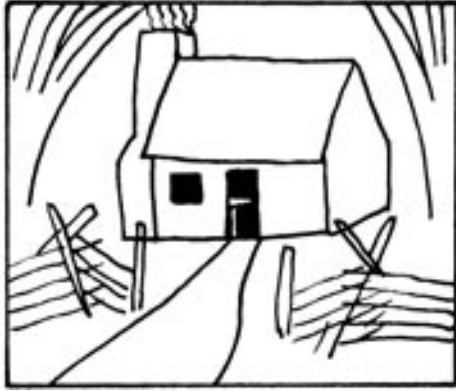


INTRODUCTION



Although this book is a work of fiction, based on the 18th century life portrayed at The Claude Moore Colonial Farm in McLean, Virginia, most people in the mid-Atlantic region of the colonies lived a similar life, few lived on large plantations.

Life for almost everyone was harder two hundred years ago: no running water, no central heat, substandard housing for most people (i.e., mud and wattle chimneys, packed dirt floors, little furniture) and work, work, work just to eat and keep sheltered. Children could not be coddled; they had to work right alongside their parents.

The term “child abuse” wasn’t even coined until the twentieth century. In prior centuries many people believed “sparing the rod spoiled the child”; in other words, children should be beaten to ensure they grew obedient and hard working. Governor William

Bradford in 1622 wrote, “Necessity was a taskmaster over them and so the Puritans were forced to be taskmasters, not only to their servants, but in a way to their dearest children. This greatly wounded the tender hearts of many a loving father and mother.”

By the time we meet Abigail in May, 1773, according to *The History of the European Family in Early Modern Times, 1500-1789*, many, if not most boys and girls spent some time in servitude, working as domestic servants (girls) or as apprentices or farmhands (boys). As late as the nineteenth century, seventy-five per cent of boys and fifty per cent of girls in northwestern Europe were in service. The majority went no more than five miles from home, but others traveled farther. The situation may well have been similar in the colonies.

I have attempted to keep this book as accurate as possible to the average 18th century life of most people. The grammar, however, sounds wrong to us today. It is important, though, to remember that language changes; not only over the centuries, but even over a decade. I am including words that are no longer used but have also included a Glossary so that you can look up a word and more easily understand what you are reading.

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