

A Huguenot Refugee

A woman had to share hard labor with her husband if either was to survive in early frontier settlements. Yet in the South, such labor was already considered working "like a slave," as described in this account. Judith Giton (ca. 1665–1711) was about twenty when she and many other Protestant Huguenots escaped, penniless, from French persecution to settle in South Carolina in 1685. She described the harrowing experience in this letter to her brother. After an early widowhood, she remarried and operated a boardinghouse while her second husband ran a distillery. Judith Manigault died too young to know that her labor had helped establish one of the South's wealthiest families.

From "Letter of Judith Giton Manigault," translated and quoted in Charles W. Baird, *History of the Huguenot Emigration to America*, vol. 2 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1885), pp. 112–14.



For eight months we had suffered from the contributions and the quartering of the soldiers, on account of religion, enduring many inconveniences. We therefore resolved on quitting France at night, leaving the soldiers in their beds, and abandoning the house with its furniture. [They hid for ten days with another Huguenot, then went on through Lyons and Lorraine to Wesel in the Rhineland, only about ninety miles from her soldier brother's winter quarters.] Our deceased mother and I entreated my eldest brother to consent that we should go that way. . . . It was in the depth of winter. But he would not hear of it, having nothing in his mind but "Carolina," and dreading to miss any chance of coming hither. The thought that we thus lost so good an opportunity to see you at least once more, has been a constant source of grief to me, ever since. After this, we passed into Holland, in order to go to England. We were detained in London for three months, waiting for a vessel ready to sail for Carolina. Once embarked, we were miserably off indeed. The scarlet fever broke out in our ship, and many died, among them our aged mother. . . . Our vessel put in [at Bermuda] for repairs, having been badly injured in a severe storm. Our captain . . . was thrown into prison, and the ship was seized. It was with the greatest difficulty that we secured our passage in another ship, for our money had all been spent. After our arrival in Carolina, we suffered all sorts of evils. Our eldest brother died of a fever, eighteen months after coming here. . . . We ourselves have been exposed, since leaving France, to all kinds of afflictions, in the forms of sickness, pestilence, famine, poverty, and the roughest labor. I have been for six months at a

time in this country without tasting bread, laboring meanwhile like a slave in tilling the ground. Indeed, I have spent three or four years without knowing what it was to eat bread whenever I wanted it. God has been very good to us in enabling us to bear up under trials of every kind.

Why Servant Women Should Come to America

The myth of increased opportunities for women under frontier conditions because of the high ratio of men to women has been echoed by many historians, past and present. For those of the lower classes in the seventeenth century, however, self-improvement was very limited. The following bawdy statement encouraged poor women to go to the New World to find husbands and to avoid prostitution in London's Lewknors Lane. But it minimized the hardships of New World servitude and the possibility of injustice and exploitation.

From William Alsop, pamphlet, in Clayton Colman Hall, ed., *Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633–1684* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), pp. 358–59.



The Women that go over into this Province as Servants, have the best luck here as in any place of the world besides; for they are no sooner on shoar, but they are courted into a Copulative Matrimony, which some of them (for aught I know) had they not come to such a Market with their Virginity, might have kept it by them untill it had been mouldy, unless they had let it out by a yearly rent to some of the Inhabitants of Lewknors-Lane, or made a Deed of Gift of it to Mother Coney, having only a poor stipend out of it, untill the Gallows or Hospital called them away. Men have not altogether so good luck as Women in this kind, or natural preferment, without they be good Rhetoricians, and well vers'd in the Art of perswasion, then (probably) they may ryvet themselves in the time of their Servitude into the private and reserved favour of their Mistress, if Age speak their Master deficient.

In short, touching the Servants of this Province, they live well in the time of their Service, and by their restraintment in that time, they are made capable of living much better when they come to be free.

She Was Faine to Ly uppon Goates Skins

Priscilla is a "perplexing" servant in this 1639 letter from John Winter in Richmond Island, Maine. She is probably one of the many indentured servants who worked in early colonial households for four or five years to pay off the cost of their passage from England. Other servants in these households were often nieces, cousins, or the children of friends who were "put out" to learn the skills of housewifery. In a Puritan household, servants were to be treated as subordinates but also as members of the family. This meant that they were to receive religious training and sometimes also minimal education in reading. Masters and mistresses were not supposed to behave cruelly toward servants, just as servants were to perform their tasks willingly. But Master Winter feels this servant deserved the beating that she complained about. His protests reveal much about the work and living conditions in early colonial households and the labor shortage that enabled servants in America to act with much greater freedom than their counterparts in England.

