

Source G: Plymouth colony court records

Background: These are all records from court cases involving indentured servants. What do they show us about the rights of masters and servants? What do they show about the punishments servants would receive for breaking their contracts?

January 10, 1632

Thomas Brian, the servant of Samuel Eedy, was brought before the Governor ... because the said Thomas had run away and absented himself five days from his masters service, and being lost in the wood, and found by an Indian. Was forced to return; and for this his offence was privately whipped before the Governor

1639

James Till, of Scittuate, for [stealing] corn [and] a shirt from William Parker of Scittuate, when he was servant to him in his house, as also for [stealing] corn from John Emerson [and] others, when he was servant to them, which were confessed by him in Court, was censured to be whipt [and] burnt in the shoulder, and to make restitution to his master Emerson, for the corn he stole from him, six bushels of corn, wither in service, corn, or otherwise.

June 8, 1655

We present Susanna, the wife of Robert Latham, for being in a great measure guilty, with her said husband, in [behaving] cruelly towards their late servant, John Walker, in not affording him convenient food, payment, and lodging; especially in her husband's absence, in forcing him to bring a log beyond his strength.