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PATTERNS OF SLAVEHOLDING IN
COLONIAL PENNSYLVANIA: CHESTER
AND LANCASTER COUNTIES 1729-1758

I

Two fundamental problems in interpreting the history of slavery in colonial Pennsylvania are why, in comparison with New York, New Jersey and the southern colonies, so little slaveholding actually appeared and why such a limited institution retained its vitality in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹ One hypothesis has recently been advanced to explain the unique situation in the Penn colony: despite the chronic shortage of labor in Pennsylvania, Quaker sentiment against slavery was powerful enough to limit the growth of that institution in the first half of the eighteenth century; in the years that followed many slaveowners personally resisted the growing momentum of Quaker benevolence, for ownership of a slave represented both a sizable and profitable investment.² The purpose of this essay is to offer an alternative hypothesis, one that explains the gradual growth of the black population, the limited extent of slaveholding in early Pennsylvania and the long-range vitality of that institution.

It was in the second quarter of the eighteenth century that the basic patterns of Pennsylvania slaveholding clearly emerged, patterns that despite changes in the succeeding 25 years were to last into the 1780s. The most important factor in shaping the slaveholding paradigm was the practical disadvantages many Pennsylvanians saw in slaveownership. As a potential source of labor the slave was an expensive item and the prospects of slaveownership were fraught

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with uncertainties. What gave practical meaning to these considerations was the existence of an alternative source of labor. Indentured servants and day laborers who came flooding into southeastern Pennsylvania from the 1720s through the 1750s formed a deep pool of cheap, competitive, short-term labor.³ But despite the unfavorable competitive position of slaves, the number of black bondsmen did increase during this period.⁴ The growing demand for slaves was reflected in the activities of several Philadelphia merchants who, no longer content to sell Negroes on consignment, began to order on their own "parcels" of blacks, accepting the greater financial risk which the practice involved in the hopes of realizing a larger profit.⁵ What lay behind the increased local demand that helped trigger this merchant reorganization was a basic change in the social structure of provincial society.

Although Pennsylvania was not settled until late in the seventeenth century, the southeastern part of the province, in particular, quickly developed into a commercial farm area.⁶ Under conditions of rapid economic expansion, there was a marked tendency in the first two decades of the eighteenth century for that area to lose its early undifferentiated character and become a more structured society—one in which a growing percentage of the community's wealth was concentrated in the hands of the large property holders.⁷ Not surprisingly, it was members of this emerging provincial economic elite who stepped forward to purchase the new Negro imports.⁸ Having prospered despite the instabilities of the colony's early years⁹ and despite the economic vicissitudes of the early 1720s,¹⁰ these men of means, confident of their own managerial abilities and of the economic future of the province, wanted publicly to proclaim their financial success. In order to do so they sought investment for their resources not only in more of the commonly held, wealth-producing capital goods but also in possessions that were an uncommon expression of wealth. And only those who enjoyed superior economic resources could afford the Negro, given the risks and expense of slaveownership. Thus, it was the rich who, along with the silver watch, the showy pacing horse and the expensive personal wardrobe, acquired the Negro slave.¹¹ The black chattel did, of course, have the capacity to perform work and his value did bear some relationship to that ability. But at the same time the slave was often overtly grouped with those possessions that had a peculiar

value, one that went beyond mere economic function and one that could not be measured by the cold criterion of utility. For example, Robert Alison left his brother his "watch and Negro boy Dick to serve him"; Robert Gay specifically bequeathed "Ben [his] Negro boy" along with his "black pacing mare"; Jacob Minshall left his "Negro man and desk unto [his] said son John."¹² In the rural society of early southeastern Pennsylvania the value of a slave, like the value of various other pieces of personal property depended, in part at least, on his role as a status conferring possession.

II

Despite the growing volume of the slave trade after 1729,¹³ it was, in comparison with other indices of economic growth, a relatively limited and uncertain business.¹⁴ The fluctuating and sporadic nature of the demand for blacks, a situation which was directly related to the highly subjective considerations that underlay the decision to acquire a Negro, was magnified by the relatively constricted market. For the majority of Pennsylvania's residents, purchase of a slave was simply not a feasible investment; the initial outlay, averaging £45 Pennsylvania currency for a mature male, was prohibitive.¹⁵ One indication of the magnitude of this sum is the fact that £45 Pennsylvania currency exceeded the total personal estate of approximately 35-40 percent of the taxables in Lancaster and Chester counties.¹⁶ This disparity between cost and economic means was not lost on contemporaries. Peter Kalm, one of the more observant foreign travellers who visited Pennsylvania, concisely stated the problem: "to buy a Negro or black slave requires too much money at one time."¹⁷ That astute and knowledgeable provincial, James Logan, attested to Kalm's accuracy in his own comments on labor costs. When, in 1740, royal recruitment officers enlisted white indentured servants, Logan remarked on the heavy losses their masters had suffered. Although the value of the redemptioners was unlikely to have averaged more than £14, many countrymen had incurred what was regarded as sizable debt in order to purchase their servants.¹⁸ In fact, the price differential between white and slave labor created a simple and rudimentary form of social ordering, one that was openly acknowledged in the recruitment crisis of 1740 when petitioners from Chester county charged that the enlistment was "a great Aggrievance, as it is a very hard

and unequal Tax . . . the whole clear Estate of some People consisting in Servants; while others, more wealthy, having no other Servants but *Negroes*, contribute nothing.”¹⁹

While the initial outlay for a slave was a prohibitive sum for the majority of rural Pennsylvanians, others, possessing greater economic resources, who could have financed such a purchase chose not to do so. One important reason for this decision was the high risk that attended slaveownership.²⁰ The possibility that a slave might successfully escape was certainly very real, but the greatest danger was that the Negro might die or become incapacitated by some illness or disease.²¹ Potential slaveowners were very much aware of this latter hazard and tried to find Negroes who at least had been exposed to smallpox and measles.²² While the general health hazards of eighteenth century life were dangers that all shared, recently imported slaves faced one danger that was of peculiar significance to them; they had to become acclimatized. After conducting his investigation of the slave trade, Darold D. Wax concluded that “even if [they were] good quality slaves, they could be expected to go through a period of adjustment, which, if complications arose, often led to their deaths.”²³

