



Reliving History, Inc.

Supporting the ca. 1751 Peter Burr House

The oldest wood frame house in West Virginia

www.RelivingHistoryInc.org

Contact us for upcoming events and to arrange presentations at your school or organization.

The Role of Children

Children are our most sacred treasure; they are our footsteps to the future.

The English colonists lived during a time when people thought differently about children than we think today. For example, today's parents allow their children to make choices about things they'd like to do during their childhood, like choosing to play a musical instrument or deciding where to go during summer vacation. But, back in the 17th & 18th centuries, parents made all the decisions about a child's life.



Chores children were expected to do include:

- Preparing fields for planting
- Sowing seeds
- Weeding
- Harvesting
- Caring for animals
- Milking
- Tending livestock
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Woodworking
- Gardening
- Cooking
- Preserving food
- Watching younger children
- Sewing
- Mending clothes & bedding
- Fetching water
- Collecting eggs
- Pinching tobacco worms off plants
- Chopping & carrying firewood

Parents believed that children should be taught the skills they would need to survive as an adult. This meant that a large part of a child's day was filled with work. Children as young as five ran errands, fetched wood and water, or even herded chickens! Girls often by the age of four learned to embroidery. As children got older, their work became even more important to the family.

Older boys helped their fathers and were trained to fill the role of head of household, which, as they got older and married, they would soon occupy. Older girls worked very closely with their mothers to be trained to run a household.

Though the children were often busy working, their parents sometimes allowed them to play games. Paintings from the 17th century show children playing games that are still recognizable today, such as leapfrog, marbles, and ball and cup. They thought that the best kind of games and sports for children were those that exercised their bodies (like running races) or their mind (like draughts). They also liked children to play games in which they practiced skills that they would need later in life (like playing house or playing with dolls). But they didn't like their children to play games that involved luck because that was too much like gambling.

Many parents taught their children reading and writing at home. This usually occurred in the evenings or in the winter when there wasn't much work to be done. Many of the parents were very religious and used the Bible to teach their children to read.

Visit the Peter Burr House

170 E. Burr Blvd., Kearneysville, WV 25430

(at Burr Industrial Park in the far right back corner)

See website for directions: www.RelivingHistoryInc.org