Between 1651 and 1733 Parliament passed a series of acts designed to regulate trade in colonial America. These policies reflected the evolving principles of mercantilism: that colonies existed to strengthen the economy of the mother country. Although not always strictly enforced, these policies did bring additional wealth to the British economy by controlling American trade and protecting the interests of British merchants and manufacturers. The policies also had unexpected consequences: They stimulated the economic development of colonial North America, especially before the mid-18th century. England hoped to strengthen its economy and saw its colonies as a means to this end. The colonies would serve as a source of raw materials and a market for finished goods. English manufacturers would process the raw materials, the country would export more than it imported, and it would consequently rely less on resources from competing European nations. The Trade and Navigation Acts were designed to facilitate these goals. The Navigation Acts of 1651 focused on shipping and were designed to challenge Dutch competition in overseas trade. The law required that most American goods be carried in English or colonial ships and that at least one half of the crew be citizens of the empire (including colonists). This encouraged the growth of England’s merchant marines. It also kept revenue “in the family,” rather than paying the Dutch to transport colonial goods. In 1660 Parliament passed a second navigation act that amended the earlier policy. Now, all colonial trade would be carried in English or colonial ships, with the master and three-fourths of the crew being British. In addition, the act gave England greater control over colonial exports and increased the ease of levying taxes on the products. Certain commodities of great value to the mother country (tobacco, sugar, indigo, and cotton, for example) were to be shipped only to England or to other British ports. They would then be sold within the empire or reexported to other European ports. In later years rice, molasses, furs, and naval stores were added to this list of “enumerated” goods. The law added intermediaries to the transport process, thereby increasing the cost but also providing income to English coffers. In the 1660s the import duties on tobacco from Maryland and Virginia amounted to 25 percent of English customs revenue. In 1663 Parliament passed the Staples Act, specifying that all European exports to British colonial America must be shipped to England first. Prices on these reexported goods were thereby increased, making many British products the cheapest alternative for American consumers. Colonists reacted to these policies in a variety of ways. Tobacco planters argued that paying customs duties significantly lowered their profit. Small planters, especially, were affected by these higher costs. New England merchants and shippers often ignored the acts; many continued to trade with the Dutch or find other ways, like smuggling, to avoid the new policies. To further tighten imperial control, Parliament passed the Revenues Act of 1663, requiring that ship captains transporting certain colonial goods pay a “plantation duty” on any enumerated items not delivered to England. In addition, a staff of customs officials was assigned to colonial port cities. These measures were only marginally successful, however, as there were too few customs officials to adequately supervise all of the trade. Parliament tried again in 1696 to close loopholes in earlier acts and established vice-admiralty courts to try cases of smuggling and other trade offenses. Between 1699 and 1733 Parliament passed other legislation to protect the interests of British merchants and manufacturers from colonial competition. The 1699 Woolen Act and the 1732 Hat Act prohibited the exporting and intercolonial sales of certain textiles and colonial-made hats. The 1733 Molasses Act, designed to protect planters and merchants in the West Indies, levied a high tax on molasses imported to the colonies from non-British ports. New England merchants and distillers largely ignored the policy, however, often bribing customs officials to escape the tariff. In general, these policies did accomplish their mercantilist goals. England achieved a favorable balance of trade and grew less dependent on foreign markets. The British treasury grew richer from customs duties paid by colonists. The acts also had significant consequences for the American colonies. Although mercantilist theory stressed the economic development of the mother country at the expense of its colonies, these acts actually promoted the development of the colonial economy. The colonists benefited from guaranteed markets and from incentives paid for producing certain commodities. Some acts stimulated New England shipbuilding. Other acts were virtually ignored, as colonial merchants freely traded rum, molasses, and sugar with little interference from customs officials. These trade regulations proved mutually beneficial, at least until the mid-18th century, after which some colonists began to feel the limitations of some of the restrictions. See also trade and shipping.
Acts of Trade and Navigation
—Virginia Jelatis
African Americans

The people referred to today as African Americans were neither African nor American in the colonies. They had been involuntarily captured and transported from Africa to colonies throughout the Western Hemisphere for purposes of enslavement, or they were descended from those people. They were not Americans because—slave, servant, or free—with very few exceptions, they had virtually no positive standing before English law, especially as it was interpreted in the North American colonies. Although among the oldest American-born populations, they tragically no longer had a true home.

Myopia among historians has largely contributed to the fact that we know less about the quality of their lives than we might. Scholars once complacently accepted Africans’ subservient status in the colonies. By the end of the 19th century, black historians, followed by their white counterparts, began to reverse that perspective by examining the emergence of slavery and the conditions in which enslaved people found themselves. Many historians presently seek to demonstrate the ways that people of African ancestry negotiated both with whites and among themselves for a few freedoms. Despite this recent trend in the scholarship, it remains important to recognize the increasingly severe restrictions under which the vast majority of black people lived.

Until recently, permanent black presence in North America was thought to have begun in 1619, with the arrival of “twenty Negars” at Jamestown, Virginia. However, a Virginia muster (census) discovered in the 1990s reveals that there were 32 black people—15 men and 17 women—already present when the 20 captives arrived in 1619. Significantly, the first African people were not slaves; they occupied a status resembling that of white indentured servants. Yet, after completing their servitude, neither were they entirely free. As their numbers grew, their status diminished, so that by the beginning of the 18th century enslavement was reserved almost exclusively for these descendants of the African continent. Yet,

some gained freedom after having completed their term of indentured servitude. Despite nominal freedom, servants and free blacks encountered monumental restrictions.

African Americans while living in a society that came to expect the status of the black person to be that of the slave. Initially, the period of servitude was limited for the black involuntary immigrant, and a modest free black population emerged during the 17th century. This small free black population prospered relative to those who would arrive later.

For instance, Mary Johnson and Anthony Johnson of Virginia gained their freedom after completion of their servitude, married, and acquired 250 acres on which they built an estate before 1653. They continued to prosper for much of the 17th century. By 1660, however, the prospect of freedom had evaporated for most people of African descent. Those Africans who arrived or their descendants who were born after the 1660s did not fare so well. Enslavement and strictly drawn racial lines would be finalized throughout the British colonies by the 18th century.

The small population that initially achieved a peculiar sort of freedom grew to one for whom slavery became their “natural” and legal status. While enslavement had already begun in the Caribbean, on the North American continent the institution’s inception would begin in Virginia in the 1660s. Every English mainland colony eventually followed suit, establishing complex slave codes that declared and justified slavery as the heritable condition for persons of African ancestry.

Despite their shared experiences of capture in the slave trade, the Middle Passage, and restrictions upon them, the African-born populace was no more monolithic than any other group in North America. They arrived possessing widely differing languages, religious beliefs, and other cultural attributes. They developed various cultural forms that reflected their adaptation to the conditions in which they lived. One important distinction was that African-born people differed from the American-born (Creoles) populace. Over time, the Creole population also developed distinct cultures, which depended largely upon the region and circumstances in which they lived.

Initially, Africans joined Native Americans and white indentured servants who labored involuntarily in the Chesapeake region, although none of the white workers were enslaved. The population of Africans grew slowly at first; and, at the outset, white servants outnumbered them. Until 1660 most unfree labor in the region was white, but, as the supply of English servants diminished and as Virginia elites became disturbed by the unrest of ex-servants, the labor force changed its color. By 1680 unfree labor was 80 percent black, the largest number of whom resided in the Chesapeake region.

By 1750 black people in all the British mainland colonies numbered roughly 242,100, comprising one of every five inhabitants of the colonies. Their numbers grew initially because of the slave trade, and, subsequently, as the result of declining mortality and increasing reproduction among slaves. The slave trade generally delivered more men than women of African ancestry to North America. The early settlers relied primarily upon the labor of males, and, therefore, women were not imported in large numbers at the outset. British ideas about a sexual division of labor did
not last long, however. As planters abandoned their reluctance to use female labor, the imbalance between males and females narrowed. The trauma of the Middle Passage and the introduction to the new environment of North America caused the first generation of black women to be largely infertile. Over time, a more balanced sex ratio developed, resulting in a higher birth rate; by 1720 more black people were born in the colonies than were imported.

Black people were widely dispersed throughout the colonies, and they were, in their work and lives, immensely diverse. In southern colonies they were enslaved primarily to till in tobacco, rice, indigo, and other crops, which required a great deal of physical labor for a long time each year. Slave labor made sense to the economic calculations of the white colonists, and they also believed that people descended from Africa were better suited than white or Native American laborers for such arduous work. The 6 African Americans northern colonies relied less upon a slave labor force, in part because wheat and other crops required less intensive labor. Consequently, a much smaller population of black men worked in a wider variety of tasks than their southern counterparts. Northern male slaves toiled primarily as field hands in stock and dairy farming in rural areas, in the ironworks as assistants to artisans, and in the maritime trades of the port cities. Black women commonly worked in the fields as well as in homes.

The cultural characteristics of African Americans and the rate of their acculturation varied from region to region and over time. Historian Ira Berlin has usefully designated three different regions determined largely by numbers and types of labor that black people performed.

In the farming Mid-Atlantic and New England colonies, slaves were substantially outnumbered by whites, and their culture reflected much white influence. In the Chesapeake region, increasing numbers of Africans were imported after 1680 to join black people who had been born in North America. These two groups, however, remained somewhat separate from each other. Newly arrived African men were “sent . . . to the distant, upland quarters where the slaves did the dull, backbreaking work of clearing the land and tending tobacco.” Many, though not all Creoles, on the other hand, worked as artisans and in households. Georgia and South Carolina created yet another cultural context. Although originally illegal in Georgia, slavery had begun on a large scale by 1750. South Carolina was the most unique colony in British North America, with a larger black than white population.

Many slaves were transported directly from the African continent to these colonies of the lower South, and they “remained physically separated and psychologically estranged from the Anglo-American world and culturally closer to Africa than any other blacks on continental North America,” writes Berlin.

The extent of the slave trade was one major determinant of acculturation, which occurred most rapidly among American-born blacks who lived in areas where the slave trade imported few, if any, Africans directly from the continent. However, regardless of where and among whom they lived, as historian Donald R. Wright observed, “blacks in America first had to have extensive social contacts with a substantial number of other blacks—they had to exist in black communities—before there could be a real development of group values, ways, and beliefs.” The nature of these interactions, however, changed over time and varied according to location. In colonies such as South Carolina, where there were large numbers of imported Africans, slaves remained somewhat separate from whites and retained more of their traditional ways. Where they resided and worked among an overwhelmingly white population, black people could be isolated and lonely.

Throughout the colonies African Americans sought to overcome the myriad disabilities imposed upon them. One way they did so was by establishing families, often a refuge from the cruelties of enslavement. African Americans pursued stability and security through marriage, which often went unrecognized by owners and the law alike. Marriage and the creation of a family reinforced their humanity, if only to themselves. In rural areas of the Chesapeake and the Low Country, where they were larger in number, African-American men and women negotiated with or blatantly defied owners in creating families that either lived together or in separate communities (abroad marriages). In the North, their numbers were smaller, and distances between rural areas greater, thus making it difficult for African Americans to find marriageable partners.

Historian Susan E. Klepp found that in Philadelphia “disrupted families, relatively low fertility, high infant mortality, and the forced out-migration of children produced a population dominated by adolescents and young adults, most born elsewhere.” Although the documentary record is slim, other northern cities resembled Philadelphia as inhospitable to black family life. And, regardless of region, interracial marriage between blacks and whites was illegal in the British colonies.

Formal education was virtually nonexistent, especially for those who were enslaved in the southern colonies. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was among the handful of groups that endeavored to introduce literacy and Christianity to blacks. Its efforts were more successful in the northern colonies than in the southern ones. A few white colonists, like Elias Neau and Quaker Anthony Benezet, worked to provide education for black New Yorkers and Pennsylvanians. Despite these efforts, few black men and
women enjoyed literacy, and even fewer published their writing. Not surprisingly, the best-known black authors resided in the North. Lucy Terry Prince (1730–1821) of Massachusetts was probably the first person of African ancestry to publish a poem, “Bars Fight” (1746), in the colonies. In 1760 Jupiter Hammon (1720–1806?) published a poem, “An Evening Thought: Salvation by Christ, with Penitential Cries.” While Phillis Wheatley is the most renowned descendant of Africa to publish poetry and a book in early America, she did not do so until 1773. There is an apparent absence of militancy about slavery in all of these writings, in part because these authors likely were primarily concerned to write black people into existence, and in part because severe criticism of racism was unlikely to have been published. Although most people of African descent did not produce written texts, other evidence reveals that they did not easily accept their subordinated status, whether slave, servant, or free. Some historians have argued that African Americans that their conversion to Christianity and appropriation of such beliefs was one form of resistance. Unfortunately, too little is known about the religious beliefs that they brought with them across the Middle Passage, though historians have begun to study Islam and Catholicism as well as indigenous religious beliefs that many of the captives brought to the Western Hemisphere. Many resisted from the moment of their capture, and slaves occasionally mutinied while on board slave ships. Daily individual acts of resistance, including theft, arson, breaking tools, working slowly, and even assault and murder were among the most common ways that slaves demonstrated objection to their subjugation. Escape, though more frequent among men than women, and often only temporary, was another avenue to a hoped-for freedom. Newspapers, including Benjamin Franklin’s Gazette, advertised for fugitive slaves during the era, revealing how frequently slaves “stole themselves.” Finally, some organized revolts with the express desire to overthrow the institution that kept them in bondage. The bloodiest of these was the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina in 1739. Revolts and insurrections were not limited to the South, as the Negro Plot of 1741 took place in New York. Regardless of where and when they lived during the colonial era, all black people suffered one disability in common—the laws defining criminal activity were much harsher toward them. Every colony legislated codes to regulate the behavior of both slaves and free blacks. Black people were punished more harshly for crimes against property, people, and the moral and religious order of society. Ironically, slaves were more likely protected from the ultimate punishment, execution, since they were a valuable investment to their owner. If a slave was executed, his or her owner was entitled to petition to the government for reimbursement of their lost property. Despite temporal and regional differences as well as different conditions—free, servant, or slave—all African Americans were vulnerable because of their racial heritage. After several generations on the North American continent, Africans and their descendants were neither Africans nor Americans. Nor were they truly African Americans. Further reading: Carol Berkin, First Generations: Women in Colonial America (New York: Hill & Wang, 1996); Ira Berlin, Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); Michael L. Conniff and Thomas J. Davis, Africans in the Americas: A History of the Black Diaspora (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994); A. Leon Higginbotham, In the Matter of Color, Race & the American Legal Process: The Colonial Period (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Susan E. Klepp, “Seasoning and Society: Racial Differences in Mortality in Eighteenth Century Philadelphia,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser., 51 (1994): 473–506; Kenneth Morgan, Slavery and Servitude in Colonial North America: A Short History (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Gary B. Nash, Red, White and Black: The Peoples of Early North America, 8th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2000); Donald R. Wright, African Americans in the Colonial Era: From African Origins through the American Revolution (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1990); Marcus Rediker, The Slave Ship: A Human History (New York: Viking, 2007); William Thorndale, “The Virginia Census of 1619,” Magazine of Virginia Genealogy 33 (1995): 155–170. —Leslie Patrick

agriculture

Colonial agriculture was a mix of European, Native American, and African influences. Europeans brought some seed, cultivation techniques, metal tools, and a zeal for material accumulation to the enterprise. Native Americans provided a wealth of new plants and cultivation techniques. Africans contributed significantly to the seed pool, applied skills learned in their homelands, and provided much of the labor that eventually created an agricultural base sufficient to feed a growing population and to accumulate export surpluses. Agriculture was the foundation of the colonial economy, molded colonial society, and identified political power. Native Americans practiced agriculture on the North American continent for at least 2,000 years before the arrival of Europeans. By the 16th century extensive Native
American agriculture existed from the St. Lawrence River to Florida and west to the Mississippi Valley. Native American agriculture thrived along the river valleys of the Great Plains and reached a level of technological sophistication in the Southwest not seen again until late in the 19th century. Native Americans grew several varieties of maize (corn), beans, squash, pumpkins, tobacco, and cotton in fields that in some places extended for miles. Contrary to popular images of Indians as hunters, agriculture provided many tribes with more than half of their food requirements and with important trade items for exchange among the tribes and, later, with Europeans. Maize, or Indian corn, was their most important crop. Maize does not grow naturally; it is the product of at least three different grasses that required generations of cross-breeding and continuous cultivation. By the 16th century it was already the most productive seed grain in the world.

New World agriculture began in present-day Mexico, worked its way to the Southwest and across the Gulf of Mexico to the Mississippi Valley in the Midwest, then spread across the continent. In the Southwest Native Americans created elaborate irrigation systems that diverted stream flow and captured runoff. In the Salt River Valley of Arizona extensive canals carried water as far as two miles from the river. Southwest farmers developed ingenious methods of diverting runoff by building systems of check dams at the mouths of arroyos that spread the water across their fields. Southwestern Native American farmers planted at least three varieties of maize, three different kinds of beans, and four varieties of squash and pumpkins. In the moisture-deficient Southwest these crops were planted in separate fields. Native farmers in wetter climates planted their crops in the same field, with cornstalks used to support bean vines and squash and pumpkins used as ground cover to retard weeds. Southwestern farmers also cultivated cotton and tobacco. Until Spanish sheep became available, cotton provided the principal fiber for clothing and blankets. Native farmers in the East planted maize on well-spaced hills; using a digging stick, they cultivated the ground around the plants, and when the maize was well established they planted beans, pumpkins, orache, and sunflowers between the cornstalks. Farmers in the Carolinas planted three varieties of maize with different maturing rates, allowing for ample time to plant and an extended harvest after about three months of growth. Generally, Native agriculturalists also planted large gardens that produced abundant supplies of vegetables until the maize, beans, and other field crops were mature. In the 16th century and earlier these farmers planted large fields of tobacco (Nicotiana rustica). Later they adopted a tobacco from the Orinoco region of South America (Nicotiana tabacum) that John Rolfe had acquired. Captain John Smith recorded that Natives in the region girdled trees and then pulled out the upper roots to prepare fields for cultivation. Women did the work of agriculture after the fields were prepared, planting maize and beans on hills from May through June and harvesting the crops from August until October. Carolina and Virginia Native farmers husked their maize after drying it in the sun and then stored the seed in woven baskets.

In the 18th century Virginia Native American farmers were observed growing popcorn that ripened by midsummer, watermelon acquired from the English, and peaches probably obtained from the Spanish or from Florida Natives. Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, and Chickasaw farmers in the interior raised large crops of maize, beans, and squash. Families maintained individual gardens near their houses, but all participated in preparing and planting communal fields. Individual families then harvested their allotted portion of the crops. Although men among these “civilized tribes” participated in all phases of their agriculture, women did most of the work of planting, cultivating, and harvesting. The civilized tribes eventually adopted many European farming methods, including fencing their fields, but, one authority insists, they refused to adopt the plow, perhaps because it was too efficient and might have led to lack of farmwork for older members of the tribes.

Early in the 17th century French explorers in the St. Lawrence Valley area observed extensive Native farming. Native farmers raised large crops of maize, both for their own consumption and for trade to the hunting Indians in the interior. Huron men participated in the agricultural enterprise by burning trees and removing brush from fields, although women did most of the work preparing the fields around the dead trees and removing rotting tree roots. The Huron and others in the region raised crops of flint corn and maize as well as sunflowers, squash, and beans. One branch of the Huron raised so much tobacco they became known as the Tobacco Nation. Huron and other Native farmers tried to raise sufficient maize and other crops to last for two or more years as a guard against famine. One authority estimates that Huron fields produced nearly 40 bushels per acre. When the crop fell significantly below that level, the Hurons abandoned the field for several years. Agricultural products probably accounted for more than 60 percent of Huron food needs.

South of the Huron in interior New York, the Five Nations of the Iroquois Confederation engaged in a sophisticated agriculture that yielded food for consumption and an important trade item. Particularly in the 17th century these farmers planted large fields of tobacco (Nicotiana rustica). Later they adopted a tobacco from the Orinoco region of South America (Nicotiana tabacum) that John Rolfe had acquired.
century, the Iroquois carried on an aggressive campaign against the Huron that extended to the destruction of smaller agricultural tribes north of Lake Erie in pursuit of dominance in the fur trade. Food stuffs, which the Iroquois had in abundance, were a key trade item with the hunting Indians of Canada. Iroquois men generally participated in burning trees and underbrush to prepare fields while the women performed the work of cultivation and harvesting. The products of the field were the property of the women and added to their unusual influence in the business of the Five Nations. The Iroquois also constructed platforms from which the young and women guarded the crops. In addition, they encircled their fields with snares to trap small animals, soaked their seed corn in hellebore to poison raiding birds, and hung captured crows by their feet around the fields to discourage other raiders. About every 10 years, when soil fertility declined, the Iroquois abandoned one area for another nearby that previously had been prepared. In the 18th century the Iroquois incorporated cattle, swine, and poultry into their agricultural mix.

When Europeans ventured to the Atlantic coast and later into the interior, they discovered a relatively large, generally sedentary Native population that subsisted on an abundance of agricultural products. Although Europeans often thought Indian agriculture “primitive,” Indian technology, including wood, shell, flint, and bone hoes, digging sticks, and mattocks, was efficient and tended to preserve soil conditions at a high level of fertility for relatively long periods of time. Indeed, early explorers and later colonists from Maine to Georgia benefited and often owed their survival to Indian agriculture.

Agriculture dominated economic activity in the North American colonies, rivaled only by the fur trade in economic importance. By the time English settlers were permanently implanted in the New World, Spanish settlers were already well under way appropriating and exploiting Native American fields and irrigation systems in the Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico, rapidly moving into the Salt River Valley and its extensive irrigation works, and introducing cattle, sheep, horses, and fruit trees to the Southwest. From their entry into the Southwest in the late 16th century until the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, Spanish settlers stole land and virtually enslaved the Native population for agricultural labor. The Pueblo Revolt in New Mexico and Comanche activity in Texas forced the Spanish back to the lower Rio Grande for more than a decade. Early in the 18th century the Spanish returned to Texas, where they established large cattle ranches that produced for the market in New Orleans, and to the upper Rio Grande, where they established more cattle ranches and introduced irrigated wheat farming to the Pueblo. The Spanish brought a wealth of new crops to the Southwest, including wheat, oats, onions, peas, watermelons, peaches, and apples, as well as sheep, horses, and cattle. Spanish invasions of the Southwest profoundly affected civil government among the Native population and the agriculture they practiced.

Agriculture was always part of the program the Virginia Company of London intended for the first successful English colony. Colonists at Jamestown were expected to raise their own food as well as produce items for trade with the mother country. Colonists soon learned from local Native farmers how to plant and cultivate maize themselves, but without maize acquired by theft, barter, or gift from Natives, the colony probably would not have survived. Not until Governor Sir Thomas Dale allotted each settler three acres of fee simple land on which to cultivate his own crops and abandoned communal farming did the colony begin to produce sufficient food to feed itself. Maize became the salvation for many new colonies. It could be cultivated in fields already prepared by Native farmers and harvested late or early with simple hand tools. By contrast, European small grains, such as wheat, required this mold-board plow was the type often used by Anglo-American farmers. (National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution)

In 1612 John Rolfe introduced a tobacco variety that had a milder taste than the locally grown types; the colonists then had their money crop. Within a few years tobacco dominated Virginia agriculture and spread throughout the Chesapeake region. Within a decade Virginia farmers exported more than half a million pounds of tobacco each year. With the exception of relatively small food crops, Virginia farmers planted tobacco exclusively. A crop that quickly depleted soil fertility, tobacco forced constant expansion of fields and rapid movement into the interior, initiating conflict with Natives that twice between 1620 and 1650 led to the near destruction of the colony. By the end of the colonial era Virginia had increased tobacco production to more than 18 million pounds a year.

Tobacco agriculture initiated a system of production that dominated the social, political, and economic life of Virginia and, ultimately, Maryland, the Carolinas, and Georgia. Those who could acquire large tracts of land farmed their acreage intensely, then allowed it to lie fallow for as long as 20 years while new acres came into production. Those who could not obtain large tracts were forced to abandon their land and move farther into the interior. Large
plantations became the norm in the southern colonies near the coast. Large planters dominated colonial legislatures and sponsored numerous laws to control the production and quality of the tobacco crop. Nevertheless, overproduction plagued the region. Declining prices, as low as a penny per pound by the end of the 17th century, encouraged further legislative efforts to control production and quality. Most small farmers ignored planting restrictions for as long as they could. Then, in 1730, Virginia enacted a comprehensive Inspection Act that established mandated grading of tobacco and required the crop to be sold only through warehouses where government-appointed inspectors ensured the quality of the product. Tobacco that did not meet the standard was destroyed. Large planters benefited from the destruction of tobacco that did not meet quality standards, while smaller farmers were hastened off the land.

South of the Chesapeake Bay in the Carolinas, settlers first produced Indian maize but quickly turned to rice as a staple crop. Early rice planting was only moderately successful, but with a rice variety from Africa cultivation expanded rapidly. By the end of the 17th century South Carolina planters exported nearly 400,000 pounds; by 1730 rice exports reached more than 9 million pounds. Exports continued to increase until 1770, when planters exported more than 80 million pounds, primarily to the West Indies. In the early years of cultivation, planters generally sowed their rice on upland fields and presumed that sufficient rain would nourish the crop. By the mid-18th century, however, planters employed irrigation or planted in swampy areas near the coast. Rice became for South Carolina what tobacco had become for Virginia. Large planters accumulated land, slaves, and wealth that one author noted “provided the economic basis for the most extensive plantation system in colonial America.”

By the middle of the 18th century, rice culture had spread to the Savannah River region of Georgia. There, one enterprising planter developed a method for capturing tidal flow through a series of dikes that held the freshwater on his fields. The method allowed much larger fields, planting farther inland, and the reduction of the time spent eliminating competing weeds. Using the tidal flow along South Carolina and Georgia rivers quickly became the common method for raising rice. At the time of the American Revolution, rice was exceeded only by tobacco and flour in the value of agricultural exports from British North America.

From 40 years before the American Revolution, indigo also became an important crop in South Carolina. During King George’s War shipping became difficult for bulky products like rice, and some planters turned to indigo, which had a high price and relatively small bulk. In 1748 Parliament established a bounty on all indigo grown in the American colonies, which lasted until the revolution. In 1770 South Carolina planters exported more than 150,000 pounds of indigo. Although the cropping of indigo lasted only three or four decades before the end of the British bounty made it unprofitable, profits from its cultivation allowed many planters to accumulate land and slaves that, in turn, permitted them a relatively easy transition to cotton agriculture. Coastal planters in South Carolina and Georgia possessed the land, slave labor, and capital to begin large-scale production of sea island cotton.

While rice remained preeminent in the Deep South, it was generally confined to the coastal regions or limited by tidal flow to relatively few miles inland. New migrants to the region were shut out of the rice culture and turned to livestock instead of planting. Many rice planters also raised extensive herds of cattle. Cattle were already important in North and South Carolina by the end of the 17th century, and this expanded in the half century that followed. Cattle roamed freely, grazing on the public, or “King’s,” lands. Fall cow hunts (round-ups) separated marketable cattle and marked calves. The West Indies provided a ready market for hides, tallow, and dried beef. By the early 18th century South Carolinians grazed nearly 100,000 head of cattle. The cattle industry thrived in the Carolinas and Georgia until midcentury, when deteriorating ranges and disease diminished their numbers. The cattle industry moved west along the Gulf Coast and continued to supply the West Indies market, but most shipping by the end of the 18th century was through Mobile and New Orleans rather than Charleston and Savannah.

While staple crops like tobacco and rice continued to dominate southern colonial agriculture, the 18th century witnessed some diversification. Large planters had always planted corn and wheat in fields where tobacco had depleted fertility. A growing domestic population and periodic crop failures in Europe created demand for American-grown small grains and some maize. Western Virginia farmers in the Shenandoah Valley raised wheat for milling and substantial maize that they used for their own consumption and to fatten cattle and hogs. The growth of Baltimore and Philadelphia provided a market outlet for western farmers in Virginia and Maryland. Tobacco planters on Maryland’s eastern shore found it more and more difficult to acquire sufficient land to allow worn-out tobacco fields to lie fallow for extended periods. Many consequently switched to wheat and maize in the mid-18th century. Sugar plantations in the Caribbean, with their large slave populations, proved a profitable market for Maryland wheat and maize.

Staple crop production in the southern colonies
required extensive land use and intensive labor. Land distribution in the colonies varied according to the status of the colony as either royal (such as Virginia after 1624), proprietary (like Pennsylvania), or corporate (Massachusetts).

English land holding was heavily encumbered by a host of feudal remnants in the form of rents, services, and homage. Whether royal, corporate, or proprietary, attempts to replicate the English system generally failed in the American colonies. Even when quitrents or other services were attached to land, colonial farmers tended to see their land as fee simple, unencumbered by any obligations but to pay local taxes, and then only when they could not be avoided. Inheritance laws in England such as entail and primogeniture, meant to preserve a stable hierarchical society, existed in most colonies but were generally ignored. Farmers and speculators easily transferred land titles by simply registering the fact of the transfer with a local magistrate. The ease of transfer allowed for land accumulation and encouraged white settlement.

Virginia established the pattern of land acquisition that prevailed in the southern colonies as well as Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and New York. To attract settlers, Virginia in 1618 offered a “headright” of 50 acres to anyone who could pay their own cost of transportation and an additional 50 acres for each family member whose transportation was paid. Although the proprietary colonies preferred to sell land, all eventually employed some variation on the headright system to attract settlers. Early in the 18th century the British government offered Crown lands for purchase. Wealthy Englishmen such as Robert “King” Carter and William Byrd II acquired tens of thousands of acres by purchase from the Crown. Virginia required no survey before the sale of lands, and farmers frequently found they had purchased or squatted on land that belonged to someone else. Conflicting land claims dominated the Virginia courts until well into the 19th century. Nevertheless, land passed into the hands of farmers who quickly placed as much as they could into commercial crops. Squatting became nearly institutionalized from Pennsylvania to North Carolina in the interior. Scots-Irish settlers with little regard for English law insisted that the abundance of land was a gift from God. During the Revolutionary War, at least in part as a way of retaining the loyalty of back-country farmers, Virginia enacted a preemption act that allowed squatters the first right to purchase land on which they settled or, if someone else purchased the land, to be paid for improvements they had made. In any event, Crown and proprietor efforts to install a land system that replicated the deferential domain of England largely failed. If farmers could not purchase land, they rented with the intent to buy in the future. When all else failed, they moved farther into the interior and squatted on the land until forced to leave.

Some of the agricultural labor in the Middle Colonies and most of it in the South was performed by bound laborers. In the 17th and early 18th centuries approximately half the European immigrants to the British colonies came as indentured servants. Mostly young men, servants sold their labor for a period of years, usually four to seven, in return for passage to the colonies. The indenture contract was a negotiable instrument that could be bought and sold along with the indenture. Purchasers of indenture contracts generally agreed to provide food, shelter, and clothing for the term of labor and pay “freedom dues” of clothing, food, tools, and occasionally land at the end of the term if, indeed, the servant survived. Life for a servant was one of work and brutal conditions. They had little recourse from abusive masters while being subject to severe punishment or added years to their servitude for the most trivial crimes. One authority estimates that nearly 40 percent of indentured servants did not survive their term of indenture and that many of those who survived still were unable to obtain land. Nevertheless, some became middling farmers or took advantage of other commercial opportunities in the growing colonies. In the southern colonies beginning in the late 17th century, indentured servitude largely came to an end, and black slavery became the dominant form of forced labor.

Slaves of African descent accounted for the largest single group of migrants, albeit forced, to British America in the 18th century. Slaves faced a life as harsh as that of servants, but without the saving promise of eventual freedom.

12 agriculture

Some scholars argue that many of the first slaves who arrived in Jamestown in 1619 were granted freedom after a term of service, but by the late 17th century slavery became the norm for laborers brought from Africa. Nevertheless, during the 17th century some slaves gained their freedom, established thriving communities, and sometimes even purchased slaves of their own. Slave labor became more extensively used and more restrictive in the 18th century. In 17th-century South Carolina slaves often raised food for themselves and for sale, enjoyed some freedom to travel for hunting and fishing, and, by law, had Sundays free of labor. The development of rice agriculture initially curtailed those freedoms. Rice was labor intense; mastering of tidal pools greatly increased the acres planted and the demand for slave labor. Large plantations bought slaves directly from Africa, kept them relatively isolated during their first
months, then placed them under close supervision. Later in the 18th century, as masters began to rely on the “task system,” slaves were assigned a certain amount of work, or task, to accomplish each day. Many slaves managed to use this system to their own advantage to carve out extra time that they controlled.

The restrictions on slaves and their increase coincided with the flowering of the plantation system in the 18th century. Wealth produced from tobacco and rice provided planters the opportunity to emulate the country gentlemen of England. Large plantation houses sprang up throughout the South, a command structure of slave overseers and task work systems became the norm, and the master and his family grew more remote from the daily lives of their slaves. Whites seldom joined their black slaves in the fields, and fears of slave rebellion, real and imagined, became more common. Slaves, indeed, did rebel, sometimes by destroying equipment, engaging in work slowdowns, and running away. Violent rebellions occurred in 1710 in Maryland, in New York in 1712 and 1741, and, most well known, in the Stono Rebellion of South Carolina in 1739. Individual and organized resistance occurred among relatively new arrivals and among slaves relatively acculturated to British ways. As slaves successfully created families and communities, kinship ties may have influenced a decline in organized rebellion, although individual acts of resistance continued. By the end of the first quarter of the 18th century, the pattern of agricultural development around staple crops and cattle raising within a plantation system dominated by slave labor was well established and could not have existed without the continual arrival of African bondpeople. Africans brought agricultural skills from their homelands that were critical to the success of the southern cattle industry. Rice culture clearly would have been seriously retarded in South Carolina and Georgia without rice varieties from Africa and the knowledge of slaves about how to grow the crop. The large-scale production of tobacco could not have occurred had not black slaves provided the intense labor necessary to produce a crop. Southern agriculture was black agriculture, with the profits going to whites.

While staple-crop agriculture developed through the 17th century south of the Chesapeake, a wholly different agriculture dominated the colonies north of the Chesapeake. European farming began in New England in 1620 with the arrival of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, Massachusetts. The Plymouth dissenters came to free their souls from the corruption of the Anglican Church but needed to feed their stomachs as well. Stolen caches of corn fed the Pilgrims their first winter, but in spring 1621 Pilgrims began to plant maize in the manner that local Native Americans taught them and in fields that Native farmers had used for generations. Later in the decade Puritan immigrants north of Plymouth brought large numbers of cattle, goats, and swine, and in 1635 Dutch merchants introduced sheep to the colony. The Pilgrims had intended to farm communally, but disputes within the congregation soon ended cooperative ventures; by 1627 Plymouth had allotted 20 acres of farmland to each family for their individual use. Individuals were intent on raising surplus crops for profit, and farms quickly expanded production to include wheat, rye, and oats, along with sheep and cattle. Generally, sheep were confined while cattle and hogs grazed freely in the forest. The British West Indies provided a ready market for New England agricultural products. Boston and New London, Connecticut, became thriving markets for beef from Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. As one author put it, “if New England had staple crops, they were annual crops of beef, pork and wool.” Until surpassed by South Carolina late in the 17th century, Massachusetts was the largest livestock producing colony in North America. The rapid expansion of English settlements in New England in the 17th century and encroachments on Indian land led to bloody confrontations with Natives in 1636 and 1675. New England farmers praised God, but mammon competed quite well for their affection.

New England farmers also produced quantities of maize and wheat in the 17th century along with tobacco, particularly in the Connecticut Valley. Connecticut tobacco was a different variety from that found in Virginia and had been acquired from Native American farmers. Although never grown in the quantities found in the southern colonies, it still was sold profitably to England in the 18th century. Black stem rust and insects began to seriously deplete wheat culture in New England by the latter part of the 17th century. Farmers consequently increased their production of maize and rye. Wheat cultivation migrated west and south to New York, Pennsylvania, and western agriculture 13 Maryland. There, wheat production increased dramatically in the 18th century and encouraged the development of a flour milling industry centered around the Chesapeake and Philadelphia. The West Indies again provided the principal market for milled wheat.

Farmers in New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland also raised “neat” cattle intended for beef and milk. Generally, production was low, and farm women converted most milk to cheese and butter for home or local consumption. In the late 18th century better breeding habits and importation of improved livestock led to cattle intended specifically to produce milk. Increased production meant a surplus of cheese and butter. By 1769 Philadelphia had become a center for marketing butter intended for the West Indies trade. Cheese and butter production, nevertheless, tended to remain the work of farm women, and the products sometimes became a principal source of family income.
New England and Middle Colony farms remained comparatively small by the standards of Virginia and the southern colonies. Livestock, wheat, maize, and other small grain cultivation was not as labor intensive as tobacco and rice. Nevertheless, northern farmers were also in need of labor beyond that provided by family members. Slavery entered the northern colonies within a few years after the first slaves arrived in Virginia and spread to every colony north of Maryland. In the northern colonies slaves often lived in towns and worked in the growing shipbuilding industry, in construction, or as assistants to artisans. Most, however, worked on the farms of the countryside, often alongside their owners. Few northern farmers owned more than one or two slaves, who sometimes lived in the master’s house and ate at his table. The largest concentration of slaves in the North was in Rhode Island, near Narragansett Bay, where immigrant planters from the West Indies tried to replicate the plantation system of their former homes. They built manor houses that rivaled those in the South, often owned more than fifteen slaves, bred race horses, and practiced the ways of country gentlemen. The tobacco farms of the Connecticut Valley became the home of another concentration of slaves in New England. Control of slave labor was always more lax in the North, and slaves often were hired out and occasionally were allowed to retain some portion of their earnings. Still, they remained slaves. By the time of the American Revolution, colonial agriculture had developed into a profitable enterprise. The production of staple crops supported a plantation economy in the southern colonies. Food stuffs, primarily wheat and other small grains, dominated the Middle Colonies, and a mixed agriculture of livestock, wool, and maize characterized most of New England. The enterprise was sufficient to support a rapidly growing population that doubled in size about every 25 years. It provided surpluses for export that supported merchant concentrations in several cities and a host of auxiliary occupations like mariners, teamsters, blacksmiths, land agents, lawyers, doctors, and the like. None would have been possible without land the Indians had long cultivated; crops, particularly maize, that Native American farmers had bred to high levels of return; varieties of crops such as sorghum grains, rice, and indigo brought to North America by slaves; the forced labor of thousands of displaced black Africans; and the insatiable material demands of Europeans. All joined in the mix that produced American agriculture in the colonial era.


—Thomas R. Wesse

American Philosophical Society

The American Philosophical Society was founded in 1743, modeled on the Royal Society in London as an intercolonial organization for the exchange of “useful knowledge.” Like so many of the organizations that Benjamin Franklin created, the society was intended to draw men into correspondence and conversations that would prove beneficial both to their own lives and to the community as a whole. John Bartram, a Quaker farmer and botanist, outlined the first plan for the organization in 1739. Writing to London merchant and natural philosopher Peter Collinson, Bartram envisioned a club where the “most ingenious & Curious men” could study “natural secrets arts & sciences.” He thought the group could secure a meeting house, sponsor lectures, and promote other avenues of inquiry. Bartram, a brilliant student of natural science, had little background or ability in organizing public plans. His friend Benjamin Franklin, however, had both that ability as well as a growing interest in expanding the intellectual lives of his fellow colonists, having already created the Junto, a social and study club for Philadelphia artisans, and the Library Company of Philadelphia in 1731. In 1743 Franklin published the plan for the American Philosophical Society that he and Bartram had worked out in “A Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge among the British Plantations in America.” With colonies now established, Franklin wrote, “there are many in every Province in Circumstances that set them at Ease, and afford Leisure to cultivate the finer Arts, and improve the common Stock of Knowledge.” From 1743 to 1746 the society welcomed members, including Franklin, Bartram, physician Thomas Bond; fellow Junto members Thomas Godfrey, William Coleman, and William Parsons; and colonial notables such as Cadwallader Colden, Robert Hunter Morris, and James Delancey. Despite an impressive membership list,
Anglican Church was established in the Chesapeake was mirrored in colonial religious geography. The first phase of English settlement in North America, this religious and civil turmoil, coinciding with monarchy in 1660. The real Anglican growth in North America began with the restored British Church into the Protestant Reformation. The road was long and troubled because the church retained features of its Catholic tradition (like bishops) while incorporating Protestant ideas and principles into its Book of Common Prayer. Puritans in the early 17th century, eager to make the church more thoroughly Protestant, clashed with the authorities of both church and state. The conflict led to civil war (1642–49), the execution of the king, the abolition of bishops and the Book of Common Prayer, and a period of Puritan rule under Oliver Cromwell. The exiled Anglican Church returned with the restored British monarchy in 1660. This religious and civil turmoil, coinciding with the first phase of English settlement in North America, was mirrored in colonial religious geography. The Anglican Church was established in the Chesapeake area, and the Puritan reformers created their own “Bible Commonwealth” in New England. Although Virginia’s system of parishes, vestries (parish governing boards), and Book of Common Prayer established the English pattern, by the 1660s only a handful of clergy served the Virginia church. The real Anglican growth in North America began toward the end of the 17th century, when Henry Compton, bishop of London (1675–1713), took direction of the fledgling colonial church. On his initiative, instructions to colonial governors included public support for Anglican parishes. In 1689 he compensated for the lack of colonial bishops by appointing James Blair, a minister serving in Virginia, as his commissary (bishop’s representative) to provide a modicum of clerical leadership. By 1763 the colonial Anglican Church was on firm footing, with parishes, Native American missions, and charity

By the 1740s the commissary system had become a feature of the Anglican Church in nine colonies. The most pressing problem, however, was the shortage of colonial clergy. In 1701 Compton collaborated with Thomas Bray in setting up the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) to recruit and support missionaries and teachers. Providing stipends for missionary clergy and schoolmasters, books for parish libraries, and funds and materials for work among Native Americans and slaves, this innovative quasi-public philanthropy became the major vehicle for the expansion of the Anglican Church throughout the colonies until the American Revolution. By the time Georgia, the last colony, was founded in the 1730s, the Anglican Church was the religious establishment in all the southern colonies. Except in New York City, it would never gain legal establishment anywhere in the North, but with SPG aid there was vigorous expansion there. Some northern parishes (King’s Chapel, Boston; Christ Church, Philadelphia; Trinity Church, New York) became important centers for growth. New Anglican churches of graceful neoclassical design in imitation of the work of Christopher Wren and James Gibbs in England attracted widening attention, particularly among the urban elite. SPG charity schools opened for slaves, free African Americans, and the poor. In New York City throughout the 18th century, SPG schoolmasters worked with the city’s slave population in the face of fears about the danger of educating slaves. SPG missionaries to Native American tribes in the North and South had only mixed results, although there were notable successes among the New York Mohawk, some of whom became schoolmasters and Anglican lay readers (nonordained leaders of worship).

This northern growth was particularly controversial in New England, where the Puritan founders had built a tightly knit society with its own religious establishment (the Congregational Church). New Englanders looked upon the Anglican Church, with its twin traditions of episcopacy (the system of church leadership by bishops) and prescribed worship by the Book of Common Prayer, as a threat to their way of life. In 1722 the alarm was raised when seven faculty and recent Yale graduates, themselves clergy of Connecticut’s Congregational establishment, declared for episcopacy. Samuel Johnson was among those who went to England for ordination. For decades after his return as an SPG missionary, he planted other Anglican churches in Connecticut and trained a generation of missionary priests to work in New England and the Middle Colonies.

Bacon’s Rebellion (1676–1677)

In 1676 one of the most important rebellions in early North America erupted in Virginia. Settlers had long chafed under their royal governor, Sir William Berkeley. They had many complaints, but it was Berkeley’s Indian policy that proved most volatile. Amid a storm of criticism, the governor had earlier conceded the land north of the York River to Powhatan tribes. To be sure, Berkeley the governor had earlier conceded the land north of Boston’s Jonathan Mayhew, who denounced episcopacy as a tool of oppression: “Is it not enough, that they persecuted us out of the Old World? Will they pursue us into the New to convert us here?” When such strong religious emotions combined with rising discontent over unpopular imperial policies in the 1760s, the ground was laid for the American Revolution. The Anglican Church, closely identified with Crown and empire, faced its most difficult challenge in the years ahead.


—Donald F. M. Gerardi
The next months proved among the most chaotic in Virginia’s colonial history, as the exile and the rebel vied for control of the colony. The rebel appeared to be winning. As Bacon paraded captured Indians through the countryside, flocks of freedmen and newcomers joined his ranks. Even established planters, who had always opposed the “Bacon rabble,” gravitated toward rebel leadership to prevent the plunder of their estates. Berkeley responded by sailing back to Jamestown with guarantees of freedom to loyal slaves and servants, but Bacon made similar promises before the governor could dock. Never getting off his ship, Berkeley watched as Bacon razed Jamestown.

Bacon’s Rebellion officially ended when English troops arrived to secure peace in January 1677, but it unofficially ended when Bacon died of dysentery in October 1676. After the dynamic leader’s death, the rebellious spirit expired. Having crushed the Indians, frontiersmen turned their attention to the October harvest.

What began as a crusade against Native Americans nearly became a social revolution. Frontiersmen initially blamed Indians for their problems but later included the upper-class leadership. Although the rebellion never achieved its logical conclusion of political revolution, the threat was enough to initiate change. Unlike Berkeley, who had been dismissed from his duties, the remaining elite followed Bacon’s advice. By almost exclusively importing African slaves rather than indentured servants after the rebellion, the elite apparently hoped that racial hatred of black people would unify white people and thus soothe future class conflict.

See also Berkeley, Lady Frances; Powhatan Confederacy.


—C. B. Waldrip

Baptists

Although they identified closely with the English Puritans, Baptists parted ways with their fellow dissenters over the issues of infant baptism and the civil government’s role in matters of religion. Convinced that the New World offered greater opportunities for religious freedom, many Baptists made the voyage to North America. Because of the intolerance these so-called Anabaptists experienced, many of them assimilated into the establishment churches, whether Congregational or Anglican. However, upon the arrival of Roger Williams in 1631, Baptists had their much-needed champion for liberty of conscience. Even though his tenure as a Baptist was brief, Williams aided in founding the first Baptist church in North America in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1638. A second church soon followed (1641) under the leadership of John Clarke, who provided stability to the growing denomination.

Following the establishment of their first two churches, Baptists grew slowly in the New England Colonies. The Middle and Southern Colonies, however, provided a more conducive environment for growth, most of which occurred in the latter part of the 18th century. This growth multiplied after the formation of the Philadelphia Association in 1707, which provided an example of church cooperation that would foster the phenomenal expansion of Baptists in the late 1700s. In 1707 about 50 Baptist churches existed; in 1763 there were about 250.

Three major issues arose in Baptist life during this period. The first was the concern for religious liberty, or soul liberty. Under the leadership of figures such as Roger Williams and Isaac Backus, Baptists struggled to avoid granting the government undue authority in matters of religion. For instance, they opposed mandatory church attendance and taxation on behalf of the established church.

Second, Baptists expressed great concern for the purity, or regenerate nature, of the visible church. Thus, they sought to secure the conversion of every member through such practices as the administration of church discipline. The third matter Baptists dealt with into the early 19th century was the division between Separate Baptists, who emphasized the continued work of the Holy Spirit, and Regular Baptists, who were wary of much of the enthusiasm prominent in the revivals known as the First Great Awakening.

During the First Great Awakening some Baptist women assumed new roles. Although most continued in the traditional roles of wives and mothers, some Separate Baptists permitted women to pray aloud during religious meetings. They also defended the practice of female exhorting—the public calling of others to repent. Examples include Martha Stearns Marshall, a Separate Baptist known for her public prayers and exhortations, and Margaret Meuse Clay. Although certainly not the rule, women served as deacons and elders in some churches. They were not always allowed to speak publicly in these capacities, but their congregations still recognized such women as spiritual leaders.

Baptists also welcomed both Native American and African-American converts more warmly than did the established churches. However, most Baptists still shared the common racial prejudices of this period. Thus, they distinguished between Christian fellowship on the one hand and social and racial equality on the other hand. New England Baptists may have relinquished some of these prejudices before their southern counterparts, but Baptists of the South still undertook missions work to both Native Americans and slaves.

—Richard A. Bailey

Boston Philosophical Society
The Boston Philosophical Society was perhaps the first organization founded in the American colonies for the pursuit of the study of experimental and natural philosophy. Established in April 1683 by the father-son team of Increase Mather and Cotton Mather, the society was patterned after the Royal Society of London, which had been established in Restoration London in 1660 and chartered by Charles II in 1662. In his autobiography, Increase Mather wrote “I promoted a design for a private philosophical society in Boston, which I hope may have laid the foundation for that which will be our future edification.” The two Mathers, as well as their colleagues in the society, saw no contradiction between the study of the natural world and the belief in an all-powerful, active deity. The members, including the Mathers, the Reverend Samuel Willard, and others sent correspondence to England and presented papers to the periodic meetings of the group.

The society was short lived, however. Dissatisfaction with the Crown’s revocation of the Massachusetts Charter in 1684, the subsequent arrival of Edmund Andros as governor in December 1686, and the declaration of the Dominion of New England took the members’ attention away from natural philosophy. Although few records survive, we may surmise that the society lasted only two to five years.
—George W. Boudreau

Bradford, William (1663–1752) printer
The founder of a large family of printers, William Bradford came to Pennsylvania in 1685 as a distributor of Quaker books published by his master, Andrew Sowle. Bradford married Sowle’s daughter Elizabeth and embraced the Quaker faith. Bradford returned to England, then traveled back to Pennsylvania, where he established a printing press. He was called before Pennsylvania’s Council for printing an unauthorized version of the colonial charter, an act that won him the support of the Quakers, who committed to buy his books and gave him a 40-pound-per-year salary. To ensure materials for printing, Bradford was instrumental in the establishment of America’s first paper mill with the help of a Dutchman, William Rittenhouse. Bradford lost favor with the Quakers when he printed an address of the discredited George Keith. Tried for this offense, the case went unresolved when the jury, handling the actual printing type, accidentally spilled the tray and destroyed the evidence. Governor Benjamin Fletcher of New York invited him to New York, where he became Royal Printer of New York and New Jersey. He continued to distribute books from his wife’s family, including her sister Tace Sowle Raylton. Bradford joined the Church of England in 1703 and received support from them. In 1725 he established the first New York newspaper, the New York Gazette. Retiring in 1744, he died in 1752 in New York City, leaving behind a dynasty of American printers.
—Margaret Sankey

British Empire
The British Empire, whereby the British spread throughout and controlled much of the globe, evolved in several stages. Historians have conventionally dated a first phase of the British Empire from King Henry VII’s (1485–1509) support of the voyages of John and Sebastian Cabot in 1497–98, through its rapid growth after the English defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588, to its maturity in 1763 at the end of the Seven Years’ War. Properly called the British Empire only after the 1707 merger of England and Scotland into the single kingdom of Great Britain, it developed during the period when European colonization and competition was based on theories collectively known as the mercantile system. Mercantilism sought to concentrate the profits from world commerce primarily in Europe. Starting in 1651, the English Parliament passed various Acts of Trade and Navigation that implemented duties, prohibitions, and bounties all meant to stimulate trade. Although these were often evaded through smuggling and never effectively enforced, the Navigation Acts attempted to ensure that English colonies would participate in a system of economic exchange geared to enrich England by providing it with both raw materials and a market for its finished products.

Before 1700 English authors addressing empire and/or English national pride in colonial expansion focused almost exclusively on the Americas and the West Indies. The English presence in India, for example, was dismissed as merely the commercial interests of London merchants, yet the commercial relationships of this “first” British Empire were arguably primary well into the 19th century. By historian Linda Colley’s estimate, one of every five families in 18th-century Britain drew its livelihood from trade and distribution, not including the farmers and manufacturers who profited from domestic and external trading networks. While overseas merchants could not succeed.
without naval protection, almost all of those engaged in trade benefited in some way from Britain’s single-minded and violent pursuit of colonial markets. Furthermore, the great trading companies such as the East India Company, the Levant Company, and the Russia Company, along with London’s mercantile community in general, supplied the government’s long-term loans that underwrote Britain’s imperial wars. Domestic and foreign trade furnished the majority of governmental tax revenues; until the end of the 18th century, customs and excise levies together supplied between 60 and 70 percent of governmental revenue. International war characterized the expansion of the British Empire in the 17th and 18th centuries. Commercial rivalry with the equally mercantilist Dutch led to three wars between the Netherlands and England between 1652 and 1674. The Dutch colony of New Netherland in the Hudson River Valley was one arena for conflict, but contention over trade with India and the lucrative slave trading in Africa and the Caribbean were equally important. After the 1688 Glorious Revolution King William III (1689–1702) fanned the well-established antagonism between the English and French governments; their ministers added competition for empire to their continental and commercial rivalries. From 1689 until 1713 Britain and France were almost continuously at war. In North America these French and British conflicts were known as King William’s War (1689–97), Queen Anne’s War (1702–13), the War of Jenkins’ Ear (1739), King George’s War (1743–48), and, finally, the French and Indian War (1754–63), which was known in Europe as the Seven Years’ War. The Treaty of Paris (1763), which ended the latter war, gave Britain a vital victory over France and its allies in North America, the West Indies, Africa, and India. France withdrew from the mainland of North America, ceding its claims to Canada and the Ohio and Mississippi Valley regions. Britain also gained control of east and west Florida, Cape Breton Island, the remainder of Nova Scotia, several Caribbean islands (Grenada, St. Vincent, Dominica, and Tobago), Senegal in Africa (a slaving post), and the Mediterranean island of Minorca. Britain also realized a greatly increased military and commercial position in India. At this point the British Empire could be said to be a truly worldwide empire, with the original 13 North American colonies temporarily at its core.

Ominously for the consolidation of this worldwide enterprise, London officials had been unable to establish strong institutions of imperial control in North America comparable to those constructed by the Spanish in their Latin American empire. The 17th-century British Stuart monarchs experienced great difficulty controlling the North American colonies despite their interest in exerting royal power. British attempts to bring the American colonies under the direct control of the king or to strengthen the program of mercantilist laws (restricting colonial manufactures, prohibiting paper currency, and regulating trade) were fitful in the early 18th century. The day-to-day administration of colonial affairs was decentralized and inefficient. A Board of Trade and Plantations had been established in 1696 to advise the government, but real colonial authority rested in the Privy Council (the central administrative agency for the government as a whole), the admiralty, and the treasury. None of these concentrated exclusively on colonial affairs because they also were responsible for administering laws at home; all faced a confusion of authority. Both the Crown and Parliament sent their own appointees to administer British interests in the colonies rather than to enlist influential and talented Americans. They thus offered few incentives to local men to join the imperial enterprise and ignored the successful precedents of incorporating native Scots into the administration of the empire in Scotland. If anything, the North American colonies experienced a period of “benign neglect” from the British Empire, allowing the colonies to enjoy a good deal of self-rule.

48 British Empire

The various American colonial legislatures generally resisted attempts to exert imperial authority well before the American Revolution. By the 1750s colonial assemblies had established the right to levy taxes, make appropriations, approve appointments, and pass laws for their respective colonies. Such laws were subject to veto by the royal governor or the Privy Council in London, but governors found themselves unable to resist the assemblies’ control of the colonial budget. Moreover, the Privy Council could be circumvented by repassing disallowed laws in slightly altered form. Any theoretical distinction that the American colonists wanted to make between royal authority, on the one hand, and parliamentary authority, on the other, made absolutely no sense in London, because the British monarchs had long been unable to function without the consent of Parliament. After 1763 the British government enacted a new set of policies for the American colonies, policies that were dictated by changing international realities and a new set of political circumstances within Britain itself. These new policies were among the decisions that highlighted British Eurocentrism and contributed to American disillusionment with the imperial relationship.

In the 17th- and 18th-century struggles over colonial control in the Americas, a rapidly growing population was one of Britain’s strong advantages. By 1700 approximately 250,000 settlers and slaves lived in England’s mainland colonies, and the population was doubling every 25 years. New France matched that pace, but with only 14,000 people in
1700, it could not close the gap. By contrast, the population of the Spanish missions was in continual decline. Of course, Native peoples greatly outnumbered settlers except in eastern New England and the Virginia tidewater. The English Civil War of the 1640s had given Indians an opportunity to resist European imperialism more effectively, but the Indians of the Eastern Woodlands did not unite into an effective anti-English league at least until King Philip’s War (1675–76). By the 1670s most of the coastal Natives had already been devastated by disease or soon would be. Indians played substantial roles in each of the four colonial wars between Britain and France, whether they helped the Spanish and French colonists to survive or aided the British colonists to expand their territory. The histories of Native Americans, until recently structured by narratives of decline and cultural loss, are now being restructured as narratives of mutual influence and hybridity, as in the case of the Catawba. English-language historiography of the British Empire long focused on European influences on the Americas; this has now expanded to investigate colonial influences on England and Scotland. Raw materials from the American colonies and Asian textiles and tea transformed the material cultures of Britain. Addictive colonial foods, such as sugar, tobacco, tea, coffee, and chocolate, along with exotic goods like silk, rice, cotton textiles and dyestuffs, all changed the social and dietary patterns of British society. Perhaps even more important, imperial trade provided a changed context for British conceptions of commerce and empire. The fruits of empire, especially tea and sugar, became so widely available, for example, that by the 1740s English moralists could exaggerate that even haymakers and chambermaids wasted their time drinking tea. New social relations and civil society had developed in coffee shops and around the tea table by the 1750s. Colonial imports into Britain were also reexported, mostly to other European markets. The imperial sector was by far the most dynamic in British commerce; its trading outposts in India, crucial to the China tea trade, and its colonies in North America and the West Indies provided what seemed like limitless expansion. Imports from North America increased almost fourfold in value in the first half of the century, while West Indian imports more than doubled in the same period. Despite widespread and very profitable smuggling, the value of tea brought to London by the East India Company grew more than 40-fold in the same period. Exports to the colonies also boomed, especially compared to a relatively stagnant inter-European trade. The booty in territory and commodities that had accompanied imperial wars in the Americas, Africa, and India, climaxing in the huge gains of the Seven Years’ War, seemed to confirm that British imperial power and commercial profit would continue to go hand in hand into the foreseeable future.


—Michelle Maskiel

Burgesses, House of (1619–1775)
The House of Burgesses was the first legislative body in British North America. For the first decade of English settlement in Virginia, the colony and its parent organization, the Virginia Company, concentrated on the daily survival of the settlers and the establishment of a viable cash crop. By 1619 the military-style government that had been in place for nearly 10 years was replaced by a more representative system that included the House of Burgesses. When Sir Edwin Sandys gained control of the foundering Virginia Company in 1618, he ordered the colony’s newly appointed governor, Sir George Yeardley, to establish a representative governmental body in the hope that it would make Virginia more appealing to potential settlers. This new legislature would meet annually with the governor and the council to address important issues. Once in session, the full assembly could adopt laws that would then be sent to England, where the Virginia Company held veto power. Although its stated powers were limited, the House of Burgesses was the first representative government in the New World and grew to a position of primary importance in Virginia by the time of the American Revolution.
The first meeting of the assembly took place in Jamestown in August 1619. There, 22 burgesses reported from their individual plantations and towns. In this first session the assembly endorsed the system of indentured servitude in which impoverished Europeans would work for a number of years as servants in exchange for their transport to Virginia. Once freed, they would normally receive some land and possibly tools or money in order to begin farming.
In its early years the House of Burgesses operated under the sometimes oppressive control of the royal governor. In 1661, after the Restoration in England, new burgesses were elected, and Sir William Berkeley
was reinstated as governor. This new royalist legislature pleased Berkeley, and he refused to call a general election until Bacon’s Rebellion 15 years later. After Bacon’s Rebellion the Crown unsuccessfully attempted to rescind the House of Burgesses’ ability to initiate legislation. By the early 18th century the House of Burgesses and the system of government in Virginia was changing. A 1699 law forbade candidates to give food or drink to potential voters. Although seldom enforced, the law illustrates the fear that only wealthy men could afford to “campaign” properly and win a seat in the assembly. Most important to the rise of the House of Burgesses was the close proximity of its members to Virginia’s farmers. Through their community ties burgesses often gauged issues far more effectively and could react to them quicker than could the governor or the council.

As the colony moved through the turbulent years after the beginning of the Seven Years’ War, the House of Burgesses gained even more importance in the eyes of Virginians. With England’s abandonment of the policy of “salutary neglect,” the House of Burgesses appeared to be the sole institution standing between full English domination and colonial selfdom. As a result, eligible voters in Virginia paid close attention to the men they sent to Williamsburg to defend what they perceived as their rights as Englishmen in America. After playing an important role in the coming of the American Revolution in Virginia, the House of Burgesses faded out of existence. The final entry in the Journal of the House of Burgesses reads: “Monday, the 6th of May, 16 Geo. III. 1776. Several members met, but did neither proceed to business, nor adjourn, as a House of Burgesses. FINIS.” Not long after the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, the House of Burgesses became the Virginia House of Delegates.


—Brian McKnight and Billy

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captivity

The first cross-cultural captives in early North America were actually Indians taken by Europeans during the first decades of exploration and colonization. We know that Columbus captured Arawaks for export to Spain as slaves and exotic symbols of the New World, but even the English in Virginia and New England took Indians hostage during the 17th century to train them as interpreters. Few went willingly. One of the most famous of these Indian captives, Squanto, was a Patuxet seized on the New England coast by seafarers in 1614 and sold into slavery in Spain. He escaped and returned to his home, only to find his people ravaged by disease and a group of English Separatists (Pilgrims) living at Plymouth. The same year settlers in Jamestown, Virginia, kidnapped Pocahontas, the daughter of the Algonquin werowance Powhatan. Acting as diplomat for her father and a bridge between cultures, Pocahontas agreed to marry John Rolfe and returned with him to England, where she died in 1616. Nevertheless, popular notions about captivity usually come from the harrowing narratives of white colonists taken by Indian warriors during times of crisis. Indeed, Jamestown more often evokes memories of Captain John Smith’s tale of his own capture and trial before Powhatan, than Pocahontas’s captivity. Mary White Rowlandson dictated one of the first published accounts of captivity after spending nearly 12 weeks with Narragansett and Wampanoag Indians in 1675 and 1676. Taken from her frontier home in Lancaster, Massachusetts, at the onset of King Philip’s War, Mary described her experience as a test of her faith in God. Demoted from mistress of her own household to the servant of an Indian “Master,” Mary struggled with privation and hunger as she tried to make sense of her captors’ motives. Although she condemned their actions, Mary’s narrative also revealed a familiarity that existed between Native Americans and English colonists even outside of captivity.

For Native Americans, captivity had a variety of purposes. Traditionally, Native groups adopted Indian captives to strengthen political ties and replenish populations decimated by war and disease. Sometimes individuals were taken to replace specific members of a clan. The Iroquois, for instance, took captives during mourning war campaigns against customary enemies and revenged the death of a family member by either killing or adopting a captive. Women and children were most often adopted. By the mid-18th century non-Iroquois people made up as much as two-thirds of the Iroquois population. Contrary to prevalent fears among colonists, Indians tortured or killed white captives only under specific circumstances. They sometimes killed white people during their initial attack or as an example to force obedience from other captives. More often, Indians kept prisoners alive to exchange for ransom or to adopt them into their households. Once in a Native community, captives were adopted through a series of sometimes dangerous rituals. They might be required to run a gauntlet of villagers wielding sticks and other weapons. Native Americans also symbolically washed and reclothed adopted captives to mark their rebirth as Indians. Although captives sometimes became servants, as did Mary Rowlandson, many white people found themselves equal members of Native
families. Some adapted well to Indian life and, especially if taken as children, even rejected Euro-American society. To her family’s horror, Eunice Williams, the daughter of minister John Williams, repeatedly refused to return to Puritan society after her capture from Deerfield, Massachusetts, in 1704 by Catholic Mohawk. Like Eunice, Mary Jemison, captured at age 15 by Shawnee in western Pennsylvania, stayed with her Native family, eventually marrying a Delaware and then a Seneca man. During the Seven Years’ War Delaware and Shawnee took many white people captive from frontier plantations in Pennsylvania. When peace came after 1763, Col. Henry Bouquet oversaw the return of more than 200 captives. He found that many of those who had been adopted into Indian families as children could no longer speak the language of their birth and proved difficult to repatriate. Some ran away to rejoin Native American kin but were recaptured by Bouquet’s men and forcibly returned to the English. Euro-Americans equated kinship or cultural identity with biology and one’s national origins. Native Americans, on the other hand, had more flexible definitions of kin that allowed them to absorb others into their communities more easily, whether by capture or choice.


—Jane T. Merritt

Chesapeake Bay

Countless generations of Native Americans and European colonists used the resources of the Chesapeake Bay for transportation, fishing, and hunting. About 11,000 years ago melting glaciers formed the bay. Native Americans settled around the Chesapeake Bay, which they called Chesepioc, meaning “great shellfish bay.” The bay served as the nucleus of Native Americans’ lives, providing a stable food source. Stunned by the bay’s size and resources, the Spanish considered the Chesapeake Bay as a superior port for vessels, calling it Bahía de Santa María. The English referred to it as the Great Bay of the Chesapeakes.

Native peoples built villages and hunting camps along the coast of the bay. Deer and wildlife were attracted to the bay, providing pelts to trade and meat to eat. The Algonquin formed the majority of the Indians around the bay; they tried to retain isolation from the Susquehannock of the Iroquois nation. Some tribes entered into alliances, such as the Powhatan Confederacy. As more tribes settled in the bay area and as European adventurers arrived seeking land and trade, the indigenous people of the region engaged in cultural and other conflicts. Although some transactions were amicable, hostilities between the Algonquin and Europeans often resulted in abductions and murders.

Chesapeake Bay 65

In 1570 a group of Spanish Jesuits established a settlement near the York River, intending to convert Native Americans to Catholicism, but the Algonquin resisted. The English planned to settle the Chesapeake Bay region as early as the 1580s, but three attempts to settle Roanoke Island failed. However, John White, an artist, returned to England with his drawings and maps, which became very well known. The original Jamestown settlers arrived at the Chesapeake Bay in April 1607, sailing up the James River. This colony suffered from starvation and exposure to the elements. Governor John Smith ordered men to harvest oysters and sturgeon from the Chesapeake to feed the settlers. The Algonquin taught the English how to grow tobacco, which was the catalyst for a massive shipping and economic system depending on the waterways of the colonial Chesapeake Bay. English Roman Catholics settled St. Mary’s City, Maryland, in 1634, taking advantage of the Chesapeake Bay to develop major shipbuilding and tobacco industries. The early labor force was multiracial, including European indentured servants, a few Indian slaves, and a handful of black servants and slaves. More land was cleared as soil became depleted by the demands of tobacco plants. As the supply of English indentured servants lessened and the Africans became more easily available, a system of racial bondage evolved at the end of the 17th century. The Chesapeake Bay enabled permanent settlements to thrive, and its tributaries were crucial as settlers migrated west. Pirates flourished, and shipwrecks littered the Chesapeake Bay.