In addition to the risks and normal expenses of maintenance that generally attended the institution of slavery, other relevant factors were peculiar to Pennsylvania. When a resident of Lancaster or Chester county decided to purchase a slave, he committed himself to the certainty of additional types of expenditures. Each year the slaveholder would find his Negro assessed at a value equal to, if not exceeding the value of, one hundred acres of good land and varying from two to four times the value of an indentured servant.²⁴ Second, the owner had the responsibility of maintaining his Negro during the unproductive years of old age. To guard against those who would emancipate the black in his declining years the Assembly had enacted a law forcing all owners to post a £30 bond with the county courts. This money was to be used for the maintenance of the newly freed slave should he, at any time, be unable to support himself.²⁵

More important than these dictates of local law was the peculiar nature of the Philadelphia slave trade. The chief distinguishing feature of many of the imported slaves was that they were “waste” or “refuse” Negroes—ones that had been rejected as inadequate by West Indian purchasers.²⁶ Although after 1729 this problem had

become “less acute,”²⁷ experiences of the 1720s and the continued importation of physically disabled blacks did affect the considerations of those who were potential buyers. In the second quarter of the eighteenth century Lancaster and Chester counties were approximately 90% rural and the landowners who resided there had an overriding economic interest in the rate of production of their farms.²⁸ Yet farm labor was heavy work and required a level of competence in “plowing, mowing, hedging, ditching and the care of cattle and sheep.”²⁹ While European laborers could be expected to have some familiarity with these tasks, blacks could not. This is not intended to suggest that blacks, even those who were somewhat disabled, could not have mastered many of the jobs that were performed on the Pennsylvania farm; surely many could have done so.³⁰ The point is that in the early eighteenth century members of the white community generally believed that a Negro had to be a “prime” prospect, acquired when young, if he was to be “receptive” to training.³¹ But it was just such a Negro that the Philadelphia merchant could not regularly provide.

There was, of course, one apparent consideration which could have offset all of these disadvantages. In a country where white labor was scarce and proportionately costly, the Negro slave provided a permanent and reliable reservoir of labor. In his “Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind” Benjamin Franklin ran through all the disadvantages of slaveholding only to conclude that some Americans would still buy slaves because they could “be kept as long as a Man pleases, or has Ocession for their Labor.”³² Yet it was precisely this argument of permanence that lost much of its persuasiveness in early Pennsylvania. Although white labor was certainly not permanent, it was replaceable. The large influx of Irish and German immigrants provided for Pennsylvania what other colonies did not have—a relatively constant and readily available supply of competitive white labor.

Existing evidence indicates that indentured servants were imported into Pennsylvania in sufficient numbers throughout the 1730s, 40s and early 50s to meet the community’s gradually increasing labor needs. Table I presents price data for two separate and comparable samples of male indentured servants. Sample Number I consists of 465 servants who enlisted under General Shirley in 1755-56 and whose masters applied to the Pennsylvania Assembly for

compensation.³³ Since most of the servants' indentures had been drawn up from two to four years before the time of enlistment the amount of consideration money paid for the contract reflected prices current between 1751 and 1756.³⁴ The average price level (lines G and H) in this sample serves as a suitable standard of comparison because contemporaries universally agreed that during the early 1750s the labor market was abundantly supplied with servants.³⁵ The second sample is drawn from the record of assignments of male servants made before James Hamilton during his year's term as mayor of Philadelphia.³⁶ Since many of the servants assigned at the Mayor's Court were sold to men from outlying areas, such as Bucks, Lancaster and Chester counties, there is good reason to believe the record reflects general price levels. The results of the comparison appear on line H of Table I. The approximate differences in the cost of a four-year redemptioner contract between 1745 and 1756 was fifteen shillings, a change of about 6%. There is, however, one significant bias in the data from the 1750s.³⁷ Cheesman A. Herrick's investigation of runaway servants lends credence to the common sense notion that those servants most likely to abscond were men who felt tricked or cheated into accepting long indenture terms for a low consideration payment.³⁸ Similarly, those who ran off to enlist in the King's forces were likely to be men of the same circumstances. With this qualification in mind, then, the most significant observation to be made about the two price levels is their comparability. There was relatively little change in the market value of indentured servants between the mid 1740s and the early 1750s.³⁹

These two samples of price data for 1745-46 and 1752-56 are fragmentary pieces of evidence, it is true, but they need not stand alone. Other indications exist that white servant labor was generally in plentiful supply. In Pennsylvania masters were forbidden by law to sell their servants without proper legal scrutiny and although the relevant statute did not oblige magistrates to record these transactions, William Pim did keep a complete account of the assignments made before him.⁴⁰ Table II shows the relatively constant number of assignments that Pim authorized; there were no great fluctuations that might indicate major alterations in either the demand for or supply of white bound labor.⁴¹ Included in this record were a few apprentices and some instances of multiple assignments of one ser-

vant; when these are subtracted from the 378 total, the actual number of indentured servants assigned by Pim proves to be 311.⁴² Assuming an average term of service to be four and one-quarter years there were at any one time between 1739 and 1751, 104 servants assigned by Pim who were actively participating in the labor market. There is no need to plead typicality for Pim; suffice it to say that there was, between 1740 and 1750, at least a dozen active Chester county Justices of the Peace, all of whom could authorize the assignment of servants.⁴³ The full implications of Pim's record are obvious: white bound labor was not treated as an economically scarce commodity but was freely exchanged in an open and active market.