From *Trelawny Papers: Collections of Maine Historical Society*, vol. 3, pp. 166–68; quoted in Lucy Maynard Salmon, *Domestic Service* (New York: Macmillan, 1897), pp. 33–34.



You write me of some yll reports is given of my Wyfe for beateinge the maid; yf a faire waye will not do yt, beateinge must, sometimes, uppon such Idlle girrells as she is. Yf you think yt fitte for my wyfe to do all the worke & the maide sitt still, she must forbear her hands to strike, for then the worke will ly undonn. She hath bin now 2 yeares ½ in the house, & I do not thinke she hath risen 20 times before my Wyfe hath bin up to Call her, & many tymes light the fire before she Comes out of her bed. She hath twize gon a mechinge [mucking?] in the woodes, which we have bin faine to send all our Company to seeke. We Cann hardly keep her within doores after we ar gonn to beed, except we Carry the kay of the doore to beed with us. She never Could melke Cow nor goat since she Came hither. Our men do not desire to have her boyle the kittle for them she is so sluttish. She Cannot be trusted to serve a few piggs, but my wyfe most Commonly must be with her. She hath written home, I heare, that she was faine to ly uppon goates skins. She might take som goates skins to ly in her bedd, but not given to her for her lodginge. For a yeare & quarter or more she lay with my daughter uppon a good feather bed before my daughter being lacke [gone] 3 or 4 daies to Sacco, the maid goes into beed with her Cloth & stockins, & would not take the paines to plucke of[f] her Cloths: her bedd after was a doubt bedd &

she had 2 Coverletts to ly on her, but sheets she had none after that tyme she was found to be so sluttish. Her beating that she hath had hath never hurt her body nor limes. She is so fatt & soggy she Cann hardly do any worke. This I write all the Company will Justify. Yf this maid at her lasy tymes, when she hath bin found in her ill accyons [actions] do not deserve 2 or 3 blowes, I pray Judge You who hath most reason to Complaine, my wyfe or the maid. . . . She hath an unthankful office to do this she doth, for I thinke their was never that steward yet amonge such people as we have Could give them all Content. It does not pleas me well being she hath taken so much paines & Care to order things as well as she Could, & ryse in the morning rath, go to bed soe latte, & to have hard speches for yt.

The Case of Charity Dallen

Mistreatment of women servants was much more common in the plantation-oriented southern colonies, though it was not usually so cruel as in the Charity Dallen case. Unlike black slaves, servants had recourse to the courts for enforcement of their indenture contracts and for a modicum of physical protection. This court ruled that Charity Dallen's indenture should be sold to a new master, and it fined her former mistress. Here, in 1649, an English woman servant was laboring in the fields with men as well as doing domestic work.

From *County Order Book*, Lower Norfolk, Virginia, 1646–51, fol. 120. Microfilm copies at Virginia State Library, Richmond.



The deposition of Joseph Mulders Aged 23 years or thereabouts Sworne and examined Sayeth

That Deborah Fernehaugh, the Mistress of this deponent, did beate her mayd Sarvant in the quartering house before the dresser more Liken a dogge than a Christian, and that at a Certaine time, I felt her head, which was beaten as soft as a sponge, in one place, and that as there shee was a weeding, shee complained and sayd, her backe bone as shee thought was broken with beating, and that I did see the mayd's arme naked which was full of blacke and blew bruises and pinches, and her necke Likewise and that afterwards, I tould my Mistress of it and said, that two or three blowes, could not make her in such a Case, and after this my speeces shee Chidge [chided] the said mayd, for shewing her body to the men, and very often afterwards she the said mayd would have shoven mee, how shee had beene beaten, but I refused to have scene it, saying it concerns me not, I will doe my worke and if my Mistress abuse you; you may complaine, and about 8 dayes since, being about the time shee last went to Complaine, I

knew of her goeing, but would not tell my mistress of it, although shee asked mee, and sayd I could not chuse but know of it, and further hee sayeth not

sworne the 31th July 1649

Thomas Bridge Clerk of Court

The Marke of Joseph X Mulders

Upon the depositions of Joseph Mulders and Michael Mikaye of the misusage of Charetie dallen, by her Mistress Deborah Fernehaugh, and by many other often Complaints, by other sufficient testimonies, and although the said Deborah hath had advertisement thereof from the Court yet persisteth in the very Ill usadge of her said sarvant, as appeareth to the board, It is therefore ordered that the said Charetie Dallen shall no longer remaine in the house or service with her said Mistress, but is to bee and Continue at the house of Mr. Thomas Lambard [Lambert], untill such time as the said Deborah Fernehaugh shall sell or otherwise dispose of her said servant, for her best advantage of her the said Deborah.