—Elizabeth D. Schafer

Cities and urban life

By 1690 five important urban centers in the present-day United States had acquired both similar and unique characteristics. Boston, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston, all located on rivers, were positioned to maximize the trade and military advantages of the Atlantic rim communities. Through these centers flowed manufactured goods, money, produce, and—significantly—information. By the 1740s each town had at least a skeleton of municipal government; a weekly newspaper; a variety of
skilled craftsmen; a diversity of cultures and religions; well-developed commercial, consumer, and credit systems; and at least rudimentary city services (e.g., mail, markets, taverns, inns, theaters, constables, poverty relief programs, prisons, and some educational institutions). Although most of the cities were in areas controlled by Britain, other small urban nodes of a few hundred people also had appeared by 1700 and would take shape as cities by the end of the century. New Orleans and Chicago developed as a result of French-Indian trade. St. Augustine (Florida), Tucson (Arizona), and San Antonio (Texas) grew out of Spanish Catholic missions. By 1775 Spanish explorers had established a beachhead on what would become San Francisco (California).

The urban areas represented economic and social opportunities and challenges. Each had an adjoining agricultural region from which to draw produce for consumption and international trade. Each had international political and economic influence disproportionate to its small size; by 1750 Philadelphia—with only about 15,000 residents—was considered to be the second most important city in the British Empire. Beginning as early as the 1690s, publishing operations in every city began gaining momentum, turning out thousands of books, pamphlets, broadsides, and magazines, including 4,000 titles between 1740 and 1760. Although Boston remained the largest (approximately 7,000 in 1690 and 16,000 in the 1740s), New York and Philadelphia became the most vigorous urban centers after 1740, growing rapidly in both population and independence for women, a significant number of whom chose to remain single in order to control their own assets. Each urban center struggled with municipal administrative challenges: road maintenance, waste disposal and pollution, housing codes, fires, and petty crime.

Regional, religious, economic, and cultural variations helped define unique characteristics of cities. The few urban areas in the South were very small, shaped by a plantation system where many plantations were the equivalent of self-sufficient villages containing their own craftspeople, agricultural produce, and private docks. Although Charleston—with only 7,000 residents by 1750—contained furniture-makers and printers who were the equal of those in other cities, it lagged behind with other services. For example, whereas Boston, Philadelphia, and New York all had colleges by the time of the Revolution, Charleston did not. The percentage of slave labor and free black residents in some of the cities also influenced urban culture. New York and Charleston, where slaves accounted for more than 20 percent of the population, both experienced slave uprisings in the 18th century. Philadelphia, under the influence of Quaker values, had a smaller slave population. Quaker influence also caused Philadelphia to lag behind the other cities in the development of theater.

As the 18th century progressed, cities also developed a hierarchical class structure, which by 1760 was defined by a dramatically unequal distribution of wealth. Whereas in 1690 the poorest 50 percent of free urban people controlled about 10 percent of the cities’ assets, their economic share had declined to less than 5 percent by 1760. This disparity, evident everywhere, was most pronounced in Philadelphia, where the poorest half of the population owned only 3 percent of the city’s assets, while the richest 5 percent had more than half of the city’s wealth—almost double the percentage they had controlled in 1690. Affluent urbanites strutted their wealth, importing wines, cheeses, books, and art from abroad and erecting public buildings and private residences copied from opulent British designs. Easy availability of information, the display of wealth, and wartime booms followed by recessions left urbanites restless and discontent, a factor that fed the desire for reform and led to the Revolution. Frequent communication among urban areas also facilitated the publicizing of revolutionary ideas, such as those espoused by John Locke and Thomas Paine. This combined with social class tensions and a growing appetite for consumer goods to highlight the English colonists’ concerns about “fairness,” “equality,” and “freedom”—concepts that appear frequently in Revolutionary rhetoric.

By 1770 the combined population of Boston, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston was only about 60,000, less than 3 percent of the 1.5 million inhabitants in Anglo-America, yet American leadership emerged from these urban areas, and the cities continued to lead the nation for decades to come. Yet, American political leadership emerged from these urban areas, and the cities continued to lead the nation during the decade of resistance preceding the American Revolution. In addition, the multicultural and multiracial characteristics of early cities defined the types of societies that eventually would become a central aspect of the United States itself.


—Emma Lapsansky and Billy G. Smith

Class

Class was an integral and ever-present part of early American
life, although its presence was never felt completely or uniformly. Like much of early American life, the nature of class relations depended to a great extent on region. In the early years of European settlement, colonial societies bore the heavy imprint of cultural and social dislocation, flux, and recomposition as the first generations of conquerors and settlers attempted to impose their European conceptions of social order on an ever-changing world of multicultural interchange. Before the 17th century in Spanish America and the 18th century in the other Euro-American colonies, they seldom succeeded. The sheer complexity of establishing footholds in the New World, of treating with the indigenous inhabitants, of establishing viable economic connections with the home countries—coupled with the fact that all European colonization efforts excluded whole classes of people—made for a cluster of colonial societies in which social hierarchies were more often chimerical than real. As hard as they may have tried to reconstruct the Old World in the New, Euro-Americans perforce created unique social systems that were, for a time, remarkably fluid and open. Only after several generations of established settlement did Creole societies begin to resemble their transatlantic counterparts. This fluidity is most clearly evident in the two regions of English settlement. In the northeastern arc of English settlements, small family farms predominated. Within these units of agrarian production, male household heads exercised formal legal and public power over family members, although in practice power in families flowed from many sources: men made decisions about fields and livestock; women made decisions about the household and its gardens, about the farmyard, and about the family orchard; older children directed the upbringing and tasks of younger siblings; adults directed the lives of servants and, sometimes, slaves. Family farm communities lacked a center of power. Composed, for the most part, of economically equal members, family farm communities formed one-class societies of small producers that provided little basis for focused, centralized power. Even though often engineered, consensual politics generally obtained in these communities, and age, more than any other factor, formed the locus of local power. This was especially true of New England villages, where several studies have demonstrated the persistence of “town fathers”—older men who guided formal and informal community decision making—in positions of local authority. These decentralized communities realized a degree of centralization only occasionally, whenever the outside world of colonial magistrates and contending armies intruded in local affairs. In the Connecticut and Hudson River valleys and the countryside surrounding New York City and Philadelphia, agriculture took on a larger-scale, commercial aspect. In these areas clientage and asymmetrical class relationships made power much more centralized. Wealthy landholders claimed economic, social, and political power throughout these commercial regions by lending money, renting and leasing land, hiring temporary labor, and helping in hard times. More often than not, these landowners turned their economic power as a rentier class into political power, calling in the suffrages of their clients and lessees as a condition of their obliging paternalism. If power was more centralized around class relationships in commercial farming areas, it was most concentrated in the northern seaport cities. As Gary B. Nash has shown, from the very beginning of settlement in Boston, New York City, and Philadelphia, cities were the most unequal places in the Northeast. Dominated economically by a class of wealthy import/export merchants, the northern seaport cities supported a diverse society made up of independent artisans, retail merchants, laborers, mariners, indentured and hired servants, and slaves. In these, the most stratified locales in northern society, a rudimentary class system linked merchant to retailer, retailer to artisan, artisan to journeyman and apprentice, and everyone to the cities’ bound laborers and mariners. The nature of this class system is often distorted and misunderstood—indeed it is occasionally even denied—by those who see class existing only in its centralized, industrial form. For although centralized in comparison with its rural counterparts, the commercial economy of the seaport cities supported class relations that were remarkably decentralized compared with those that would exist in the 19th century. These seaport societies revolved around trade, and this made merchants one center of urban society. Merchants employed mariners for their vessels, bought the time of indentured servants, and purchased slaves as personal and household servants. However, at the same time, they also contracted with independent artisans for goods and farmers for produce. For their part, master artisans hired journeymen and trained apprentices, but they also bought the time and persons of indentured servants and slaves as the supply of dependent labor and the size of their purses dictated. Even the position of laborers and mariners (together composing the largest group of working people in the seaport cities) was ambiguous. Servants typically hired themselves on an annual basis and mariners for the duration of a voyage. This brought them under the direct personal supervision of their temporary owners, who controlled not only their working but their personal lives as well. Although they possessed some legal rights and protections, the position of servants and mariners was closer to that of slaves than free
wage laborers, at least during the term of their respective indentures. The overlapping diversity of these class relations remained diffuse in these communities, and, while in some respects they might prefigure the world of industrial capitalism, they mostly represented a semicentralized world of independence and dependence, of clientage and custom, of freedom and bondage. It is only when we turn to the English plantation complex that we encounter a well-articulated and centralized class system in early America. From their inception the English Caribbean and southern mainland colonies were designed as colonies of exploitation. Unable to find significant mineral wealth or to exploit Native American labor effectively, as had their Spanish predecessors in the New World, the English were able to follow their Iberian counterparts in establishing lucrative staple-producing societies. Relying first on English indentured servants, the southern mainland colonies quickly evolved into societies in which class was the dominant form of inequality. In colonies to which few women came before the mid-17th century, the near absence of family life focused colonial life on the economic nexus. Developing from the English institution of year-long contracts struck between landlords and agricultural servants, the indenture system of Maryland and Virginia quickly became a system of quasi slavery. Servants could be bought and sold or their persons and labor gambled away. For those found guilty of increasingly minor infractions, their time in “service” could be extended two-, three-, or four-fold as punishment and as a means of enhancing the wealth and power of the region’s planter class. The lines of class were thus clear in the early Chesapeake: the bulk of the work of planting tobacco—the region’s staple crop—was performed by indentured servants who labored for an increasingly wealthy and powerful class of plantation owners. If the indenture system represented the most class-centered form of inequality in early British American society, the slave system that supplanted it after 1680 was even more so. Slavery in the Chesapeake was in many respects a direct result of the indenture system of the early and middle 17th century. After 1660 slave prices fell as servant prices rose, making the purchase of slaves increasingly the norm. Bacon’s Rebellion, which pitted ex-indentured servants against their former masters, accelerated the purchase of slaves, who by 1650 were already considered a class unto themselves: servants for life. By 1710 the Chesapeake colonies had become fully committed slave societies, with African slaves constituting 42 percent of Virginia’s and 23 percent of Maryland’s total population. The same held true farther south in the Carolinas, where slavery and its attendant class system arrived with the first white immigrants. Comprised of displaced settlers from the sugar island of Barbados, there was little question about the status of the African slaves they brought with them. Once South Carolina planters had mastered the techniques of rice growing—learned, ironically, from their African bondpeople—they quickly turned the fledgling province into the most prosperous of the British mainland colonies. By the early 18th century South Carolina had become the mainland’s only black-majority colony. Thus, by the turn of the 18th century, the basic pattern of class relations that would come to dominate the plantation complex was in place in the mainland colonies. It involved the domination of southern society by a small class of very wealthy and powerful planters whose wealth derived from the exploitation of a subaltern class of slaves. That dominance encompassed the white, small-farming population as well. Interspersed throughout the plantation complex were other white people, most of whom were family farmers much like their northern counterparts, although they competed directly with large planters by growing small quantities of the local staple in addition to producing their own food and fodder. The financial power of the plantation grandees coupled with the virtual control they exercised over colonial legislatures and county court systems made the class system of the plantation regions, along with those of New Spain, the most centralized in pre–19th-century America. Early North America was thus a concatenation of systems of power and inequality. Working outward from colonial families to local communities and on to colonial society as a whole, inequalities of power in all of its aspects took on many forms, but despite the existence of rudimentary forms of capitalism and several configurations of class, outside the plantation complex class was never the central organizing institution of early American society. In fact, within the northeastern arc of the British mainland colonies—except, perhaps, in the large seaport cities—it is difficult to find any stable centers of power at all. That would begin to change as rapid population growth in the 18th and early 19th centuries, repudiation of colonial status, the creation of independent nationhood, and the infusion of capital into productive relationships began to transform early North America into an industrial nation. However, while the impact of commercial expansion and early industrial capitalism on the structure of power and
inequality in the new nation was profound, the question of class in early 19th-century American society admitted no unequivocal answer.

Some commonalities of class emerged throughout the larger Atlantic world, especially in Europe and the Americas. In the late 17th and early 18th centuries, imperial settlement, religious change, and the commercial revolution created conditions enabling new identities based on class. This was especially evident in the appearance and development of the “middle classes.” Like Benjamin Franklin, many people (mostly white males) began to aspire to improve their social and economic status by adopting the values of hard work, frugality, and mastery of their own behavior. Pursuing genteel lives in the burgeoning consumer empire, this new middling sort eventually articulated a clearer sense of their social distinctiveness, economic interests, and political objectives. The appropriate use and display of consumer goods, for example, offered status and symbols of social superiority for some prosperous people at the same time that it excluded others. Even as middling colonists sought common cause with one other and the fashionable Europeans they considered their peers, they sharpened distinctions in colonial communities and nurtured resentment among those who lacked the wherewithal to acquire the trappings of respectability. This newly affluent middle class also increasingly feared the “dangerous classes” comprised of marginalized, impoverished people, who were perceived as too irresponsible to care for themselves or their families.

Of course, new definitions of class had a gender component as well, as some white women began to define themselves according to middle-class respectability. Working outside the home became less acceptable, and appearances (of themselves and their domiciles) grew more important. All of these changes reflected the reconfiguration of class relations and the newer ways of conceptualizing the differences between men and women and between black and white people along increasingly restrictive lines.


College of Philadelphia
The College of Philadelphia began in 1749, when Benjamin Franklin published the anonymous pamphlet Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvaniathat called for the creation of a public academy along a model unique in Anglo-American educational history. Practicality was Franklin’s goal in the academy: “As to their Studies, it would be well if they could be taught every Thing which is useful, and every Thing which is ornamental: But Art is long, and their Time is short.” Instead of the “ornamental” classical curriculum that dominated the educations of wealthy young white Americans, students at Franklin’s proposed academy would be trained in modern subjects to prepare them for future careers. His educational plan was firmly grounded in his own practical self-education, his grasp of Enlightenment ideas, and the needs of the ethnically and religiously diverse population of Philadelphia. The academy quickly became an institution far different from what Franklin had envisioned. Much of that transformation was due to the Anglican priest William Smith (1727–1803), whom the trustees hired as a professor in 1754. The following year, under Smith’s influence and leadership, the board applied for a new charter that would allow them to grant college degrees, but Smith’s personal habits and politics repelled as many as they enticed. He had little interest in forming a coalition with Quakers, Lutherans, or Presbyterians in the religiously diverse city. His personal interests were in teaching and befriending the sons of wealthy Anglican merchants, not in providing charity education for artisans’ children. Franklin eventually came to consider Smith one of his most bitter enemies, and the College and Academy of Philadelphia became a hotly contested issue in the increasingly divisive Pennsylvania politics, having serious repercussions for the school during the late colonial period and during and immediately after the Revolution.

—George W. Boudreau
College of William and Mary
Chartered on February 8, 1693, the College of William and Mary in Virginia is the second oldest institution of higher education in British America. A college was planned as early as 1618, but the 1622 Powhatan uprising decimated the planned site. Reverend James Blair secured the 1693 royal charter, which endowed the school with 10,000 acres, nearly £2,000, a steady income from tobacco duties, and named the college for William III and Mary II, the ruling English monarchs. The original brick main building, attributed to Sir Christopher Wren, was completed in 1699, and the college’s elegant structures inspired the colony’s gentry to construct mansions in Wren’s architectural style.
Initially, the college’s academic standards were minimal, although they improved over time. Blair departed from the traditional English curriculum, adding dance in 1715 and mathematics the following year. In his will physicist Robert Boyle endowed an Indian school with land and funds to support a master to teach “reading, writing, and vulgar arithmetic.” Established in 1706 as part of the College of William and Mary, the Indian school served as many as 20 Native Americans, but their numbers dwindled to nothing by the 1770s. In 1729 the college completed its faculty of six masters teaching moral and natural philosophy, mathematics, divinity, and grammar and enrolled around 60 students. Distinguished alumni include Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, and Edmund Randolph. —Michael J. Jarvis collegesSee education; specific colleges

Congregationalists
Congregationalists are Protestants whose congregations govern themselves directly rather than submitting to the government of elected elders or appointed priests and bishops. Congregationalists reject the imposition of more than minimal restraints on a local church’s actions by higher ecclesiastical authorities or on an individual member’s beliefs by prescriptive creeds. Congregationalists have occasionally drafted descriptive creeds, including most notably the Savoy Declaration (1658), a counterpart to the Presbyterians’ Westminster Confession.

English Congregationalism drew its initial impetus from Robert Browne’s book A Treatise of Reformation without Tarrying for Anie(1582). Brown and other radicals organized independent underground congregations, with one in the town of Scrooby eventually coming under the leadership of Puritan cleric John Robinson. In 1608 Robinson and lay elder William Brewster oversaw their flock’s flight to the Netherlands; in 1620 Brewster and much of the congregation migrated again, planting Plymouth Colony in North America. Plymouth’s Pilgrims stressed their autonomy from the Church of England. Within a decade the Massachusetts Bay Colony had been established north of Plymouth by more moderate Puritans who denied any such autonomy. Nevertheless, Massachusetts Bay’s Puritans followed Plymouth’s Pilgrims in choosing Congregational church government. Migrants from Massachusetts carried Congregationalism with them as they settled the rest of New England.

In 1648 New England’s Congregational churches adopted the Cambridge Platform defining their common polity. Beginning in the latter part of the century, as these churches endured a prolonged period of perceived decline, their ministers responded by modifying that polity in order to give themselves greater leverage over both their lukewarm churches and their secularizing communities. The crisis of “declension” continued until the Great Awakening, when a surge of conversions brought fresh vitality to churches led by New Light clergy like Jonathan Edwards. At the same time, the Awakening’s excesses triggered resistance on the part of churches led by Old Light clergy like Charles Chauncy. Tensions between these two blocs anticipated Congregationalism’s eventual division into distinct Trinitarian and Unitarian denominations.

Further reading
—George W. Harper

Connecticut
In the early 17th century approximately 6,000 to 7,000 Native Americans belonging to several different tribes of the Algonquin confederation lived in present-day Connecticut. The region was less densely settled by Native Americans than the region to the east (present-day Rhode Island), and most of the Algonquin communities cooperated with early European settlers. The Dutch explored the Connecticut River Valley before the English reached it. Adriaen Block, a Dutch explorer, sailed up the Connecticut River as far as present-day Windsor in 1614, and in 1633 the Dutch built a fort on the site of present-day Hartford. In the same year, however, Plymouth colonist William Holmes started a trading post at Windsor, and English settlement soon superseded Dutch claims to the region. There were two distinct waves of English settlement in the 1630s: the first, from 1633–36, focused on the Connecticut River towns of Windsor (1633), Wethersfield Connecticut 75 (1635–36), and Hartford (1636); the second, from late 1635 to 1638, included the coastal towns of Saybrook (1635) and Quinnipiac (New Haven, 1638). Most settlers were disaffected Massachusetts Bay colonists who moved south in search of good farmland and more congenial religious and political leadership. In spite of the close similarities between the two settlements, they were governed separately until 1665: the Connecticut River towns as the Colony of Connecticut under the leadership of John Winthrop, Jr. (the first governor), Zion Gardiner (builder of the English fort at Saybrook), and George Fenwick; and the Quinnipiac region as the Colony of New Haven, under the spiritual leadership of Reverend John Davenport and the secular leadership of merchant Theophilus Eaton. The first clash between Native Americans and English settlers in Connecticut came in 1636, when the Pequot, a
obtained a charter that legally established the Connecticut
John Winthrop, Jr., traveled to England in 1661–62 and
their claims to the land and to self-government. Governor
government, however, and settlers were anxious to secure
76 Connecticut
the Connecticut Valley (The New York Public Library)
Orders provided only a rough outline of the colony's
resembled a Puritan church covenant and was, in fact, based
the
Fundamental Orders of Government, a civil covenant that
independence from the mother colony. In 1639 they adopted
the
Before the Restoration Connecticut’s political structure was
loose and simple. Initially eight magistrates
appointed by the Massachusetts General Court governed
the region, but the Connecticut settlers, dissatisfied with
the Massachusetts leadership, soon asserted their
independence from the mother colony. In 1639 they adopted
the
Fundamental Orders of Government, a civil covenant that
resembled a Puritan church covenant and was, in fact, based
on a 1638 sermon by Thomas Hooker. The Fundamental
Orders provided only a rough outline of the colony’s
Illustration depicting Thomas Hooker’s party on the way to
the Connecticut Valley (The New York Public Library)
76 Connecticut
government, however, and settlers were anxious to secure
their claims to the land and to self-government. Governor
John Winthrop, Jr., traveled to England in 1661–62 and
obtained a charter that legally established the Connecticut
colony, licensed it to absorb New Haven (which it did in
1665), defined its boundaries (theoretically extending west
to the Pacific Ocean), and granted it generous privileges of
self-government. The charter called for annual elections of
a governor, deputy governor, and 12 assistants; these men
formed the upper house of the colonial legislature. In
addition, each town was permitted to send two
representatives
to the lower house. The upper and lower houses of the
legislature together formed the General Assembly, which met
twice annually and was empowered to pass laws that did
not conflict with English law.
Connecticut, like the other New England colonies, faced a severe threat to self-government when James II attempted to annul the colonial charters and unite all of the northern British-American colonies in the Dominion of New England under Governor Sir Edmund Andros.
Connecticut was subject to the dominion from the fall of 1683 until the spring of 1689, when news of the Glorious
Revolution reached America. The freemen then voted to reinstate the predominin magistrates and appealed to the
new monarchs, William and Mary, to restore Connecticut’s charter. The restored charter, confirmed in 1693, served as the basis of Connecticut’s government until 1818.
After the political struggles of the first two generations of settlement, Connecticut residents turned their attention to trade, education, and religious life. The English population grew rapidly, reaching 130,000 by the census
of 1766; meanwhile, the black slave population remained small (3,000 in 1766, slightly more than 2 percent of the colony’s population), and the Indian population declined from a high of 6,000 or more in the early 17th century to
a mere 600 by the mid-18th century. In the 17th century both Indians and Africans were held as slaves, but they constituted only a tiny fraction of the population. In 1715 the General Assembly, frightened by news of the recent Indian wars in the Carolinas, forbade the importation of Indian slaves; Indian slavery died out gradually in the early to
mid-18th century. In contrast, the number of Africans and African Americans held as slaves in Connecticut tripled between the 1740s and 1760s. Most slaves worked as domestic servants or labored beside their owners on farms and in small craft shops. In the late colonial period it became increasingly common for slaveholders to manumit their slaves, although freedmen’s former masters were required to support them if they seemed likely to become charges on the community.
Both free black people and the few Indians who remained in the colony had difficulty supporting themselves. Indians, in particular, were subject to debilitating commercial restrictions. They could not legally purchase arms, iron, steel, horses, boats, or other goods that would enable them to launch a military challenge to English rule. Their movements within the colony were restricted. Connecticut officials viewed Indians as a corrupting influence on English colonial society. They encouraged them to convert to Christianity but, at the same time, discouraged ordinary English settlers from associating with Indians and imposed stiff penalties on English folk who chose to live in Native American communities. The General Assembly did not condone wanton behavior toward local Indians, however; it also enacted legislation to protect Indian goods from seizure and Indians accused of crimes from summary punishment.
Until the mid-18th century Connecticut’s economy was overwhelmingly agricultural. Capital was scarce, farmers depended on family labor supplemented (in wealthier households) by a few servants or slaves, and most families focused their energy on subsistence agriculture. Maize (Indian corn) was the principal crop; it was even used as money in the 17th century. Farmers also grew wheat, rye,
peas, oats, barley, flax, and hemp and raised a wide variety of livestock, including cattle, sheep, and swine. Connecticut farmers exported surplus grain, meat, and livestock to other parts of New England, Newfoundland, and the West Indies. In the 18th century the growth of trade and the expansion of British markets in the West Indies led many Connecticut farmers to specialize in the production of livestock for export. Small industries, such as clock-making, iron-making, and shipbuilding, developed in the colony’s principal towns. Although the volume of the colony’s trade increased rapidly, its focus remained provincial; Boston, New York, and the British West Indies were Connecticut’s most important trading partners.

The growth of commerce and manufacturing fomented economic and political conflict within the colony. Merchants residing in the eastern coastal towns called upon the General Assembly to issue more currency, which would enable them to pay off their debts (debt was a perennial problem for colonial merchants) and purchase more British imports. Residents of agriculturally oriented western Connecticut feared that economic growth in the coastal regions, combined with coastal merchants’ land speculation in the Susquehanna River Valley (in present-day Pennsylvania), would drive down property values in western Connecticut, and they succeeded in destroying the New London Society for Trade and Commerce, the merchants’ power base. The western residents’ ultimate triumph reflects the continuing importance of farming and rural life in late colonial Connecticut. As late as 1766, 90 percent of the colony’s population was still engaged in agriculture. Connecticut was a vigorous, generally conservative center of religious and intellectual life almost from the Connecticut 77 period of its founding. Religious enthusiasm animated the region’s first English settlers, and the colony’s founding documents reflect its Puritan mission. From 1644 colonial law obligated every resident to contribute to the support of the Congregational Church. Although Quakers, Baptists, and Anglicans frequently challenged this law, the General Assembly repeatedly upheld it. The Code of 1650 mirrored another overriding Puritan goal, widespread literacy. Every town of 50 or more families was required to employ a teacher of reading and writing, while every town of 100 or more families was required to found a grammar school as well. Many 17th-century New England schools were fleeting and unstable operations, but Connecticut repeatedly reaffirmed its educational mission. A grammar school was founded in New Haven as early as 1660, and in 1700 the General Assembly ordered the maintenance of a grammar school in each of the four county seats. In the early 18th century Connecticut colonists, like other Puritan New Englanders, struggled with a sense of “declension,” of having fallen away from the spiritual mission of their forebears. Connecticut’s clerical and intellectual elite responded by expanding educational opportunities for young men and reforming church government. The colony’s Collegiate School (later Yale College) was incorporated by the General Assembly in 1701 and opened in Killingworth in 1702. It moved several times before settling permanently in New Haven in 1717. Yale College, created as an alternative to Harvard College, was the third institution of higher education in British colonial America. For the first half century of its existence, it functioned primarily as a theological seminary, although it also trained men for political leadership. The college was plunged into controversy in 1722, when rector Timothy Cutler and tutor Samuel Johnson converted to Anglicanism. Their defection to the Anglican Church provoked a conservative reaction at Yale. In the following decades the college adhered strictly to the orthodox tenets of New England Congregationalism and the traditional classical curriculum.

Meanwhile, the Congregational Church attempted to shore up its power through the Saybrook Platform of 1708, which called for greater coordination of religious life through associations of pastors and consociations of autonomous town churches. The Saybrook Platform failed to resolve the underlying weaknesses in Connecticut’s religious life, however, leaving the colony ripe territory for the religious revivals of the 1730s and 1740s. Itinerant preachers converted thousands of Connecticut men and women to evangelical Christianity, leaving a bitter divide between revivalist “New Lights” and antirevivalist “Old Lights.” The religious divide duplicated, to some extent, the emerging economic divide between commercially oriented, New Light, eastern Connecticut and agriculturally oriented, Old Light, western Connecticut. Many churches, however, were split down the middle; in some cases New Lights seceded and formed autonomous congregations. The Old Lights marshaled their political strength to pass legislation restricting the activities of evangelical preachers. Some New Light judges were thrown off the bench, while New Light assemblymen were denied their seats in the legislature. In the 1760s the New Lights organized a political counterattack and drove the Old Lights from office. These New Light politicians ultimately provided Connecticut’s Revolutionary political leadership.

As Connecticut’s economy and religious life evolved, so, too, did its social life and legal culture. In the 17th century Puritan culture emphasized social order and consensus. The colony’s laws were based on the legal code of the Old Testament. There was relatively little violent crime or sexual misconduct, and most debt and property disputes were resolved through arbitration rather than litigation. By the early 18th century, however, the courts
were becoming much busier. Civil litigants increasingly relied on professional lawyers to plead their cases, and the courts gradually instituted a gendered double standard in adjudicating both fornication and slander suits. Divorce suits became more frequent. Evangelical religion, longdistance trade, and the passage of generations gradually eroded the influence of town meetings, village churches, and local gentlefolk, creating a more complex and individualistic society.


—Darcy R. Frye

convict labor
The English government compelled some convicts to emigrate to the colonies to labor as indentured servants. The system of banishing convicts emerged in 1597, when English magistrates were given the power to exile rogues and vagabonds. Beginning in 1718, they used this discretion to transport convicted felons to the New World. Leaders in England considered their ability to exile convicts to be a major innovation in the administration of justice, and the system operated as an intermediate option between capital punishment and lesser sanctions, such as whipping and branding.

The system benefited Great Britain most. Shipping convicts to the colonies provided one means of ridding its society of its unwanted. Convict transportation spared Britain from having to build and maintain a massive prison system. British leaders paid little attention to the servants convict labor 79 themselves. As one authority on the topic noted, they consigned them to a merchant and assumed no further responsibility. It is estimated that 50,000 convicts were transported to the colonies during the colonial period. Colonial leaders reacted angrily when they realized that they were expected to receive convict servants. Chesapeake area residents accused Britain of dumping its “Scum and Dregs” on colonial shores. They assumed that convicts carried communicable diseases contracted in jail. More troublesome, though, was the potential for unrest from these servants. It seemed unlikely that convict servants would work hard, and colonists assumed that their presence would corrupt the very foundation of society, setting a bad example for honest people. A few colonies took steps to prevent convicts from landing on their shores. Some Caribbean colonies set firm population ratios between white and black residents. They refused convict servants because they were “not considered among the Whites.” Jamaica passed a law to encourage white immigration and specifically excluded convicts. Transporting Britain’s felons to the colonies engendered some of the most heated antiimperial debate before the American Revolution. The majority of the convict servants worked in the colonies with the greatest demand for cheap labor, Virginia and Maryland. Convicts arrived after the time when the labor system in the Chesapeake area had transformed from white indentured servants to black slaves. Convicts were shipped primarily to regions that were expanding economically and where planters were unable to obtain sufficient numbers of slaves. In Virginia they worked the tobacco and grain fields in the region north of the York River. In Maryland convicts landed in four of 14 counties, where they constituted about 7 percent of all labor. The economies of these four counties, Baltimore, Charles, Queen Anne, and Anne Arundel, relied primarily on tobacco production along with smaller quantities of grain and corn. Just before the Revolution, convicts appeared in the Virginia and Maryland backcountry. These more newly settled regions experienced intense labor shortages, and although planters preferred the labor of slaves, they purchased convicts if left with no other options. Western Maryland contained approximately 14,000 inhabitants, including fewer than 150 convict servants.


—Sharon V. Salinger

Cooke, Elisha, Jr. (1678–1737) politician
Elisha Cooke, Jr., succeeded his father and namesake as leader of the opposition party in Massachusetts upon the latter’s death in 1715. Cooke’s party won control of the assembly beginning in 1720, in part because he and his followers created America’s first political machine, the Boston Caucus. Thereafter, slates of caucus candidates were usually elected almost unanimously until Cooke’s death. A wealthy physician, real estate owner, and hospitable fellow who was always ready for a drink, he was easily able to stand election expenses. Cooke served as Massachusetts’s agent to England from 1723 to 1726 in an unsuccessful effort to convince the British government that Massachusetts was right in standing up to its governors. He continued to defend colonial rights and plague British governors until his death. His personal importance appears in the fact that after his death, the caucus went into eclipse as government supporters led by Thomas Hutchinson came to power. However, it came back in the 1760s, and thus
British crowds protested food shortages, tax burdens, and some claim to legitimacy with authority figures. French and modern crowds acted with a certain decorum and possessed or wrongly maniacally violent and inherently illegal, early today’s “mobs,” which sometimes are considered (rightly but often enjoyed the informal support of rulers. Unlike Such crowds acted without official sanction frequently gathered to effect some common and specific end. Throughout Europe in the early modern age, crowds crowd actions —William Pencak

Crowd actions

Throughout Europe in the early modern age, crowds frequently gathered to effect some common and specific end. Such crowds acted without official sanction but often enjoyed the informal support of rulers. Unlike today’s “mobs,” which sometimes are considered (rightly or wrongly) maniacally violent and inherently illegal, early modern crowds acted with a certain decorum and possessed some claim to legitimacy with authority figures. French and British crowds protested food shortages, tax burdens, and price hikes by employing limited and symbolic violence. If bread prices soared, for example, English laborers might impale a loaf of bread on a staff and march to a bakeshop, demanding “fair” prices that would allow poorer people to purchase a basic necessity and permit bakers to earn a decent income. When crowds did resort to violence, they usually targeted property instead of persons. Women often participated in or even led European crowds, particularly those inspired by food shortages.

Material and political peculiarities in colonial North America altered patterns of crowd action. As in Europe, crowds in North America defended the prerogatives of ordinary people, and women often joined in crowd activities. However, the comparative abundance of food in the New World obviated the need for many bread riots, while the relative weakness of state authority encouraged some crowds to move beyond traditional demands. Bacon’s Rebellion and Leisler’s Rebellion, in particular, signified direct challenges to constituted power. In the 1670s thousands of ex-servants who had successfully worked off their indenture to pay off their passage to North America roamed colonial Virginia. They had few prospects of obtaining scarce land other than by seizing it from Native Americans. When a young gentleman named Nathaniel Bacon accused the colony’s rulers of pandering to Indians and monopolizing all the arable lands, many of the discontented freedmen rallied behind him. For three months in 1676, Bacon’s forces defied royal officials, plundered loyalists, and murdered Indians. They even burned Jamestown on September 19. Only Bacon’s death and the arrival of troops from England restored order.

In 1689 the governor of New York capitulated when the Glorious Revolution across the Atlantic dethroned his sovereign, James II. Into the resulting power vacuum stepped Jacob Leisler, a small merchant of German lineage. Leisler drew support from New York’s laboring people and from Dutch inhabitants wearied of English domination. Leislerian crowds ransacked merchants’ mansions during the summer of 1689, while their leaders freed imprisoned debtors and called for the popular election of justices of the peace and militia captains. In 1691 a new governor backed by the new monarchs, William and Mary, arrived to resume power. Recognizing the threat that the Leislerians posed, the governor had Leisler and his chief adjutant hanged and then, for good measure, decapitated.

Most crowds in colonial North America, however, concerned themselves with more pedestrian ends. They defended their presumed right to sell wares, settle land, and obtain subsistence. The typical crowd aimed not to topple rulers but to correct their abuses; not to overturn the social order but to return it to an imagined equilibrium. After Bacon’s Rebellion Virginians resumed less dramatic crowd actions. In 1682 tobacco planters sought to stem the flow of their product to Europe. The transatlantic trade, they believed, mainly benefited royal officials and wholesalers. Thus, planters large and small cut down whole swaths of tobacco groves to deprive merchants of merchandise. Fifty years later a Tobacco Inspection Act threatened small planters who grew crops of marginal quality. In response inspection warehouses were torched across the Potomac region, often with the tacit approval of wealthy planters. These planters-turned-arsonists supplemented direct action with humble petitions to the Virginia Assembly. In upstate New York tension between tenants and Dutch patroons occasionally sparked serious riots as poorer people protested high rents. Crowds freed fellow tenants from prison—often by getting the sentries drunk—and refused to pay rents during lean years, but they rarely demanded redistribution of land or political power. In Boston a midnight crowd dressed in clergymen’s robes tore down a new public market in 1736 to preserve the old method of open food marketing. Such symbolic, limited crowd actions persisted above all in frontier regions. In Revolutionary Maine squatters sometimes dressed like Indians to intimidate proprietors who sought to impose rents. These “White Indians” placed wood chips in their mouths while confronting proprietors, consciously cultivating a savage image in order to face down their opponents.

Yet again, the rioters almost never injured anyone and aimed only to preserve the autonomy they enjoyed on their rude settlements. Crowd actions reflected attitudes toward work and authority in colonial society. The plebeian sense of fairness so evident in crowds’ demeanor stemmed from a
Delaware (colony) of entitlement gave crowd actions their moderate, negotiated commoners deserved basic necessities. This shared sense of entitlement gave crowd actions their moderate, negotiated character and distinguished them from slave revolts. Crowd actions frequently climaxed with a standoff between an assembly and a single gentleman. Sometimes the crowd intimidated the grandee and gained its demands, while other times the gentleman shamed the many into sheepish submission. Crowds thus exhibited the intensely personal and contingent nature of authority in early America, and the actions of crowds anticipated the popular resistance to Great Britain in the decade preceding the American Revolution.

Euro-Americans accorded scant legitimacy to the demands of African Americans and Native Americans. Slave revolts occasioned considerable violence and dread. In 1712 about 20 slaves, many still bearing their African names and tribal markings, may have set fire to a number of buildings in New York City. They had covered themselves with a sacred powder endowed with protective properties, but nothing could defend them from the savage response of the white Authorities. Thirteen slaves were hanged on the gallows, three were burned at the stake, one starved in captivity, and another was broken upon the wheel. A rash of mysterious fires and thefts in the same city in 1741 and 1742 inspired a similar round of arrests and tortures. The Stono Rebellion in South Carolina in 1739 constituted the largest slave revolt in early America. When the Spanish offered freedom to runaway slaves in Florida, between 75 and 100 slaves rose up along the Stono River in 1739, killed some 30 white people, and headed toward Florida. However, the militia caught them first, and the rebellion ended in bloody repression. Native Americans likewise engaged not only in warfare against white people in British America but also in numerous revolts in the Spanish colonies and French colonies, including the Pueblo Revolt in 1680, the Natchez Revolt between 1729 and 1731, and the Pima Revolt in 1751.

See also Negro Plot of 1741; slave resistance. Further reading: Paul A. Gilje, Rioting in America (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1996).

—J. M. Opal

Delaware was the second smallest of the 13 original colonies. The boundaries of colonial Delaware contained just 1,982 square miles, divided among three counties: New Castle (the northernmost county), Sussex (the southernmost and largest county), and Kent (situated between Sussex and New Castle). The southern portion of colonial Delaware rested squarely on broad Atlantic coastal plains and contained approximately 190 square miles of wetlands. The northwestern portion of the colony yielded to gently undulating foothills, most prominent in New Castle County. The Delaware River and Delaware Bay dominated the landscape, as the river flowed from north to south, past the towns of New Castle and Wilmington and into the Delaware Bay, ultimately emptying into the Atlantic Ocean. In part due to the trade advantages associated with the region’s proximity to a navigable river and the Atlantic Ocean, European powers competed for control of the region.

Original Inhabitants
Archaeological evidence suggests that as early as 6500 b.c. nomadic hunters and gatherers subsisted within the Delmarva Peninsula. Between a.d. 1000 and 1300 indigenous populations began developing less nomadic methods of hunting and gathering as they increasingly relied on local fishing spots and rudimentary agricultural production methods. Thus, by the time Europeans arrived in the region, Native American communities had enjoyed thousands of years of uninterrupted use of the Delmarva Peninsula’s forests, streams, wetlands, and bays. When the first European colonists arrived in the early 17th century, three indigenous tribes considered the Delmarva Peninsula their homeland. The two most prevalent Native American tribes, the Lenape and the Lenape, shared a common, although slightly varied, Algonquin language. The Lenape and Lenape became distinct tribes in about a.d. 1300. The two tribes migrated seasonally, relied on the fishing resources of seasonal fish migrations and the hunting resources of Delaware’s virgin forests, and lived adjacent to the Delaware River and the Delaware Bay. The third Native American tribe, the Nanticoke, lived in the southwest portion of the Delmarva Peninsula in what would later be known as Sussex County. The European colonists referred to these three culturally and ethnically distinct Native American tribes as Delaware Indians. The relationship between the Lenape and the European colonists is emblematic of the overall relationship between Delaware Indians and the colonists.

Beginning in the early 17th century, the Lenape enjoyed more than 50 years of cordial trading with Dutch and
Swedish colonists. This often mutually beneficial relationship continued while Quaker-dominated Pennsylvania ruled the Delaware colony. Yet, the story of European encroachment on Native lands does not involve simply peaceful trading relationships. By the mid-18th century a combination of European settlement of Native hunting grounds, European diseases (to which the Native American population lacked immunity), and a growing European population forced the Native Americans from the lands of their ancestors. This involuntary diaspora resulted in the Lenape’s mid-18th-century migration, first to western Pennsylvania (to profit from the lucrative fur trade), and subsequently to Ohio, Canada, and, in some cases, past the Mississippi River to present-day Oklahoma. Despite the Lenape’s forced eviction from land their ancestors had roamed for more than 1,000 years, the Lenape language and culture survive to this day.

European Control of Delaware
The European control of the Delaware colony often resembled an imperial game of musical chairs; many major European powers—including England, the Netherlands, and Sweden—competed for an opportunity to sit in Delaware’s chair. It would not be until England wrested control of Delaware from the Dutch in 1664 that the music would finally stop, with England in sole control of Delaware.

Attempting to locate a northwestern water route to Asia, Dutch explorer Henry Hudson voyaged into the Delaware River (what he called “South River”) in 1609, marking the initial European foray into the Delmarva Peninsula. The Dutch did not attempt a permanent settlement until 1631, when they established a 28-man settlement at Cape Henlopen on Lewes Creek named Zwaanendeal. Ostensibly aimed at harvesting and selling the lucrative whale oil evident in Delaware Bay’s abundant whale population, the settlement lasted less than a year before an unknown band of local Indians killed the colonial settlers, purportedly due to a misunderstanding resulting from an Indian “theft” of a Dutch tin coat of arms. The Dutch did not attempt to resettle in the Delaware region for another 24 years.

In 1638 the New Sweden Company established a permanent settlement on Minquan Kil (eventually renamed Christiana River to honor the queen of Sweden). As the Thirty Years’ War (1618–48) raged on the European continent, Sweden aimed to become a strong colonial power, yet from 1648 to 1654 the Swedish settlement did not receive any supply shipments from Sweden. The initial settlement did not number more than 200 Swedes and Finns and ultimately failed to create Swedish hegemony in the Delmarva Peninsula. By 1655 disputes over the control of the Delaware River and the fur trade that relied on the river’s transportation caused the Dutch to reassert control of the Delmarva Peninsula. In that year the Dutch captured the Swedish Fort Christiana and incorporated Delaware into the preexisting New Netherland. Dutch colonial successes, however, were short lived, as their appetite for colonial power collided with a more robust and powerful English appetite for colonial supremacy.

In 1664 a British naval force commanded by James, duke of York (who in 1685 became King James II of England), captured New Amsterdam. A smaller group of warships commanded by Sir Robert Carr subsequently attacked the Dutch stronghold at New Amstel. The British renamed this northern Delaware town New Castle. From 1664 to 1682 a deputy of the duke of York governed the Delaware region as a portion of the English colonial possession.

In 1682 European possession of the colony again changed hands, although this time not between countries but rather between citizens of the same country. Maintaining ultimate English control of Delaware, William Penn, proprietor of Pennsylvania, requested and obtained control of the Delaware region from the duke of York. Penn allowed the northernmost of the three counties to remain named New Castle, but he renamed the two southernmost counties Kent and Sussex. The Delaware colony was not yet independent, as Delaware remained a collection of counties belonging to Pennsylvania, alternately known as the “Government of the Counties of New Castle, Kent, and Sussex on Delaware” or simply as the “Lower Counties.” William Penn’s Act of Union in 1682 ensured that residents of the Lower Counties received an equal voice in Pennsylvania’s General Assembly. Despite Penn’s attempts to maintain union among Pennsylvania and the Lower Counties—including Delaware 95 having the General Assembly meet in New Castle in 1684, 1690, and 1700, away from its traditional seat of power in Philadelphia—Quaker-dominated Pennsylvania and the more heterogeneous Lower Counties were unable to coexist in the same legislature.

In 1701 William Penn allowed the divided legislative assembly to meet separately. In 1704 Delaware’s assembly met independently for the first time in New Castle. Although meeting in a separate assembly, the Penn family’s proprietary relationship to Delaware would continue until the Revolutionary War.

Slavery and the Delaware Economy
Beginning in the mid-17th century, enslaved African labor provided the backbone of Delaware’s economy. Swedish control of Delaware (1638–55) brought a limited number of African slaves to the region due in part to the limited
Crown had sought—unsuccessfully—to send a governor to the boundary of Pennsylvania. As early as the 1630s, the Dominion of New England stretched from the Maine frontier to the northern English colonies imposed by the British Crown for domestically produced tobacco, corn, and wheat. By the mid-18th century tobacco ceased to be a lucrative crop in Delaware, and large planters increasingly used slave labor to produce wheat and corn. Delaware on the Eve of Revolution

On the eve of the American Revolution, Delaware had attained its status as one of America’s 13 original colonies. European settlement, westward expansion, and disease had caused the death or migration of the vast majority of the colony’s Native American population. In 1770 between 20 and 25 percent of Delaware’s population was of African descent, and more than 95 percent of the African population continued their enslaved toil in the fields, homes, and parlors of the affluent members of Delaware’s white society. Although initially hesitant to sign the Articles of Confederation, Delaware became the first state to ratify the United States Constitution. Further reading: John A. Munroe, History of Delaware (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993); William H. Williams, Slavery and Freedom in Delaware 1639–1865 (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources Books, 1996).

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Dominion of New England (1686–1689)

The Dominion of New England was a consolidation of the northern English colonies imposed by the British Crown that stood for three years until overthrown by armed revolt in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution. At its greatest extent, between 1688 and 1689, the dominion stretched from the Maine frontier to the northern boundary of Pennsylvania. As early as the 1630s, the Crown had sought—unsuccessfully—to send a governor general to rule New England colonies already considered dangerously independent. These colonies, in turn, save Dominion of New England 101 for Rhode Island, formed their own loosely knit alliance, the New England Confederation, for purposes of defense and mutual advice. Following the 1660 restoration of the Stuart monarchy, complaints of the colonists’ illegal trading and, particularly, of Massachusetts’s encroachment on its neighbors and persecution of religious dissidents brought renewed pressure to conform to Crown authority. In 1676 royal messenger Edward Randolph brought back information that led London officials to demand that Massachusetts accept a revision of the charter that formed the basis of its government. New Hampshire, hitherto governed from Boston, was set off as the region’s first royally governed colony in 1679. Massachusetts’s stubborn refusal to compromise delayed a settlement until 1684, by which time the Crown had begun a concerted campaign to remodel charters both in England and North America to establish more direct and autocratic rule. Not only was the charter of Massachusetts now formally annulled, but the colony was gathered with neighboring New Hampshire, Plymouth Colony, and Rhode Island’s Narragansett region into a single unit, the Dominion of New England, to be governed directly by the Crown without any of the customary locally elected officials or assemblies. A further argument favoring union was to provide for more coherent defense against French and Indian attack. In September Joseph Dudley, one of a handful of dissident colonists who had collaborated with Randolph in planning the new government, was commissioned president of the dominion. Dudley presided with a royally appointed council from May until December 1686, when English army officer Sir Edmund Andros arrived as governor, backed by two companies of English soldiers. Legal proceedings had now annulled the charters of Rhode Island and Connecticut, and Andros incorporated them under his control. In 1688, responding to a growing French threat to the colonists’ northern border, New York and East and West Jersey were likewise added to the dominion. Andros soon alienated his unwieldy province. Sullen submission became open opposition as the governor pressed his instructions to raise taxes without representative consent, review all land titles, and provide for religious toleration while favoring the Anglican Church—all policies that struck at the cornerstone of Puritan life in New England. Andros scorned to conciliate his subjects, ruling through English officials such as Randolph and a group of intimates brought from his former government of New York, some of them Roman Catholics. Town meetings were restricted, juries packed, and dissidents jailed. “Either you are Subjects,” the governor bluntly informed one protesting group, “or you are Rebels.” His subjects made their choice. In the spring of 1689, as Andros was on the frontier defending against Indian raids, news arrived from England of the overthrow of his patron, James II, by William of Orange. Andros sped back to Boston only to be caught up in a popular uprising in
the city on April 18 that imprisoned him and his subordinates, later sending them back to London. The dominion dissolved into its component parts, restoring charter government. In New York a coup headed by Jacob Leisler took power, expelling Andros’s lieutenant governor, Francis Nicholson.

As an experiment in royal autocracy and consolidation, the dominion failed. London made no further attempt to emulate the French and Spanish practice of ruling established colonies without the forms of representative government. New Englanders cherished memories of their part in its overthrow, which they would recall in the 1770s. More immediately, however, the dominion represented the formation of a more uniform, London-directed English empire in America. In the settlement that followed its fall, King William (1689–1702) restored both elected assemblies and Crown-appointed governors to Massachusetts and New York, a turning point in defining the constitutional balance subsequently established in the great majority of 18th-century English colonial governments in America.

See also government, British American.

102 Dominion of New England


—Richard R. Johnson

The economy of colonial North America was shaped by a number of factors. Because it was part of England’s imperial empire, the colonies were subject to the controls and policies dictated by Parliament. Within this broad framework, however, the economy of each colony responded to regional factors such as geography, climate, and resources available to the local population.

England believed that its outposts existed to benefit the empire, and it established policies based on the theory of mercantilism to regulate colonial economies accordingly. The colonies, for example, would serve as both a source of raw materials and a market for English finished goods. Each region would produce commodities that did not compete with England or with one another. Moreover, unless otherwise stipulated, these commodities would be shipped only to England, where they would be sold or then shipped to other European ports. Although this system did limit economic options, colonists generally benefited from England’s oversight, especially before the mid-18th century. The colonists had a guaranteed market for their products and British ships to protect their cargo during transport. On occasion, England even paid incentives to planters and merchants, encouraging them to produce certain commodities. Thus, each colony found exports that fulfilled England’s mercantilist policies while also capitalizing on the system’s protections.

Tobacco was the cash crop of the Chesapeake colonies and the single most important commodity produced in colonial America. During the colonial period it accounted for more than one-quarter of the value of all exports. Employing the labor initially of indentured servants from England and, later, of slaves from Africa, Virginia settlers grew tobacco on farms and plantations. A few subsidiary industries, such as wagon and barrel making, developed to support tobacco production. Maryland also exported tobacco, but by the early 1700s, because of overproduction and decreasing tobacco prices, settlers in both Maryland and Virginia began to diversify their economy. They cultivated wheat, hemp, and flax and developed local industries to produce iron and textiles. Although most of Virginia’s early settlers were men, women also lived and worked in the colony. Female indentured servants worked as domestics and in tobacco fields. Because mortality rates among men were high, many women were widowed and left alone to oversee farms and plantations.

Farming was an important part of the New England economy, as settlers cultivated corn and wheat for local consumption and for export. Much of this work was performed by wage and family labor, including women and children. The rocky soil and cooler climate encouraged settlers to diversify, and colonists also engaged in fishing, lumbering, and shipbuilding. For much of the 17th century, New Yorkers also participated in the fur trade, buying and exporting furs from their Indian neighbors.

The Middle Colonies of Pennsylvania, New York, Delaware, and New Jersey were rich in farmland, and their economy was based primarily on agriculture. Settlers grew wheat and flax, raised livestock, and processed lumber for export. Early in the colonial era most of their surplus was sold to the West Indies to support planters and their slaves, because planters there focused on the production of sugar rather than foodstuffs. After the mid-18th century the Middle Colonies also shipped flour to Britain.

In the Lower South, Carolina’s economy was diverse in the late 17th century when settlers helped supply the West Indies with corn, peas, livestock, lumber, and naval stores. In addition, Carolina traders purchased and exported deerskins from the local Indians. Traders also engaged in a slave trade of Indians until tensions with neighboring tribes made this enterprise imprudent.
By the early 1700s the economy of South Carolina and later Georgia shifted to plantation agriculture. Rice and indigo dominated the economic landscape. Rice tended to be a “rich man’s” crop, as it required large investments of land and labor. Many rice planters also grew indigo as a second staple. Small farmers grew indigo on less expensive upcountry land.

The success of these staple crops was due largely to the talents and labor of African slaves, who worked the farms and plantations. Rice and indigo were grown in West Africa, and many of the slaves imported from there already possessed the knowledge and skill needed to cultivate these crops. White planters took advantage of that knowledge in their workforce.

By the 1750s the southern backcountry was also growing and developing its own regional economy. Located approximately 100 miles inland and stretching from Pennsylvania south to Georgia, the backcountry attracted German and Scots-Irish immigrants who were looking for inexpensive land. Most were subsistence farmers, but by the 1760s small commercial towns, such as Camden, South Carolina, and Winchester, Virginia, grew to support a developing commercial economy.

As the colonies matured, merchant, artisan, and professional classes grew to support local industries. Merchants coordinated long-distance ocean trade, including the buying and selling of black slaves. An artisan class emerged, working as shoemakers, tailors, coopers, blacksmiths, weavers, and potters. Women worked on family farms and businesses and also as domestic servants. A professional class, including doctors and lawyers, also developed, especially in the cities. By the mid-1700s the colonial economy had matured and developed under England’s protective policies. Rice, livestock, and dairy products were not among Parliament’s enumerated commodities, and thus they could be sold to areas outside England. Ships made in New England carried these foodstuffs to the Lower South, the West Indies, and across the Atlantic. Tobacco production continued as the demand in Europe increased ten-fold during the 18th century. The success of plantation staples encouraged the demand for labor, bringing increased wealth to merchants and traders involved in the slave trade.

As the population grew, more of the farm output was sold locally. The growth in local consumption stimulated demand for other goods and services. The economy of the colonies was thereby becoming integrated. For example, between 1700 and 1770, the volume of trade between Charleston and England doubled, but it increased sevenfold between Charleston and the northern colonies. The developing economy also brought greater social inequality. Most middle- and upper-class colonists enjoyed improved standards of living, but there was also a growing lower class. In the port city of Philadelphia, for example, the rich were getting richer while the poor got poorer. During the course of the 18th century, the wealthiest 10 percent saw their share of taxable property increase from 40 to 70 percent. The poorest third of the population, however, saw their share drop from 5 to 1 percent.

Recently, some scholars, such as Timothy Breen, have argued that a “consumer revolution” occurred in British North America beginning in the 1740s. Manufactured goods from Britain, including textiles, printed items, and ceramics, spread to many middle- and upper-class households. These material goods formed the basis for the development of new identities, especially those based on class.

According to this interpretation, these everyday items and the desire for them revolutionized life in America before the political event known as the American Revolution. Still, other historians reject this hypothesis, arguing instead that most early Americans required relatively few new material goods during the colonial era, surely not enough to transform them into vigorous consumers.

By the 1760s, although the colonies were still part of Britain’s empire, they were no longer simply a source of raw material and a market for finished goods. The colonies had developed a growing internal market and constituted an important component of the Atlantic economy. Many colonies also came to believe that the increasing economic restrictions imposed by Parliament were beginning to limit their economic growth.

See also trade and shipping.


education

Of all the cultural institutions transplanted to the New World by colonists, education has received the least attention from historians. This historiographical fact is likely the result of the vast differences that separate the realities of colonial education from the expectations of later generations of Americans. None of the British colonies created a free, mandatory, public education system that would dominate the lives of the young for a decade or more, as their
descendants created in the mid-19th century, but this is not to say, as historians have often misconstrued, that early Americans cared nothing about education. Instead, they transplanted some pedagogical customs to the New World, created others once there, and developed learning methods that supported their central beliefs and adapted them for the lives they would lead.  

Education was closely tied to the cultural backgrounds of the groups settling each of the colonies, and each colony developed a unique educational pattern. Religion was the foremost of these characteristics affecting educational culture. For example, the Calvinist beliefs of the people who settled New England in the 1630s strongly emphasized a personal interpretation of the Bible. Puritans therefore stressed literacy and established community schools that would teach as well as help shape individual lives. Within the first decade of settlement, the Puritans established grammar schools and Harvard College, and by 1642 passed legislation demanding that families and masters be responsible for providing basic literacy to youths. Within the ensuing decades laws required each New England village of 50 or more families to have a schoolmaster and that towns with more than 200 inhabitants be able to train young men in a grammar school to prepare them for college. None of the colonies outside New England displayed a similar zeal for formally mandated levels of education, in part because other colonies did not demand the same level of church-state social control that New Englanders required. The different religions’ varying perspectives on childhood and the family strongly affected the way colonies developed educational patterns for children. In Quaker Pennsylvania, for example, the Society of Friends’ early emphasis on the importance of nurturing families and the “special” nature of childhood led the colony’s Quaker-led leadership to defer questions of child training to individual families. William Penn’s admonition to “have but few books” often led historians of education to misunderstand colonial Quaker educational beliefs. Penn A page of the New England Primer, used by colonists to advocate reading good books rather than limiting literacy; Quakers were not anti-intellectual in their policies, but they believed that childhood was a pivotal moment that required careful nurturing overseen by loving parents and guardians. Pennsylvania’s educational culture therefore developed in a pattern as unique as the colony’s population. Quakers created public academies, including the Friends school established in 1683, in which schoolmaster Enoch Flower taught pupils reading, writing, and basic ciphering. In addition, other religious denominations, including Anglicans, German and Swedish Lutherans, Moravians, Baptists, and German Reformed sects all established educational institutions to teach their children in curricula that reflected their beliefs. Beyond the religiously based schools, few colonists studied classical language or mathematics. As historian Bernard Bailyn observed, to fully understand the educational patterns of colonial America, one must examine the entire process by which people hoped to transmit their cultures from one generation to the next. For a large part of the white population, education entailed a formal period
of vocational training when students would learn the “art and mystery” of a specific craft. Apprenticeship, whose customs were rooted in the Middle Ages, was the most common form of education for the “middling sort” of colonists. An apprenticeship agreement, negotiated between the youth’s parents and the master, usually prescribed the level of schooling that the child should receive during his or her apprenticeship. The schoolmasters and mistresses whose advertisements filled the columns of newspapers offered instruction in reading, writing, ciphering, and a few other subjects, often in day schools for one set of children and night schools for those required in craft shops during the day. Indeed, it was the differing pedagogical methods of the 17th and 18th centuries that often led historians to misunderstand the educational achievements of colonists. Scholars sometimes tallied the number of people who signed documents as indicative of the literacy of early Americans. However, white colonists usually learned “passive literacy” (reading) rather than “active literacy” (writing). Considering these educational backgrounds, we can estimate that as many as 85 or 90 percent of adults in some areas could read.

One group excluded from formal education in colonial America were those who came to the New World in chains. Some attempts were made to educate African Americans, including allowing black New Englanders to attend classes with their white neighbors or teaching segregated classes like those Cotton Mather offered for black and Indian children in 1717. Religious groups—including New York missionaries of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, the Anglican Church, and Philadelphia’s Quaker Yearly Meeting—established some schools for black pupils. Thomas Bray’s Associates, an England-based philanthropic organization, was also instrumental in creating schools for African Americans, including schools in Philadelphia and Williamsburg. Men like Philadelphia Quaker Anthony Benezet, who taught black students for four decades, helped educate leaders for African Americans in urban areas, yet only a tiny portion of African Americans received any formal schooling, and their literacy rates consequently were extremely low. Indeed, masters often prohibited the education of their slaves, fearing that literate bondpeople would write passes to aid in their own escape.

As each of the colonies matured and developed a more stratified social hierarchy, education increasingly became a central determinant of where one fit into society. While struggling planters in the 17th-century Chesapeake area put little energy into creating permanent schools, their more prosperous 18th-century descendants used education—as they used material goods, architecture, and leisure practices—to establish themselves at the pinnacle of their colony’s society. Much of this gentrify education took place on the plantations themselves, with private tutors hired to teach the children residing there. Philip Fithian, who taught the children of planter Robert “King” Carter in the early 1770s, instructed the five daughters, two sons, and a nephew in various topics. The eldest son, 18-year-old Benjamin Tasker Carter, was “reading Salust; Grammatical Exercises, and Latin Grammar,” subjects obviously preparing him for college and, eventually, for the refined behavior expected of a Virginia gentleman. His younger kinsfolk followed in his footsteps, studying English grammar, writing, and mathematics. Eldest daughter Priscilla Carter, preparing for her role as a planter’s wife, studied Addison and Steele’s Spectator, writing, and was “beginning to Cypher” at age 15, while her younger sister was “beginning to write” at 13. Other subjects, such as fencing and dancing, completed the children’s education. The lessons learned by the elites were designed to connect them with other gentry children, and no one else. When on January 30, 1774, Fithian found two of his young charges dancing in the schoolroom with a group of slaves, he “dispersed them . . . immediately.” In other colonies creating educational patterns unique to the society’s gentry was repeated. Each of the colonial colleges established by the early 1740s—Harvard College, the College of William and Mary, Yale College, the College of New Jersey—were centers of genteel identity as well as places where the young elite could prepare to identify themselves as leaders and to learn classical curricula. Benjamin Franklin reacted against that aspect of college life in the 1720s, when he characterized Harvard students as “fops” and “blockheads.” He echoed the charge in 1749, when he himself called for the creation of a public academy in Philadelphia, the school that would eventually become the College and Academy of Philadelphia and then the University of Pennsylvania. “Art is long, but their time is short,” Franklin wrote, explaining why the students who would attend the school he proposed would learn practical subjects as well as some classical studies. Still, understanding the political realities, he solicited support from the colony’s wealthy Anglican elite and altered his curricular plans to include subjects that they desired for their sons. In the end, the College of Philadelphia held little of the pedagogical uniqueness that Franklin had proposed. It was essentially one more school training a colony’s gentry for leadership.

Franklin’s creation of the College of Philadelphia was just one such founding in the mid-18th century that reflected the changing beliefs and structures of colonial societies. The Great Awakening was the leading force in creating new schools. As George Whitefield and his fellow itinerants crisscrossed the colonies, they spread
were served by nine institutions of higher learning, each drawing from different theological backgrounds, based on local traditions of support, and each closely tied to their colonies’ leadership and elite. 


—George W. Boudreau

Edwards, Jonathan (1703–1758) Congregationalist minister, theologian

Perhaps the greatest minister and theologian in early America, Jonathan Edwards was born on October 5, 1703. He was the fifth child and only son of the Reverend Timothy Edwards, the pastor of the Congregational church of East Windsor (then within the jurisdiction of Massachusetts) and Esther Stoddard, the daughter of the Reverend Solomon Stoddard, the influential pastor of the Congregational church in Northampton, Massachusetts. Schooled by his father, Edwards was entered in 1716 at the new Collegiate School chartered by the Connecticut colony, renamed Yale College in 1718. The curriculum Edwards encountered at Yale was based on the staples of classical Protestant scholasticism. This “old logic,” which “mightily pleased” him, inclined Edwards to look to the Puritan past for the substance of his theology, yet the generosity of Yale’s British friends had also endowed the college with a library containing some of the newest scientific and philosophical texts, especially those of John Locke and Isaac Newton. From these, Edwards acquired, alongside a very traditional Calvinist theology, a sharp curiosity over the scientific revolution of the 1600s and how it might be bent toward serving Calvinist ends. His notebooks, especially on “The Mind” and “Natural Science,” show that Edwards was particularly attracted to the immaterialism usually associated with Bishop George Berkeley and Father Nicholas Malebranche. “That which truly is the substance of all bodies is the infinitely exact and precise and perfectly stable idea in God’s mind,” Edwards concluded in one early notebook entry, “together with his stable will that the same shall gradually be communicated to us and to other minds according to certain fixed and exact established methods and laws.” This did not mean that physical realities did not exist, but it did mean that whatever existence physical realities did have was entirely dependent on God’s will and had “no proper being of their own.” Edwards graduated from Yale in 1720, served briefly as minister to a Presbyterian congregation in New York City, and in 1724 returned to Yale as a junior instructor. In November 1726 the Northampton church invited him to become the associate of his aging grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, and he was ordained by the Northampton church on February 22, 1727. Five months later he married Sarah Pierrepont of New Haven. After Stoddard’s death in 1729, Edwards succeeded him as pastor of the Northampton church.

Edwards’s preaching in his first years in the Northampton pastorate show him as cautious and conventional, but in the winter of 1734–35, as a result of series of sermons that Edwards aimed against the decay of Calvinist orthodoxy, “a Concern about the Great things of Religion began . . . to prevail abundantly in the Town,” in which “more than 300 souls were savingly brought home to Christ.” Edwards published an account of the revival and a justification of his own encouragement of it in 1737 as A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God. However, a second and far more dramatic revival of religious concern occurred in 1740 in the wake of the New England preaching tour of the celebrated Anglican itinerant George Whitefield. At the height of this “awakening,” in July 1741, Edwards preached (at Enfield, Connecticut) his most famous sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.”

Unhappily, Edwards soon found that the passionate emphasis on divine sovereignty and personal religious conversion that he demanded aroused suspicion and opposition from the elite pastors of Boston’s wealthy Congregational churches. He published a series of defenses of revivalism beginning in 1741 with The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God and rising in 1746 to his most important work on religious experience, A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections. Edwards also discovered another form of opposition within his own congregation when in 1744 he proposed to change Northampton’s practice of open admission to communion and instead begin restricting access to only the demonstrably converted. The congregation resented the criticism of their own sincerity implied by this change, and at the end of a six-year struggle they dismissed Edwards from the Northampton church. Edwards assumed the post of missionary to the Indian congregation at Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where he
was able to turn his time and thinking back to the philosophical problems that had dominated his youth. In 1754 he published Freedom of the Will, a rigorously logical defense of the compatibility of human responsibility with absolute divine determination of human choice and followed that in 1758 with The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended. In 1757 the College of New Jersey (later Princeton College) invited him to become its third president. However, after only two months in office, Edwards died on March 22, 1758, because of complications arising from a smallpox inoculation. His two “dissertations” on ethics and ontology, The Nature of True Virtue and Concerning the End For Which God Created the World, were published in 1765.


—Allen C. Guelzo

The English Civil War

The causes of the English Civil War (1642–49) were complex. These included the swelling ranks and rising aspirations of the urban middle class within English society and the Puritan party within the English church; the growing frustration felt by both these groups as well as the rural gentry at the Elizabethan and Stuart monarchies’ repeated frustration of their aspirations; and the Stuarts’s aggressive defense of a type of civil and ecclesiastical government and eventually of a theology that threatened these groups’ legitimacy and even the lives of many of their members. War loomed when the politically dexterous King James I (1603–25) was succeeded by the maladroit King Charles I (1625–49), who drove these disparate groups into each other’s arms.

Relations between Charles and Parliament’s House of Commons were poor from the start. When war with Scotland forced Charles to ask the Commons for a military appropriation, it refused; consequently, Charles dissolved this so-called Short Parliament (1640) after just three weeks. Further setbacks at the hands of the Scots compelled him to call for new elections, though, convening what came to be known as the Long Parliament (1640–53). Relations between king and Commons steadily worsened until finally both sides took up arms. After several inconclusive battles during 1642 and 1643, Parliamentarian Oliver Cromwell led his New Model Army to triumph at Marston Moor (July 2, 1644), Naseby (June 14, 1645), and Preston (August 17–19, 1648). Charles was executed for treason on January 30, 1649, the monarchy was abolished, and a commonwealth was proclaimed. Cromwell served as lord protector from 1653 until his death five years later, maintaining a measure of order during a time of great social ferment. Eventually, moderates engineered the restoration of the monarchy and the coronation of Charles’s eldest son as King Charles II (1660–85).

