

Chapter 4 The Have-Not's in Colonial Society

so that a runaway is soon recovered. He who detains or returns a deserter receives a good reward.

If such a runaway has been away from his master one day, he must serve for it as a punishment a week, for a week a month, and for a month half a year. But if the master will not keep the runaway after he has got him back, he may sell him for as many years as he would have to serve him yet.

Wanted: Runaway Servants

We have learned a considerable amount about colonial servitude from documents like the following. They are advertisements for runaway servants, placed by their masters in eighteenth-century newspapers in Virginia, Georgia, and South Carolina. Why did the masters describe the clothes their servants were wearing when they ran away? Why would the servants not simply discard those clothes for others? In terms of purchasing power, the rewards offered were very large. What kinds of trades and skills did the runaways represent? These advertisements were published in an area where black slavery was well established. Does that fact make any sense? If there were thousands of slaves, why were there indentured servants?

Virginia Gazette, April 16, 1767. Advertisement.

Run away from King William court-house, on the 14th of March last, three apprentice boys, viz. James Axley, a carpenter, about 5 feet 8 inches high, and wears his own black hair cued behind; had on when he went away a gray cloth coat, without pockets or flaps, and a pair of leather breeches much daubed with turpentine. William Arter, a carpenter, rather taller and better set than the former, of a dark complexion, has black hair, but his clothes no way remarkable. William Kindrick, a bricklayer, which business he understands well, and is supposed to be gone with a view of carrying it on with the other boys; he is a fresh complexioned youth, wears a cap, and had on a bearskin coat with metal buttons, a dark brown waistcoat, and a pair of lead coloured serge breeches. It is supposed they are gone to Bedford, or into Carolina. Whoever brings the said apprentices to King William or Hanover court-houses shall have forty shillings reward for each, besides their expenses defrayed.

Francis Smith, Sen.-James Geddy

Virginia Gazette, Nov. 1767

Prince George, November 10, 1767

Supposed to be run away from the subscriber (having liberty about three weeks ago to go up to Osborne's and Warwick, on James river, to look

To explore some of the laws put in place in the Virginia colony to control indentured servants and eventually separate them from slaves, see <http://www.virtualjamestown.org/indlink.html>.

From U. B. Phillips, ed., "Plantation and Frontier," Part I in John R. Commons et al., eds., *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society*. Copyright 1909, 1937 by John R. Commons; copyright 1958 by Russell & Russell. Russell & Russell, New York, 1958, pp. 352-354, 346-348.

for work, and not since heard of) an indentured servant man named Alexander Cuthbert, by trade a bricklayer, born in Perth in Scotland, but came last from London in one Captain Grigg to Potowmack river. He is about 5 feet 6 or 7 inches high, about 22 years of age, wears his own hair of a dark brown colour, is a little pitted with the smallpox, and, as he was some time in England, has not much of the Scotch accent. Had with him when he went away a blue coarse cloth coat, blue and red striped silk and cotton jacket, blue breeches, several white and check linen shirts, and many other articles of apparel. He carried with him his bricklayer's and plastering tools, a sliding rule, some books of architecture and mensuration, etc. From the little time I have had him, he appeared a harmless inoffensive lad, entirely sober and obliging, and if he has gone off must have been advised to such a measure by some more designing than himself. It is probable he may make to the northward and so to Philadelphia, having been heard to speak of some acquaintances gone that way. Whoever takes up the said servant (if run away) and delivers him to the subscriber, shall have five pounds if taken within the colony, and ten pounds if taken at any considerable distance out of it, paid by

William Black

N.B. All masters of vessels are desired to be cautious of not carrying such a person out of the country.