The Case of Elizabeth Greene

The primitive living conditions and regulations imposed on servant women, especially on southern plantations, could sometimes lead to desperation and even death. Elizabeth Greene, without relatives or women friends, perhaps even ignorant of female functions, apparently committed infanticide. This bare but heartrending account reveals that after migrating from a country village near Norwich, England, Elizabeth lived with other servants, all men, without privacy even during childbirth. A midwife, Grace Parker, was called to examine her and verify her crime. Elizabeth Greene probably knew that the penalty for pregnancy during indenture was additional years of servitude. She took her chances at concealment and claimed she had had a miscarriage in her fourth month, but her subterfuge did not succeed and she was hanged for her offense. Spelling and punctuation have been modernized.

From J. Hall Pleasants, ed., *Archives of Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1883), vol. 49, *Proceedings of the Provincial Court of Maryland*, 1663-66, pp. 232-36.



The Examination of Elizabeth Greene taken this 5th day of July 1664 Before the Governor and Councill—being asked if her name was Elizabeth Greene, answered yes, and what Country Woman she was, said born five miles from Norwich. Asked where she lived, answered she lived last with John Gary. You are accused of having a Bastard Child and that you did murder it. She answered

she had One but did not murder it, nor did not see what she had whether it was a Child formed or not. What made you so barbarous to make it away? She answered she was gone but 4 months. Had you a Child born or not? Answered she did not see such a thing but was delivered being put into a fright by some runaways.

William Wheeler and Thomas Taylor as witnesses against Elizabeth Greene examined, William Wheeler first. Do you know Elizabeth Greene? Yes I lived in the house with her. Did you know whether she was with Child? He did not know but she was very big—then the said William Wheeler was demanded whether he heard any thing Cry with a voyce in the likeness of a Child. Yes something he did hear like the voyce of a Child at the time that she was sick.

Thomas Taylor examined saith that he Came into the house when she was lying on the Ground and asked her what she ailed and bid her go to bed, and that she had milk and water in her breasts two months before—

Grace Parker Examined saith That she was a stranger to the wench and did not see her above once all the time she was with Child and that she did search her breast and the wench denied she was with Child but there was milk in her breasts. And it was agoing away being hard and Curdled—And she desiring her to declare after she was delivered what she had done with her Child she said she had buried it in such a place but when they Came to search for it they Could find no such thing. . . .

The Jury for the Right Honorable the Lord Proprietary do present Elizabeth Greene of Garriden in Calvert County, spinster, [who] the sixth day of May in the year of Our Lord God 1664 being big with Child by God's Providence was delivered of a Certain living man Child which said living man Child She then said Elizabeth Greene did throw into the fire, And so that the said Elizabeth Greene the living man Child by throwing into the fire in manner and form afore-said, then and there feloniously and of malice forethought did Kill and Murder Contrary to the peace of his said Lordship his Rule and Dignity. . . . [The jury declared her guilty.]

Then was it demanded of Elizabeth Greene, what she had to say for herself, Answered that she threw herself on the mercy of the Board, being again demanded if that was all she had to say, she Answered Yes—Then Sentence of Death passed upon her by the Governor and Judge in these words . . . Elizabeth Greene You shall be Carried to the place from whence you Came, from thence to the place of Execution, and there be hanged by the neck till you are dead, and so God have mercy upon your Soul.

On the Morrow being the 8th July 1664 warrant issued to the Sheriff of St. Mary's County for the performance of Execution.

ether kil it or lay it to an other and you shal have no blame at al for I have had many children and none [of their fathers?] have none of them.

A Bedroom Story

The earliest dwellings of most European settlers in America were small, usually with only one or two rooms centered around a large fireplace, with a loft above. Families had no privacy and neither did their servants. Because these houses were so small, often many people slept together in one room—masters, mistresses, and servants, men, women, and even children, two or three to a bed. The following excerpt from a witness's statement in a court case shows what forbidden activities might result from these living arrangements.

From Middlesex, Massachusetts, County Court Records, folder 62, group 6, Massachusetts Archives, Boston.



