

## An Orphan's Apprenticeship <sup>[1]</sup>

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*Apprenticeships were not uncommon in Colonial North Carolina, although the system was much less formal than the Apprenticeship system in England. Apprenticeships could be voluntary or compulsory. In the case of Jesse Cook, a young man in Bertie County during the mid eighteenth century, it was likely that his apprenticeship as a shipwright was compulsory following the death of his father, which left Cook an orphan. A transcription of his indenture -- the contract that bonded Cook to Hezekiah Mohun until his 21st birthday -- is below.*

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This Indenture made the Twenty-Seventh day of April in the year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty Nine between John Brown [Esquire](#) one of the [Justices of the County Court](#) of Bertie and his Successors of the one Part and Hezekiah Mohun of the same County and Province [Ship Wright](#) of the other Part. Witnesseth that the said John Brown by Virtue of the Power and Authority in him (by Law) vested do Put and Bind unto the said Hezekiah Mohun as an [Apprentice](#) <sup>[2]</sup> Jesse Cook Orphan (or Minor) of Samuel Cook [Decd.](#) about the age of Seventeen years; The said Jesse Cook, with the said Hezekiah Mohun to Live untill he shall Accomplish the age of Twenty One years: during all which Term or Time the said Jesse Cook his said Master he shall faithfully Serve and all his lawful Commands everywhere Gladly Obey. Neither shall the said Jesse Cook frequent [Publick Houses, Contract Matrimony or Commit Fornication](#) during the said Term. And the said Hezekiah Mohun doth Covenant Promise and Agree to and with the said John Brown and his Successors that he will Teach or Cause to be Taught and Instructed the said Jesse Cook in the art and [Mistry](#) of a Ship Wright in the Best Manner that he Can, And also that he will find and Provide for the said Jesse Cook, Sufficient Meat Drink apparel Washing and Lodging in Sickness and in health for and during the said Term; And the said Hezekiah Mohun doth further Covenant and Oblige himself to Cause the said Jesse Cook to be Taught to Read and Write; And also [at the Expiration of the said Term Pay to the said Apprentice what the Law in that Case doth allow](#)

In Testimony whereof the Parties to [these presents](#) <sup>[3]</sup> have hereunto Set their hands and Seals the day and year first above Written.

Sealed and Delivered in Presence of John Brown.

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### Primary Source Citation:

Wynns, Benjamin. Indenture Contract. 1759. Bertie County, NC, County Records, North Carolina State Archives (CR.010.101.7).

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