Virginia Gazette, March 26, 1767

Run away from the subscriber, in Northumberland county, two Irish convict servants named William and Hannah Daylies, tinkers by trade, of which the woman is extremely good; they had a note of leave to go out and work in Richmond county and Hobb's Hole, the money to be paid to Job Thomas, in said county; soon after I heard they were run away. The man wore a light coloured coarse cloth frock coat, a blue striped satin jacket, and plaid one, a pair of leather breeches, a pair of Russia drill white stockings, a little brown bog wig, and his hat cocked up very sharp. He is about 5 feet 8 inches high, of a sandy complexion, and freckled; is a well made fellow, somewhat bow legged. The woman had on an old stuff gown and a light coloured petticoat, and under petticoat of cotton with a blue selvage at the bottom, a blue striped satin gown, the same with his jacket, two check aprons, and a pair of pale blue calimanco shoes. They both wore white shirts, with very short ruffles, and white thread stockings. They had a complete set of tinkers tools. They were seen to have two English guineas and a good deal of silver, and said in Essex county they lived in Augusta, and inquired the road that way. Whoever will apprehend both or either of said servants, and brings them to me, shall have five pounds reward for each, and reasonable travelling charges allowed by

William Taite

Virginia Gazette, Feb. 26, 1767. Advertisement.

Run away from the subscriber in Augusta, on the 17th of January last, a convict servant man named John Jones, an Englishman, about 35 years of

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age, about 5 feet 7 inches high, of a fair complexion, and fair short hair; had on when he went away a blue homemade drugget jacket lined with striped linen, a blue broad cloth do. under it, leather breeches, coarse spun shirt made out of hemp linen, sheep gray stockings, and country made shoes; he has been a sailor, and I suppose will endeavour to get on board some vessel. I have heard that he has altered his name at Fredericksburg, and stole from thence a ruffled shirt, a pair of everlasting breeches, an old whitish coloured jacket, and two razors. Whoever takes up the said servant, and brings him to me, or John Briggs at Falmouth, or secures him in any county gaol so that I may get him again, shall have five pounds reward, paid by me or John Briggs.

Andrew Burd

N.B. As he is a very good scholar, it is imagined he will forge a pass.

Virginia *Historical Register*, vol. vi, 96-97, advertisements reprinted from the *Virginia Gazette* (Williamsburg), 1736-1737.

Ran away lately from the Bristol Company's Iron Works, in King George County, a servant man named James Summers, a West Country [i.e., Cornish] Man, and speaks thick, he is a short thick fellow, with short black hair and a ruddy complexion. Whoever secures the said servant and brings him to the said Iron Works, or to the Hon. John Taylor, Esq., in Richmond County, or gives notice of him, so as he may be had again, shall be well rewarded besides what the law allows.

Nansemond, July 14, 1737

Ran away some time in June last, from William Pierce of Nansemond County, near Mr. Theophilus Pugh's Merchant: a convict servant woman named Winifred Thomas. She is Welsh woman, short black Hair'd and young; mark'd on the Inside of her Right Arm with Gunpowder W. T. and the Date of the Year underneath. She knits and spins, and is supposed to be gone into North Carolina by the way of Cureatuck and Roanoke Inlet. Whoever brings her to her master shall be paid a Pistole besides what the law allows, paid by

William Pierce

South Carolina *Gazette* (Charleston), June 16 to 23, 1739. Advertisement.

Savannah, May 7, 1739

Run away on the 5th Instant from Robert William's Plantation in Georgia, 3 Men Servants, one named James Powell, is a Bricklayer by Trade about Five Feet 9 inches high, a strong made man, born in Wiltshire, talks broad, and when he went away he wore his own short hair, with a White cap: Among his comrades he was call'd Alderman.

Another named Charles Gastil did formerly belong to the Pilot Boat at Pill near Bristol, is by Trade a Sawyer, about 5 feet 10 Inches high, of a thin spare make, raw boned, and has a Scar soinemwhere on his upper Lip, aged about 25.

The 3rd named Jenkin James, a lusty young fellow, about the same Height as Gastrill, has a good fresh complexion, bred by trade a Taylor, but of late has been used to Sawing, talks very much Welshly, and had on when he went away a coarse red coat and waistcoat, the Buttons and Button holes of the Coat black.

Any person or Persons who apprehend them, or either of them, and bring them to Mr. Thomas Jenys in Charleston, or to the said Mr. Robert Williams in Savannah shall receive 10 l. Currency of South Carolina for each.

Robert Williams

Besides the above mentioned Reward, there is a considerable sum allow'd by the Trustees [of the colony of Georgia] for taking run away Servants.

N.B. About a Fortnight ago, three other of the said Robert William's Servants run away, who are already advertized.