

diary of the irascible Virginia slaveholder Landon Carter, who complains constantly about his bondswomen. Documents 3 and 4, both taken from George Washington's diaries, are more matter-of-fact. In Document 3, Washington took the time in February 1786 to list all his slaves individually; in Document 4, extracted from entries written from 1786 through 1788, he details the work assignments of his enslaved field hands. Document 5 is the recollections of an old woman, Eulalia Perez, who worked in a Spanish mission in California in the early nineteenth century. Together, these documents highlight the differences and similarities of women's labor in the various regions that would become the United States.

1. Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker, a Wealthy Philadelphian, Describes Her Work and That of Other Women, 1758–1794

Work done in part of the Years: 175[7,] 1758: 1759: 1760.

Work'd a Irish stitch Pocket Book for Catn. Morgan.

A Double Pocket Book in Irish Stitch for Peggy Parr.

A Irish stich Purse Pincushon for Ditto.

Plated a Watch String for Saml. Wharton.

A Watch String for John Hunt.

Knit a round Pincushon for R. Drinker.

Knit a round Pincushon for R. Coleman. . . .

Crown'd a Boys cap, for R. Rawle.

Help'd to make Baby Cloaths, for Betty Smith at Point.

Work'd a Irishstitch Tea Kittle holder for M. Parr.

Work'd a large silk Needle Book, in several stitches, for self.

A pair of silk Sleeve-strings for Ditto.

A pair of Irishstitch Garters for Ditto. . . .

Novr. the 1. 1758. Finish'd a pair of White Wosted Stockings for self.

Finish'd 7 shifts for self.

Finish'd Knitting a pair of blue yarn Stockings, for Susey Georges youngest Child.

Finish'd Knitting a pair of White wosted Stockings for Polly. . . .

1759 Plated 2 Horse-Whip-strings for B. Moode.

July the 19 Plated a Watch-string for Henry Drinker.

Augt. the 31: 1759: Finish'd Knitting a pair of fine thread Stockings for Self.

Sept. the 14 Finish'd 2 Tea Kittle-Holders, in Irish Stitch for. . . .

May the 9. 1760 Finish'd working a Screen, in Irishstitch Flowers.

May the 21, Finish'd Knitting a pair of thread Stockings for self. . . .

Decemr. the 31. Finish'd knitting a pair white thread Stockings for self.

1761. Janry. the 2. Plated a Watch-string for Henry Drinker.

Janry. the 8, Finish'd Knitting a pair of Silk Mittins for Self. . . .

27 [April 1759] Went in the Afternoon with M Parr, to M. Burrows and R[ebecca]

Steels, and several other Shops; she came home and drank Tea with us. . . .

13 [July 1759] went to R Steels to buy Silk. . . .

14 Stay'd at home all Day; Nancy Mitchell, call'd in the After-noon to Borrow a Pocket-Book, for a Patren. . . .

12 [February 1760] Peggy, Polly & Self, busy knitting. . . .

6 [October 1760] Becky Rawle, and Caty Howel, spent this Afternoon with us—up stairs helping to Quilt. . . .

[She marries Henry Drinker, 1761.]

7 [September 1762] Sister and self very busy Ironing &c. . . .

26 [August 1763] put a Gown skirt in the Frame, to Quilt this Afternoon. . . .

30 Sister and self finish'd my Quilt this Afternoon. . . .

1 [July 1765] Phebe Morris . . . came to fit a Body Linning for me. . . .

15 Phebe Morris here this Afternoon fitting a Gown for me, Molly Worrel with Sitgreaves's Baby who she Nurses, were also here. . . .

1 December [1766] Sally Gardner came to live with us, at 2/6 p Week. . . .

22 June 1771 George Baker drove up Polly Campbell, whome I have hir'd this day to tind my little Henry. . . .

13 [July 1771] Dr. D. says I must wean my little Henry or get a nurse for him, either seems hard—but I must submitt. . . .

18 agree'd with [Sally Oats] to take my Sweet little Henry to Nurse. . . .

29 [August 1771] we set forward to David Levans 18 Miles from Reding, a Tavern in Manatawny, to this place we got about Dusk. . . . This Evening our Landlady, a dirty old Dutch Woman, refused Changing very dirty, for Clean Sheets, tho after much intreaty, she pretend'd to comply, but to our mortification found she had taken the same sheets, sprinkled them, then Iron'd and hung 'em by the fire and placed them again on the Bed; so that we were necessitated to use our cloaks &c & this Night slepp'd without sheets.—with the assistance of our two Servants cooking, we sup'd pretty Well and slep'd better than we had any Reason to expect, all in one Room. . . .

30 from this place to the Widdow Albrights at Macungee we proceeded about 8 miles, and then Breakfasted tolerably for a Dutch House. . . .

29 [September 1771] [on a second journey] about Dusk we got to the Widdow Jemmisons, here sup'd and lodg'd. . . .

23 January 1779 our Maid Elizabeth, has been in Bed all day, with the ague and Fiver, Sister is very much taken up in the Kitchen, having none but little John to help, Molly Brookhouse occasionally. . . .

20 [February 1779] Wid. Rusel [here] to measure the Girls for Stays. . . .

28 June [1779] I took Molly [her daughter] to School to Betsy Devonshire. . . .

9 [August 1779] we have had no Maid Servant for some weeks past but Molly Brookhouse who comes before dinner and goes away in the afternoon. . . .

