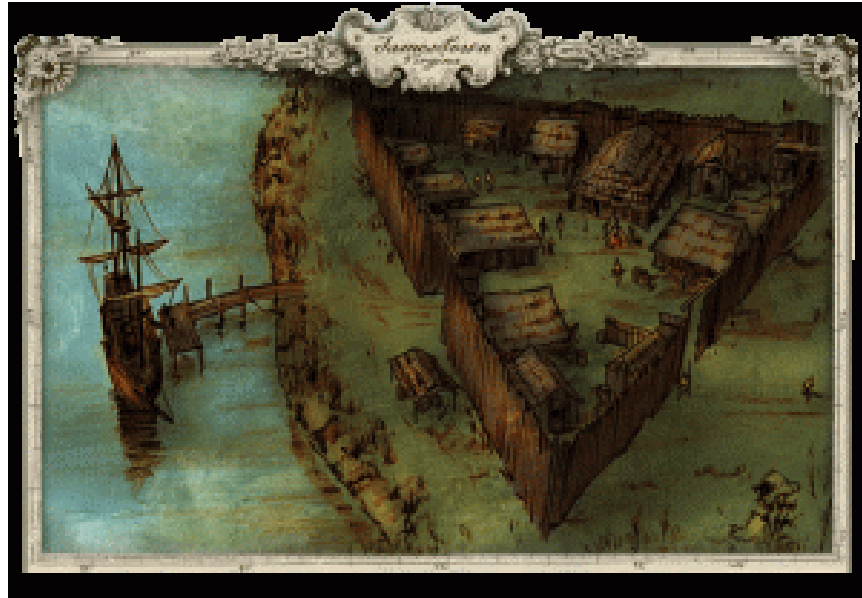


# Expansion of the Early American Colonies, 1650-1750

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## 1 – English Administration of the Colonies

Britain's 13 North American colonies reflected different structures of government: provincial, proprietary, and charter.

### 1.1 – Introduction

#### 1.1.1 – Colonial Governments

By 1776, Britain had evolved three different forms of government for its North American colonies: provincial, proprietary, and charter. These governments were all subordinate to the king in London and had no explicit relationship with the British Parliament. Beginning late in the 17th century, the administration of all British colonies was overseen by the Board of Trade, a committee of the Privy Council. Each colony had a paid colonial agent in London to represent its interests.

#### 1.1.2 – Provincial Colonies

Provincial colonies, also known as royal colonies, were under the direct control of the king, who usually appointed a royal governor. Provincial colonies included New Hampshire, New York, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and eventually Massachusetts. The governor was invested with general executive powers and authorized to call a locally elected assembly. The governor's council would advise the governor and sit as an upper house when the assembly was in session.

Assembly members included representatives elected by the freeholders and planters (landowners) of the province. The assembly's role was to conceive all local laws and ordinances and to ensure that local laws were not inconsistent with the laws of England. The governor had the power of absolute veto and could prorogue (i.e., delay) and dissolve the assembly at will. Laws could be examined by the Board of Trade, which also held veto power of legislation. Over time, many of the provincial assemblies sought to expand their powers and limit those of the governor and crown.

### 1.1.3 – Proprietary Colonies

Proprietary colonies included Pennsylvania (which included Delaware at the time), New Jersey, and Maryland. Proprietary colonies were owned by a person (always a white male) or family, who could make laws and appoint officials as he or they pleased. This person or family was given the title of Lords Proprietor. Proprietary colonies were governed much as provincial colonies except that Lords Proprietors, rather than the king, appointed the governor. Typically, they enjoyed greater civil and religious liberties than provincial colonies.

### 1.1.4 – Charter Colonies



***Thirteen original colonies : This map illustrates the 13 original colonies under British rule in North America in the 18th century: Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. Lands to the west at that time were colonized by France and Spain. Some land to the west was also set aside for Native Americans.***

Charter colonies, also known as corporate colonies or joint stock companies, included Rhode Island, Providence Plantation, and Connecticut. Massachusetts began as a charter colony in 1684 but became a provincial colony in 1691. In a charter colony, Britain granted a charter to the colonial government establishing the rules under which the colony was to be governed. A joint stock company was a project in which investors would buy shares

of stock in building a new colony. Depending on the success of the colony, each investor would receive some of the profits in proportion to the number of shares he bought.

