be obedient to the Civil Government, worshipping God after their own way..
2. There is freedom from Custom [taxes], for all Wine, Silk, Raisins, Currance, Oyl, Olives, and Almonds, that shall be raised in the Province [colony]...
3. Every Freeman and Freewoman that transport themselves and Servants shall have...100 Acres of Land for him and his Heirs for ever, and 50 Acres for every Servant he or she brings...
4. Every Man-Servant at the end of their contract, is to have 100 Acres of Land to him and his heirs for ever...and the Women-Servants 50 Acres of Land...
5. They are to elect a Governor and Council...who has no power to Tax, or make any Law, without the Consent of the Colonial Assembly.
6. They are to choose annually...a General Assembly [with] the sole power of Making Laws, and Laying Taxes for the common good when need shall require.

### **Document 6:**

*Robert Beverley, Jr. The History and Present State of Virginia*

Robert Beverley, a Virginia planter, wrote this report on the Virginia colony in 1705.

“the best poor Man’s Country in the World”

The People are generally of the Church of England, which is the Religion established by Law in the colony...Christians of all Nations have equal freedom...

Slaves are the Negroes and their Posterity [children]...They are call’d Slaves in respect of the time of their Servitude, because it is for Life. Servants are those which serve only for a few years, according to the time of their Indenture [servant contract].

The work of their Servants and Slaves is no other than what every common Freeman does...And I can assure you, with a great deal of Truth, that generally their Slaves are not worked near so hard, nor so many Hours in a Day, as the Laborers in England.

They live in so happy a Climate and have so fertile a Soil that nobody is poor enough to beg, or want [lack] Food

There are large tracts of Land, Houses, and other things granted to Free-Schools for the Education of Children in many parts of the Country...

The Natural Temperature of the Inhabited part of the Country [colony] is hot and moist, tho’ this Moisture I take to be occasion’d [caused] by the abundance of low Grounds, Marshes, Creeks, and Rivers

## Documents: Life in the New England Colonies

### Document 7:

*John Winthrop, "Model of Christian Charity," 1630*

John Winthrop (1588–1649), lawyer and leader of the 1630 migration of English Puritans to Massachusetts Bay Colony, delivered this famous sermon aboard the Arbella to settlers traveling to New England

"The only way to provide for our posterity [children] is to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. We must be knit together in this work as one man; we must take care of each other with brotherly affection. We shall be united in the bond of peace, the Lord will be our God and delight to dwell among us, so that we shall see much more of his wisdom, power, goodness and truth. We shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us; so that if we shall [behave badly] and cause God to withdraw his help from us, we shall [invite] the mouths of enemies to speak evil of the ways of God, and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us. Therefore let us choose life, that we, and our [children], may live; by obeying his voice, for he is our life, and our prosperity."

### Document 8:

*'The Divine Right to Occupy the Land' John Cotton, 1630*

Puritan leader John Cotton gave the following sermon to members of his congregation who were immigrating to America in 1630. Cotton became a respected and influential clergyman in the Massachusetts Bay Colony

The Bible says: "I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and I will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more." The settling of a people in this or that country is the Lord's decision. Now, God makes room for a people in three ways: First, He drives out the heathens before them by waging war on the inhabitants. Second, He gives a foreign people favor in the eyes of any native people to come and sit down with them. Third, He makes a country empty of inhabitants where the people will live. Where there is an empty place, the sons of Adam and Noah are free to come and live there, and they neither need to buy it nor ask permission.

### Document 9:

*"Molasses to Rum," from the musical 1776*

Molasses to rum to slaves, oh what a beautiful waltz  
You dance with us, we dance with you  
Molasses and rum and slaves  
Who sails the ships out of Boston  
Loaded with bibles and rum?  
Who drinks a toast to the Ivory Coast?  
Hail Africa, the slavers have come  
New England with bibles and rum  
And it's off with the rum and the bibles  
Take on the slaves, clink, clink  
Hail and farewell to the smell  
Of the African coast  
Molasses to rum to slaves

'Tisn't morals, 'tis money that saves  
Shall we dance to the sound of the profitable pound  
In molasses and rum and slaves  
Who sails the ships out of Guinea  
Loaded with bibles and slaves?  
Boston can boast to the West Indies coast  
Jamaica, we brought what you craves  
Antigua, Barbados, we brought bibles and slaves!  
Molasses to rum to slaves  
Who sail the ships back to Boston  
Loaded with gold, see it gleam  
Whose fortunes are made in the triangle trade

**Document 10:**

*Letter Home from a New England Colonist, 1640*

When we arrived, we found all our friends who had come before us to be in good health. The Indians who live around us are peaceable and friendly. The climate here is mild and good for planting. There are many fruits that grow here naturally. Trees like those in England cover the land. The forests are full of animals of all sorts. There are great flocks of wild turkeys, quails, pigeons and partridges. There are many great lakes filled with fish, water birds, beavers, and otters. The sea provides us with plenty of all kinds of excellent fish. We all own land here. Most of the settlers here are very religious and honest people. We have church services every Sunday. We have everything a person needs to be happy here. Please send my wife and children to be with me here.