TABLE I
PRICE INDEX FOR MALE INDENTURED SERVANTS

A. Sample Number	I	II
B. Year	1757 ^a	1745-6 ^b
C. Total Number of Male Indentured Servants	465*	571*
D. Total Number of Years to be Served	2193	2449
E. Average Number of Years to be Served per Servant	4.51	4.29
F. Total Price Paid for Servants	£7239	£8568
G. Average Price for One Year of Servant Labor	£ 3-6-0	£ 3-11-9
H. Average Price for a Four Year Indenture Contract	£ 13-4-0	£ 13-19-0

^aList of Servants Belonging to the Inhabitants of Pennsylvania and Taken into His Majesty's Service. . . . (1757) H.S.P.

^bAccount of Servants Bound and Assigned Before James Hamilton, Mayor of Philadelphia, Oct. 1745 to Oct. 1746, H.S.P.

*Total number of male servants for which both the time of indenture and the consideration money in £'s valuation, Pennsylvania currency, was given.

TABLE II
WILLIAM PIM'S RECORD OF INDENTURED
SERVANT ASSIGNMENTS

Year	1739	1740-1	1742-3	1744-5	1746-7	1748-9	1750-1
Number of Assignments	35	53	59	61	62	57	51

Total Number of Assignments — 378

Other extant evidence tends to confirm the conclusions which the price data and Pim's assignment record suggest. Between 1720 and 1750 the population of Pennsylvania almost quadrupled as it grew from 31,000 to 120,000 and a large percentage of the newcomers were men who accepted temporary servitude in order to pay for their trans-ocean voyage.⁴⁴ Observers certainly agreed that the late 1720s and early 30s brought an abundance of German and Scotch-Irish redemptioners to both Philadelphia and Newcastle.⁴⁵ Similarly, a general consensus existed that Pennsylvania's labor needs were more than adequately met when immigration rates increased during the late 1740s and early 50s.⁴⁶ The one possible period of scarcity occurred in 1740-41, when the servant ranks were depleted in an irregular manner. In the late summer of 1740, 276 indentured servants enlisted in the provincial forces that were being recruited for the Cartagena expedition. Their removal from the labor force, coming as it did at the peak of the harvest season, did hurt some landowners but by June of 1741 the Assembly had reimbursed all those who were eligible.⁴⁷ If there was a relative scarcity of servant labor it was merely a slight, short-term variation in what was generally a steady market, for masters freely bought and sold servants without interruption and immigrant-laden ships continued to arrive.⁴⁸

In the second quarter of the eighteenth century slavery in rural Pennsylvania was clearly a marginal economic institution. High initial cost made slaveownership impossible for most men; high risk, heavy expenses and the nature of the Philadelphia slave trade made

it less than a compelling proposition to others. The advantage of permanency was not such a persuasive consideration for the supply of white labor was adequate and constantly being replenished.⁴⁹ In this situation, where economic calculations provided no very sound rationale, motives other than those of profit entered more openly than normal into men's decisions. In eighteenth-century rural Pennsylvania the decision to become a slaveowner was a complex social one, one that depended on how men perceived that institution and how they conceived of their own role in local society.⁵⁰

III

In the first decades of its existence, Pennsylvania was an unstable and peculiarly truncated society. Just as provincial residents felt threatened by colonial administrators, London court factions and proprietary rights, so did they regard local society as being remarkably incomplete. By the standards of the societal model that colonists judged to be normative—the one “at home”—Pennsylvania was an unnatural world. There were no titles and no institutions such as colleges to confer rank and order. Property ownership was widely shared and tangible wealth relatively unconcentrated.⁵¹ Furthermore, the two dominant religious groups found themselves peculiarly disoriented: though the dissenters in England, Quakers were in control in Pennsylvania; although part of the establishment in Britain, Anglicans were an outside minority in William Penn's colony.

As the colony matured, however, manifestations of the colonists' desire to emulate the complexities of old world societies began to appear; attempts were made to establish traditional benchmarks of order and to preserve respect for old differentiations. By the late 1730s and early 40s the title “esquire” began to appear after some individual names on tax lists.⁵² When, in 1745, the indigent Seymour was about to be forced “to jog from house to house for maintenance,” John Taylor would not allow it, for this object of charity was a “well bred man whose father was a Gentleman of far greater parts than any of us.” Taylor suggested that Seymour remain quietly in a suitable local home, while other weighty residents of Thornbury township wanted to take up a collection to send this social embarrassment back to England.⁵³

More than any other development, the increasing affluence and economic dominance of a minority of county inhabitants allowed men so favored to give expression to their social ambitions, for in the absence of old traditions and distinctions great emphasis was placed on wealth as a guarantor of political and social influence. Recognizing this, perhaps unconsciously, members of the newly emerging elite felt the need to give concrete and exclusive expression to their economic assets. Physical forms that bespoke wealth certainly inspired respect as such but, in addition, they came, over time, to have an influence of their own, demanding and receiving widespread admiration and social deference. In Pennsylvania, where symbols of order were relatively scarce, abnormally heavy pressure was placed on wealth to acquire additional characteristics that would be recognized as elitist and help to generate the sense of hierarchy that the affluent deemed desirable.

Theoretically, of course, the circumstances of rural life were limiting factors as to how the wealthy could spend and invest their resources. But in reality, such restraints were not often felt for the ideal that was to be emulated was a local interpretation of the English country life.⁵⁴ The possessions that the wealthy acquired were, within the confines of the accepted ideal, calculated to show their worldly success. The spacious and well-furnished country house was the focal point for all activities that took place on the 250 to 300 acre plantation.⁵⁵ Inside could be found the owner's library and the desk upon which he transacted personal, township, county and possibly provincial business. In the front bed chamber hung an expensive and elaborate personal wardrobe; included among the most prized items were the ones made of silver—his watch, buttons and perhaps shoe-buckles. Behind the house was stabled the valuable riding horse that bore the owner wherever he travelled;⁵⁶ occasionally, a chaise or a coach, drawn by a single pacer or by a matched team was a preferred means of transportation.⁵⁷