The war’s impact on England’s American colonies was significant. Virginia’s leaders, siding with the Crown, worked to eradicate Puritan influence in the South. New England’s leaders, siding with Parliament, worried that London rather than Boston would be the model for the coming universal reform of church and state. The Puritans’ Great Migration of the 1630s halted and even reversed itself as men of action returned to England in order to fight on Parliament’s behalf. With the monarchy’s restoration, New England became a haven for three of the “regicides” who had signed Charles I’s death warrant.


—George W. Harper

English immigrants

Most immigrants to British North America in the 17th century were of English extraction. English immigration to North America began with the founding of Jamestown in 1607 and accelerated after the founding of Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1629. In the Great Migration, which lasted from 1629 until the onset of the English Civil War in 1642, approximately 20,000 English men, women, 116 England and children migrated to New England and as many as 40,000 to other English colonies, particularly Maryland and Virginia. Most of the New England settlers were Puritans (many from East Anglia, the center of English Puritanism), most were people of modest means—farmers, craftspeople, or lesser gentry—and most immigrated in family groups. The Chesapeake region drew a much larger percentage of single adults (mostly men), moneyed investors, and servants.

Immigration patterns changed markedly after 1649. During the English Civil War, some Puritan settlers returned to England. Relatively few English immigrants settled in New England after 1649; later 17th- and 18th-century immigration focused on the South and, above all, Pennsylvania and the Middle Colonies. The population of the Delaware Valley (Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware) escalated from about 3,000 settlers in 1680 to 24,000 in 1700 and 170,000 by 1750. Initially, Quakers from Wales and the English midlands dominated the region’s culture. They sought to escape religious persecution and to create a society that reflected Quaker ideals.

After 1715, however, many non-Quaker English immigrants also settled in these colonies, so that by 1760 Quakers were
a minority in the region. The Quaker leadership’s liberal social policy quickly made the Delaware Valley one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse regions of British America.

A large percentage of English immigrants to the Delaware Valley and the South were indentured servants, teenagers and young adults who obtained free passage to the New World by bartering their labor for a period of years (typically four to seven years, although children were sometimes bound for much longer terms). All the British colonies imported indentured servants, but they were most numerous in Virginia and Maryland in the 17th century, where an average of 2,000 servants arrived each year from the 1630s until 1700. Indentured servitude declined in the southern colonies in the late 17th century as economic conditions in England improved and the cost of importing slaves declined. During the 18th century most indentured servants went to the Middle Colonies. English convicts (and occasionally prisoners of war) were transported to North America in a slow but steady stream throughout the colonial period. Convicts were bound for even longer terms than indentured servants were, typically seven to 14 years. Most went to the southern colonies. The transportation of convicts to the American colonies was controversial, however, and colonists generally discouraged it.

In 1690, 90 percent of the colonists in British America were of British descent. In the 18th century, however, a large percentage of immigrants to the British colonies were German, Scottish, Scots-Irish, and African. Between 1715 and 1775, 250,000 people fled famine and poverty in northern Britain—the north of England, the Scottish lowlands, and northern Ireland—and sought economic refuge in British America. The movement began as a trickle but accelerated rapidly in the 1760s. Both families and young, single adults tried their fortunes in the New World. Many came as indentured servants. They faced horrific conditions aboard immigrant ships and often encountered ethnic prejudice from other British Americans. As the richest land along the eastern seaboard had long since been claimed and cultivated, most of the new northern British immigrants moved west to backcountry regions of Pennsylvania, Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, where they established small farms. The northern British and Scots-Irish influence is still evident in Appalachia today. Still, the largest group of new arrivals in 18th-century British America were Africans forcibly brought to the New World as slaves.


--- Darcy R. Fryer

**Enlightenment, American**

Scholars have most often identified the writings of Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, and John Locke on science, philosophy, and government as the springboards of the Enlightenment in both Britain and British America, their greatest influence occurring roughly between the 1680s and the era of the French Revolution (1789). Immanuel Kant summarized the aims of “enlightenment” in the phrase sapere aude—dare to know for oneself. Traditionally conceived, to be enlightened was to throw off slavish adherence to tradition and insist on one’s own critical ability to make judgments about nature, religion, politics, and society. These new freedoms prioritized individual religious conscience and the separation of church and state, the replacement of superstition and merely textual authority by experimental science to investigate nature, the replacement of monarchies and absolutist regimes by representative and constitutional forms of government, and the freedom to attempt a wide range of practical reforms for the good of society.

As a result of increasing transatlantic trade, the British American provinces became culturally more sophisticated during the 18th century and, looking to Britain for models, gradually developed similar social institutions for the exchange of ideas and information within the “public sphere.” These included newspapers and magazines, coffee houses, Masonic lodges, social clubs, public libraries, and the establishment of new colleges, all of which were knit together by extensive correspondence networks and the circulation of printed books (mostly imported from London), known collectively as the “republic of letters.” The colonists appropriated some elements of European Enlightenment culture but rejected others. For example, Benjamin Franklin’s leading role in creating the Library Company of Philadelphia, the American Philosophical Society, the Pennsylvania Hospital, and other institutions reflected continuity with British traditions of civic-minded improvement and the use of science and technology to achieve practical benefits in areas like agriculture and navigation. By contrast, the unabashed antireligiousness of philosophes like Voltaire did not resonate as deeply with Americans, whose societies, unlike Catholic France, had never known a socially dominating established church.

Some features of the American Enlightenment were conscious departures from European models. The one...
stronghold of American anticlericalism was, unsurprisingly, the colony where Anglicanism (the established Religion of England) was also strongest: Virginia. Deism (the view that God constructed the universe as a self-running machine, from which he then withdrew) enjoyed a rare institutional base at the College of William and Mary, where Thomas Jefferson was a student. In 1786 Jefferson helped legalize the separation of church and state in Virginia. William Penn, the Quaker proprietor of Pennsylvania, had made religious toleration the law in his colony a century earlier, but the pluralistic character of American religious life ultimately owed more to the sheer diversity of denominations in the colonies rather than any one program of toleration. The teachings of liberal English Anglicans like Samuel Clarke and John Tillotson and moderate Scots Episcopalians like Francis Hutcheson found important venues at colleges and churches, promoting enlightened ideas about individual moral and intellectual capacities. Like Quakerism, these traditions sought to reconcile spiritual and commercial free will with benevolent and unifying social activity. Scottish “moral sense” writers argued for the existence of innate benevolence and social sympathy in human beings, while “common sense” philosophers insisted on the trustworthiness of individual sensory knowledge as a basis for making judgments about nature and morality. These ideas became especially dominant after the 1790s as an antidote to the threats of philosophical skepticism and atheism many perceived in the French Revolution and as a way of doing science without contradicting Protestant doctrine. British American attitudes to nature took shape within an immensely flexible intellectual framework that emphasized that the universe was a divine and rational work whose structure was intelligible through human reason. There was no decisive conflict between science and religion in this era. All colonial science, or rather “natural philosophy” (later physics and chemistry) and “natural history” (later biology), existed within Protestant thought, never outside it. This framework was often referred to as “physico-theology,” or “natural theology,” both of which indicate that ideas relating to the physical structure of nature were generally considered a branch of religious devotion. American thinkers were eclectic in combining biblical and philosophical views of natural phenomena. Cotton Mather believed that smallpox was caused both by atomic effluviae and sinful behavior, while Jonathan Edwards, despite his serious interest in Newtonian natural philosophy, retained the orthodox Calvinist view that humans did not possess free will and that their spiritual fate was predetermined. Examples of art and architecture serve as enduring expressions of the Enlightenment principles of democracy, rationality, and humanism in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Charles Willson Peale, a naturalist, inventor, artist, politician, and Revolutionary War veteran, cofounded the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia. He glorified men such as Benjamin Franklin and George Washington in portraits intended to “represent the mind . . . through the features of the man.” Jefferson regarded Greco-Roman architecture as the embodiment of knowledge, democracy, and science, and he accordingly designed his home at Monticello in the neoclassical style, a popular product of the Enlightenment. More significantly, Jefferson adopted the architecture of republican Rome as a model for the nation’s capital in Washington, D.C., to express permanently and on a monumental scale the principles that informed the establishment of the new government. The greatest impact of the Enlightenment in North America has most often been thought to be political. The revolution against British rule, from the Declaration of Independence’s affirmation of universal natural rights to the federal Constitution’s system of republican representation, safeguarded by checks and balances between the people and their government, remains the transcendent achievement of the American Enlightenment. More recently, however, scholars have focused on the social groups deliberately excluded from this revolution. Despite their literacy and despite a famous request from Abigail to John Adams to “remember the ladies” in constructing a new polity, British American culture continued to insist that women’s roles as wives and mothers were incompatible with political activity. Quakers John Woolman and Anthony Benezet were early antislavery leaders who succeeded in banning the slave trade among the Quakers by 1758, but financial self-interest and fear of reprisal on the part of southern slaveholders prevented the extension of the Declaration’s principles to African Americans in 1776. Native Americans suffered directly as a consequence of American independence, because the expulsion of the British removed a major obstacle to the settlement of western lands.

See also Boston Philosophical Society; medicine; Philadelphia.

“Monsters shaped and faced like men;” “a fanatical, self-conceited sort of people;” “near beasts;” “ignorant, mean, worthless, beggarly Irish Presbyterians;” “devilish Satyr apes;” “wild and beggarly Irish;” “heathens;” “savages.” These derogatory expressions (ethnophaulisms) are but a small sample of the descriptive terms used by early Americans to classify individuals from cultures and classes unlike their own.

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to judge others in terms of the norms of one’s own group, culture, or class and to assert the alleged superiority of one’s own group. Ethnocentric beliefs can predispose one ethnic group or social class to derogate, segregate, or commit violence against other people. Ethnocentrism intensified in the 17th-century Atlantic world as immigrants and Natives both confronted other groups of people and often reshaped their own ethnic identities. Indians, Africans, and Europeans initially understood “strangers” through cultural categories and caricatures arising both from their sense of their own superiority and from their anxiety about the sufficiency of their own folkways in comparison to those of “others.” As Europeans increasingly encountered other peoples during the 16th and 17th centuries, their ethnocentrism often intensified. Economic change stimulated a growing material and cultural disparity between the wealthy and the poor in Europe, and the former often regarded the latter as “the brutish part of Mankind.” Simultaneously, growing domestic migration brought wandering “strangers” to cities like London. As the Reformation shattered Christianity into a myriad of competing ethnoreligious sects, each touted its superiority over others. When Europeans began overseas expansion, they encountered a bewildering variety of exotic cultures that challenged them not only to interpret the alien cultures but also to define themselves as exceptional imperial peoples. The systematic conquest and subjugation by the Tudor and Stuart dynasties of their Celtic peripheries—Scotland, Ireland, and Wales—confirmed and reinforced the assumptions held by the ruling elite of southeastern England that their culture was superior because it combined the benefits of English Christianity with those of classical civility, as defined by the Renaissance humanists. They believed the Celtic groups, especially the “barbarously savage” Catholic Irish, were stuck in an earlier stage of human development and would therefore benefit from English colonization. The English elite subsequently applied this ideological cant to the Native peoples of North America, Africa, and the Caribbean.

Similarly, Spanish and Portuguese Christians came to accept invidious associations of Africans with paganism, bestiality, and cultural depravity, and, ultimately, slavery. Influenced by the biblical legend of Ham and religious imagery contrasting white “purity” with black “depravity,” Elizabethan elites, like their Iberian counterparts, ranked black people as a “special category of mankind,” considerably behind the cultural evolution of Native Americans.

Aversion to African racial and cultural characteristics, when coupled with the imperatives of the slave trade, eventually made Africans vulnerable to exploitation deemed unacceptable for white people. Still, English intellectuals examined alien cultures for signs of similarities that would answer their own questions about whether English society corresponded to universal, God-given principles of social organization. Many thought of Indians, like the Irish and the English, as springing from a common human stock, and they attributed shared similarities and differences in skin color and physiognomy to be “accidental” or the result of environmental factors. In addition to adherence to English Christianity, English writers judged the “civility” of other cultures according to the degree to which they demarcated class and gender distinctions, possessed a hereditary hierarchy, maintained nuclear families, and practiced settled agriculture. Social class was at the heart of the European literati’s definition of civilization. French officials identified “savagery” in Algonquin societies in the weakness of political authority, the absence of clear class divisions, and the lack of ethnocentrism 121 subordination of commoners to Native elites. Indeed, English explorers and colonizers were eager to identify Native chiefs, sachems, and werowances as equivalent to European “kings,” “queens,” and even “emperors,” and the English frequently approved of visible distinctions between “betters” and “commoners” among Natives. The superficial congruence of some European and Indian cultural and political practices fostered the illusion among metropolitan elites that Indians could be rapidly and easily assimilated into New World Christian empires.

European elites also categorized the lower classes as “savage.” The wandering rural poor of Europe bore many cultural traits of an alien, “uncivil,” and ungoverned people whose peripatetic ways and fitful work habits were regarded contemptuously by their “betters” as requiring reform by means of involuntary servitude. The metropolitan merchant elite and rural gentry equated “civilization” with a stable, hierarchal social order that “superior” aristocracies imposed on the bestial and depraved lower classes of their respective realms. Early modern elites, thereby, fused race, culture, authority, and class.

Indian and African peoples were also ethnocentric, often contemptuous of European colonists who, despite superior ships and metallurgy, could barely feed themselves without Native help. As Roger Williams reported, if “the Europeans are always wrangling and uneasy,” Indians wondered, why do they “not go out of this World, since they are so uneasy and discontented by it.” Nevertheless,
Native peoples thought that, perhaps with regular bathing and disciplined education in Native ways, Europeans might become productive and contributing members of their respective clans, villages, and tribes. Convinced of the superiority of their cultures, Indians often encouraged individual Europeans to seek adoption by families in their communities and used persuasion, bribery, and force to incorporate entire European settlements into their polities. Unlike their xenophobic leaders, many lower-class white men and women took up the Natives’ offer. In the pays d’en haut of the Great Lakes region, the coureurs des bois (French fur traders of peasant origins) intermarried extensively with the Algonquin to gain access to trade networks and the protection that Native kinship offered. Frequent interracial unions along the English, French, and Spanish frontiers laid the foundation for the mixed raced “new” peoples of North America—the métis and the Mestizo. Similarly, many white indentured servants did not always share the aversion that their “betters” displayed toward Africans. White and black servants frequently fraternized, engaged in sexual liaisons, and even ran away together, sometimes seeking protection in neighboring Indian villages. Only gradually, through legally enforced segregation, the social construction of race and white skin privileges, and the effects of intercultural competition and conflict, did European commoners in the Americas come to assimilate the xenophobia and, eventually, racism that their upper class “betters” displayed towards Africans. White and black servants did not always share the aversion that their “betters” exhibited toward Africans. White and black servants frequently fraternized, engaged in sexual liaisons, and even ran away together, sometimes seeking protection in neighboring Indian villages. Only gradually, through legally enforced segregation, the social construction of race and white skin privileges, and the effects of intercultural competition and conflict, did European commoners in the Americas come to assimilate the xenophobia and, eventually, racism that their upper class “betters” exhibited toward Africans.

Because the power of European states was weak on the peripheries, frontier communities fostered cultural negotiation and accommodation and a degree of acceptance, or at least coexistence, of European and Native cultural traditions. Indians, Europeans, and, to a lesser extent, Africans in the borderlands were mutually dependent and symbiotic. To realize their religious, imperial, and commercial aspirations, metropolitan elites and their colonial administrators struggled to obtain orderly frontiers by regulating settlement, protecting tributary tribes and their lands from European settlers, and controlling how Europeans, Indians, and Africans interacted. The metropolitan English eventually failed to pacify their frontiers because of resistance to their visions of imperial comity by not just Indians but also by the burgeoning European communities who competed with Indians for control of frontier resources. When expanding their ethnic communities sparked hostile confrontations with Indians, white colonists were often better able than Indians to overcome some of their ethnic differences. Indians did not see themselves as one people. Throughout the 17th century Algonquin-Iroquoian intercultural conflicts were as bloody and genocidal as many English-Indian clashes. Imperial authorities supported and exploited these Indian rivalries to their advantage, just as the Indians played off competing imperial powers to further their own interests. Despite differences among their vernacular ethnic cultures, Euro-Americans were able to generate a more intense feeling of pan-European ethnic identity because they were predominantly Protestant peoples and shared a common political allegiance to Crown and commonwealth. In contrast, Indian efforts to build pan-Indian ethnic unity were more halting, as in King Philip’s War, and did not really bear fruit in the Ohio and Great Lakes region until Neolin and Pontiac in the 1760s. Racism, unlike ethnocentrism, seemingly did not exist widely among European colonists until the late 17th century. The earliest African slaves in Virginia, for instance, may not have been treated significantly differently than white indentured servants. Meanwhile, New Englanders interpreted individual Indian behavior and individual adherence to European cultural norms and religious traditions as standards to distinguish between “good” and “bad” Indians. Protoracist fulminations against the “savages,” therefore, could alternate with claims that the English and Indians were “of one blood.” Opechancanough’s uprisings against the Virginia colonists in 1622 and 1642 were understood by the colonists as an affront to their attempts to transform the Powhatan 122 ethnocentrism into ethnic English people. The conflicts thereby exacerbated ethnocentric feelings. The intercultural conflicts of King Philip’s War, King William’s War, and Queen Anne’s War intensified distrust of Indian “incivility” and “savagery,” undermined distinctions between “civilized” Christian Indians and those they regarded as pagan savages, and led to demands that they be made separate and subordinate to the Anglo-European colonists. Colonial authorities and elites thus became convinced that the solution to the “Indian problem” was their segregation into reservations and praying towns, not integration or amalgamation into European communities. Protracted intercultural warfare encouraged colonial lawmakers to levy increasingly harsh restrictions on all Indians, thereby fusing Christian and non-Christian Indians together into a single category because, as one New Englander claimed, “tis very difficult, unless upon long knowledge, to distinguish Indians from one another.” This shift in the way white people distinguished themselves from alien “others” on the basis of religion and culture would blossom into what is best defined as “racism.”

The slow evolution from ethnocentrism and group
fugitive slaves

Running away was an unambiguous act of rebellion against slavery in early America. Perhaps most frequently, runaways fled to escape imminent violence or in the aftermath of physical abuse. Others took to their heels for fear of being sold, while a few absconded temporarily, voluntarily returning to their masters only after protracted negotiations about their future treatment. Trying to secure their permanent freedom, many runaways challenged the system of racial bondage itself.

To prevent and deter runaways, white masters and colonial legislatures put in place all manner of obstacles. Slaves who were discovered beyond the confines of their owners’ land without written permission were typically punished by whipping. Virginia laws of 1723 and 1748, for example, punished repeat offenders with dismemberment, castration, branding, whipping, and incarceration. Colonial officials also made it difficult for fugitives to depend on anyone else (especially other black people) for aid. Any free persons found guilty of hiding or otherwise abetting runaway slaves faced heavy fines or 20 lashes. Conversely, any individual who captured or returned a runaway was rewarded; 20 shillings (the equivalent of a week’s labor for a laborer) was the going rate in South Carolina for much of the 18th century. Here and elsewhere in the southern colonies, slave owners also subsidized organized slave patrols.

Many escapees perished in rivers and woods trying to avoid detection and evade recapture. Despite such obstacles to gaining freedom, the promise of liberty tempted thousands to try. Newspaper advertisements in which masters sought the return of recent runaways detail the attempts of thousands of such fugitives. Benjamin Franklin’s Pennsylvania Gazette included notices detailing 1,324 black escapees between 1728 and 1790. Those fugitives shared many characteristics. American-born, English-speaking young men fled most frequently; eight male runaways appeared in newspaper notices for each female fugitive. Slaves who were physically fit, of mixed race, without families, and possessed of craft skills that might help them find employment were far more likely to attempt to escape slavery in this manner than those newly arrived from Africa or the Caribbean. Still, many “salt-water” slaves (newly imported) also tried to escape, but usually with less success.

In their advertisements, owners revealed some of the tactics by which fugitive slaves attempted to evade suspicion and capture. Roger Saunders of South Carolina warned the public that his slaves Quamino and Quacco would use their fluency in English to create plausible back-stories and pose as freepersons. Other slaves used forged papers and passes. Their choice of destination could also help fugitives find cover. The free black populations of Philadelphia, New York, and Charleston provided at least some security for runaways able to reach them. Other fugitives typically headed for maroon communities in the interior, such as Virginia’s Dismal Swamp, or for the free black communities of Spanish Florida. Other blacks who stole away headed for nearby port towns in hopes of securing passage on an undermanned ship and embarking on a career as a mariner. A handful of escapees headed west to Native Americans, where they were sometimes protected and at other times turned back to white authorities.


fur trade

Native Americans initiated and controlled the North American fur trade almost one hundred years before Europeans founded Jamestown, Plymouth, and Boston. The first Europeans came to North America to fish, not to collect furs or to establish communities. The quantity and quality of the furs Native Americans offered fishermen helped entice Europeans to trade. Furs were a scarce commodity in Europe since most fur-bearing animals became extinct on that continent by the late Middle Ages. North America was not only rich in furs but also possessed an Indian labor force that trapped, processed, and transported pelts along established indigenous trade routes. The fur trade grew slowly and sporadically, but it eventually emerged as a commercial enterprise in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence during the 1580s. Among the earliest Indian traders were Tarrentines from Nova Scotia and the Gulf of Maine. Skilled sailors who used European-style shallows to collect furs from coastal Indian villages, the Tarrentines operated as middlemen in the exchange of furs with Europeans. Their
shallows weighed up to 12 tons, measured 12 meters long, and had multiple masts. In these vessels, the Indian traders plied the North Atlantic coastline, collecting and storing furs until the summer months, when Europeans arrived. The Jesuits referred to the Tarrentines as “courageous and active sailors,” an observation confirmed in the written accounts of other early European explorers.

In addition to the coastal Maine trade, Indians established trading villages where Native people and foreigners gathered during the summer months to exchange furs and agricultural produce for European trade goods. The most populous of these sites was Tadoussac, controlled by the Montagnais. Their territory included the Saguenay River, a crucial outlet for the vast fur-rich hinterland. Tadoussac stood in close proximity to indigenous and European fishing grounds, and as many as 20,000 people gathered there during the summer months.

Disease disrupted Indian control over the initial trade, and by the early 17th century the French, Dutch, and British became directly involved in the exchange process. Through an alliance with the Huron and the founding of Quebec (1608), the French gained control of the St. Lawrence River valley, the only inland river from the Atlantic seaboard to the continental interior. Although this provided the French access to vast quantities of prized peltry, their ability to harvest those furs still depended on Indian people. Developing these relationships, French traders traveled throughout Minnesota, the Hudson’s Bay, and the Mississippi delta.

The fur trade became an arena of cultural interaction, often referred to as the “middle ground,” where French and Indians participated equally in the exchange process, and where French men lived in an Indian world in which indigenous custom held sway. The fur trade encompassed far more than economic gain, and the French proved willing to forego profits to foster their political and diplomatic objectives. Both licensed traders (voyageurs) and illegal traders (coureurs de bois) married Indian women. Some descendants remained part of Native communities; others founded societies of people of mixed ancestry (métis) at Detroit, Mackinac, Green Bay, and Chicago.

Furs were also a lucrative commodity for the Dutch, who by the early 1600s shipped as many as 40,000 pelts per year from Fort Orange (now Albany) to Amsterdam. Like the French, the Dutch also relied on intermarriage to improve their access to peltry. However, a more distinct profit rather than political motive characterized the Dutch trade, subtly demonstrated by the illegal traders (Bosch Loopers) who produced higher volumes of peltry than the officially licensed ones in New Amsterdam. By 1650 the English had displaced the Dutch traders. English traders displayed less enthusiasm toward intermarriage, often bringing their families to the colonies and usually working from established trading posts. The English considered the fur trade, like the acquisition of Indian lands, as an economic rather than a cultural form of exchange.

By the 18th century, the establishment of towns, the transformation of beaver ponds into farms and pasture lands, and the depletion of fur-bearing animals dramatically reduced the New England fur trade. France dominated the beaver trade, and Britain vigorously contested its control. The 18th-century French trade proved wildly profitable; Great Lakes furs grossed as much as one million livres per year. France had established furs as a viable commercial enterprise, and the beaver, transformed into the felt hat, remained a fashion staple for over three hundred years. Even when silk hats replaced beaver ones in the 1840s, beaver skins remained a high-volume export. Eventually, the fur trade moved from the Great Lakes into the Northwest because furs there were more plentiful and less expensive to harvest.

In the South, deerskins shaped the history of the fur trade. By the mid-18th century, the Catawba, Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, and Choctaw annually harvested as many as 400,000 deerskins for shipment to England. French and later Spanish Louisiana rivaled the exports of this southeastern trade. The demand for deerskins continued to increase throughout the 18th century because of the repeated disease outbreaks that crippled European livestock herds. Indian deerskins were a welcome substitute for domestic hides, and they produced high-quality breeches, gloves, harnesses, saddles, and book bindings. Toward the end of the 18th century, aggressive hunting had forced the deer population into a precipitous decline. The fur trade exacerbated national rivalries and intensified colonial conflicts. Britain and France repeatedly challenged each other’s access to furs. By 1721 Britain successfully wrested control of Hudson’s Bay from the French.

In the 1760s, the Franco-Anglo fur trade rivalry in the Ohio River valley helped trigger the Seven Years’ War. Following the conquest of Canada, Britain dominated the trade. By the American Revolution, Britain imported 95 percent of all its furs from North America; almost 80 percent of pelts came from recently acquired lands previously claimed by the French, and beaver displaced deerskin as the nation’s most valuable import.

Historians have often negatively portrayed the fur trade as a factor in the demise of indigenous peoples by intensifying their materialism, undermining their spiritual connections with animals, and spreading alcohol.

An illustration showing Native Americans swapping their furs for rifles with French colonists (Hulton/Archive)
gender
Originally a term used to describe a grammatical form, scholars now use the term gender to refer to sex roles of men and women in a given society. Gender differs from the term sex, which distinguishes whether a person is male or female. Therefore, sex involves biological and physiological differences. In discussing gender, scholars examine what is masculine or feminine. What any given society views as manly or womanly concerns gender. For social scientists, gender is a category of analysis—a way of examining any given culture by focusing on a specific group of people. Some social scientists argue that gender is revealed through language; we understand our gender roles through the words and phrases that define our identity. Others feel that gender roles reflect essential natures found in one's sex. Another group of scholars argues that gender is a function of our material world; without possessions to pass on to progeny, prehistoric peoples did not have such rigid gender roles as they did once humans became agricultural, settled down, and were able to pass on their goods to their children. Discussions of gender involve values, norms, and the social roles of men and women.

Different cultures and societies have different understandings of what gender roles are appropriate for their peoples. For example, in 1680 the people of the Taos Pueblo in the Southwest rebelled against the Spanish conquistadores. Part of the conflict arose over conflicting gender roles. In Spain, as in most Western cultures, men did most of the construction on homes and buildings. For the people of the pueblo, the making of the mud and straw adobe bricks was the work of women. This conflict over gender roles contributed to the revolt. Pueblo men felt emasculated by the work and refused to make the bricks. This example of a conflict of gender roles shows how concepts of gender, ideas about what a given society views as masculine or feminine, shape the everyday lives of people.

Ideas of what is manly or womanly vary in specific historical and cultural ways. For example, colonial men and women in North America had sharp labor divisions based on gender. Plowing, carpentry, masonry, and animal husbandry were “men’s work,” whereas cooking, brewing beer, making soap or candles, and sewing served as “women’s work.” Early Americans lived in a patriarchal society, that is, one in which men had more power than women. Even the Quaker leader William Penn (whose religious sect advocated gender equality) organized the first Pennsylvania government providing a special category for “women, children, and idiots.” Thus, gender also helps one understand power relations in a given society.

As historians concentrate on change over time, the changing gender roles of men and women in American society over the past four centuries serve as a mechanism...
for understanding the lives of people in the past. In examining the various cultures that existed in early American society, including English, French, Dutch, Native American, Jewish, and African, we can learn much about gender in early America.

Gender roles and definitions varied regionally among European settlers in early America. In the 17th-century southern colonies, English men greatly outnumbered women. There was considerable pressure on girls to marry or engage in sex at a young age, although many women had to wait until their indentured servitude ended before they wed. If they were widowed (not uncommon in an era of high mortality), women often inherited their husband’s property and bargained for marriages to wealthy plantation owners. Some women, like Elizabeth Lucas Pinckney, managed plantations in the 18th-century South, regardless of the rigidly prescribed gender roles. As part of their masculine identity, men prided themselves on their 144 gender dancing (a well-turned calf meant a man was a good dancer) and loved to drink whisky, gamble, race, and ride horses. Women in early New England more frequently migrated as part of family groups, and they usually functioned within narrowly defined gender roles. On her husband’s death a New England woman received “the widow’s third.” That is, a portion of her marital property was given to her while the rest was distributed among her children. New England inheritance patterns favored men, because gender roles prohibited women from managing their own legal affairs. Meanwhile, Quaker women in the Middle Colonies usually took a more active role, often preaching their religion. Nearly all African-American men and women came involuntarily to the New World as slaves. Although some lived as free people—for example, large groups of free black people lived in New Orleans—most did not. For these men and women, their traditional gender roles were often compromised by slavery. Both men and women worked in the fields doing heavy labor. Within the plantation household women often took on the burden of raising not only their own children but the children of the plantation owners.

Native Americans also had clearly differentiated gender roles, although women often exercised considerably more social, economic, and political power than did European women. Among the Iroquois, for example, women grew most of the food and exercised considerable political power, as older women selected chiefs. In addition, women could easily divorce their husbands by placing his property outside their longhouse door.


—Paula Smith-Hawkins

Georgia

Georgia was the last of the original 13 colonies to be settled by the British. The idea of a new colony south of South Carolina had been discussed in London during the late 1720s, and it eventually came to fruition due to the happy confluence of philanthropic ideals and imperial concerns. Leading British parliamentarians had become concerned about the plight of the poor, and those serving on the Parliamentary Gaols Committee saw at firsthand the treatment of criminals, many of whom had been jailed for debt. In an attempt to break the vicious circle of poverty, debt, and jail, the idea of a new American colony, one that would serve as a safe haven for the poor, became popular. At the same time, British government ministers were acutely aware of the vulnerability of their southern colonies in North America, with both the French in the Mississippi Valley and the Spanish in Florida capable of posing a threat to one of the most profitable parts of the empire. This threat was brought home during the Yamasee War of 1715, which caused great damage to many Carolina plantations. The new colony, it was thought, would be able to act as a buffer state and would enhance British territorial claims in the Southeast.

The job of creating the new colony was delegated to a group of 21 trustees, many of whom sat in Parliament and had access to the highest levels of government. Almost uniquely for a new colony, the British Parliament provided a substantial portion of the initial funding, ultimately amounting to several hundred thousand pounds. This was partly because Prime Minister Walpole often relied on the block votes of the trustees to pass important legislation in Parliament, but it was also confirmation that Georgia was not intended to be a commercial colony.

With a solid financial base the trustees chartered a ship, the Anne, and recruited 114 men, women, and children who, together with Trustee General James Edward Oglethorpe, would be entrusted with founding the new colony. The Annesailed in November 1732 and arrived at the future site of Savannah in February 1733. After obtaining a formal cession of lands from local Indian leader Tomochichi, Oglethorpe had virgin forest cleared in order to lay out the new town of Savannah.

The first settlers in Georgia were a mixed group. Unlike many other southern colonies, whose initial populations consisted almost entirely of young white men, early Georgians were mixed in age, sex, class, and ethnicity. In the first decade of settlement, most arrived “on the charity,” meaning that the trustees paid their passage to the
New World. These people were supposed to be the “worthy poor,” who merited the chance of a new beginning.

Only after 1742, when parliamentary money began to dry up, did the number of free settlers paying their own passage begin to rise.

All early settlers shared the color of their skin: They were white. Because of the belief that slavery would make Georgia more difficult to defend from Spanish attacks and that it would not provide the working opportunities for ordinary poor white settlers that the trustees believed were vital, racial bondage was prohibited in Georgia in 1735. This experiment with free labor was unique in British North America, and it was an abject failure. From the outset settlers complained that the heat made work impossible for white people, that Georgia would not be able to compete with South Carolina for settlers due to the existence of slaves there, and that they were unable to exploit the natural resources fully because of a shortage of workers. A vocal group of malcontents emerged in Georgia consisting mainly of English and Lowland Scottish settlers who repeatedly pressed the trustees to permit slavery, but Highland Scots in the small town of Darien and the Salzburgers in Ebenezer urged the trustees to maintain the ban on racial bondage so that poor white people would not be economically disadvantaged. The malcontents then enlisted the help of Thomas Stephens, son of William Stephens, the trustees’ secretary in Georgia. He argued the proslavery case directly to those in power in London, forcing the trustees to publish several defenses of the colony.

The trustees could not escape the fact, however, that Georgia was not an economic success. Experiments with silk production, intended to make the colony self-financing, were constantly set back by poor weather and inexperienced workers. Indentured servants frequently fled to South Carolina, where they were welcomed and released from their remaining years of servitude. Many settlers who had paid their own passage also left for Carolina, knowing it offered better economic opportunities. After nearly 20 years of trustee control, Georgia remained a backwater. Its population was small, its contribution to the imperial economic system was negligible, and it remained a financial burden on the British government.

The decision to permit slavery, made effectively in the late 1740s but not enacted until 1751, was a major turning point in the history of Georgia. Planters from South Carolina, aware of the rice-producing potential of Georgia’s sea islands, invested in the colony. As the population grew, so did the demand for goods and services provided by ordinary people. When the trustees surrendered their charter to the British Crown in 1752, they passed on a colony that had a rosy future. By the time the first royal governor, John Reynolds, arrived in 1754, Georgia’s population had swelled to 7,000, with 2,000 slaves providing the backbone of the labor force.

Georgia’s population, unlike its neighbor South Carolina, retained a white majority, but Euro-Americans were concentrated in the backcountry. In the coastal parishes containing rice plantations, there were often nine slaves for every white person, many of whom were imported directly from Africa. Consequently, African elements of culture, language, religion, and familial relationships lingered in the sea islands far longer than elsewhere in British America. The planters who owned these slaves became the principal men in Georgia. Men such as James Habersham, Jonathan Bryan, and Noble Jones made their fortunes in Georgia and were able to dominate the colony socially, politically, and economically through the number of offices they held. Each justice of the peace, assembly member, and juror tended to be chosen from the same small group of elite white men.

Nevertheless, Georgia continued to be attractive to ordinary poor white families, especially in the later colonial years. The prospect of free lands enticed many from the Chesapeake area and Pennsylvania to move south. Nonslaveholding white people therefore constituted the largest social group in the colony, with some enjoying a comfortable sufficiency. Poverty still existed, however, especially for widows with children, and, lacking widespread public or private charitable help, many poor white people eked out a bare subsistence in conditions of terrible hardship.

Away from the coast the settlement of backcountry areas relied on the Indian trade. Unlike in other southern colonies, few Native American tribes in Georgia lived near the coast. The small and scattered Native groups that had settled in the low country, the most notable being the Yamacraw ruled by Tomochichi, did not possess sufficient trade goods to interest many traders. In order to access the true wealth of the Indian trade, the town of Augusta was founded in 1736, and traders from Georgia and South Carolina both used the town as the starting point for expeditions deep into Creek, Cherokee, and other Native American lands. Augusta occupied a strategic position on the Indian trails but also provided the highest point to which boats could navigate up the Savannah River. Despite being more than 130 miles from Savannah, merchants arriving at Augusta with furs and other goods could ship them easily to the coast; this, above all else, secured the economic future of the backcountry.

Discouraged by the struggling economy and by continuing conflict with the Spanish in Florida, the trustees gave
1607–1660: Foundings

Within this shared framework, British America’s first colonial governments adopted numerous forms. The Crown placed its first successful settlement, Virginia, under the Virginia Company of London, granting it a charter whose only limitation required the joint-stock company to render laws “agreeable to the laws, statutes, government, and policy of our realm.” Under Governor Edwin Sandys, Virginia convened America’s first representative assembly, composed of the governor, his appointed council, and two elected burgesses from every parish. The assembly met annually, and all laws it passed were subject to the governor’s veto and, ultimately, that of the Virginia Company.

The enfranchisement of all landowning white male inhabitants made the assembly a model for future representative institutions that eventually characterized governments throughout British America. When the Privy Council annulled the Virginia Company’s charter in 1624, Charles I turned Virginia into a royal colony. The assembly, despite this shift in authority, remained intact.

A different governmental structure materialized in New England. The Massachusetts Bay Company followed a charter that called for a governor and a council of 18 assistants to be elected annually by the colony’s freemen. A general court maintained power to render laws consistent with the laws of England. Although the charter was a secular document, a powerful group of Calvinist investors moved to establish the colony as a Bible commonwealth. An opportunity presented itself when the investors discovered that the charter failed to require the company to remain in England. Thus, in 1630 John Winthrop, charter in hand, led a fleet to the Massachusetts Bay Colony, where—relatively free from the Crown’s oversight—he established a semithetocratic society. Clergy were denied power to wield secular authority, but the colony’s government demonstrated its theocratic tendencies through the religious mindset of its secular leaders, who, among other decisions, based the colony’s moral codes on biblical rather than common law. In 1648 the colony countered its theocratic bias with the adaptation of “The Book of General Laws and Liberties,” which defined more clearly the functions of the magistrates, the “liberties” of the people, and due process.

In 1632 George Calvert, the first lord Baltimore and a Catholic convert, received a proprietary charter to Maryland. Although Calvert was dead when the charter’s status became official, the document granted his heirs the privilege to govern as “absolute Lords and Proprietors.”

With respect to legislation the proprietor could make laws subject to “the Advice, Assent, and Approbation of the government, British American

According to a Boston doctor writing in the early 1750s, colonial government consisted of “three separate negatives”: thus, by the governor, representing the King, the colonies are monarchical; by the Council, they are aristocratical; by house of representatives, or the delegates from the people, they are democratical: these are distinct and independent of one another, and the colonies enjoy the conveniences of each of these forms of government without their inconveniences, the several negatives being checks upon one another.

His opinion at the time was entrenched. English adherence to a mixed government gained momentum throughout the 16th century, hinging on the idea that a balanced government indefinitely preserved liberty by juxtaposing society’s basic socioconstitutional elements: king, lords, and commons. This fundamental precept, later popularized by Montesquieu’s Spirit of the Laws(1748), structured the theoretical framework within which the earliest settlers established governments throughout colonial America.
free men of the same Province . . . or of their Delegates or Deputies.” When Baltimore’s son, the second lord Cecilius, organized a venture to the colony in March 1634, he sent his younger brother Leonard Calvert to manage the colony according to the charter’s stipulations. Calvert, while stressing religious tolerance, granted large manors to an elite Catholic gentry and in 1638 mediated this manorial control with the establishment of Maryland’s first representative assembly—a body that was to reflect “the like power . . . as in the House of Commons.” The ascendancy of Parliament in 1640 pushed Baltimore to appoint a Protestant governor and present a bill of religious toleration called the Act Concerning Religion. As the long Parliament became established, however, Calvert’s proprietary status came under fire, and, by 1651, a group of Maryland Puritans, who rejected the act, had placed themselves in power. Not until 1657, after Oliver Cromwell’s ascent, was Baltimore reinstated, and the Protestants relented, accepting the Act of Toleration and, in turn, a precarious stability.

1660–1681: New Foundings

After the restoration the 17th-century colonial governments of Virginia, Massachusetts Bay, and Maryland were joined by Carolina (1663), New York (1664), and Pennsylvania (1681). The “restoration colonies” were all proprietary governments, but each one took on unique characteristics, further complicating the diverse patchwork that constituted colonial American government.

In 1663 Charles II granted eight proprietors rights to establish a colony in the Carolina region. The earl of Shaftsbury, with the help of John Locke, outlined the government, British American 151 colony’s government in the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina. To “avoid erecting a numerous democracy,” the Fundamental Constitutions instituted a palatinate court, which called for a “parliament,” prepared legislation, appointed officers, and dispersed funds. The parliament consisted of the proprietors, landed nobility, and deputies representing the colony’s freeholders. Carolina’s government distinguished itself from other colonies through its pyramidal landholding structure, whereby proprietors, nobles, yeomen, serfs, and freeholders owned land according to their rigidly defined status. Locke, ironically, later became known for ideologies supporting representative government, propertyed individualism, and the political upheavals that ushered these ideas into reality. The Fundamental Constitutions, however, not only failed to foreshadow such republican developments but quickly proved hopelessly inappropriate as Carolina’s governing structure. Under the burdens of slow population growth, the refusal to ratify the Fundamental Constitutions, and the popularity of fur trading over farming, Locke’s proposed hierarchical blueprint was routinely ignored. Few manors developed, settlers surveyed the land independently, and the proprietors, many of whom were absentee, remained politically weak. The decentralized political authority that subsequently prevailed in Carolina until the 1720s easily accommodated the hundreds of planters from Barbados who arrived to settle large plantations along the Ashley and Cooper Rivers with slaves, rice, and the quest for profit. New York initiated a form of government especially sensitive to its background. England, which conquered New Netherland in 1664, established a chartered government under the leadership of Richard Nicholls that aimed to integrate English laws and Dutch customs. Nicholls immediately instituted the Duke’s Laws, named after James, duke of York, which created a governmental structure of overseers elected by the colony’s freeholders. New York’s lack of an assembly, however, became a conspicuous point of contention. Throughout Governor Sir Edmund Andros’s tenure, 1674 to 1683, towns pushed vehemently for an assembly to legitimate the taxation schemes that Charles II wanted imposed. When financial problems became unbearable, James replaced Andros with Thomas Dongan and reluctantly decreed an assembly. New York’s assembly, which effectively balanced the interests of the Dutch and English, conferred power on the governor, council, and “the people in general assembly” while granting the vote to all freeholders.

The pressure placed on Nicholls to initiate an assembly was largely in response to the founding of New Jersey in 1665. The duke of York’s grant to Sir George Carteret and John, Lord Berkley resulted in a colony in which New Yorkers could elect an assembly. The establishment of the most democratic system in the British Empire not only intensified opposition to New York’s lack of an assembly but attracted a large number of Puritans and Dutch Protestants to settle in New Jersey. These religious dissenters, however, posed a problem for Carteret and Berkley when they resisted the ruling and taxation authority of the Restorationists. Faced with this dilemma, Berkley sold his grant to two Quakers in 1674, who subsequently turned the grant over to three other trustees, one of whom was William Penn. After a division of the colony into East and West Jersey in 1676, Carteret (who owned East Jersey) sold his grant to yet another group of proprietors, one of whom was also William Penn. In 1702 a growing and diverse group of settlers from many backgrounds as well as an emerging Quaker elite united to become the royal colony of New Jersey.

Like Baltimore, William Penn also exploited his royal connections to seek a haven for a religiously persecuted group. Obtaining a charter from Charles II in 1681, Penn secured for his Quaker brothers and sisters the right to grant land on the terms of his choosing, create manors, and make all laws subject to “the approbation of the Freemen of the said Country.” He established an assembly, called for
religious toleration, and labeled his venture a “holy experiment.” Penn articulated his governing vision in a document
called the Frame of Government of 1681. It stipulated that all Christians could vote and hold office, that settlers
would not be taxed to support a church, that the upper and lower houses of assembly were to be elected by the
enfranchised male property holders, and that the governor lacked a veto. To keep Penn’s proprietary power in check,
the Crown ordered that all laws be reviewed by the king for inspection. In return, the Crown agreed to levy no taxes
without the consent of the assembly, Parliament, or the colony’s proprietor. Penn settled his colony with the help of
an organization of wealthy Quakers called the Free Society of Traders, who funded the arrival of thousands of settlers
and worked under Penn’s belief that “Governments rather depend on men than men upon governments.”

1660–1760: The Emergence of Political Stability

Despite differences in their specific governmental structures, these colonies—linked as they all were to the same
metropolitan political culture—followed a similar trajectory of development throughout the colonial period. After
several decades of chronic political disorder, most colonies experienced an era of extraordinary stability lasting into
the 1760s.

After a rare period of stability between 1660 and Bacon’s Rebellion (1676), Virginia succumbed to conflicts
arising from the Crown’s effort to control the colony’s political and economic mechanisms. These tensions
divided Virginia’s gentry and led to 50 years of constant political instability, with one governor rapidly succeeding
152 government, British American

another. Starting in the late 1710s, however, in the context of Robert Walpole’s emphasis on political harmony among
all governmental branches and with an increasingly profitable tobacco economy, Virginia benefited from a series
of governors who capably managed the interests of the elite planters while tending to those of yeomen and their legislators. During the terms of Hugh Drysdale and Sir William
Gooch, voting Virginians continually placed a ruling elite in positions of legislative authority, assumed a position of
deferential adherence to its decisions, and ushered in a period of unprecedented political stability.

South Carolina experienced its share of factionalism into the 1720s. Battles between merchants and
planters, West Indian immigrants and English immigrants, and town and country ripped through the colony
and resulted in the overthrow of the weakened proprietors in 1719. Throughout the 1720s the demand for increased
paper currency and a severe depression intensified political infighting. With the permanent implementation of a royal
government in 1730, however, the political situation began to improve. Disparate groups began to share in the colony’s
increasing economic prosperity, the common pursuit of profit united the interests of the yeomen, merchants,
and planting elite, and the growing slave majority unified whites in a single, if broad, interest group.
Pennsylvania’s political turmoil initially centered on the anti-authoritarianism of the Quaker elite and the proprietary
interests of William Penn. Later, it flared up between the Quaker elites who secured power and a “country party” led
by David Lloyd. Throughout the contentious tenures of Charles Gookin and Sir William Keith, Pennsylvania
foundered on the issues of land tenure, paper currency, and proprietary power. As in Virginia and South Carolina, however,

stability soon followed. A tight coalition of Quaker elites consolidated economic power, permanently diminished
proprietary privilege, and gained control of the assembly. By the 1730s a tightly knit group of wealthy merchants and
landholders forged a steady consensus among the colony’s traditional warring factions, and, in turn, a stable political
environment evolved.

Massachusetts followed the same basic course. Metropolitan authorities undermined Puritan leadership
throughout the late 17th century and, in so doing, created an opportunity for the region’s rising merchant class to
make a successful power grab, a development that initiated a country-town rift. Fifty years of conflict ensued, with
royal governors, including Sir Edmund Andros, attempting to assert power, the Crown claiming monopoly over
large trees used for the masts of ships, and merchants trying to bend the assembly to their economic wishes. The
contest over royal prerogative had diminished by the 1730s, however, and with it so did the rural-urban tension
that had plagued the colony for so many years. As in the other colonies, a prominent elite—in this case a group of
maritime merchants—consolidated political power on the basis of a strong rural–urban consensus. Aside from the
land bank controversy in 1740–41, Massachusetts government reached a level of stability on par with governments
throughout British America.

New York’s path to political stability was the least successful. The Leislerian conflict, the commercial-gentry
rivalry of the 1720s, and the Morris-Cosby dispute, among many other factors, precluded the kind of governmental
stability that prevailed elsewhere. Nevertheless, by the 1730s New York began to practice a form of politics that
one historian has described as “a model of tension within a broad framework of consent.” Routine, almost ritualistic,
rivalries yielded to loosely organized parties whose very presence minimized the possibility of violent civil disorder.
Ironically, New York’s constant factionalism may have been the basis for the region’s eventual political stability.

Underlying Agents of Change
These remarkable parallels toward political consensus throughout colonial British America speak to a convergence of several underlying factors. Historians have duly noted the emergence of a colonial elite, institutional development, and the rise of the public sphere as factors contributing to the strength of colonial governments in the 18th century, but the glue giving collective shape to these individual factors involved the differences among colonial governments and the political ideology that those differences nurtured.

With royal governors, assemblies, and councils, colonial governments seemed to mirror the ideal English constitution. Beneath the surface, however, the American governments were quite different. In England royal patronage ensured that Parliament remained loyal to the Crown, with often as many as half the Members of Parliament holding Crown offices. The electorate, for its part, was too weak to maintain vigilance over these corrupt arrangements, because only about one-quarter of adult males could vote. One outcome of this concentration of political power was the emergence of a vocal opposition group of “radical Whigs,” also known as “commonwealthmen,” who drew upon classical republicanism to argue that human beings, who were naturally inclined to abuse power, required a truly representative government to safeguard liberty. In light of England’s patronage system, they claimed that corruption had overtaken virtue and that English liberty was falling prey to a sinister executive conspiracy. The commonwealthmen remained on the fringe in England. In America, however, their message resonated deeply. Not only did royal governors lack patronage power, but the assemblies had achieved a defining voice within colonial governments. With their allegiance not being government, British American 153 swayed by patronage appointments, assemblies in America responded more directly to the will of their constituents, who constituted about 70 percent of the adult white male population. (The land required to vote generally was the same in England and America, but land was much more readily available in America). By the mid-18th century it had become clear to many Americans that their own governments reflected the ideal English constitution more accurately than did England’s system. Thus, when England, after the Seven Years’ War, abandoned its period of “benign neglect” of the American colonies and started to impose new, restrictive measures on the colonies, Americans eagerly embraced the radical Whig ideology and used it to solidify their opposition to what they perceived as arbitrary rule. It was on this point that the diversity of colonial governments ultimately converged.


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Great Awakening

A manifestation of philosophical, political, economic, institutional, and demographic changes, the Great Awakening was a multifaceted religious movement that swept through American Protestantism beginning in the 1720s the repercussions of which shaped the religious outlook of America’s founding generation. The movement’s ideological impetus had its beginnings in Europe in the late 1600s, when visionaries like Sir Isaac Newton and John Locke began to describe a universe different from the one previously conceived by religious theorists. This new concept involved a rational rather than capricious order to the universe, one in which, as New England Great Awakening preacher Jonathan Edwards proclaimed, God’s overpowering goodness was “irresistible.” Out of the philosophical position of rationalism, residents of western Europe and the American colonies gained increasing understanding of and control over their world. Navigation instruments, printing presses, vaccinations against epidemics, and botanical innovations were among the discoveries and inventions that convinced these innovators that the world was subject to predictable laws. The result was erosion of the general belief in a vengeful God who would arbitrarily choose to save some souls and damn others. A forgiving God gained ascendancy, one who would grant “grace” (forgiveness and salvation) to anyone who would profess faith and dedication. These new ideas had had their origins in Europe, but they acquired special power in the North America colonies, where increasing ideological independence was bolstered by the growing number of people in whom profitable exports and plentiful, inexpensive land bred optimism. For many American yeoman farmers, merchants, and artisans, increasing economic independence convinced them that they could master and improve their own fate, with or without divine assistance. By 1720 church attendance had declined in all the American colonies. At the same time American religion faced new institutional challenges. English colonists had been accustomed to a national church sanctioned by the government and supported by taxes levied on members and nonmembers alike. New Englanders had replicated this system, but with a Congregational instead of an Anglican Church. In the South and in parts of New York, the Anglican Church
educated and credentialed religious officials to maintain Anglican bishops in the colonies, there were not enough educational institutions to train ministers and no support of the established denomination. Because there were few educational institutions to train ministers and no Anglican bishops in the colonies, there were not enough educated and credentialed religious officials to maintain theological discipline and consistency in American churches. American clergy had to return to England to be ordained, and often their congregations viewed them as incompetent, aloof, and uninspiring. The result by the 1720s was a restless mixture of institutions and individuals ripe for dramatic remodeling.

Transformation came in the form of “revivals” begun by local ministers in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts as early as the 1720s. In the Raritan Valley region of New Jersey, much of the ideological leadership came from Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, a Dutch Protestant immigrant of the pietist tradition who, worried that American Christians had grown too lax in the practice of their faith, preached stirring sermons differentiating between the “broad way” and the “narrow way.” The broad way was easier and more attractive, Frelinghuysen argued, but only the narrow way would result in “Eternal Life, everlasting Glory and everlasting Joy and Salvation.” Frelinghuysen’s emotionally stirring sermons prepared the way for Presbyterian evangelical preacher William Tennent, Sr., and his three sons to echo a similar message in Pennsylvania and in the western mountains of Virginia. Convinced that individual and community salvation required that community members dedicate themselves to serving the Lord, preachers like Frelinghuysen, the Tennents, and their followers stressed the importance of biblical scripture.

Their revival movement, which gathered momentum during the 1730s, followed a format similar to that of British minister John Wesley’s. He traveled through England and the colonial South preaching a religion that stressed social service to prisoners, slaves, and other oppressed people and a disdain for the liturgy of traditional Protestant churches. Wesley also emphasized a personal conversion experience frequently involving a dramatic and emotional public confession of sins and embracing of renewed faith, which one observer described as “bitter shrieking and screaming” and “convulsionlike tremblings.” The final spark of America’s Great Awakening was lit by rebel Anglican minister George Whitefield, who arrived from England, almost single-handedly coalesced a movement, and then left its expansion in the hands of an equally charismatic New Englander, Jonathan Edwards. Edwards and other itinerant preachers responded to invitations that helped build a network of revivalist communities in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and a few outposts in New York, Maryland, western Virginia, and Charleston, South Carolina.

Wesley had worked with Whitefield in England, and the two had developed a compelling preaching style that drew thousands to hear them wherever they spoke. By 1741 Whitefield had become the first person who almost everyone in all the colonies had seen or heard of. Many men who had abandoned the boredom of church services turned out to hear Whitefield, and tens of thousands of women were drawn to carry out their own evangelizing. Jonathan Edwards’s wife, Sarah Pierpont Edwards, wrote a detailed account of her experience of being “swallowed up, in the light and joy of the love of God.” She was but one of many women who began to see that women’s souls might be equal before God and that therefore women might also claim equality in social and political ways as well. Whitefield, an itinerant preacher who modeled himself after him, regularly preached to mixed audiences of men and women, black and white. Through such gatherings many African Americans had their first compelling experience with Christianity. Several noted black religious leaders were recruited in these gatherings. Richard Allen, converted in a Wilmington, Delaware, meeting, later founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church—the world’s first black Christian denomination. Following an emotional conversion, John Marrant of Charleston, South Carolina, began to “read the scripture very much,” and he preached to maritime black communities in Massachusetts and Nova Scotia before settling in England.

English followers of Whitefield and Wesley swept across the American countryside, especially in New England and the South, deputizing lay preachers, distributing food and medical care to the needy, opening some schools for orphans, stirring consciences against slavery, and gathering converts among both free black people and slaves, who would in large numbers adopt the religion of these advocates. Many Methodists, Baptists, and Quakers adopted the idea that all souls were equal before God, and, although they did not openly advocate abolition, they became identified with justice for the dispossessed—including poor white people and African Americans. Itinerant ministers and
religions. Methodists and Baptists often went beyond behavior called for leniency for practitioners of these liberal in subsequent plots for slave insurrections their code of behavior called for leniency for practitioners of these liberal religions. Methodists and Baptists often went beyond Quakers in incorporating black members into their congregations and in appointing black preachers. The Great Awakening created fissures in the old church communities, with members taking sides and realigning power and authority. “Old Lights,” who tended to be of the upper class, sought to hold on to an educated ministry and a prescribed service, decrying what they viewed as the undignified worship behavior of the revivalists. For their part, “New Lights” viewed their rivals as stodgy, boring, snobbish, “frigid,” and lacking in true religious commitment. Specialized knowledge of the Scriptures and intellectual debate about theology were less important, argued the New Lights, than was a deep and heartfelt connection to God. In New England, some New Light Congregationalists split off to found Baptist churches; in the South Presbyterians as well as Baptists made inroads into the traditionally Anglican countryside. In each case establishing congregations offered more immediate and emotional religious experience to artisans, yeoman farmers, and small shopkeepers. These more accessible religions eventually became the religions of the frontier. Despite divisions among themselves, however, the liturgy of American Protestants remained remarkably similar. American Protestants remained unified in their distrust of Roman Catholics and Jews, and most church members felt a new sense of empowerment to examine, question, and judge their leaders. Never again in North America would clergy be imposed upon a congregation; American congregations controlled their ministers, not the other way around.

Despite its apparent antiintellectualism, the Great Awakening also spawned educational institutions designed to train ministers. Presbyterians established Princeton College and Dutch Reformed Church leaders started Rutgers, both in New Jersey. Baptists founded Brown University in Rhode Island, and Congregationalists opened Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. Soon, other minister-training schools would dot the countryside. Thus, this religious revival movement became the impetus for a burgeoning national education system. Two more enduring legacies of the Great Awakening are its effects on American political leaders and its influence in leading American citizens toward a separation of church and state. The rumblings within traditional religious structure gave permission for thoughtful Americans to embrace the Enlightenment—that European extension of rational thought that encouraged scientists to investigate and test the behavior of the universe and to attempt to explain and harness that behavior in new machines, models of the heavens, and complex studies of flora and fauna. Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson are among the best-known of the advocates of Deism, but many intellectuals subscribed to the idea that the universe might be a system set in motion by a God who then left it for humans to manage. The shaping of the documents that underpin American political life—the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—are flavored with the idea that religious freedom is the “natural” result of the assumption that “all men are created equal.”

In responding to a mélange of class, race, gender, regional, and philosophical tensions, the Great Awakening can be described as the first truly unifying event of the British colonies in America. In some ways it was a rehearsal for the unity that would be called upon by white Americans during the Revolution and for the religious themes that would undergird the black communities’ struggles for their freedom. In addition, there are some indications that leaders of the resistance movement to Great Britain in the decade before the American Revolution were more likely to be radicals if they were adherents to the new religious beliefs popularized during the Great Awakening.


Emma Lapsansky and Billy G. Smith

Harvard College
North America’s oldest institution of higher education, Harvard College (now Harvard University) was founded in 1636 and officially chartered in 1650. Its patrons used Cambridge University, a Puritan stronghold in England, as an archetype. Throughout the 17th century Harvard’s leaders explicitly designed the school to produce Congregational ministers. Puritans believed that faith had both spiritual and intellectual dimensions. Thus, they considered the education of ministers a matter of first importance. Harvard’s
Anne Marbury (1591–1643) religious dissenter

Born in Alford, England, to an unorthodox minister, Anne Marbury grew up exposed to her father’s radical religious notions, inspiring her deep commitment to religious faith and theological debate that eventually landed her at the center of the Antinomian Controversy in Boston between 1636 and 1638. After marrying a merchant and giving birth to a number of children, Hutchinson and her family migrated to Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1634, primarily to follow John Cotton, a Puritan minister they regarded highly. In Massachusetts Bay it was not uncommon for groups of women to meet in homes during the week to discuss scripture and theology. Hutchinson began holding these meetings at her home soon after her arrival.

In an almost forgone conclusion the civil trial and church trial that followed led to Hutchinson’s banishment from the church and the colony. She and some of her followers fled to Rhode Island, where her family had resettled, but they soon felt threatened there by a growing influence of Massachusetts Bay leaders and relocated to Dutch-controlled Long Island. In 1643 Hutchinson was killed in an Indian raid, and some Puritans interpreted her death as evidence of God’s justice.

Hutchinson’s experience is telling of the interconnection between church and state that existed in Massachusetts Bay and the strong response that followed any threat, whether theological or secular, to the colony’s stability. Colonial leaders used the power of the state to suppress religious dissent, challenges to the authority of magistrates, and resistance to socially prescribed gender roles.

indentured servitude

Indentured servitude was a form of bound labor. The most common type of indenture or contract in the British colonies required that the servant serve a master “well and faithfully [in] such employments as the master might assign” for a specified period of time, usually three to four years, and in a particular location. In return, the master promised to pay the passage of the servant to the colonies, provide food, clothing, and housing during the term of indenture, and, depending on the particular transaction, provide the servant “freedom dues” upon completion of service.

The indenture referred to a document, a form that contained the terms of the servitude. It recorded the beginning and ending dates of service and the provisions of freedom dues. At the end of the term, the contract was the only proof that the individual had that she or he was free. An English pamphleteer, John Hammond, strongly urged servants to take special care to guard the document in order to avoid any problems when the term of service was completed.

The precise terms of the indenture ranged widely, depending upon where the servant was located and the type of labor performed. Skilled servants occasionally received wages or clauses were included in their contracts to permit them to work outside the master’s domain at times when the master had insufficient tasks for the servant. German servants sometimes asked that they be taught English as part of the agreement. Freedom dues varied widely as well and included anything from money and land to tools, new or used clothes, animals, or seeds. One historian of the Chesapeake described how masters extended the length of servants’ contracts for minor infractions in order to keep them from attaining their freedom. If they successfully fulfilled their contracts, servants often had a difficult time collecting their freedom dues. In one case a master literally fled before he paid the servant his dues.

The origins of indentured labor remain somewhat hazy. In the early 1580s the Englishman Sir George Peckham wrote a pamphlet intended to secure subscriptions from individuals who wished to colonize Newfoundland. A portion of the pamphlet analyzed why North American colonies were important for the British, and the concluding section argued that peopling these colonies need not be difficult. Peckham outlined the principle upon which indentured labor was based. English men and women would voluntarily exchange the cost of their passage to the New World for a fixed period of labor servitude.

Historians credit the Virginia Company, the joint stock company authorized to settle and develop Virginia, with inventing the form of indentured servitude used throughout the colonies. A broadside issued by the company in 1609 referred to indentured labor, suggesting that servants arrived in the British North American colonies in the early settling of Jamestown. This one-page advertisement announced that wealthy and noble persons had agreed to emigrate to the new colony in the Chesapeake Bay, and that all those who wished to make the voyage, no matter what their occupation or skill, were to appear at Sir Thomas Smith’s house in Philpot Lane, London, to enroll. The “Adventures” or masters who agreed to take the servants received an additional allotment of land for each servant they procured. The servants were promised their transportation and freedom after seven years of labor.

The use of a contract to bind laborers as indentured servants did not originate with English colonization; however, indentured servitude included a series of innovations. The terms of the contract involved a stricter set of obligations than other labor contracts and provided ways to enforce the provisions if the work was not performed. The practice of “selling” servants was new. The Virginia Company arranged the transportation to the colony for hundreds of servants and then sold them to resident planters. In addition, contracts were standardized, replacing what in England tended to be verbal rather than written agreements. Finally, English servants frequently left home at the age of 10, often moved annually from household to household, and labored primarily in agriculture.

Although colonial indentured servants worked in the agricultural sector, especially in the Chesapeake, they also served masters in the cities and towns. While many labored under highly unstable and exploitative circumstances, they commonly served their entire indenture with just one or two masters.

Who were the indentured servants? In the 17th century, most servants immigrated to the colonies from England. Initially they came from a broad segment of English society, usually were about 15 to 25 years of age, were comprised of a mixture of skilled and unskilled laborers, and were predominantly male. White indentured servants from England performed most of the labor in the earliest British settlements in the New World, and their successors in the 17th and 18th centuries continued to play key roles. By the 18th century Germans, Irish, and Scots joined the English. In the 17th century these people often became victims of shady emigrant agents, the English “spirit.” Merchants hired some spirits to gather a servant cargo; others worked independently and sold individuals to ship masters. Armed with sweets and liquor, spirits roamed the streets and docks.
of London and lured unsuspecting children and adults on board ships bound for the colonies, where they were sold into servitude. In 1664, in an attempt to control the activities of the spirits and to insure that no one was forced into servitude, the British Parliament authorized an official registry office. In the early decades of the 18th century a new form of indentured servitude appeared—the redemptioner system. Thousands of German and Swiss families began their passage to the New World only to find that they had insufficient resources to finance the entire voyage. Ship captains took whatever money the passengers possessed and, upon arrival in the colonies, gave the passengers a period of time, usually 14 days, to secure the balance of payment. If the immigrants were unable to raise the additional money, the captain sold them into servitude to satisfy the debt. Convict labor provided another source of indentured servants to the colonies. These were people who had been convicted of crimes, and rather than suffer corporal or capital punishment, their sentence was transportation to the colonies to serve as indentured laborers. Merchants profited from selling convicts as indentured servants in the colonies. This group of indentured servants were numerous, second in number only to African-descended people as bonded labor in the North American colonies. Between one-half and two-thirds of all of the white immigrants to colonial North America arrived as indentured laborers. What motivated individuals who were not spirited away or banished as convicts to travel to the New World and to sign away four or five years of their labor to work for an unknown master? By exchanging their labor for a period of time for the costs of transportation to the New World, some servants dreamed of prosperous futures while others fled Europe out of desperation. William Moraley, for example, left a journal describing his route to indentured servitude. His father was a successful watchmaker in London until 1720, when his fortunes collapsed along with the stock of the South Sea Company. The family moved from London not long after Moraley’s father died. He took his small inheritance and ventured back to London to “seek my fortune.” London offered him no prospects for his future; indeed, he was imprisoned briefly for debt and released in 1729. Faced with a bleak economic future, Moraley sold himself into servitude, bound for five years.

Indentured servitude was extremely costly. As Governor Leete of Connecticut wrote in 1680, “there is seldom any want relief; because labor is deare.” The surveyor general of New York explained in 1723 why workers were in short supply. “Every one is able to procure a piece of land at an inconsiderable rate and therefore is fond to set up for himself rather than work for hire.” Without a sufficient number of free laborers, employers turned to unfree workers. Indentured servants helped relieve the colonial labor shortage. They were, in the words of one historian, the machines that grew tobacco in the 17th-century Chesapeake and carried the burden of labor in the sugar plantations of the West Indies before the increased importation of Africans. Rates of mortality for these servants were extremely high; most did not live long enough to finish their terms of service. Gradually, over the course of the 17th century, indentured servitude declined in importance as planters turned increasingly to slave labor. The shift to unfree labor occurred in part because the supply of indentured servants from England diminished. In addition, rates of mortality declined, making the investment in slaves for life more profitable. Some collected their own lands and began to grow tobacco. Others were displaced and fomented uprisings. Established Chesapeake planters did not like the added competition from these former servants and feared their unrest especially after their participation in Bacon’s Rebellion. Slaves offered planters certain advantages. Because they served for life, slaves would never become competitors in the tobacco market. A carefully designed and repressive legal system would work to prevent slave rebellion. In contrast to the plantation economies of the Chesapeake, Lower South, and West Indies, New England colonies relied only minimally on indentured labor.
Although land was plentiful in the Northeast, no profitable staple crop, such as tobacco or sugar, dominated. Economic organization was based on the family farm, and when additional labor was required, employers hired on a casual basis. Indentured servitude played a more active role in the Middle Colonies. Initially, during the founding years of Pennsylvania, unfree laborers worked in the agricultural sector, but not in a staple-crop economy. Pennsylvania farmers produced primarily wheat and other commodities for local consumption, which did not require as much labor as southern crops. By the second decade of the 18th century, servitude shifted from the rural to the urban sector. Servants labored in the homes of wealthy merchants or the shops of successful artisans.

