Richard Freethorne Writes to His Mother and Father, 1623

Loving and kind father and mother, my most humble duty remembered to you in God of your good health, as I see myself am at the making herofe, this is to let you understand that your Child am in a most heavy Case by reason of the nature of the Country is such that it Cause much sickness, as the scurvy and the bloody flux [dysentery], and divers other diseases, which make the body very poor, and Weak, and when we are sick there is nothing to Comfort us; for since I came out of the ship, I never ate any thing but peas and lobolli (that is water gruel) as for deer or venison I never saw any since I came into this land, there is indeed some fowl, but We are not allowed to go and get it, but must Work hard both early and late for a mess of water gruel, and a mouthful of bread, and beef, a mouthful of bread for a penny loaf must serve for 4 men which is most pitiful if you did know as much as I, when people cry out day, and night, Oh that they were in England without their limbs and would not care to lose any limb to be in England again, yea through they beg from door to door, for we live in fear of the Enemy every hour, yet we have had a Combat with them on the Sunday before Shrovetide, and we took two alive, and make slaves of them, but it was by policy, for we are in great danger, for our Plantation is very weak, by reason of the dearth, and sickness, of our Company, for we came but Twenty for the merchants, and they half dead Just; as we look every hour When two more should go, yet there came some for other men yet to live with us, of which there is but one alive, and our Lieutenant is dead, and his father, and his brother, and there was some 5 or 6 of the last year's 20 of which there is but 3 left, so that we are fain to get other men to plant with us, and yet we are but 32 to fight against 3000 if they should Come, and the nighest help that We have is ten miles of us, and when the rogues overcame this place last, they slew 80 persons. How then shall we doe for we lie even in their teeth, they may easily take us but that God is mercifull, and can save with few as well as with many; as he showed to Gilead and like Gilead's soldiers if they lapped water, we drink water which is but Weak, and I have nothing to Comfort me, nor there is nothing to be gotten here but sickness, and death, except that one had money to lay out in some things for profit; But I have nothing at all, no not a shirt to my backe, but two Rags nor no Clothes, but one poor suit, nor but one pair of shoes, but one pair of stockings, but one Cap, but two bands, my Cloak is stolen by one of my own fellows, and to his dying hour would not tell me what he did with it but some of my fellows saw him have butter and beef out of a ship, which my Cloak I doubt [think] paid for, so that I have not a penny, nor a half penny Worth to help me to either spice, or sugar, or strong Waters, without the which one cannot live here, for as strong beer in England doth fatten and strengthen them so water here doth wash and weaken these here, only keep life and soul together. But I am not half a quarter so strong as I was in England, and all is for want

Some of the spelling in this document has been modernized.
This Indenture made the 1st day of May, 1635, in the yeare of the prince and glyde after, William Byard, esquire, of New Plymouth, in the County and Colony of New England, and afterwards Captain of the said Plymouth, and thereafter of the Towne of New York, in the Province of New York, deceased, doth give and sell unto Geo. White, the said Geo. White, his Heirs and Assigns, for ever and ever, the body and soul of Richard Pethorne, sometime of Plymouth, in New England, servant to the said Geo. White.

The said Richard Pethorne, being a minor, doth give and sell unto the said Geo. White, his Heirs and Assigns, the said Richard Pethorne, all his right and title thereto, and the said Richard Pethorne, being a minor, doth hereby and doth in the time hereafter, in behalf of himself and his posterity, release the said Geo. White, his Heirs and Assigns, from all claims or demands whatsoever, arising out of or by reason of the said indenture.

And the said Geo. White, his Heirs and Assigns, doth hereby release the said Richard Pethorne, his Heirs and Assigns, from all claims or demands whatsoever, arising out of or by reason of the said indenture.

In witness whereof the said Geo. White and the said Richard Pethorne, have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

Geo. White

Richard Pethorne