By the late 1720s the black slave was with increasing frequency being added to the traditional symbols. As Table III demonstrates, from 1729 until 1758, 85 percent of the slaves in Chester and 93 percent in Lancaster were held by the top 30 percent of the property owners. Like the other status symbols, the slave was a possession completely and indefinitely tied to the master's will. Such an absolute form of ownership paid homage to the notion of permanence

and particularly so in comparison to the fluidity that characterized the indentured servant market. Employed in many cases as a household servant⁵⁹ and always subject to the heavy county tax assessment levied each year, the slave came to signify the conspicuous consumption⁶⁰ that was the exclusive prerogative of the rich. In rural Pennsylvania displays of the wealthy were organized around specific physical needs: a house in which to live, the need for transportation and, in this case, an ostensible need for labor. What characterized the well-to-do was that they met these needs in such a way as to preclude participation by those who did not share in the possession of considerable economic resources. The Negro served as representative of a certain life style or, alternatively, as a statement that one's aspirations were to attain that life style. He was easily recognized, very distinctive, relatively scarce, totally dependent on the master and beyond the economic means of most; his very presence in a household suggested leisure, independence, order, power and permanence.

IV

After 1758 a variety of stresses and pressures brought about changes in the institution of slavery in rural Pennsylvania. The emancipation message which was to be preached throughout the province by a number of Quaker proselytes was certainly the most revolutionary in its immediate implications.⁶¹ Prior to the French and Indian War, the act of emancipation was individual, sporadic and uncharacteristic,⁶² but once the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting had condemned slavery in 1758, sweeping changes were inevitable.⁶³ In Chester County 70% of the identifiable slaveowners, from 1729 to 1758, were members of Quaker Meetings and would have been subject to visitations by convinced emancipationists and eventually subject to strict meeting discipline.⁶⁴

A second major source of change was the pressure of economic development. Whereas only a few slaves were employed in occupations other than farm laborer and domestic in the early eighteenth century, growing numbers came to perform a variety of tasks as urbanization and attendant economic specialization began to transform southeastern Pennsylvania after 1760. Then, too, in the late 1750s and early 60s white bound servants finally came into short

TABLE III⁵⁸
 THE DISTRIBUTION OF SLAVES AND INDENTURED
 SERVANTS ACCORDING TO PERSONAL WEALTH
 RANKING OF OWNER

Percentile Groups of Personal Property Holders	Servants		Slaves	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
A. CHESTER COUNTY				
1729-58				
90-100	86	34.9)	60	57.7)
80-90	67	19.7)	23	22.1)
70-80	71	20.6)	5	4.8)
60-70	48	13.9	7	6.7
50-60	30	8.7	5	4.8
40-50	16	4.6	3	2.9
30-40	8	2.3	1	1.0
20-30	9	2.6	0	—
10-20	8	2.3	0	—
0-10	2	0.4	0	—
Totals	345	100.0	104	100.0
B. LANCASTER COUNTY				
1739-58				
90-100	41	45.6)	22	60.3)
80-90	11	12.2)	8	22.9)
70-80	10	11.1)	3	9.6)
60-70	7	7.8	1	3.1
50-60	7	7.8	0	—
40-50	9	10.0	0	—
30-40	1	1.1	1	3.1
20-30	1	1.1	0	—
10-20	2	2.2	0	—
0-10	1	1.1	0	—
Totals	90	100.0	35	100.0

supply. During those years, when the French and Indian War was in its most crucial phase, large numbers of blacks were imported and put to work, in an unprecedented manner, in a wide range of occupations.⁶⁵ Such changes in economic deployment in the context of a more differentiated society brought about changes in the social meaning attributed to slaveownership. These were complex and subtle developments, hard to measure, difficult to detect, but certainly very real.

But the shifts and adjustments that took place in the structure of slaveholding after 1758 did not completely supersede or destroy the older patterns. For the Quaker emancipationists the process of converting an institution that had been strongly rooted in worldly pride and hunger for prestige into one that was only worthy of opprobrium was a demanding task. The silence of the monthly meeting records attests to the unwillingness of local religious leaders to commence disciplinary actions. The ultimate weapon that the Quakers could bring to bear on members who flouted meeting authority was disownment, and it is particularly significant that most such actions against slaveowners did not take place until the late 1770s and early 80s.⁶⁶ Only after the Quakers had refueled themselves with the idealism of the Revolution and, at the same time, been cut off from exercising direct political power did they direct more attention to the inconsistencies between principle and practice. Second, the disownment of slaveholders indicates the relative failure of the emancipationists; despite three decades of effort they had not convinced their fellow Quakers that slavery was a reprehensible institution.

Outside the confines of the meetinghouse old practices likewise survived. In the long-settled areas of Chester County, non-Quakers held on to traditional ideals and the symbols that embodied them. William Moore of Charlestown was just one individual who kept his slaves and preserved his country way of life through the 1780s. Further west, in the growing urban center of Lancaster, where economic changes were most highly concentrated, the new patterns of slaveownership maintained a fundamental continuity with the old. After conducting his study of Lancaster Borough, Jerome H. Wood concluded that the 55 slaves who were living in the town by 1783 were "never a factor in the economic life of the town. Although a few slaves may have been craftsmen and labored in the establish-

ments of local artisans, most of them were domestic servants in the homes of wealthy townsmen—a testimony, primarily to the financial and social success of their owners.”⁶⁷ Even after the Revolution the two common characteristics that many slaveholders shared were relative wealth and social prominence.

From the perspective of later years the most telling feature of slavery in Pennsylvania was its vitality. Despite the relatively limited extent of slaveholding in William Penn’s colony, the roots of that institution were deeply embedded in the social practices and traditions of the white community. In the formative years of the early eighteenth century, black bondsmen had been a potential source of labor but more important they provided a partial means of satisfying broadly based social and psychological needs. Provincial residents who by the third decade of the eighteenth century had achieved economic success possessed both the power and the desire to encourage the growth of a more differentiated society and to arrogate to themselves symbols that would bolster their own ascendancy within the social order. Thus, one form of social differentiation—a growing concentration of wealth—sponsored a different but closely related index of social prominence. Because those who purchased slaves were almost always men of wealth and influence, slaveownership came to denote economic success, public prominence and community leadership. Once this association had been firmly established in rural Pennsylvania—as it clearly was by the 1730s and 40s—slavery was bound to be a difficult institution to uproot. Integrated into the basic community structure, slavery was built upon and protected by the same complex of social assumptions that underlay other valued institutions and practices.

