

United States Daughters of 1812
A Minute in History at the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House #4
Grace Wisher

December 16, 1809, Mary Pickersgill agrees to pay the sum of twelve dollars and provide a Baize dress as part of the indenture contract for Jenny Wisher's ten-year-old daughter Grace Wisher. Grace, a free African American girl, was indentured to Mary Pickersgill for six years to learn house work and plain sewing. During the summer of 1813, Grace, then aged 13 the same as Mary's daughter Caroline Pickersgill, would have been three years into her indenture and certainly would have been expected to take part in household work and business of flag making, including being present and active in the creation of the Star-Spangled Banner. Grace held a unique role in the ecosystem of the Flag House. As an indentured apprentice she would have worked closely alongside Mary and the other Young-Pickersgill women, but would have been confronted by the disparity in her household duties compared to the African American enslaved women owned by Mary during this period who were not afforded the same opportunities Grace was as a free girl of color.



Quilt artist Grandmother Edna Lawrence stitches red and white fabric into her quilt dedicated to Grace Wisher for her exhibit, *Fabric Expressions*, at the Flag House, 2018 – 2019.

The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House is operated by the
Star-Spangled Banner Flag House Association, a nonprofit organization.

Indenture of Grace Wisher: Grace Wisher to Mary Pickersgill

This Indenture Witnesseth that Grace Wisher a free Girl of Colour, hath put herself and by and with the consent and approbation of her mother Jenny Wisher doth voluntarily and of her own free will and accord put herself to Mrs. Mary Pickersgill to learn the art and mystery of Housework and plain sewing after the manner of an apprentice to serve the said Mary Pickersgill from the day of the date hereof and during and to the full end and Term of six years next ensuing. During all which Term the said apprentice her said Mistress faithfully shall serve, her secrets keep, her lawful commands every at all times readily obey, she shall do no Damage to her said Mistress nor see or suffer it to be done by others without giving notice thereof to her said Mistress. She shall not waste her said Mistress Goods nor lend them unlawfully to any she shall not Contract Matrimony within the said Term, without license from her said Mistress. She shall neither buy nor sell, she shall not absent herself day nor night from her said Mistresses service without leave, but in all things behave herself as a good and faithful apprentice ought to do, during the said Term, and the said Mistress on her part shall use the utmost of her Endeavour to teach or cause to be taught or instructed the said apprentice the art of Housework and plain sewing, or needle work, and provide for her sufficient meat drink Cloathing washing & Lodging, suitable for such an apprentice during the term aforesaid, and at the Experation of said Term Customary freedom dues and

it is agreed between the said Jenny Wisher and the said Mary Pickersgill that the said Mary shall advance to the said Jenny twelve dollars at the time of executing these presents, out of which sum the said Jenny is to purchase for the apprentice Grace Wisher a dress of Baize cloth or at the end of a Term of twelve months from the date hereof to pay the said Jenny Wisher a further sum of twelve Dollars deducting so much therefrom as may be necessary for the comfortable cloathing of said apprentice, particular bills or accounts whereof are to be furnished by the said Mary Pickersgill and for the true performance full and singular the covenants and agreements aforesaid, the parties bind themselves to each other firmly by these presents, in witness whereof the said parties have interchangeably set their hands and seals this Sixteenth day of December 1809.

Subscribed and acknowledged before
Thomas Bailey, a Justice of the Peace
for Baltimore County
Mary Pickersgill
Grace Wisher (her mark)
Jenny Wisher (her mark)
Approved and ordered to be Recorded by the Orphans Court of
Baltimore County this 6th day of January 1810.

Baltimore 16th of December 1809 Receive of Mrs. Mary Pickersgill
the sum of twelve dollars including the Baize Dress, being the
consideration within mentioned to be paid to me in advance.
Jenny Wisher (her mark)