

Bristol Connecticut Indentures 1800 – 1839

A group of documents labeled Indentures was discovered in the lower level storage area in August 2009, during the course of the Bristol Records Project. The group consists of 22 Indentures, one Indemnification, and one Release of Indenture. The 24 documents were folded, wrapped in paper, and bound with string. “Indentures 1800-1834” was written on the paper wrapper with a line drawn through the year 1834, but the documents appear to date from 1800 through 1839. Pencil dates have been noted on the documents, but are inaccurate in some cases.

The binding of persons by indenture was governed by Title LXVI *Masters and Servants* of the *Public Statute Laws of the State of Connecticut*. The text of that title, in the compilation of statutes revised to 1838 is reproduced below, maintaining spelling and punctuation as they appear in the original:

Sect. 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened, That the fathers and guardians of minors may bind them, by deed, or indenture, as apprentices, to learn some trade or profession; males till twenty-one, and females till eighteen, or to the time of their marriage within that age, with the assent of such minor, expressed in the indenture, by subscribing the same; which binding shall be as effectual as if the minor was of full age.

Sect. 2. Minors of the age of fourteen, having no father or guardian within the state, may bind themselves apprentices, by indenture, with the approbation of the major part of the select-men in the town.

Sect. 3. If any person or persons, who have had relief or supplies from any town, shall suffer their children to mispend their time, and live in idleness, and shall neglect to bring them up, and employ them, in some honest calling; or if there shall be, at any time, any family that cannot, or does not, provide competently for their children, whereby they are exposed to want; or if there be any poor children in any town, that live idly, or are exposed to want and distress, and there are none to take care of them; it shall be the duty of the select-men of such town, and they are hereby empowered, with the assent of a justice of the peace, to bind out such poor children, belonging to such town, to be apprentices to some proper masters, to be instructed in some suitable trade, calling or profession; males till the age of twenty-one, and females to the age of eighteen, or to the time of their marriage within that age; which binding shall be valid and effectual in law.

Sect. 4. If any apprentice, bound by indenture, shall refuse, or wilfully neglect, to serve as an apprentice, according to the terms of the indenture; or shall disobey the lawful commands, or resist the authority of his master; or shall waste or destroy his property; or be guilty of any gross misbehavior, and wilful neglect of duty; the master may make complaint to any two justices of the peace in the town where he lives, who may issue a warrant and cause such apprentice to be brought before them, and enquire into the truth of the matters complained of, and if they shall find such apprentice guilty, they may

commit him to a house of correction, or if there be none, to the common gaol, in the county, there to be confined, at hard labor, for such time as they shall think proper, not exceeding thirty days. Provided, that such justices may, on reformation, order such apprentices to be released from prison; or, such justices may, if they judge it best, discharge such master from the contract of apprenticeship, and all obligation to perform the same, and may cancel the indenture; and in that case, such apprentice may be bound out anew. (11 Connecticut Reports)

Sect. 5. Where an apprentice, bound by indenture, as aforesaid, shall depart from the service of his master, it shall be lawful for any justice of the peace, on complaint of the master, to issue his warrant to the sheriff or constable, commanding them to press men, if necessary, to pursue such apprentice, and bring him back by force, at the request and expense of the master.

Sect. 6. It shall be the right and duty of the parents, guardians, and of the select-men, where the apprentices are bound by them, to enquire into the treatment of the apprentices by their masters; and if they find, that the masters are guilty of any personal cruelty or abuse; or refuse to provide for them necessary food and clothing; or neglect to instruct them in the trade or business, to learn which they are bound apprentices; or if such apprentices shall flee from the tyranny and cruelty of their masters, to the houses of any of the inhabitants of the same town; then, in either of the above cases, such parents, guardians or select-men, shall make complaint to a justice of the peace in the town, who shall cause such masters and apprentices to come before him, and reconcile them, if he can, and if he cannot, he may, according to his discretion, bind the master to appear at the next county court, and also the apprentice, or give order for his custody, in the mean time, and for his apprentice to appear at said court; which court shall have the power to enquire into the matters complained of, and, if they find the master guilty of personal cruelty and abuse, has refused to furnish the apprentice necessary food and clothing, or has neglected to instruct him in his trade or business, they may discharge the apprentice from the service of the master, and cancel the indenture, with costs against the master, and award execution accordingly; but if the complaint shall be found untrue, and without probable cause, the court shall award costs to the master, against the parent, guardian or select-men, and issue execution of the same.

Sect. 7. The president and directors of all factories, which now are, or hereafter shall be, legally incorporated, and the proprietor or proprietors of all other manufacturing establishments in this state, shall cause that the children employed in such factory or establishment, whether bound by indenture, by parol agreement, or in any other manner, be taught to read and write, and also be instructed in the four first rules of arithmetic (provided the term of their service shall be of so long duration that such instruction can be given,) and that due attention be paid to the preservation of their morals; and that they be required, by their masters or employers, regularly to attend public worship.