Servants’ experiences differed depending upon where they lived and the type of tasks performed. Those who worked in the steamy inhospitable climates of plantation colonies, in the labor-intense industries of sugar and tobacco production, suffered from hard labor conditions and high death rates. Planters also found it difficult to motivate servants to work. They were, as one historian of the Chesapeake notes, essentially prepaid by the costs of transportation, thus they lacked incentives. As a result, masters threatened servants with extending the length of their service or withholding their freedom dues if they did not perform adequately or if they attempted to run away. In contrast, working for a Quaker family in Pennsylvania, in an artisan’s shop, or as a domestic servant usually meant not only humane treatment but also a better possibility for social and economic success after the term of service ended.

Indentured labor gradually died over the course of the late 18th century. Its demise was not due to a concerted effort to end the system. Rather, transatlantic fares became more affordable, enabling more immigrants to buy their own tickets. Also, the mid-Atlantic colonies depended less and less upon unfree labor because of a steady increase in the number of free workers.


—Sharon V. Salinger and Leslie Patrick

Jamestown

Called “James City” by its English settlers, Jamestown was settled under the auspices of the Virginia Company of London in 1607 on James Island, a deep-water anchorage 60 miles up the James River from where it empties into Chesapeake Bay. To English eyes the north bank of the James west to its confluence with the Chickahominy may have appeared to be “unused” wilderness, but it actually was the domain of the Paspiheigh tribe of the Powhatan Confederacy, a people who actively occupied and exploited it, but not in the ways to which the English were accustomed. The Paspiheigh immediately contested the English claims to “ownership through use,” sending clouds of arrows over the palisaded walls surrounding James City’s wattle-and-daub huts. To defend themselves against the Paspiheigh and possible incursions of Spanish warships, the English built James Fort on high ground away from the river, and it become the core around which James City and the colony expanded.

The Virginia Company founded James City at an inauspicious time. The Chesapeake region and its Powhatan inhabitants were suffering under the most severe drought in seven centuries, sparking an agricultural crisis that limited the amount of food the Powhatan could willingly trade for the copper jewelry, glass beads, and other goods manufactured by James City artisans. The English settlers hoped the exchange of these manufactured goods for food would sustain them until they could become self-sufficient producers of their own foodstuffs. When the Powhatan judged trade to be disadvantageous or dishonorable and withheld their foodstuffs, the desperate English under John Smith bullied and browbeat corn from them and sacked and burned their villages, which unleashed a decades-long guerrilla war punctuated by brief periods of uneasy peace. James City’s neighbors, the Paspiheigh, were the immediate victims of the warfare. In February 1610 the English killed the Paspiheigh werowance Wowinchopunk. After the starving winter of 1609–10, George Percy sallied forth from James City, burned the Paspiheigh village, and put the captured Paspiheigh queen to the sword after executing her children by “Throweinge them overboard and shoteinge owtt their Braynes.” Between 1616 and 1669 the Paspiheigh disappeared from the Virginia census, yet by 1612 there were Indians living in James Fort and working for the colonists. A number of intermarriages occurred between English working men and Indian women, a practice strenuously denounced by the upper-class clergy of James City as “uncivilized.”

Drought also increased the James River’s deadly salinity, thereby contributing to the extreme mortality in the early years. Only 38 of the original 104 settlers survived the first year of settlement, causing the premature evacuation
of James City itself. Between 1607 and 1625 nearly 5,000 of the 6,000 European immigrants died from diseases like typhoid as well as malnutrition and conflict with Natives. Virginia became a “death trap,” and were it not for John Rolfe’s successful experiments with tobacco, mortality may have outpaced immigration for most of the century. Tobacco quickly became Virginia’s chief and most profitable export. Tobacco exports rose from 20,000 pounds in 1617 to more than 40 million pounds by 1727, overwhelming European competitors. James City became a boomtown, with tobacco cultivated even in its streets. English merchants supplied planters with manufactured goods and indentured servants, predominantly young men; merchants returned home with profitable cargoes of the “stinking leaf.” Many servants were from the lower classes—the poor, vagrant, and imprisoned—judged by the English and Virginians to be “the vile and brutish part of mankind,” fit only for forced labor. Others came from respectable artisan and yeoman families, but once in Virginia were worked hard, often mistreated, bought, sold, and even gambled away by their masters. Before 1670 these bonded laborers came from the lower and “middling” classes of southern and western England but were quickly replaced by slaves from Africa and the Caribbean.

In 1619 John Rolfe, the father of the tobacco boom, reported that “there came in a Dutch man-of-warre that sold us 20 negars,” an addition to the 31 Africans already there “in the service of all planters.” Within a generation of their arrival, lifetime bondage for African servants became an established custom, although not yet recognized in law. In the same year James City witnessed the arrival of “Young maids to make wives for so many of the former Tenants,” to be sold by the Virginia Company for not less than “one hundredth and fiftie [pounds] of the best leafe Tobacco.” The importation of European and African laborers to toil in households and on tobacco fields swelled the colony’s population from a few hundred English colonists in 1618 to 13,000 by 1674, 800 of whom lived in James City. Under its 1618 charter the Virginia Company hoped to concentrate settlers in four boroughs—James City, Charles City, Henrico, and Kecoughtan—in which life and government would be that of a municipality rather than that of an English county. The tobacco boom, however, sparked a “plantation revolution” that by the 1620s spread the settlement into 49 tobacco plantations up the James River all the way to the fall line. By the 1620s James City experienced its own suburban sprawl marked by small satellite settlements spreading out farther into Paspieheigh lands. As planters fanned out along rivers and bays, English tobacco merchants were able sail their ships right to the plantations’ wharves, thereby diminishing the commercial importance of the four boroughs; they were soon supplanted by organization of local government by counties. “[T]he Advantage of the many Rivers which afforded a commodious Road for Shipping at evey Man’s Door,” Robert Beverley noted in 1705, “not any one Place of Cohabitation among them, that may reasonably bear the Name of a Town.” The unceasing intrusion of European settlement into Indian lands also ignited the Powhatan resistances of 1622, 1644, and 1676, resulting in the deaths of substantial numbers of English settlers whose distance from towns made them highly vulnerable to attack. Settlers would scurry to the protection of James Fort during these outbreaks but just as quickly return to their wide-flung estates when hostilities cooled.

After the demise of the Virginia Company, James City developed in “fits and starts” in three waves: in the 1620s and 1630s, in the 1660s, and in the 1680s. James City’s development was planned and implemented not according to the dispersed settlement patterns dictated by the new maritime tobacco trade but according to a model of what Virginia speculators saw to be the lucrative possibilities of the emerging English manufacturing towns, specifically, developing urban industries and constructing and renting quarters for workers attracted to such enterprises. In the 1630s Governor John Harvey encouraged the commercial development of James City by declaring it Virginia’s sole port of entry. He also encouraged the immigration of skilled artisans, particularly brickmakers and bricklayers, to build up the town and manufacture items for sale at home and abroad. Harvey’s industrial schemes failed, but they were revived after 1660 by speculators such as Philip Ludwell, who invested heavily in James City land, built brick row houses to quarter artisans and workers, and otherwise attempted to create a James City that was more than a statehouse and “a collection of taverns serving those coming to the capital on official business.” The Town Act of 1662 required each of the 19 counties to construct a substantial brick building in James City, and it reimbursed individuals who undertook similar construction. James City’s fire-prone wooden-frame buildings thereby were gradually replaced by brick structures that conformed more closely to the fire and building codes of an English town.

Widespread settlement also shifted political, social, and ecclesiastical control from the governor and his council in James City to the county courts, which were dominated by local elites comprised of the largest planters in the county. These men were not the high-born sons of the English aristocracy who sat on the governor’s council during
the company period or who constituted the first General Assembly that met in the choir of the James City church in 1619. They were the tough, ambitious, land-grabbing, Indian-hating, self-made men who preempted lands of the Virginia Company after its dissolution and who ousted Governor Harvey in 1635 for his commercial schemes and conservative Indian policies. They in turn died away and were replaced from the 1640s onward by the immigration of a third generation of leaders—Bland, Byrd, Carter, Culpeper, Digges, Burwell, Ludwell, and Mason—the well-connected younger sons of English merchant families long associated with Virginia. Based on family land in the colony, inherited wealth, or family shares of original Virginia Company stock, they built up substantial plantations from lands already cleared and cultivated by the first and second generations of Virginians. They gradually assumed places of power and authority in the county courts, the assembly, and the governor’s council and founded the great 18th-century Virginia ruling dynasties.

The transition to a stable, country aristocracy married to the maritime tobacco trade ultimately spelled the demise of James City. It lost its status as the mandatory port of entry for Virginia in 1662, at a time in which tobacco production and, therefore, political power was beginning to shift northward. Conflict between jealous local magnates and Governor Berkeley and his “Green Spring Faction” over their monopoly of provincial offices and patronage ignited Bacon’s Rebellion. In 1676 Nathaniel Bacon burned down James City to deny its use to Governor Berkeley. The final wave of development in James City in the 1680s consisted of its rebuilding after Bacon’s conflagration, but rebuilding on a modest scale without the grandeur of earlier years. Jamestown, thereafter, became little more than the seat of provincial government, although surrounding James City County tripled in population from 1674 to 1699. In 1698 James City’s statehouse again burned to the ground. The growing power held by residents of York County, men such as James Page of Middle Plantation, made that settlement the logical successor to James City as the colony’s new capital. The following year the capital of Virginia was moved to the new town site of Williamsburg, formerly Middle Plantation. James City gradually disappeared, and the old town site on James Island was taken over by the Ambler and Travis plantations, on which the bicentennial of Jamestown was celebrated in 1870.


—James Bruggeman

journalism

Although the first newspaper published in the American colonies began in Boston in 1690, it proved to be a shortlived experience because government authorities suppressed it immediately. It was not until April 24, 1704, when The Boston News-Letter appeared, that the public could enjoy a regularly published newspaper, although only on a weekly basis. Other rival newspapers appeared in Boston quickly, and other cities followed suit as Philadelphia, New York City, Annapolis, Charleston, Newport, and Williamsburg began publishing weeklies.

In 1727 the Maryland Gazette, the first newspaper in the province of Maryland and the oldest continuous surviving newspaper, was established at Annapolis by William Parks. At this time there were but six other newspapers published in America. The Gazette was discontinued in 1736 but revived again in 1745 under the management of Jonas Green. It is still published today and has been called the “flourishing patriarch of American journals.” By 1775, 37 weekly newspapers existed in 11 colonies. These newspapers were similar in structure, usually a small weekly folio, four pages in length, with the following format: Page one contained foreign news; page two, domestic news; page three, local news; and page four, advertisements. Political news and the proceedings of legislative bodies aroused lively interest. Issues including abolitionism, religion, women’s rights, education, and medical discoveries highlighted the news. Specific events, such as the trial of John Peter Zenger, the Great Awakening, the Stono Rebellion, the Seven Years’ War, the Stamp Act Crisis, and the Boston Tea Party appeared in colonial weeklies. Rather than articles penned by reporters, important letters and documents were often quoted at length. This became particularly critical when issues welded people together in their resistance to Britain beginning in 1763. Although local news was sometimes negligible, advertisements told the story of the economy, society, and cultural events of a particular town or region. Essays and poetry sometimes filled a considerable portion of newspapers, especially in Benjamin Franklin’s Pennsylvania Gazette. The use of an occasional editorial cartoon, such as Franklin’s famous “Join or Die” woodcut advocating uniting of the

The use of an occasional editorial cartoon, such as Franklin’s famous “Join or Die” woodcut advocating uniting of the
colonies during the Seven Years’ War, also appeared. Besides newspapers, early Americans wrote autobiographies, journals, and political pamphlets. These authors sometimes described their own experiences, meditating on their lives, seeking to attract settlers to the colonies, defending a particular religious view, or attacking specific governmental policies. Examples of 17th-century chroniclers include John Smith, William Bradford, John Winthrop, and Cotton Mather, while 18th-century examples include Robert Beverley and William Byrd II.

A second phase of American journalism after 1750 was greatly influenced by the Enlightenment. By the middle of the 18th century, the colonists became more aware of the efforts of Sir Isaac Newton and others to explain the mechanical laws of the universe and the philosophy of natural law. Writers began to emphasize rational thought, to think of history as possibly revealing the meaning of life, and to see institutions such as the law as having a life of their own. The works of Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Hutchinson, and David Ramsey are typical of the approach. Except for what appeared in newspapers, secular literature was limited to the wealthy. Theological books did abound, but outside of the Bible and almanacs, the newspaper was the only printed medium found in most colonial family homes. Further reading: David A. Copeland, Debating the Issues in Colonial Newspapers: Primary Documents on the Events of the Period (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2000).

—James F. Adomantis

King’s College (Columbia University)
The founding of King’s College reflected the ethnic, religious, and cultural controversies that had shaped colonial New York’s society for almost a century before the college opened its doors. The issues of Dutch versus English leadership, of how Anglicized the colony’s culture should become, about battles between locating the center of the colony’s culture in New York City or elsewhere, and about the transformations brought by the Great Awakening all influenced the creation of the school that would one day be Columbia University.

The first mention of a college for the colony of New York was made by Lewis Morris, who described the location as “the center of English American [and] . . . a proper place for a college” in a 1704 letter to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, but it was not until 1746 that the colony’s governor, assembly, and council approved a lottery to raise £2,250 for that purpose. The school immediately became the subject of controversy. First, location was the issue. Advocates of a rural setting, among them Cadwallader Colden, railed against the corruption of New York City, its tippling houses, and other base entertainments, but supporters of an urban college overcame that opposition. They raised £13,000 and secured land from Trinity Church in 1752 for the college’s location. The location controversy paled by comparison to the debate over religion at the College of New York. The Rev. Samuel Johnson, a former tutor at Yale College who, like President Timothy Cutler, had converted from Congregationalism to the Church of England, led the charge for New York’s college to be an Anglican institution. Cutler was both enthusiastic for his chosen faith and frightened at the widespread support for the Great Awakening and the colleges it inspired. In 1747 Johnson called the College of New Jersey (Princeton) “a fountain of Nonsense” and was angered that this “dissenting” institution, close to New York, would draw support away from the Anglican school he hoped to found.

William Livingston emerged as the leader of non-Anglicans in the college controversy. Raised in the Dutch Reformed Church in Albany, Livingston was a 1741 graduate of Yale who had grown weary both of the religious revivalism going on around him and Thomas Clap’s extreme orthodoxy at the college. Livingston and his supporters called for an enlightened, liberal arts curriculum that left theological study to the private hours of the students. In November 1751 the New York legislature established a board of trustees comprised largely of Anglicans to oversee the school’s lottery funds. Two years later that board chose Samuel Johnson as the first president of the college. In May 1754 the controversy flared up again, when Trinity Church repeated its offer of land for the college, but now required that its president always be an Anglican and that its religious services always be conducted in the forms of the Church of England. Livingston again led a vociferous opposition, stating that the church was not established in New York, that using lottery funds to support an Anglican institution was an insult to dissenters, that Trinity’s first offer had no such requirements, and that the charter should be submitted to the assembly, not the governor. The trustees ignored the protests by Livingston and others, and on May 20 petitioned the governor and council for a charter. On June 4 Lieutenant Governor James DeLancey ordered the colony’s attorney general to prepare An 1859 print of King’s College as it appeared in 1756 (New York Public Library) An 1859 print of King’s College as it appeared in 1756 (New York Public Library) 194 King’s College a royal charter. Livingston and his supporters continued their dissent, waging a newspaper war and sending numerous petitions to the colonial assembly. On November 2 the
The history of labor in colonial America covers more than 200 years, spans a vast geography, and includes important regional diversity. Adding to the complexity, laborers themselves often left little written record, making it difficult to piece together the experiences and stories of their lives. A common theme, however, does appear. Until well into the 18th century, scarcity describes labor everywhere. Potential employers complained that even if laborers were available, wages were too high. This lament came from tobacco producers in the Chesapeake area as well as artisans in the port cities. Labor shortages were the result of the rich natural resources found in the colonies, primarily land. Colonists had less need to work for someone when they could own land.

Colonists turned to a variety of solutions to solve some of the problems created by labor scarcity. The three major port cities, Boston, Philadelphia, and New York City, and the Middle Colonies blended bound with free workers. The plantation owners in the southern, Chesapeake, and West Indian colonies responded to the shortage of workers by depending primarily on unfree laborers. Colonial America contained three distinct types of unfree labor—apprentices, indentured servants, and slaves. Each form was used in varying degrees in every colony. However, the nature of each system varied. Apprentices combined education with labor. Apprentices were bound to a master for a period of years, and in exchange for obedience and work the master provided food, clothing, lodging, and training in the “art and mysteries” of a trade.

The colonial system of apprenticeship came from England, where it was intended to supply society with skilled labor and at the same time to reduce the burden of supporting orphaned and other poor children. Apprenticeship did little to relieve the labor shortage in the colonies. Unlike servants and slaves, apprentices came primarily from the native-born population. More important, because they started their service at a very young age, they contributed little in terms of labor, often being relegated to running errands, sweeping floors, lighting and tending fires, and other odd jobs. Older apprentices gained the skills that enabled them to participate more fully in the labor force. Apprentices served artisans most often, although masters who also taught skills ranged from doctors to lawyers, seamstresses to domestic service. Indentured servitude contributed greatly to easing the labor shortage in the colonies. Between one-half and two-thirds of white immigrants from Great Britain and continental Europe immigrated as indentured servants. The vast majority of colonial servants labored in the agricultural sector. Most entered into servitude because they were too poor to finance their own passage to the colonies and were willing to exchange service for a specified period of time, usually three to four years, for the price of their transportation.

African slavery provided the bulk of workers in the southern colonies, especially after 1700. The brutal system reduced human beings to property. In the early 17th century little distinction apparently existed between servants and slaves. Gradually, white colonists passed laws that bound African slaves for life and passed this condition on to the slaves’ children.

The Chesapeake Area and Lower South

Although the economies of the Chesapeake area and the Lower South developed differently, both regions relied on staple crops that required intensive labor. In the Chesapeake area planters grew primarily tobacco; in the Lower South they focused their energies on rice and indigo. The first Jamestown settlers in 1607 worried very little about labor. Many assumed that they could grow rich in Virginia on its natural abundance. They were so confident that they would not have to work that the first ships transported a large percentage of gentlemen (who would not work because of their status) and skilled craftsmen, like silversmiths and jewelers, who could extract precious metals and stones. If they did need labor, the colonists fully expected to mold the local Indians into a labor force.

Nothing went according to plan. Death stalked the colonists, and gold and silver were nowhere to be found. In addition, the Indians understandably refused to work for them. John Rolfe introduced the one ray of hope for Jamestown beginning in 1612, when he discovered that the lands of
Virginia were well suited for the cultivation of tobacco. At that time the English smoked tobacco for its medicinal qualities. This changed, however, when regular shipments of the weed arrived from the New World. People increasingly smoked for pleasure, and the demand for the “jovial weed” rose dramatically. Tobacco helped solve the colony’s financial problems, but it had a hidden difficulty. The cultivation of tobacco was labor intensive—it required many workers over a long planting, growing, and harvesting season. The Virginia Company of London, the joint-stock company in charge of promoting and developing Virginia, indentured young English people to solve their immediate labor needs. These servants entered into servitude for the company by exchanging the cost of their transportation to Virginia and food, shelter, and clothing for seven years of service. The company promised this first group of servants a share in the profits from the colony. The company, however, struggled financially and devised another system to entice people to sign on as servants. Instead of buying and shipping the servants, the company encouraged anyone who planned to immigrate to Virginia to pay the costs of their own servants’ travel. For each servant transported, the master received 50 acres of land. The company also promised land to the servants as part of their freedom dues. According to the first population census in 1625, more than 40 percent of Virginia’s residents were indentured servants; almost all of them had emigrated from England. About three-quarters of the 75,000 whites who immigrated to the Chesapeake colonies from Britain between 1630 and 1680 came as indentured servants. Masters struggled with how to force servants to labor under harsh, inhospitable conditions when they lacked economic motivation. In a sense, servants were prepaid by their transportation to the colonies. They did not earn any additional benefit from their labor. Gradually, legislators devised a legal system that devoted a great deal of attention to controlling servants’ behavior. If servants ran away, masters could add time to their contracts, whip them, crop their hair, or, if they absconded habitually, brand them. The laws licensed masters to use “reasonable” force if they needed to exert control over their servants. For the first 50 years of Virginia’s existence, servants were the machines that grew tobacco. Gradually, toward the end of the 17th century, slaves began to replace servants. This transformation occurred for a number of reasons. As economic conditions and workers’ incomes improved in England, the supply of servants dwindled while the demand for labor continued to increase. Simultaneously, the availability and relative costs of slaves decreased. During the early 17th century high mortality rates made it more cost effective to invest in the short-term service of a servant than in the more expensive slave for life. As the risk of early death diminished and when the Royal African Company’s monopoly on the slave trade ended in 1698, the costs of Africans decreased, and planters turned to slaves. The decline in mortality also meant that more servants survived their servitude and collected their land. In addition, Chesapeake area planters feared that they would compete in the tobacco market. Because slaves served for life, they posed no risk of competition. The cycle of tobacco production extended over an entire calendar year. The heaviest labor occurred during the late summer and early fall, but the crop demanded almost daily attention. Because tobacco required so much care, it was well suited for gang labor, small units of about eight to 10 workers. This allowed the tobacco master or overseer to command close supervision of the workers; one member of the gang often set the pace for the group. The slaves who labored in the tobacco fields worked from sunup to sundown, and because their workday was organized around time rather than output, they had little incentive to work quickly. Although masters adhered to strict gender division of labor regarding white women and would not place female servants in the fields, they had no reservations about black women. Through the 18th century black women outnumbered men as field workers, and they were often joined by black children. The story of staple crop development and labor unfolded differently in the Lower South. South Carolina’s settlers came primarily from the West Indies and arrived with their slaves. The system of labor did not evolve from one dependent on white servitude to one dependent on black slavery. Rather, slaves were present in the colony from its inception. In the early decades of the colony, no single crop dominated production. By the second generation planters focused their energies on rice. Rice was not part of the English diet, but planters recognized its potential value because it was an important dietary staple in southern Europe. Even though the boggy soils of the Carolinas were perfectly suited for rice cultivation, the first attempts failed because planters did not know enough about what they were doing. Successful rice cultivation coincided with the arrival of a large number of West Africans who were familiar with rice production. They introduced the style of planting, cultivating, cooking, and even singing work songs that provided the rhythms of production. The key role they played did not soften the effects of slavery. Ironically, the slaves’ ability to grow rice moved the colony more quickly toward a heavy reliance on slave labor. 198 labor The cycle of rice cultivation lasted for more than a year, with the most intense activity at midsummer and midwinter. Unlike tobacco, rice growing featured slack periods, and slaves often ended their day before sunset.
Immigrants to New England in the 1630s often brought servants with them. They realized how much labor was involved in creating new settlements. However, once these servants achieved their freedom, they were not replaced. Indentured labor never played a significant role in the labor force. Perhaps one-quarter of all Massachusetts families owned servants. New England farm families did require additional labor, especially during harvesting, building, and birthing. They preferred to rely on their children or, if necessary, exchange or hire labor for specific days and tasks.

Pennsylvania’s founding generation predicted that labor would be scarce. The Free Society of Traders, the joint-stock company in charge of the colony’s development, planned to import servants and slaves. As in the colonies to the north, unfree laborers did play an important role in establishing the first farms. Approximately 271 servants and between 400 and 500 slaves resided in Pennsylvania in the early decades. By the early 18th century the demand for unfree labor shifted from the rural to the urban sector. By the 18th century Philadelphia accounted for a disproportionate number of unfree laborers. Throughout the history of the colony, servants and slaves were members of interchangeable labor forces. Residents preferred the labor of white servants, but when they were in short supply they bought slaves.

Gendered Division of Labor

Households everywhere participated in a gendered division of labor. Women had primary responsibility for the house and children, and among middling and poorer families they also cultivated gardens. Men were relegated to the fields. During periods of peak labor demand, this structure altered somewhat. For example, in Pennsylvania when wheat and hay were harvested, men and women formed teams. Women operated slightly lighter scythes and helped reap and pile the grain. Haying followed, and because the scythes for this were considerably heavier, women trailed the men and spread the grass to dry. Both men and women loaded the hay onto the wagons.

Households participated in a range of activities in which the roles of men and women were interdependent. In textile production, for example, men assumed the primary responsibility for growing the flax. Women might do some weeding, but their most important contribution was turning the flax into cloth and then making items of labor 199 clothing. The economic status of the household dictated to a large extent the ways in which women spent their time. Women in middling families devoted a large percentage of their labor to food preparation and preservation. They performed the labor themselves or with the assistance of their daughters. Upper-class women were responsible for the same range of tasks but were more likely to supervise servants than to perform the work themselves. Women in
poorer families maintained their households and took care of their children. They also supplemented their families’ incomes in various ways. In the cities they took in washing or sewing for a small fee or scavenged in the streets for discarded items; in rural areas they might weed gardens or gather vegetables in exchange for food. Women contributed to the economic well-being of their families beyond their household tasks. They were involved in an often hidden but essential network that exchanged goods and services. These rarely involved cash but constituted an important part of their families’ incomes. Women who made cheese, for example, might trade with a neighbor for candles or preserves. Women also tended the sick, pulled flax together, and assisted at a birth. New England Puritans demonstrated how they valued women’s work by attaching a symbolic value to their labor. For each man who arrived in the colonies without his family, the Massachusetts Court of Assistance offered him cash to be used to hire the services usually performed by a wife.

The value of women’s labor eroded in the 18th century. Key to this shift was the transformation of the economy. Although women were always subservient to men, this position did not affect their essential contributions to the household economy. During the 18th century money played an increasingly larger role, and market consciousness expanded. Consequently, the value of labor came to be measured more in terms of cash. While women’s work remained virtually unchanged and they continued to labor in the home, they received little external cash value. Women were no longer considered to be part of the “real economy,” as domestic labor had become marginalized.

Changing Artisanal Labor Conditions

Important transformations occurred in the nature and the organization of labor among artisans at the end of the colonial era in British North America. Masters began to function more as employers in a free market rather than as craftspeople. Rather than relying on bound apprentices and journeymen engaged for long periods, masters began to hire and fire workers as they needed them. Journeymen, consequently, enjoyed more individual freedom, since their personal lives were less frequently supervised by masters outside of the workplace. However, journeymen became more vulnerable to the vagaries of the market, since they were dismissed when the economy in general or the demands for their specific skills decreased. Meanwhile, the apprenticeship system, which taught young people artisanal skills, began a slow decline. All of these changes established the foundation for conflicts between employers and workers that would become considerably more serious in the 19th century.

See also convict labor.


—Sharon V. Salinger and Billy G. Smith

and

The study of land policies in colonial North America falls into two general categories. One category examines England’s efforts to claim title to North American territory. Another focuses on the transfer of land from the Crown to specific groups or individuals. In general, while England followed European customs, its land policies were not carefully conceived or uniformly applied. Before England could claim possession of its “New World” territory, it had to establish the basis for those claims.

The Crown based its original title on the commonly accepted right of discovery doctrine. This theory argued that any new territory not already under the dominion of a Christian or Muslim ruler was the property of those who “discovered” it. John Cabot’s voyages to North America in 1497 and 1498 provided justification for English possession.

Spain also claimed North America, but England countered that Spain had not settled the territory, thus it forfeited any claims. This theory of vacuum domicilium (that people had a right to inhabit “unsettled land”) was also used to justify usurping Native American land rights. Because the Native population did not develop the land according to European models, England declared the land “vacant” and claimed title.

Although England did not recognize land ownership by Native Americans, it did hope to maintain peaceful relations with local Indians. For this reason officials sometimes negotiated treaties and made token payments to secure large tracts of lands. In Pennsylvania, for example, land treaties between founder William Penn and the Lenape Indians led to few tensions and a generally peaceful transfer of land. More often, however, officials obtained land through coercion, deception, or warfare. The Pequot Indians, for example, lost all their Connecticut lands after a conflict with New England settlers in 1637.

In the Walking Purchase of 1737 the Lenape Indians of Pennsylvania lost more than 1,000 acres due to British manipulation of treaty language. Indians were also forced to cede land when unable to pay debts to colonial merchants.

To minimize confusion and conflict, British officials discouraged individual land purchases between colonists.
and Indians. According to English interpretation, the land was the property of the king and only the Crown could authorize such transactions. Land transfer from the Crown to groups or individuals could occur in a number of ways, including grants, individual purchase, church or corporate group purchase, or by renting or squatting. Virginia, for example, began as a business venture organized by English stockholders. The company received a land grant, and each member who paid his own way to the colony was given a portion to settle plus a headright of 50 additional acres for each individual whom that member was paid to transport. In exchange for transport, these poor migrants worked as indentured servants for a fixed period of time (usually four to seven years). At the end of their term, many received a small tract of land as part of their “freedom dues.” This system promoted the accumulation of large landholdings by original settlers and smaller holdings on less desirable land by poor laborers. Other colonies, such as South Carolina and Pennsylvania, were settled through proprietary grants. These land grants were given by the king to reward friends or political supporters. The proprietors would then sell or rent the land and collect fees for its use. These fees, or quitrents, were generally between two and three shillings per acre and were used to help finance local governments. Land for the Massachusetts Colony was granted to a group of individuals who planned to establish religious communities. Plots of land were distributed to families for private settlement, with some held in reserve for public use.

As the colonial population grew, land was transferred through individual sales and inheritances as well as by sales through land companies. Land speculators like Benjamin Franklin and George Washington often grew rich by purchasing western lands and then reselling them to new settlers a few years later. While most property owners were men, single women could buy and sell property and married women might inherit a portion of land from their husbands’ estates. When women married, their land became the property of their husbands unless a premarital agreement had been reached. Although it varied by colony, free black people could hold property. In 17th-century Virginia, for example, some black indentured servants received small plots of land when their terms of service concluded. However, these rights were curtailed by legislation in the final decades of the 17th century. As the population increased, settlement spread westward. Many new settlers were squatters who claimed land ownership simply by their presence. Local officials, hoping to use backcountry settlements as a buffer between coastal communities and Native Americans, sometimes gave immigrants land. Officials also granted thousands of acres to land speculators. By the mid-18th century as many as two-thirds of white colonial families owned land. Further reading: Allan Kulikoff, From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

—Virginia Jelatis

Locke, John (1632–1704) political philosopher, activist

Although British philosopher John Locke never set foot in North America, he deeply influenced its political institutions. As one of the foremost theorists of human freedom and sovereignty, Locke’s Two Treatises of Government (1689) set out the principles of liberal democracy that underlay the U.S. Constitution. Locke based the legitimacy and authority of government on “social contract” theory—that is, the idea that all those who would be governed must freely consent to the rules of civil society. He hypothesized that humans originally lived in a “state of nature,” a kind of perfect freedom and equality under which all individuals enjoyed such “natural rights” as “life, liberty, and estate” (i.e., property), yet nothing protected these rights; in order to safeguard them, individuals came together and agreed upon mutually advantageous rules by which all would abide. These rules, which aimed to preserve humanity’s natural rights, formed the basis for a communal or “civil government” by providing the principles for liberal democracy (as opposed to those for absolute monarchy, which Locke opposed). Among these principles were that all people should be considered equally free, that the liberty to do as one wished within reason should be preserved, that the property and persons of other people should be respected, and that those who violated these principles could be punished. By remaining in a society governed by such principles, Locke maintained, one agreed to live by them; the only freedoms one relinquished in exchange were those of legislative and executive decision making (that is, making laws and executing them), which were accorded to civil government. Related to these principles of liberal democracy were Locke’s recommendations about education. Having been trained under the harsh discipline and memory-based curriculum typical of English schools at that time, he proposed instead that education be guided by freedom, tolerance, and truth. Rather than absolute standards, a child’s individual talents and capacities should guide its learning. Parents and educators should teach by example; while children need to learn self-discipline, their natural desire for freedom and play should also be respected. More broadly, Locke maintained that playfulness and humor should be incorporated...
into learning whenever possible. Even if these ideas appear obvious or unremarkable today, Locke was among the first to offer such recommendations, and they tremendously influenced modern education.

One element of Locke’s political theory was that only men had natural rights. Locke was perfectly comfortable with only men enjoying the rights of citizenship. Also necessary was that the politically enfranchised be property owners. One of the state’s primary responsibilities, according to Locke, was to protect personal property. To have an original right to property, a person needed to take material not owned by others and to mix one’s own labor with it. This property could then be sold or bequeathed to others through contracts. However, Locke argued, Native Americans and Africans did not adequately work their lands in order truly to own them. Instead, they merely occupied the land and could legitimately be pushed aside by those, like “industrious” Europeans, who would mix their labor with it. This belief permitted various forms of colonization and conquest, such as of those “inland vacant places in America” that were allegedly uncultivated by 208 Locke, John Native Americans and therefore open to ownership by more hard-working colonists. Indeed, Locke claimed that “in the beginning, all the world was America,” by which he meant that all the earth was open for ownership until men began mixing their labor and acquiring it as personal property.

Locke was deeply ambivalent about slavery. On the one hand, he condemned it as a “vile and miserable” estate contrary to a “gentleman’s” generosity; on the other, he invested heavily in the slave trade and profited handsomely from the buying and selling of human beings. He was a charter member of the Royal African Company, whose main business was the purchase, transport, and sale of African slaves for the British colonies in the Americas, and he bought into other companies whose purpose was to develop the profitability of New World plantations using slave labor. From 1668 to 1683 and from 1696 to 1700, Locke also helped to administer the North American colonies for the British government. He contributed to the Fundamental Constitution for the Government of Carolina (copies exist in his handwriting), which states that “every freeman . . . shall have absolute power and authority over his negro slave.”

However, 17th-century slavery was not entirely coded by skin color, that is, racist. The British, for example, quite willingly sold into servitude the Irish, their own countrymen who were poor or in debt, as well as such believers in “nonconformist” forms of Christianity as Roman Catholics and Puritans. Thus, it would be a mistake to think that Locke was necessarily a racist, although many of his beliefs and actions contributed to what would later become racist thinking. At the same time, he profited eagerly from the unpaid labor of those who lacked what was, for him, the supreme ingredient of human life—liberty. The legacy of Locke’s contradictory impulses continue to plague American thinking today.


—Dan Flory

Lutherans

Lutherans are the followers of a denomination founded by Martin Luther following the promulgation of his Ninetyfive Theses in 1517 in Saxony. Among their beliefs is the doctrine of salvation by faith alone: God provides salvation regardless of man’s good works because of his love and mercy. Luther contended that the Bible was the sole authority for faith. In addition, he rejected all of the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church except for baptism and the Eucharist, and even his view of the latter differed from the traditional Roman Catholic interpretation. Other beliefs that contributed to the schism included the denial of the validity of indulgences, purgatory, and papal power. Lutheranism came to the British colonies mainly from Germany and Scandinavia. The first Lutherans to settle permanently in the New World arrived from Holland in 1623. Although colonists established a congregation in New Amsterdam in 1649, Lutherans in the region did not experience freedom of worship until the English took over New York in 1664. In the meantime, Swedish Lutherans established the colony of New Sweden in present-day Delaware.

While Lutherans settled throughout the Middle and Southern colonies, Pennsylvania was the focal point of their settlement. The first churches established by German immigrants were small and poor, often without pastors. Because the German settlers were unfamiliar with the responsibilities of voluntarism (in which congregation members voluntarily provided funds rather than depending on taxes), they often confronted problems with obtaining ordained clergy and supporting individual church buildings.

The lack of clergy sometimes resulted in schoolmasters performing the duties of a minister, ultimately contributing to provincial and continental religious officials expressing concern for the conditions of the parishioners. In the early 1730s several Pennsylvania congregations began requesting regular pastors from the Lutheran court preacher in London. The lack of a response to these queries by 1740
forced German Lutherans to ask the king of Sweden for assistance. These requests were finally heeded when Henry Melchior Muhlenberg accepted the call. Muhlenberg’s arrival guaranteed the success of the Lutheran denomination in the colonies, as his presence preserved many of the rural congregations in Pennsylvania from succumbing to the overtures of the Moravian leader Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf. In 1748 Muhlenberg organized the pastors and congregations of the Middle Colonies into the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania, the first Lutheran synod in America. By the end of the colonial period, almost 250 Lutheran congregations were established in the British colonies, 11 of which were Swedish. Four-fifths of the adherents were German. Many of the Swedish Lutheran congregations eventually were assimilated into the Anglican Church. The German Lutherans became the antecedents of the varied Lutheran synods of modern times. Further reading: A. G. Roeber, Palatines, Liberty, and Property: German Lutherans in Colonial British America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). —Karen Guenther

marriage and family life

In all societies the family fills a number of functions, including the primary locus of the rites of passage (birth, mating, and death); the fulfillment of primary physical, economic, and emotional needs; and the transmission of culture. Nowhere was that reality more starkly demonstrated than in colonial North America, where vast wilderness, sparse population, and the intersection of European, African, and Native American cultures helped shape distinctive family dynamics. The nature of families varied greatly over time and region as well as among racial groups. Family structures and functions varied much more among Native Americans than among Euro-Americans. Among the Iroquois, for example, three or four families lived in a longhouse, with elder women exercising a good deal of control over the household. Husbands and wives engaged in an economic as well as emotional partnership, with women tending to agriculture and men engaging in hunting. Women exercised considerable power within families, including the authority to divorce their husbands by setting their belongings outside the longhouse entrance. Parents provided their children with a great deal of freedom. Although other Indians defined their families quite differently, Europeans were impressed and sometimes shocked by some aspects of family life among Natives, especially the power exercised by women.

The “typical” 17th-century Euro-American family in the Upper South was large and complex; premature deaths of spouses engendered multiple marriages, and households were often comprised of half-siblings, step-siblings, and miscellaneous orphans in addition to extended family members, servants, apprentices, and slaves. Hence, this engraving shows Marquette and Jolliet exploring the Mississippi River. (Library of Congress) 216 marriage and family life a colonial child might well be part of a nuclear family in which death and remarriage meant that neither “parent” was biologically related to the child. The rare divorce, the binding out of children to learn a trade, and the frequent relocation of family units also contributed to many changes in a “household” and “family.” On the other hand, all these variables also contributed to a strong community fabric, as cousins, friends, siblings, and step-siblings were often closely related through many different blood lines and shared experiences. White families in New England and the Middle Colonies, where mortality was lower, usually were not broken as often by the death of one of the spouses, and many children consequently grew up in households containing both parents and even grandparents. As death rates declined in the Chesapeake region during the 18th century, white families there began to resemble those in the northern colonies. Throughout the colonial period, although region, race, class, and culture defined the specifics, Euro-American households shared these and other general characteristics. The predominant pattern was a patriarchal, hierarchical, nuclear family in which one primary focus was subsistence. As the time-consuming tasks of providing fuel, tending livestock and gardens, and providing food and clothing required a team effort, practically no one lived alone. Women were mostly responsible for domestic work—most clothing and food were made at home—and they were answerable to their husbands or fathers, who oversaw agricultural production and hunting. Thus, the household constituted a unit in which production and consumption were self-contained. While white family units were mostly under the authority of men, many Native American women wielded considerable influence in their families and communities. This illustration shows an entire colonial family working together to prepare flax to be spun into thread for clothing or twine. (Library of Congress) marriage and family life 217 contrasted sharply with married white women, who had almost no access to the political process or to the courts, except through their male protectors or, perhaps, through the intervention of their churches. Widowed or single women sometimes exercised slightly greater control over their economic lives, and servant women could occasionally...
get a hearing in the courts, but slave women had no access to power (or control over their children) except through the intervention of a sympathetic master. Daily life was strenuous. In the temperate mid-Atlantic climate, for example, it is estimated that simply providing household fuel required the equivalent of the full-time labor of one adult man. Because existence in solitude was so difficult, the few people who did live alone aroused the suspicion of their neighbors, and community persecution—such as witch hunts—felled unequally upon people (especially women) who lived by themselves. As houses were small and privacy and hygiene haphazard, households were constantly coping with illness—either individual or epidemic—and a fair amount of the family energies went into planning for these events or into actually caring for the sick. Alcohol was a staple of the medicine cabinet, and some historians have theorized that most colonial Americans, adults and children, consumed some alcohol nearly every day, partly to compensate for polluted water and unbalanced nutrition. Infant mortality was high, and the average adult life span was less than 45 years. However, this average obscures the fact that it was not uncommon for an affluent colonial, who had survived childhood epidemics and who might avoid the hazards of hard physical labor, to live more than eight or nine decades. In general, however, the colonial American population was healthier, better housed, better fed, and longer-lived than in Europe. In New England, where European men migrated along with their families, births began to outnumber deaths before 1700. An affluent woman usually married before the age of 20, and, during the next few decades, she bore a child every two or three years, for a total of seven or eight children. Her husband was usually seven or eight years older, because he needed to wait to inherit land or otherwise to procure an economic foundation. A servant woman, however, who could not legally marry until her term of service ended, might be in her late 20s before she could take a mate—who was likely to be marrying late for the same reason. By contrast, in the South, where white men greatly outnumbered women in the 17th century, population growth by natural increase (the difference between births and deaths) did not begin until the 18th century. Although the plantation system promoted young marriages for both men and women, slave and free, the population remained smaller because mortality and morbidity were higher in the southern than in the northern colonies. The shortage of white women in the South also promoted limited intermarriage among Europeans, Native Americans, and African Americans. In addition, the rape of slave women by white owners produced children of mixed race. By 1700 the South had a significant population of multiracial residents. In New England and the mid-Atlantic colonies the few free black families sometimes intermarried with local Native Americans. Child rearing, a central part of white family life, was likewise affected by many factors. As many as half of newborns died before their fifth birthday, mostly from illnesses, accidents, and diseases. Birth (attended by midwives until the mid-18th century, when male doctors gradually assumed this role) was often an event for which family members traveled long distances to be with the expectant mother. While there is some indication that families discouraged emotional attachment to young children until they had survived infant diseases, it is still unclear how much colonial Americans differentiated between adult human nature and child culture. Although a typical household contained some toys and playthings, children often were viewed simply as small adults, as suggested by such diverse evidence as the lack of differentiation in children’s clothing and the expectation that they would assume responsibility for household tasks at a very young age. Religion was also important in shaping how children were raised. New England Puritan literature instructed parents that their role was to break the will of their children to make them obedient to God. However, Quaker assessment of human nature called for protecting the child—assumed to be born innocent—from the decadent influence of the adult world until the child’s conscience was strong enough to withstand temptation. What we now think of as violence was a common part of white family life. Infanticide, although forbidden, was not uncommon. Children, wives, servants, and slaves were routinely thrashed for misbehavior. Public punishments, such as pillorying and hanging, helped reinforce the idea that corporal punishment, often prescribed by the churches, was the best way to maintain discipline. Among the propertied classes, especially in New England, patriarchs held title to land, while sons waited, sometimes with unveiled hostility, for their fathers to die and leave them the wherewithal to marry. Lacking a system for “retirement,” the old could relinquish the burden of economic responsibilities and the young could not take it up. The resulting resentment of the old sometimes erupted into violence or neglect. Education, at least teaching sufficient literacy to read the Bible, frequently was carried out in the homes of the affluent but was more erratic for poorer people. New England soon established schools to teach young people marriage and family life to read the Bible. Even so, reading and writing were often taught separately, and a person might be able to read but
northern teachers to educate their households, and a handful unable to write. Southern planters sometimes imported—Emma Lapsansky Press, 1982).

Families, and Their Society(Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982).


—Emma Lapsansky

Maryland

Maryland was a proprietary colony ruled by the lords Baltimore except during a period of royal government from 1689 to 1715. When George Calvert, scion of Yorkshire landowners, withdrew from public life, announcing his Catholicism and inability to take the Oath of Supremacy in 1625, James I rewarded his loyal service with the title baron Baltimore (Ireland). Already an East India Company shareholder and member of the Virginia Company of London board of governors, Calvert was granted “Avalon” (Newfoundland) in 1620. A disappointing 1627 visit convinced him to petition Charles I for land in northern Virginia, and two months after his death in April 1632 a colonial charter was granted his son, Cecilius. The ships Arkand Doveand around 140 settlers reached Maryland (named after Queen Henrietta Maria) in May 1634. Maryland’s 8,000 to 10,000 mostly Algonquin Indians (40 tribes formed into the Piscataway and Nanticoke federations on the lower western and eastern shores, respectively) offered little resistance to settlement. The descendants of Indians who survived European diseases subsequently moved northward out of Maryland in the 18th century. A greater threat to Maryland settlers came from the roughly 100 Virginians under William Claiborne on Kent and Popely’s Islands. After a naval encounter in Chesapeake Bay in April 1635, the fur-trading William Clobbery and Company replaced Claiborne with George Evelin and sued for peace. Long-term threats to the Calverts came through objections to proprietary despotism and Catholicism. Maryland’s charter gave Baltimore palatine powers, including the right to grant lordships and land, to collect quitrents, and to hold manorial courts over tenants (payment to the king was two Indian arrows per year and one-fifth of all precious metals). However, the charter was otherwise vague, giving Baltimore “absolute power . . . to ordain, make laws, with the advice, assent, & approbation of the free men,” and referring to “delegates . . . called together for the framing of laws.” Governor Leonard Calvert (Baltimore’s brother) initially vetoed all acts of the early assemblies because they were legislative rather than executive initiatives but eventually accepted assembly legislation in 1638. Conflict over the structure of government and power of assemblies continued, however, and became entwined with English political and religious convulsions during Maryland’s mid-century “time of troubles.” Maryland was never actually a Catholic colony. Most settlers were Protestant, and Baltimore required “Acts of Romane Catholique Religion to be done as privately as may be and . . . Romane Catholiques to be silent upon all
occasions of discourse concerning matters of Religion.”
Still, political and sectarian conflict were inseparable.
The English Civil War reached Maryland with Richard Ingle’s arrival in St. Mary’s City in 1644; he proclaimed “the King was no King” and claimed armed ships for Parliament. He fled to England after his arrest but returned with parliamentary letters of marque to raid royalist homes in Maryland in 1645 and 1646 (the “plundering time” during which Claiborne tried to retake his trading post). After Leonard Calvert’s death in 1647, Baltimore appointed Protestant William Stone governor. Stone granted refuge to 300 Virginia Puritans under Richard Bennett in Ann Arundel County and confirmed acceptance of all Christians with the 1649 Toleration Act. With news of the execution of Charles I, however, acting governor Thomas Greene declared Charles II king. Despite Stone’s retraction, enemies persuaded Oliver Cromwell of Maryland’s rebelliousness, and the Protector appointed a commission headed by Bennett and Claiborne to govern Maryland.
The 1654 assembly, after excluding Roman Catholics from voting, forbade public Mass and abolished oaths of allegiance to Lord Baltimore. Baltimore ordered Stone to reestablish his authority in Maryland, inaugurating Maryland’s Civil War. The commission’s forces routed Stone’s 130 men at the Battle of the Severn on March 25, 1655, but by 1657 Baltimore’s rule and religious toleration were restored, with amnesty given to rebels. New governor Josias Kendall, however, resigned his commission in 1660, accepting one instead from assembly delegates proclaiming themselves “a lawfull Assembly without dependence on any other power.” This “Pygmie rebellion” ended after two months with the Restoration of Charles II. Calvert’s authority was tested in the Restoration era as well. Baltimore insisted that “What Privileges and Powers I have by my Charter are from the King, & that of Calling of Assemblies in any such manner & way as I think fit being an undeniable one among the rest, I cannot Deem it Honorable Nor safe to Lodge it in the Freemen.” In 1669 Reverend Charles Nicholette urged the assembly to claim “a Liberty equal to the people of England.” Although the council extracted a fine and apology from Nicholette, delegates subsequently complained that “our laws, whereby our Liberty and Property subsists, are subject to Arbitrary Disposition.” Concurrent with Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676, rebels in Charles County led by Fendall and John Coode bemoaned Calvert vainglory, despotism, nepotism, corrupting of assembly members, and the lack of an established Anglican Church in Complaint from Heaven with Huy and Crye & a petition out of Maryland and Virginia. In 1681 after learning of Charles II’s overthrow in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, Coode and others formed the Protestant Association that listed antiproprietary grievances, declared William and Mary king and queen (1689–1702), and captured St. Mary’s City without resistance. Although Baltimore kept his land and quitrents, Maryland became a royal colony. The new assembly passed acts of establishment and endowment (40 pounds of tobacco per taxable inhabitant annually for ministers’ salaries) for the Anglican Church, banned Quakers from sitting in the assembly, and banned Roman Catholics from public office holding and worship. Maryland returned to proprietary rule in 1715 following Charles Calvert’s death and the conversion of Benedict Leonard Calvert, fourth Lord Baltimore, to Anglicanism. Royal rule witnessed a governmental revolution as well. In 1694 Governor Francis Nicholson moved the capitol to Annapolis. The assembly established standing committees to expedite business, gained greater control over money bills, reformed the courts, revised laws, and began holding executive officials to account. Royal Governor John Seymour called the assemblymen a “restless and pernicious Crew.” During the second proprietary period the Calverts and their Court Party supporters regularly fought the Country Party opposition over paper money, control of public officials’ and clergy salaries and fees, and, as indicated in the title of Daniel Dulany, Sr.’s, pamphlet, The Right of the Inhabitants of Maryland to the Benefit of English Laws(1728).
As with politics, Maryland’s economy and society developed greater stability over time. Learning from Virginia, Marylanders established tobacco staple agriculture, producing 100,000 pounds as early as 1639. Assemblymen indicated tobacco’s importance during price depressions in the 1660s and 1680s, agreeing with Virginians to a “stint” limiting production to raise prices and enacting town loading laws to cut transport costs and raise profits, although the Calverts vetoed both measures. In 1747 Maryland enacted tobacco inspection, whereby substandard tobacco was burned at county warehouses, keeping quality and prices high (to the detriment of smaller farmers, who cut and burned planters’ tobacco in response). In 1723 first minister Robert Walpole exempted tobacco from reexport fees under the Navigation Acts, and Maryland exports rose from 30,000 pounds to 100,000,000 between the 1720s and 1770s. Maryland’s economy nevertheless diversified. Wheat dominated agriculture in the west, north, and lower eastern shore by the late 18th century. Ironworks appeared in Cecil County in 1715 and Baltimore Town in 1731. Baltimore’s 220 Maryland
population was only 200 in 1755 but grew rapidly with the proliferation of wheat milling and the development of shipbuilding in the later 18th century. These developments encouraged a diverse urban and rural artisan and service economy. Economic growth and development was reflected in rapidly expanding population, area of settlement, and socioeconomic differentiation. Settler population remained less than 400 in 1642, many dying of “agues and fevers” (primarily malaria) and the “bloody flux” (dysentery). The very high mortality of the 17th century prevented population increase by natural means. It also undermined the nuclear family but intensified the development of extended kinship networks. Elevated mortality rates among men led to extensive property ownership by women as they inherited wealth from their husbands and provided women with greater bargaining power in the marriage market. Subsequent generations were less susceptible to “seasoning” and, with natural increase superseding immigration and a Creole majority before 1700, population rose to 8,426 in 1660, 42,741 in 1710, and 162,267 in 1760. Tobacco planting led to scattered settlement, with planters settling riverfront land and smaller farmers living inland. Much of the lower western shore was settled by the mid-17th century, the north and lower eastern shore after the Susquehannah treaty of 1652, and the western and piedmont areas in the 18th century. The spread of settlement and population growth forced the provincial council and manor courts to relinquish governmental burdens to local institutions, and proliferating landownership further diminished Calvert power. From the 1660s county courts gained jurisdiction in criminal cases not involving life or limb, civil litigation, tax-raising powers, and responsibility for building and maintaining roads and public buildings, licensing taverns, policing weights and measures, overseeing orphans, directing poor relief, appointing county officials, and supervising elections. To encourage settlement, in 1634–35 Baltimore established a headright system in which free settlers received 100 acres for themselves plus 2,000 acres for every five family members or servants brought with them. Between 1635 and 1683 new arrivals received 100 acres plus 50 acres for each child under 16, after which settlers could purchase land. Landowners paid annual quitrents, and if they died intestate, their title reverted to the Calverts. Even so, the widespread availability of land undermined the Calverts’ vision of a manorial society of proprietors, lesser landowners, and tenants, creating instead a powerful planter elite and a large population of smaller independent farmers—at least among whites. Labor requirements, always intense in a tobaccoproducing economy, were initially met by indentured servants, with slavery developing slowly. Thirteen slaves appeared in St. Mary’s City in 1642. These early black laborers were sometimes treated similarly to indentured servants, many being freed and given an allowance of clothing and food after four to seven years of service. Servant migration from England declined in the late 17th century. As the prices of white servants increased and of African slaves declined, Maryland planters, many of whom had amassed greater capital, began to invest heavily in slaves. In 1663 and 1664 the assembly legally established slavery, legislating enslavement for life and declaring that baptism gave no entitlement to freedom. Slaves numbered only 750 in 1660 but rose to 8,000 in 1710 and near 50,000 in 1760. By 1763 slaves represented almost a third of Maryland’s total population. Slaves were more heavily concentrated in the predominantly tobacco-growing lower western shore, where they exceeded half the population. In the increasingly wheat-growing remainder of the colony, they formed less than 15 percent of the inhabitants. The growth of slave communities, creolization of most of the slave population, and development of a thriving African-American culture and tradition of resistance by the mid-18th century enabled slaves to carve out a meaningful existence even while suffering brutal conditions. A planter elite established itself by the end of the 17th century. As well as gaining wealth in slaves (and greater tobacco production), their land values doubled between 1680 and 1700. Wealthy planters enhanced their authority through dynastic alliances and through control of the assembly, the increasingly powerful courts, and the church vestries. They distinguished themselves through a cult of gentility, building brick Georgian mansions, filling them with genteel accoutrements, appearing in more refined clothing and carriages, and pursuing exclusive leisure activities. Increasing inequality also entailed diminished economic opportunity for poorer people. Seventy percent of white Maryland householder (many originally indentured servants) owned land in the 1660s. That figure declined to 50 percent over the next century, and by the 1760s only 15 percent enjoyed all the rights of freemen; even fewer could exercise the vote. Although slavery increased material inequality in white society, it also aided social stability through imposing disciplinary imperatives and creating notions of racial supremacy. Also, British merchants in the Chesapeake area from the 1730s enhanced access to credit and to slaves (half of southern Marylanders were slaveholders by the 1760s) and other goods so that standards of living generally rose. Not until the Revolution was Maryland’s elite significantly challenged. Further reading:Lois Green Carr, Russell R. Menard, and Lorena S. Walsh, Robert Cole’s World: Agriculture
century, but no permanent colony was attempted. Fishing was explored by European mariners throughout the 16th century. Also inhabiting the land were the Nipmuc, Pennacook, Neponset Rivers on Massachusetts Bay in the 16th century. The name Massachusetts, meaning “near the Great Hill,” referred to the Algonquin-speaking Natives living in the general vicinity of the Blue Hills near the Charles and Neponset Rivers on Massachusetts Bay in the 16th century. Massachusetts

The name Massachusetts, meaning “near the Great Hill,” referred to the Algonquin-speaking Natives living in the general vicinity of the Blue Hills near the Charles and Neponset Rivers on Massachusetts Bay in the 16th century. Also inhabiting the land were the Nipmuc, Pennacook, Mahican, Narragansett, and Pocumtuck. The coast was explored by European mariners throughout the 16th century, but no permanent colony was attempted. Fishing fleets from Europe were frequent visitors to Massachusetts coastal waters by the early 1600s. Coastal trade soon developed between the Natives and the Europeans, especially in fur. An epidemic transmitted from one of the visiting European ships took a heavy toll among the Native population along the entire New England coast around 1617. When English settlers began to arrive within the next 10 years, they found cleared lands and little opposition from the devastated Natives.

Early Settlement and Growth

The Pilgrims, a small group of radical Protestants called Separatists, successfully founded the town and colony of Plymouth along the interior western side of Cape Cod Bay in 1620. They established relations with the Wampanoag and Nauset. The Pilgrims were followed by several other small settlements around Massachusetts Bay, including Merrymount, Wessagusset, and Winnisimmet within a few years. The most important of these was the small seasonal fishing village at Cape Ann. The abundance of fish, notably cod, attracted numerous fishermen, and their need for a permanent base led to the establishment of Naumkeag (Salem) in 1624 under the leadership of Roger Conant. John Endecott, with a group of followers, became the first governor of the small settlement in 1628. Salem’s inhabitants were just the vanguard of the “Great Migration” of English colonists to Massachusetts that followed. The Puritans who immigrated were Protestant reformers, dissenters from the Anglican Church who followed the teachings of John Calvin. The Massachusetts Bay Company, hoping for great profits and looking for settlers, was granted a charter from King Charles I (1625–49) in 1629. Facing increasing persecution in England, an estimated 30,000 Puritans joined the Great Migration to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the decade from 1630 to 1640. Their stated goal was to build a new Jerusalem in the wilderness, to be a “city upon a hill” in the words of John Winthrop, which would serve as a model for the rest of the world. Towns were established clustering around the capital of Boston on Massachusetts Bay and along the Connecticut River Valley 80 miles to the west, like the frontier outpost of Springfield. The few interior settlements were located along old Indian trails that soon became rough colonial roads. Each town was governed by a 222 Mason, John town meeting where “freemen” could vote. “Freeman” status was limited to church members who were adult males who owned at least £20 worth of property or its equivalent. The Congregational church, with a simple, or “plain style,” of service, was firmly established as the central focus of every Massachusetts town.

Local magistrates sought close control over their Puritan commonwealth. Religious minds that differed from the expressed tenets would not be allowed to practice or even live in Massachusetts. Anne Marbury Hutchinson was banished in 1636 for her Antinomian views, despite sympathetic allies Governor Henry Vane and Reverend John Cotton. Minister Roger Williams, a talented but, to Massachusetts minds, too independent theologian, was banished after unsuccessfully trying to preach at Boston, Salem, and Plymouth; he founded Rhode Island on Narragansett Bay. Massachusetts Puritans quickly put their faith into action, especially by emphasizing education. Harvard College, the first English college in the colonies, was founded in 1636 in Cambridge as the training ground for a future Puritan ministry. A printing press, the first in North America, also was set up in Cambridge in 1639. Among its first published works was The Bay Psalm Book, a translation of the psalms into English. In 1647 Massachusetts became the first civil society in the world to require compulsory primary education by passing a law called the Old Deluder Satan Act because keeping people ignorant of the Bible supposedly was a tactic of Satan. Massachusetts undertook minting its own currency in 1652, which it continued for many years afterwards, always printing the date 1652 to deceive royal officials. The first codification of laws in the modern world was created with passage of The Laws and Liberties of 1648, detailing the rights and responsibilities of individuals in the commonwealth.

Massachusetts took an early theological and political lead in the North American colonies because of its large population and, some would argue, arrogant attitude. A large group from Massachusetts, including Governor John Haynes and Reverend Thomas Hooker, traveled inland in 1635 and 1636 to found the Colony of Connecticut. This close relation between Massachusetts and Connecticut, and
the smaller colonies of Plymouth and New Haven, led to the formation of the New England Confederation in 1643 for the mutual defense and security of all four colonies. The alliance was formed in the wake of the Pequot War of 1636 against any more possible threats from Indians or the nearby Dutch and French colonies. English settlement continued encroaching inland until several events precipitated King Philip’s War (1675–76), one of the most devastating wars in American history. One out of every three English settlements in New England was attacked by a combination of several Native tribes, notably the Wampanoag led by Massasoit’s son Philip (Metacom). Attacks on English towns ranged from Deerfield in the west to Plymouth in the east. Half of all the towns in New England suffered raids; 12 towns were completely destroyed. The war proved devastating for New England’s Natives—Philip was ambushed and killed, his captains executed, his villages destroyed, and the Natives in nearly three colonies virtually eliminated. Even the “Praying Indians,” those Natives converted by the Reverend John Eliot, who had translated and published the Bible in Algonquin in 1663, were incarcerated and left to starve on an island in Boston Harbor. Many Natives, including King Philip’s son, were sold into slavery in the West Indies. The war left the colonies with large debts and one of every 15 men of fighting age dead. The fighting continued off and on in Maine for some dozen years more. There were later periodic attacks by Natives in Massachusetts following King Philip’s War, notably Haverhill in 1695 and Deerfield in 1704, but these were associated with the shifting allegiances of the Natives among colonists of the continually warring nations of England and France.

With the threat of Native warfare effectively reduced, the English colonists of Massachusetts looked to restoring their colony as the Puritan commonwealth, but times had moved past them. In 1684 the charter was revoked by King James II (1685–88) and the Royal Province of New England was established, headed by the autocratic and tyrannical Governor Sir Edmund Andros. The Massachusetts Puritans watched with horror as an Anglican Church was forcefully established in Boston, as their annual election of officials was terminated, and as political favor was doled out to Andros’s close circle of cronies. Reverend Cotton Mather called this “Decennium Luctuosum,” the lamentable decade. When they had finally had enough and heard the news of the overthrow of James II by William of Orange during the Glorious Revolution of 1688, leading Puritans in Boston had Andros and his associates arrested and sent back to England. Reverend Increase Mather was sent to London to secure the return of the charter, but compromise was necessary. After several years of lobbying, Mather was able to secure a new charter for the Province of Massachusetts Bay in 1691, which restored many of the earlier rights but also required many changes.

Among the changes were a royally appointed governor, the annexation of the Territory of Maine and Plymouth Colony, and the extension of suffrage to inhabitants who were not members of the Congregational churches. The Provincial Period, Increase Mather returned to Massachusetts in May 1692 with the new charter and the new royal governor, Massachusetts resident Sir William Phips. They immediately found the entire colony consumed by the witchcraft hysteria that was occurring in Salem. Governor Phips created a Court of Oyer and Terminer to try the hundreds of people imprisoned on suspicion of witchcraft, hoping to quickly end the whole affair. The hysteria resulted in the deaths of 20 people, the incarceration of hundreds more, and the effective end of Puritan supremacy in Massachusetts. The colony became the royal Province of Massachusetts Bay and soon found itself involved in the politics of the worldwide British Empire.

As an indication of Massachusetts’s new role in the empire, shipping increased dramatically. The port of Boston led the way with a new emphasis on shipbuilding, importing and exporting, and serving as a hub of military activity for the English colonies in North America. Military expeditions were launched from Boston’s Long Wharf, which extended nearly half a mile into the harbor. The new emphasis on mercantile affairs also brought about the creation of a bureaucracy of customs officials and a vice admiralty court (1696) based in Boston to administer a close watch on colonial affairs. Several smaller ports, Salem, Marblehead, and Newburyport, grew in population, shipping, and importance as well. The mercantile policies of the Crown were not always followed by the Massachusetts merchants who, despite the Navigation Acts, were willing to risk breaking the official policies for a profit. Massachusetts’s role in the 18th-century wars for empire was one of supplying soldiers, ships, and goods during the struggles of King William’s War, Queen Anne’s War, King George’s War, and the Seven Years’ War, as well as defending itself and its interests. In 1745 Governor William Shirley and Sir William Pepperell planned and orchestrated the successful siege of the fortified French town of Louisbourg on the coast of Nova Scotia. This stunning victory was reversed, however, when the fortress was returned to France at the end of King George’s War, much to the annoyance of all New Englanders. Massachusetts provided many of the soldiers and sailors necessary for these costly imperial wars. There was also the continual need for defense along the frontier, where the shifting allegiances of the remaining Native tribes and their resistance to encroachment on their lands meant there was always the possibility of hostilities. By the mid-18th century the toll had become apparent as
the number of poor rose drastically, particularly with an increase of widows and orphaned children. Political factionalism during the 1700s took the place of the religious controversies of the 1600s. Career politicians like Governors Joseph Dudley and William Shirley held the province’s highest offices during the next several decades, trying to court favor with both their patrons in England and the general Massachusetts population. Loosely organized political parties developed: a “court” party usually comprised of the governor, his cronies and political appointees, and several of the wealthier, more powerful families, and a “country” party, generally consisting of Massachusetts’s artisan and laboring classes and the rural population.

Political divisions carried over in the Land Bank versus Silver Bank controversy, with the Land Bank providing a temporary boost to the local economy but creating high inflation, causing its repeal by Parliament in 1741. Party politics, never formally organized, would evolve into the Whig and Tory factionalism of the Revolutionary era. This division was clearly visible in the political feud between the Hutchinson and Otis families, in which the Hutchinson faction was the court party, holding numerous Crown offices, and the Otis faction held many of the popularly elected offices and tirelessly stressed the rights of Massachusetts citizens. James Otis, Jr., brilliantly argued the case against the Writs of Assistance in 1761 and inspired two decades of radical unrest and political fighting by the likes of Samuel Adams and John Hancock against the Hutchinson-dominated government.

Culture and Society

The inhabitants of Massachusetts were far from the typical Puritan caricature of black clothes and grim faces. Probate inventories show people wore many different types of clothes in many colors, followed London fashions, and bought imported fabrics, despite the “sumptuary laws” passed during the 1600s, which attempted to prohibit poorer citizens from wearing expensive clothing. Laws like these were designed to maintain the structure of Massachusetts society, a hierarchy in each family, each church, and each town. Class differences, although less drastic than in England, were preserved in Massachusetts. Most people lived in small, modest houses of two or three rooms and a loft, which developed from typical English models. The wide availability of wood encouraged its use instead of brick, even for the grander homes of merchants. Houses of the mid-18th century had assumed the standard layouts of the Cape and the Saltbox, both often constructed around a large, central hearth for warmth. Birth rates were high, causing the population to grow at a rapid pace.

Life in Massachusetts during the colonial period was often difficult. Farms dominated the countryside, as subsistence farming was the most common occupation. The rocky soil of New England meant they could never produce much surplus for export. Small manufacturing and trades developed to supplement farming, including rum distilleries, iron ore forges and foundries, and lumber mills. The ports that dotted the coasts provided the more profitable but usually more dangerous enterprises of shipbuilding, fishing, and ocean-going trade. Imports increased as the population grew, until by the 1750s Massachusetts was importing not only manufactured and luxury goods from England but also raw materials and food like molasses for rum production and grain to feed itself. The Massachusetts merchants exploited the business opportunities afforded in the empire using their own ships to engage in the “Triangle Trade,” bringing Africans as slaves to the West Indies and the southern colonies in return for raw materials to exchange for goods in Europe, some merchants making fortunes in the process.

