

Sarah Winter Indenture of 1802

It was common practice in the 1700's and early 1800's for individuals to be "indentured" to others (that is, owing money and/or time), to earn passage when immigrating to America, to learn a trade (apprenticeship), or to earn their keep.

The following indenture is a contract for the apprenticeship of Sarah Winter, signed in 1802. Transcribed as written, with misspellings and, you will notice, no punctuation. Although a bit difficult to read, it provides an amazing glimpse into the early 1800s.

"This Indenture

Witnesseth that I John Winter of White Deer township in Northumberland County in the State of Pennsylvania Laborer hath put his daughter Sarah Winter aged Seven years and Eleven months and by these presents the said John Winter doth voluntarily and of his own free will and acord (sic) put his daughter Sarah apretnice (sic) to John Linn of township County and State aforsaid (sic) yeoman to Learn the art and mystery of housekeeping and after the manner of an apretnice (sic) to serve the said John Linn or his heirs from the day of the date hereof for and during and to the full End and term of ten years and one month next Ensuing during all which term the said apretnice (sic) her master faithfully shall serve his Sarah keep his Lawfull (sic) Command Every where readily obey She shall do no damage to her said master nor see it to be done by others with Calling or giving notice thereof to her said master She shall not waste her masters goods nor Lend them unlawfully to any She shall not Commit fornication nor Contract Matrimony within the said term She shall not play at cards dice or any other unlawfull (sic) game whereby her said master may have damage with his own good or the goods of others without License from her said master She Shall not buy or Sell She shall not absent herself day nor night from her masters Service without his Leave nor haunt alehouses taverns or playhouses but in all things Behave herself as a faithfull (sic) apretnice (sic) ought to do during the said term and the said Master shall use the utmost of his Endeavor to teach or cause to be taught or instructed the said apretnice (sic) in the art and Mystery of housekeeping and procure and provide for her Sufficient Meat drink apparel Lodging and washing fitting for an apretnice (sic) during the term of ten years and one month and also to teach her the said Sarah to read and write and at the Expiration of Said term to give her a new Suit of Clothes a Spinning wheel a bed tick a pair of blankets and a coverlet and a new bible

"for the true performance of all and Singular the Said Commands and Agreement Either of said parties bind themselves unto the other by these presents in witness whereof they have here unto Set there (sic) hands and Seals

"This fourth day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand Eight hundred and two

Sealed and delivered in the presence of John Winter and John Linn

“Northumberland County

Before me the subscriber one of the justices of the peace in and for said county came the within named John Linn and John Winter and acknowledged the within indenture to be there (sic) acts and deed done before me this fourth day of Dec 1802.” signed Jn. Kelly

The actual indenture of Sarah Winter is in the collection of the Union County Historical Society and currently on display, with several other early documents, at the society's office in the county courthouse. Many other early documents are available on microfilm.

This Indenture
Witnesseth that I John winter of White Deer township
in Northumberland County in the State of Pennsylvania
Labourer hath put his daughter Sarah winter aged seven years
and eleven months and by these presents the said John winter
doth voluntarily and of his own free will and accord put his
daughter Sarah apprentice to John Linn of township County
and State aforesaid yeoman to learn the art and mystery of
housekeeping and after the manner of an apprentice to serve
the said John Linn from the day of the date hereof for and
during and to the full end and term of ten years and one
month next ensuing During all which term the said apprentice
her master faithfully shall serve his service keep her lawful
Command Every where readily obey she shall do no damage
to her said master nor see it to be done by others with lictin
ence thereof to her said master she shall not
do them unlawfully to any

Northumberland
County — Is

Before me the subscriber one of the
Justices of the peace in and for said
County came the within named
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Jⁿ. Kelly

Indenture Paper