

The Passage

Bulletin of the National Society of the Descendants of Colonial Indentured Servants

Number 5

February 2025

A D V E R T I S E M E N T S .

RUN away from Robert Alexander, of Philadelphia, Merchant, Three Indentured Servants, being Palatinians and some of those who were Imported about Five Months ago in Maryland, the first named Peter Kures, a middle aged Man, Tall of Stature and Swarthy Complexion, the second named John Terich Garlach, aged about 30 Years, of a middle Stature and brown Complexion, the third named William Smith, a middle aged Man, Tall of Stature and Slender, of a brownish Complexion, he pretends to be a Miner. It is supposed they are about New-York.

Whoever takes up the said Servants and secures them, and gives Notice thereof to Mr. George M'Call Merchant, in Philadelphia, shall have Forty Shillings as a Reward for each, and Reasonable Charges.

The American Weekly Mercury (July 18, 1723)



7th General Meeting
Friday, April 11, 2025 - 11:30 a.m.
The Army & Navy Club, Washington DC



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A Note from the President General

It has been an honor to serve as President General of the National Society Colonial Indentured Servants for the past two years. This society was formed to remember and celebrate the success of our colonial ancestors, who worked hard to establish a life in America.

The Passage is a labor of love, and we are all very thankful that Honorary President General Sumner Hunnewell continues his indenture as editor and webmaster. In addition to contributing many articles for publication, he also manages our website.

The February Issue includes the invitation to our Seventh Annual Meeting on April 11, 2025, at the Army and Navy Club in Washington, D.C. We will share our meeting with Descendants of Early Postmasters 1607-1900, as is our tradition. Seating will be limited, so mail your reservation early.

If you haven't visited the website in a while, go to www.indenturedservants.org for resources, minutes, reports, and past issues of *The Passage*.

— Sharon Sowders



The Passage: Bulletin of the National Society of the Descendants of Colonial Indentured Servants is published yearly by the Society. It is a perquisite of membership.

Indentured Servants at Gunston Hall

When English settlers arrived in the New World, they brought indentured servitude with them. Under this system, people worked for a set period of time as a payment for something. In Virginia, many indentured servants worked to earn enough money to pay for the cost of their travel from England. Some were children who were “bound” by their parents or the court system. Indentured servants were men and women who willingly signed a contract in which they agreed to work for a certain number of years to compensate for their voyage to America.

Three different types of indentured servant agreements existed in the 18th century: free-willers, King’s passengers, and redemptioners. George Mason held contracts for all of these kinds of indentured servants over the course of his life. Mason’s records are inconclusive, so it is not known how many he utilized throughout his life.



Free-will indentured servants decided to come to America on their own merit and willingly signed a contract before departing England. King’s passengers, also known as convict servants, were criminals who were sent to America to serve a term of seven or fourteen years, depending on the crime they committed. Finally, redemptioners were passengers who were given two weeks to redeem the price of their voyage once they got to America and if they were unable to make the payment, they were sold to the highest bidder.

There are very few records on the indentured servants who worked and lived at Gunston Hall. The handful that remains give us a look at what type of servitude

they were indentured into, the skills they acquired, and their primary responsibilities.

William Buckland

After receiving training as a carpenter and joiner in Oxford, England, William Buckland, at the age of 22, decided to sign an indenture contract with Thomason Mason, who was acting on behalf of his brother George. Buckland's indenture began in 1755 and lasted for four years. His skills in designing and building fashionable woodwork yielded a sum of £20 sterling (an amount equaling about 3 months wages for a skilled laborer) per year in addition to room and board which included "meat, drink, washing, [and] lodging." Buckland played a significant role in the creation of Gunston Hall and produced the elaborate interior designs that can still be seen today. Upon completing his indenture, he continued to design and construct houses and public buildings on the Northern Neck of Virginia and in Annapolis, Maryland.

William Bernard Sears

A skilled woodcarver, William Bernard Sears must have fallen on hard times. While living in London, he stole several articles of clothing and pawned them off. Sears was punished with a sentence of serving seven years as a "King's Passenger," or convict servant. At the time, only about 50% of Europeans newly arrived in North America lived longer than 6 months. Sears was placed on the colonies-bound ship *Tyrall* in 1752. After beginning work on Gunston Hall in 1754, George Mason seems to have bought Sears' contract—and thus his labor—from another person in the region. As a master carver, Sears translated William Buckland's designs into wood.