**Document 11:**

*Daniel Neal, History of New England, London, 1720*

Neal, an English historian, remarks on Boston after a visit.

The Bay of Boston is spacious enough to contain in a manner the Navy of England. The Masts of Ships here, and at proper Seasons of the year, make a kind of Wood of Trees like that we see upon the River of Thames about [near] Wapping and Limehouse, which may easily be imagined when we consider that, by Computation given in to the Collectors of his Majesty's Customs . . . it appeared that there was 24,000 Ton of Shipping sent annually.

There are five Printing-Presses in Boston, which are generally full of Work, by which it appears that Humanity and the Knowledge of Letters [humanities] flourish more here than in all the other English Plantations [colonies] put together...

The people of this Province [colony] chiefly follow farming and merchandise. Their staples are shipping, lumber, and fish. The Government is so far democratic as that the election of the Governour's Council and the great officers is made by the members of the Lower House, or Representatives of the people.

## Documents: Life in the Middle Colonies

### Document 12:

*William Penn, The Plan of Government for Pennsylvania, 1682*

In 1682, Penn was granted land in Pennsylvania as a favor to his father for service to the King.

Let there be here in this land of Pennsylvania men of wisdom and virtue. Let men of good conscience, to the best of their skills, create laws of this government to benefit all.

Be it known to all. I, William Penn, do declare that all Freemen, Planters, and Adventurers in this territory have the following liberties and privileges:

Freedom of conscience to practice their religious beliefs is guaranteed provided that they believe in one almighty God. They will not be made to do anything against their religious beliefs.

All persons who are Christians may serve in the government.

An Assembly chosen yearly by the freemen in the colony.

All criminals shall have the right to call witnesses to testify at trials.

When a servant is brought over to work the land at the end of his years of service he shall be given 50 acres of his master's land.

Planters are to trade fairly with the natives of this country.

No person shall harm or mistreat an Indian in any way.

I William Penn, Proprietor and Governor of Pennsylvania, declare for myself and my heirs that these liberties will be held by the people forever.

### Document 13:

*Thomas Dognan, "Governor's Report on NY," 1687*

Dognan wrote this official report for the English government about the New York colony and its progress.

The buildings in New York are generally of stone & brick. In the country the houses are mostly new built, having two or three rooms on a floor. The Dutch are great improvers of land. New York and Albany live wholly upon trade with the Indians, England, and the West Indies. The returns for England are generally Beaver, Peltry, Oil & Tobacco when we can have it. To the West Indies we send Flour, Bread, Peas, Pork & sometimes horses; the return from thence for the most part is rum which pays the King a considerable excise & some molasses which serves the people to make drink & pays no custom [tax]. . . .

Here be not many of the Church of England; few Roman Catholics; abundance of Quakers, preachers, men & Women especially...

Every Town and County must maintain their own poor, which makes them careful so that no Beggars, nor Idle Persons live here.

**Document 14:**

*Gottlieb Mittelberger, Pennsylvania, 1750, German immigrant*

Coming to speak of Pennsylvania again, that colony possesses great liberties above all other English colonies, inasmuch as all religious sects are tolerated there. We find there Lutherans, Reformed, Catholics, Quakers, Mennonists or Anabaptists, Herrnhuters or Moravian Brethren, Pietists, Seventh Day Baptists, Dunkers, Presbyterians, Newborn, Freemasons, Separatists, Freethinkers, Jews, Mohammedans, Pagans, Negroes and Indians. The Evangelicals and Reformed, however, are in the majority.

**Document 15:**

*A Dialogue on New Netherland (New York), Adriaen van der Donck, 1655*

We must look to commerce [trade]...which at present is carried on in the New-Netherlands, consists mostly in grain, as wheat, rye, peas, barley, &, and in pork, beef, fish, beer and wine, and what is necessary for families...with the commerce of navigable streams, of which we will treat, quantities are sent to the islands in the West Indies [Caribbean], . . . The country is well calculated and possesses the necessaries for a profitable trade. First, it is a fine fruitful country. Secondly, it has fine navigable rivers extending far inland, by which the productions of the country can be brought to places of traffic. The Indians, without our labor or trouble, bring to us their fur trade, worth tons of gold...