There were diversions in colonial life. Massachusetts boasted a generally literate population who often read. Favorites included the Bible, works of Milton and Bunyan, Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, almanacs, newspapers (after 1704), and especially religious tracts like sermons published in pamphlet form. Among the most popular texts were Michael Wigglesworth’s long poem The Day of Doom and historical works by Cotton Mather and Thomas Prince. The value of education resulted in many local schools, wide readership of various printed materials, and even a knowledge of science. Smallpox inoculations in the 1720s in Boston, although protested by many, were supported among the clergy, resulting in positive results and many lives saved. Local taverns, or ordinaries, which were licensed by the counties, provided a social gathering place outside the ever-present meetinghouse, where much of the town business was conducted. Rum, hard cider, and punch were favorite drinks and consumed in great quantities. Tobacco was also commonly smoked. Roads were difficult to travel but were better than in many of the other colonies thanks to a system of post roads used by travelers.

The journal kept by Sarah Kemble Knight on a trip in 1704 provides one of the best pictures of the hazards of travel. While the local ministers may not have liked the ideas of travel or other diversions, they grew more accepting with the passing years. Increase Mather preached against dancing, and Samuel Sewall railed indignantly against the fashion of wearing wigs among the young men in the early 1700s, yet Massachusetts grew ever more cosmopolitan and fashionable. Card playing, dice, and games were common, if not always approved. Luxury trades flourished in the larger towns. Massachusetts gold and silversmiths, like Paul Revere,
were recognized master artisans. Furniture makers known as joiners and turners in the 1600s were replaced by professional cabinetmakers in the 1700s, producing some of the finest examples of American colonial furniture. Gravestones, all hand-carved like furniture, started out as a luxury item in the 1670s, but carving workshops could be found across the colony within 50 years. Music developed far more slowly, being limited mostly to Psalm singing, but with the arrival of Peter Pelham in Boston in the 1730s, it started to be widely enjoyed. Pelham not only played and taught music but was also a dancing master and a skilled engraver who produced quality portraits. His son-in-law, John Singleton Copley, would carry the art of portraiture to its greatest form in the colonies. Copley engaged in the one form of fine art, portrait painting, that had been approved of and respected among the Massachusetts Puritans because it preserved images of “visible saints.” By the time of his most famous paintings, the portraits of Paul Revere and Samuel Adams, he was building on nearly a century of portraiture by John Smibert, Robert Feke, Joseph Blackburn, and a number of anonymous artists.

The size of the population of Massachusetts remained second only to Virginia throughout the colonial period, yet it was always foremost in importance in shipping, publishing, culture, political agitation, and independence, the last of which would prove the most troublesome for Parliament and Crown as events in Massachusetts precipitated the start of the American Revolution. Further reading: David Grayson Allen, In English Ways (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981); Richard L. Bushman, King and People in Provincial Massachusetts (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Benjamin W. Labaree, Colonial Massachusetts: A History (New York: KTO Press, 1979); Alden T. Vaughan, New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians 1620–1675 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995).

—Stephen C. O’Neill

Massachusetts School Act (1647)

The first law in Massachusetts calling for public education, this act required that all towns of 50 or more families “appoint one within their own town to teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and read.” Towns with 100 households or more were also to hire a master to run a grammar school that would teach youths in a classical curriculum to prepare them to attend Harvard College. Known also as the Old Deluder Satan Act, the 1647 law followed five years after Massachusetts’s first educational legislation, the 1642 law that required that all families or masters of apprentices take responsibility for teaching basic reading and writing to the children in their charge. The 1647 law, then, marked a shift of responsibility for education from the family to the community, although children being taught at home were still not required to attend public schools. The style of the act had wide-ranging effects on New England’s educational culture: By 1677 it had been copied by the legal codes of Connecticut, New

Massachusetts Bay Company (1628–1629)

Begun as a trading venture, the Massachusetts Bay Company soon took on a spiritual mission as Puritans used it to emigrate from England to Boston. Issued in May 1628 at the instigation of Sir Richard Saltonstall and Issac Johnson, the company received a charter, which, for a limited time of seven years, allowed it to ship people and provisions to establish a “plantation” in New England. If the company had the land surveyed, then the short indenture could be changed to a patent. The company’s subscribers elected a governor, Mathew Cradock, who served with the aid of six associates. The first company ship was sent out under the command of John Endecott to take possession of the Dorchester settlement at Salem. In the following April the company sent out a further five ships carrying an additional 200 passengers, many of them poor.

In England disagreements soon emerged between those who wanted the company to be primarily a trading enterprise and those, like John Winthrop, who had a more spiritual end in view. The non-Puritan elements sold their interests to the religious men on August 26, 1629, and Winthrop became the new governor. While the company remained headquartered in England, Anglican bishops could easily spy on its operations and anyone could threaten the control of the Puritans by buying into Massachusetts Bay Company. 225

the company. Fortunately for the Puritans, the company’s charter did not specify that it had to remain in the mother country. It was hoped that the members of the company could slip away unnoticed and that the distance of North America would make English interference impossible. The Puritans took the charter and set sail in March 1630 in a fleet of 11 ships with the aim of joining the substantial base of people already established in New England. The Salem location did not prove satisfactory, so the company chose to establish itself in Boston, a thin neck of land protruding into the sea. When the government transferred to North America, the Massachusetts Bay Company became the New England Company.


—Caryn E. Neumann
Virginia, and unable to go any farther, they realized that the Massachusetts coast, outside the jurisdiction of 1620 with a patent to establish a religious settlement in known as the Pilgrims, sailed across the Atlantic in the United States. Passengers aboard the Mayflower, of Plymouth colony and an important record for The Mayflower Compact was the first governing document Mayflower Compact could only hope for an education in basic literacy at home permitted to attend the grammar schools it created and provisions were only for boys, as girls were not The 1647 act had many restrictions, though. Its educational provisions were only for boys, as girls were not permitted to attend the grammar schools it created and could only hope for an education in basic literacy at home or in a “dame school.” Although it provided for education, the law did not necessarily create public schools, as teaching was often carried out in private homes. Funding was tenuous, with costs being paid through annual taxation, not through endowments of land or money like most European schools of the period. And the wars of the late 17th century also affected children’s school lives. During King Philip’s War outlying towns petitioned the assembly for relief from requiring children to attend schools out of fear of capture by Native Americans. The fear continued into the next century. In March 1703 the Massachusetts House passed a law exempting towns from penalties for not enforcing the 1647 act because “Diverse of the frontier Towns which are by Law Obliged to Maintain a Grammar School, are in such Hazard of the Enemy, that it is unsafe for the children to Passe to and from the Schools.”


—George W. Boudreau

Mayflower Compact

The Mayflower Compact was the first governing document of Plymouth colony and an important record for the United States. Passengers aboard the Mayflower, known as the Pilgrims, sailed across the Atlantic in 1620 with a patent to establish a religious settlement in northern Virginia. When they found themselves along the Massachusetts coast, outside the jurisdiction of Virginia, and unable to go any farther, they realized that any settlement they built would be without any legal authority. Governor William Bradford wrote that there were soon “discontented and mutinous speeches” from some of the “Strangers” on board the ship, those passengers who were not members of the Separatist Church (the “Saints”). The “Strangers” (mostly members of the Church of England) threatened to “use their own liberty” and go their own way. Bradford realized cooperation was necessary for their common survival. All the passengers then agreed to form a “civil body politic” that would bind the Separatists and the “Strangers” in a self-governing unit. It was signed by 41 passengers, all the free adult males, in the cabin of the Mayfloweron November 11 (November 21, new style calendar), 1620, while the ship was anchored in Provincetown Harbor at the tip of Cape Cod. The covenant agreed to was specifically for their “better ordering and preservation.” They agreed to “enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws . . . as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony.” It was a covenant similar to ones used in the Protestant churches of the time providing for those who agreed to the covenant to be bound by “all due submission and obedience.” What the Mayflower Compact created was a secular covenant consented to by its signatories providing for a voluntary government, but one that would still be agreeable to the laws of England.

Many years later Americans believed that the Mayflower Compact was one of the progenitors of American democracy and a forerunner of the idea of self-government as expressed in the U.S. Constitution. However, the compact made on the ship Mayflowerhad only a short life. The Mayflower Compact was superseded by the Patent of 1621, which was sent to the Plymouth colony by John Pierce, one of the merchant adventurers in England who 228 Mayflower Compact had helped finance the voyage. The original document of the Mayflower Compact has never been found.


—Stephen C. O’Neill and Billy G. Smith

mercantilism

Mercantilism refers to the economic theories followed by western European nations during the American colonial era. This economic theory rationalized the construction of powerful states in western Europe and provided a justification for establishing colonies in the New World. Mercantilism was an economic system in which trade among nations was seen as a “zero-sum game”—one nation’s gain was another one’s loss. National wealth was measured by the amount of gold and silver bullion a country possessed. If France’s import of British goods increased, for example, then Britain benefited because France had to pay for the balance of trade in precious specie. Thus, not only did increasing exports strengthen a country by adding bullion to the national treasury, it did so at the expense of its trading partner (and occasional adversary). Mercantilism dictated that economic growth and development should be orchestrated by the state. Central governments played a key role in regulating the economy and seeking to maximize the economic benefits of trade in order to strengthen the nation. Governments also set the prices of certain essential products, like bread, in an effort to minimize economic exploitation of poorer people.

The term mercantilism was not used in the 17th and
The British colonies benefited from some mercantilist policies, especially from the protection of shipping afforded by the British navy, the restriction of foreign competition, and the easy availability of inexpensive British goods, but Parliament’s restrictions on American trade and economic development took a greater toll after 1750, contributing to the rift between Britain and the American colonies that culminated in the War for Independence. Further reading: John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, _The Economy of British America, 1607–1789_ (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

—Jonathan Mercantini

**merchants**

Merchants played a key role in the development of the American colonies because trade was essential to their economic growth and well-being. Merchants operated on scales, from the largest (and wealthiest) who served as factors for the major British trading firms to small peddlers who traveled through the backcountry providing small necessities to men and women who lived far from towns and cities. Although initially few, the number of merchants increased as the colonies began to produce a surplus. Most merchants who engaged in transatlantic trade lived in the major port cities. Merchants were expected to be cautious, reliable, and especially trustworthy, because they transacted most of their business on credit and their personal word. The lack of currency and near total absence of bullion in the colonies meant that money changed hands less regularly than in Europe; goods and services were more often bartered or purchased with bills of exchange. Merchants also served as the chief monetary lenders in many communities. Thus, they often functioned like bankers, at the center of a sizable network of both credit and debt. Merchants frequently used their considerable economic resources to wield political power as well, and they were well represented in most colonial assemblies. Merchants served as a crucial link between Native Americans, the colonists, and European markets. Many of the earliest merchants made their livelihood from trade with Indians. They exchanged metal tools, blankets, firearms, and alcohol for furs and animal skins prized in Europe. Other merchants were involved in exporting the colonies’ staple goods, such as rice, tobacco, wheat, indigo, and naval stores. Among the wealthiest American merchants were those involved in the slave trade. In South Carolina men like Henry Laurens made their fortunes by importing slaves. Laurens used his wealth to become one of the colony’s...
Native Americans

When Europeans began arriving in North America in large numbers during the late 16th and 17th centuries, they landed in a world inhabited by hundreds of distinct tribes who had developed a variety of cultures independent of the Old World. Because of European diseases, increased warfare, and the introduction of new technologies, the period 1585–1763 witnessed massive changes in the lives of Native Americans throughout the continent. One of the most important characteristics of this transition was the variety of ways in which Indians responded to European encroachment on their lands. Tribes responded to Europeans based on their preexisting worldviews, religious beliefs, and political alliances. Equally important, different European groups arriving in the New World dealt with Indian peoples according to their own imperialist goals and cultural dispositions. Thus, settlers, fur-traders, and missionaries all had different perspectives on how to deal with Native Americans. The developments in Indian-European relations that occurred in the 17th and 18th centuries had their roots in the first contacts between Indians and Europeans and in European intellectual constructs.

Population, Economies, and Cultures

Native American populations stretched from Tierra del Fuego at the southernmost tip of South America through the Arctic of Canada. The diversity of cultures, political organizations, and languages was tremendous. From village-oriented tribes to small nomadic bands and hierarchical empires to confederacies of allied tribes, Native Americans developed organizations that fit their ecological, social, and political needs. As in every region of the world, these organizations changed over time, and the location of an empire could become the location of a loosely organized set of villages a few hundred years later. The rise and fall of empires, changes in political organization, and other adaptations occurred throughout the Americas before Europeans ever set foot in the Western Hemisphere. Although most Native Americans did not have written languages, scholars have been able to create a picture of the Americas before Europeans arrived. Using linguistic evidence, archaeology, and oral traditions of Native peoples, we have been able to learn a great deal about what the Americas were like before European arrival.

Despite these methods, scholars are unable to answer all the questions they ask. Scholars have had a particularly difficult time trying to gauge population sizes in the Americas prior to European arrival. Population estimates for the Western Hemisphere range from 40 million to nearly 100 million people in the late 15th century. The East Coast of North America, from Canada to Florida, probably contained about 250,000 people at the time of European contact. Although we do not have exact population numbers, historians know that contact with Europeans caused a precipitous decline in the Native population due to imported diseases. Before the arrival of the Pilgrims, for example, European diseases ravaged the New England Indian population during the epidemic of 1616–17. Without the exact population, precise death rates will never be known, but even with imperfect precontact estimates, scholars estimate that some tribes on the East Coast lost between 70 and 90 percent of their people during the early colonial period.

The East was one of the earliest regions to come into contact with white people, but the tribes who lived there were far from being one homogeneous group. The East Coast of the present-day United States was populated by politically and socially diverse groups of Algonquin, Iroquoian, and Siouan speakers. The Powhatan Confederacy and the Five Nations Iroquois consisted of villages organized in a complex political system, with accompanying rules and traditions of diplomacy among its member villages. These large, relatively sedentary groups relied primarily on a mixed economy of hunting and agriculture, in which women often did the farming while men hunted deer and small game. In northern New England groups like the Abenaki and Montagnais tended to be semisedentary, traveling during part of the year to hunt and residing in a village during the other seasons to fish or trade. These migration patterns varied from tribe to tribe according to tradition and ecological limitations. In southern New England tribes like the Narragansett, Pequot, and Massachusetts tended to be larger and more sedentary then their northern neighbors. When the French, Spanish, and English began arriving in what is now the United States, they encountered this diverse array of civilizations.

European Contacts

Although many of the tribes on the East Coast encountered early explorers in the early 1500s, significant interaction...
truly began in the 17th century. In the St. Lawrence River Valley, northern New England, and the Canadian Maritime provinces the Micmac, Abenaki, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot had been in contact with Basque and French fishermen by the close of the 16th century. When these Europeans made short trips to the shores to dry fish before their voyage home, they began a small-scale fur trade with the local Indians. This marked the origins of the French-Indian fur trade that would help shape their relationship and the colonial experience for the next centuries. The French who followed sought deerskins, muskrats, and other furs. However, most valuable was the beaver, whose fur was turned into felt for a type of hat fashionable among French aristocrats. Because the French needed Indians to hunt and trap beavers and other fur-bearing animals in the interior, they established peaceful alliances with their trading partners. The Indians benefited from the fur trade initially by receiving copper kettles, glass beads, and, most important, firearms and metal with which to tip their arrows. While the French developed amicable relations with the Huron, Montagnais, Algonquin, and other tribes, the new alliances caused sour relationships with the Iroquois, long-time enemies of the Indian allies of the French. With firearms and metal-tipped arrows, the Iroquois’s enemies were more deadly than ever. Because the French excluded the Iroquois from being trading partners, the Iroquois found themselves at a technological disadvantage to their enemies.

The Iroquois Confederacy, made up of the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk, were a powerful force who lived in what is now upstate New York and southern Canada, yet their influence spread across much of the land east of the Mississippi. From the St. Lawrence River, through the American South, and west to the Mississippi River, the Iroquois sought to carve out a place in the trade with Europeans to acquire goods by peaceful exchange, if possible, or by raiding if necessary. The Montagnais, Algonquin, and Huron had been at war with the Iroquois before the French arrival, but the French presence affected the balance of power. In 1609 the French explorer and founder of Quebec, Samuel de Champlain, allied himself with a group of northern Indians in a raid against the Iroquois, whom they routed near the lake that bears Champlain’s name. Throughout the 17th century the French were frequently at war with the powerful confederacy during the colonial period, yet the Iroquois remained relatively autonomous through the first part of the 18th century, trading with the French, English, and Dutch when it served their interests and raiding European settlements when necessary. A print depicting a Delaware Indian family, from Reverend John Campanius’s New Sweden, 1650 (The New York Public Library)

Native Americans 251

The English, who began to colonize the area from southern New England through Virginia, initially enjoyed somewhat peaceful relations with Indians because they often depended on Natives for food, trade, and technology. However, English invaders eventually established settlement patterns that were more destructive to Native Americans. While the French economic and social patterns tended to foster more amicable relations with Indian people, the British desire for land led to conflicts with Indians. Whether seeking religious community in New England or staple crop agriculture in Virginia, the British required land for towns and farmland for both crops and livestock. This vision of the land assumed that it was largely unoccupied, and both in New England and Virginia war consequently broke out.

In the 1630s the Massachusetts Bay Colony began to spread into the Connecticut River valley. The Pequot Indians controlled the mouth of the Connecticut River and directed the wampum trade between the coastal and the interior tribes. Disease, which always accompanied Indian-European contact, had been particularly difficult for the Pequot. From 1616 to 1618 an epidemic swept through southern New England, wiping out entire villages. The Pequot were hard hit by this scourge and lost much of their population. In addition to disease, the Pequot suffered from very poor relations with the British. The Puritan settlers conceived of the surrounding Indians as “savages,” attached to the wilderness and ignorant of God. Some thought that Indians might represent malevolent forces of the devil—a perspective that hardly allowed for calm diplomatic relations. Accusing the Pequot of having killed some Englishmen, the colonists sent a military force, which in 1637 massacred women and children as well as Pequot warriors at Fort Mystic. After selling many of the survivors into slavery in the West Indies, the settlers forced those who remained to sign the Treaty of Hartford in 1638, which declared that the Pequot no longer existed as a political entity. The treaty all but eradicated the Pequot. Nevertheless, the few remaining Pequot managed to cling to a tribal identity through the colonial period and to the present day.

In the South English settlers and Native people generally coexisted peacefully for a brief period because both groups desired trade, technological exchange, and allies. However, a series of wars eventually erupted in Virginia between colonists and the powerful Powhatan Confederacy. When the English settlers landed in Virginia and settled the precarious colony of Jamestown in 1607, they inhabited land controlled by a powerful chief
named Powhatan, who maintained a great deal of influence and received tribute from neighboring villages. By 1609 conflicts had erupted between the Powhatan Confederacy and the English. Skirmishes continued through 1617, when Powhatan’s daughter Pocahontas married John Rolfe, cementing through marriage an alliance between the two groups. Relations soured when Pocahontas died in Britain and Powhatan’s successor, Opechancanough, inherited the chiefdom. The English hunger for land increased greatly with their adoption of tobacco as a staple crop. After the 1620s settlers and indentured servants began to arrive in greater numbers. Angered by the British encroachment onto Indian lands, the Powhatan Confederacy launched a number of attacks against Virginia settlers beginning in 1622. By 1632 peace was officially declared, but English farmers continued to invade lands claimed by Native Americans. In 1644 an aged Opechancanough led a final attack against Virginia. However, the English, allied with some Indians who resented the confederacy’s power, defeated Opechancanough. Although the Treaty of 1646 prohibited further British expansion, settlers continually violated it, and by 1670 the entire coast of Virginia was in English hands.

The Spanish, who by the 17th century had conquered the Aztecs and decimated or subjugated numerous Native Americans in the Caribbean and Mexico, also made inroads into North America in the 16th century, particularly in the American South. Lucas Vasquez de Allyón, Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, and Hernando de Soto all made voyages to the Southeast in the mid-16th century. Longterm Spanish influence was much greater in the American Southwest, particularly in what is now New Mexico among the Pueblo Indians. After the Spanish introduced missionaries who worked to eradicate Native religions and cultures, the Pueblo attempted to drive the Spanish out of their area in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Led by a Pueblo leader named Popé, the revolt united a diverse group of Pueblo and killed more than 400 Europeans. In the 1690s Spanish military leader Diego de Vargas, allied with other Pueblo, suppressed the rebels, reaffirming Spanish control over New Mexico.

Disease
One of the most disastrous imports from Europe was disease. Measles, smallpox, influenza, and other afflictions destroyed Indian populations, who had no natural immunities to these European diseases. The resulting depopulation weakened Indian military forces, disrupted social and economic life, and challenged Indian medicine men to cure these new illnesses. Disease killed many more Natives than warfare. Entire villages sometimes were wiped out from disease, and the survivors were forced to seek shelter with neighboring Indians. Repeated throughout the Americas, these types of realignments resulted in significant reordering and eradication of tribes and cultures. In the Carolinas the Catawba, one of many tribes in the Piedmont region, began to absorb remnants of the surrounding tribes. By 252 Native Americans 1750 Catawba villages contained people speaking 20 different languages, all called Catawba by the surrounding English settlers.

To replenish their populations, decimated by both disease and war, many eastern tribes participated in “mourning warfare” to capture members from enemy tribes, preferably young children or adolescents, who were then ritually adopted into the tribe. While such activity was common throughout eastern North America, each tribe had its own particular set of rituals of adoption. After the correct rituals were performed, the captive became a member of the tribe and even was said to have become one of the people who had been killed in war or had died by disease.

Missionaries
The French, Spanish, and English participated in significant efforts to convert Indian peoples to their brand of Christianity. For the French and Spanish this meant Catholicism, and for the British, Protestantism. Although all three nations supported and used missionaries, the French and Spanish incorporated mission societies most deeply into their colonial policy. Because the expenses of maintaining colonial outposts were too much for some French kings to bear in the 17th century, they gave generous land grants to the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) to establish colleges, hospitals, and mission villages for converting Indian peoples. In these villages the Jesuits sought to transform Indian peoples into European-style farmers, even those who lived in regions that did not support agriculture. They reasoned that urging them to accept European social forms would make them more accepting of European religions. Some of these mission villages, notably Sillery Kahnawake, Odanak, and St. François de Sales, attracted both converts and traditional Indians. While many people were interested in accepting Catholicism, others simply wanted to form alliances with the French. While some Indians accepted baptism as a means to demonstrate their alliance with the French, others believed it a means of salvation. One factor that accelerated conversion was the presence of epidemic disease. In villages depopulated by disease, where faith in their own shamans faltered, missionaries were often successful in presenting Christianity as an alternative religion.

The English attempts at converting Indian peoples were more short-lived and generally less effective. The British established a series of praying towns set apart from the English settlers’ towns. Although the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s charter required the settlers to convert Indians to Christianity, they did not make serious missionary efforts...
Until the 1640s, Thomas Mayhew and John Eliot were two of the pioneers of these praying towns. Unlike the Jesuits, these ministers were Protestant, not from a monastic order, and were paid in salaries supported by the English nobility. Like the Jesuits, they served a religious and social function. To teach Indians about Christianity, they translated the Bible and prayer books into Indian languages. They also required that Indians abandon their non-Christian relatives, live in European-style homes, and give up traditional hunting and farming techniques in favor of European-style agriculture. The English missionary effort suffered a severe blow in the wake of King Philip’s War in 1676. Although the English eventually defeated their Wampanoag enemies with the help of praying town Indians, the event triggered a fear and resentment of Indians among the British, and they dismantled most of the mission villages in New England. Both the French mission villages and English praying towns copied Spanish models. Although numerous religious orders participated in the conversion of Native Americans in Mexico and the Caribbean, the introduction of Christianity in the American Southwest began with Juan de Oñate, a Franciscan, in 1598. Like the French Jesuits, the Franciscans performed the duties of the Crown while converting souls. Moving through New Mexico along the Rio Grande and its tributaries, the Franciscans attacked Native religions, attempting to win over souls by undermining traditional practices and beliefs. In Florida Franciscans made significant inroads among Native Americans like the Guale from the 1670s through the turn of the century. In the early 1700s war erupted between Spain and England, precipitating attacks by the English and their Indian allies from the North. Under constant fear of attack, most of the Spanish missions in Florida had collapsed by the opening decades of the 18th century.

Expansion of the Colonies and Their Role in International Politics

As the British colonies grew in size through the 17th century, they pushed farther into lands occupied by Indian peoples. In western Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and the Piedmont region of Virginia and the Carolinas, the growth of the colonies led to further conflicts. Neither the French nor the British were blind to the fact that Indian allies could help them in their conflicts with other European countries. While the Iroquois were one of the most frequently courted Indian people because of their military power, France’s geopolitical position continued to exclude the Iroquois from their trade while simultaneously supplying their enemies with trade goods. When the French explorers René-Robert Cavelier, sieur de La Salle and Henri Tonti reached the mouth of the Mississippi in 1682, they established a fur trading post in Louisiana that incorporated many of the southern tribes into their sphere. In 1699, at present-day Biloxi, Pierre Le Moyne, sieur d’Iberville established a post and allied himself with the neighboring Choctaw, Biloxi, Pascagoula, Moctoli, and Capira, who had been at war with Native Americans 253 the Creek and Chickasaw. The British had hired the Chickasaw to capture their old enemies, who were then sold into slavery in the West Indies. In 1709 the British and their Indian allies attacked the French fort at Biloxi. The French Crown, realizing that the only way to secure Louisiana was to develop strong ties with Indian allies, funded a system of forts so that they could provide gifts and trade items to Indian allies. The lower Mississippi became an arena of conflict between the French and their Indian allies and pro-British Natchez and Chickasaw in the 1730s. To a certain extent, French Indian policy took on a more genocidal tone in the Chickasaw War, in which they attempted to eradicate their enemies, somewhat similar to the British in the Pequot War.

The increased French presence in the Mississippi and Ohio Valleys angered the British, who also claimed much of this area. Although the British could offer higher quality trade goods and lower prices to Indians, the French followed Indian protocols of trade to a greater extent, and in doing so secured allies through the west. In addition, the French policy of trade rather than land acquisition was understandably perceived by Natives as less threatening to their own autonomy. When warfare broke out between England and France in Pennsylvania in the 1750s, the French were able to muster a large number of Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Chippewa allies, without which the French might easily have been overrun by the stronger British force. The conflict over the continent endured from 1754 through 1759, when the British took Quebec. When peace was officially declared between France and England in 1763, the French relinquished their claims to North America. France’s loss was a disaster for many Native Americans, too. The presence of multiple European powers had allowed tribes to negotiate for better prices in trade and to realign themselves militarily when the situation demanded it, that is, to “play off” the British against the French. Lacking a choice of European allies, Native Americans in the North, led by Pontiac, mounted a campaign of resistance against the British at the end of the Seven Years’ War. Indians in the South continued to play off the Spanish against the British whenever possible.

Negro Plot of 1741
Throughout the colonial era people of African descent expressed outrage at their enslavement and the conditions to which they were subjected. Those who lived in the northern colonies were no exception. In 1741 fear of a slave uprising came to a head when rumor of an insurrection spread through New York City, which had one of the highest percentages of slaves in British North America; about one in every five of the 11,000 residents was black, nearly all of whom were slaves. Whites remembered the insurrection of 1712, when slaves set a building ablaze and killed nearly 25 people. Nineteen slaves were executed for the arson. Moreover, tension was palpable in the spring of 1741 as fear of King George’s War with Spain (1740–48) and the potential of a growing black population aiding the Spanish combined to create fear in the minds of whites.

What began with a petty burglary became a rumor of revolt. One night in late February, merchant Robert Hogg’s shop was robbed of a sack of coins, two silver candlesticks, and some linen. Two slaves, Caesar and Prince, were suspected and arrested. They were not alone, however. A white husband and wife, John and Sarah Hughson, were accused of receiving the stolen goods. Authorities investigating the crime discovered as much only when they questioned the Hughson’s indentured servant, Mary Burton, who informed them that she knew about the robbery. The authorities promised Burton that she would be released from indenture, enough of an incentive for her to accuse the Hughsons of receiving the stolen goods. Her accusation proved correct—the purloined goods were found on their premises.

On March 18 new fears erupted when a series of fires broke out in the city. Initially, slaves were not suspected. By raising the possibility that a conspiracy was afoot, however, the city council fueled suspicions that slaves had set the fires. When the fires burned again on April 6, the black populace was suspected. Panic gripped the town and a rumor quickly circulated that blacks and poor whites were conspiring to destroy law and order and to seize control of the city. Suspicions were quickly translated into actions: “The Negroes are rising!” cried many whites. White crowds rounded up black people, taking nearly 100 to the jail. Officials and townspeople believed that slaves, “silly unthinking creatures,” were led by whites. Daniel Horsmanden, a dedicated and ambitious attorney, rose to prominence in overseeing the prosecutions. When Horsmanden took over the case, matters changed dramatically. Using “money to loosen tongues,” he cast the net wider so that between April 13 and August 29 a number of confessions were secured; more people were arrested, jailed, and executed. Horsmanden, supporting Burton’s allegations, declared that the fires were a conspiracy among the black inhabitants to seize control of the city. Burton’s initial accusations were aided by the confessions of black people sentenced to execution.

Mary Burton achieved freedom by cooperating with the authorities and promoting the belief that the fires resulted from a conspiracy that seemed to grow larger each time she testified. After her first appearance before the grand jury, Burton returned and accused yet more people, both black and white, of conspiring to burn the city. Burton further fueled the general xenophobia that targeted outsiders and newcomers. The Roman Catholics and Irish were particularly suspect, according to one scholar, because “a belief persisted that a constant Catholic conspiracy was afoot to subvert the crown and the Church of England; and with war raging in the West Indies and Spanish attacks on the Georgia-Florida borderlands and sorties as close as Charleston, South Carolina.” A dancing master and his indentured servant, two soldiers, and a schoolteacher fell under the suspicion of Judge Horsmanden.

In the end, 21 people were hanged, including 17 black men, two white men, and two white women. Additionally, 13 black men were burned at the stake. Seventy-two black men were pardoned but banished.


—Leslie Patrick***

New Hampshire
One of the New England colonies, New Hampshire was among the smallest British colonies in both population and area. The future colony of New Hampshire was inhabited
and Discoverer, up the Piscataqua River in June 1603, and captain Martin Pring sailed his two ships, the Speedwell to dry their catch or to trade with Natives. The English were the first Europeans to visit New Hampshire as they stopped for at least 10,000 years. When Europeans first arrived, approximately 4,000 Algonquin-speaking people of the western Abenaki Indians lived in the region. These groups subsisted by hunting and fishing as well as by cultivating corn and beans. Besides maintaining semipermanent villages, they sent out hunting parties and, at times, migrated seasonally. Politically, western Abenaki tribes had a chief, a council, and regular meetings of all adult tribal members to discuss and decide serious matters.

French and English fishermen probably were among the first Europeans to visit New Hampshire as they stopped to dry their catch or to trade with Natives. The English captain Martin Pring sailed his two ships, the Speedwell and Discoverer, up the Piscataqua River in June 1603, and the founder of the French colonies in North America, Samuel de Champlain, arrived in July 1605. In 1614 the well-known English explorer John Smith charted the coast of the region, discovered the Isles of Shoals, and publicized its rich natural resources, particularly forests, fur, and fish in his description of future New England.

The colonization of New Hampshire began in the 1620s, when the Council for New England granted several land patents to establish settlements and trade posts in the area. On August 10, 1622, the former governor of Newfoundland, Captain John Mason, and Sir Ferdinando Gorges received from the council a grant of the territory between the Merrimack and Kennebec Rivers. In 1629, when the new owners divided the territory between themselves, John Mason received the lands between the Merrimack and Piscataqua Rivers. The proprietor called his domain New Hampshire after his home county in England. In 1623 David Thompson founded the first English settlement in New Hampshire near the mouth of the Piscataqua River, which existed for several years. Merchants from London, including Edward and William Hilton, established a new settlement in 1628 several miles northward that became Dover. In 1631 Mason initiated a settlement at the mouth of the Piscataqua named Strawberry Banke. Another impetus for the colonization of New Hampshire came from its southern neighbor—the Massachusetts Bay Colony. While the Puritan dissenters from Massachusetts under the Reverend John Wheelwright established the town of Exeter in 1638, the Boston authorities also supported a settlement in the region in 1639 that became the town of Hampton.

The natural resources of the region shaped the development of the economy and the primary occupations of the settlers (farming, fishing, fish and fur trading, lumbering, and shipbuilding) and propelled the colony into the lucrative transatlantic trade with the Caribbean and European markets. New Hampshire also supplied fish products to Massachusetts and Virginia as well as to Spain, Madeira, and the Canary Islands. Most important, wood and wood products of New Hampshire (clapboards, oak barrels, and casks) were in great demand in the West Indies and southern Europe, primarily for the shipping of rum, molasses, and sugar, and as fuel for sugar processing. By 1671 New Hampshire was exporting 20,000 tons of boards and staves yearly.

The white pine forests of New Hampshire made it a source of ship masts, timber, and naval stores for the Royal Navy. The export of masts from the colony grew from 56 in 1695 to 500 in 1742. The mast trade also gave rise to a protest movement in the Exeter area. In the 1734 Mast Free Riot, colonists registered their opposition to the practice of marking the best trees in the forests for the Royal Navy. With the rapidly expanding settlement of New Hampshire from the 1690s to the 1760s, the economy of the colony grew more diverse. In 1719, for example, Presbyterian colonists from northern Ireland and Scotland founded the town of Londonderry and initiated the cultivation of potatoes. The expansion of white settlements heightened tensions with local Indians. From 1675 to 1756 there were several wars and numerous clashes between the English and the Abenaki tribes. These conflicts were interconnected with the Anglo-French struggle over North America and the long-standing enmity between the Abenaki and the Iroquois, who lived west of Abenaki lands. Because they frequently fought the pro-British Iroquois, the Abenaki sought French military support and trade, and they established a formidable alliance with the French during a long series of ferocious conflicts in the region. New Hampshire played an active role in this monumental struggle as a theater of military operations, as a recruitment and supply base, and as a communication route for British forces. By 1759 nearly 1,000 men from New Hampshire were enlisted to serve in the army outside the colony. During King William’s War (1689–97) the Abenaki tribes raided Dover, Salmon Falls, Exeter, Durham, and other New Hampshire settlements. Large-scale Indian raids resumed during King George’s War (1744–48). During the Seven Years’ War (1756–63) the colonial militia, led by Captain Robert Rogers, and British troops, drove the Abenaki tribes northward.

The politics of New Hampshire were dominated by disputes with the neighboring colonies of Massachusetts and New York. The widespread confusions, false claims, and misinformation about the region’s geography led to overlapping land grants, ambiguous borders, and continuous territorial disputes on the southern and western frontiers of New Hampshire. Additionally, developments in the early history of New Hampshire favored claims of the Massachusetts Bay Colony on the entire territory of New Hampshire.
After the sudden death of John Mason, the small colony of only several hundred white inhabitants was left without a central government and existed as a conglomerate of semi-independent settlements. The situation was further complicated by the influx of Puritan settlers from Massachusetts, driven out of that colony by religious disputes. By 1640 these Puritan dissidents constituted more than half of the nearly 1,000 white residents of New Hampshire. There were numerous quarrels between the new Puritan settlements (Exeter, Hampton) and the traditional Anglican Strawberry Banke area; Hilton Point (the future Dover) often fluctuated in its loyalty between the two. The religious and political disputes and instability as well as the consent of local Puritans invited interference from Boston. Wealthy landowners and merchants of New Hampshire allied themselves with the Massachusetts Puritans to resist John Mason’s heirs, who attempted to confirm their land rights in New Hampshire. Additionally, the continuous menace of Indian attacks forced the New Hampshire colonists to turn to Massachusetts and its strong militia for defense. During the 1640s England, involved in its own civil war, was unable to control the territorial ambitions of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. By 1637 Massachusetts laid claim to all of New Hampshire, and within five years nearly all settlements in the colony conceded to the authority of Boston. Strawberry Banke was incorporated by Massachusetts in 1653 and renamed Portsmouth. Because of the religious and political concessions Boston made to New Hampshire, the colony did not experience large-scale religious persecutions except for a brief repression of the Quakers in 1659–60. In 1679 the Crown, to strengthen its control over New England and in response to continuous appeals from the Mason family, reversed the Massachusetts territorial gains and in September 1680 created the separate royal province of New Hampshire. Nevertheless, there were other periods when New Hampshire rejoined Massachusetts for political, economic, and security reasons. The two colonies were joined officially in the Dominion of New England from 1686 to 1689, and between 1690 and 1692 they cooperated against the military threat of the French and Indians. From 1698 to 1741 New Hampshire and Massachusetts shared the same governor, with New Hampshire being ruled by the lieutenant governor. After 1741 New Hampshire had its own governor. After 1749 New Hampshire struggled with New York over the lands between the Connecticut River and Lake Champlain. Before 1769 New Hampshire’s governors granted land to more than 130 towns in the region.

Although the Crown settled the boundary line between the two colonies in 1764 in favor of New York, the dispute continued until the American Revolution. In 1680 the Crown established a government for New Hampshire that consisted of a president of the province (later a governor), a council of governor’s appointees, and an elected assembly. Voting rights were limited to affluent males by the 50-pound property qualification. By the end of the 17th century the assembly had used its financial prerogatives to broaden its political power. This created numerous conflicts between the executive and the assembly. Governor Edward Cranfield (1682–84), whose commission was finally revoked by the Crown for numerous illegalities and abuse of power, ruled for several years without the assembly, which refused to pass his revenue bills.

By 1699 the assembly had established its own leadership, a set of formal rules, and its printed organ—The House Journal. Even one of the most effective and pragmatic royal governors in British America—New Hampshire’s Benning Wentworth (1741–67)—experienced several rounds of tough confrontation with the assembly, although the situation of the colony stabilized considerably during his tenure.

Several powerful Puritan families of wealthy merchants, landowners, and fish traders (the Cutts, Vaughans, and Waldrons) dominated politics in New Hampshire from 1640 to 1715. After 1715, with the growing importance of the mast trade, the Wentworth dynasty of mast traders came to the center of New Hampshire’s political life. The family produced two governors and one lieutenant governor of the colony.

The political stabilization and economic development of the colony led to the growth of its white population (from some 10,000 in 1700 to 25,000 in the mid-1730s). The majority lived in more than 140 towns and villages, 260 New Hampshire and most were of British ancestry. In 1756 the first newspaper in the colony, The New Hampshire Gazette, was established.


—Peter Rainow

New Jersey

Although one of the smaller colonies in physical terms, New Jersey contained a variety of ethnic and racial groups, produced a considerable amount of wheat and other foodstuffs, and had a complex and contentious political history. Italian traveler Giovanni da Verrazano explored the New Jersey coast in 1524, and in 1609 Henry Hudson, an English mariner employed by the Dutch East India Company, sent
a party to explore Sandy Hook Bay. Until the mid-17th century, however, the Delaware, or Lenape, Indians dominated present-day New Jersey. They numbered between 2,000 and 3,000 people and subsisted mainly by hunting and fishing. There was little friction between the Lenape and the first European explorers; the Dutch and Swedish colonists were more interested in establishing trading partnerships than in acquiring land, and the Lenape valued the trade for European goods.

In the 1640s Dutch settlers began to move southward from New Netherland (present-day New York), while Swedish settlers moved northward from New Sweden (present-day Delaware). As European settlements expanded and colonists sought to appropriate valuable farmland, their relations with the Lenni Lenape deteriorated. Two Indian wars, Governor Kieft’s War (1641–45) and the Peach War (1655), weakened the Dutch settlements, but in 1655 the Dutch nevertheless forced the outnumbered and militarily weak Swedish population to submit to Dutch government.

The region’s European population remained tiny, however: about 200 Dutch, 100 Swedish, and an undetermined number of English settlers from New England. When England conquered New Netherland in 1664, it also laid claim to the area that would become New Jersey. King Charles II (1660–85) patented the region to his brother James, who deeded it to two friends, John, Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret. The result was a colony where New Jerseyans could elect an assembly. The establishment of the most democratic system in the English empire attracted a large number of Puritans and Dutch Protestants to settle in New Jersey. These religious dissenters, however, posed a problem for Carteret and Berkeley when they resisted the ruling and taxation authority of the Restorationists. Faced with this dilemma, Berkeley later sold his half-share in the colony to two Quakers, John Fenwick and George Billing. In 1676 the colony was divided in half. Fenwick and Billing established West Jersey, while East Jersey was settled slightly later by a group of two dozen proprietors who had purchased shares from Carteret. West Jersey was more religious and egalitarian in tone than East Jersey, while East Jersey was more hierarchical and commercially oriented, but they resembled each other as much as they differed. A mixture of Quaker enthusiasm and economic ambition propelled both settlements.

West Jersey’s early decades were stormy. Fenwick and Billing soon quarreled over the terms of their partnership. They submitted the dispute to a Quaker arbitration team, which determined that Fenwick owned 10 shares in the colony while Billing owned 90. William Penn, one of the arbitrators, became Billing’s trustee; the territorial dispute marked Penn’s first involvement in American colonization. Fenwick founded Salem, the first English town in New Jersey, in November 1675. Billing subdivided and sold most of his shares, expanding the proprietary group from two to about 120 investors. Approximately half of these investors immigrated to New Jersey, and by 1682 perhaps 2,000 English Quakers had settled there. The colony’s government remained highly unstable, however. Fenwick had initially tried to exercise gubernatorial powers, but his right to do so was disputed by Billing, the other West Jersey proprietors, and the royal governor of New York. Further rifts soon developed within the large and unwieldy group of proprietors; they worsened after 1685, when some shares in the colony’s government passed out of Quaker hands. In 1687 Dr. Daniel Coxe, an English speculator, purchased title to the West Jersey government from Billing, and in 1693 Coxe sold it to the West Jersey Society, a corporation that speculated in lands and political interests in the Jersey colonies and Pennsylvania.

The first European settlers in East Jersey were Dutch and English families from New England, Long Island, and New Netherland. When England acquired New York and New Jersey in 1664, there were already 33 families of European immigrants living in Bergen, opposite Manhattan Island. Between 1664 and 1666 English Quakers and Puritans streamed into East Jersey and founded several more towns. In 1681 Carteret’s widow sold title to the colony to a group of 12 proprietors (later expanded to 24) who were predominantly Scottish and Quaker and included William Penn. The new proprietors encouraged emigration from Scotland to East Jersey and in 1683 established the town of Perth Amboy. There was continual friction between the proprietors and the English settlers, however; the proprietors challenged the settlers’ land titles, while the settlers resented the proprietors’ attempts to collect quitrents and dominate the colony’s government. Simmering social tension peaked in 1698 and 1701.

In 1702 the West Jersey Society and the defeated proprietary government of East Jersey ceded political power to the Crown. The Crown united West and East Jersey as a single colony, New Jersey. Although subject to the royal governor of New York, New Jersey elected its own legislature, which met alternately in Burlington and Perth Amboy.

In spite of the Crown’s hopes, the unification of New Jersey did little to stabilize its government. Lingering tensions between the original sections, between various religious denominations, and between resident and nonresident proprietors continued to haunt the colony. In 1738 the Crown
appointed Lewis Morris, a hotheaded and opportunistic New York politician, to be the first separate governor of New Jersey. Political autonomy did not bring New Jersey peace, however; Morris was unpopular and, like the New York governors who preceded him, fought bitterly with the colonial legislature over the division of political power. Basic disputes about land titles, the supply of paper money, and the location of boundary lines between East and West Jersey and between New Jersey and New York complicated daily life in the colony until the American Revolution. In contrast, local government, based on a combination of town meetings and county courts, was fairly placid.

New Jersey was one of the less populous English colonies in North America. Its non-Indian population numbered about 14,000 in 1702; by then, few Native Americans remained in the colony. New Jersey’s European population, however, was exceptionally diverse, including English, Scottish, Irish, Dutch, Swedish, and German settlers, as well as Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Quakers. Most colonists farmed, producing grain, vegetables, hemp, flax, livestock, and lumber for export. Coastal residents fished as well. Although some of the Scottish proprietors created large estates and attempted to introduce tenant farming, family farms of 100–200 acres were the rule. New Jersey was overwhelmingly rural; even its twin market and political centers, Burlington and Perth Amboy, numbered only about 500 people each in the 18th century. Puritans from New England and Dutch settlers from New York founded primary schools in several East Jersey towns, but there were few schools in West Jersey until the 19th century.

By 1760 New Jersey’s population had grown to 93,800, but its rural townships were still overshadowed by the emerging cities of New York City and Philadelphia. Elizabethtown, Trenton, and New Brunswick gradually overtook Burlington and Perth Amboy as the colony’s internal commercial centers. Trenton, founded in 1709 at the head of the Delaware River, was particularly important as a transshipment point for exports from New Jersey’s agricultural hinterland; it also attracted skilled artisans. Iron mining, which had begun on a small scale in the 17th century, became a more important industry after 1750, when Britain lifted the import duty on iron. In the late colonial period some affluent New York and Philadelphia families built country estates in New Jersey, beginning the region’s long tradition as a suburban retreat.

By 1750 African and African-American slaves made up about 7 percent of New Jersey’s population; in 1775, approximately 10,000 African Americans (mostly slaves) lived in New Jersey. New Amsterdam (New York City), as a port, was an early center of the slave trade, and Dutch farmers and other immigrants from New York brought slaves with them when they settled in New Jersey. The colony’s slave population was concentrated in East Jersey, especially along the New York border. Most New Jersey slaves labored on large farms; in southern New Jersey some affluent settlers established estates that resembled Chesapeake area plantations. Quaker West Jersey, on the other hand, generally frowned on slavery. In the 1740s West Jersey and Pennsylvania Quakers began to debate the morality of slavery, and in 1754 John Woolman published a pamphlet, Some Consideration on the Keeping of Negroes, in which he argued that slavery harmed both master and slave. New Jersey’s religious life was complex. West Jersey was originally founded as a refuge for English Quakers, and Scottish Quakers played a prominent role in the settlement of East Jersey. However, Quaker influence diminished over time as non-Quakers purchased proprietary shares and a flood of immigrants from New England, Britain, and Germany diluted the Quaker population. The Great Awakening, a series of religious revivals that swept through the American colonies in the late 1730s and early 1740s, affected New Jersey’s Presbyterian congregations profoundly and influenced the Congregationalists, Baptists, and Dutch Reformed to a lesser extent. In New Jersey as in New England, the Great Awakening divided many congregations and communities; these rifts were gradually healed as the most committed Old Light leaders passed away and were succeeded by more accommodating clergy. The Great Awakening also led to the founding of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton College), a successor to the New Light Log College, in 1746. The college’s innovative curriculum, which included an expanded emphasis on natural and moral philosophy, drew many students from other colonies by the 1760s. By the eve of the Revolution, the Presbyterians had displaced the Quakers as the dominant religious denomination in New Jersey.


—Darcy R. Fryer

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Newspapers

The first newspaper published in British North America, Publick Occurences, lasted just one issue. Printed by Benjamin Harris in Boston in 1690, the four-page serial drew fire for its criticism of the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s Indian allies and was immediately suppressed. Fourteen years elapsed until printers tried again, establishing the
Boston News-Letter in 1704. Its format and content borrowed heavily from the London weeklies, offering local readers a compendium of warmed-over reports on military, diplomatic, and court matters from Europe. The NewsLetter was joined by two similarly tame rivals in 1719, William Brooker’s Boston Gazette and Andrew Bradford’s American Weekly Mercury, printed in Philadelphia. Newspapers again became a subject of official scrutiny in the 1720s, when James Franklin attempted to differentiate his New England Courant from its competitors by taking out a series of political positions anathema to Boston’s elites and critical of the city’s government. When such stands landed Franklin in jail in 1722, he transferred legal ownership to his apprentice and younger brother, Benjamin. Benjamin Franklin published the Courant until his brother’s release, then fled to Philadelphia when James tried to reassert the terms of Benjamin’s original indenture. In 1729 Benjamin Franklin took control of the Pennsylvania Gazette, quickly turning it into one of the most important institutions in the city. Another controversy arose in 1734, when John Peter Zenger was charged with seditious libel for criticizing the government in the New-York Weekly Journal. His case and acquittal have been recognized as one of the first political trials in early America. By 1749 there were 13 newspapers in the colonies, most of which were clustered in port cities where commercial and information networks converged and where proprietors could raise revenue by advertising the arrival of the latest goods from Europe and the Caribbean. Newspaper printers also supported themselves by publicizing notices describing runaway wives, servants, and slaves; in Franklin’s Pennsylvania Gazette, for example, more than a quarter of all advertising concerned unfree labor. For much of the 18th century, domestic news was confined to the margins of newspapers. While the activities of the colonial governors usually made the front page, other notices—typically a mixture of commercial information and sensational stories—appeared on inside pages or clustered along side back-page advertisements. Local news was consistently neglected, a fact that most scholars have attributed to the vitality of face-to-face communication networks in the towns and cities in which newspapers sold. Only as newspapers proliferated did the proportion of domestic news begin to rise as American editors began to exchange papers and copy freely from one another. The state of the American newspaper industry in the 1760s was decidedly mixed. Most newspapers lasted only a few issues before folding, while their hardworking printers (including female entrepreneurs such as Cornelia Smith Bradford and Ann Smith Franklin) struggled to turn a profit through advertising, sales, and subscriptions. Despite such hardships, the number of newspapers in the colonies continued to grow. By 1765, 26 papers published regularly, not only in port cities but also in a growing number of inland locations. While print runs rarely topped more than a thousand copies per issue before the Revolution, the pervasive presence of newspapers in taverns and coffeehouses ensured that cumulative consumption was vastly higher. Further reading: William David Sloan and Julie Hedgepeth Williams, The Early American Press, 1690–1783 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994).

—Richard J. Bell

New York

New York’s early history was tied to the Hudson River. Navigable for 150 miles from Long Island Sound, it connects with lakes to form a water route to Canada. Most 268 newspapers European settlement and trade happened between the two poles of Albany at the northern end and New York City at the southern. Despite easy water access to the interior via lakes and the Mohawk River, powerful Native Americans and hostile French kept the Dutch and English settlements close to the Hudson and the easternmost parts of the Mohawk. Long Island, reaching northeast from the Hudson along the New England coast, was also heavily settled.

First Inhabitants

The earliest evidence of human activity in the region comes from 9,000-year-old flint spear tips; settlements have been dated to 4500 B.C. Between these first Paleo-Indian cultures and the emergence of Iroquoian and Algonquin cultures about A.D. 1100, tools and agriculture became increasingly sophisticated to support an increasing population. By 1500, 15,000 people lived on Manhattan Island. Algonquin-speaking people dominated the eastern regions, Iroquoian the western. Long Island, New York City, and surrounding areas were settled by a people who called themselves Lenape. The Lenape lived in small, mobile communities. Iroquoian societies, by contrast, were more firmly rooted in large palisaded towns, the major structure of which was the longhouse. These extended family homes were the foundations of a matrilineal and, to some degree, matriarchal society. In the 16th century, just as European explorers and traders began to enter the Hudson Valley, five bands of communities, the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondago, Cayuga, and Seneca, joined together to form the Iroquois League. The league was intended to promote peace, but in practice the confederation more often exercised their power in war.

Exploration

The first documented European explorer of New York was
traded for furs in the area throughout the century, significant exploration and contact did not come until 1609, when Henry Hudson, also seeking a northern route to the Indies, sailed 90 miles up the Hudson River. Hudson’s voyage had been undertaken by the Dutch East India Company; although they did not take advantage of his discovery, other Dutch merchants did. By 1614 Dutch merchants had organized a trading post for furs, and in 1621 the Dutch West India Company was established with a monopoly over all Dutch trade with West Africa and the Americas.

**Dutch Settlement**

In 1624 the Dutch West India Company sent 30 families to settle New Netherland. Nearly all were Walloons (French-speaking Protestants from the southern Netherlands, now Belgium). Most went north up the Hudson; others were sent to New Netherland’s eastern and western borders. Not until the next year did the company send people to settle on Manhattan Island, named New Amsterdam. The company planned New Netherland as a self-sufficient community whose primary purpose was to advance the Dutch fur trade with local Natives. Compared to its holdings in the Caribbean and in South America, the North American trading post was a disappointment, and the directors gave it little financial support.

Because the colony grew far more slowly than the company had hoped, the directors in Amsterdam offered enormous grants of land—up to 18 miles along the banks of the Hudson, but with unlimited lateral expansion—to any entrepreneur who could bring 50 people to New Netherland and stay there. The landlord, known as a patroon, had nearly complete judicial and economic powers. One of the original investors in the company, Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, had one of the few profitable Dutch patroonships, which he called Rensselaerswyck. Because of the company monopoly on the thriving fur trade, however, other potential investors were closed out of the colony, and the patroon system was not an overall success.

The relative peace and prosperity of the Netherlands in the 17th century made many Dutch unwilling to emigrate. The company was forced, therefore, to recruit settlers and laborers from all over northern and western Europe. One visitor claimed that 18 different languages were spoken in the colony. From the beginning fewer than half the colonists were Dutch; the rest were primarily Belgian, Swiss, English, German, and Scandinavian, and most were single young men. Religious diversity was nearly as widespread. Although the Dutch Reformed Church was the official religious establishment of New Netherland, Lutherans, Jews, and even Quakers won some tolerance. Over the opposition of the colony’s director, the Dutch West India Company pragmatically decided that religious tolerance was necessary for settlement and trade. This practical approach to diversity would characterize the region for most of the colonial period.

New Netherland could not supply its demand for labor with Europeans alone. African slaves first arrived in 1626. By the 1640s slave shipments became larger and more frequent, and the proportion of Africans to Europeans rose to 10 percent of the population. As with whites, men far outnumbered women. Under Dutch rule possibilities for slaves were relatively extensive. Slaves had the same religious, economic, and legal rights as whites. In 1644, when some of the first slaves petitioned for their freedom, the company granted them “half-freedom,” an arrangement by which slaves received their liberty and some land but were forced to work for the company, for wages, whenever necessary. Their descendants, free black families, owned farms in the countryside outside New Amsterdam.

The European population of English colonies in North America was increasing far more rapidly than New Netherland’s. Rapid growth in New England encouraged some Puritans to move south to Long Island. In 1640 a group from Massachusetts established the first English settlement in New York. These English settlers shared few cultural ideals with their Dutch neighbors. The contrast between New Netherland’s tolerant pluralism and the New Englanders’ desire for homogeneous communities quickly led to conflict.

More violent, however, were the Dutch-Indian Wars in the lower Hudson Valley. Although the Dutch carefully maintained peace with the Iroquois Confederacy for the sake of the northern fur trade, tensions over land hampered relations with southern Algonquin. From 1641 to 1645 company director Willem Kieft led a savage war that killed nearly 1,600 Indians, a demographic loss from which the Lenape never fully recovered. Dozens of communities on Long Island and Staten Island were destroyed. Shorter conflicts persisted throughout the Dutch period. The company immediately recalled Kieft to the Netherlands and replaced him with Peter Stuyvesant, the last and among the most competent of the company’s directors.

By the middle of the century it seemed clear that New
Netherlands had not been a profitable investment for the Dutch West India Company. Half the company’s debt of 1 million guilders came from the North American colony alone. The English continued to encroach on Long Island, and New Netherland had not yet acquired enough white settlers of its own to hold them off. In 1640 the company tried to turn the tide. First and most significantly, it gave up its monopoly over the lucrative fur trade. Other merchants could now invest in the colony, revitalizing trade in fur and slaves and sparking other economic activity in the production of tobacco and timber. Second, recognizing that land was the most attractive commodity to potential settlers, they revised the patroon system to give 200 acres of land to any colonist who brought along five other settlers.

Stuyvesant transformed New Amsterdam from a struggling trading post into a bustling port city. Immigration brought thousands of new settlers, most as members of healthy families. Stuyvesant negotiated a treaty with New England to curb Puritan settlement on Long Island in 1650. Algonquin-speaking Indians lost several more conflicts in the 1650s and 1660s and ceased to be a threat to Dutch settlement along the lower valley.

**English Conquest**

Despite the gains in peace and population, however, New Netherland became caught up in the struggle between England and the United Provinces for commercial and naval dominance. As a pawn in the Anglo-Dutch wars, it earned the dubious honor of being the only English colony in North America acquired by conquest. In 1664 King Charles II (1660–85) granted his brother James, duke of York, a charter for a colony that included all the land between the Delaware and Connecticut Rivers. James immediately sent a fleet to Manhattan. Stuyvesant was more reluctant than his officials to surrender, but in the end he gave up the colony without a fight. The English immediately renamed both the city and the colony New York, in James’s honor. Dutch influence in the colony persisted, however, and the process of Anglicization continued for more than a generation. Ethnic and religious heterogeneity were too deeply embedded to be eradicated, and diversity continued to be the colony’s most salient characteristic.

Both as duke of York and later as king, James attempted to impose an absolute government on the colony. In 1665 Governor Nicholls drew up a law code (the Duke’s Laws), drawn mainly from New England statutes but that did not allow for any elected assembly. The English on Long Island were more opposed to the new government than were the Dutch, who had never adopted representative government in New Netherland. The restrictive laws made it difficult to attract English settlers to New York, especially after the governments in New Jersey implemented elected legislatures. In the first nine years after the conquest, the colony remained more Dutch than English. Thus, when a Dutch fleet sailed into Manhattan in 1673, the city again surrendered without a struggle. New York City was renamed New Orange in honor of the new Dutch military leader, William, 270 New York prince of Orange. The Dutch held the colony for only 15 months, however. When the Third Anglo-Dutch War ended in 1674, they returned the colony to the English as part of the peace negotiations. Although the duke granted a charter that guaranteed a legislature and personal freedoms (the Charter of Liberties) in 1683, the colony remained a Dutch society ruled by English conquerors. Settlements along the Hudson retained Dutch language and culture well into the 18th century.

Dutch women were particularly resistant to Anglicization. Under the Roman-Dutch law of New Netherland, women had many more legal and economic rights than under English common law. Dutch culture considered marriage an economic partnership; English culture set men at the head of the household. In churches and at home women continued to write and speak Dutch far longer than their male counterparts.

When James II assumed the throne in 1685, he extended his experiments in absolutism by revoking the colony’s charter and dissolving its assembly. The next year he established the Dominion of New England, an unpopular new government that included New England, the Jerseys, and New York. Even before the news reached North America in 1689 of William and Mary’s victory over James in the Glorious Revolution, colonists had overthrown the dominion.

The New York militia, under the command of Captain Jacob Leisler, took over Fort James in Manhattan and held it in William’s name. Leisler, a German-born immigrant who had married a wealthy Dutch widow, feared that a rumored French invasion would turn the colony over to dreaded Papists. Despite summoning an elective assembly, he instituted an absolute government of his own, frequently flouting English legal and economic rights. The supporters of Leisler’s Rebellion were primarily Dutch and had few English contacts. Despite a Dutch king on the English throne, Leisler was convicted of treason. He and his son-in-law were hanged, drawn, and quartered in 1691. It would take nearly a generation before the ethnic tensions created by Leisler’s execution dissipated. The economic, cultural, and geographic schisms that underlay the rebellion would characterize New York politics for the rest of the colonial period.

After 1691 New York became a royal colony with an
assembly, English courts, and traditional English liberties. Anglicization proceeded slowly, however, and certain holdovers from the Dutch period continued to characterize the colony, including tenant farming on enormous manorial estates, political power consolidated in the hands of a few families, conflicts between New York City and the settlements farther up the Hudson, an economic orientation toward Atlantic trade, and, most of all, extensive ethnic and religious diversity. British Settlement

The factional politics of the Leislerians and anti-Leislerians in the 18th century turned into a conflict between competing “mercantile” and “landed” interests. The legislature acquired more privileges as the royal governor continually sought increased revenues. Governors were rarely able to keep themselves out of the local struggles for political power, which were determined more by family alliances and ethnic differences than by particular political agendas. Political factions often formed around individual personalities. Class interests were rarely part of the picture; both sides of any conflict had elite leadership that claimed popular support. In the mid-1730s political factionalism came to a head. The New York Weekly Journal, bankrolled by the antigovernor faction and edited by the printer John Peter Zenger, printed criticism of Governor William Cosby. Cosby’s supporters arrested Zenger for libel, a charge from which he was acquitted. The Zenger case made the press an important component in 18th-century politics and forced factions to broaden their appeal. In the 1750s and 1760s New Englanders again began to move into New York, putting pressure on the large landholders. Immigrants from western Europe, particularly Palatine Germans but including French Huguenots, Scots, Scots-Irish, and other Germans, also began to settle the area. Some of these farmers, led by New Englanders who had been accustomed to outright land ownership, confronted the owners of manors in the Hudson Valley in violent confrontations. British troops were called in to subdue the rioters. Increasing numbers of slaves in New York City, Albany, and the surrounding countryside also created tension. In 1712 African slaves burned down a house and killed at least nine people who came to put out the fire. Twenty-five slaves were convicted of revolt; 18 were executed, some by torture. Rumors of other slave rebellions persisted throughout the 1720s and 1730s, culminating in a 1741 investigation of a slave conspiracy to set fire to New York City, murder its white population, and hand the port over to the Spanish, with whom Britain was at war. A yearlong series of trials into the Negro Plot of 1741 ended in the execution by burning and hanging of 31 people, including four whites, and the banishment of more than 70 others. New York’s economy was heavily geared toward trade, particularly the export of foodstuffs from the Hudson Valley to the West Indies and of furs to Europe. New York’s economic culture was characterized by the active participation of women in trade. Drawing on older Dutch models of female traders and on newer demands of an Atlantic market, women in New York and Albany acted as merchants and shopkeepers. The fur trade was entirely dependent on New York’s alliance with the Iroquois. Albany and the trading post New York 271 Oswego became places of exchange among the French, Indians, and British. New York’s most important commerce was closely tied to international conflicts over North America. War

The increasing struggles between Britain and France for North America often played out along the New York–New France frontier. Both European empires attempted to gain the support of the Iroquois Confederation (now the Six Nations), but the Iroquois in turn set the Europeans against each other for their own purposes. Because the confederation controlled most of western New York and all access to the fur trade, they were essential participants in North American diplomacy. Although the first three Anglo-French conflicts (King William’s War, 1689–97; Queen Anne’s War, 1702–13; and King George’s War, 1744–48) were essentially inconclusive, they all destroyed frontier settlements, disrupted the fur trade, and made New York increasingly pivotal in the attempt to drive France from the continent. As English settlers encroached on Iroquois land, the Six Nations were increasingly alienated from their former allies. In 1754 British officials held a major conference in Albany to woo Iroquois loyalty. As a result of the Albany conference, when the Seven Years’ War (1754–63) erupted that year, the Iroquois fought for the British. Most of the mainland battles were fought north of Albany, and from there the final invasion of Canada was launched. Albany itself became the center of mainland operations. In 1763 the French were driven from North America.

See also African Americans; gender.


—Serena Zabin
New York City

In 1626 the Dutch West India Company’s director, Peter Minuit, “purchased” Manhattan from local Indians in exchange for 60 guilders worth of European goods. He named the new settlement New Amsterdam. In the first year New Amsterdam was a small settlement on the southern tip of Manhattan with 270 inhabitants, 30 houses, a mill, and a countinghouse.

Ten years later New Amsterdam had hardly expanded in size or population, but its inhabitants had become remarkably diverse. The mayor claimed that 18 different languages were spoken in the city. Most of the inhabitants were men working for the Dutch West India Company, which had financed the settlement and owned most of the property.

In 1626 the company bought 11 male slaves and three more in 1628. Initially, slaves had many of the same legal, military, and religious privileges as whites, although miscegenation was later forbidden. In 1644, when some of the first slaves petitioned for their freedom, the company granted them “half-freedom,” an arrangement by which slaves received their liberty and some land but were forced to work for the company, for wages, whenever necessary.

Although New Amsterdam had begun as a rough trading post—fully one-fourth of the buildings in 1638 were taverns—by the middle of the 17th century it had developed into a bustling seaport. By 1660 the population had increased to 1,500, including many more families. The inhabitants were still a heterogeneous mix of Europeans and Africans. In 1664 the 300 slaves in New Amsterdam constituted 20 percent of the city’s population. That same year James, the duke of York, sent a war fleet to New Amsterdam. The locals surrendered without resistance. The Dutch recaptured the city in 1673 and named it New Orange, but when it was ceded back to England 15 months later, it permanently gained the name New York City.

In the decades after the British reconquest of New York, the city became increasingly Anglicized and connected to the British Empire. Trade increased to England and the West Indies, and English merchants owned an ever larger percentage of the city’s wealth. During the wars against France and Spain, New York sent out more privateers to harass foreign shipping than any other port in North America. In the early part of the century, pirates, including Captain Kidd, received economic and social support from the governor. Sailors, soldiers, and other transients contributed to the fluidity of New York’s culture. Despite the decline of Dutch culture, which had encouraged women’s economic activity, women remained practicing traders in the Atlantic world. Coverture and the exclusion of women from economic life were not characteristic of British New York City. Numerous female merchants and shopkeepers contributed to the city’s role as an entrepôt for the British Empire.

The city retained the ethnic diversity that had characterized it in the Dutch era. As late as 1750 the English still did not represent a majority of the people. At midcentury the city was roughly 45 percent English, 21 percent German and Dutch, 15 percent Scots, Scots-Irish, and Irish, and 14 percent African American and African. New York City had the largest urban black population north of Maryland.

The British established a more rigorous slave code than had the Dutch, but it was nearly impossible to enforce. Slaves socialized with whites and each other in taverns and on the streets. In 1712 roughly 25 newly imported African slaves revolted, burning buildings and killing nine whites. In 1741 authorities suspected another plot, though on little evidence. More than 30 people, including four whites, were executed in the Negro Plot of 1741, and another 70 were banished from the colony.

See also cities and urban life.


—Serena Zabin

North Carolina

The colony of North Carolina was among the least prominent of the original thirteen colonies, in part because of its geographic semi-isolation. The Outer Banks provided a long, rugged coastline, which blocked most of the colony from easy access to the ocean; the Cape Fear River furnished the sole deepwater port.

Original Inhabitants

When the first English colonists arrived at Roanoke in 1585 in present-day North Carolina, the Catawba, Cherokee, Tuscarora, and various other Indian peoples occupied the area. The Tuscarora lived in the Piedmont in western North Carolina. In their society, both genders carried out essential economic roles, with men hunting and women planting corn and beans and gathering berries and other foods. Related linguistically to the Iroquois (of New York), the Tuscarora sometimes allied with them in raids against their common enemy, the Catawba. Like most Native Americans along the East Coast, the Tuscarora...
became dependent on European trade goods, which created struggles with neighboring Indians to control hunting grounds and commerce with Europeans. In addition, North Carolina’s colonists encroached on the land of the Tuscarora and paid their enemies to capture the Tuscarora and to sell them into slavery. In 1711, the Tuscarora retaliated by killing a British trader and then attacking colonial plantations, thereby setting off the Tuscarora War (1711–13). The North and South Carolinians defeated the Tuscarora, who then moved north to become the final group in the Six Nations of the Iroquois. Like many other Native Americans, the Catawba sustained huge population losses from European diseases, became dependent on English metal goods, and suffered attacks on their culture and independence. The Catawba acted as brokers in the trade between other Natives and the English, which helped them to maintain their autonomy. As the political structures of neighboring Indians disintegrated, the Catawba adopted many of them into their society, simultaneously creating new cultural groups. Severe smallpox epidemics and the diminishing deerskin trade undermined the power of the Catawba in the mid-18th century.