Charter governments were political corporations created by letters patent, giving the grantees control of the land and the powers of legislative government. The charters provided a fundamental constitution and divided powers among legislative, executive, and judicial functions, with those powers being vested in officials. The charters of Rhode Island and Connecticut granted the colonists significantly more political liberty than other colonies.

## 1.2 – The Mercantilist System

Mercantilism regarded government control of foreign trade as crucial for ensuring the prosperity and military security of the nation.



*The Battle of Terheide, 10 August 1653, by Willem van de Velde, 1657: This image illustrates a battle fought at sea during the Anglo-Dutch Wars. Control of trade routes was a primary factor leading up to the war, and England's mercantilist policies were a major factor that shaped this desire to control trade routes.*

Mercantilism was an economic doctrine which held that a nation's power depended on the value of its exports, and so the government must control all foreign trade. Under mercantilism, nations sought to establish colonies to produce goods for export as a chief means of acquiring economic strength and power. Essentially, mercantilists believed that colonies existed not for the benefit of settlers, but for the benefit of the home country.

For Britain, the goal of mercantilism was to run trade surpluses to increase the flow of gold and silver pouring into London. The government took its share through duties and taxes with the remainder going to merchants in Britain. The government spent much of its revenue on the Royal Navy, which not only protected the British colonies but threatened and sometimes seized the colonies of other European empires in the Americas.

## 1.3 – Controlling Trade and Promoting Exports

### 1.3.1 – Trade Barriers, Regulations, Tariffs, and Subsidies

British mercantilism mainly took the form of efforts to control trade. A wide array of regulations was put in place to encourage exports and discourage imports, thereby increasing the nation's profit. The colonies were captive markets for British industry; the ultimate goal was to enrich the mother country. Under British mercantilism, the government and the merchants became partners with the goal of increasing political power

and private wealth, to the exclusion of other empires. The government protected its merchants—and kept others out—through trade barriers, regulations, and subsidies to domestic industries in order to maximize exports and minimize imports into the realm. A tariff was placed on imports and a bounty given for exports, while the export of some raw materials was banned completely. The government had to fight smuggling—which became a favorite American technique in the 18th century to circumvent the restrictions against trading with the French, Spanish, or Dutch.

### **1.3.2 – The Navigation Acts**

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the Parliament of England passed the Navigation Acts to increase the profit England derived from its colonies. Among the provisions, the Acts required that any colonial imports or exports travel only on ships registered in England. The colonies could not import anything manufactured outside of England unless the goods were first taken to England, where taxes were paid. The colonies were forbidden to export tobacco and sugar to any nation other than England. The Navigation Acts expelled foreign merchants from England's domestic trade. Once under British control, regulations were imposed on the colonies that allowed the colony to produce only raw materials and to trade only with Britain.

Many colonists resented the Navigation Acts because they increased regulation and reduced their opportunities for profit, while England profited from colonial work. This led to friction between colonists and mainland England; indeed, these mercantilist policies (such as forbidding trade with other empires and controls over smuggling) were a major irritant that would contribute to the American Revolution.

## **1.4 – Enforcing the Navigation Acts**

The English Navigation Acts were a series of laws restricting imports and exports in the British colonies for the ultimate profit of England.

### **1.4.1 – Background**

The English Navigation Acts, which were passed in the 17th and 18th centuries, restricted foreign trade by England's colonies. In essence, the Acts forced colonial trade to favor England and prevented colonial trade with the Netherlands, France, and other European countries. These Acts formed the basis for British overseas trade for nearly 200 years.