10 [February 1780] I dismist my maid Caty Paterson this afternoon, on her return home after 2 or 3 days frolicking, our old maid Molly Hensel is to Supply her place tomorrow. . . .

23 [August 1784] a little before 7 before I was up, S Heartshorn sent for me;—she was deliver'd about 8 of a fine Girl,—who they call Susanna; I breakfasted there, came home about 9. . . .

30 [May 1792] Betsy Fordham at work here. . . .

19 [November 1793] Caty Mullen here to day, in great trouble; she came over from Irland a poor widdow, when her 2 Sons were small, she work'd industreously

for their and her own maintainance, put them apprentice, took great care of them during that term, they have been some years free, and have work'd at their trades with reputation; she hop'd that they would be her support in the decline of Life, but how uncertain are all human prospects? they were both taken this fall with the prevailing disease [yellow fever], and died, one the day after the other, the poor mother 'tho very ill at the same time surviv'd them, and may be truly call'd a 'lone woman. . . .

11 April [1794] S S[wett] spent the day try'd on a gown for me. . . .

26 Betsy Fordham left us this afternoon, she has been near 2 weeks at work for us. . . .

20 October [1794] S Swett fitted a mantua gown on me, which I had provided [ordered] in the Summer, she is so kind to do what little I want in that way for me, I beleive I never had a gown better made in my life, and she is now within about seven weeks of 73 years of age, to work so neatly at such an age is the cause of my making the memorandum.

2. Landon Carter Complains About His Female Slaves, 1771–1773

[July 9, 1771]

I find the [slaves at] Fork will not finish the field they are in this day as I expected. The pretence is Nanny was sick one day, when they all had worked half a day in that field before they went into it 4 days ago. But even with overseers this is a constant excuse, if any one person, the most trifling hand, is ill but a day or a piece of a day, it generally excuses the loss of a whole day's work of the gang. . . . The reason is everybody is lazy and careless enough to want an excuse and Catch at anything.

I went to see my cow pen ground and I find that missing and much injured by the horses. I ordered Sukey to make up the hills and set in the double plants at her peril. . . .

[August 10, 1771]

Mary, McGinnis' daughter, at best from a whimsical mother has been hitherto a sound healthy wench, though full of Hysteric frights when ever anything ailed her. I remember once she sat crying as if somebody had whipped her for a trifling belly ache. And 3 weeks agoe she cryed herself into fits because she was sick at the Stomach, and about 10 days agoe A pain in her shoulders gave her more fits. I had her up here and by evacuations joined with nervines She was grown quite well; and of her own accord went out to work this morning; but by 9 o'clock a little fever brought her to her tears and she is as bad as ever. She has a Sister and brother exactly the same; any little complaint fills them with the Apprehensions of death. Nay, the old jade, the mother, cannot have a finger ach but the hole plantations hears her roar.

Jack P. Greene, ed., *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752–1778* (University Press of Virginia, 1965) 2:588–589; 609–610, 672–673, 733, 742, 755.

As to this wench, nothing so odd. She has a full pulse, though too quick but yet soft which indicates she cannot want bleeding, and her looks are those of perfect health. . . . Perhaps she may be breeding; but that she will not confess; and as to every natural complaint, I am given to understand she is quite well. It would possibly be barbarity, but I apprehend there is some trick in all this. . . .

[April 22, 1772]

Billy Beale tells me the cowkeeper, Sicely, neglected her cattle yesterday and let a cow go into the mire below the barn swamp where she perished. I cannot tell what to do with these sordid creatures. The wench is kept to do nothing else but constantly to follow the cattle. But I suppose, tired with such a constant employment, though a very easy one, she looks herself to sleep and so this injury happened; for Beale says it was really a fine cow. I have ordered the wench to be tyed up and severely slashed to keep her care if possible; but I am afraid it will not be long enough remembered. It seems this is the first of that kind which we have lost up here this year. . . .

[September 25, 1772]

There is nothing so absurd as the generality of negroes are. If in the beginning of cutting tobacco without watching they will cut all before them, and now, when there is danger of losing the tobacco by the frost, should it happen, they will not cut plants really ripe because they may be thicker just as if there was time to let it stand longer. My Jades at the Fork would not cut half this they might have done yesterday, because they thought it would be thicker; however I set them in today and made them cut every good plant. . . .

[November 21, 1772]

McGinnis's Jamy's foot, a good whipping and a stout vomit has at last cured him; for I saw his fevers the affect of these fall intermittants, and by proceeding that way he is got about. And so has Mr. Will's joints got clear of their pains by giving a revulsion by his back.

Mrs. Dairy Mary is also cured the same way of her invisible pain in her hip. The mother and sister fell on Beale when he went to apply my Prescription; but by the stumps of the switches they got also cured of their rebellious impudence. . . .

[June 5, 1773]

I find it is almost impossible to make a negro do his work well. No orders can engage it, no encouragement persuade it, nor no Punishment oblige it. It was but on friday several were whipped for leaving the weeds in the middle of the corn rows, and yesterday I would indulge the weakness of some of the wenches. I put them to weeding the light ground Corn expressly ordering them to work from side to side the whole row and yet today I saw that not one had done so, but the whole is to be done over again.