

## CONTRACT of a YOUNG APPRENTICE

### Introduction:

Young men or boys, called *apprentices*, would agree to work for a master, or *artisan*, for a number of years in exchange for being taught that person's trade. This contract between an apprentice and his master is typical of such agreements in colonial times. These arrangements were basically business deals and the obligations of both people are spelled out in detail.

### Vocabulary:

*consent*: to give permission; an agreement

*cordwainer*: someone who works with leather

*unlawful*: against the law; illegal

*matrimony*: the act or state of being married

### Early 18<sup>th</sup> century apprentice contract

This indenture witnesses that William Matthews, son of Marrat of the city of New York, does voluntarily and of his own free will and by the consent of his mother put himself as an apprentice cordwainer to Thomas Windover.

He will serve from August 15, 1718, until the full term of seven years be completed and ended. During all of this term, the said apprentice shall faithfully serve his said master, shall faithfully keep his secrets, and gladly obey his lawful commands everywhere. He shall do no damage to his said master, nor see any done by others without giving notice to his said master. He shall not waste his said master's goods nor lend them unlawfully to any. He shall not contract matrimony within the said term.

At cards, dice, or any other unlawful game, he shall not play with his own goods or the goods of others. Without permission from his master, he shall neither buy nor sell during the said term. He shall not absent himself day or night from his master's service without his permission, nor visit ale-houses, but in all things he shall behave himself as a faithful apprentice toward his master all during his said term.

The said master, during the said term, shall, by the best means or methods, teach or cause the said apprentice to be taught the art or mystery of a cordwainer. He shall find and provide unto the said apprentice meat, drink, clothing, lodging, and washing fit for an apprentice. During the said term, every night in winter he shall give the apprentice one quarter of schooling. At the end of the said term, he shall provide him with a decent new suit of clothes, four shirts, and two neckties.

Adapted from *Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1909, 1910.*

1. List some of the ways in which this contract limited young William Mathew's (the apprentice) actions. What are some things he CANNOT do according to this contract?
2. According to the contract, what does Thomas Windover (the master) owe his apprentice?
3. Why would a master like Windover want to have an apprentice? What makes this arrangement "worth it" to him?
4. How long is the term of this contract? Explain why young William and his mother would commit to this arrangement. Would you be willing to accept these conditions? Explain why or why not.