The Cherokee dominated the Appalachian Mountains in present-day Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, and North and South Carolina. Although decimated by diseases contracted from 16th-century Spanish explorers, they were able to recover their population before sustained contact and trade with the English in the 17th century. In 1650, the Iroquoian-speaking Cherokee probably numbered about 22,000. Typically, their villages consisted of a small number of log cabins, where women and men shared political and social power. Women engaged in agriculture while North Carolina 273 men hunted. Selected by each town, chiefs had a division of responsibilities between wartime and peacetime leaders. During the late 17th and early 18th centuries, select Cherokee villages signed peace treaties with Carolina’s settlers, and a number of Cherokee women married Europeans, especially traders. The Cherokee’s excessive reliance on European manufactured goods weakened their political bargaining power and caused them to cede large tracts of lands to white colonists to pay their debts. During the Seven Years’ War, some Cherokee towns supported the French and launched sustained attacks on the Carolina backcountry. Generally siding with the British during the American Revolution, the Cherokee eventually lost even more land and became subordinate to the new United States government.

The “Lost Colony”

The French and Spanish explored and claimed the area in the 16th century. They were especially interested in Pamlico Sound, which they hoped to be a gateway to an ocean route to China. In 1583 Queen Elizabeth I conferred the exclusive license to discover and colonize “remote heathen and barbarous lands” upon Walter Raleigh, who was already intensely involved in colonizing Ireland and heavily invested in lucrative privateering forays against Spanish shipping. Planning his American colony as a base for privateering, Raleigh dispatched Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe in 1584 to reconnoiter a settlement site close to the West Indies and the homeward route of the Spanish treasure fleet. They found Roanoke Island, sheltered between the Outer Banks and the mainland of present-day North Carolina, to be a plausible site for a covert naval base. Amadas and Barlowe were warmly welcomed and entertained by Granganimeo, the werowance who ruled Roanoke at the pleasure of his brother Wingina, the paramount chief of an alliance of local Algonquin villages. Wingina was eager for English allies in intracultural rivalries with his neighbors. He also hoped to enhance his power and prestige by becoming an intermediary in the trade with the English. On their return to England in September 1584, Amadas and Barlowe brought glowing reports of the New World’s potential along with Wingina’s advisers, Manteo and Wanchese, who learned English and taught Thomas Harriot the Roanoke Algonquian dialect. Elizabeth knighted Raleigh for his efforts, but forbade him to go to sea. Instead, Sir Richard Grenville (see Volume I) was named admiral of the fleet and general of the expedition. Grenville’s expedition reached Wococon Island on June 29, 1585, and he planted the colony on the north end of Roanoke Island, close to Wingina’s principal village, Dasamonquepeuc. The presence of Raleigh’s colony profoundly unsettled regional Algonquin life. English demands for corn threatened the Indians’ surplus already made meager by several years of drought. The English also spread deadly diseases, which undermined the Algonquins’ confidence in their native religion. Wingina eventually adopted a policy of resistance. He changed his name to Pemisapan (“One who watches”), withdrew from the English, refused to provide them with food, and eventually hatched a plot to eradicate the colony. The colonists responded by raiding Dasamonquepeuc and killing Wingina and his advisers, thereby making most Roanoke implacable enemies of the English.

The Indian embargo on trading foodstuffs, Grenville’s delay in resupplying the colony, and the unexpected arrival of Sir Francis Drake and his privateering fleet in June 1586 induced the colonists to take up Drake on his offer to transport them back to England. Shortly thereafter, Grenville arrived with three ships. Finding the colony abandoned, he left 15 men on Roanoke with provisions for two years, “being unwilling to loose the possession of the country which Englishmen had so long held.” The failure to find
precious metals or even a suitable harbor for refitting privateers quickly soured enthusiasm among wealthy investors for the Virginia enterprise. Raleigh, however, held fast to his dreams of empire and backed John White, the painter, in gathering support for another expedition. After his appointment as governor, White led 14 English families to Roanoke Island in May 1587. In August, White went to England to secure additional supplies and support. White’s return was delayed by English naval engagements with the Spanish Armada, and when he arrived in Roanoke in 1590, he found that the colonists had vanished, leaving only clues that they might have tried to relocate the colony inland or to Chesapeake Bay.

Colonization

King Charles I claimed Carolina (the Latin name for “Charles”) in 1629 by granting the region to Sir Robert Heath, but he failed to establish any settlements. King Charles II granted the area to eight supporters whom he named the Lords Proprietors over Carolina. Their charter provided them with extensive power over the colony, and they promised political and religious freedom as well as land to settlers. When these promises failed to attract many colonists, Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper (subsequently earl of Shaftesbury) and the philosopher John Locke wrote the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina in 1669, which maintained feudal privileges but also provided some popular rights. However, settlers did not adopt the Fundamental Constitutions, and the colony developed along considerably different lines than envisioned by the authors of that document.

The colonization of North Carolina proceeded slowly in the 17th century. Virginians established the first permanent settlement around Albermarle Sound in the early 1650s, and migration from Virginia continued, especially after Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676. In 1689, the Virginia proprietors appointed a governor for the province of Albermarle, which gradually became known as North Carolina. The pace of migration increased after the English Parliament’s 1705 passage of the Naval Stores Act, which encouraged the production of turpentine, tar, and pitch, all of which were possible in the area’s vast pine forests. Freeholders also relied on indentured servants and black and Indian slaves to produce corn, tobacco, and livestock.

As Native Americans were pushed west of the Appalachian Mountains, German and Scots-Irish migrants flowed into the Piedmont. Scots and smaller contingents of Swiss and French migrants settled along the Cape Fear River. The early 18th century was a time of difficulty. The Tuscarora raided white settlements in 1711, and the Yamasee attacked the Carolinas in 1715. Pirate activity near the Outer Banks contributed to the unrest. Dissatisfied Carolinians complained about the proprietors’ failure to protect them or to provide additional lands. In 1712, North Carolina was made a separate colony. The boundary between North Carolina and Virginia was surveyed in 1728, and in 1729, North Carolina became a royal colony.

At the end of the colonial era, the colony was deeply divided along regional, class, and racial lines. Small family farmers with few slaves came into conflict with more affluent eastern owners of slaves and larger estates. Western farmers, perpetually in debt, paid high fees and taxes and exercised little power in the colony’s general assembly. They organized the Regulators to “regulate” their communities in a more honest and equitable fashion.


—James Bruggeman and Billy G. Smith

Penn, William(1644–1718) Quaker leader, founder of Pennsylvania

William Penn, a Quaker, was the founder of Pennsylvania. He was born in England, the son of Admiral Sir William Penn and Margaret Jasper Vanderschuren, the daughter of a Rotterdam merchant. Penn studied at Chigwell Free Grammar School, then attended Christ Church College, Oxford, from which he was expelled in 1662 for criticizing the Anglican Church. He traveled in Europe, where he seemed to shed his unorthodox leanings, then returned to England in 1664 and studied law at Lincoln’s Inn. Penn assisted his father in business until 1667, when, while in Ireland supervising family properties, he adopted Quakerism. He quickly became a leading advocate of the Society of Friends (Quakers), using his acquaintances in Charles II’s court, particularly his friendship with the king’s brother, James, duke of York. He defended the Quaker faith against attacks by protagonists of other religions and was jailed for blasphemy and attending Friends meetings, which the English government considered illegal “conventicles.” Penn campaigned against legal requirements to attend Anglican services, pay tithes to the established church, and take oaths, all of which Friends opposed. Through these efforts he engaged the larger principle of religious liberty. Penn also helped to set legal precedent in the landmark Penn-Meade trial of 1670, in which juries

Penn, William 283
won the authority to reach verdicts contrary to the judge’s instructions.

In the 1670s Penn achieved first-rank status in the Society of Friends, traveled to Holland, Germany, and parts of England on missionary visits, and became involved in colonization in North America, specifically in New Jersey. Penn helped to draft the liberal West New Jersey Concessions and Agreements (1676), which gave broad powers to a popularly elected assembly. He inherited his father’s fortune and landholdings in 1670, including a debt owed by Charles II, which by 1680 amounted, with interest, to £16,000. Penn negotiated with the Crown for about a year, obtaining a charter for Pennsylvania in March 1681. His reasons for founding the colony were both idealistic and financial. He had not been successful in winning religious liberty for Friends in England, and he thus built on his experience with New Jersey to conceive of a model society in America. He also needed a new source of funds, for he lived well beyond his means and could not collect rents from his English and Irish tenants. He hoped that sale of Pennsylvania lands and continuing income from quitrents would solve his financial problems.

Penn was hugely successful in promoting his colony through pamphlets such as Some Account of the Province of Pennsylvania (1681) and among the network of Quakers in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Europe. With advice from Algernon Sidney and several lawyers, he drafted the Frame of Government and Laws Agreed upon in England (1682). This constitution became more conservative with each draft but still included a popularly elected bicameral legislature and the right to trial by jury. Penn extended religious liberty to everyone who believed in one God, but only Christians could vote and hold political office. Land sales were brisk, and by 1682 Penn had more than 500 buyers. He carefully purchased the property from the Lenape Indians, thereby maintaining peaceful relations. He also obtained the three Lower Counties (Delaware) from James, duke of York, incorporating the Swedish, Dutch, and English residents into his government.

While Penn’s “holy experiment” was much more successful during his lifetime than were colonies such as Virginia and Massachusetts in establishing friendly relations with the Native Americans, largely because of the Quakers’ pacifism, Pennsylvania quickly became part of the Atlantic slave system. Slavery had existed in the Delaware Valley under the Dutch and Swedes; with Quaker settlement many wealthy Friends, including Penn, purchased Africans or brought slaves with them from the West Indies. Pennsylvania became enmeshed in the West Indies trade, exchanging foodstuffs, livestock, and lumber in return for West Indies sugar, molasses, and slaves. Many enslaved Africans lived and worked in Philadelphia, where their estimated portion of the population peaked at 17 percent in the first decade of the 18th century, then declined. Although Pennsylvania had a less brutal regime than did plantation colonies to the south, its legislators created a caste society based on perceptions of race, including separate courts without juries for all blacks, whether slave or free.

William Penn lived in Pennsylvania for only four years, in 1682–84 and 1699–1701. Despite the colony’s rapid demographic and economic growth, the proprietor quickly considered it a failure. When he was unable to collect quitrents, the cost of governing the province put him further in debt. He spent nine months in debtors’ prison after the heirs of his steward, Philip Ford, won a judgment against him in 1707. Penn’s monetary problems and long legal battle with Charles Calvert, Lord Baltimore, over the Maryland-Pennsylvania boundary (which was settled with the Mason-Dixon survey only in 1767) left his proprietorship constantly embattled. Most hurtful, perhaps, was the insubordination and bickering of Pennsylvania colonists, including its Quaker leadership, whom Penn had expected to create a model consensual society. When he suffered a debilitating stroke in 1712, his wife, Hannah, became acting proprietor. The proprietorship remained in the Penn family until the American Revolution.


—Jean R. Soderlund

Pennsylvania

From settlement in the late 17th century as a haven for persecuted Quakers to its central place in American culture and American independence during the 18th century, Pennsylvania and its capital, Philadelphia, played a crucial part in early American life.

Native Americans

The first inhabitants of the Pennsylvania region were Indians, who had been living in the area for centuries at the time of European settlement. The Lenape (Delaware), members of the Algonquin linguistic stock, occupied much of the state’s area. The Shawnee were another important Algonquian-speaking tribe who entered the region from the west in the 1690s. Both the Lenape and the Shawnee eventually came into conflict with the settlers, and many of them allied with the French in the Seven Years’ War. The Susquehannock were an Iroquoian-speaking group who lived along the Susquehanna River.
284 Pennsylvania in Pennsylvania and Maryland. These three groups, in addition to the Nanticoke, Conoy, and Conestoga, constituted most of the approximately 15,000 Natives in the region when William Penn arrived. Relations between Native Americans and white colonists in early Pennsylvania demonstrated that the two groups could peacefully coexist as long as Europeans maintained a commitment to fair dealings with the continent’s original inhabitants. Following their high ideals, William Penn and his Quaker followers initially did not occupy Indian lands without purchasing them. Moreover, Natives and colonists alike profited both from trade and from sharing technology and knowledge. But in the 1730s, with thousands of new Scots-Irish immigrants aggressively seeking land on the frontier and not holding the Quakers’ commitment to pacifism, conflict between Natives and white people increased. The Walking Purchase of 1737 cheated Indians out of much of their lands and betrayed earlier Quaker ideals. Relations between Indians and colonists deteriorated, and various conflicts ensued, from the Seven Years’ War to the 1763 slaughter of the Conestoga.

Early Explorers

Many explorers visited Pennsylvania before William Penn commenced his Holy Experiment in the colony. Captain John Smith visited the Susquehannock Indians on the Susquehanna River in 1608. The following year, 1609, Henry Hudson, in service to the Dutch West India Company, entered Delaware Bay. In 1610 Captain Samuel Argall of Virginia visited the Delaware Bay, naming it for the governor of Virginia, Lord de la Warr. The Dutch sailors Cornelis Hendricksen and Cornelis Jacobsen explored the region in, respectively, 1616 and 1623. In the early part of the 17th century, posts were established for fur trading with the Indians. Swedish explorers founded the first permanent settlement in 1637–38 at Wilmington, Delaware. Governor Johan Printz of New Sweden established his capital on Tinicum Island in present-day Pennsylvania. In 1655 Governor Peter Stuyvesant of New Netherland captured New Sweden and incorporated it into the Dutch colony. In 1664 the English conquered the area in the name of the duke of York (later, King James II). Except for a brief period in 1673–74 when the Dutch exercised temporary control, the region remained under the duke of York’s control until 1681.

William Penn, Quakerism, and Religious Toleration

Pennsylvania and its capital, Philadelphia, were the result of the vision and ideas of the most famous “American” Quaker, William Penn. The story of the establishment and settlement of Pennsylvania and its capital city is a familiar one, but it bears relating because so much of what Pennsylvania later became resulted directly from its founding. During the English Civil War of the 1640s, a number of radical religious groups sprang up, each dedicated to remolding English society along the lines of its own religious vision. One of these was founded by George Fox and Margaret Fell and came to be known as the Society of Friends (Quakers). These Quakers, as the Friends were more commonly called, held a number of ideas that were considered heretical to the main body of Puritans, who dominated England politically. Among these ideas was the belief that all people had an “inner light” that, when developed properly, allowed the individual to commune directly with God. The Quakers differed markedly from the New England Puritans in their belief that with God’s help they could approach spiritual perfection. Furthermore, Quakers had little use for the notion of original sin, and they rejected the notion of predestination of a few “elect” people; Quakers believed that everyone could be saved. Friends also had little need for ministers because the individual could intimately know what God’s word was, and their meetings were largely silent affairs punctuated by the spontaneous utterances of people who had been moved by the spirit of God.

This painting shows William Penn negotiating a treaty with Native Americans. (Library of Congress) Pennsylvania 285

The Quakers had a unique social vision that accompanied their religious views. They believed that all humans, regardless of gender and race, were equal in the sight of God (the institution of slavery would soon cause moral problems among the Friends), and they downplayed class divisions. Quakers became known (and sometimes despised) for their pacifism, their refusal to swear oaths or to observe customs of social deference (like doffing their hats to their “superiors”), and the prominent role their society accorded women, even encouraging them to preach.

William Penn converted to Quakerism in the 1660s while in college at Oxford. In 1681 Penn received a huge land grant from King Charles II (1660–85), largely in payment of a debt that the king owed Penn’s father. Penn began to plan carefully because as proprietor of this land grant he desired both to create a haven for Quakers and to realize a profit from land sale and rents. The settlers who eventually migrated to Penn’s land were by no means all Quakers. Because Penn’s only source of revenue was from the sale of land and the collection of rents, he promoted his colony aggressively throughout England, Ireland, and Germany. He even printed and distributed pamphlets in several languages extolling Pennsylvania’s fertile ground. The response was overwhelming, and Penn threw the doors of his territory open to men and women of all nations.
As a result, Pennsylvania became one of the most multicultural regions in the New World. Many who came were English, Irish, and Welsh Quakers, but others hailed from such countries as France, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Scotland, and Germany. As a result, they represented diverse religious views. Religious denominations included Quakers, Anglicans, Mennonites, Amish, Moravians, Schwenkfelders, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Jews, and Lutherans. Several thousand African slaves were also brought to Pennsylvania by 1730, despite protests to slavery by a few Quakers. Penn was not interested in a haven solely for Quakers, but rather a haven for peoples of various ethnic groups and religious persuasions. By 1700 approximately 30,000 persons were living in the colony. This number grew to roughly 300,000 by the American Revolution.

The visiting Dr. Alexander Hamilton depicted the heterogeneity of Philadelphia religious society when he wrote on June 8, 1744:

I dined at a tavern with a very mixed company of different nations and religions. There were Scots, English, Dutch, Germans, and Irish; there were Roman Catholics, Church men, Presbyterians, Quakers, Newlightmen, Methodists, Seventh day men, Moravians, Anabaptists, and one Jew. The whole company consisted of 25 planted round an oblong table in a great hall well stoked with flys. The company divided into committees in conversation; the prevailing topic was politicks and conjectures of a French war.

Hamilton’s imagery is important because it provides a picture of people living in harmony in the face of significant religious and cultural differences. It is an imagery that largely mirrors historical reality in spite of friction between the Quaker assembly and the Anglican proprietors (William Penn’s successors converted), some anti-Catholicism, and some discomfort over the increasing numbers of “Palatine Boors” from Germany. Furthermore, religion seems not to have been a major source of conflict. Indeed, the German immigrant Gottlieb Mittelberger was horrified at the plethora of religions in Philadelphia and even more horrified to find that “many pray neither in the morning nor in the evening, nor before or after meals. In the homes of such people are not to be found any devotional books, much less a Bible.” The fact that there were only 18 churches in Philadelphia in 1776 (or one for every 2,200 people) lends support to Mittelberger’s observations that many Pennsylvanians may not have been deeply religious.

Politics

When he arrived in 1682, William Penn brought with him a constitution for his new colony. A second constitution was enacted the following year, which established a bicameral legislature composed of a provincial council and a general assembly. Penn lost his colony between 1692 and 1694 due to his friendship with King James II, who was deposed during the Glorious Revolution of 1688. In the meantime, friction between the two houses of the legislature was growing. A popular movement led by David Lloyd demanded greater powers for the assembly, some of which were granted by Markham’s Frame of Government in 1696. Penn returned to Pennsylvania in 1699 and agreed to a revised form of government. The Charter of Privileges, which was enacted in 1701 and remained in effect until 1776, granted the assembly full legislative powers and gave Delaware (which was part of Pennsylvania until the American Revolution) a separate legislature of its own. Penn died in 1718, but constant tensions between the proprietors (Penn’s descendants who gradually gave up Quakerism for Anglicanism) and the assembly (often dominated by Quakers) characterized Pennsylvania politics until the American Revolution. Another important political theme during the 18th century was the constant battle on the part of frontier peoples for greater representation in the government.

The Seven Years’ War

Pennsylvania was relatively peaceful until the mid-18th century, when war broke out between the colonists and the 286 Pennsylvania French and Indians who opposed the westward expansionism of Pennsylvanians. The Seven Years’ War was part of a larger imperial struggle between France and Great Britain over territory ranging from Europe to North America to Asia. In July 1755 British forces commanded by General Edward Braddock were defeated near Fort Duquesne. Native Americans subsequently attacked the colonists, burning villages and killing settlers on the frontier and coming within 30 miles of Philadelphia itself. Eventually, the British emerged victorious, as confirmed by the 1763 Treaty of Paris. After the war Indians continued to resist European expansion. Pontiac’s Rebellion ensued, which, in part, caused the British to issue the Proclamation of 1763 that supposedly limited the expansion of the colonists into Indian lands.

Economic Life

Colonial Pennsylvania boasted a varied and dynamic economic life. Aided by rich soils, the colony quickly became an important source of agricultural products, the surplus of which was sold as exports to Europe and the West Indies. Wheat became the most important crop, but corn and rye were also significant. Pennsylvanians also developed manufacturing. Sawmills and gristmills, shipbuilding, iron production, printing and publishing, papermaking, tanning, and gun making were all important enterprises. The Conestoga wagon, soon to be revamped...
for westward expansion, was a product of the Lancaster region. By 1763 Philadelphia was perhaps the most vital economic center in North America. Like most port cities, it was an entrepôt through which passed foodstuffs bound for Europe and British manufactured goods to be sold in the backcountry.

Culture and Learning: Philadelphia

and the American Enlightenment

Enlightenment science exploded in those colonies that would make up the United States, particularly during the last generation before the American Revolution. By this time colonial accomplishments, although still overshadowed by those from abroad, were beginning to rise to the level of those to be found in European nations. That American scientific accomplishments began to compare favorably with those of Europe was due to a number of factors, not the least of which was the fact that during the 18th century colonial society matured rapidly. It became more populous, city-oriented, interconnected, and wealthy, so that more people (Benjamin Franklin being the prime example) had leisure time to devote themselves to scientific inquiry. Institutions such as libraries, colleges, and learned societies, as well as the growth of printing presses, printed materials, and a more efficient postal system stimulated intellectual interchange among the colonists and a wider dissemination of innovative ideas. Furthermore, Americans responded favorably to the efforts of British institutions such as the Royal Society of London and individuals such as Peter Collinson to establish science in the colonies. Finally, by the 18th century the British colonists were much less concerned with physical survival and could turn their attention to understanding the universe instead of just attempting to live in it. Unlike many of the European philosophers, Enlightenment figures in the British colonies were working intellectuals; the colonists managed to do quite well despite the fact that they did not enjoy the patronage of king and enlightened nobles that many European intellectuals enjoyed.

From Cotton Mather’s emphasis on smallpox inoculation in Boston to Alexander Garden’s botany in South Carolina, from Cadwallader Colden and Jane Colden’s botany in New York to Thomas Jefferson’s gadgets and architecture in Virginia, Enlightenment science influenced the 13 colonies in important ways. However, it was most strongly felt in Philadelphia, which became the center of the Enlightenment in the British North American colonies. Philadelphia had its share of colonial scientific luminaries. The wealthy and erudite James Logan, secretary to William Penn and lifelong defender of proprietary interests, amassed a large library of classical works and scientific treatises (he owned the first copy of Newton’s Principia Mathematica known to exist in the colonies) and undertook many scientific studies of his own. He was a mathematician and worked on understanding the Moon’s motion, prepared a treatise on optics, and even suggested some improvements on Huygen’s method of treating lenses. He also published several papers in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, including studies on astronomy and lightning. Logan’s most impressive scientific accomplishment came in the field of botany, in which, demonstrating the function of pollen in fertilizing maize, he explained the functions of the sexual organs of plants. Until his death Logan remained one of the colony’s premier scientific minds and could be counted on to lend support to various scientific endeavors.

Other capable men joined Logan in this scientific milieu that existed in Philadelphia in the 18th century. Joseph Breinl, Quaker merchant and member of Franklin’s Junto, published papers on the aurora borealis and the effects of rattlesnake bites in the Philosophical Transactions; John Bartram became the most significant botanist in the colonies, a difficult feat considering that many dabbled in botany; and Adam Kuhn studied botany with Carolus Linnaeus. The emphasis on botany and natural history was so great in Philadelphia that even William Young, an obscure young German man from Philadelphia, managed to get himself named botanist to the king and Pennsylvania 287 queen. The geographer Nicholas Scull produced a valuable map of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, while Thomas Godfrey, self-taught in mathematics and familiar with the Newtonian system after teaching himself Latin and borrowing Logan’s copy of the Principia Mathematica, developed a better quadrant for measuring latitude at sea slightly before Hadley did. Finally, David Rittenhouse, like many American artisans who became practical scientists, developed an accurate orrery later in the century, an important accomplishment in light of Brook Hindle’s contention that they served as “monuments to the faith of the Enlightenment in the reasonableness of the world.” Rittenhouse joined fellow Philadelphians Benjamin Franklin, William Penn, and Dr. John Morgan in becoming colonial Fellows of the Royal Society of London. These were by no means all of the important scientific contributions of the 18th century, but they indicate the extent to which scientific vigor grasped the minds of Philadelphians. Of course, the foremost scientific mind in the colony belonged to Benjamin Franklin. Born to a candlemaker of modest means, Franklin began as an apprentice to his older brother in the printing business in Boston. Becoming restless, Franklin moved to Philadelphia, where he became a
very successful printer, businessman, politician, and scientist. His demonstration, using kite and key, that lightning was electricity made him famous throughout the Western world. He retired from business at age 42 to devote his life to scholarly pursuits and public service. Franklin’s life, in a very real sense, stood as a symbol for his age. He demonstrated that it was possible (if not usual) for a poor boy to rise above his station in life to become respected and revered, and he was typical of a large number of philosophers in Philadelphia. Indeed, many, like James Logan, were wealthy men in pursuit of knowledge, but Franklin represented the world of the artisan. A quick glance at the Junto (Leatherstocking Club) would be enough to indicate that common men as well as elites actively engaged in philosophical debate. It was possible for men like Franklin and Thomas Godfrey to make a name for themselves in the realm of science.

In their pursuit of knowledge and rational inquiry, Philadelphians revered usefulness above all else. There were two main reasons for this. First, Enlightenment figures throughout the Western world were reacting against Scholasticism, which, they believed, engendered much brainwork, sometimes without involvement in the everyday world. In this way the Enlightenment rejected what many believed to be wasted energy and inane speculation. Second, Philadelphians were still in the midst of building colonial society, and the practical aspects of that infused their intellectual approach to problems. A tremendous purveyor of Enlightenment thought was found in Philadelphia’s subscription libraries, which were open to the public. Franklin’s library was opened in 1731, and in 1742 the Junior Library Company was formed. The Union Library Company followed, organized by craftsmen and tradesmen in 1747, and in 1757 the Amicable and Association Libraries opened. Over time these libraries were consolidated and finally absorbed by the Library Company of Philadelphia in 1769, making it, perhaps, the best library in the colonies. Despite their importance as innovative institutions, the subscription libraries were not the only voluntary associations that brought Enlightenment ideas to Philadelphia and disseminated them. Franklin’s Junto was an important center of discussion and philosophical debate, especially during the 1730s and 1740s. The famous American Philosophical Society eventually exerted even greater influence in the realm of Enlightenment thought than did the Junto.

Pennsylvania on the Edge of Revolution

By 1763 Pennsylvania was an established colony characterized by general religious toleration, a robust economy, ethnic and racial diversity, and a growing metropolis that was rapidly becoming the nation’s dominant city. However, social fissures were beginning to appear, especially in Philadelphia. After midcentury, wealth inequality intensified substantially. As the rich benefited from the process of economic change, the position of middle- and lower-class people grew more precarious. Declining wages combined with increasing prices for life’s necessities to lower the living standards of poorer people. The resulting growth of class tensions formed a backdrop against which resistance to Britain and the American Revolution was played out.

Over the next 20 years Pennsylvania was drawn into the vortex of revolution and new nationhood, emerging on the other side as the center of American political, economic, and cultural life. Birthplace of both the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, Philadelphia took the lead in establishing the new nation.


—Donald Duhadaway and Billy G. Smith

Export-oriented settlers in the southern colonies relied on a North American version of the New World plantation system. It was an economic and social system of labor relations in which a planter with capital invested in bound laborers, land, and buildings that constituted the means of production. In the 15th century the Portuguese forged a general model of the system using African slaves on the Cape Verde Islands off West Africa, subsequently introducing it into Brazil. In the New World it appeared in the Caribbean in the 17th century, then spread in the Americas during the next two centuries. In most colonies of English North America, British and German indentured servants made up most of the unfree laborers in the 17th century. Planters purchased thousands of transported British criminals in the 18th century, but African slaves were imported in much greater numbers in the 18th century. By the 1730s the trend was clear: The richest planters owned labor forces composed almost entirely...
of black slaves, and society was organized primarily along racial lines in the Tidewater coastal region of the southern colonies. Masters exercised great personal power over slaves and servants in regard to their general treatment and corporal punishment, and a slave code and other legal apparatuses backed up their authority. By 1763 organized white militias maintained the system on a day-to-day basis. If servants or slaves threatened the planters’ power, as occurred in Bacon’s Rebellion, soldiers could be summoned from Britain.

The successful planter put together several economic elements, but only the shrewdest and most resolute men and women could arrange these elements to best advantage.

The land was the important first decision: The best lands lay in the Tidewater region extending from the Chesapeake Bay to Georgia and in the lower Mississippi Valley’s New Orleans region. These bottomlands, sometimes partially cleared by Native Americans, typically were rich, well watered and well drained, and located near major rivers used to transport produce. It did not take much of the best land (250 to 500 acres) to support a highly profitable enterprise, but most of the finest land was quickly bought up by the richest of the earliest colonial families, some of them owning more than 100,000 acres. They monopolized large reserves for the support of future generations, because intensive plantation agriculture exhausted the soil.

The richest planters erected imposing estates. A mansion house usually was set near the crest of a natural levee, facing the river, often with formal gardens. Barns, separate kitchens, wells, privies, and other necessities were arranged not far from the “big house” in accord with drainage requirements. An overseer’s house might also exist. Beyond these premises were located the slave quarters, where slave cabins, crude and lacking in comforts, were arranged in a block pattern. However, most plantations were far more humble.

The fields required highly specific cultivation according to a strictly regulated seasonal agenda to produce rice, tobacco, and indigo. Hydraulic techniques of flood control and knowledge of rice in Africa enabled slaves to establish that very profitable crop along the South Carolina and Georgia coasts. The African tradition of hoe agriculture, with which English ploughjoggers were unfamiliar, was necessary to maximize the production of the crop. The system was a capital-intensive response to rising consumer demand for excellent Virginia quality smoking and snuff tobacco—especially in Europe and particularly in France—to strong demand in southern Europe for rice, and to the demand in all ports for high-quality indigo.

As a social unit the plantation system contained contradictions in all of its relations. Planters used violence to force an arbitrarily defined “race” of people to work and to submit as the planter kept most of the profits of their labor. The plantation was divided socially in another way: Patriarch, wife, and their children lived in the big house as a family, sharply withdrawn from the traditional village life that remained important for the English gentry. Their isolation intensified as the increasing shortage of land drove nonslaveholding whites out of the Tidewater. By contrast, the slave quarters formed a communal space with kin and plantation system 297 unmarried people living in close quarters, often with two or more generations. The plantation system was riddled with weaknesses that redounded to the benefit of slaves. Most important was the ability of most slaves to resist dehumanization and play satisfying roles in the slave community.

Many also engaged in subversive social relations with other laborers and free white farmers. As a result planters had to exercise unrelenting vigilance to maintain control of the slave population. In addition, most slaves and servants had family plots of waste lands assigned by the master, and much of the best produce of these plots (hogs, fowls, greens) was purchased by planters for their own consumption. While indentured servants had hope of getting free and even prospering in some cases, slaves generally were without hope of purchasing or otherwise gaining their freedom. The work of bound laborers was long and grueling. Tobacco and rice required germination, transplanting, and frequent worming and weeding, followed by preparing and curing the product for export. Other seasonal activities were interspersed in the schedule of the main crop: digging drainage ditches and laying by corn, fodder, firewood, and lumber.

See also Maryland; slavery.


—Thomas N. Ingersoll

Plymouth

When the Pilgrims—members of the Leiden Separatist congregation and the nondissenting “Strangers”—onboard the Mayflower finally reached the Massachusetts coast, they saw, in Governor William Bradford’s words, “a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men.” The land where the English settlers began
building Plymouth had already been cleared and cultivated years before by the Wampanoag Indians. Their village, Patuxet, was destroyed by disease around 1617. The only survivor, Tisquantum, or Squanto, had been kidnapped and brought to England before the epidemic. When he returned he found the village gone. The Pilgrims viewed the epidemic that emptied the village as a providential sign that God wanted them to establish their own town there, but it was still a struggle for the Pilgrims to build Plymouth during the first winter. Bradford wrote, “they had now no friends to welcome them nor inns to entertain or refresh their weatherbeaten bodies; no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succour.”

Of the 102 passengers that traveled on the Mayflower, four died on the voyage, and another 44 did not survive to the following spring; after that, there was never another “starving time.” The first “Thanksgiving” was celebrated in the fall of 1621. It was a harvest festival attended by the English and more than 90 of their Wampanoag allies, including their leader, Massasoit.

The first form of government, the Mayflower Compact, had been agreed to because the Pilgrims found themselves north of their destination, Virginia, and several passengers threatened to venture out on their own. The compact was necessary for everyone’s survival. In 1621 the Pierce Patent was sent to Plymouth, then replaced by the Bradford Patent in 1630. Plymouth Colony never received a royal charter. The colony finally paid off the debts to its creditors in 1644 from the profits of fur trading. The colony joined Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Haven in the New England Confederation in 1643.

Plymouth’s government was similar to that of the later New England colonies: an annually elected governor, assistants, and suffrage limited to freemen admitted to full church membership. Governor Bradford held the office for nearly 30 years, documenting much of it in his thoughtful and literate history Of Plymouth Plantation. Governor Thomas Prence, Bradford’s successor, presided over two witchcraft trials (both women were acquitted) and was a relentless persecutor of Quakers, although Plymouth never executed any.

Plymouth enjoyed peaceful relations with the Wampanoag through the friendship of the sachem Massasoit. He died in 1660 and was succeeded by his sons Alexander (Wamsutta) and Philip (Metacom). Alexander died within a few years, leaving Philip as sachem of the Wampanoag. Tensions had been increasing over the years as more English towns were established, steadily encroaching upon Native lands. The resulting King Philip’s War (1675–76) destroyed nearly half the English towns in New England, including several in Plymouth Colony. The war also destroyed the Native tribes as a force in southern New England.

The town of Plymouth, the colony’s seat of government, lacked a deep harbor and therefore never prospered as a major port, but it did support fishing, shipbuilding, and limited trading throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1685 the colony was divided into three counties, Plymouth, Bristol, and Barnstable, when the colony was included in the short-lived Dominion of New England.

The “Old Colony,” with a population of about 7,400, ceased to exist as a separate entity when it was annexed under a new charter to the Province of Massachusetts Bay in 1692, 298 Plymouth but its mythology and cultural importance outlived it and continue to grow.


—Stephen C. O’Neill

population trends

Between 1585 and 1763 the population of British North America increased enormously as growing numbers of Europeans and Africans replaced declining numbers of Native Americans. The best estimates are that the colonies contained approximately 4,600 people of European and African descent in 1630, a quarter million in 1700, and slightly more than 2 million on the eve of the Revolution. Scholars disagree about the number of Indians who lived north of the Rio Grande before contact with Europeans. Estimates vary from 1 to 13 million inhabitants. Contact with Europeans had a disastrous impact on Native Americans. Common European childhood diseases, such as whooping cough, measles, and especially smallpox, killed tens of thousands of Indians, who had not been previously exposed to these illnesses. Indeed, these diseases often killed Native Americans who had never even seen a white person, because the pathogens that caused these illnesses—often unknowingly carried by Natives who had been infected through contact with whites—frequently preceded the arrival of Europeans. The first English colonists at Roanoke, unaware that they carried pathogens to which the Natives had no resistance, noted that Indians often became sick and died. English commercial anglers went ashore in present-day New England in the 1610s to dry their catch and trade with the Natives; in the process, they passed diseases to the local peoples. By the time the Pilgrims arrived in the area in 1620, disease had killed so many Native people that one English trader, noting the skeletons and abandoned wigwams that littered the landscape, called it a “new found Golgotha.”

Disease, however, did not affect only those who died; it also devastated those who survived. When a large number...
of people in a community fell ill, the healthy often fled, hoping to avoid the contagion. If they went to another village, they unwittingly carried the disease with them. Disease on a large scale meant that no one was available to tend fires, carry water, prepare food, or care for the sick. If crops were not harvested, the survival of the community after the epidemic was jeopardized. Women who survived disease were less likely to bear children, thereby affecting future generations. Indians in the interior of the country usually had sufficient time to renew their population before facing the onslaught of European settlers. However, East Coast Natives sometimes found that the combination of population decline caused by diseases and the aggressive seizure of land by white settlers were too intense to survive. Among European colonists population growth varied over time and space, although it generally increased rapidly due both to immigration and natural increase (the difference between the number of births and deaths). In New England, despite the 50 percent mortality rate in the first few years among the Pilgrims, the population grew rapidly. The arrival of migrants in family groups, the general good health of the region, and the widespread availability of land all encouraged high fertility and low mortality rates. It was not uncommon for settlers to survive into their 70s, much longer than their counterparts in the mother country. Many lived long enough to exert control over their adult children and to see their grandchildren—another rarity in England. In addition, waves of immigrants increased the number of inhabitants. From a population of 14,000 in 1640, the New England population multiplied to perhaps 87,000 by 1690. It continued to expand, albeit at a somewhat slower rate, during the 18th century.

In sharp contrast to New England, the white population of the Chesapeake area colonies did not increase rapidly in the early 17th century. Indeed, the English population actually declined during the initial decades of settlement. Between 1625 and 1640, 15,000 people immigrated to Virginia, yet only 8,000 whites lived in the colony in 1640. Unlike New England, where entire families immigrated, most immigrants to the Chesapeake area were single males arriving as indentured servants. The resulting gender imbalance, with males at times outnumbering females by seven to one, created very low birth rates. In addition, because large planters concentrated almost entirely on raising tobacco rather than foodstuffs, diets were often inadequate. Diseases like malaria, common in a hot, damp climate, as well as shallow wells poisoned by saltwater, also took a high toll on human life. Not until the end of the 17th century did the number of births exceed the number of deaths in the Chesapeake area colonies. One stabilizing factor in this period was the constant replenishment, both in settlers and in indentured servants, from England. Unlike New England, the British population of the Chesapeake area did not become self-reproducing until the 18th century, but the population then grew relatively rapidly until the War for Independence.

The Middle Colonies experienced enormous growth resulting from both natural increase and migration. While New York and New Jersey had steady, although not spectacular, rates of population growth, Pennsylvania, founded in 1681, contained the second largest population in British North America by 1770 and the largest white population by 1780. Much of Pennsylvania’s demographic increase in the 18th century can be attributed to the influx of large numbers of German settlers, who by the 1750s accounted for a third of the colony’s population. Their huge numbers, language, and observance of German customs caused some uneasiness among English colonists. Benjamin Franklin, for example, worried that Pennsylvania would soon become a “Colony of Aliens.” Pennsylvania was also the destination of thousands of Scots, Irish, and ScotsIrish immigrants, most of whom headed for the frontier and the land available there.

The 18th-century black slave population of British North America was unique in that it was the only bound population in the New World that reproduced itself. However, this reproduction did not begin in the 17th century. Throughout the first half of the 17th century newly arrived African slaves suffered high mortality rates. Many died within five years after landing in the Chesapeake area as disease, inadequate diets, depression, and brutal working conditions took their toll. After the Middle Passage many Africans were in poor health on arriving in the colonies. The African population in the Chesapeake area was small in the early 17th century because planters invested in less expensive white indentured servants rather than African slaves.

After 1675, as planters turned to purchasing African slaves, their population increased substantially. By the end of the first decades of the 18th century, slaves had formed sufficiently stable communities and marriages to enable them to reproduce their numbers. Their population was continually augmented by newly purchased slaves from abroad, as more than 250,000 blacks were brought into America between 1700 and 1775. Indeed, more Africans than Europeans arrived in British America in the 18th century. The slave population in South Carolina exploded in the early 18th century, once planters found that rice was a profitable crop and that they could purchase slaves relatively inexpensively. In some rice cultivation areas blacks accounted
for 80 to 90 percent of the inhabitants. Bondpeople were forced to labor in very hazardous conditions, detrimental to their health, on those plantations. The only advantage that some enjoyed was partial immunity to malaria.

By the 1730s African Americans constituted one-third of the people living in the coastal areas stretching from the Chesapeake Bay to Georgia. On the eve of the American Revolution one of every five colonists was black.


Presbyterians

Presbyterians are Protestants whose congregations are governed by elders (“presbyters”) elected by their membership. These elders govern collectively, as a session, with some of them chosen as representatives to the local presbytery, the regional synod, and the national general assembly. Presbyterians trace their origins to 16th-century Geneva, where John Calvin instituted a rudimentary form of Presbyterianism. Their theological distinctions are summarized in the Westminster Confession (1647) and Shorter (1647) and Larger (1648) Catechisms. English Puritans were too divided to impose these tenets on the Church of England, but they were adopted by the Church of Scotland and later by breakaway denominations in Scotland as well as by daughter churches in America. The first Presbyterian church in what became the United States was established in Hempstead, New York, in 1644, with others soon following in Newark (1667), Philadelphia (1692), and elsewhere along the midAtlantic coast. Francis Makemie, a Scots-Irish missionary recognized as the father of American Presbyterianism, arrived in 1683. In 1706 he led in organizing the Presbytery of Philadelphia, serving as its first moderator; in 1716 this was reorganized as the Synod of Philadelphia. Most of its growth stemmed from the influx of Scots-Irish immigrants and the southward surge of New England Puritans. While the Scots-Irish generally stressed the centrality of doctrinal orthodoxy as defined by fidelity to the Westminster Confession, New Englanders generally urged the secondary status of all standards other than the Bible and emphasized the centrality of “experimental” (experiential) religion. Tensions between the two were temporarily eased by the Adopting Act of 1729, in which the synod embraced Westminster as its doctrinal standard while making room for those with scruples about nonessential aspects of Westminster’s teaching.

These wings endured a painful separation during the Great Awakening. Experience-oriented Presbyterians, dubbed New Lights, welcomed the revival as God’s work, while doctrine-oriented Presbyterians, dubbed Old Lights, saw New Light excesses as reason enough to reject it outright. At the synod’s 1741 meeting the Old Lights revoked the Adopting Act and ousted most New Light ministers. Pro-revival Presbyterianism now entered a period of accelerated growth; in 1745 New Lights organized the Synod of New York, and a year later they founded the College of New Jersey, Princeton University’s predecessor, primarily to provide their congregations with well-educated pastors. Meanwhile, antirevival Presbyterianism experienced stagnation and numerical decline that eventually forced the Old Lights’ reconciliation with the New Lights on the latter’s terms. In 1758 their synods merged to form the Synod of New York and Philadelphia.

Recent scholarship has argued that New Lights, including Presbyterians, were more likely to challenge secular as well as religious authority. Many of them consequently engaged in political resistance during the decade preceding the American Revolution.


—George W. Harper and Billy G. Smith

Princeton College

Princeton was one of nine colleges existing in the colonies before the Revolution. Following the English tradition, religious groups founded educational institutions in order to train students for the ministry and for state service. The schools were identified with specific denominations, restricted to males, and generally limited to upper-class families. Their curricula were designed to strengthen the mental and moral powers of students through classical studies (Latin and Greek) and strict discipline. In the 18th century colleges differed more in their theological outlooks than in their approaches to academics. The founders of the College of New Jersey in 1746 were followers of Irish evangelist William Tennent, Sr.’s, work at Log College. Members of the “New Light” wing of Presbyterians, they aimed to train ministers for the Great Awakening, causing a temporary schism in the church. The first president of the college, housed in New Brunswick, was Reverend Jonathan Dickinson. Reverend
Aaron Burr presided over its second home in Newark, and in 1756 the College of New Jersey moved to Robert Smith’s Nassau Hall in Princeton. (It took its present name in 1896.) Princeton was the religious and educational center for Scots-Irish Presbyterians during the Great Awakening. The evangelical community attracted noted ministers Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield. Aaron Burr led a religious revival at the college in 1757 that was accompanied by a lively literary culture. Although their goal was to train ministers, the Presbyterian educators at the College of New Jersey were also interested in worldly learning.

—Deborah C. Taylor
printing and publishing

Sir William Berkeley, governor of Virginia for 38 years, wrote in 1671: “But I thank God, we have not free schools nor printing; and I hope we shall not have these hundred years.” Despite his wish, printing thrived in colonial America.

In 1639, a century after the Spanish had established a printing press in Mexico City, printing began in British North America. The first press was established in Cambridge, Massachusetts, primarily for the use of Harvard College. The first printed item was The Oath of a Free-Man, a broadsheet containing an oath for all citizens of the Massachusetts Bay Colony; the first book was the Bay Psalm Book (1639). While Boston became the primary center for printing, presses were established in Philadelphia in 1685 and in New York City by 1693. By 1760, 60 printers worked in the colonies.

While the presses in the Spanish colonies printed primarily government documents and religious works, printers in British North America produced a wider collection of materials, including fiction, magazines, almanacs, and schoolbooks. Newspapers, however, were slow to develop in the British colonies. Demand for news was initially satisfied by English papers, which arrived frequently by ship; apparently, there was little interest in local news, because the settlers were more oriented toward their homeland than to their colonial neighbors. The growth of commerce and the possibility of advertising revenue helped the development of newspapers. In 1690 Benjamin Harris published his Publick Occurences Both Foreign and Domestick, the first American newspaper, which authorities banned printing and publishing 311 after only one issue. There would not be another American newspaper until 1704, when John Campbell, the postmaster of the Boston post office, published the first continuous American newspaper, the Boston News-Letter. Campbell clipped items from incoming London newspapers and printed them as foreign news. Circulation never exceeded 300 copies, a small number that reflected the dullness of a newspaper in which the copy was cleared with either the governor or his secretary.

Independent journalism emerged with the establishment in 1721 of the New England Courant by James Franklin (the elder brother of Benjamin). While James Franklin’s paper lasted only five years, it was extremely influential. Franklin began what has become known as “crusade” journalism when he attacked Increase Mather and his son Cotton Mather for supporting the idea of inoculating people with blood from recovered smallpox patients. Franklin was bitingly nasty in his attacks until it became clear that the Mathers were right. This independent style of journalism attracted more readers, and by 1750, 14 weekly newspapers appeared in the six most populous colonies. Except for a few success stories, such as the Bradfords in New York, the Greens in Boston, and, most famously, Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia, colonial printers usually were not prosperous. Most were hardworking artisans who scraped by with whatever business they could find.


—Kenneth Pearl

proprietary colonies

Proprietary colonies were those created by a royal charter granting both land and government to a private actor, usually an individual or a small group of people. The first of these in North America was George Calvert’s Avalon settlement in Newfoundland, but the first in the present-day United States was Maryland, granted to Cecil Calvert in 1632. Others include East and West Jersey, New York, Carolina, and Pennsylvania.

Proprietorship departed from earlier forms of corporate colonization organized by joint-stock companies such as the Virginia Company and the Massachusetts Bay Company. The insubordination among members of and disappointing profits earned by those companies angered the Crown, subsequently resulting in the assumption of royal authority over the colonies bearing their names. The proprietary structure allowed the Crown to influence colonies more effectively than did the corporate form. The
Crown could use its grants as a form of patronage to reward those whose compliance could be assured, rather than the intransigent investors of the corporate colonies. Proprietors claimed sweeping authority under their charters, and the Crown believed that a strong and loyal executive provided the best guarantee that the colony would remain faithful to England and its interests. For example, Maryland’s charter, modeled on the extensive privileges granted to the lord bishop of Durham by William the Conqueror, granted near-feudal powers to its proprietors, including ecclesiastical, military, and diplomatic rights. Proprietors used their authority not only to pursue profit but also to achieve social goals that eluded them in England. Calvert promoted Maryland as a haven for persecuted Catholics. William Penn defended toleration as a basic principle of his colony. The Carolina proprietors, led by Anthony Ashley Cooper and John Locke, created an elaborate structure of government they called the Fundamental Constitutions, which provided for broad social toleration within an aristocratic framework. However, proprietors often faced pressure from both their colonial tenants and the Crown. Settlers often sought greater freedom from rulers regarded as proprietary colonies 313 insensitive to their situation. The Crown, meanwhile, also restricted the proprietors’ powers.

As the settlements grew larger and brushed up against indigenous and imperial neighbors, the issues involved with their administration grew more complicated. Moreover, the development of substantial colonial estates created classes of increasingly independent colonists, more capable of challenging the proprietors. In Carolina, the 1680s reflected a period of intense rivalry between the proprietors and their increasingly restive tenants, during which the Fundamental Constitutions were revised to expand the role of the assembly. Under pressure from both Crown and colonist, all of the proprietary colonies in North America, save Pennsylvania, acceded to royal authority by the time of the American Revolution. In some cases, local residents forced the change, as with Carolina, which royalized in two parts between 1719 and 1729. Some proprietors wished to liquidate their claims for profit or to shed the burden of governing their fractious populations. A financially struggling William Penn attempted to sell Pennsylvania for £60,000 during the 1730s. The proprietors of East and West Jersey begged for royal intervention in the face of virulent opposition by their settlers, and their request was granted in 1702. Other colonies were brought under Crown control by simple royal fiat. In New England, proprietary claims encompassing Maine and New Hampshire were ultimately folded into the royal government of Massachusetts. New York was royalized when its proprietor, the Duke of York, ascended to England’s throne as King James II in 1685. In the years following the Glorious Revolution in 1688, the Calvert and Penn claims were revoked, though both were ultimately reinstated, if only temporarily. By the 18th century, British imperial policy turned in favor of direct royal control of its holdings. Georgia, founded in 1731, reflected this new direction, with the grant of a more expansive role for the state and the imposition of limits on the power of the assembly.

Conflict with Catholicism

Protestantism

Protestantism was born in 16th-century Europe, which had been primarily Catholic until that time (except for small clusters of Jews throughout the continent and the Muslim Moors in Spain). The centuries of rule had taken their toll on the Catholic hierarchy, which by the 15th century seemed corrupt to many. It controlled vast property and wealth, its priests were sometimes immoral, and it demanded too much money from all ranks of society. Protestantism denied the authority and infallibility of the pope and advocated a “return” to the “true” church, with an emphasis on scripture.

Calvinism

Calvinism, based on the teachings of French religious leader John Calvin (1509–64), emphasized five principal tenets: the total depravity of humans, God’s unconditional “election” of certain people to eternal salvation, Jesus Christ’s atonement for human sins being limited only to the sins of the elect, the inability of the elect to refuse salvation, and their inability to fall from their state of grace. Calvinists believed that God’s will was supreme and that the task of the elect on earth was to compel everyone to carry out God’s will. No one on earth had any way of knowing who was predestined for salvation, but a blameless life was an indication that a person might be elected. Calvinism flourished in the New World initially, especially among Puritans, but by the end of the early 18th century it was in decline. The logic of predestination suggested that there was little point in leading a moral life, because the elect could not fall from grace. In addition, the seeming arbitrariness of predestination gradually lost its appeal in a society which emphasized rewards and success for merit and hard work.
Protestants believed that Roman Catholics were not true Christians. They denied the supremacy of the pope and despised the ritual of the Catholic service, believing that it obscured rather than revealed the true nature of God. Their first attempts were to reform Catholicism, not to destroy it. However, Martin Luther and others soon realized that they would have to leave the church rather than change it.

The Puritans who founded Massachusetts had no tolerance for Catholicism. Any Catholic found in the colony was banished; if he or she returned, the penalty was death. Most other 17th-century colonies also oppressed Roman Catholics to a greater or lesser degree. Exceptions were Maryland, founded as a Catholic colony in 1634, and Pennsylvania, in which all peaceable worshipers of God were welcome. After the Glorious Revolution in England (1688), the Catholic Calvert family who had established Maryland was ousted, and the population became increasingly Anglican.

The French and Spanish explorers who settled Canada and the Southwest were Roman Catholics. The missionaries who sailed with them converted many Indians, both forcibly and voluntarily; part of the original Spanish mission to the New World was to convert “heathens” to the Catholic faith. Franciscan friars founded missions throughout the Rio Grande Valley between 1598 and 1630, and Jesuit Father Eusebio Francisco Kino (1654–1711) founded many missions in Arizona in the 1690s. In 1768 the Jesuits withdrew from North America.

**Denominationalism**

Denominationalism is a system of voluntary church affiliation. Rather than being coerced by the state to join a particular church, people who live under this system are free to choose a church of their own. It is up to the church to recruit new members without assistance from the state. Some colonies, such as Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, always operated under this system. In most colonies, however, the state enforced a system of either Anglicanism or Congregationalism. In spite of the first amendment to the Constitution, church and state were not separated in all states until 1833, when Congregationalism was officially disestablished in Massachusetts.

The many differing brands of Protestantism found among the population of the colonies, not to mention other faiths such as Catholicism, made denominationalism almost essential for survival in British America. Colonists in places such as New York soon realized that they could not bar Protestants from their rights as citizens simply because of the church at which they worshipped.

**Protestantism and the English Reformation**

The English Reformation differed from the Lutheran and Calvinist Reformation in continental Europe in an important respect: Its roots were political rather than theological. In fact, Henry VIII opposed Luther; he wrote a defense of the seven sacraments in 1521 for which the pope rewarded him with the title “Defender of the Faith.” King Henry VIII (1509–47) used the pope’s refusal to grant him a divorce from Catherine of Aragon as his excuse to deny the supremacy of the church in England. In 1534 Henry created the Church of England, named himself as its supreme head, and granted his own divorce. The Church of England made no immediate attempt to change Catholic doctrine; apart from the denial of papal supremacy, Anglicanism and Catholicism seemed identical.

In 1547, when Edward VI became king, the Protestants took control of the government. They instituted significant changes to the church, removing images from churches, forbidding prayer to saints, and repealing the tradition of clerical celibacy. Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury during this period, wrote the Book of Common Prayer and the Forty-two Articles, which stressed justification by faith and the supreme authority of the Bible. Under Catholic Queen Mary (1553–58) many of these reforms were repealed, and Cranmer and dozens of other Protestant leaders were executed. When Queen Elizabeth (1558–1603) took the throne in 1558, she restored the Protestant reforms. In 1571 the Forty-two Articles were shortened to the Thirty-nine Articles, which were not quite radical enough to please many Puritans. Thus, the English Reformation did not go far enough for this minority, thousands of whom eventually sailed to North America to worship as they pleased.

**Evangelical Protestantism**

Evangelical Protestantism emphasizes individual conversion, the authority of the Bible, and moral and social reform. Evangelicalism began with Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius (1560–1609), who argued that each human being had the power to choose or refuse salvation. This directly contradicted the Calvinist doctrine of predestination.

The prominence of Evangelicalism in early North America began in 1726, when Dutch Reformed minister Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen of northern New Jersey demanded that members of his congregation openly repent of their sins and admit their reliance on the Holy Spirit. Church membership grew, and others, notably William Tennent, Sr., and his sons Gilbert, John, and William, followed Frelinghuysen’s lead. In the 1720s and 1730s ministers who graduated from Tennent’s Log College spread Evangelicalism further through the colonies. Probably the most famous of all the evangelical ministers of the period is Jonathan Edwards of Northampton, Massachusetts. Edwards believed in justification by faith, not in the Arminian creed of salvation by choice, and his dramatic, emotional sermons led to a great rise in church membership during the mid-1730s. Edwards published a...
Lutheranism

Martin Luther argued that civil powers had a right to reform the church. This was an important tenet of Puritanism as it evolved in New England, where status as a church member meant status as a citizen. Luther denied that priests were any closer to God than were other Christians, because God spoke directly to all persons of faith. He held that only two sacraments—baptism and the Lord’s Supper—could be justified on the basis of the New Testament. He believed Protestantism 315 in justification by faith, with faith being the unquestioning acceptance of God. Faith could not be earned; it was a gift from God.

Swedish Lutherans founded a settlement called New Sweden in the Delaware River Valley during the 1630s; the first Lutheran congregation in North America was established in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1638. By 1669 Lutherans had established churches in Albany and Manhattan. When Pennsylvania was established in the 1680s, Lutherans arrived in large numbers. Their common language and culture led them to join in worship with German Reformed congregations.

In 1742 Henry Melchior Muhlenberg arrived in North America and formed the Lutheran Church’s first American governing body. Muhlenberg used this Pennsylvania Ministerium to return the Lutheran Church in North America to the teachings of Luther.

Puritanism

Puritanism had its roots in Calvinist doctrines of the depravity of humans and the supremacy of the will of God. Puritanism stressed the covenant between God and people and strict standards for church membership. Everyone was required to attend church, but only those who experienced conversion were entitled to be full church members and to have their children baptized. Only full church members could vote; Puritans trusted no one but the elect to decide on matters that affected the community.

New England was the stronghold of Puritanism. In the 1630s thousands of Puritans migrated to New England with the purpose of establishing a “New Jerusalem”—a modern city of God. In 1636 the Puritans established Harvard College across the river from Boston to ensure that their ministers would be educated. Ideally, the Puritan minister (always male) was better educated and informed about Scripture than his parishioners, but he was not an intermediary between them and God. Instead, a minister was considered a community leader and a teacher.

As the population of New England grew and the high standards for church membership ensured that membership rolls declined to the point of endangering the faith, Puritan leaders agreed to the “Halfway Covenant” of 1662. According to this covenant, the children of righteous Christians who were not church members were still eligible for baptism.

Quaker Doctrine

The Society of Friends (Quakers) followed the teachings of George Fox (1624–91). He rebelled against the strict Puritanism of his parents’ home, from which he ran away in his youth. Fox believed that religion was something experienced in the head and the heart, not externally by repeating set prayers or listening to ordained clergymen. When Fox was 22, he believed he heard God speaking to him. He and his followers preached the doctrine that the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit was conferred directly on all people. Therefore, all members of a congregation were equal; there was no need for ordained clergy. In Quaker meetings any person who felt moved to speak of his or her reception of the Holy Spirit was encouraged to do so. The doctrine that women and men were equal in the sight of God, both capable of receiving the “inner light” and equally deserving of attention when speaking in meetings, was unique to Quakers. Women held few positions of power in other Protestant denominations until the 20th century. Quakers did not accept the sacraments. They embraced pacifism and were the first denomination officially to condemn slavery.

Quakers were the targets of Puritan persecution throughout New England, except in tolerant Rhode Island. They eventually found a welcome in Pennsylvania, the colony established by Quaker William Penn in the 1680s. Inspired by notions about the equality of all peoples, Penn and his Quaker followers initially did not move onto Native American lands without purchasing them. Both Natives and Quakers benefited from peaceful trade and from sharing technology and knowledge. However, in the 1730s, as Quakers lost control of the boundaries between Indians and colonists, violence intensified between the EuroAmericans and Native peoples.

The Society of Friends, a religious denomination also known as the Quakers, dates from the late 1640s. It began as a radical movement that empowered individuals and encouraged disrespect for prevailing institutions. George Fox is typically identified as the founder of the movement, although others, especially Margaret Fell, also contributed to its creation. The Quakers believed that an educated ministry and a church hierarchy were detrimental to true religion, and instead urged the believer to look to the “light,” or “seed,” within. This divine spark was thought to be a part of Christ within each believer. Their detractors sometimes falsely accused the early Quakers of claiming actually to be Christ. Because their message encouraged people to act independently of established institutions, it offered answers to those who found the English civil wars, regicide, and increased radicalism of the 1640s unsettling. The early Quakers were imbued with the millennialism common in the era. They felt compelled to spread the news of the “inward light.” An early group of converts, later known as the “first publishers of the truth,” traveled throughout England gathering many converts. Any believer, having been convinced of the sect’s message, could begin to preach publicly, and many of them did, including a large number of women. The movement spread from the north of England into London and from there throughout the countryside.

The response to the early Quakers was mixed. An official policy of religious toleration in the 1650s protected them to some extent from persecution and allowed the growth of the movement. After George Fox converted Margaret Askew Fell, wife of a justice of the peace in Lancashire, her home at Swarthmore Hall became central to the movement. Despite the convinacement (discovery of truth) of someone of Fell’s social standing, the Quaker message frightened conservatives, who saw it as socially leveling as well as heretical. The aggressive preaching style of the early Quakers, which included harangues aimed at passersby and at congregations gathered for other sorts of worship services, earned them enmity from crowds as well as magistrates. Such peculiar practices as the refusal to swear an oath or to doff one’s hat to a social superior were often greeted with suspicion. To defend their views and further their movement, the sect published many pamphlets. In 1655 James Nayler outraged conservatives by recreating Christ’s entry into Jerusalem, riding into Bristol on an ass while his followers sang “Hosanna.” Parliament tried Nayler for blasphemy and considered the death sentence but in the end ordered his mutilation, whipping, and imprisonment. Quaker convincements in the British Isles, however, may have reached 30,000, and traveling witnesses had begun to visit other parts of Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas.

The restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660 brought greater persecution. The Quakers, led by Fox and Fell, responded by developing new policies that would assuage some of the concerns of conservatives. They also encouraged

Protestant work ethic
In 1630 about 1,000 Puritans set sail for the American colonies intending to establish a community that would reflect and embody their religious views. Their beliefs centered not around the individual but on the community, and Puritans emphasized that people were bound together by reciprocal responsibilities and rights. One important aspect of Puritanism lay in their theory of work, associated with the Calvinist notion of a “calling” in which the labor of every person was equally valued. Hard work and discipline were for the glory of God. Therefore, idleness was equated with sin, while work was associated with obedience. Individuals worked not so much to increase their own material wealth as to improve the society. If a person grew wealthier, it was sometimes a sign of God’s blessing. This emphasis on dedicated, continual labor had not characterized Western preindustrial societies, in which work routines were generally much more casual.

As 18th-century American culture began to stress individualism, ambition, and materialism, the Puritan emphasis on self-discipline and hard work for the sake of church and community slowly eroded. Increasingly, colonists viewed work and land as a means to acquire material goods. In a secular sense, Benjamin Franklin is the quintessential representative of the Protestant work ethic. The 12th child of a Boston candle maker, Franklin began his life in poverty but managed to rise to a position of wealth and power. By the age of 23 Benjamin Franklin was a financial success, a self-made human being in material terms. In 1748 he launched Poor Richard’s Almanack, a collection of common sense, wit, and, most of all, financial advice. One reason for the almanac’s incredible success was its advice on how to gain wealth, including such aphorisms as “time is money” and “lost time is never found again.” Hard work and frugality were primary values Franklin advocated, thus continuing, in a secular sense, the historical threads of the Protestant work ethic.

—Kate Werner***

Quakers (Society of Friends)

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—Stephanie Muntone

316 Protestant work ethic

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organized the movement to sustain it over time. The Society of Friends as a distinctive organization with a structure of monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings, a class of recognized ministers (both male and female), and a generally accepted body of doctrines was born after 1660. The society embraced quietism, the plain style, and pacifism. It continued to grant a greater role and more authority to women than any other religious movement. Elite young men, some of them university trained, joined the movement. William Penn, Robert Barclay, George Keith, and Isaac Pemberton were among those converted. The period from 1660 to 1680 was one of modest growth and consolidation. Persecution was heavy, especially initially, and the organization systematically collected accounts of sufferings. This literature of suffering, along with the journals of traveling Friends and doctrinal tracts, became staples of the Quaker library.

Quakers had been drawn to North America from the 1650s, and traveling witnesses had convinced colonists from Barbados to Maine. Rhode Island boasted an especially active Quaker population. Massachusetts vigorously opposed the spread of Quakerism, banishing, whipping, and mutilating missionaries who visited there in the 1650s. Finally, it ordered banishment on pain of death, which led to the execution of four Quakers, including former Boston resident Mary Dyer, between 1659 and 1661. The persecution was scaled back after Charles II ordered an end to the executions in 1661. A Quaker meeting was gathered in the town of Salem, and it continued to meet despite efforts to crush it. In 1672 George Fox toured Quaker meetings in the Caribbean and North America. He, along with other members of the society, sought a colonial site to which British Quakers could migrate to escape persecution. As a result, a number of English Quakers were involved in the establishment of New Jersey. This activity formed a prelude to the major Quaker colonization effort, Pennsylvania.

William Penn, a convert to Quakerism, inherited a debt owed to his father by Charles II, who paid it by naming Penn the proprietor of a large tract in North America. Penn envisioned Pennsylvania as a moneymaking venture for himself (but like most proprietors he would be disappointed in this) and a haven for his coreligionists. In keeping with Quaker principles, he pursued a pacifistic policy with the Native American population, did not require military service of inhabitants, and permitted liberty of conscience. Many Quakers migrated to the colony after it was founded in 1681. The Society of Friends was a dominant force in Pennsylvania society and politics until Quaker men withdrew from politics in large numbers during the French and Indian Wars, or Seven Years’ War.

Shortly after the founding of Pennsylvania, the society experienced a major controversy, known as the Keithian schism. Keith, a well-educated Scottish convert, was serving as a tutor in Philadelphia when he proposed a series of reforms to the society. Had they been adopted, these reforms would have made the society more like other Christian churches of its day, with a confession of faith, tests for membership, and a greater reliance on the Bible. Although Keith did not prevail and eventually left the society to become an Anglican missionary and polemicist, the schism rocked early Pennsylvania and sent reverberations throughout the Atlantic Quaker community. A later schism that led to an orthodox (or evangelical) versus Hicksite split in the 19th century revolved around some similar issues.

The connections between Friends in Britain and North America fostered economic enterprises, and some Quakers grew rich as a result of their commercial activities. The image of the Quaker as hardworking, honest, and sober brought business to Friends, and later sociologist Max Weber would use the society as the primary example of how Protestant religion fostered economic development. These connections were maintained by a unique system of traveling ministers, individual Quakers who felt called to visit other communities of Friends. They traveled, usually in same-sex pairs, with a certificate granted by their original meeting and supplemented by testimonials from other meetings they visited. They traveled back and forth across the Atlantic, around the British Isles, and up and down the coast of North America. Women as well as men made these journeys, occasionally leaving young children at home to be tended by relatives while they went on tours that might last many months. These travelers and the journals they produced of their experiences helped to knit together a transatlantic Quaker community. They also reaffirmed the movement’s commitment to spiritual equality.

By 1760, 50,000 to 60,000 Quakers lived in the mainland North American colonies controlled by Britain; half resided around Philadelphia and in Maryland. All Friends met in local meetings for weekly worship. Monthly meetings for business handled disciplinary cases, granted permission to couples to marry, and produced certificates and testimonials in support of traveling Friends. A yearly meeting decided policies and handled the most contentious cases of discipline or dissent. By 1760 six yearly meetings met in North America, including meetings for New England, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia and North Carolina. The Philadelphia yearly meeting (covering the regions of Pennsylvania and New Jersey) was the largest. The smaller meetings might
look to the Philadelphia or London yearly meeting for guidance, but each meeting was officially autonomous. Just as the society used suasion to bring recalcitrant members into line, it used similar strategies to keep all Friends “united in the truth.”