FOOTNOTES

1. While New York and New Jersey’s black populations were respectively 14% and 8% of the total, the number of Negroes in Pennsylvania never exceeded 2½% of that province’s population. Arthur Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation: the Abolition of Slavery in the North* (Chicago, 1967), 4-6.

2. Zilversmit, *First Emancipation*. Early historians tended to focus on what they saw as the lack of vitality in northern slavery. Generally, they argued that, as Pennsylvania’s economy became more diversified, the unskilled and docile Negro could not be profitably employed. Hence, the long run eighteenth-century trend was for slavery to die out. Edward R. Turner, *The Negro in Pennsylvania* (Washington, D.C., 1911), 14-16; Cheesman A. Herrick, *White Servitude in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1926), 23.

3. See section II of text.

4. *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington, D.C., 1960), series Z, 756.

5. In his masterful study, *The Negro in Pennsylvania*, E. R. Turner pointed out that the largest number of slave importations took place during the first half of the eighteenth century. Recently, Darold D. Wax has somewhat refined Turner's focus emphasizing in particular the years 1729 to 1766. Turner, *The Negro in Pennsylvania*, 15. Darold D. Wax, "Negro Imports into Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History*, 32 (1965), 254-87. Darold D. Wax, "Quaker Merchants and the Slave Trade," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (hereafter *P.M.H.B.*), 86 (1962), 145.

6. For this classification and the characteristics that distinguish it, see Jackson Turner Main, *The Social Structure of Revolutionary America* (Princeton, 1965), 28-34.

7. Between 1693 and 1730 the top 30 percent of the property holders in Chester County gained control of an additional 6% of the country's wealth while, over the same period, the lowest 30% lost control of 8% of the county's taxable property. James T. Lemon and Gary B. Nash, "The Distribution of Wealth in Eighteenth Century America: A Century of Change in Chester County, Pennsylvania, 1693-1802," *Journal of Social History*, 2 (1968), 11.

8. See Table III, p. 295 of text.

9. Gary B. Nash, *Quakers and Politics; Pennsylvania, 1681-1726* (Princeton, 1968).

10. R. A. Lester, "Currency Issues to Overcome Depressions in Pennsylvania, 1723 and 1729," *Journal of Political Economy*, 46 (1938), 324-58.

11. The watch, the pacing horse and the extensive personal wardrobe represent the types of objects acquired by different men as they gradually became more wealthy. This tendency may be observed in any sampling of representative probate records for the period under consideration. Also see pp. 293-95 of the text.

12. Lancaster County Will Book B, 429, 338; Chester County Will Book A, 416. The will books may be found at the Lancaster and Chester County Court Houses.

13. I used the date 1729 because in that year Lancaster County was formed out of the westernmost townships of Chester County. Also, Wax dates changes in the structure of the slave trade from that year. Actually, it would appear from his import figures that an increased demand for Negroes had been felt by 1727. His charts also show an earlier upsurge in the slave trade after 1715. This increase in demand may have been related to what Nash sees as the emergence of a coherent Philadelphia social and economic elite. Darold D. Wax, "The Negro Slave Trade in Colonial Pennsylvania" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Washington, 1962), 46-9; Nash, *Quakers and Politics*, 306-28.

14. Darold D. Wax, "Robert Ellis, Philadelphia Merchant and Slave Trader," *P.M.H.B.*, 88 (1964), 62-65.

15. This figure is based on the valuations assigned to Negro slaves in the inventory records of Chester County (1729-58) and those of Lancaster County (1739-58). This sum was approxi-

mately three times the value of a comparable white servant who was under indenture for a four year term. My calculations agree with Turner, *The Negro in Pennsylvania*, 11 n.

16. This figure is based on calculations I have made which take into account the biases of the inventory records in Chester and Lancaster counties from 1729-1758.

17. Peter Kalm, *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America* (trans. and ed. by Adolph B. Benson, New York, 1937), I, 205.

18. The £14 figure is based on the price data from Table I, p. 290 of text. Cheesman A. Herrick suggests an average price £ 14 at about mid-century. Herrick, *White Servitude*, 202. James Logan to John Penn, November 10, 1740, Logan Papers, James Logan Letter Book, 1716-43, HSP.

19. *Pennsylvania Archives*, 8th series, "Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives," Vol. III, 2564, hereafter cited as *Votes*.

20. Frank Cancian argues that in an agrarian society it is the third quartile of property holders that are the most conservative in the adoption of new agricultural techniques. Such men resist innovation "when the risk is high." It is among members of this same economic group that the incidence of slaveholding drops off significantly despite the fact that the price of a slave could not have been completely beyond their means (Table III, p. 295). Frank Cancian, "Stratification and Risk Taking: A Theory Tested on Agricultural Innovation," *American Sociological Review*, 32 (1967), 912-27.

21. According to E. R. Turner, Negro slaves "frequently" ran away. Turner, *The Negro in Pennsylvania*, 49.

22. Darold D. Wax, "The Demand for Slave Labor in Colonial Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History*, 34 (1967), 339-40.

23. *Ibid.*, 344; Herrick, *White Servitude*, 23.

24. The 1739 assessments for Lancaster County were calculated on the basis of the following scale: £ 6, 5, or 4 per 100 acres of land (depending on the nature and location of that property), £ 2 per horse, £ 1 per cow, 2s. 5p. per sheep, £ 4 per white servant, and £ 15 per Negro slave. Lancaster County Commissioners' Book, Assessment Rates for 1739. Also see the rates for 1744-45, 1750-51, 1751-52. The Commissioner's Book is on microfilm at the Lancaster County Historical Society. The provincial assessment rates for 1763 valued white servants, 15-50 years of age, at 30 s. per head and Negroes, 12-50 years of age, at £ 4 per head. The ratio of valuation was almost 3 to 1. Herrick, *White Servitude*, 204.

