



The Confession of John Grimes _____ 1765

John Grimes was one of 50,000 convicted criminals transported to America by the British government to be "sold" as indentured servants. In 1765 Grimes and two other Irish servants were convicted of burglary in New Jersey and sentenced to death by hanging. Felons' final statements were often published as pamphlets to be circulated on execution day — a common practice of the time to underscore the consequences of illegal behavior. Whose perspective is reflected in the confession? How might Grimes have rewritten the confession to reflect his perspective? In what ways would he have agreed with the anonymous author and publisher?

I JOHN GRIMES, aged Twenty-two Years, was born in the West of *Ireland*, in a small Village, of low, mean [poor] Parents, who had neither Ability nor Opportunity to give me any Education, so that from my Infancy I was brought up to Idleness and thieving, which, instead of being corrected in me, was rather encouraged; at least I became so notorious, that I was obliged to leave that Part of the country, and come to *Dublin*, and being bred to no Business, worked on board Ships at the Leys, but following my old Trade, I was dismissed from all Employment for Dishonesty and Thieving; I subsisted sometime in that City by joining a Gang of Street Robbers and Pick Pockets, but Justice overtaking them, and the heads of the Gang being hanged, and others impeaching me, I was once more obliged to abscond, and from thence went over to *Liverpool*, but being known there, I travelled to *Bristol*, and from thence to *London*, following my Trade of Thieving all along; and there turning Foot Pad [highway bandit], and robbing a Gentleman at *Temple-Bar*, I was taken and committed to *Newgate* [prison], and tried at the *Old Bailey* [court]; and as it was the first Crime I was known to be guilty of, I was cast for Transportation [sentenced to indentured servitude in the colonies], and accordingly came over in the *Dolphin*, Capt. *Cramer*, to *Patapsco*, in *Maryland*, and was sold as a Servant to an Iron-Work, but I soon run away from them, and carried off with me as much Goods out of a Store I had broke open, as made me pass for a Pedlar, when I came into *New-Castle*; from *New-Castle* I went to *New-York*, where I associated with a Gang who for a long Time had infested that City; but being obliged to leave that Place, I returned to *New-Castle*, where I pretended to be an Irish Pedlar newly come over; but I could not help following what was almost natural to me, but once more took to Thieving and House-breaking, and after performing several Exploits in that Way, I at last stole a Horse, for which I was apprehended, tried, and bumt [branded] in the Hand; while I lay in this Gaol [jail], I could not resist the Temptation of Stealing, the Evil was so ingrafted in my wicked Heart; the Affair was this, a Man being in that Gaol, under Sentence of Death, the Sheriff procured a Person to execute him, and paid the Money before hand; but to secure the Fellow from running away before he had done the Job, he put him in Gaol, where he had not lain long before I robb'd him of all his Money, which I spent idly: I lay a considerable Time in this Gaol, till a Gentlemen from *Maryland*, upon my signing an Indenture to serve for some Time for the Fees, took me out, but instead of fulfilling my Engagement, I robbed the Gentleman of his Horse, and all he had about him, and again push'd for *New-York*. In the Gaol at *New-Castle*, I had Information from a Prisoner who was well acquainted in *New-Jersey*, of the House of *Joseph Burr*, for the robbing of which I not suffer. In the City of *New-York* I first became acquainted with my unhappy Fellow-Sufferers; from that City we travelled in Company towards *West-Jersey*, and parted near *Mount-Holly*, when I went across *Delaware*, into *Pennsylvania*, and there stole the Watch of *Edward Hill*, and then returned into the *Jersies*, met my old Comrades, and with them planned and executed the aforesaid Robbery, we then stole Horses to carry us off, but getting drunk, we quarreled in the Woods about dividing our Booty, when I was beat in so terrible a Manner that I was not able to make my Escape, and the other two going to sleep, during which Time the Country being alarmed, we were apprehended and brought to *Burlington*, and now are deservedly to suffer for this and our former Crimes. I die a Member of the *Roman Catholic* Communion, and in Peace and Charity with all Men, hoping GOD will pardon all my Sins and Offences, and forgive my Enemies.