

MARYLAND HISTORICAL MAGAZINE

TABLE I.  
Beaver and Bead Values in the Chesapeake Relative to Tobacco

Year	Beaver pelts (price per lb.)	Peake (per fathom)	Roanoke (per arms' length)	Tobacco (per lb.)
1633 Va.	7-9s. (84-108d.)	—	—	4-9d.
1634 Va.	10s. (120d.)	10s. (120d.)	—	4-6d.
1636 Va.	6s. 6d.-10s. (78-120d.)	—	—	4-8d.
1638 Md.	7s. 6d.-8s. (90-96d.)	7s. 6d. (90d.)	1s. (12d.)	3d.
1643 Md.	12s.-25s. (144-300d.)	—	1s. 8d.-2s. 6d. (20-30d.)	2-3d.
1644 Md.	24s. (288d.)	—	2s. 4d. (28d.)	4 d.

Virginia values (all Eastern Shore) are found in Susie M. Ames, ed., *County Court Records of Accomack-Northampton, Virginia 1632-1640* (Washington, D.C., 1954), 16-17, 74.

Maryland values come from *Archives of Maryland*, III, 67-68, 73, 78; IV, 48, 84-89, 103-05, 214, 227, 274.

Tobacco prices are based on Russell R. Menard, "A Note on Chesapeake Tobacco Prices, 1618-1660," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 84 (Oct. 1976), 404-407.

When John Baxter died in 1638, his possessions were sold at auction. His seven suits of clothes brought 46 pounds of beaver pelts, while his 28 pairs of shoes fetched another 14 pounds. A ream of writing paper, symbolic of the superiority that literate Englishmen assumed over Indians and less-educated countrymen, was sold for a one-pound pelt, one half the value of Mr. Baxter's coffin. The 1638 inventory of William Smith of St. Mary's City revealed that his manservant, with 2½ years to serve, was worth £3—only half of what his seventeen pounds of beaver pelts were appraised at. When Capt. Robert Wintour died in Maryland, the largest single item in an estate worth 11,800 pounds of tobacco was his 28 pounds of beaver, valued at 1120 pounds of tobacco. Everything, and everybody, it seems, had a price in beads and beaver. In 1643 native beads perhaps entered the colonial bedchamber, as a Maryland widow accused her neighbor of having "lyen with an Indian for peake or roanoke." The following year, Richard Bennett, a Virginia Puritan, sold Thomas Cornwalleyes, a Maryland Catholic, two black servants for 97 pounds of beaver pelts and some cash, giving new definition to the "skin" trade.<sup>33</sup>

33. *Archives*, IV, 48, 85-89, 103-05, 258, 304.