25. J. T. Mitchell and Henry Flanders (eds.), *The Statutes-at-Large of Pennsylvania, 1682-1801*, IV (Harrisburg, Pa.), 61. For a specific example of this law in operation see Lancaster County Road Docket, Quarter Court Sessions, II, 44, Lancaster County Court House.

26. Wax, "Quaker Merchants and the Slave Trade in Colonial Pennsylvania," 151-52. Complaints about the poor physical condition of redemptioners were no more than occasional until the large German importations began in the late 1740s and early 50s. Herrick, *White Servitude*, 187-91.

27. Darold D. Wax, "The Negro Slave Trade in Colonial Pennsylvania," 29.

28. Since there are no extant assessment lists, other than fragments, for Lancaster and Chester counties before the 1760s, this study is based on the probate records of the two counties. Those men whose inventories included slaves constitute the group of slaveholders discussed in the paper. Approximately 80% of the slaveholders in Chester County were yeoman or gentlemen farmers. Most of the slaves in Pennsylvania were deployed on plantations as farm workers or household servants. Turner, *The Negro in Pennsylvania*, 40; Wax, "The Demand for Slave Labor in Colonial Pennsylvania," 336.

29. John Pemberton to Jonah Thompson, October 7, 1755, Misc. Mss., Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore. This letter should not be construed as evidence of labor shortage. Pemberton, a Quaker minister, wanted Thompson, another Quaker minister, to find servants of "good character." The letter implies that the servants should be Friends if possible and at least favorably disposed to Quaker discipline.

30. In his study, Cheesman A. Herrick strongly emphasized the inability of the black to perform the kind of labor required in a diverse and mixed economy. Wax plays down the Negro's lack of training and the fact that they were not reared in a European culture. He does admit, however, that these must be partial considerations. Herrick, *White Servitude*, 23; Wax, "The Demand for Slave Labor in Colonial Pennsylvania," 341.

31. *Ibid.*, 337.

32. According to Franklin the disadvantages of slaveownership were many: "Slaves one with another cost £30 Sterling per Head. Reckon then the Interest of the first Purchase of a Slave, the Insurance or Risque on his Life, his Cloathing and Diet, Expenses in Sickness and Loss of Time, Loss by his Neglect of Business (Neglect is natural to the Man who is not to be benefited by his own Care or Diligence), Expense of a Driver to keep him at Work, and his Pilfering from Time to Time. . . ." Benjamin Franklin, "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind," in Leonard W. Labaree, ed., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven, 1959), IV, 229-30.

33. List of Servants Belonging to the Inhabitants of Pennsylvania and Taken into His Majesty's Service . . . (1757); HSP: Herrick, *White Servitude*, 245-49.

34. A reasonable number had served 5 to 8 years, while the minimum and maximum periods of time served by those who had enlisted were 15 days and 14 years, respectively.

35. Herrick, *White Servitude*, 178. For five years beginning in 1749, large numbers of immigrants, many of whom were Germans, arrived in Philadelphia. Richard Peters reported that 23 ships carrying 7000 Germans had arrived by October of 1749. The stability of price levels (Table I) in the face of this inundation only serves to discredit the notion that there had been a relative scarcity of servants in previous years. The remarks of contemporaries about this new flood of immigration may have been brought on by the fact that the proportion of Germans among immigrants had increased dramatically at the time when the Quaker-German political alliance was coming under attack. Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, October 26, 1749, Penn Papers, Official Correspondence, IV; James Hamilton to Thomas Penn, September 24, 1750, Penn Papers, Official Correspondence, V, HSP.

36. Account of Servants Bound and Assigned Before James Hamilton, Mayor of Philadelphia, October 1745 to October 1746, HSP.

37. There is a second possible bias: since the price data for both samples of servants is in Pennsylvania currency and since the ships that carried immigrants operated in an international market the foreign exchange rate could affect the value of redemptioners. In 1745 and 1746 the value of £100 sterling was £175 and £179 Pennsylvania currency, respectively; from 1751 to 1755 the exchange rate averaged about £168 (£170 high, £166 low) Pennsylvania currency for £'s 100 sterling. The effect of this change would be slight but what effect there was would tend to decrease prices of servants sold in the 50s relative to the 1745-46 sample. This possible bias operates to render even less significant the price difference between the two sample groups.

38. Herrick, *White Servitude*, 230.

39. This data should not be construed as a denial of short-term variations in price. There were, for example, regular fluctuations that were closely tied to the seasonal rhythms of an agrarian society. Spring and early fall, naturally enough, were the peak periods of labor demand. During April and early May of 1746 the immediate needs of the land and the uncertain knowledge of how many shiploads of redemptioners were on the way drove the price of servants up. Over a six-week period the average price of a four-year contract advanced to £16-8-0, an increase of approximately £2-10-0. The second period of high labor demand, the harvest season, rarely affected price levels for the late summer months always brought the greatest number of immigrants to Pennsylvania shores. Account of Servants Bound and Assigned Before James Hamilton; Herrick, *White Servitude*, 199. Darold D. Wax discovered seasonal fluctuations in the slave trade, too; Negroes were more difficult to sell in the winter months than during the rest of the year. This market pattern, however, may have been dictated as much by the increased hazards of acclimatization during the days of winter, as by the seasonal downturn in labor demand. Wax, "Quaker Merchants and the Colonial Slave Trade," 153.

40. *Statutes-at-Large*, II, 55; William Pim, His Book for the Assignment of Servants, Misc. Mss., Chester County Historical Society. Pim, a resident of East Caln Township, was a Chester County magistrate. For a sample indenture that has been assigned three times see under Evan Edwards, Dreer Collection, HSP. An assignment was a contractual arrangement between two or more parties in which articles of indenture were exchanged for consideration.