Sect. 8. The civil authority and select-men for and within such towns in which such factories or manufacturing establishments, do or may exist, or a committee by them appointed, shall be, and they are hereby constituted, a board of visitors; and it shall be the

duty of such board of visitors, in the month of January, annually, or at such other time or times as they shall appoint, carefully to examine, and to ascertain whether the requisitions of this act, which relate to the instruction and preservation of the morals of the children employed as aforesaid, be duly observed: and if, on such examination, such board of visitors shall discover, that the president and directors of any incorporated factory, or the proprietor or proprietors of any manufacturing establishment, have neglected to perform the duties enjoined upon them by this act, such board of visitors shall report such neglect to the next county court within the county within which the same shall have occurred; and thereupon, such county court shall cause the president and directors of such incorporated factory, or the proprietor or proprietors of such manufacturing establishment, to appear before such court, to answer in the premises; and if, on due enquiry, it shall be found, that such president and directors, or the proprietor or proprietors of such establishment, do not duly attend to the education of the children by them respectively employed, as is by this act required; or that due attention is not paid to preserve the morals of such children; it shall be the duty of such court, and they are hereby authorized, at their discretion, either to discharge the indentures or contracts, relating to such minors, and by which they may be bound to render services in such establishments, or they may impose such fine or forfeiture on the proprietor or proprietors of such establishment as they may consider just and reasonable: Provided the same shall not exceed the sum of one hundred dollars.

Sect. 9. If any person shall entice and eloin any apprentice, whether bound by indenture or otherwise, from the service and employment of his master, he shall forfeit and pay to the person or persons to whom such apprentice or servant was bound as aforesaid, not exceeding the sum of one hundred dollars, to be recovered before any court proper to try the same. Provided, that nothing herein contained shall be construed to affect the right of the master to recover just damages for the loss of the service of his apprentice or servant.

Sect. 10. If any servant or apprentice, employed in any incorporated factory, or in any manufacturing establishment, as aforesaid, or in any other business, shall, without sufficient cause, abscond from the service of his master, such servant or apprentice, when he shall arrive at full age, shall be subjected and become responsible for all the damage, which may have been sustained by his former master or employer, in consequence of his absconding as aforesaid; any law to the contrary notwithstanding. (1 Day 30; 3 Day 126; 8 Connecticut Reports 15; 2 Root 316, 320, 378, 363, 466, and 482)

The Documents

The spelling of the names that appear below may be incorrect due to the difficulty of reading or the inconsistency of spelling in the original hand written documents. An effort was made to spell the names as they appeared in the documents and not correct or modernize the spelling.

1) Annar Peck, Indentured to David Marks of Bristol, dated June 2, 1800

- 2) Dany Roberts, Indentured to Stephen Barns of Hartford County, dated February 2, 1803
- 3) Chauncy Curtis, Indentured to James Stone of Bristol, dated February 5, 1805
- 4) Lines Tharp, Jr., Indentured to Henry Cook of Harwinton, dated February 4, 1806
- 5) Sally Russel, Indentured to Philo Pierce of Bristol, dated February 14, 1809
- 6) Daniel Tuttle, Indentured to David Mitchel of Southbury, dated March 7, 1809
- 7) David Tuttle, Indentured to Benjamin Hand of Newtown, dated August 22, 1809
- 8) Virilda Jerome, Indentured to Chauncy Jerome of Bristol, dated October 8, 1813
- 9) Asahel Warner, Indentured to Samuel Allis of Plainfield MA, dated January 30, 1815
- 10) Connal Warner, Indentured to Samuel Allis of Plainfield MA, dated January 30, 1815
- 11) Norman Tuttle, Indentured to Rhesa Foot of Newtown, dated March 8, 1815
- 12) Lydia Russel, Indentured to Gideon Woodruff of Plymouth, dated April 13, 1815
- 13) Ruth Jerome, Indentured to [?] Hart of Bristol, dated April 17, 1817
- 14) Daniel Tuttle, Indentured to John Birge of Bristol, “to be taught the art, trade, mistery, and occupation of wagon making” dated January 5, 1818
- 15) Cynthia Selinda Russell, Indentured to Samuel Benham of Bristol, dated April 24, 1818
- 16) Sally Saphrona Russell, Indentured to Asahel Cowles of Bristol, dated December 29, 1818
- 17) Samuel Peck Jr., Emilee Peck, Abel Gaylord Peck, and William W. Peck, Indentured to Sylvester Peck of Bristol, dated July 17, 1819
- 18) Orren Brown, Indentured to Lott Jerome of Bristol, dated April 1, 1822
- 19) Dimis C. Culver, Indentured to Richard & Abel Russell of Russell MA, dated May 31, 1828
- 20) Newton Hart, Release of Indenture by Lucinda Phelps of Egremont MA, dated December 11, 1834 and second document Newton Hart, Indemnification by Dennis? F. Butler, dated September 3, 1823

- 21) Mary Jane Warner, Indentured to Ezekiel Montague, dated December 9, 1837
- 22) Mary Jane Warner, Indentured to Theodore Terry of Bristol, dated July 23, 1838
- 23) George W. Blakeslee, Indenture to Allen Bunnell of Plymouth, Dated November 16, 1839