

# MONEY & JOBS

## Introduction

Thank you for using the DAR Museum's Money & Jobs Portable Education Program!

Following is a brief introduction to the concept of this program and some related historical information, meant as background information for the teacher. We recommend the following order for the lessons, although you may choose to adjust it.

Lessons:

- Identify Jobs
- Which Job Would You Want
- Apprenticeship
- Math with Money
- Money in the Marketplace

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## MONEY

### English currency

Money in colonial America was not a straightforward matter. As a colony of England, it used English money as the basis for its currency. The English monetary system was based on the pound sterling. Prices were expressed in pounds, shillings, and pence. There was no coin for a pound, it was just a unit of measurement, though there was a silver shilling coin and a silver penny coin. The halfpenny and farthing (1/4 of a penny) were copper. Other coins included gold guineas and silver crowns.

English currency was not a base ten system until 1971. In the 1700s, there were 12 pence in a shilling and 20 shillings in a pound. The abbreviations were:

Pound = l. or £ (from the Latin word *libra*, meaning a pound)

Shilling = s. (from the Latin word *solidus*, a Roman coin)

Penny = d. (from the Latin word *denarius*, a Roman coin)

### The situation in America

England did not allow the American colonies to mint their own coins, and while there were coins that came from England, America had a chronic shortage. To compensate for the shortage of English coins, Americans used and accepted the coins from many other countries. Here is a chart showing the value of different coins as published in the *Virginia Almanack*, 1749 (reprinted by Colonial Williamsburg). The exchange rate differed between colonies and changed over time.

A Table of the Value of Gold and Silver Coins, as they now pass in PENNSYLVANIA, by Agreement.					
		<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>	
<b>E</b> nglish Guineas at	1	14	0		Spanish Pistoles not lighter
French Guineas	1	13	6		than 4 <i>dwt.</i> 6 <i>gr.</i> -
Moidores - - - -	2	3	6		Arabian Chequins - -
Johannes's - - - -	5	15	0		Other Gold Coin, <i>per Ounc.</i>
Half Johannes's - -	2	17	6		French Silver Crowns
Carolines - - - -	1	14	0		Spanish milled Piece of 8.
Dutch or German Ducates	0	14	0		Other good Coined Spanish
French milled Pistoles	1	6	0		Silver, <i>per Ounce</i> -

Some coins were “milled,” which means the edges were ridged, as a security measure to prevent thieves from shaving bits of the precious metal off the coin.

### Paper money

Each American colony also printed its own paper money. Paper money was not as dependable as coins, though, and the notes were usually worth less than the amount printed on them.

## **JOBS**

### **The job market**

The job market in the American colonies was different from Europe. England wanted the American colonies to be a market for finished goods, and not compete with English manufacture. The government preferred that Americans supply raw materials, which would go to England and be made into finished goods, which Americans would then buy. England prevented certain advancements in technology from reaching the American colonies, such as improved equipment for processing fiber into fabric, and improved sheep breeds with better wool. England even went so far as to outlaw the manufacture of certain items at different times, to ensure that the colonists would purchase them from England.

Between the restrictions on manufacture and a shortage of skilled labor, many of the trades practiced in Europe (often in large, factory-like settings) were not practiced to the same extent in America. An example is basketmaking; there were professional basketmakers in Europe but in America it was a domestic activity in which families made their own. There were many other trades that did not come to America during the 1700s, and so Americans imported and purchased these items in stores.

### **American jobs**

Nevertheless, there was a need for many different jobs in America. Most Americans in the 1700s were farmers, even if they had another job or trade. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, for example, were wealthy gentlemen who owned large farms. While they had both hired and enslaved workers to actually work the soil, they carefully monitored their farms and wrote about them extensively in letters and journals.

There was a range of skill associated with each job, as there is today. Brickmakers were considered unskilled workers, while wigmakers and apothecaries underwent extended periods of training. It is difficult to calculate income, however, because most people were self-employed and there was no income tax so no one had to report how much they made. The only people for whom we have income data are those who were employed by someone else, for example a schoolmaster in Virginia in 1755 was paid 60 pounds... but was also allowed to take on other students, so he might have earned more. In the mid-1700s, a Swedish man named Peter Kalm traveled through the

American colonies and in the 1770 translation of his book, *Travels Into North America*, he wrote:

A man-servant-- who has some abilities, gets between sixteen and twenty pounds in Pennsylvania currency, but those in the country do not get so much. A servantmaid gets eight or ten pounds a year— these servants have their food besides their wages, but must buy their own clothes, and what they get of these, they must thank their master's goodness for.

In comparison, here was the price at the time for:

saddle:	2 l.
wig:	1 l. 12 s. 6d.
hoe:	5 s. 6 d.
one yard of flannel cloth:	1 s. 3 d.
pair of shoes	ranged from 2 s. 6 d. to 2 l.

## **Apprenticeship**

Job training was often (though not always) through apprenticeship. An apprentice was legally bound to a master in order to learn the trade. Details of each contract varied, but usually specified what the master was to provide (training, food, clothing, lodging), how the apprentice was to act (refrain from indecent behavior, not get married during the apprenticeship, etc.), and how long the apprenticeship was to last. Apprenticeships were set for either a period of time (seven years was common in England, but shorter apprenticeships of four or five years were more common in America) or until the apprentice reached a certain age. The archaic phrase “art and mystery” used in these contracts simply meant the skills and information needed to practice the trade.

Apprenticeship contracts were called indentures. This referred to the practice of writing two copies of the document on the same sheet of paper, then cutting them apart in a pattern— usually scallops or waves— as a security measure. The paper was thus “indented,” with the master keeping one copy and the parents or guardians of the apprentice keeping the other. In any question about the indenture, for example during a court case, the indenture could be proved genuine by comparing how the two copies fit

together. Some indentures were handwritten, while others were sold by printers as fill-in-the-blank forms.

Apprentices usually did not have a choice in what trade or master they were apprenticed to. Many ran away, including the young Benjamin Franklin! Newspapers at the time frequently printed advertisements for runaway apprentices.

After an apprenticeship was over, the apprentice became a journeyman. This meant the journeyman could work for any master, for wages. A journeyman became a master upon setting up their own shop; masters were not necessarily more skilled than journeymen, they were simply self-employed rather than an employee.

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