41. Pim died in late 1751 and the slight decrease in assignments towards the end of the 1740s may reflect growing inactivity due to sickness or old age. For Pim's will see Chester County Will Book C, 329, Chester County Court House.

42. Of the 378 assignments only 325 were completely legible. Included among these were 3 assignments out of the county, 16 assignments of apprentices and 49 assignments of 37 servants who had already been assigned once by Pim. I subtracted these exceptions from the 325 and then projected that proportion to the full sample size. The result was 311 indentured servants among the 378 assignments.

43. Assignments within the province had only to be made before one magistrate. *Statutes-at-Large*, II, 54-55. It is impossible to work out a ratio of servants to magistrate per year from Pim's book alone. Included in Pim's record were 49 original indenture contracts as opposed to direct assignments. Articles of indenture had to be signed by two magistrates and the number of people thus recruited within a county varied from area to area. Herrick, *White Servitude*, 100-12. Second, there is no way of calculating how many servants assigned by one

magistrate were reassigned by another. For a listing of J.P.'s see J. Smith Futhey and Gilbert Cope, *History of Chester County* (Philadelphia, 1881), 364-65.

44. Pennsylvania's great distinguishing feature in the second quarter of the eighteenth century was its spectacular economic and demographic growth. While Pennsylvania's population was almost quadrupling between 1720 and 1750, that of New York and New Jersey only increased by 2 to 2½ times (*Historical Statistics of the United States*, Series Z, 756.) The arrival of large numbers of immigrants and the developing export trade created an expanding market for locally produced goods. (James G. Lydon, "Philadelphia's Commerical Expansion, 1720-1739." *P.M.H.B.*, 91 [1967], 401-18.) The resulting demand for labor was, in turn, supplied by the newly landed immigrant hordes. Of those immigrants who came to Pennsylvania, a considerable proportion were indentured servants. (Abbot E. Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776*, Chapel Hill, 1947, 319-30, 323.) Because of the large supply of white labor, slaves were not in such great demand, a situation which was reflected in the size of Pennsylvania's black population.

Two other factors were important in keeping the number of blacks in Pennsylvania low. One, of course, was the existence of anti-slavery sentiment. (Sydney V. James, *A People Among Peoples*, Cambridge, Mass., 1963, 103-40; Thomas E. Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America*, New Haven, 1950, 1-67; Zilversmit, *First Emancipation*, 61-71.) The second factor was the general reluctance of the German minority to hold slaves. Apparently, slavery had no real place among the social imperatives that most Germans brought with them and once they had settled in Pennsylvania their inward looking, cultural isolation militated against the acceptance of this alien custom. Also, the well-known success of some German farmers, as well as other non-slaveowning yeomen, underlined the purely peripheral economic benefits that slaveholding could confer. The low incidence of slaveholding among the Germans until mid-century, the gradual acceptance of this institution by some members of this linguistic group in the 1760s and 70s and the apparent affinity of the Scotch-Irish for slavery during this same period indicate that an ethnic or cultural approach will be necessary in order to sort out the social significance of slavery in the later eighteenth century.

45. James Logan to John Penn, November 25, 1727, Logan Papers, James Logan Letter Book, 1716-43; James Logan to John Penn, September 11, 1728, Penn Papers, Penn Official Correspondence, I, HSP; Herrick, *White Servitude*, 142, 165. In his studies Darold D. Wax concludes that indentured servants were "more readily available" than Negro slaves. Wax, "The Demand for Slave Labor in Colonial Pennsylvania," 340-41.

Many of the immigrant ships discharged their passengers in the three lower counties, and consequently Delaware shared the benefits of a plentiful white labor supply. Despite the Maryland influence, Delaware's early involvement in tobacco cultivation and a time-sanctioned commitment by some Delaware families to slaveholding, from 1725 to 1775 the number of blacks in the colony never constituted more than 6% of the total population. *Historical Statistics of the United States*, series Z, 756.

46. Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, October 26, 1749, Peters Papers, Richard Peters Letter Book, HSP; Herrick, *White Servitude*, 178. In 1751, after two years of abnormally heavy immigration there were reports that the market was glutted with servants. Samuel Emlen, Jr. to John Pemberton, September 20, 1751, Pemberton Papers, VII, HSP.

47. Even after the recruitment there was some doubt as to how grave the labor shortage had become. When various masters petitioned the Assembly, they complained that the servants had been spirited away at a time when the labor demand was at a yearly peak; they never did

suggest that, given adequate compensation, replacements could not be found in the course of the next year. When James Logan reported the situation to Thomas Penn, he remarked that the chief problem posed by the enlistment policy was that it left many countymen saddled with the debt they had incurred by purchasing the redemptioners. If they were forced to buy replacements in the near future a not inconsiderable financial burden would be made even heavier. Herrick, *White Servitude*, 234-42; James Logan to John Penn, November 10, 1740, Logan Papers, James Logan Letter Book, 1716-43, HSP.

48. See Table II, p. 291. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 16, May 14, May 21, June 18, 1741.

49. Even in the iron industry where a familiar, skillful and reliable work force was essential, the employment of Negro slaves was not as general as one might suppose. *Votes*, III, 2679.

50. Even Arthur Zilversmit, who comes down very heavily on slavery as an "economic system" admits the complex, subjective nature of the decision to buy. Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation*, 33-53.

51. Nash, *Quakers and Politics*, 175-79.

52. Chester County Tax Lists, Chester County Historical Society.

53. John Taylor to Joseph Brinton and Caleb Pierce, October 21, 1745, Misc. Mss., Chester County Historical Society.

54. The material in this paragraph is based on a reading of the inventory records of Chester and Lancaster counties for the appropriate period. For an illustration see *Samuel Blunston's Inventory*, March 4, 1746, Griffith and Pascall Collection, HSP.