### **1.4.2 – Rationale**

The major impetuses for the Navigation Acts were the ruinous deterioration of English trade in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War and the opening of trade between the Spanish Empire and the Dutch Republic. Within a few years, Dutch and Spanish merchants overwhelmed English merchants in commerce on the Iberian Peninsula, the Mediterranean, and the Levant. Even the trade with English colonies was dominated by Dutch merchants, who crowded out English direct trade with a sudden influx of commodities from the Levant, the Mediterranean, the Spanish and Portuguese empires, and the West Indies, carried in Dutch ships and ultimately increasing Dutch profit. For the British government and its traders, the most direct solution was to seal off the British-Scottish markets to these unwanted imports.

### **1.4.3 – Passing and Enforcing the Navigation Acts**

The Navigation Act was first passed in October of 1651 by Parliament, led by Oliver Cromwell. This first Act reinforced a longstanding government principle that English trade should be carried in English vessels. The Act banned foreign ships from transporting non-English goods to England or its colonies. The Act specifically targeted the Dutch, excluding the Netherlands from essentially all trade with England. In some instances, British colonists and foreign merchants subverted the Act; for example, in the West Indies, the Dutch kept up a

flourishing ” smuggling ” trade due to the preference of English planters for Dutch goods and the better deal the Dutch offered in the sugar trade. The Dutch colony of New Netherland also offered a loophole through intercolonial trade, as settlers in different colonies traded with each other.

Later revisions of the Act added new regulations. Ships’ crews had to be three-quarters English, and ship captains were required to post bond to ensure compliance. The 1663 revisions required all trade to be carried in English vessels. Importers of enumerated commodities (goods that were only permitted to be sent to limited destinations, such as sugar, rice, and tobacco) had to land and pay a tax in England before going on to other countries. This increased both the cost to the colonies and the shipping time. Colonists could trade in their own ships with foreign plantations or European countries other than England, provided they did not violate the enumerated commodity clause.

The Acts were in full force for a short time only. After the second Anglo-Dutch War (1665–1667), which ended disastrously for England, the Dutch were permitted to ship commodities produced in the German hinterland to England as if these were Dutch goods. Even more importantly, England conceded to the principle of “free ship, free good” which provided freedom for Dutch ships from molestation by the British Royal Navy on the high seas, even in wars in which the Dutch Republic was neutral. This enabled the Dutch to conduct their “smuggling” unhindered as long as they were not caught red-handed in territorial waters controlled by England.

#### **1.4.4 – Effect on the Colonies**



*Oliver Cromwell, by Samuel Cooper: Oliver Cromwell led Parliament in passing the first Navigation Act in 1651.*

The Navigation Acts, while enriching Britain, caused resentment in the colonies and were a major contributing factor to the American Revolution. The Acts required all of a colony’s imports to be either bought from



England or resold by English merchants in England, regardless of what price could be obtained elsewhere. Colonists widely flouted the Acts, and efforts by the British to prevent smuggling created hostility and caused colonial unrest. Later laws such as the Molasses Act of 1733 (the first of the Sugar Acts) levied heavy duties on the trade of sugar from the French West Indies to the American colonies, forcing the colonists to buy the more expensive sugar from the British West Indies instead and only added fuel to the growing fire.

Historians debate the economic impact of the Acts, with some arguing that the burden on the individual was small while the impact on overall economic growth extreme. Others argue that the political friction caused by the Acts was more serious than the negative economic impact, because the merchants most affected were the most active politically. As the colonial economy matured, the Acts would block it from serious competition with British manufacturers.

On the whole, the Navigation Acts were more or less obeyed by colonists, despite their dissatisfaction, until the Molasses and Sugar Acts. The Molasses Act led to extensive smuggling, as no effective means of enforcement was provided until the 1750s. Irritation with stricter enforcement under the Sugar Act of 1764 became a greater source of resentment by merchants in the American colonies against Great Britain, contributing to the American Revolution.

## 1.5 – The Dominion of New England

The Dominion of New England was a short-lived administrative union of multiple colonies.

