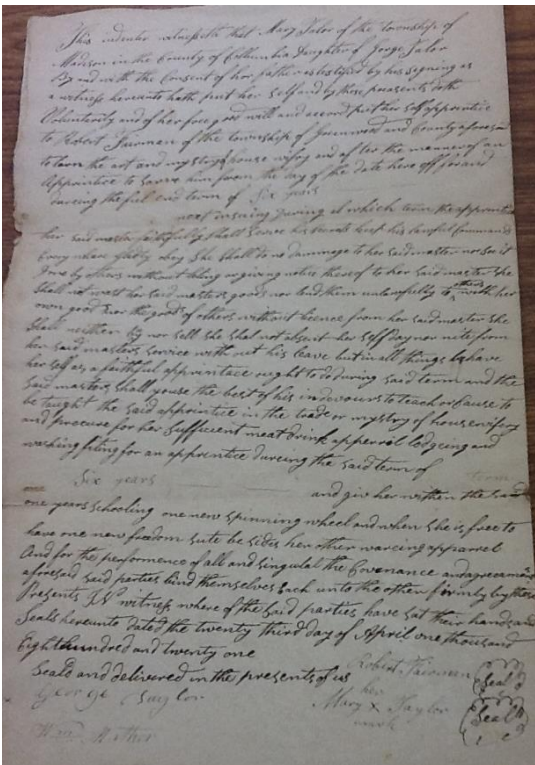


Columbia County Indentured Servants

by Dani Crossley

We were hot on the trail of Mary Taylor, born in 1810 and married in 1829 to Isaac Ikeler of Greenwood Township. We had her Bible records, knew her spouse and children, even where she and Isaac are buried, but we were clueless as to who her parents were. Chris Sanders and I were determined her 4th great-grandmother would remain a mystery no longer.

It's helpful to remember that the records on our website are updated on a continual basis. So, even though that resource had been mined before, it wouldn't hurt to check again. On the Search Databases tab, we selected Search by Name and entered "Taylor, Mary." Checking Show All brought up one entry in the Land Records category. In addition to Deeds and Draughts in this Society resource you will find other miscellaneous selections. Retrieving the folder labeled "Taylor, Mary," Chris and I anxiously withdrew a yellowed document and began to read its contents.



This indenter witnesseth that Mary Talor of the township of Madison in the County of Collumbia Daughter of Gorge Talor By and with the Consent of her father as testified by his signing as a witness herewith hath put er self and by these presents both voluntarily and of her free good will and accord put her self apprentice to Robert Fairman of the township of Greenwood and County aforesaid to learn the art and mystery of house wifery and after the manner of an apprentice to serve him from the day of the date here off for and during the full end term of six years next insuing during of which term the apprentice her said master faithfully shall serve his secrets, keep his lawful Commands, everywhere gladly obey. She shall do no damage to her said master nor see it done by others without letting or giving notice thereof to her said master. She shall not waste her said master's goods nor lend them unlawfully to others with her own goods nor the goods of others, without licence from her said master. She shall neither buy nor sell she shall not absent herself day nor nite from her said master's service without his leave but in all things behave herself as a faithful apprentice ought to do during said term

and the said master shall youse (use) the best of his indevours to teach or Cause to be taught the said apprentice in the trade or mystery of housewifery and procure for her sufficient meat, drink, apparel, lodging and working fitting for an apprentice during the said term of six years and give her within the said term on years schooling, one new spinning wheel and when she is free to leave one new freedom suit besides her other wearing apparel. And for the performance of all and singular the Covenant and agreement aforesaid said parties bind themselves each to the other firmly by these presents in witness whereof the said parties have sat their hands and seals hereunto dated the twenty-third day of April one thousand eight hundred and twenty-one.

Sealed and delivered in the presents of us: Robert Fairman, Mary Taylor (her mark), George Taylor, Wm. Mather.

The above is transcribed with most of the original spellings and punctuation (or lack thereof) except where clarity was needed.

While we were still spellbound by this document, we came upon a like indenture for Mary's brother John. He was probably of similar age and was indentured for 17-1/2 years to John Oliver of Greenwood Township by his father, George Taylor, to learn the art and mystery of weaving.

Now that we had her father's name, we tried to locate George Taylor in census and tax records. He is in the 1800 and 1810 census in Derry Township, Northumberland County (before Columbia was created in 1813). He has one daughter in 1800 and three sons and three daughters in 1810, one of whom is most likely Mary. We know he was in Madison Township in 1821 when the indentures were signed, but cannot locate him in the census again until 1850, where he is a 70-year-old man (born 1780), pauper, living with 50-year-old Christianna Johnston and her husband, Henry, in Madison Township. Christianna is probably the one daughter enumerated in the 1800 census. No sign of him in 1860, nor 1820, 1830, or 1840.

Similar results were found when examining the tax records. He shows up crossed out in Madison Township in 1821. Usually when the entry is crossed out in one tax year it is because the tax collector started with last year's list and verified as each person was contacted, crossing out those who had left the area. But, of course, he doesn't appear in the 1820 tax list, so that doesn't make any sense. Our goal was to find him and his children listed at the end of the township recordings where the poor children who need to be educated by the county are spelled out. For our area, this practice seems to have started with the 1814 tax records. George Taylor is just not there during the years 1814-1820. I did find him in 1805, 1808 and 1811 in Derry Township, but no poor children listings existed during those years.

For the moment, we are heavily in favor of believing that George Taylor is our Mary Taylor's father. But, as always seems to be the case in genealogy research, one answer just produces a passel of new questions:

1. Where was George Taylor in the 1820-1840 census records?
2. What happened to cause him to indenture his children?
3. Did his wife die unexpectedly?
4. Why isn't he in the Columbia County tax records for 1814-1820?
5. Why do Beers and Mary's Bible pages both claim she is from New Jersey, when the census records indicate both she and her parents were born in Pennsylvania?
6. What happened to indentured brother John Taylor?

Finding answers to those questions is an adventure for another time! For now, we will be happy to have found Mary and her father George and also happy to have discovered a vital new resource at our Society. I think we're all familiar with the method by which many immigrants arrived in this country, but indentured servants in Columbia County? Who knew!