

Colonial Virginia Module **Virginia Landowners**

The fact that she had six slaves suggests that she didn't have a large plantation, but that doesn't mean her husband didn't have a large plantation. When a husband died, by law, a woman was entitled to the "widow thirds," her dower share. Either Sarah Green is just the recipient of a small portion of her husband's estate and slaves, or else he was a small prosperous farmer who made his wealth from perhaps selling goods, being a merchant or trader. Slaves were one of the few kinds of property that were often inherited by women. Land usually went to the male heirs.

A large number of slaves in colonial Virginia lived on small farms rather than on large plantations. It wasn't uncommon for a person to own only one or two slaves. It's interesting, though, that she had at least two young slaves, Sarah, a girl, and Sam, a boy. Does that mean then that Bridget and one of the male slaves were married and these were their children perhaps?

If she didn't have land of her own for them to farm, then she would profit from their labor by hiring them out. She probably hired the women out as domestics and she lived off the income because labor continued to be in short supply in colonial Virginia.