The Stony Brook Quaker Meetinghouse in Princeton, New Jersey, was built in 1760. (Library of Congress)

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In Pennsylvania the Society of Friends learned to exercise power, an experience it had not had previously. The danger of becoming a powerful and complacent majority presented new challenges to the American branch of the Society of Friends. The society eventually became concerned about the need to police its own borders, and in the 1750s it began to disown members who married outside the meeting or engaged in other unacceptable activities. This period of renewed attention to the features that made the sect distinctive has been referred to as “the reformation of American Quakerism.” It resulted in a decline in membership but also in a recommitment to the principles of the sect among the remaining members. Because of its principled commitment to social justice, nonviolence, and honesty, the society experienced periodic reform movements intended to reaffirm the sect’s commitment to its principles. The withdrawal from politics of Quaker men in the 1750s occurred after members decided that continued involvement required too great a compromise. The issue of slavery was another area of concern, and Friends eventually opposed the traffic in human beings. Germantown Quakers petitioned against the practice as early as 1688, and agitation over the issue continued sporadically thereafter. In the 18th century reformer John Woolman led the way on this issue. Decision making by consensus was a slow process, but the ideal was to bring everyone along. Once the meetings had agreed to phase out first the slave trade and later slavery, Quakers could be disowned for trading in slaves (after 1743) or for owning them (1770s). Quakers, especially Anthony Benezet, formed the first antislavery society in 1775 and worked with British Friends to make antislavery an international cause.

See also Protestantism.


—Carla Gardina Pestana

race and racial conflict

Despite its common usage, the concept of “race” is elusive, slippery, and elastic. While scholars mostly now agree that race is not a valid human category, a belief in race and racial differences played a decisive and critically important role in the development of colonial North America’s human interactions. Before British contact with the peoples who inhabited the African and North American continents, the term race was inconsistently applied to a variety of social groups now conceived of as nations or ethnic groups. Race in the British North American colonies was an idea that acquired strength once contact occurred. The term then assumed meanings that suited the interests of the colonizer, not the colonized; the enslaver, not the enslaved. Africans and Native Americans did not invent the concept of race; Europeans did. The concept functioned to organize and mediate differences among groups of people who occupied overlapping territories. The term’s content derived from relations of power that frequently resulted in conflict. Indeed, ideas of race and racial conflict are mutually dependent upon each other, and this was especially true in the British colonies of North America. While most scholars have adopted the view that the concept of race is socially constructed, some historians have enlarged on this idea. For them, the concept of race is not fixed in time or space. Its meaning is historically specific as well as socially constructed. Historian Ira Berlin sums up this point: “Race, no less than class, is the product of history, and it only exists on the contested social terrain in which men and women struggle to control their destinies.” The idea of race gave birth to the reality of racial conflict. The concept of race has a long history that stretches back to well before British colonization of North America or the later enslavement of people who inhabited the African continent. Before contact with the indigenous peoples of North America, the English maintained simultaneous but contradictory views about Native Americans—that they were friendly and ingenuous on the one hand, but treacherous and savage on the other. The negative notions of race were used against Native Americans when white colonists demanded their land. Even in those instances in which initial contact had been relatively benign, conflict nearly always ensued. British ideas about Africans constituting a distinct race were equally vague and imprecise before the middle of the 17th century, that is, before their participation in the slave trade. The earliest exchanges suggest that Africans were considered both civil and hospitable. Once England became a major power in the slave trade, however, ideas about the racial inferiority of Africans crystallized. Although historians disagree about whether the slave trade resulted from ideas about race or from the economic necessity for an inexpensive and permanent labor force, the concept of race served as the foundation for the belief that people of African ancestry were ideally suited for slavery. Slave revolts and other forms of resistance to
enslavement are the most blatant examples of Africans’ opposition to, and hence conflict about, designations that resulted in what was intended to be permanent subjugation based on their “race.” Despite different and changing perceptions by Europeans of Africans and Native Americans, there was one characteristic in common: Each group came to be described in terms of its “color.” It is, of course, possible to distinguish people by color. However, it was not the color in itself that determined a group’s fate. Rather, color was used in conjunction with an assigned status, such as savage, slave, or civilized. Red, black, and white became insidious shorthand for designating status and power. Given the circumstances that brought the British into contact with Native Americans and Africans, it was probable that conflict among the groups would ensue. Simply put, the English demanded land from Native Americans and labor from Africans. Although the primary contestants in British North America were the English against Native Americans and Africans, the latter two groups variously joined forces or fought against each other. The reasons that Native Americans and Africans fought each other during the colonial era, however, rarely included racial considerations of the sort that defined both of them as subjugated groups.

Ideas about race were important in the colonial era and have had a lasting influence on American history. Only rarely, however, have American historians considered how Africans and Native Americans thought about groups other than their own before they encountered the British. Historians have greater knowledge of European than non-European ideas about race, and with few exceptions have little understanding of or concern with the ways that non-Europeans conceived of themselves. Moreover, most American historians have been more concerned with the idea of race than with the conflicts it promotes, although racial conflict is more easily documented than are ideas about race. Their concerns suggest that the very definition of fields of historical inquiry in America is still dominated by unequal relations of power between Western and non-Western worldviews. Arguably, the enterprise of historical writing about race in America is itself a continuation of racial conflict by other means.


—Leslie Patrick

religion, African-American

From 1585 to 1763 the religion of African Americans underwent a fundamental shift as traditional African faiths gradually gave way to a Protestant-based Christianity that used many features of African religions and became known as slave religion. Africans who were transported to the Americas as slaves came from complex and diverse religious backgrounds. While specific beliefs and practices varied, most West African societies held beliefs about a god or gods, an afterlife, and a spirit world. Most cultures also shared ancestral worship and certain moral injunctions, such as the condemnation of married women with children who committed adultery. Many slaves arrived in North America with a religious background deeply influenced by Islamic traditions. The religious heritage of slaves transported from Africa was not passed on intact to subsequent generations. Documents left by whites reveal little about the religion of the first slaves except the ignorance that masters appear to have shared. This contemptuous attitude on the American continent toward African religions, as well as factors in the situation of bondage itself, produced an environment that created spiritual difficulties for many slaves. African religious practices were communally based, but newly purchased slaves usually did not share the language and culture of their fellow bondpeople. High mortality rates and a lack of spiritual leadership likewise undermined communal religious experience. This was not alleviated until the slaves had an opportunity to form new communities and begin developing a new culture. Several elements of African culture were preserved and eventually became a significant portion of the emerging African-American culture. For example, slaves often conducted burials according to African customs, which involved burying items with the dead. Conjuring, a practice involving communication with ancestral spirits, also survived as a common element in African-American culture. Archaeological excavations suggest that African practices such as healing, calling on ancestral spirits, and divination were practiced...
Christianity. For medieval Europeans, there was no New World, one of their goals was to convert the Natives to religion, Euro-American.

In the 17th century masters often distrusted the idea of Christianity among their slaves, voicing concerns that slaves who converted to Christianity would then consider themselves equal to their masters and in possession of a valid claim to freedom. Early ministers strove to counteract this idea by emphasizing that slaves would always be required to serve their masters and even included promises to do so in the baptismal ceremony of slaves. Evangelicals also attempted to persuade masters that a conversion to Christianity would render slaves more docile, obedient, and trustworthy. There is no conclusive evidence that their claims were fulfilled, and many masters remained hesitant and occasionally openly hostile toward Christianity in their slaves quarters, setting the stage for secret meetings and a movement toward a distinctly African-American Christianity.

A minority of slaves practiced their faith among whites in white churches. Olaudah Equiano and Phillis Wheatley produced literature heavily influenced by Christian themes. These slaves converted to a Christianity that had distinctive European roots, and they were often segregated and usually given a minimal role within the church. This did not change until intense efforts were practiced by Evangelicals in the Great Awakening, when large numbers of slaves converted to Christianity. Baptists began to actively seek slave converts during the 1760s, and Methodists began in the 1770s. As their ranks grew, black Christians formed their own congregations, chose their own pastors, and attended their own meetings. Their religion began to take on distinct African elements, including active worship with shouting and dancing, an emphasis on freedom, secret meetings, and call and response preaching, which eventually shaped slave religion.


religion, Euro-American

When Europeans sailed west to explore and conquer the New World, one of their goals was to convert the Natives to Christianity. For medieval Europeans, there was no separation between church and state. Religion was an everyday concern, not just something celebrated once a week. Religion was also used as a weapon against minorities and a rationale for war.

Christianity is a worldwide religion of those who believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, the son of God who died for the sins of humankind. Because it is a missionary religion, Christianity has spread to practically every corner of the globe.

Except for small pockets of Jews in urban areas throughout Europe and the Muslim Moors who invaded Spain, Europe was entirely Catholic throughout the Middle Ages. The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century came about because various Europeans felt that Catholicism had become corrupted; they attempted to force reforms that would “return” the church to “true” Christianity. This Protestant Reformation was one of the reasons for the 17th-century migration to North America and had a lasting effect on American religion.

The Protestant Reformation entailed the rejection of clerical authority as represented by the pope and the celibate orders of clergy. While Roman Catholics held that priests were intermediaries between God and the faithful, Protestants emphasized direct communication between God and an individual believer. This emphasis on the individual had its parallel in the 18th-century Enlightenment ideals of the importance of the individual. The Reformation resulted in the establishment of numerous Protestant churches. Broadly speaking, followers of Martin Luther believed in justification by faith, while follower of Calvin believed that a chosen few were predestined for eternal salvation. In the North American colonies, Calvinist Puritans established a stronghold in New England, German and Swedish Lutherans in the Middle Colonies, and Anglicans in the South. During the early 1700s a long period of religious revival began, inaugurating evangelical forms of Protestantism that would later become known as Fundamentalism.

The Anglican Church was born when the pope refused to grant King Henry VIII (1509–47) a divorce from Queen Catherine. Henry’s solution was to deny the pope’s supremacy over the king of England, to establish an English church with himself as its head, and to grant his own divorce. Anglicanism remains very similar to Catholicism in most respects apart from the supremacy of the pope and a celibate clergy.

Puritans who migrated to New England embraced the idea of “predestination,” a Calvinist doctrine holding that God chose some human beings for eternal salvation. These “elect” could not fall from grace nor refuse to be saved. Their salvation did not depend on virtue; it was arbitrarily decided for them, nor could salvation be earned by excessive virtue. A blameless life was no more than a sign that a
person might be among the elect. Congregationalism was a brand of Puritanism that vested authority in the hands of each congregation rather than in a church hierarchy. New England was the stronghold of Congregationalism; the punitive measures to which it resorted to uphold its rigid standards were, in part, responsible for its failure to establish itself throughout the rest of the colonies. Massachusetts and Connecticut were the primary homes of Congregationalism. Rhode Island, on the other hand, declared people of all faiths welcome in 1663; the colony contained hundreds of Baptists and Quakers. Pennsylvania, founded by Quaker William Penn in the 1680s, also preached and practiced religious tolerance. Pennsylvania quickly became home to people of such diverse faiths as Calvinism, Judaism, and Catholicism. New England generally resisted religious groups other than Puritans until after 1700, while the Middle Colonies welcomed all faiths. Maryland was founded in 1634 as a Catholic colony and continued thereafter to have the highest percentage of Roman Catholics, although the colony grew more Anglican as time passed. In 1648 Catholic governor Calvert was driven from the colony and a Protestant named in his place. In 1689, with the Glorious Revolution in England, Protestants overthrew Maryland’s Catholic government. Protestant-Catholic tussles in the colony continued until the colonies declared their independence. The Anglican Church in North America was established in Virginia. Church membership, attendance, and conformity were required by law. However, Virginia did not make a success of its attempt to establish the Anglican Church. In the early years of the 17th century mere survival was the most important consideration. Afterward, many factors combined to make it difficult for the church to play a major role in Virginia. The population was too widely scattered, there were no bishops, and economic prosperity was of much greater concern to many than spiritual well-being. Anglicanism remained limited to the area around the Chesapeake Bay for many years, but by the mid-18th century missionaries from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel ensured that there were Anglican churches in all the thirteen colonies. American Anglicans pleaded for the English church to send bishops to the New World, but representatives of almost every other faith protested. Experience told them that bishops were far too likely to become politically powerful, and they wanted to weaken rather than strengthen English authority in the colonies. North Carolina and Georgia were home to a diverse religious population. In 1758 Georgia officially established and supported the Anglican Church. Deism is a belief in a logical God who created a rational universe. Deists believe that God was bound by the same physical laws and moral standards as his creatures. Although many believed in an afterlife as an incentive for good behavior on earth, Deists were skeptical of any element of religion that appeared to entail superstition. Deism was a philosophy more than it was a religion. Most deists in the American colonies were Anglicans or Protestants of other denominations. Deist beliefs in the rationality of the universe, the perfectibility of humankind, and the supremacy of intellect rather than birth or titles all supported the revolutionary mood that swept the colonies after the Seven Years’ War. Deism grew especially among urban artisans and among intellectuals like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. Its insistence on rational thought also helped to secularize the United States, just as was the case in Europe. During the early days of colonization the church and the state were unified. British Protestants, Swedish Lutherans, and Dutch Reformed all established small communities within which the church was supported by taxes and full church membership was required for citizenship. Only church members could vote, hold public office, and serve on juries. However, this system was challenged by the arrival of thousands of immigrants of many faiths. Many Protestants, Jews, and Roman Catholics migrated west to escape religious persecution or to establish places in which they could worship as they chose, without state interference. The existence of so many faiths meant that tolerance was often necessary to survival. Rhode Island was the first colony to guarantee religious tolerance in its charter of 1663. In the 1680s William Penn made it clear that Pennsylvania welcomed all peaceable worshipers of God—everyone was to be left alone to worship as he or she chose. During the 18th century important political leaders in both Europe and North America concluded that people should be free to worship in any institution they chose, without fear of political pressure or oppression. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison worked together to try to weaken the Anglican church establishment in Virginia, arguing that officials of the government were no more theologians than they were physicists or mathematicians and thus were not competent to establish the rules by which people worshipped. In 1786 Jefferson wrote a Statute for Religious Freedom that, when passed, carried the case for religious freedom. The first amendment to the Constitution guarantees
the separation of church and state. The roots of this separation lie in the religious pluralism that was always a fact of life in the American colonies.


—Stephanie Muntone

religion, Native American

Although anthropologists and archaeologists can only extrapolate precontact forms of worship from surviving artifacts and oral traditions, it is clear that American Indian peoples practiced a wide variety of religious rites and held myriad beliefs about religion and its relationship to the material world. For example, all tribes had creation stories that helped to link them to their physical environment and the animal world and to explain the social structures of human societies. Pueblo, Navaho, Mandan, and Choctaw all believed that their ancestors emerged from under the earth. New England Algonquin insisted that their predecessors had been formed from trees. The Iroquois and Huron told slightly different versions of the “world that was built on Turtle’s back,” in which Sky Woman fell or was pushed from the heavens into a vast ocean where different animals brought her mud to create the world. There, she gave birth to twin brothers and, through their conflicts and actions, life on earth began. This female creation story mirrored the matrilineal nature of Iroquois and Huron societies.

In general, the deity structure of Native American religions was polytheistic. Although highly developed Native civilizations such as the Aztecs believed in a hierarchy of powerful gods, most tribes presumed that a pantheon of spirits, or manitous, possessed the animals, plants, and natural features of their landscape. Others believed that the spirits of their ancestors wandered the earth and potentially might assist or terrorize the living. Religious practices, then, involved the ritual appeasement or manipulation of these manitous for supernatural assistance in everyday life. After the first kill of a hunting expedition, the Algonquin often prepared ritual offerings and a great feast. They set out tobacco by a bear or deer carcass or blew smoke into the mouth of the dead animal, asking the spirits to refrain from interfering with their hunt. In the American Southwest Anasazi (and later Pueblo) implored katsina, or the cloud-spirits of their dead ancestors, to bring rain for their crops by offering gifts of prayer sticks, dance, and cornmeal. Aztecs performed elaborate rituals, including the sacrifice of captives to appease their war/sun god, Huitzilopochtli. In other words, gods and spirits were not necessarily benign; they required careful handling so they might act on the behalf of humans.

Most Native societies had a priest, or shaman, who mediated for the gods and performed necessary rituals. They usually had knowledge of herbal remedies and performed curing ceremonies, connecting bodily health with spiritual well-being, but Indians also found ways to appeal directly to spirits. Sweat lodges or extreme privation sometimes induced much sought-after dreams and visions that made up the mainstay of individual spiritual experience.

330 religion, Native American

When European nations colonized North America, traditional Native American religious practices came under pressure. Spanish, French, and English colonization efforts all included a religious component that influenced the development of Native American religious practices in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. During the early 17th century Franciscans from Spain and Jesuits from France established Catholic missions among the Pueblo and Huron, respectively. Although not supported by a centralized church or by the British monarch, English Protestants also established mission communities, or praying towns, among the sedentary Algonquin tribes in New England during the 17th century. Native Americans often approached the introduction of Christianity by adapting selected elements of the new religion into customary practices, rather than replacing existing religious systems. For instance, Huron and Algonquin of the St. Lawrence River initially invited Jesuits to visit their villages because they recognized them as powerful holy men with access to the spirits. They hoped that the Jesuits might help to slow down or stop the devastation of smallpox epidemics. However, the Huron also assumed that Jesuits might help them in war against their Native enemies. As one historian put it, rather than converting to Christianity, the Huron, in a sense, converted Christ into a manitou. Even women, who had been central to traditional Native religious life in the East, found ways to retain their power in a Christian context. For example, in the 17th century, Kateri Tekakwitha, an Iroquois woman, joined a female order of the Catholic Church in New France and practiced extreme mortification of the flesh through fasting and infliction of pain on herself. Before her death believers sought her blessing during times of crisis, and she is likely to become the first Native American saint.

Only a small percentage of Native Americans accepted Christianity. There were many examples of profound resistance. In 1680, after a century of contact with Franciscan friars and conversion to Catholicism, the Pueblo coordinated a revolt against Spanish rule. Especially angry at the suppression of katsina worship, the medicine men who had kept traditional religious practices alive in hidden kivas encouraged the Pueblo to kill Catholic priests and
drive Spanish settlers away. By the 18th century, despite the proliferation of Protestant mission activities in the American Northeast, Native religious revitalization movements gained momentum.


—Jane T. Merritt

St. Mary’s City

St. Mary’s City was the first capital of Maryland and the fourth permanent North American English settlement. In 1632 King Charles I (1625–49) granted George Calvert, the first lord Baltimore, land from the original Virginia grant to create a colony. Calvert died soon thereafter, and his sons, Cecelius Calvert (the second lord Baltimore) and Leonard Calvert (Maryland’s first governor) recruited both Catholic and Protestant settlers from various social classes.

Founded in 1634 when Leonard Calvert and 140 English settlers arrived on the pinnaces Arkand Dove, St. Mary’s City was established as the nucleus of lord Baltimore’s colony in the New World. St. Mary’s City was a small village located on an inlet where the St. Mary’s River flows into the Potomac River. Baltimore envisioned a hierarchical manorial system of landlords and tenants, which was common in England, and servants outnumbered gentlemen in St. Mary’s City. Laborers composed a greater percentage of the workforce than did skilled workers. A Catholic refuge promoting religious toleration, St. Mary’s City served as the base for Roman Catholics in the English colonies. Because of the city’s proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, shipbuilders settled in St. Mary’s City. The Woodland Indians, primarily the Piscataway, coexisted with the settlers of St. Mary’s City, teaching them to plant tobacco. The Natives, however, eventually emigrated from their land due to strife with colonists.

Tobacco growers farmed land surrounding St. Mary’s City, and their plantations contained vast acreage worked by slaves. Both slavery and indentured servitude were common in St. Mary’s City, with servants helping in homes as well as tending livestock and gardens. A Dutch ship brought 20 Africans to Maryland in 1619. Within four decades almost 400 Africans lived in the area. Because the Maryland colony thrived on its tobacco economy, a statehouse was built at St. Mary’s City to serve as a court. Inns and taverns were erected, and such businesses as a printing shop were opened. Men outnumbered women six to one; unmarried women enjoyed rights to land, which was not common in England.

From 1645 to 1646 St. Mary’s City was embroiled in Ingle’s Rebellion. During the English Civil War this Protestant uprising occurred in Maryland in an attempt to remove the colony’s Catholic government. The rebellious forces seized and looted property in St. Mary’s City, took prisoners, and caused Leonard Calvert and several hundred residents to flee. Calvert hired mercenary soldiers from Virginia to end the conflict. Some Protestants, such as Panoramic photograph of the Castillo de San Marcos fort in St. Augustine, Florida (Wikipedia)

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William Claiborne, continued to wage attacks on St. Mary’s City, but unsuccessfully. After the rebellion yeoman planters dominated St. Mary’s City’s economy. Some servants became landowners, and earlier unequal land and wealth distribution became more balanced.

In 1689 John Coode paralyzed the government in Maryland by seizing governing records and preventing ships from departing St. Mary’s City to England. Believing Coode’s false accusations that Roman Catholics planned to massacre Protestants, England’s rulers, William and Mary, appointed Lionel Copley the first royal governor in 1691. His successor, Francis Nicholson relocated the capital to Annapolis in 1695, and St. Mary’s City was abandoned by many of its residents.

See also Brent, Margaret Reed.


—Elizabeth D. Schafer

Scots immigrants

Scots immigration to North America in the 17th and 18th centuries included people from the Lowlands, Highlands, and Islands of Scotland (see Scots-Irish Immigrants for Ulster immigrants). Few Scots moved to North America in the 1600s, as they chose instead to migrate to countries with which they were more familiar, such as England, Ireland, and the Netherlands. Scots immigration increased in the 1700s, but it ebbed and flowed rather than occurring in a massive wave. The years between the Seven Years’ War and the American Revolution brought the greatest number of immigrants; an estimated 25,000 Scots arrived in British North America during that time. Perhaps 35,000 Scots immigrants were in the American colonies by 1775. Exact numbers of immigrants are difficult to determine because of limited data and because Scots often were recorded as “British.”
Many Scots journeyed to North America as involuntary migrants—exiled criminals banished from their homeland and sold as indentured servants in the New World. In the 1650s Oliver Cromwell sent shiploads of prisoners to Virginia, and soon thereafter, King Charles II and his brother James banished Covenanters (supporters of the Presbyterian faith) to the American plantations. The Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745 also brought a number of involuntary Scots to the colonies, as exiled supporters of the Stuart line were sold to American masters. Repression of Highlanders after the Jacobite defeat in 1746 meant not only prisoners but also persecuted Highlanders, including those who lost their lands, sought refuge in North America. Perhaps 2,000 Highlanders, either by choice or by compulsion, settled in North America after the Jacobite rebellions.

Scotland’s Privy Council continued to dispatch prisoners and other “undesirables” to North America throughout the 18th century. Religious and economic factors also caused Scots emigration. Religious persecution and intolerance were particularly severe in Scotland in the late 17th century. In the 1680s Scots Presbyterians immigrated to South Carolina, where the Carolina proprietor Anthony Ashley Cooper, a Covenanter supporter, welcomed them. Some Scots Quakers, likewise persecuted, fled to New Jersey about the same time. In the 18th century, as rents rose sharply across Scotland, economic motivations became more important among migrants. Many of the voluntary immigrants came as indentured servants, selling themselves into servitude in exchange for passage to the colonies.

The Scots settled principally in the mid-Atlantic and southern colonies, often on the frontier, where they frequently waged war with Indians over the control of land. By the 1770s Pennsylvania had become a primary destination. Highlanders found their way to the frontiers in North Carolina and Georgia, and to the upper Hudson and Mohawk River valleys of New York. Lowland Scots, including many merchants and professionals, inhabited port cities, especially Philadelphia, Charleston, and Boston. Lowland Scots also settled in Virginia, where they played a significant mercantile role in the tobacco trade.

Scots immigrants did not usually establish their own communities but often assimilated into English communities. Highlanders sometimes maintained separate cultures, preserving their customs, including the wearing of the traditional Highland kilt.

Scots immigrants contributed greatly to the development of the early American colonies. They established mercantile networks that linked the American colonies to Britain and the West Indies. They played major roles in Virginia and Maryland, from governor to indentured servant. Education benefited from the Scots presence, as many were tutors and schoolmasters. Serving as physicians and establishing medical schools, clinics, and dispensaries, Scots migrants likewise promoted advances in the medical field.


—Robin Patten

Scots-Irish immigrants

“Scots-Irish” (also known as Ulster-Irish or, incorrectly, Scotch-Irish) is an American term that refers to Lowland Presbyterian Scots who migrated to Ulster in northern Ireland in the 1600s, then subsequently moved to the American colonies the following century. Besides Africans and the English, the Scots-Irish were the largest ethnic group of migrants to arrive in 18th-century America. Some scholars believe that as many as 10 percent of the colonists were Scots-Irish by the time of the American Revolution. Estimates for the actual number of Scots-Irish immigrants who arrived in the colonies between 1700 and 1775 vary considerably, ranging from 66,000 to 250,000.

England created the Ulster plantation in the early 1600s as it sought to both extend the empire and protect its flank; by 1625, perhaps 8,000 Scots had settled in 346 Scots immigrants Ulster. The initial peaceful conditions of the divided society ended with the Great Rebellion of 1641, a Catholic Irish uprising against English lords. After that, war and religious persecution against Presbyterians continued in varying degrees, resulting in both religious and economic reasons for immigration to North America. Economic conditions were perhaps the primary reason to emigrate; sanctions such as the 1699 Woolens Act and the practice of rack-renting—increasing rent when a lease expired—created extreme hardships for the Ulster Scots. When many Ulster leases expired in 1718, 1,000 emigrants boarded ship and left for Boston. This first wave of Scots-Irish migrants began a stream that became a river of immigrants to the American colonies.

A combination of economic depression, famine, and rack-renting continued in Ulster throughout the 18th century. Unable to afford the berth on a ship, many of the migrants came to North America as indentured servants, exchanging between four and seven years of labor for the cost of passage. At the end of their indenture, immigrants supposedly were provided with some necessities to begin their new life: clothes, money, and sometimes tools.
Still, many were unable to find financial security in the colonies. Favorable reports from the immigrants along with increased advertising enticed others to leave Ulster and seek opportunity in the New World.

Unwelcome in Puritan New England, the 18th-century Scots-Irish immigrants flocked to the frontier, especially to Pennsylvania. By the American Revolution, perhaps one of every three Pennsylvanians were Ulster Scots. In the mid-18th century, as Pennsylvania became more populated and land grew scarce, the Scots-Irish pushed into Virginia, occupying the Shenandoah Valley. The Scots-Irish continued to move southward into the Carolinas, Georgia, and Tennessee. As explorers and pioneers, their movement played a significant role in “opening up” the American borders to European invasion and settlement, but, in the process, displacing or killing indigenous people.

Although maintaining a distinct identity initially, the Scots-Irish eventually assimilated with others in the colonies and were absorbed into American culture. As a people, the Scots-Irish influenced colonial America, expanding the Presbyterian faith, usually supporting the Revolutionary cause, and contributing greatly to westward expansion. Further Reading: Ronald Chepesiuk, The Scotch-Irish: From the North of Ireland to the Making of America (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2000); Aaron Fogleman, “Migrations to the Thirteen British North American Colonies, 1700–1775: New Estimates,” Journal of Interdisciplinary History 22, no. 4 (1992); Patrick Griffin, The People with No Name: Ireland’s Ulster Scots, America’s Scots Irish, and the Creation of a British Atlantic World, 1689–1764 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

—Robin Patten

Seven Years’ War (French and Indian War) (1754–1763)

The French and Indian War ensured the dominance of English-speaking peoples over North America and set the stage for the American Revolutionary War (1775–83). At the end of the war France lost all of her lands in present-day Canada to Britain. With the French threat in North America eliminated, Britain and its colonies could wrangle over the nature of the imperial relationship. In addition, many of the men who would later lead the Americans in their struggle against the British, George Washington, Philip Schuyler, and Benjamin Franklin among them, rose to prominence during that conflict. This war is known by a variety of names, reflecting three increasingly large dimensions of the conflict. As the French and Indian War, it began in 1754 in what is now western Pennsylvania. A Virginia force of some 400 troops under 22-year-old colonel George Washington was defeated and sent home by a French expedition about double its size. Both had arrived to secure the Ohio Valley, but instead of simply considering this one of many border incidents that had troubled colonial relations since the 17th century, the British government, alarmed that the French had constructed a chain of forts from Nova Scotia to the Gulf of Mexico since the end of King George’s War in 1748, decided for the first time to begin a major war over a colonial dispute. In Europe the conflict is known as the Seven Years’ War, because more general fighting broke out in 1756 that pitted Britain and Prussia against Russia (until 1762), France, Austria, and (beginning in 1762) Spain. Historian Lawrence Henry Gipson dubbed the conflict “The Great War for Empire” to call attention to the fact that the skirmish fought by Washington mushroomed into a world war fought on every inhabited continent then known, including Asia, Africa, and South America as well as Europe and North America. The war’s first major combat occurred in western Pennsylvania. In 1755 an expedition of more than 2,000 Virginians and British regulars commanded by General Edward Braddock was ambushed and annihilated, with a loss of more than 800 of his men and only 39 of the French and Indians, just before it reached its intended goal of Fort Duquesne (present-day Pittsburgh). Pennsylvania, still ruled by the pacifist Quaker faction, had only grudgingly supplied food and wagons to Braddock. Native Americans in western Pennsylvania had been forced off of their lands in the eastern part of the state during the previous 25 years through treaties the colony had negotiated with the Iroquois, whom the colony recognized as sovereign in the area. Consequently, following Braddock’s defeat, the Indians launched a ferocious series of attacks that forced the line of European settlement eastward about 100 miles, behind the Susquehanna River. Raiding parties reached the environs of Reading and Bethlehem and came within 30 miles of the port city of Philadelphia. The British experienced minor victories and major setbacks for two years as they implemented an ambitious plan designed to drive the French from North America once and for all. The British planned to proceed along three fronts toward the center of French power at Quebec: from the west via Forts Duquesne, Niagara, and Oswego; from Louisbourg, the French fort at Cape Breton Island and down the St. Lawrence River from the east; and, after capturing the French Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga), through New York and up Lakes George and Champlain. However, until 1758, when a large expedition headed by the dying general John Forbes compelled the French to
Montcalm, who had only contempt for Indians and nonprofessional soldiers, feared his troops would desert unless he fought immediately. Although victory at Quebec appeared to have secured the British triumph, important operations remained. Amherst conquered Montreal the following year, and Colonel Henry Bouquet, who with Amherst’s knowledge distributed smallpox-infected blankets to Native Americans in a primitive version of germ warfare, temporarily pacified the Ohio Valley. The Treaty of Paris (1763), which ended the war, gave Canada and most of the territory in North America east of the Mississippi River (except for New Orleans and a vaguely defined West Florida) to the British. Defying the royal Proclamation of 1763, British colonists poured into the West. Bouquet and the British army were again required, this time to defeat what has been called Pontiac’s Rebellion (1763–65). It was actually a great intersocietal rebellion of Native Americans who increasingly were acquiring a common identity, even as white people were defining them collectively as racially inferior, suitable only for extermination or removal.

The futile British effort to curtail westward settlement was only one of many policies that made the Seven Years’ War the necessary, if not sufficient, prelude to the American Revolution. Efforts to eliminate illegal trade with the West Indies, from which major American merchants such as John Hancock prospered, stemmed from British anger at colonial trading with the enemy during war and the avoidance of taxes through smuggling. The Stamp Act of 1765 was designed in part so Americans might at least pay the British soldiers and civilians as they leave Fort William and the impressment of American mariners into the British navy.

The success of James Wolfe in conquering Quebec in 1759 temporarily eclipsed past misunderstandings. Considered reckless, if not insane, by fellow British officers, Wolfe ascended the St. Lawrence with a force of 4,500 men, who seemed to be helplessly stuck before the high cliffs guarding Quebec. Suffering from disease and fearing the 348 Seven Years’ War onset of winter, which would trap their ships in the river’s ice, Wolfe and his soldiers, in a last-ditch effort, climbed the cliffs and presented themselves on September 12 before the city walls on the Plains of Abraham. Instead of waiting for a relief force that was nearby, the French commander, Marquis de Montcalm, led his approximately equal force out of the city and onto the battlefield. Most of it consisted of poorly disciplined Canadian militia and Indians, no match in the open field for the British, but

When Sir William Pitt became prime minister in 1757, he realized British forces and resources would be spread thinly throughout the European continent and North America. Thus, he encouraged the raising of royal colonial regiments and funded the various colonies’ war efforts to the tune of more than 1 million pounds sterling, perhaps a third of all Britain’s expenses. However, the close association of British professional soldiers with colonial volunteers and civilians bred hostility on both sides. The British insisted on subordinating all colonial officers to Europeans, attempted to quarter troops in colonial cities to popular dismay, and, in general, relegated colonial soldiers, whom they treated contemptuously, to garrison duty and support work such as digging trenches. In turn, the colonists considered the British officers impossibly arrogant and their common soldiers badly behaved. The colonists insisted on choosing and following only their own officers and returning home each year to tend their farms and shops. Massachusetts, which provided the most soldiers—up to 8,000 per year—also was the most rambunctious; its troops mutinied 11 times. Other points of contention included American merchants trading with the enemy (the French West Indies sugar islands offered high prices for American foodstuffs) and the impressment of American mariners into the British navy.

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Americans looked forward to a destiny in which their population would continue to grow by leaps and bounds, and they would expand, as a people chosen by their Protestant God, throughout the continent. However, another world war, which developed out of the American Revolution, was required to decide which vision would prevail.


—William Pencak

shipbuilding

The tall trees of the New England coast provided English colonists with their most valuable resource (after codfish) and the raw materials for the entire shipbuilding industry. A fleet of vessels was a necessity for the colonists to conduct regular transportation and trade with England and with other colonies. It was the one colonial industry that British officials never sought to regulate because ships were always required, especially in time of war, when the merchant fleet suffered losses by the enemy. Ships built and owned by colonial merchants also allowed them closer control over their commerce without being dependent on ships and merchants in the mother country.

Colonial shipbuilding began in Massachusetts in the 1640s, where there was the need, the resources, and a growing merchant community. Throughout the colonial period Massachusetts remained the center of shipbuilding activity, taking the early lead in volume of construction. Before the Revolution Massachusetts-made ships accounted for one-third of all American-built vessels. The most important shipyards clustered around Boston and along the Merrimack and North Rivers. The industry expanded along the coast of Maine (then part of Massachusetts) and to other New England colonies. Ships made in Maine, Massachusetts, and Connecticut ranged from small coastal sloops to larger oceangoing ships, characterized by sound design and solid construction.

Shipbuilding centers developed in other colonies during the early 18th century. Philadelphia, soon after its founding, fostered the industry by welcoming shipbuilders. The Chesapeake region and South Carolina developed their own shipbuilding industry, albeit on a much smaller scale. Throughout the colonies shipbuilding added diversity to local business ventures, such as supplementing the tobacco trade in the Chesapeake area. Shipbuilding also contributed to the development of direct commerce with Europe, Africa, and the West Indies.

Shipbuilding employed hundreds of shipwrights and laborers, who often faced difficult and sometimes dangerous working conditions. They usually worked seasonally. Master shipwrights could become wealthy, while lesserskilled artisans and laborers sometimes struggled to eke out an existence.


—Stephen C. O’Neill

slave codes

Slavery preceded the emergence of slave codes in colonial North America. Initially, African-American workers’ legal status was often ambiguous. Some were held in lifelong slavery, others were treated as indentured servants, and some acquired freedom through manumission or self-purchase. The earliest known reference to lifelong, hereditary black slavery occurs not in a law but in a 1640 Virginia court decision. This indicates that colonial courts enforced local customs regarding African-American slavery before slavery was enshrined in law.

Slave codes developed haphazardly in the second half of the 17th century as the number of African and African-American workers in the American colonies grew. Slaves’ activities were restricted: They were forbidden to carry guns, possess liquor, or own property. At the same time, lawmakers closed off possible avenues to freedom by legislating that conversion to Christianity did not justify manumission and that children followed the status of their mother. Laws against miscegenation and interracial marriage separated the social worlds of African-American slaves and poor white settlers and put a premium on “whiteness.” The southern gentry used slave laws as tools for social control; legislators aimed not only to restrict the movements of slaves but also to discourage poor white people from associating with them, lest the two groups cooperate in property crimes or political rebellion.

In 1705 the Virginia legislature codified several decades of legislation pertaining to slaves into a single, massive slave code. Other southern colonial legislatures used the Virginia code and, later, the South Carolina code as models for their own slave codes. (The northern colonies, which were less dependent on slavery, seldom codified their scattered slave legislation into formal slave codes.) Slave codes not only restricted slaves’ economic and social activities but also defined their relationship to the law; slaves were generally forbidden to testify under oath and were subject to the death penalty for many offenses that were not capital crimes when committed by whites. Colonial legislatures often revised slave codes as social and political conditions changed. The South Carolina assembly, for example, issued a revised slave code in the wake of the Stono Rebellion of 1739.

Further reading: Leon Higginbotham, In the Matter of
slave resistance

During the 17th and 18th centuries the emergence of slavery as a legalized institution created a violent system of forced labor that spurred the social, economic, and political development of British North America. From the point of their enslavement, when they became property, to their life of endless labor throughout North America’s plantations, cities, and farms, slaves did not passively accept their fate. African resistance to slavery by men and women of all ages occurred in a variety of aggressive and subtle ways. Through resistance, bondpeople played a significant role in negotiating the relationship between master and slave.

One of the initial ways that slaves resisted their enslavement occurred after they boarded the slave ships off the West African coast. The majority of ship revolts occurred at the beginning of the transatlantic crossing. At this early stage of the Middle Passage—the voyage of slaves from West Africa to the Americas—the coastline remained visible, inspiring some slaves to hope that a successful uprising would enable them to return home. Once the coastline disappeared, insurrections were less common because Africans were chained in the hold, and few had any knowledge about operating European-designed vessels.

Even if they killed the crew, where could they go and how would they get there? While most ship revolts were not successful, they greatly worried ship captains and crew, who often used brutal measures to control their human cargo. Africans continued to resist after arriving in the New World. Open revolt was extremely risky because white people responded immediately and brutally. All slave uprisings on the mainland North American continent ended in the death of rebels and sometimes their family and friends as well. Revolt often constituted an act of desperation, when no other solution seemed available and when a chance of success might be possible. Recently arrived Africans were most likely to resist slavery openly, although this does not mean that seasoned, Creole, or American-born slaves passively accepted their position. Most major slave revolts between 1585 and 1763 occurred in the West Indies and in Central and South America, in areas where black people significantly outnumbered white people and where distinct geographical features offered a possibility of success. These conditions existed more rarely in British North America, although slave revolts occurred there as well.

In 1712 a group of approximately 20 slaves and fellow conspirators started a fire in New York City, then waited to ambush the arriving firefighters. Their attack killed nine white people and injured others, but the revolt was quickly quashed. White people engaged in brutal retributions. Local authorities arrested 70 people for their alleged roles in the revolt. Twenty-five slaves were found guilty: 13 were taken to the gallows, six committed suicide before 352 slave codes their sentences could be carried out, one starved to death, three were burned at the stake, and one was broken on the wheel. The colony of New York responded by legislating a very harsh slave code rivaling that of the southern colonies.

In 1739 along the Stono River in South Carolina, the most famous of America’s pre-19th-century slave revolts occurred—the Stono Rebellion. A group of 20 slaves forcibly obtained arms and ammunition in the hopes of fleeing to Spanish Florida. One motivation behind this centered on the Spanish king’s 1733 declaration making Florida a refuge for runaway slaves. As the slaves started their journey, they attacked, plundered, and burned plantations while killing all the white people they encountered.

They also recruited slaves to join them. They were soon engaged by a combination of South Carolinian militia and Native Americans who, because of their superior numbers and firepower, effectively ended the revolt by killing 30 slaves. The colony of South Carolina, greatly fearful that other revolts would follow, prohibited further slave imports and worked to greatly restrict the movement and interaction of slaves.

While slaves initiated the 1712 New York and 1739 Stono rebellions, the Negro Plot of 1741 in New York City illustrated growing racial and class tensions. In New York, Philadelphia, and other urban areas where masters owned and used slaves, extensive interaction occurred among slaves, indentured servants, and the developing white urban working class. The Negro Plot of 1741 involved not only slaves resisting a system that restricted their freedom as humans, but also the growing economic discrepancies between rich and poor. The plot began when Quack, a slave, was roughly refused entrance into the governor’s home to see his wife, a slave cook. Quack, angered by the events that had occurred, went to Hughson’s, a tavern frequented by slaves, indentured servants, and members of the working class, to vent his frustrations. Quack soon returned to the governor’s home, but rather then visiting his wife he started a fire. As the blaze grew, it threatened the town; soon after, other fires burned throughout the city, causing the free citizens to believe that a slave conspiracy
of African slaves to resist bondage. Fleeing was less violent
on a continual basis and clearly demonstrated the desire
against the institution of slavery, escape occurred
While rebellions constituted the most concerted resistance
against the institution of slavery, escape occurred
a continual basis and clearly demonstrated the desire
of African slaves to resist bondage. Fleeing was less violent
than open rebellion, and the punishment less harsh,
even though it was still an activity that undermined the
slave system. Among the problems for fugitive slaves was
where they could flee to safety because the British colonies
all endorsed slavery. In the 17th century some slaves fled
to the frontier, although they met with a mixed reception
from Native Americans. A few, especially in Florida, found
refuge among Indians.
In the 18th century slaves born in North America, capable of
speaking English and understanding Euro-American
culture, were more likely than new arrivals to take to their
heels. These fugitives often possessed the knowledge of
where to go and how to get there. The group of slaves best
able to disappear from the plantation or their master were
those who already possessed or had acquired specialized
skills, such as being a smith, which allowed them more
easily to find employment in a new location. Cities,
especially
Philadelphia, New York, and Charleston, were magnets
for runaways seeking to blend into a relatively large free
and slave population, where they might carve out new lives.
Another option for runaway slaves was to escape North
America altogether by going to sea as mariners. African
and African-American “Black Jacks” thus traveled
throughout the Atlantic world, and, as the Atlantic economy
developed, an ever increasing number of sailors were
needed.
While revolts and flight constituted visible signs of the
determination and desire of slaves to resist their
enslavement, bondpeople also engaged in more subtle forms of
rebellion. Many masters complained of the “laziness”
of their slaves, not realizing that their bondpeople were
passively resisting their own exploitation. When slaves
refused to work, or worked as little as possible, they
hindered their master’s ability to profit from their labor. In
the
same vein, slaves also broke tools, hoed plants instead of
weeds, harmed domesticated animals, destroyed crops,
burnt buildings, and stole food, liquor, and other
commodities from their masters. These subtle forms of
resistance
decreased the efficiency and profitability of bondage and
provided slaves with power to negotiate their relationship
with their owner.
Slaves were not passive pawns who humbly accepted
their enslavement. Instead, they employed various forms
of resistance, from violent uprisings to nonviolent covert
work slowdowns. While the threat of ship revolts and slave
rebellions struck fear in the hearts of slave owners, more
effective forms of resistance sometimes involved the
everyday defiance of slavery.
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Free Press, 1985); Gerald W. Mullin, Flight and Rebellion:
Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia (New
York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Billy G. Smith and
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Advertisements for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette,
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1989).
—Ty M. Reese

slavery
Slavery was the most exploitative and one of the most
common forms of labor in the New World. Slavery was
legal and prevalent throughout all the colonies in North
and South America. It was based on a legal definition of a
race of slaves, whose status was inherited solely by descent
from their mothers and whose lives were subject to special
laws or slave codes, concerning chattel property and
the treatment of slaves by masters. Slaves were considered
property rather than citizens, possessed virtually no legal
rights, could not own property, and were subject to severe
corporal and psychological punishments. African slavery
on plantations, the dominant form, was adopted by various
European colonizers of the West Indies in the 17th century
to produce export crops. The Tidewater planters of the
Chesapeake area colonies and Lower South imitated them
and created slave societies by 1700, although the resulting
social structure was quite different than in the West
Indies. Slaves could outnumber whites by 10 times or more
in the islands in the 18th century, but they composed only
about two-fifths of the population of the southern colonies
by 1776.
A slave society was defined as one in which a planter
class depended primarily on slave labor for basic production,
and the entire social structure was oriented to keeping
slaves in their place. It comprised two interlocking social
formations: The slaves had a social life and maintained
cultural ways in their quarters somewhat apart from the
whites’ dominant culture, but neither side was free of the
influence of the other, and together they created a creolized
society. All colonies in the Americas had at least some black
and a few Indian slaves. They were not all slave societies,
however, which were found only in certain geographic
areas in some colonies by 1763. Slave societies existed in
of slaves not fit to be citizens. Estimates are that the slaves
majority of Greek men who owned no slaves, and a mass
as composed of a small group of natural masters, a poor
majority of Greek men who owned no slaves, and a mass
of slaves not fit to be citizens. Estimates are that the slaves
of Greece at its height formed a third of the population.

The final step in the development of ancient slavery was
the codification of the law of slavery, carried out by the
Christian Roman emperors.

Ancient slavery began to decline into tenantry and servitude
in the later Roman Empire, but some slaves existed in
continental Europe in feudal times until the 15th century,
most of European birth, many of them Slavs—thus our
word slave. They were most numerous in certain towns in
Italy and Spain. Vikings and Englishmen also carried on a
trade in Irish slaves in medieval times. Then the Portuguese
opened up the transoceanic African slave trade, importing
the first large cargo of Africans to Lisbon in 1441. The best
customers during the first century were Europeans, who
had imported 275,000 slaves from Africa by 1600.

The African slave trade opened up the possibility of
more structured racial slavery than in the past because of
the separation of Africans from their homes and allies by
an ocean. By contrast with ancient times, in Europe and
the American colonies slavery could be defined racially as
“black” and as an indefinitely inheritable status. The Spanish
and Portuguese established the special status of black slaves
in the Americas. They forcibly moved about 184,000 of
them across the Atlantic between 1521 and 1640 to serve as
a labor force working to produce staples in the New World.
The sugar plantation district in Portuguese Brazil became
the largest slave society in the world by 1763 and contained
a population of 2,061,532 in 1800, with bondpeople
constituting three-fourths of the total population in core
regions.

By contrast, the great period of Spanish colonial slavery did
not begin until after 1763, the year reforms were initiated
in Cuba that would make it a large slave society producing
sugar to rival Brazil and Saint Domingue.

The vast majority of the some 11 million slaves
brought to the New World during the era of the slave trade
(the 15th through the 19th centuries) were carried to the
Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, and Dutch colonies
in the West Indies and South America. About 427,000 (or
4.5 percent of the total) arrived in the 13 North American
colonies and the United States before prohibition of the
African slave trade by the federal government in 1808. In
1763 more than 200,000 slaves had already been imported
into the thirteen colonies.

The purpose of slavery was to gain profits for masters
from the production of staples for export such as tobacco,
rice, and indigo. It resulted in part from the planters’
desire to replace or reduce their dependence on white
indentured labor. In all North American colonies except in
New England after 1660, British indentured servants were
a principal component of the labor supply, but exploitation
354 slavery
of them was limited in important ways. Indentured servants
could not be reduced to slavery. Those who survived their
servitude became free; some escaped their
contracts and joined neighboring white societies; all were
likely, once free, to be turbulently opposed to the restrictive
land policies of the Tidewater planters. So eager were
they for labor that the planters likely would have reduced
white peoples to slavery, but English law, politics in Britain,
and the class menace in the colonies represented by white
indentured servants led planters to prefer exploiting a race
of black slaves. The indentured continued to arrive until
the 19th century, but black slaves became the dominant
form of labor in the Tidewater region of the South, growing
especially numerous during the late 16th and early 17th
centuries.

At the time of English arrival in North America, some
Native Americans owned a small number of Indian slaves
who were neither regarded as a separate race nor intended
to labor for their owners’ profits. Their children might
become respected members of the tribe. In England slavery
was not sanctioned by law, nor did it exist there as a social
condition. In the New World, however, British colonists, in
part from observing slave societies in South America, simply
assumed that dark-skinned heathens could be reduced
to slaves. British colonists enslaved Indians, especially in
the South, but their efforts mostly failed because Indians
could too easily escape into neighboring Native societies,
because the process of capturing Indian slaves often
incited wars, and because Indians were more susceptible
than were Africans to European diseases. Colonists in all
English colonies enslaved some Indians, mainly to export
them for sale in the West Indies. At the time when the
South Carolina low country became a black slave society
(1708), Indian slavery probably reached its peak, when
1,400 Indians constituted nearly a quarter of the slave
force; they were mainly women and children because most
men were exported for sale in the islands.

Africans became the preferred choice of white planters in the
late 17th century for five major reasons. First,
the color of Africans made them easier to identify and
control, and the entire white population was supposed to
police black Africans to minimize their resistance. Second, Africa was somewhat outside Europe’s economy, so European slave traders could purchase and export many members of its workforce without concern about the consequences. Third, the supply of indentured servants from Great Britain declined at the end of the 17th century, just when the Royal African Company began making many more Africans available for sale to Americans. Fourth, some Africans enjoyed partial immunity to malaria, a major scourge of the southern colonies, so they were somewhat less likely to die during the dangerous “seasoning” of people arriving in the New World. Finally, unlike Britons, Africans were familiar with the cultivation of some of the principal export crops in the New World because they were also grown in Africa; they were also familiar with intensive hoe agriculture. In short, imported Africans offered planters several distinct advantages over indentured Britons: They could be defined as slaves by color and better policed, separated from their homeland, obtained in more steady supply, invested in with less risk, and exploited more profitably because of their superior agricultural skills. Black slaves were available for sale in Africa because human bondage already existed there, although in a much different form than it was to assume in North America. African masters initially sold war captives, surplus laborers, and unruly slaves (mainly men) to passing traders. Not consciously part of the Atlantic slave trade, masters eventually funneled exiles into a network leading to coastal slave trading posts dominated by the various European powers. Over time a number of free Africans were also kidnapped into slavery, like the famous writer and abolitionist Olaudah Equiano (1745–97), son of a substantial West African slaveholder, kidnapped from his house and reduced to slavery in Virginia in about 1757. He compared African to American slavery in his 1789 autobiography, noting that in Africa masters and slaves performed similar work and a master’s This engraving depicts an iron mask and collar used by some slaveholders to keep field workers from running away and to prevent them from eating crops such as sugarcane. (Library of Congress) black slavery after the fact. Africans came from very diverse cultural origins. Over time the focus of the slave trade shifted steadily from West Africa to Central Africa. Hence every society in America had a special mix of African cultural influences, depending on when the slaves were imported, the nationality of the slave trader, specific tastes of planters for slaves of particular ethnic groups, and historical conditions in Africa. Most slaves imported to North America came directly from Africa or following brief stops on West Indian islands before transshipment to the mainland. The slave populations of the northern colonies were exceptions, composed primarily of West Indians carried to the continent and sold by their owners. In the South most slaves arrived directly from Africa. In North American slave societies slaves became self-reproducing populations by the middle of the 18th century, whereas they succumbed more readily to epidemic diseases in those places where the slave trade was more active and the disease mix more dangerous, like the West Indies. By 1700 slave culture was a syncretic African mix created out of what they brought with them. By 1763, however, strong African culture remained among the newly arrived and older slaves, while a Creole (meaning born in America) population was creating new African-American cultural traditions. The latter were oriented primarily to their need to resist the unnatural human power relation by which masters degraded them. Individual slave societies varied widely, shaped by a number of factors: the ratio of slaves to the white population; the gender ratio among slaves; the percentage of African-born and Creoles among slaves; the concentration of slaveholding as measured by the average plantation size; local environmental conditions; the degree of planter absenteeism; the degree of inequality among planters; the work regime based on the specific local export crop(s); the commercial wealth of the local Atlantic port; and the specific historical era in the imperial contest to control
transatlantic commerce. Even so, generalizations about slave societies are possible. In comparison to West Indian and Brazilian societies, slave populations in British North America were relatively smaller; their gender ratio became more balanced over time; Creolization produced by natural reproduction was greater; slaveholding was less concentrated; natural provisions and cultivated foods were more abundant (enough to ship a surplus to the islands); the rate of planter absenteeism was much lower; while the “gang system” of labor prevailed in the Chesapeake area, similar to the islands, the individual “task system” characterized the Lower South; Atlantic ports were smaller and less rich than Caribbean ports; and slave populations increased later in North America and at a slower rate than in the islands.

African slaves were abundantly available in English colonies in this era—if not cheap at £25–35—but North American planters had a financial motive to extend the value of their investments by encouraging the slave population to reproduce naturally by making them somewhat more comfortable in their daily conditions of life. In all slave societies Africans recovered from the shock of the slave trade and attempted to form their own communities, but knowledge about the development of many of their intimate social relations in the slave quarters is limited by lack of evidence. The slave community, or “quarter,” was usually based on the family unless planters deliberately created situations in which conjugal families could not develop. An unbalanced sex distribution existed to a pronounced degree in the early period, but by the early 1700s women slaves were sufficiently numerous for many families to form in most locations in North America. Extensive kinship ties within and between plantations developed, with many of the rights and obligations of kinship that were typical of Africa, as revealed in naming practices. Contrary to an older impressionistic view of chaotic family relations in the quarters, most slave families had two parental heads and were knitted into extended networks for mutual support.

Slaves created their own rules of behavior and social status based on standards similar to those in free society. Although their homes and garden plots belonged to the master, slaves tended to become proprietorial about them. Slave societies established parallel cash economies by which some slaves could accumulate money, either by 356 slavery working for the master or someone else on the free day, Sunday, or by selling on the local domestic market the agricultural and artisanal produce of the soil, forests, and waterways. Masters and other whites purchased most of the pigs and fowls raised by slaves in their patches, the fish they caught, and the firewood and other items they gathered in their free time. As a result slaves might hold a significant portion of the local circulating currency in their possession. Slaves who engaged in local market activities were also more likely to come in contact with white people other than the master and his family. All of these status markers or networking advantages may have strongly affected individual slave status in the quarter. In rare cases it was the key to liberation because individual slaves tried to buy themselves when they had the money, a practice approved by some masters. Probably most slaves who were manumitted somehow earned it. By 1763, moreover, in some places the number of free blacks was becoming sufficient to enlarge their local population mainly by marriage and reproduction. The growth of this additional social layer must have enriched and complicated matters in the slave quarters where relatives of free blacks lived. An individual slave’s status began with sex and age, became more specific based on the strength of a kinship network, but could also be shaped by customary relationships with the master and his family, other white people, free blacks, and Native Americans and may well have reflected personal wealth as well.

Cultural factors played an important role in the creation of African-American communities, although they are less useful in comparative analysis because of their variability, instability, and poor documentation. The syncretization of religious beliefs, languages, and productive arts by individuals from a variety of African backgrounds into something African American demonstrates the extraordinary adaptive capacity of human culture and its potential to facilitate rational social relations even in the worst circumstances. Incessant and rapid cultural change provided individual slaves an opportunity to create a flexible cultural matrix in which to fashion a parallel society in the slave quarter, the community that enabled slaves to resist complete dehumanization. They did this in part by adapting elements of European culture to their own needs, in particular the English language they soon learned, into which they introduced many African words, meanings, speech patterns, and subversive intonations. Blacks also imported an abundance of medical lore, music, agricultural knowledge, and other elements that had great and lasting effect on the larger American culture.

One older historical interpretation indicates that slavery was most dehumanizing in English and Dutch slave societies, least so in Spanish and Portuguese slave societies, and somewhat in between in French plantation colonies. That model relied on comparing laws, the size of free black populations, and religious opportunities. Recently, historians have shown that slave laws and manumission rates
of free people in all the colonies before 1763; instead, the nature of slave religion is now playing an especially large role in debate. Roman Catholic priests routinely baptized virtually all slaves in Latin America and in the French colonies, perhaps following the basic catechism, perhaps not, depending on the volume of the slave trade. Beyond that, planters resisted further interference by clergy in their slave quarters, although slaves were usually permitted to attend church services. By contrast, Protestant clergy were more reluctant to baptize slaves, and masters in Protestant colonies were just as resistant as were Catholic masters to thorough Christianization of their slaves and equally fearful that it made them proud and rebellious. A few historians have emphasized that some slaves in British North America responded along with many free people to the emotion-charged evangelism of the Great Awakening in the 1740s and 1750s. Others emphasize the continuing primary influence of African religious beliefs, at least in regions like Georgia’s rice coast. Another view holds that the planters’ policy was both to suppress African beliefs and practices and to prevent Christianization, so that by 1763 slaves were experiencing a religious “holocaust.” A final sociocultural factor that is still little understood and affects comparative analysis is the degree of racial intermixture in a given slave society. People of mixed racial parentage were called mulattoes disparagingly, and North American laws decreed banishment, imprisonment, or stiff fines for racial intermarriage, making the practice rare. The older cultural model holds that this pattern of hostility to racial intermixture and manumission was uniquely characteristic of the English and Dutch, but recent scholarship suggests that these policies were much the same in French, Spanish, and Portuguese colonies. In 1763 the potential of the plantation slave system to spread in North America was limited only by the royal Proclamation of 1763 prohibiting colonial expansion beyond a line marked out along the Appalachian Mountain system and by the potential rebelliousness of the slaves. Many recent historians have described a slave culture deeply imbued with traditions of resistance to dehumanization. The power of masters, although decisive in the end, was limited by slave sabotage and rebellion. The 1720s and 1730s saw considerable plotting or outright rebellion. White South Carolina was terrified by the Stono Rebellion of 1739. Convinced that they had enough slaves by midcentury, the Tidewater planters frequently tried to limit the African slave trade because they saw it as a source of social unrest, but they were opposed by many young white men without slaves, who formed the majority of free people in all the colonies. Slavery in the southern colonies was depleting the soils in the coastal regions, and it was producing ambitious sons and daughters of slaveowners who were determined to develop the rich soils of the North American interior beyond the mountains. The Crown was of two incompatible minds, eager to protect the fur-producing areas west of the Proclamation Line but now increasingly dependent on the royal revenues arising from the slave trade itself and from slave-produced export staples. The final settlement of this issue would come with the War for Independence, for the slave system expanded into many new regions and created new states beyond the mountains after 1776.


—Thomas N. Ingersoll

slave trade
See African Americans; slavery.
and 1888, to the Americas and Caribbean. Historians disagree about the aggregate number of Africans transported across the Atlantic. Their estimates range between 11 and 20 million people, with females comprising roughly a third of the total. Generally, captives came primarily from the western areas of Africa, from Angola in the south to Senegal in the north as well as from the west and west-central interior. Farmers and herders, fishermen and women, blacksmiths, weavers, potters, traders, artisans, artists, and religious figures were among the millions stolen from their homes. Recently, historians have begun to more closely examine and refine the numbers of Africans transported, Africans’ ideas about gender, gender breakdown, and the regions from which the captives came.

The slave trade was an international enterprise, with Portugal, Spain, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and England all carrying Africans to the Western Hemisphere. It began in the 1440s, well before the British North American colonies were established, and ended more than 400 years later, long after their independence. Portugal and Spain dominated the trade initially, but after 1670 England transported the largest number of Africans to the Western Hemisphere. The North American colonies received the smallest number of captives directly from Africa. Between 1601 and 1775, according to calculations by David Eltis, 263,200 Africans were transported to the British North American colonies. The vast majority of captives arrived in the Caribbean, Spanish America, and Brazil during these years. The 1619 arrival of 20 Africans at Jamestown, Virginia, is a useful example illustrating the slave trade’s international character. The Africans had Spanish given names and were sold to the English colony by a Dutch trader. This transaction marked the introduction of the international slave trade to mainland British North America.

Although the largest number of captives transported to North America during the colonial era arrived in Maryland and Virginia, all British colonies participated in the slave trade. By 1700 North American colonists were fully involved in and profiting from the slave trade, which, according to W.E.B. DuBois, “was the very life of the colonies” and had “become an almost unquestioned axiom in British practical economics.” New England shipbuilders, mid-Atlantic merchants, and southern planters transported, sold, and bought the African captives.

Often the slave trade is described as a triangle, the sides of which linked Europe, Africa, and the colonies of the Western Hemisphere. This static spatial description, however, fails to capture the complex interactions and negotiations that changed over time. Initially, European merchants financed voyages by investing in and outfitting ships, paying mariners who sailed to the African continent 358 slaves with merchandise such as liquor, cloth, beads, iron, and guns to exchange for human beings. Many captives were transported from inland to be sold on the coast. Prudent captors moved prisoners rapidly and sold them quickly if there were no compelling demands for their labor. Even if there was a great need for labor, it was often advantageous to sell local captives and buy slaves from some distance away. Either trade or raid would bring together individuals, otherwise unknown to each other, who would be forcibly removed from their homes, families, and ancestors.

Another method of acquiring captives resulted from trade organized by African elites, merchants, and warlords, although historians disagree about the extent to which Africans were fully aware of the likely fate of those they sold overseas. For example, in 1700 the Asante state in modern Ghana began supplying slaves to traders in exchange for firearms, a practice that continued into the 19th century. On the other hand, some African states refused to participate in the nefarious practice. In 1516 the Kingdom of Benin prohibited the export of all male slaves, a ban that continued until the 18th century. One African captive, Ottobah Cuguano from the Fante nation, aptly summarized the dispute about African participation in the slave trade. He wrote that his countrymen “kidnapped and betrayed” him to be exiled into slavery but added, “if there were no buyers there would be no sellers.”

The captives were marched to the coast, shackled and malnourished, and there imprisoned to await their dreadful fate. Not all captives acquiesced. Some organized revolts while imprisoned in the coastal forts where traders awaited the arrival of the vessels for transport across the Atlantic. Others resisted shortly after being driven on board the vessels when, according to historian Robin Blackburn, they realized “that they were in the hands of white men rather than being kept as part of the slave labour force on the coast.”

The route to the Western Hemisphere, commonly referred to as the Middle Passage, was one of the most horrible and terrifying ordeals in human history. Olaudah Equiano, who claimed to have been a captive from Benin, vividly recounted what he and others suffered on the gruesome journey across the Atlantic. Men were chained in the hold of the ship, “which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself.” The involuntary inhabitants produced “copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells.” Captives also suffered from inadequate nutrition and rough handling by sailors. The ship’s crew could subject women to sexual indignities, and black women usually had little power to protect themselves. Men, women, and children perished or committed suicide during the journey that, depending on conditions, could take from two to four months. Dehydration was a
The major cause of death, although contagious diseases also took their toll. Rates of mortality were considerable, given the conditions in which people were transported. Between 1500 and 1760, British ships left Africa with 1,662,000 captives and arrived in the Western Hemisphere with 1,252,000 men, women, and children; a loss of one in four captives. After 1750, mortality rates declined significantly due to increased knowledge about providing fresh water and preventing contagious diseases.

The slave trade was not without either its defenders or its detractors. Church and state justified the practice. Theological justification claimed that heathens would benefit from becoming slaves to Christians. Political theorists argued that the slave trade would bring savages to civilization. Opposition to it came from Africans, of course, and a very small number of white people. Unfortunately, there are only a very few written accounts from Africans who survived and undoubtedly opposed their captivity, transport, and enslavement. More prevalent are the eyewitnesses’ accounts of Africans throwing themselves overboard or starving themselves to death. The earliest protest by whites in British North America occurred in 1688 in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Four men, who had recently immigrated from the Netherlands, submitted a petition to the Society of Friends’ Monthly Meeting, protesting that the slave trade, among other things, violated the Golden Rule. They were ignored.


—Leslie Patrick

Colonial merchants engaged in widespread smuggling as a means of avoiding taxes levied by the British Parliament. Crown official Edward Randolph decried the flagrant violation of trade regulations by American merchants and loss of revenue to the Crown as early as 1676. Reporting in a pamphlet entitled “The present State of the Affairs in New England,” Randolph charged that Americans “violate all the acts of trade and navigation, by which they have ingrossed the greatest part of the West India Trade, whereby his Majestie is damaged in his Customs above 100,000 £ yearly.” While his figure is an exaggeration, many merchants in the colonies were certainly involved in some form of illegal smuggling. Americans saw wealth to be made by avoiding paying customs duties, regardless of the law. The many inlets, coves, and islands along the Atlantic seaboard provided perfect locations for colonial smugglers of all varieties. The widely accepted process of smuggling in the American colonies helped create some of the largest fortunes. Frederick Philipse of New York was widely known to traffic with the pirate outpost on Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. John Hancock of Massachusetts, who inherited his uncle Thomas’s fortune and shipping business at the age of 27, soon became one of the wealthiest men in the colonies, primarily from the profits of smuggling. Apart from these two famous cases, it is uncertain to what extent smuggling was carried on by colonial merchants. There was no effective force to stop colonial smuggling altogether, and local customs officials could be bribed.

Records, beyond the official complaints of Randolph, are not to be found. Two particular areas of smuggling that are known to have developed in the 1600s were the importation of European manufactured goods into the colonies and the West Indies trade of sugar, molasses, and rum. Passage of the Navigation Acts was designed to stop illegal trade by the colonies with any non-English merchants, particularly the Dutch. The acts were passed specifically for the benefit of the mother country but also, as in the case of the Molasses Act of 1733, for the benefit of a particular group. That act was passed for the Barbados sugar planters, who faced competition from colonists buying cheaper French and Spanish sugar in return for colonial foodstuffs. By the smuggling
1760s the acts passed to counter colonial smuggling began to be viewed as an attack on the rights and freedom of colonial merchants.


—Stephen C. O’Neill

society, British American

“What then is this American, this new man?,” Hector St. John Crèvecoeur inquired in 1782. Twenty-two years earlier Benjamin Franklin questioned the whole idea of a “typical” American. The colonies, he explained, “were not only under different governors, but have different forms of government, different laws, different interests, and some of them different religious persuasions and different manners.” Crèvecoeur’s question and Franklin’s assessment described coexisting aspects of colonial British American society. Throughout most of the colonial period, British 364 smuggling

America consisted of several distinct societies. These cultures distinguished themselves through their demographic conditions, labor arrangements, economic structures, racial and gender roles, and political frameworks, yet, at the same time, the notion that a single “American” had emerged after the Revolution suggested that colonial America shared unifying characteristics that bound its diverse regions into a single culture. Franklin and Crèvecoeur were two of colonial America’s most astute observers. An understanding of their competing perspectives contributes to an appreciation of colonial America’s social complexity.

Within 10 years of Jamestown’s 1607 founding, the Chesapeake region had created a commercialized tobacco economy strong enough to shape the region’s early social development. A young, male-dominated population of white planters, white and black indentured servants, and African slaves prepared the region’s large plantations for extensive tobacco exportation. The conditions under which these men labored confirmed the planters’ drive for profit. An inadequate food supply, overworked laborers, and unhealthy water resulted in high mortality rates and frequent political instability. These conditions, along with fluid racial categories, the lack of families, and an increasingly skewed distribution of wealth, encouraged personal autonomy and greed while discouraging social deference, traditional gender roles, and political stability. The planters’ ongoing quest for land, moreover, not only strained relations among whites but antagonized relations with Native Americans. Major battles between settlers and Indians broke out in 1622, 1644, and 1675. Early Virginia and Maryland thus stood in sharp contrast to society in England.