55. Valuable furnishings that could be found in the home included the silver plate, finished cabinets of chests and a looking glass. For the plantation grounds see Thomas Graeme to Thomas Penn, July 1, 1755, Penn Papers, Official Correspondence, VIII, HSP; Graeme boasted about the 150 acres that surrounded his house, claiming that "as a piece of beauty and ornament to a dwelling I dare venture to say that no nobleman in England but would be proud to have it on his seat or by his house."

56. Jeremiah Langhorne, one of the most influential men in Bucks County rode a powerful black stallion wherever he went. "Jeremiah Langhorne and His Times," Samuel C. Eastburn Collection, Folio 31, Bucks County Historical Society.

57. See Blunston's inventory for a chaise; Thomas Cookson of Lancaster ordered a coach from Philadelphia sometime before 1745. Thomas Cookson to Richard Peters, August 30, 1745, Lancaster County Misc. Papers, 1724-72, HSP.

58. The information in Table III is based on an examination of the inventory records for the periods given. The inventories are filed in the Lancaster and Chester County Court Houses. Total samples in the respective cases were 1236 and 1280. In order to check the reliability of the inventory results I performed the following exercise: I located as many of the Chester County slaveowners as possible on one of three Chester County tax lists (1730, 1740, 1750) that immediately preceded his demise; I then calculated his position as a tax payer in his home township in relationship to his fellow residents. The results set out in Table IV below indicate that the inventory information is reasonably reliable.

TABLE IV

DISTRIBUTION OF SLAVES IN CHESTER COUNTY ACCORDING
TO SIZE OF COUNTY TAX PAID BY SLAVEOWNER (NO. OF
IDENTIFIABLE SLAVEOWNERS WAS 47)

Deciles of Tax payers	No. of slaves	% of slaves
90-100	47	54.0)
80-90	19	21.8) 86.1%
70-80	9	10.3)
60-70	6	8.1
50-60	3	3.4
40-50	3	3.4
30-40	0	—
20-30	0	—
10-20	0	—
0-10	0	—
Totals	87	100.0

The distribution of Negroes according to the criterion of number held was as follows:

TABLE V

NO. OF SLAVES HELD BY INDIVIDUAL SLAVEOWNERS

	Total No. of Slave- owners	Total No. of Slaves Held	No. of Slaves Held Singly	No. of Slaves Held in 2's	No. of Slaves Held in 3's or more
Chester	58	104	34 (33%)	26 (25%)	44 (42%)
Lancaster	18	40	7 (17%)	10 (25%)	23 (58%)
Lancaster*	51	95	28 (29%)	24 (25%)	43 (46%)

*In order to check the representativeness of the Lancaster and Chester inventories I surveyed the Negro holdings listed in the fragmentary tax assessment lists for various townships of Lancaster in the 1750s. Fragments exist for Hannover 1750, Bethel 1756, Cocalico 1756, Colerain 1756, Conestoga 1756, Drumore 1751, Earl 1756, Hempfield 1758, Lampeter 1758, Lancaster 1758, Lancaster Borough 1754, Leacock 1756, Lebanon 1756, Little Britain 1758, Manor 1756, Paxton 1756, Derry 1758, Martic 1756, Rapho 1758, Salisbury 1756. According to this survey 4255 taxables held 95 Negroes.

Measured by the criterion of spacial distribution, slaveholding patterns showed the same characteristics in Lancaster and Chester. The older settled areas had the most Negroes. In Chester, for example, the townships that would eventually become Delaware County reported over 50% of the slaves. It is difficult to know just how meaningful this pattern was for areas removed from the county seat were always relatively under-represented in the probate records.

59. Wax, "The Demand for Slave Labor in Colonial Pennsylvania," 336; Turner, *The Negro in Pennsylvania*, 40. It is impossible to establish exactly what proportion of slaves were household servants. On the basis of the fragmentary evidence I have seen, it is not unlikely that 50-60% of the blacks in Pennsylvania were women or young children who would most likely be employed in household activities and light outdoor labor (such as tending the garden). It would seem reasonable to assume that this kind of labor, particularly since it was employed by families of high economic standing, was a form of conspicuous consumption for in most cases it would have been improbable that the leisure thereby gained would be spent by the ladies of the household at some more remunerative activity. For examples of slaves that were probably household servants see Chester County Will Book A, 411; B, 229; C, 334; Lancaster County Will Book A, 146, 188; B, 431, 542.

60. Although the employment of a fit and capable Negro slave on a plantation may not have been an actual example of that conspicuous consumption.

61. Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation*, 61-98.

62. Thomas Woody, *Early Quaker Education in Pennsylvania* (New York, 1920), 233-66. For sample emancipations see Chester County Will Book A, 352; B, 209; C, 94.

63. Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation*, 73-75.

64. My identification of Quaker slaveowners is based on a study of the meeting records for Lancaster and Chester Counties. The total is likely low for I omitted doubtful cases. The meeting records are on microfilm at the Friend's Historical Library in Swarthmore.

65. Wax, "Negro Imports into Pennsylvania," 256-7; Herrick, *White Servitude*, 74, 94n; Herrick's account of runaway notices in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* reflects this. His count was as follows: 1720 — 43, 1730 — 36, 1740 — 64, 1750 — 144, 1760 — 79, 1770 — 201. *Ibid.*, 74; the range of occupations are discussed in Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation*, 35-40. The Pennsylvania iron industry was one that became increasingly dependent on black labor. Contrast *Votes*, III, 2679, with Joseph E. Walker, "Negro Labor in the Charcoal Industry of Southeastern Pennsylvania," *P.M.H.B.*, 93 (1969), 466-86.

66. Woody, *Early Quaker Education*, 233-261. On the lateness of emancipation see the scattered listings of emancipations in the Miscellaneous Deed Book, Grantors, 1688-1852, and Miscellaneous Deed Book, Grantees, 1688-1858, Chester County Court House.

67. Jerome H. Wood, Jr., "The Negro in Early Pennsylvania: The Lancaster Experience, 1730-1790." (Unpublished paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, October 24, 1970, 7).