Benjamin Chamberlene aged about 21 years doth testifie that on the 30th of September last, Joseph Graves was at the house of Thomas Goble in Concord, in the night time, and tarrying there after the said Thomas Goble was in bed, who lay in the same roome, and also two mayds in another bed, viz: Ester Necholls and Mary Goble. the said Joseph Graves went and set by the bedside and talked with them privately and after that sung some short songs to them. and after a while I saw the said Joseph Graves in bed with them.—the cloathes were over him. The said mayds as he apprehends being in their naked beds.

An Unwed Mother

To deal with the problem of illegitimate births in Massachusetts, a 1672 law required the father to be responsible for the child's costs. The law specified that the father was whomever the mother named during labor. Puritans assumed that no woman would risk eternal damnation by telling a lie on the brink of death. Not all women had such tender consciences, however.

From anonymous letter in Middlesex, Massachusetts, County Court Records, folder 30, group 4, Massachusetts Archives, Boston.



der love i remember my love to you hoping your welfar and i hop[c] to imbras the[c] but now i rit to you to let you nowe that i am a child by you and i wil

Wilt Thou Not Drinke to Me?

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A woman's life on early southern plantations was often far different from the genteel images of later generations. Except for the wealthy minority, most women—both black and white—mixed quite freely at work and in taverns. The result in this 1681 case was, apparently, rape. Several men, including John Aust, testified that Katherine Watkins had brought it on herself; Humphrey Smith was the only man to testify in her behalf. Katherine herself claimed that she had been raped by "Mulatto Jacke" on her way home.

From Henrico, Virginia, County Deed Book, 1677–92, pp. 192–95. Microfilm copies at Virginia State Library, Richmond.



The examination of Katherine Watkins, the wife of Henry Watkins of Henrico County in Virginia, taken this 13 of September 1681 before us William Byrd and John Farrar two of his Majesties Justices of the County aforesaid as followeth (vizt.)

The said Katherine aforesaid on her Oath and examination deposeth, That on fryday being in the Month of August aboute five weeks since, the said Katherine mett with John Long (a Mulatto belonging to Capt. Thomas Cocke) at or neare the pyney slash betweene the aforesaid Cockes and Henry Watkins house, and at the same tyme and place, the said John threw the said Katherine downe (He starting from behinde a tree) and stopped her Mouth with a handkerchief, and tooke up the said Katherines Coates [i.e., petticoats], and putt his yard into her and ravished her; Upon which she the said Katherine Cryed out (as she deposeth) and afterwards (being rescued by another Negroe of the said Cockes named Jack White) she departed home, and the said John departed to his Masters likewise, or that way; after which abuse she the said Katherine declares that her husband inclinable to the Quakers [who were pacifists], and therefore would not prosecute, and she being sicke and her Children likewise, she therefore did not make her complaint before she went to Lt. Col. Farrars (which was yesterday, Morning) and this day in the Morning she went to William Randolphs' and found him not at home, But at night met with the gentlemen Justices aforesaid at the house of the aforesaid Cocke in Henrico County in Virginia aforesaid before whom she hath made this complaint upon oath. . . .

The deposition of John Aust aged 32 years or thereabouts Deposeth, That on fryday being the twelvth of August or thereabouts he came to the house of Mr. Thomas Cocke, and soe went into his Orchard where his servants were a cutting downe weeds, whoe asked the deponent to stay and drinke, soe the deponent stayed and dranke syder with them, and Jacke a Mulatto of the said Thomas Cocke went in to draw syder, and he stay'd something long whereupon the deponent followed him, and coming to the doore where the syder was, heard Katherine the wife of Henry Watkins say (Lord) Jacke what makes the[e] re-fraine our house that you come not oftner, for come when thou wilt thou shalt be as well come as any of My owne Children, and soe she tooke him about the necke and Kissed him, and Jacke went out and drawed Syder, and she said Jack wilt thou not drinke to me, who sayd yes if you will goe out where our Cupp is, and a little after she came out, where the said Thomas Cockes Negroes were a drinking and there dranke cupp for cupp with them (as others there did) and as she sett Negroe dirke passing by her she tooke up the taile of his shirt (saying) Dirke thou wilt have a good long thing, and soe did several tymes as he past by her; after this she went into the roome where the syder was and then came out againe, and between the two houses she mett Mulatto Jacke a going to draw more syder and putt her hand on his codpiece, at which he smil'd, and went on his way and drew syder and she came againe into the company but stay'd not long but went out to drinking with two of the said Thomas Cockes Negroes by the garden pale, And a while after she tooke Mingoe one of the said Cocke's Negroes about the Necke and fling on the bedd and Kissed him and putt her hand into his Cod-piece, Awhile after Mulatto Jacke went into the Fish roome and she followed him, but what they did there this deponent knoweth not for it being near night this deponent left her and the Negroes together, (He thinking her to be much in drinke) and soe this deponent went home about one houre by sunn.