After Sears completed his indenture, he continued to work as a master carver. He carved a wooden mantelpiece in the dining room at George Washington's Mount Vernon, as well as trained Washington's enslaved carver, Sambo Anderson. He then worked on two churches, including Pohick Church in Lorton, Virginia. Sears' 1818 obituary stated that he "lived for a considerable time in the family of Col. George Mason of Gunston, who ever spoke of him in terms of highest respect."

Timothy Hanly

Timothy Hanly was a sawyer, or someone skilled in sawing wood into boards. He came to America as a redemptioner, with two weeks after his arrival in the New World to find money to pay for his trip across the Atlantic. Hanly discovered what most other redemptioners learned: it was almost impossible to earn the money that quickly. Hanley proved unable to pay his passage fare within the allotted time. George Mason bought his contract, paying the debt in exchange for Hanley's work for a period of time. The Masons needed Timothy Hanly's specialized skills in

sawing wood, because one of the middle Mason sons, Thomson, was building his home, Hollin Hall. Hanly's indenture lasted for 18 months.



John Davidson and David Constable

John Davidson from England, signed a contract as a free-will tutor for George Mason in 1770. Very few records of Davidson exist, but we can assume that his indenture term lasted between three to four years because another indentured tutor, David Constable, started his term in 1774.

David Constable, also someone who traveled to the colonies of his own free will, graduated from the College of Aberdeen in Scotland. Soon after, he left the British Isles to move to Virginia and tutor Ann and George Mason's children. Constable lived and worked at Gunston Hall from 1774 through 1781. After he completed his indenture, the young man moved to the Caribbean island of Saint Kitts, where he took over his ailing brother's business. George Mason helped smooth the way for Constable, writing to the Governor of Virginia, Thomas Nelson Jr., asking for a passport for Constable to travel to the West-Indies in 1781.

Thomas Spalding

Thomas Spalding, a free-will brick maker and brick layer, arrived at Gunston Hall in 1774. His contract stated that his indenture would last for four years, during which time, he would also receive a salary of £12 sterling. According to the Fairfax County Court, Spalding was not capable of performing his duties, and the court changed his original contract. The Court ruled that Spalding would have to finish the remainder of his indenture, but he would no longer receive wages.

German Coachman, Name Unknown

When George Mason needed someone to be a coachman, or drive his carriage, he purchased from another plantation owner an indenture contract that still had two years left. We know little about the man who was under contract. We know that he was a German immigrant, but we do not know his name. When he was not driving the carriage, the man served as a waiter in the mansion. After he fulfilled his contract in 1787, the coachman stayed on at Gunston Hall, working out several yearly contracts. Staying on as a wage worker was a fairly common practice for people whose indenture agreements had run out. The unidentified man received wages of £15 a year plus clothing. The clothing likely included livery (a uniform). A surviving letter to George Washington tells us that Mason did not think much of the coachman but kept him on because it was difficult to find skilled coachmen. Mason wrote to Washington that the coachman was “exceedingly lazy” and “incorrigibly addicted to liquor.”

Reprinted from the Gunston Hall website with permission

Speaker for our 7th Annual Meeting: Carol S. Howell

In our quest to enrich the understanding of America’s history and development through the valuable contribution of indentured servitude, we encourage support for organizations that share our vision.

Carol S. Howell, a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Regents of Gunston Hall, will be our guest speaker to tell us about the indentured servants who worked and lived at Gunston Hall during Mason’s time.

Gunston Hall is the ancestral home of George Mason, a founding father, an architect of the American Revolution, and the author of the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights.





**National Society Descendants of Colonial Indentured Servants
Descendants of Early Postmasters 1607-1900**

The Presidents General and Officers of the National Society Descendants of Colonial Indentured Servants and Descendants of Early Postmasters 1607-1900 cordially invite you to their jointly held Annual Meeting

Friday, April 11, 2025

Doors open at 11:15 a.m.

Welcome and Introductions at 11:30 a.m.

Iwo Jima Room—The Army and Navy Club
Farragut Square, 901 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC

Presentation and both business meetings will follow the luncheon.

The cost is \$45 per person.

Reservations must be postmarked by March 20, 2025

The Menu

Grilled Chicken Caesar Salad

Herb Croutons, Shaved Parmesan, Anchovies, Caesar Dressing

Deep Dish Apple Pie

Shortbread Crust, Fiji Apples, Cinnamon Sugar Crumbs

Member name _____

Member phone _____ Email _____

Member of: Postmasters Indentured Servants

Guest _____

Food allergies _____ (Meal substitutions at chef's discretion.)