Chesapeake area settlers ameliorated these destabilizing conditions by approximating familiar metropolitan traditions. Throughout the 17th century the establishment of county courts and parishes, representative lawmaking assemblies, and widespread political participation provided the Chesapeake region with a sociopolitical framework coherent enough to moderate its destructive trends. White planters further contributed to this emerging stability by manipulating race and gender so as to define more rigidly a once ambiguous hierarchy of power. By perpetuating a racial distinction between white servitude and black slavery through slave codes, white planters defused the class tensions that fueled Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676 and established the basis for a white supremacist ideology. Furthermore, the division of labor along gender lines, the regulation of white women’s sexuality, and the condemnation of Native Americans’ division of labor (Indian women managed fieldwork) similarly constructed once fluid gender expectations into less flexible gender roles. As more women arrived in the colony this evolving patriarchal norm exerted a social influence that contributed to the region’s growing stability.

New England Puritans established England’s second large North American society in 1629. Although the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the Chesapeake region were outposts of the same metropolitan culture, the contrasts between these societies were striking. Most migration to New England occurred in a short burst of voyages lasting from 1630 to 1642. It landed about 4,000 white, Puritan, middle-class families in a healthy environment replete with natural resources, even if the farmland was less rich than in other colonies. The economic quest for transatlantic profits through cod, timber, and fur exports initially yielded to modest family farms that closely replicated English traditions. Puritans employed servant labor rather than slaves, made the family rather than the plantation the central economic unit, and immediately adopted the patriarchal assumption (enforced by the practice of “coverture”) that husbands controlled their wives’ property and person. Puritans did not oppose material gain. Instead, they tempered commercial pursuits with values gleaned from covenant theology, familial stability, and the supposed moral benefits of hard work. Accordingly, they established a political system favoring religiously “elect” white men who monitored social behavior for signs of subversion. The banishment of Roger Williams for transgressing Congregational theology and Anne Marbury Hutchinson for contradicting the gendered order suggest the magnitude of this vigilance. A low infant mortality rate, a nearly equal sex ratio, and a mixed economy supportive of an equitable wealth distribution allowed New

While the early Chesapeake region worked to impose stability on its evolving society, New England labored to preserve it. And while the Chesapeake area largely succeeded, New England generally failed. The theologically driven, socially homogeneous society that the founding generations forged bowed under the weight of several changes. New England became an aggressively commercial society defined less by its ministers’ sermons than its merchants’ ledgers. The anxiety inspired by a growing commercial elite manifested itself in events such as the Halfway Covenant (1662) and the Salem Witch Trials (1692). New Englanders’ further challenged their founding ideals by abandoning their original towns for cities like Boston, Newport, and New Haven, or for frontier communities. Migration and urbanization disrupted church organizations, strained traditional gender roles, and undermined the deferential attitudes once enforced by family, church, and community. Commercialization and internal migration, moreover, ushered in slavery and poverty. By the society, British American 365 late 17th and early 18th centuries growing wealth from the cod, timber, and whale trades enabled a powerful minority of New Englanders to import slave labor. If New England slaveholders and those who fell into poverty were relatively few, their presence nevertheless reflects the larger changes unhinging New England from its original mission. As “peaceable kingdoms” of the 17th century diminished, New England started to look more like the rest of colonial British America.

The Middle Colonies—primarily New York and Pennsylvania—emerged later in the century (1664 and 1681, respectively) and quickly assumed a unified sociocultural character. Like the Chesapeake region, the Middle Colonies exhibited materialistic and individualistic tendencies during their settlement years. Unlike the Chesapeake area, though, an influx of immigrants from Scotland, Ireland, and Germany channeled potentially disruptive social impulses into the development of colonial America’s most stable and diverse economy. A healthy balance of family farms, merchant houses (especially among Pennsylvania Quakers), and shipping firms enabled this region to negotiate both local and transatlantic markets. Through the exportation of wheat and livestock, a local trade in iron, dairy products, and bread, and the provision of services including shipbuilding and food processing, the Middle Colonies nurtured an economic culture that made it, according to one historian (referring to Pennsylvania), “the best poor man’s country.”

The Middle Colonies’ economic progress was inextricably linked with the region’s social development. As in New England, family labor dominated the Middle Colonies. Quaker families in particular advocated an arrangement whereby parental authority remained weak, the nuclear family prevailed, partible inheritance became common, and children left home at young ages to improve their material conditions. Tenancy and servitude, however, were also common features of the social landscape, and these institutions placed poorer immigrants in positions of extreme dependency. Despite tenant uprisings on New York’s manorial estates in the 1740s, however, tenancy and servitude sometimes became stepping-stones to a freehold in the hinterland or artisanal independence in the city, rather than remaining a permanent condition.

However, opportunities for upward mobility were not ubiquitous. Slavery was a growing reality in the Middle Colonies. New York City and the manufacturing centers around Philadelphia craved skilled slave labor. By 1746 30 percent of New York City’s laborers were slaves. Slaveholders in the Middle Colonies never employed the brutal gang labor techniques used in the Chesapeake region, but slaves still suffered the cruelties of their condition. Slave codes mandated the same racial dichotomy that prevailed in the Chesapeake area, and violent resistance among disgruntled slaves remained an ongoing and often real threat. Colonial North America’s first slave insurrection took place in New York in 1712. Servitude, tenancy, and slavery, moreover, fostered a differentiated social structure. In cities the wealthiest 10 percent owned more than 50 percent of the taxable wealth, with the bottom 30 percent owning less than 2 percent. Stratification was lower in rural areas, with a distribution of property more equal than in New England. Finally, government in the Middle Colonies reflected the anti-authoritarianism of the Quaker population by remaining weak, highly inclusive, and responsive to the needs of white males.

Planters from Barbados settled the Lower South in the 1680s. By the early 1700s the dominant sociocultural traits of the Lower South included a dedication to staple crops (rice and later indigo), an unhealthy environment, rapid demographic growth due to English, Scots, Ulster Scots, and German immigrants, and a fierce commitment to slave labor. The logic behind staple agriculture required the importation of a slave population that in some counties dramatically exceeded that of whites (as high as 90 percent), a wealth disparity that made a select minority of planters the richest men in colonial North America, and unprecedented displays of conspicuous consumption. The Lower South adopted a restrictive approach towards the black population, especially after the 1739 Stono Rebellion, but its stance towards other institutions,
such as the family, was comparatively lax. White women in South Carolina, for example, routinely contradicted traditional gender norms. Married women were allowed to maintain an estate, and thus a measure of independence, separate from their husbands’ holdings. This provision, in addition to the many slaves that white widows inherited, conferred unusual economic power upon southern women and perpetuated fluid gender norms inconsistent with the rest of colonial North America. If there was a culture that looked the most different from the metropolis of Britain, it was the Lower South.

The differences among these four colonial regions, stark as they seem, coexisted with four broad social developments that, throughout the 18th century, transcended distinctions among colonial societies and provided colonial British America a shared foundation upon which to negotiate their differences and build a unified, highly complex society. First, scattered pockets of slavery evolved into a comprehensive slave society that influenced life from New England to the Carolinas. Black slaves, unlike indentured servants, lacked formal rights, became cheaper and easier to obtain, and, unlike Native Americans, were initially reluctant to escape into an unfamiliar countryside. In 1640 the mainland colonies had about 1,000 slaves—about 2 percent of the European-American population. By 1780 they had well over 500,000—about 25 percent of the European-American population. The economic consequences of this transition catapulted the mainland colonies to a position of international significance. Its sociocultural consequences, however, were equally profound. Enslaved Africans negotiated incredible difficulties to establish an influential African-American society that pervaded the British mainland colonies. Slaves from the Carolinas to New England reconstructed family life to incorporate aspects of their African pasts into their colonial present. They conducted extralegal marriages, traveled widely to maintain kinship and friendship connections, and, in so doing, supported vibrant African-American communities. Slaves participated actively in public culture. Through music, marriage ceremonies, storytelling, and dancing, enslaved blacks preserved traditions while carving out a meaningful place within colonial America’s growing public sphere. Slaves resisted the institution under which they labored through finely coordinated strategies. Whether it was slacking off work on the plantation, breaking field equipment, running away, or assaulting (and even murdering) whites, slaves honed a sense of community and shared culture unlike any other immigrants to America. Their suffering and strategies to manage that suffering forged a set of common ideals that influenced white societies throughout colonial British America.

Second, although historians have vigorously debated the extent of its impact, religious expression also shaped a discrete American society. As colonists took advantage of North America’s comparatively tolerant religious environment to embrace dissenting Protestant ideals, they established social trends that resonated deeply throughout the colonies. Most visibly, congregational expansion after 1700—be it Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, or Presbyterian—transformed America’s physical space. Churches and meeting houses replete with bells and spires gradually “sacralized” the colonial landscape. This landscape, in turn, became the context for transcolonial evangelical revivals that grew especially intense in the 1740s, leading some historians to call this movement the Great Awakening. These periods of spiritual rapture encouraged colonists of all religious backgrounds and from all regions to balance traditional doctrinal loyalty with personal introspection. Colonial American religious development also granted women unique opportunities to assert their independence and authority. Although they could not be ordained, chair meetings (except Quakers), or hold office, women constituted a majority of church membership, and their numerical strength allowed them to influence hiring, policy, and church discipline.

A third factor influencing the convergence of a single American society involved consumer behavior. Throughout the 18th century, European-Americans, slaves, and Native Americans experienced important changes in their material lives. The diet of white Americans improved, incorporating finer cuts of meat, a wider variety of fruits and vegetables, and more herbs and spices. Slaves also developed more sophisticated diets as masters allotted them time to grow their own food, keep their own livestock, and do their own cooking in separate quarters. Sickness, drought, and dispossession of their land placed Native Americans in a different position. For them, diminished agricultural activity meant dependency on European-Americans for their food. In terms of clothing, white colonists enjoyed both increasing imports from England and clothes made domestically. They could, especially after 1730, choose from a plethora of affordable fabrics and complement their outfits with distinctive hats, shoes, and underwear. Garments became status markers, and as wealthy merchants donned the finest silk shirts and French shoes, slaves, with their rough-cut shirts and threadbare pants, reflected the lowest rung of the
Indians were able to achieve substantial diplomatic leverage during the Seven Years' War (1754–63) in North Carolina (1712), and the Yamasee War in South Carolina (1715). During the Seven Years’ War (1754–63) Indians were able to achieve substantial diplomatic leverage by playing French and English interests against each other. For groups like the Catawba in the South and the Iroquois in the North, these strategies proved temporarily beneficial. By the end of the Seven Years’ War, however, as the Revolutionary Era approached, white Americans moved West with such force and rapidity that many Indians, who no longer enjoyed the diplomatic advantages that the English/French conflict conferred, disintegrated as coherent tribal entities. Some tribes, like the Mississippi Chickasaw and the Florida Seminole, extended their autonomy, but they were the exceptions. The Oneida took refuge in camps, and the Iroquois Confederacy was dissolved. The marginalization of Native Americans throughout colonial North America unified the colonies in a relentless quest for land.

Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG)

Founded in England in 1701 by royal charter, the Venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was formed to strengthen the Church of England and convert non-Christian peoples in the British colonies. The SPG also distributed Bibles, prayerbooks, and religious monographs for church and college libraries. While their missionary efforts were most successful among British colonists, SPG ministers also worked among 47 different Native American tribes, from the northern Iroquois to the southern Yamasee. The most successful missionary effort was among the Mohawk, begun in 1712 in response to a plea for Christian instruction from four Mohawk sachems who presented their request to Queen Anne (1702–14) in London in 1710. Over the next 60 years many tribal members were baptized, the Book of Common Prayer and much of the Bible were translated into the Mohawk language, and Native leaders were trained as catechists and teachers.

Christian instruction for African slaves was more problematic. Missionaries attempted to provide basic literacy instruction for slaves, contending that church members
South Carolina
The colony of South Carolina became one of the most important of the original 13 colonies, as it dominated the political and economic life of the Lower South.

Native Americans
Before the European invasion, various Indian groups, including the Cusabo, Catawba, Yamasee, and Cherokee, inhabited the area that would become South Carolina. When the first English colonists arrived in present-day North Carolina in 1585, the Catawba numbered among the many tribes who lived in the Piedmont region of North and South Carolina. During the next two centuries, European diseases decimated their population, while their independence, culture, and lands came under attack. Like many other Native Americans, they gradually became dependent on European goods, especially metal pots, arrow tips, knives, and guns. The Catawba and their neighbors initially killed deer and exchanged their skins for these articles, but, as the number of deer declined in their territory, the Catawba became the brokers in the trade between European power and commerce with white settlers, which undermined their power and independence. Their consumption of these commodities was so enormous that the Cherokee ceded large tracts of lands, from South Carolina to Tennessee, to British-American settlers in payment for their debts. The Cherokee were entangled in the complex political struggles among the British, French, and Spanish in the 18th century, and they often attempted to play one European power off against the other for their own benefit. During the Seven Years’ War, some Cherokee towns supported the French and attacked the Carolina backcountry in 1760, while many others fought with the British.

Siding with the British during the American Revolution, the Cherokee eventually lost even more land and became subordinate to the new U.S. government. Both the Spanish and the French many times attempted but failed to establish settlements in South Carolina in the 16th century. King Charles I of England claimed Carolina (named from the Latin name for “Charles”) in 1629 by granting the region to Sir Robert Heath. However, he did not attempt to found settlements. After the Stuart Restoration, King Charles II, responding to the requests of a group of prominent politicians, granted the area to eight supporters whom he named the Lords Proprietors over Carolina. Their charter provided them with extensive power over the colony, and they promised political and religious freedom as well as land to settlers. When these promises failed to attract many colonists, Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper (subsequently earl of Shaftesbury) and the philosopher John Locke wrote the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina in 1669, which maintained feudal privileges but also granted some popular rights. Its purpose was to

needed to be able to read to participate in the liturgy, but slaveholders often thwarted these efforts. Many blacks, however, were baptized and enrolled in local congregations. Schools for African Americans were also established, such as that taught by Huguenot convert Elias Neau in New York City from 1704 to 1722. The school continued after his death and eventually formed the basis for black public schools after independence. As revolutionary fervor increased, aside from notable exceptions, most SPG ministers upheld the loyalist cause. In 1783 the society withdrew its support from the newly formed United States. The correspondence between local SPG agents and the London office, available on microfilm, is a rich resource for colonial social history.


—Mary Sudman Donovan
define a well-ordered, hierarchical colony, with counties of equal size, each of which was apportioned in equal parcels. The proprietors would own the largest number of parcels, the colonial aristocracy the next greatest number, and the least amount of land was reserved for less affluent settlers. Whites without property would enjoy no political rights, while black slaves were to be completely subject to their masters. Political power would rest primarily in the hands of the wealthy.

Settlers did not adopt the Fundamental Constitutions, and the colony developed along considerably different lines than envisioned by the authors of that document. Politically, the proprietors appointed the governor and half of the council, who essentially ruled the colony. The free men elected an assembly with very limited power. Meanwhile, northern and southern Carolina evolved into distinct societies. In North Carolina (initially separate in 1712, then officially in 1729 when the king formally divided the region), freeholders used slave laborers and indentured servants to produce corn, tobacco, livestock, and naval stores. South Carolina’s first permanent English settlement was at Albemarle Point, where immigrants from England and Barbados arrived in 1670. During the next 10 years, most new arrivals were white Barbadians and their black slaves. For the next few decades, South Carolina produced wood staves, corn, and livestock to trade with the sugar-producing island of Barbados, becoming, as one historian has called it, the “colony of a colony.”

In 1680, the colonists moved their capital to Charles Town (later Charleston), which expanded rapidly and became the center of the colony’s political, social, and cultural life. Roughly 5,000 colonists lived in South Carolina at the end of the 17th century, many of whom were Indians and black slaves. Although white settlers quickly established a slave society, many Africans and African Americans exercised at least some nominal freedoms and engaged in diverse occupations, at least during the final years of the 17th century.

Cultivated by black slaves familiar with the crop in their homeland, rice was introduced into South Carolina about 1680, and within a quarter century, it quickly became the colony’s most important export. The intense labor demands associated with rice production spurred an incredible expansion of slavery and the establishment of a harsh plantation regime that brutalized bound laborers. One result was that black inhabitants outnumbered white residents throughout most of the 18th century. In some marshy rice-producing areas, and especially when owners fled to Charleston during the summer to escape malaria and the heat, slaves accounted for more than three-quarters of the population. These conditions, combined with the continual importation of Africans, enabled slaves to blend traditions, religions, and languages from various parts of Africa to create a distinct culture. In 1739, when black bondpeople were more than twice as numerous as white residents in the colony, a group of 50 slaves staged the Stono Rebellion—the largest slave revolt in early North America. Hoping to escape to the freedom promised by the Spanish in Florida, slaves attacked property and killed more than 20 whites before being defeated by the militia. In response, the colony’s assembly passed the most severe slave code in mainland North America. Thereafter, slaves adopted subtler, less violent ways to resist their exploitation.

The early 18th century was a time of considerable difficulty. In 1715, the Yamasee attacked the colony, killing more than 400 settlers and causing the colonists to abandon half of their cultivated lands. Meanwhile, the growing number of pirates off the coast contributed to the unrest. Dissatisfied settlers complained about the proprietors’ failure to protect them or to grant them additional lands. In 1719, the colonists engaged in a bloodless rebellion and received the protection of the Crown. The next year, the British sent Francis Nicholson to serve as the provincial royal governor. South Carolina became a royal colony in 1729 when the original proprietors’ heirs sold their rights to the Crown.

The remainder of the colonial era was somewhat more peaceful and stable. Indigo became the second most important product of South Carolina during the 1740s. In addition to African forced migrants, large numbers of Germans and Swiss arrived in the 1730s and 1740, while the Scots-Irish moved southward from Pennsylvania and Virginia in the 1760s. Yet, the colony remained fractured in regional, economic, and social terms. Poorer farmers in the backcountry struggled against the powerful rice planters along the coast, and the latter ruled and continued to rule the region for decades.


Seventeenth-century English colonizers brought with them the technologies of a preindustrial, agricultural society, many of whose tools and techniques dated to the Middle Ages. Colonial North American technologies were defined
The production of tobacco was a significant component of the colonial economy. The demands of that production encouraged the growth of indentured servitude and slavery in the Chesapeake area colonies as well as the expansion of white colonists onto Indian lands. Many Native Americans cultivated tabacum, two of 60 species of the genus Nicotiana of the Solanaceae, or nightshade, family. They ingested it by chewing, snuffing, and drinking, and even with enemas, but mostly by smoking. Tobacco was used for medicinal, ceremonial (especially peacemaking), and religious purposes.

Practice and belief varied, but hallucinations (induced by strong nicotine content or mixing with other substances) were widely construed as representing communication with spirits occupying tobacco plants. Europeans initially viewed tobacco medicinally, especially after Spanish physician Nicholas Monardes rated it a panacea in 1571. Consumption increased as availability rose and prices fell. English imports, 25,000 pounds in 1603, reached 38,000,000 by 1700; meanwhile prices declined from 40 pence per pound in 1618 to 1 pence by the 1660s. Mass consumption, with 25 percent of adults smoking a pipeful each day, appeared in England by the 1670s and in much of Europe by 1750. Pipes were favored initially (although Iberians, like Native South Americans, preferred cigars), but snuff became more common in the 18th century. Consumption was not restricted by class, race, or gender, although 18th-century elites incorporated tobacco into genteel rituals, while others used “sot weed” for their own hallucinogenic and recreational purposes. Tobacco was cultivated in Amazon settlements and for their own hallucinogenic and recreational purposes. Tobacco was cultivated in Amazon settlements and for their own hallucinogenic and recreational purposes. Tobacco was cultivated in Amazon settlements and for their own hallucinogenic and recreational purposes. Tobacco was cultivated in Amazon settlements and for their own hallucinogenic and recreational purposes. Tobacco was cultivated in Amazon settlements and for their own hallucinogenic and recreational purposes. Tobacco was cultivated in Amazon settlements and for their own hallucinogenic and recreational purposes. Tobacco was cultivated in Amazon settlements and for their own hallucinogenic and recreational purposes.


—James Delbourgo
experiments in Jamestown beginning in 1612, Virginians dedicated their efforts almost totally to producing tobacco and failed to grow sufficient food, thereby contributing to the colony’s near collapse. Despite falling prices and wartime disruptions, tobacco remained fundamental to the Chesapeake economy and society: “our meat, drinke, cloathing and monies,” according to Reverend Hugh Jones in 1699.

Cultivation required about 50 acres of land per worker, accounting for rapid but scattered settlement. Although labor intensive, the crop yielded little economy of scale. This engraving shows tobacco leaves being pressed, cured, and packed by slaves. (Hulton/Archive)

Tobacco 391

and small farms remained common in the Chesapeake area. From the 1680s the supply of indentured servants declined, and larger planters amassed sufficient capital to buy slaves. Chesapeake area slaves increased rapidly, from 1,708 in 1660 to 189,000 in 1760, rising from 5 percent to 38 percent of the population. From the 1660s law and custom forged greater distance between the races, and this allowed development of semiautonomous African American community, culture, and resistance. A slaveholding plantocracy appeared by the 1690s, consolidating its wealth dynastically. It developed a genteel “tobacco culture” that emerged from a consignment system of direct market and social relationships with British merchants. Material inequality rose (70 percent of white householders owned land in 1660, but only 50 percent by 1760), yet white racial solidarity increased as Euro-Americans envisioned themselves as part of a superior race. Wider access to markets, credit, and imported goods (including slaves) through Scottish merchants in the Chesapeake region raised standards of living among most white people after 1730, creating a more stable white society. Further reading: Lois Green Carr, Russell R. Menard, and Lorena Walsh, Robert Cole’s World: Agriculture and Society in Early Maryland (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Jordan Goodman, Tobacco in History: The Cultures of Dependence (New York: Routledge, 1993); Allan Kulikoff, Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680–1800 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

—Steven Sarson

trade and shipping

Trade was the foundation of the early American economy, with commercial ties extending in many directions. Colonists established exchange with Native Americans that ranged from casual to well-developed enterprises. Settlers also participated in transatlantic trade, primarily with England and the West Indies. In addition, an internal trade network developed involving both backcountry and coastal communities. Over time the nature and extent of these networks changed, reflecting the growth and development of colonial America. Before the arrival of Europeans, Native Americans engaged extensively in trade with one another, and archaeologists have found evidence that goods sometimes were transported across the continent. Most items traded were items of luxury rather than necessity. European colonists were often very interested in trading with Natives because animal furs and pelts gained high prices in the Old World. Jamestown residents traded metal pots, fishhooks, and traps for foodstuffs and furs. Massachusetts settlers exchanged iron tools, cloth, firearms, and liquor for furs. In the Middle Colonies Indians sold fish, pelts, and venison at town markets.

In the Carolinas traders bought deerskins from the Westo, Creek, and Cherokee Indians. This trade proved significant, accounting for 18 percent of Carolina’s total export earnings before 1749 and remaining at roughly 10 percent until 1775. Carolinians also engaged in trading Indian slaves. Between 1690 and 1710 perhaps 12,000 Indians were exported from the Carolinas to the northern colonies and the Caribbean. This trade increased tensions between settlers and nearby Indians, set off a series of wars, and disrupted the deerskin exchange. As a result, Carolinians abandoned this slave trade by the 1720s. Over time the fur trade became highly organized and one of the most valuable enterprises in the British and French colonies. Some tribes, acting as intermediaries, collected furs from Indians hunting as far west as the Great Lakes. The furs were then traded to colonial merchants and exported to Europe. As fur-bearing animals in some areas grew scarce, trade gradually shifted northward. The Hudson’s Bay Company, established in 1670, focused its operation on fur-rich areas in northern Canada.

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Colonists also engaged in transatlantic trade. In the early years of settlement planters and merchants in Virginia exported tobacco to England. New Englanders shipped grain and lumber to the West Indies and fish to southern Europe. In exchange colonists imported such goods as molasses, coffee, salt, and wine. Beginning in the 1650s, Parliament began to issue a series of acts to control trade within the empire. They required that certain enumerated commodities be shipped only to England, on English ships with British (including colonial) crews. Although these policies restricted some aspects of colonial trade, they also protected and stimulated many commercial enterprises. Colonists had a guaranteed market for many of their exports. Their shipbuilding industry also profited; by the mid-18th century
nearly one-third of all British ships were American made. Moreover, many policies were often evaded by colonists and not strictly enforced by Parliament.

The American colonies formed an important link in the transatlantic trade that saw goods flow to and from colonial North America, the West Indies, and England. American merchants shipped furs, naval stores, tobacco, rice, and indigo to England. They exported grains, fish, lumber, and livestock to the West Indies. In return colonists imported manufactured products from England and slaves and molasses from the West Indies. Through this route most black slaves were brought to the British mainland colonies.

Between 1619 and 1760 approximately 400,000 slaves were brought to the thirteen colonies. British slave-trade companies supplied the bulk of the slaves, but American merchants, most of them based in Rhode Island, organized the sale of slaves in the colonies. During the 18th century Rhode Island merchants controlled 60 to 90 percent of North America’s trade in African slaves.

The colonies also developed internal trade networks. Backcountry farmers sold surplus grain and fresh vegetables to coastal communities. Rice and tobacco from the southern colonies were shipped north and exchanged for meat and grain. By 1760 roughly 30 percent of the total tonnage of colonial ships was destined for other American mainland ports.

These various trade connections combined to stimulate growth and development. The populations of port cities like Boston, New York City, and Philadelphia increased, as did job possibilities for merchants, shopkeepers, shipbuilders, artisans, and others in trade-related industries. This intercolonial trade likewise promoted the development of roads and interactions among colonists. The changing dynamics of trade with England reflect the maturing of colonial America. During the early 17th century the value of exports far exceeded the value of imports, reflecting the relatively low standard of living consistent with early settlement. By the early 18th century the value of imports from Britain was greater than exports to the mother country; this trend continued throughout the century. This transformation in trade indicates the changing consumption patterns of North America before the Revolution.

See also Acts of Trade and Navigation.


—Virginia Jelatis

Early Americans traveled primarily for work. Judges moved from town to town to preside at circuit courts. Ministers, who were responsible for more than one congregation or had no fixed place, traveled to folks eager to hear them preach. Peddlers took to the roads to sell their wares, and traders moved around in the colonial interior to exchange goods with Indians. Occasionally, travel was motivated by an official function. William Byrd II journeyed with a small group to mark the boundary between Carolina and Virginia. Colonial leaders met with Native Americans to negotiate treaties and form trading partnerships. Representatives left home for meetings of the assembly. Water transportation offered the easiest, cheapest, and most favored form of travel. Pennsylvanians avoided the bumpy wagon ride by loading their grain onto shallops and relying on the network of rivers to move their produce to market. Southern planters transported their tobacco from their farms to the docks of Jamestown or Charleston for shipping to European or British markets. Because tobacco was bulky and fragile, they avoided the jostling from uneven roads and depended upon inland waterways to carry their crop to eastern ports. According to one source, “it was easier and less traumatic in good weather to sail from London to Boston than to reach Charleston from Massachusetts by horse.”

Taverns were the first hotels and motels in early America. By law they were required to provide nourishment and lodging for humans and horses. The 1692 Massachusetts law was typical: “The ancient, true and principal use of Inns . . . is for the Receipt, Relief and Lodging of Travellers and Strangers, and the Refreshment of persons upon lawful Business.” Colonial authorities tried spacing taverns at convenient distances; if an individual wished to open a tavern, claiming that they were conveniently located on a well-traveled road offered the most compelling argument. Because people used both land and water transportation, public houses in the Middle and New England colonies were located on public roads and travel 393 ferry landings. Very few taverns existed in the Chesapeake region, Lower South, and western regions of the colonies. While surveying the Virginia-Carolina border, William Byrd and his party were forced to camp for much of their journey. Travelers in these regions often had to impose upon private homes for lodging. Virginia law acknowledged the inadequate number of taverns by requiring plantation owners to furnish lodging for passersby.

Travel for most colonists was uncommon. The vast majority of early Americans rarely ventured beyond home, church, and fields, with an occasional trip to market. Only wealthy individuals had the luxury of travel for leisure. Dr. Alexander Hamilton, for example, journeyed from travel
his home in Annapolis, Maryland, to New England and back seeking a cure for his ill health. Sons of elite planters or New England leaders often crossed the Atlantic for a European tour or for advanced education. Elites moved from their city homes to their country dwellings to escape the summer epidemics.

If travel was unusual for most colonists, it was even rarer for women. Sarah Kemble Knight, who journeyed from Boston in 1704, complained bitterly about having to stay in taverns, but she was unable to avoid them altogether. At Mr. Havens’s inn she was disturbed all night by “the Clamor of some of the Town topers in the next room, Who were entred into a strong debate.” Women did venture inside the tavern. However, respectable women preferred to avoid the discomfort and the risk to their reputations. The mode of transportation was related to an individual’s social and economic status. The earliest settlers moved around primarily on foot. Once horses were introduced, only poorer members of society continued to walk. When Benjamin Franklin moved from Boston to Philadelphia, he followed a typical pattern. He started his journey by sea and then walked from Amboy to Burlington, New Jersey.

Stagecoaches improved travel markedly. They first appeared in 1752, covering the 50 miles between Burlington and Amboy, New Jersey. Stagecoaches connected travelers with Philadelphia and New York City. Another stage route linked these two port cities in 1766. If the weather cooperated, travelers could expect to make the trip in two days. One year later stagecoach service was established between Boston and Providence. Soon after, the stagecoaches connected Salem with Boston and Boston with Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The reliability of the stagecoach increased the amount of travel in the colonies.

—Sharon V. Salinger

Turell, Jane Colman (1708–1735) writer

Born into a Boston Congregationalist family, Jane Colman was precocious, memorizing scripture and reciting the catechism at an early age. Her minister father, Benjamin, to whom she remained close all her life, encouraged her intellectual development, praising her couplets and hymn lyrics and engaging in epistolary dialogues to improve her writing skills. Poor health resulted in a sedentary childhood, and by the age of 18 she had read every volume in her father’s library, frequently staying up all night with a book. At 19 Jane Colman married Ebenezer Turell, a Harvard-educated minister, and they moved to Medford, Massachusetts. Turell continued to write after her marriage, reading daily and setting aside time each month to compose. The Turells had four children, only one of whom survived infancy. The stress of repeated pregnancies, in addition to her poor health, probably hastened Turell’s early death.

Women who pursued literary activities in early America stepped outside the usual female role. Even her supportive father reminded Turell not to prioritize writing over her traditional duties; Turell admitted that she found this difficult. She never sought publication, instead distributing her work privately among friends and family. Although Turell wrote in a variety of ways and on many topics, the only writings that remain are the ones that Ebenezer Turell chose to publish with his memoir. He destroyed her humorous essays so that all would know she prioritized religion, morality, and childbearing.

See also Anne Dudley Bradstreet.

—Victoria C. H. Resnick

Virginia

Virginia was the first permanent English settlement in North America. Two earlier British colonization attempts, at Roanoke Island in present-day North Carolina and at Newfoundland, ended in disaster. Still, James I hoped to give the English a foothold in the New World and provide a bulwark against Spanish settlements in the Caribbean.

In 1606 he granted the Virginia Company of London, a joint-stock company formed to speculate in American lands, a patent to an enormous region of southern North America, stretching from the Chesapeake Bay to the Pacific coast. In May 1607 the Virginia Company founded a settlement at Jamestown on the James River, which flows into the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. Virginia Company entrepreneurs cherished grandiose visions of the colony’s potential, both as a tool for Christianizing and “civilizing” local Native Americans and, still more importantly, as a supplier of precious metals, furs, and other valuable raw materials, but the colony floundered because the Virginia Company settlers refused to perform the agricultural and other labor necessary to support themselves. They neither farmed, fished, hunted, nor gathered; observers reported that men died of sheer “idleness.” The Jamestown settlement was organized as a military expedition, and the Virginia Company’s servants likely expected to live off the land and endure high death rates. The English settlers may also have suffered from pellagra, a nutritional disease that leads to apathy and anorexia, or from dysentery resulting from drinking polluted water from the James River. Whatever the cause, however, the first years of the Jamestown settlement were a bitter tragedy of violence, mortality, disappointed hopes, and squandered opportunities.

The Native Americans who lived along the Chesapeake Bay viewed the English settlement ambivalently. At the beginning of the 17th century approximately 20,000 Native Americans lived in the Chesapeake region. The region’s preeminent political power was the Powhatan
Confederacy, a diplomatic league of 32 Algonquin-speaking tribes founded by Powhatan’s father in the 16th century. Powhatan, who led the confederacy when the English arrived, hoped to establish a lucrative trade with the new settlers; indeed, he gave them maize to help them through the first difficult winters in Virginia. However, in 1609 the English settlers, who had grown dependent on the crops supplied by Powhatan’s people, began to raid Native American communities for food. In an illogical burst of anger, the English killed the Indians who had been supporting them and destroyed their crops. Powhatan retaliated by trying to starve the English settlers out, resulting in catastrophic mortality.

The Virginia Company did not accept defeat; it shipped many new immigrants and livestock to Virginia to revive the faltering colony. Moreover, it launched a vigorous war against the Powhatan Confederacy. By 1613 the Virginia Company colonists dominated the region between the James and York Rivers, and in 1614 Powhatan reluctantly accepted a peace treaty. Virginia’s disastrous early years were followed by a decade of unsteady growth in which several important precedents were set. In 1612 John Rolfe began experimenting with a hybrid strain of tobacco that was particularly well suited to the Virginia climate, and for the first time Virginia Company speculators began to see a return on their investments. The introduction of tobacco profoundly affected Virginia’s social and economic structure. It was a highly labor-intensive crop and so, in order to recruit sufficient labor, the Virginia Company established the headright system in 1616. It granted a specified number of acres to each immigrant or the person who paid the immigrant’s passage and encouraged immigration (by families and single women as well as men); some wealthy colonists amassed substantial plantations by importing indentured servants from England and collecting their headrights. African slaves were first brought to the colony in 1619, but early planters relied mainly on the labor of white indentured servants. In 1619, too, the Virginia Company convened the House of Burgesses, the first representative assembly in colonial North America.

Nevertheless, the Virginia colony remained highly unstable. A series of typhus and dysentery epidemics washed over the settlement between 1617 and 1624; by 1624 more than 85 percent of the colonists who had immigrated to Virginia since 1607 were dead. Meanwhile, Powhatan’s successor, Opechancanough, marshaled anti-English forces with the Powhatan Confederacy and on Good Friday, March 22, 1622, launched a surprise attack on the Jamestown settlement, killing nearly 350 people, a quarter of Virginia’s English population. This attack initiated a destructive 10-year war, but the English Crown did not wait until the war’s end to reorganize the colony’s government. In 1624 the Crown revoked the Virginia Company’s charter and made Virginia a royal colony.

The first decades of royal rule were a prosperous period for the English colony in spite of the continuing problems of disease, famine, and war. By 1640 Virginia’s English population had risen to 10,000, while the region’s Native American population had declined to an equal number. In 1645 the English settlers finally captured Opechancanough; his execution marked the eclipse of the Powhatan Confederacy, whose power declined steadily thereafter. Although the English had conquered Virginia, settlers continued to live in squalid conditions; even the wealthiest planters occupied rough houses of one or two rooms. At least three-quarters of immigrants arrived as indentured servants, having barred their labor for a number of years (usually between four and seven) in exchange for passage to Virginia. Most indentured servants were single young men; the colony’s gender ratio was highly imbalanced throughout the 17th century. Free women married quickly (men who courted female indentured servants sometimes offered to buy their freedom), and the high mortality rate enabled planters’ widows to amass substantial estates, making them prizes on the marriage market. Tobacco remained the principal crop; soil exhaustion pushed English settlers farther and farther into what had once been Indian territory.

In the 1670s long-simmering social tensions erupted in a violent episode that became known as Bacon’s Rebellion. The Susquehannock Indians, who lived along the upper Potomac River, opposed white settlers’ encroachment on their land. In response Nathaniel Bacon led frontier planters and landless settlers on raids of Indian villages, killing many Natives. Virginia governor Sir William Berkeley tried to suppress Bacon’s raids to preserve social order, but his opposition exacerbated a second axis of conflict: that between the established Virginia gentry and restless freedmen (former indentured servants), who embraced Bacon as their champion. In the spring of 1676 Bacon’s troops looted and burned Jamestown. The rebellion collapsed quickly after Bacon’s death in October. Nevertheless, it profoundly frightened the planter gentry and probably spurred the transition to slave labor in the colony in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

Virginia planters adopted slave labor for several other reasons. By the late 17th century economic conditions in England had begun to improve, stemming the flow of indentured servants to British North America. At the same
time Virginia’s demographic regime stabilized so that the majority of European and African immigrants now survived their first few years in the colony. Slaves cost more than indentured servants; it was not cost effective to purchase slaves unless most of them survived longer than a typical indentured servant’s term of four to seven years. Around the 1670s, however, it became clear that slaves were a better long-term investment. In addition, the supply of slaves increased and their price declined. The wealthiest planters consequently began to switch from servant to slave labor. Social tensions contributed to their choice; the supply of good land available to ex-servants was decreasing, and established planters did not want to expand the pool of restless freedmen, laborers, and squatters who threatened their hegemony. By 1700 slaves probably outnumbered indentured servants. Virginia planters did not make the transition from servant to slave labor all at once, however. White indentured servants continued to labor beside African and African-American slaves on Chesapeake area plantations well into the 18th century. This important transition to slavery was accompanied by the expansion and codification of Virginia’s black code. Initially, slavery was regulated by local custom rather than law; many mid-17th century African laborers held an ambiguous status between servant and slave, and quite a few eventually obtained their freedom. In the 1660s, however, the House of Burgesses began to pass laws defining slaves’ status as property and blocking off potential paths to freedom: Children of slave mothers were deemed to be slaves; conversion to Christianity did not justify emancipation; the murder of a slave by his or her master did not constitute a felony; slaves could not own firearms. Wealthy planters probably hoped to co-opt the political support of poorer white people by attaching political value to “whiteness”; the concepts of black slavery and white liberty became intricately entangled in the minds of 18th-century white Virginians. In 1705 the Burgesses’ restrictive laws were collected in a comprehensive Virginia Slave Code. By then the vast majority of Africans and African Americans living in Virginia were held as slaves. Between 1700 and 1770 approximately 80,000 slaves were imported to Virginia and Maryland. Most grew tobacco on properties that ranged in size from small farms, where a handful of slaves and servants labored beside the white family, to sprawling, villagelike plantations worked by 100 or more slaves. Eighteenth-century Virginia slaves were healthier and longer-lived than their counterparts in the Caribbean and South America due to better nutrition, a less extreme work regime, and a less deadly disease environment. By the 1730s the Virginia slave population had begun to grow by natural increase; it was the first slave population in the Americas to do so. Over the course of the 18th century slaves created a syncretic African-American culture, fusing social and religious traditions from several regions of Africa with European influences. music, dance, funeral rites, naming patterns, and Creole dialects that blended vocabulary and grammatical patterns from various African and European languages all played a pivotal role in early African-American culture. In the 1760s and 1770s many African-American slaves converted to Christianity and began to fuse Christian beliefs and customs with African religious traditions to form a distinctive mode of Afro-Christianity. African-American culture also influenced white Virginians’ material culture, accents, musical tastes, and cuisine. 400 Virginia Virginia was not only the oldest of Britain’s mainland North American colonies but also the most populous. After the early years its population grew steadily from 18,700 people in 1650 to 58,600 in 1700 and 340,000 in 1763. Slaves constituted slightly more than a quarter of Virginia’s population in 1700 and more than 40 percent by 1760. The colony’s white social structure included large planters who owned 20 or more slaves and from one to several plantations; small planters who owned fewer than 20 slaves and one small-scale plantation; backcountry and tenant farmers who grew tobacco and cereal crops on small farms, relying primarily on family rather than slave labor; and indentured servants. Artisans and shopkeepers congregated in small towns such as Williamsburg, but in spite of the House of Burgesses’s attempts to encourage the creation of towns, Virginia remained overwhelmingly rural throughout the colonial period. The county was the principal unit of local government; in the absence of towns, colonists congregated at court days, militia musters, and rural stores and taverns. In 18th-century Virginia about 60 percent of adult white men held enough land to qualify for the vote. This was an unusually broad suffrage by European standards. Large planters monopolized the House of Burgesses, which soon superseded the governor’s council in political influence. Eighteenth-century Virginia was a firmly hierarchical society. The Tidewater gentry exercised power not only through political and judicial service but also through patronage and material display. In contrast to 17th-century planters, who often lived in small, bare houses, their 18th-century counterparts constructed elegant Georgian mansions on their estates. Weddings, funerals, and other lifecycle events were celebrated with elaborate banquets and parties that could last as long as three days. Churchgoing was another important occasion for social display; the local elite congregated in the churchyard and made a regal entrance just before the service began. Large
planters often marketed tobacco, obtained consumer goods, and did business for smaller neighboring planters, thus drawing them into semidependent relationships. It was also customary for political candidates (mostly large planters) to “treat” voters (mostly small landowners) with liberal allowances of food and alcohol on election days, effectively purchasing their votes not with money but with promises of hospitality and patronage. The social status of the Tidewater gentry within the larger British Empire remained ambiguous, however. In spite of the enormous influence they exercised in Virginia, many of them struggled with a perennial sense of cultural inferiority to the British gentry they sought to emulate.

The backcountry’s social structure differed considerably from that of the Tidewater region. Although many wealthy planters speculated in backcountry lands, few actually lived in that region, nor were there many slaves in the colonial Virginia backcountry, because most backcountry farmers could not afford to purchase them. After the 1720s new immigrants, many of them German and Scots-Irish, flooded into the Virginia Piedmont; by the 1750s European settlement had reached the edge of the Appalachian Mountains. The new immigrants raised livestock and grew cereal crops and low-grade tobacco on the rich Piedmont soil. Some enjoyed a comfortable standard of living, although they never approached the Tidewater gentry in wealth or political influence; the poorest were squatters, who led a precarious existence without legal title to their land. In the wake of the Seven Years’ War the British government attempted to relieve tensions between white settlers and Native Americans in the Ohio Valley by issuing the Proclamation of 1763, which forbade white settlement west of the Appalachians. Many frontier settlers resisted this decree, which contributed to Virginians’ growing resentment of British colonial rule.

Virginia’s early intellectual and religious life was relatively calm and undistinguished. Because Virginia was a royal colony, the Anglican Church was established as the colony’s official church, and all taxpayers contributed to its support. Most white Virginians adhered to the Anglican Church, at least nominally, but the Chesapeake region lacked the religious fervor of the Puritan and Quaker colonies. Anglican clergy—mostly English immigrants—exercised little social authority. New backcountry settlements often lacked churches; itinerant ministers performed marriages and baptisms, although many couples cohabited without marrying. The educational situation was similarly bleak. In the 17th century schools were few and far between; wealthy planters sent their children to England for schooling, others simply did without formal education. In the 18th century many planter parents hired private tutors for their children or sent them to small local schools, but offspring of poorer families enjoyed little chance to study. The College of William and Mary was established at Williamsburg (soon to be the new capital of Virginia) in 1693. The college’s elegant buildings introduced the Virginia gentry to the architectural principles of Christopher Wren and inspired a spate of mansion construction, but the college’s academic standards were initially low. Careful parents sent their sons to northern institutions to protect them from the dissipations of Williamsburg.

The character of Virginia’s religious life changed dramatically during the Great Awakening, a wave of evangelical religious revivals that spread throughout the mainland British colonies in the mid-18th century. The Great Awakening reached the Virginia Piedmont in the mid-1740s, but its full effect was not felt until the 1760s. Every layer of Virginia society, from rich planters to slaves, responded to evangelical preaching. The Baptists and Methodists, the two leading evangelical denominations, grew rapidly; the revivals also reshaped and invigorated Scots-Irish Presbyterian congregations. Intriguingly, evangelical Protestantism attracted many African-American slaves to Christianity for the first time. Slaves attended revivals, preached, and joined Baptist and Methodist congregations; for a few decades in the late 18th century many Virginians belonged to interracial churches. (In the early 19th century most of these congregations splintered into separate African-American and white meetings.) The Great Awakening utterly transformed Virginia society in the decades before the American Revolution. Indeed, the revivalists’ preaching style and their emphasis on challenging established authority may have prepared Virginians to embrace the Revolutionary rhetoric of liberty. As the largest and oldest mainland colony, Virginia was often in the spotlight and played a leading role in early Revolutionary protests.

connections of family and interest in Raleigh’s and Gilbert’s earlier colonies, James I promulgated a charter in 1606 authorizing new English colonies in America under the aegis of two joint-stock companies: the Virginia Company of London, whose grant allowed them to plant colonies from present-day North Carolina to Long Island, and the Virginia Company of Plymouth, with colonization rights extending over the New England area.

The Virginia Company of London was primarily a business venture whose goal was to realize a profit, although the company’s appeals for investors were couched in terms of broader national and religious interests. A factional cross-section of the English aristocracy capitalized and led the Virginia Company of London, which established the Jamestown colony in 1607. The “ancient companies” and the great London merchants, especially Sir Thomas Smith, who served as the company’s treasurer, brought to the enterprise their experience of trading with Russia and the Levant. The Rich family, particularly Sir Robert Rich, the second earl of Warwick, aspired to realize the old dream of a privatizing base in the New World from which to strike at Spain and its treasure fleets. Many landed gentry, eventually championed by Sir Edwin Sandys, invested heavily in the company, hoping that lucrative returns would shore up their incomes, which, heavily dependent on fixed rents, were being rapidly eroded by inflation. Meanwhile, humanitarians and clergy among the founders would assist the unemployed poor who were flooding London by making them indentured servants to work the company plantation. They also aspired to make the Virginia Indians “civilized” and acquire Christian allies and customers for English-made trade goods, the demand for which would stimulate the English domestic economy. These conflicting goals and interests bred division, suspicion, and intrigue that undermined the cooperation needed to solve the immense problems of debt and insolvency entailed by the expense of sustaining the Jamestown colony until it could become profitable.

Peopling, governing, capitalizing, and making profitable the Jamestown colony was an experiment without precedent, except perhaps the failed Roanoke colony and the brutal English colonization of Celtic Ireland, models that boded ill for English-Indian relations. Unable to find a lucrative export, misruled and beset by disease, unable to feed itself or to keep peace with the Powhatan Indians, Jamestown floundered, forcing company officials down a path of repeated, but ultimately futile, reforms. The company secured a second charter in 1609 that limited royal control of its affairs, brought the colony under the control of “one able and absolute Governor,” and permitted public sale of stock. Its third charter in 1612 gave control of the financially promising Somers Isles (Bermuda) and allowed fundraising through a public lottery. Dissatisfied with the management of the London merchants, smaller stockholders in 1619 initiated another round of reform and eventually ousted treasurer Sir Thomas Smith, replacing him with Sir Edwin Sandys.

Sandys recruited more than 3,500 settlers for Virginia, many of whom were unemployed poor forced into indentured servitude. The company made land grants to private individuals in return for quitrents and established “particular plantations” farmed by tenants along the James River, further encroaching on Indian lands. Bowing to stockholder unease over burgeoning and exclusive tobacco production, Sandys encouraged the production of commodities such as iron, potash, and lumber. The company set up a representative assembly that quickly became a means for the wealthiest colonists to control the labor of tenants and servants, maintain their own power, and subvert the company’s will, especially its discouraging of tobacco cultivation. The failure of the reforms to produce profits and the Powhatan uprising in 1622 accelerated internal dissension among the stockholders, causing Charles I to dissolve the company in 1624 and declare Virginia a royal colony.


—James Bruggeman

women’s status and rights

The status of women in the British North American colonies varied significantly according to the ethnic group and class to which they belonged. Religion, region, and maturity of the colonial settlement also had an impact on women’s lives.

Within European settlements English law, custom, and religion established distinct yet flexible boundaries between the roles of women and men. Men were dominant in politics and society as well as within families; they were responsible for the financial support and protection of their wives and children. Women had a constricted public role, and within the household they contributed unpaid labor and promised obedience to their husbands.

The gender ideology of early modern England contained the contradictory constructs of women’s inferiority, on the one hand, and capability, on the other. The English,
like other Europeans, believed that men and women had different natures, with males assuming central, dominant, and positive characteristics and females portrayed with marginal, subordinate, and negative traits. Europeans believed that women were intellectually and morally inferior to men, less able to control their passions, and more likely (as in the case of Eve) to make compacts with Satan. While females were weaker physically and mentally, their openness to the devil’s deception gave them powers that men feared and sought to control.

English common law contained both the means of subordinating women and recognition of their potential strength. Under the concept of unity of person, a woman and a man became a single entity upon marriage. The husband received legal authority to act for both—to sell, buy, transfer, and bequeath property, control earnings, sue and be sued, make contracts, and act as guardian of the children. The wife, as a married woman, held the legal status called feme covert; she could take none of these actions independent of her husband. She did retain the right to dower, the use of one-third of the couple’s real estate upon her husband’s death.

If her husband became incapacitated or was absent for a long time, a woman was often expected to manage his affairs—to become a “deputy husband,” as historian Laurel T. Ulrich has explained. Courts recognized the authority of women in such situations to make contracts and to carry on business regardless of whether they had a formal power of attorney. Thus, English common law placed married women in an inferior position but recognized their ability to manage family business. It further confirmed women’s capacity in the feme sole status accorded unmarried women. Femes soles retained or, in the case of widows, regained the property rights that married women lost. Thus, they could legally establish businesses and support themselves and their families.

Among Eastern Woodlands Indians the lack of private ownership of land worked to women’s benefit. The tribe as a whole claimed ownership rights, not individual members or families. Kinship groups, or extended families, formed the basis of Native American society and government. The heads of kinship groups chose the band’s primary leaders (called sachems) who, with advice, assigned fields for planting, decided where and when to hunt, managed trade and diplomacy, and judged whether to go to war. Among Algonquin-speaking people the heads of extended families were usually men, as were the sachems they chose.

However, in Iroquois culture women served as clan leaders, taking a share of political power. Iroquois society was matrilineal, with family membership passing from mother to children, and matrilocal, as the husband left his family upon marriage to live with his wife’s family. A woman divorced her husband by setting his possessions outside the door; a man could divorce his wife by removing his belongings from her family’s longhouse. Women elders could not speak publicly at tribal councils or serve as sachems, but they chose these political leaders and advised them on such matters as waging war.

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While the family lives of slave women are difficult to reconstruct from the existing records, scholars have argued that they exercised more power within their families than did white women. As slaves, black men did not possess the economic means to provide them a foundation for claims of authority over their wives. In addition, many husbands and wives lived apart, on separate plantations in the South or in separate households in the North, further encouraging the independence of slave women. Bound women, like free women, undertook both productive and reproductive work. In addition, slave women were liable to sexual exploitation by their masters.

Work

In general, women’s work roles differed from those of men and varied by class, ethnic origin, and individual need or opportunity. Except in far northern New England, where the growing season was short, East Coast Indians had a mixed economy of agriculture, gathering, fishing, and hunting. Native American women were responsible for raising corn, squash, beans, and (where possible) tobacco. They also gathered nuts and fruit, built houses, made clothing, took care of the children, and prepared meals, while men cleared land, hunted, fished, and protected the town from enemies. This gender division of labor was somewhat different than that of the English, who believed free women should avoid field work and thus considered Indian women’s agricultural labor too onerous.

English women were primarily responsible for domestic tasks, whether they supervised servants and slaves or performed these necessary, productive chores themselves. Their workplace encompassed the house and yard. They prepared and served meals, baked bread, cared for children, built fires, carried water and waste, cleaned the house and furnishings, washed and ironed laundry, gardened, tended poultry, milked cows, and made clothing and other household articles. Some women specialized in one or more activities and traded surplus production with neighbors and shopkeepers. Women in established rural communities were more likely to produce textiles and dairy products than either frontier women, who with their husbands were too busy meeting the challenges of establishing farms, or urban women, who lacked space for spinning wheels, looms, or livestock and could readily purchase manufactured goods and foodstuffs at the market.

Colonial women took responsibility for a large part of
medical care, delivering babies, treating wounds and illnesses, and administering drugs. Literate mothers taught their own children to read, and in New England towns some women opened dame schools for young girls and boys. Women throughout the provinces transmitted skills to young women in the “art, trade, and mystery” of housewifery or a specific craft such as weaving. In the ministry and law, women did not have access to formal professional training, in college or apprenticeships. They did often assist their husbands in trades and took control of businesses after their deaths. Women thus worked in shoemaking, cabinetmaking, brewing, printing, and similar crafts; some ran shops, taverns, and inns.

On plantations and farms, where most women lived in colonial British America, their work varied widely by class, ethnicity, and stage of settlement. Under normal circumstances a British colonial farm woman expected to escape heavy fieldwork, except at harvest, just as her husband avoided domestic chores. However, many women and girls worked side by side with men in the fields. Immigrants to 17th-century Virginia and Maryland included female indentured servants, who paid for the cost of their transportation by tending a master’s tobacco for four or more years. In New Jersey and Pennsylvania servant women from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Germany spent at least part of their labor in the fields. Indeed, German farm women, whether free or bound, customarily tended and harvested crops.

Enslaved African and Native American women worked in many occupations. In areas like the Chesapeake and the Carolinas, with labor-intensive staple crops, most spent long hours performing hard physical labor raising tobacco, corn, and rice. Masters differentiated between men and women in the assignment of tasks other than ordinary fieldwork. Only men had the opportunity to become drivers and artisans. Slave women, usually those too old or too young for fieldwork, served as nurses, cooks, and spinners. Both women and men performed domestic service. At the same time, female slaves were responsible for the household needs of their own families, including laundry, food preparation, and sewing. In the northern colonies enslaved women engaged in a wide variety of tasks, as these colonies lacked staple crops that consumed huge amounts of agricultural labor.

Inheritance Practices

According to English common law and colonial statutes, a widow had the right of dower to one-third of the couple’s real estate for use during her life. The children or other heirs, if adults, received the other two-thirds immediately and the widow’s third at her death. If the husband left a will, he was obligated to grant his wife dower (otherwise she could contest the will), but he was free to distribute his personal estate as he saw fit. In regard to the rights of sons and daughters, English common law specified primogeniture, with the eldest son normally receiving all of the real estate. Most colonial parents divided their estates more evenly, attempting to provide all of their children with a start in life, whether a farm, college tuition, an apprenticeship, livestock, or cash. Sons more often received real women’s status and rights 423 estate, while daughters received personalty such as slaves, household furniture, or money.

Historians have measured the degree to which husbands adhered to the legal guidelines in making bequests to their wives. Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh discovered how men in 17th-century Maryland often gave their wives responsibility for managing their entire estates, including the children’s share, despite the fact that widows quickly remarried and thereby ceded control of the property to their new mates. Early Maryland society was highly unstable and fragmented, with high mortality and disrupted kinship networks. Husbands chose, perhaps because in their minds they had little alternative, to give greater authority to their wives than was customary in England. In northern colonies, in contrast, more testators lived long enough to see sons reach maturity. They gave less authority to their widows and sometimes adopted a practice that was rare in the Chesapeake area: They devised all of their real estate to one or more sons and made the heirs responsible for supporting their mother. Instead of receiving her dower right of one-third of the real estate for life, the widow obtained possession of a room; the right to pass through the house to and from her room; and firewood, food, use of a horse, and a small amount of cash paid annually.

Ethnicity as well as demographic conditions influenced men’s testamentary practices. In New York during the first generations after the English conquest, Dutch colonists retained the tradition of community property within marriage, that is, that the wife and husband held property jointly. Dying husbands left most or all of their possessions to their wives, who kept control during their widowhood. Sons and daughters, even if mature at the death of their father, had to wait until their mother died or remarried before receiving their inheritance. At that point the children obtained equal portions, with daughters as well as sons receiving real estate.

Religion

The degree to which a woman could take part in religious affairs depended on her faith. In Native American communities women occasionally served as shamans (priests). Indian religions often recognized both female and male
characteristics in their deities. Christianity, which dominated the British settlements, was more patriarchal. In all Christian denominations women stood equal with men in the eyes of God, but the extent to which they could participate in decision making and the ministry varied widely.

Among New England Puritans women sat separately from the men, could not speak except to sing hymns, and were allowed no leadership role. Their status improved little over the colonial period and, in fact, probably deteriorated after 1650 as they became an increasing proportion of members. Puritan women challenged these restrictions in a variety of ways. Most often they used their influence, or informal authority, to sway the church fathers. Although men alone had the right to cast votes and sign petitions for new churches, women spurred the establishment of new congregations by convincing their husbands of the need. Women of Rowley, Massachusetts, in 1674 successfully opposed the ordination of their young minister, Jeremiah Shepard, at least in part because he was disrespectful to female members. Other women shown here is the title page of a 1737 work on the legal status of women that was imported to Virginia from Britain. (Hulton/Archive)

424 women’s status and rights challenged the 17th-century Puritan order more dramatically, expressing publicly their less-than-orthodox beliefs. Most famous was Anne Marbury Hutchinson, who in 1637 was tried for defaming ministers. She defended herself well and nearly escaped conviction but then shocked her judges by announcing that God had told her that they would be destroyed. Hutchinson was banished from the commonwealth and settled in Rhode Island with family and supporters. The Anglican Church also expected women to accept a subordinate role, as only men could preach, administer the sacraments, and serve on the vestry boards that were in charge of all parish business, including aid to the poor, sick, and elderly. Like Puritans, however, Anglican women wielded informal authority that emanated from their responsibility for religious practice in their families, supervising preparations for burials and marriages, most of which took place at home.

Quakers, on the other hand, believed that revelation did not end with the Bible and that the “inner light” could bring new understanding, which revealed that women should serve as ministers, missionaries, and leaders of the church. Quakers also denied any continuing significance of the fall of Adam and Eve, arguing that equality of women and men returned with spiritual rebirth. In their own separate monthly meetings for business, Quaker women made disciplinary decisions concerning women and girls, supervised marriages, and provided relief to the poor. While women Friends lacked complete equality with the men, because most women’s meetings technically were required to seek the men’s permission before disowning anyone, the men’s meetings apparently always approved the women’s decisions.

Women and Community

When women exercised authority in colonial British society, they did so primarily among women and girls. Middle-aged and elderly women took responsibility for the female half of the population. They observed the actions of the community’s young women—not just their own daughters and granddaughters—to guard against sexual offenses and disorderly marriages. If a young girl showed signs of departing from the straight and narrow, they warned her of the consequences of sin. In the Society of Friends, women’s meetings dealt most frequently with unsupervised weddings, marriages to non-Friends, fornication before marriage, and bastardy; these constituted the misdeeds of most female offenders. In Puritan New England, although elder women lacked the institutionalized power of the Quaker meetings, they took responsibility for the behavior and well-being of younger women. Everywhere in colonial British America women were barred from serving as justices or members of juries. Nevertheless, they counseled, reprimanded, and aided girls and young women who were victims or accused of crimes.

By law the woman held most accountable for reporting sexual misconduct was the midwife, a respected and mature member of the female community. She had such official and semiofficial functions as testifying in court as to whether an unmarried mother had named an infant’s father during labor, reporting whether an infant was born prematurely or at full term, verifying birth dates, and examining female prisoners to determine whether they were truly pregnant or just claiming that condition to avoid punishment. More important to nurturing a community of women, however, was the midwife’s role in orchestrating the activity that brought women together and excluded men—childbirth. During the colonial period professional midwives presided over most births, which a group of female relatives and neighbors also attended. Childbirth, or “travail,” as the English colonists called it, was imbued with female ritual and tradition, including special bed linen, food, and paraphernalia such as the “midwife’s stool.” Although elder women carried weight as the guardians of younger women and girls, they lacked political power and thus were subject, like all women, to the judgment and domination of men. In fact, elder women were most
at risk of being charged with witchcraft, defined legally as making a compact or conversing with Satan. The colonists, like their Old World contemporaries, believed that God and the devil both influenced everyday events. Weak individuals, especially women, could be recruited by Satan to perform evil deeds against God’s people. In the British colonies the New England governments prosecuted the great majority of witchcraft cases; this was partly the result of the centrality of religion in society. Also important was the fact that elder women, the people most at risk, were much more numerous in the Puritan colonies than elsewhere during the 17th century, when witchcraft hysteria peaked. According to historian Carol Karlsen, between 1620 and 1725 about 350 New Englanders, mostly women, faced accusations of witchcraft. The most famous episode occurred in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692, when almost 200 people were accused and 20 persons executed for conspiring with the devil.

Gender differences also existed in the prosecution of other kinds of crime. Women were convicted of murder, theft, fraud, and assault, but at rates much lower than men. The prosecution of women most often stemmed from sexual crimes, especially fornication. A double standard existed in English law granting property rights in the chastity of women to husbands and fathers. A woman’s sexual purity was valued as property, belonging to her father before marriage and her husband after, but wives and mothers had no similar rights in the chastity of men. Thus, adultery committed by a woman was considered more serious than that committed by a man. The 1648 Massachusetts legal code, for example, defined adultery, which was punishable by death, as illicit sexual relations involving a married woman. If a married man and a single woman had intercourse, they committed fornication, which was not a capital crime. In practice, magistrates reduced the charges of most people accused of adultery, and just a few were put to death for the crime. The same was true in the case of rape, which was also a capital offense in the Bay Colony. Women had difficulty proving that they had not consented to the act. Men of higher status were likely to escape punishment, while white servants and black people received harsh punishment for attacks on white women. Consistent with the double standard, rapes were considered trespasses on the property rights of the assaulted woman’s husband or father.

Before 1763, then, the conflicting concepts of women’s capability and inferiority defined gender relations in British North America. English custom and law and Protestant theology held women responsible for guaranteeing the smooth operation of households, representing and protecting their families in the absence of husbands, and maintaining God’s providence over the community, but required their subordination to men. Indian women held a higher status in their communities, as Native Americans respected women as full participants in the economy and in land ownership. Iroquois and some Algonquin-speaking groups practiced matrilineal descent and recognized women’s leadership in politics and society. Most African-American women in pre-1763 British America were slaves, as the emancipation movement expanded only after that date. As slaves, women had little control over their work and family and were less likely than men to escape their bonds.


—Jean R. Soderlund

Yale College

The “Collegiate School within his Majesties Colony of Connecticut” was founded in 1701 by a group of ministers, including Cotton Mather, the influential Puritan theologian and writer. Designed to maintain order and tradition, early American colleges followed the English system of training young upper-class men for the ministry and for service to the state. Ministers taught theological and classical studies accompanied by strict discipline. The first classes were held at the home of Rector Abraham Pierson in Killingworth, Connecticut, then moved to Saybrook in 1707. In 1716 the Collegiate School moved to its permanent home in New Haven. Two years later the college was renamed in honor of Elihu Yale, who responded to a request for donations from Mather. Yale, born in Boston and educated in England, was a wealthy East India Company trader, British civil servant, and philanthropist. He sent nine bales of East India Company goods to New Haven that the college then sold for 562 British pounds to buy books and buildings. In 1731 George Berkeley donated books and his Rhode Island farm to provide further support for the school. The present charter for Yale College, now University, was drawn up in 1745.

—Deborah C. Taylor

Yamasee

The Yamasee were a diverse group of Native Americans whose roots lay with the Guale of coastal north Florida. Leaving the major Guale settlements in the early 16th century, the Yamasee settled near the Savannah River in present-day South Carolina. By the 1580s, when Spanish Franciscans established a string of missions throughout Florida and coastal South Carolina, the Yamasee were recognized as a separate people distinct from the Guale of
Florida. Much to the frustration of the Spanish missionaries, the Yamasee refused to convert to Roman Catholicism and retained their own religion and cultural integrity. When the English settled the Carolinas in the 1660s, the Yamasee became central players in a complex system of European-Indian diplomacy and trade. The first traders in the Carolinas were Virginians who allied with the Westo, who themselves used the coalition with the Virginians to become the dominant Indian power in the region. As part of this process, the Westo drove the Yamasee into northern Florida and southern Georgia.

By the 1670s the Virginians were supplanted by a new group of English settlers, many coming from the English Caribbean colony of Barbados. Viewing the Westo as allies of their Virginian enemies and hence as a threat to their control over the South Carolina colony, the new Carolinians allied with a band of refugee Shawnee, the Savannah. During the first half of the 1680s, they destroyed the Westo as a people. Returning to their homelands, the Yamasee soon became staunch allies of the new South Carolinians. Heavily involved in trade with the English, during the final decades of the 17th century, the Yamasee joined with their fellow Muskogean speakers, the Creek, to raid Spanish missions in Florida and southern Georgia. Many of the Yamasee raids took them as far south as the Spanish capital of St. Augustine. However, by the 1710s, English traders and settlers began to see the growing strength of their Yamasee and Creek allies as a potential threat; many merchants also viewed all Indian peoples on the southern frontier as potential slaves. Faced with increasing cheating, enslavement, and violence, the Yamasee mounted a coordinated surprise attack on a number of English settlement and trading posts in 1715. The resulting Yamasee War lasted until 1718, when the English and their Cherokee allies defeated the main body of Yamasee warriors at Saltketchers on the South Carolina frontier.

Following their defeat in the Yamasee War, the remaining Yamasee people migrated south into Florida, where they allied with the Spanish for protection. In 1727 most of the remaining Yamasee were killed in an English raid against the Spanish. The handful of survivors sought refuge with the Seminoles and were quickly absorbed into their villages.

—Ronald Schultz

Yamasee War (1715–1718)
The Yamasee War involved a pan-Indian attempt to retain territorial and cultural integrity on the South Carolina frontier in the face of increasingly violent English attacks on their former Indian allies. Beginning in 1715 with a series of coordinated attacks by the Yamasee, Creek, and Catawba on English traders and frontier settlements, the scale and success of the attacks seriously threatened the existence of the fledgling South Carolina colony. The war continued intermittently for three years as English colonists struggled to suppress the Indian coalition. Only when the Cherokee decided to ally with the British against their Creek enemies were the English able decisively to defeat the Indian alliance.

The English coalition crushed the Yamasee and drove the survivors into Florida, where they sought refuge with the Spanish. The Creek and Catawba remained intact as a people, but they were chased well away from established English settlements. To protect themselves further, British South Carolinians entered into an alliance with the Iroquois, who systematically attacked the Catawba for the next decade, seriously weakening them as a potential military force.

Like many conflicts between Europeans and Indians, the Yamasee War was ultimately about sovereignty: who would control land and trade. The Yamasee as well as the Creek and Catawba were eager to trade with British colonists. However, the increasing integration of Indian peoples into larger trade networks worried the English, who both feared and profited from their Indian allies. As a result, English traders turned to fraud, intimidation, and force in their increasingly contentious relations with the Indian people around them. The Yamasee War was an Indian attempt to halt this process and restore their independent position in South Carolina.


—Ronald Schultz