Humphrey Smith aged 26 years, deposeth, That he heard John Aust say (about September last past) what Matter is it what I swore to and likewise the deponent saw Katherine's Mouth (the wife of Henry Watkins) torne and her lipps swell'd, And the handkerchief that she said the Mulatto Stopt her Mouth with very much bloody And the deponent heard the Mulatto confess that he had beene to aske the said Watkins wife forgiveness three tymes, and likewise the Mulatto sayd that Henry Watkins (the last tyme he went) bidd him keepe of[f] his plantation or else he would shoote him and further saith not.

Concerning the Freedom of Elizabeth Key

Mulatto children born to slave women and white fathers created much uneasiness among early Virginia settlers. Some fathers, in accordance with English common law, which required that a child's legal status be based on that of the father, tried to ensure the freedom of their children born to slave women. Elizabeth Key's was such a case in 1654, and the court reluctantly granted her petition. William Greensted, the lawyer who represented her, then married her. Soon thereafter, however, legislation was passed forbidding racial intermarriage and making all mulattoes slaves for life, no matter who the father. Punctuation has been added.

From County Order Book, Northumberland, Virginia, 1652-65, fols. 40, 46, 49. Microfilm copy at Virginia State Library, Richmond.



It appeareth to us [a committee of the Virginia assembly] that shee is the daughter of Thomas Key by severall Evidences, and by a fine imposed upon the said Thomas for getting her mother with Child of the said Thomas; That she hath bin by verdict of a Jury impannelled 20th January 1655 in the County of Northumberland found to be free by severall oathes which the Jury desired might be Recorded; That by the Comon Law the Child of a Woman slave begott by a freeman ought to bee free; That shee hath bin long since Christened, Col. Higginson being her God father, and that by report shee is able to give a very good account of her fayth; That Thomas Key sould her onely for nine yeares to Co. Higginson with severall conditions to use her more Respectfully then a Comon servant or slave; That in case Col. Higginson had gone for England within nine yeares hee was bound to carry her with him and pay her passage and not to dispose of her to any other; For these Reasons wee conceive the said Elizabeth ought to bee free and that her last Master should give her Corne and Cloathes and give her satisfaction for the time shee hath served longer than Shee ought to have done. . . . 21th July 1656 Jurat in Curia.

These are to Certifie [to] whome it may concerne that William Greensted and Elizabeth Key intends to be joyned in the Holy Estate of Matrimony. If any one can shew any Lawfull cause why they may not be joyned together lett them Speake or ever after hold their tongues. Signum William Greensted, Signum Elizabeth Key. 21th July 1656.

An Act Concerning Negroes and Other Slaves

Black women in the southern colonies were apparently at first indentured under terms similar to those of whites. But in 1664 the colony of Maryland (with Virginia soon following) declared that "all Negroes or other slaves" (probably Indians) could never become free. Black women's children would inherit their mother's slavery. In addition, to enforce the separation of the races, the law stated that the offspring of Englishwomen who married slaves would inherit their *father's* slavery. Thus all women were victimized, whereas no one punished "forgetful" Englishmen who sired slave children. Spelling and punctuation have been modernized.

From William Hand Browne, ed., *Archives of Maryland: Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly of Maryland*, January 1637-38-September 1664 (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1883), pp. 533-34.



Be it enacted . . . by the advice and consent . . . of this present General Assembly That all Negroes or other slaves already within the Province And all Negroes and other slaves to be hereafter imported into the Province shall serve Durante Vita. And all Children born of any Negro or other slave shall be Slaves as their fathers were for the term of their lives. And forasmuch as divers free-born English women, forgetful of their free Condition and to the disgrace of our Nation, do intermarry with Negro Slaves, by which also divers [law]suits may arise touching the Issue of such women, and a great damage doth befall the Masters of such Negroes, for prevention whereof for deterring such freeborne women from such shameful Matches Be it further Enacted by the Authority advice and Consent aforesaid That whatsoever free born woman shall intermarry with any slave . . . shall serve the master of such slave during the life of her husband And that all the Issue of such freeborn women so married shall be Slaves as their fathers were. And Be it further Enacted that all the Issues of English or other freeborn women that have already married Negroes shall serve the Masters of their Parents till they be Thirty years of age and no longer.

BUILDING COLONIES NORTH AND SOUTH