Descendants of Colonial Indentured Servants is the 2025 host society.

You will receive an email confirmation when your check is received. Reservations must be postmarked by March 20, 2025. Please return this form with your **check payable to NSDCIS** (\$45 per person) to: Douglass "Tim" Mabee, 17 Killarney Court, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-7501 (518-587-8426 tmabee@aol.com)

No. Attending: _____ Total @ \$45 per person \$ _____ Donation \$ _____ Total \$ _____

National Society Descendants of Colonial Indentured Servants

Sixth Annual Meeting, 12 April 2024, The Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C.

DRAFT MINUTES

The Annual Meeting of the National Society Descendants of Colonial Indentured Servants (NSDCIS) was held at the Army Navy Club on April 12, 2024, by President Sharon Sowders. This was a joint meeting with the Descendants of Early Postmasters 1607-1900 (DEP) as is our tradition. After the invocation and opening ritual conducted by DEP, a joint memorial service was held. Members who were memorialized included David Grinnell and Doraine Arlene Ester Dorman.

Welcome and Introductions

President Sowders graciously greeted and welcomed members of both societies. She then introduced the officers of NSDCIS who were present; her parliamentarian, Rebecca West; and Honorary Presidents General in attendance, Sumner Hunnewell and Janet Walker.

Since the minutes from the last annual meeting had been distributed and filed, they were not read. Additionally, since a quorum of four were in attendance, President Sowders announced the business of the society could proceed.

Officer Reports

President General Sowders reported:

- Sumner Hunnewell has developed an excellent website for distributing information and offering resources for prospective members. Additionally, he edits and publishes our newsletter, *The Passage*.
- She asked members to submit articles for *The Passage* about their ancestor.
- Officer reports are filed and available on the website.

Vice President Patricia Gallagher notified the assembled that she had sent out insignia to new members and has offered additional insignia to members who may desire to have both sizes.

Registrar Robin Towns reported that the society now has 129 members and that it had gained 10 this past year and four supplementals had been completed. A list of members and supplementals is attached.

Honorary President General Hunnewell expounded on President General Sowders remarks about the website. He announced that the resource list on the site provides proof document links to other resources and provides a list of approved ancestors.

Honorary President General Janet Walker remarked that she had put a copy of *The Passages* in her local library and our organization had recently been featured their in the genealogy section. She also mentioned the public and private Facebook

pages as a vehicle to provide information to members and recruit potential new members.

New Business

President General Sowders introduced discussion on a variety of topics:

- She reported the recommendation from the Executive Board to send \$1000 to Pemberton Hall. The membership voted unanimously to provide these funds.
- She encouraged the membership to submit proposals to the Executive Board to fund other organizations that address our mission and might benefit from funding in the future.

Elizabeth Sewell mentioned that she had recently visited Gunston Hall, George Mason's home, and would further research this historical home as a possible contender for future donations.

Lastly, she appointed three members to be on the Nominating Committee for new officers. Those asked to serve are Suzanna Rawlins, Karen Pogoloff, and Shirley Arendt.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Elizabeth Sewell, Secretary General

New Members (2024-25)

128 Nancy Louise Plummer Hoffer	Henry Byrom (1697-1701), Virginia
129 Cielle Muller Clemenceau	Edward Brantley (1638), Virginia
130 Gregory Kenneth May	Pieter Claesen Wyckoff (1637), New York
131 Karen Lynn Lumpkin Kivette	Dickerson Lumpkin (1757-59), Virginia
132 Jodi Kaye Prather Stevens	Thomas Prater (1622), Virginia
133 Lucy Nicol Peak Birch	Stephen Hopkins (1609-14), Virginia
134 Stephen Joseph Havlovic	George Martin (1639-43), Massachusetts
135 Terry Martin DeWitt	Benjamin Cooley (1643), Massachusetts
136 Bill Blaylock	Robert Ransom (1654), Plymouth
137 David Senna Raese	Johann Michael Willheit/Wilhoit (1717-25), Va.

Be sure to check out our website

[indenturedservants.org](http://www.indenturedservants.org)

As new members join, it is updated with new resources for research and qualifying ancestors!

Also keep up to date by joining our Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/colonialindenturedservants/>