### 1.5.1 – The Dominion: A New Governing Structure



*Seal of the Dominion of New England, 1686–1689: The seal of the Dominion of New England was ordered by King James II of England. The inscription around the edge is an abbreviation for Iacobus Secundus Dei Gratia Magnae Britanniae, Franciae et Hiberniae Rex, Fidei Defensor (“James the Second, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith”), the monarch’s full title, an inscription which was also on the Great Seal of the Realm. The motto of the dominion was Nunquam libertas gratior extat, taken from the Claudian quotation Nunquam libertas gratior extat Quam sub rege pio (“Never does liberty appear in a more gracious form than under a pious king”).*

The Dominion of New England in North America was an administrative union of English colonies, including the territories of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the Plymouth Colony, the Province of New Hampshire, the Province of Maine, and the Narragansett Country (present-day Washington County, Rhode Island). It was composed of the present-day states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey. The union lasted from 1686–1689 and ultimately failed because it was too large for a single governor to manage.

### **1.5.2 – Forming the Dominion**

Following the English Restoration in 1660, King Charles II sought to streamline the administration of the colonial territories and began a process that brought a number of the colonies under direct crown control. One motive for these actions was to control the cost of administration of individual colonies; another significant reason was the desire to regulate trade. The specific objectives of the Dominion included the regulation of trade, an increase in religious freedoms, reformation of land title practices to conform more to English methods and practices, coordination on matters of defense, and a streamlining of the administration into fewer centers.

Joseph Dudley, a Massachusetts-born colonial, was made provisional president of the Council of New England on October 8, 1685, a move intended to secure the Dominion while political support was raised for Sir Edmund Andros, who was to take permanent command. Dudley's council successfully petitioned the Lords of Trade to include the colonies of Rhode Island and Connecticut in the Dominion on September 9, 1686. Edmund Andros, whose commission had been issued in June, was given an annex to his commission to incorporate them into the Dominion.

Andros arrived in Boston on December 20, 1686, and immediately assumed power. The Dominion at this time consisted of the Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island colonies. In 1688, its jurisdiction was expanded to include New York, and East and West Jersey. Andros' commission called for governance by himself, again with a council. The initial composition of the council included representatives from each of the colonies, but because of the inconvenience of travel and the fact that travel costs were not reimbursed, the council's quorums were dominated by the most local representatives from Massachusetts and Plymouth.

### **1.5.3 – Tensions in the Dominion**

Andros was extremely unpopular in New England. He disregarded local representation, denied the validity of existing land titles in Massachusetts (which had been dependent on the old charter), restricted town meetings, and actively promoted the Church of England in largely Puritan regions. He also enforced the Navigation Acts, laws that restricted New England trade.

### **1.5.4 – Enforcing Revenue Laws**

The first attempts to enforce revenue laws were met by stiff resistance from a number of Massachusetts communities. Several towns refused to choose commissioners to assess the town population and estates, and officials from a number of them were consequently arrested and brought to Boston. Some were fined and released; others were imprisoned until they promised to perform their duties. Other provinces did not resist the imposition of the new law even though, at least in Rhode Island, the rates were higher than they had been under the previous colonial administration. Plymouth's relatively poor landowners were hard hit by the high rates on livestock.

Andros, responding to the tax protests, sought to restrict town meetings, since these were where that protest had begun. He introduced a law that limited meetings to a single annual meeting, solely for the purpose of electing officials and explicitly banned meetings at other times for any reason. This loss of local power was widely

hated. Protests were made that the town meeting and tax laws were violations of the Magna Carta, which guaranteed taxation by representatives of the people.

### **1.5.5 – Land Title Practices**

Andros had been instructed to bring colonial land title practices into line with those in England and introduce quit-rents as a means of raising colonial revenues. Some landowners went through the confirmation process. Many refused, fearing the possibility of losing their land; they viewed the process as a thinly veiled land grab. The Puritans of Plymouth and Massachusetts, some of whom had extensive landholdings, were among the latter. Since all of the existing land titles in Massachusetts had been granted under the now-vacated colonial charter, Andros declared them to be void and required landowners to re-certify their ownership, paying fees to the Dominion and becoming subject to the charging of a quit-rent.

### **1.5.6 – Religious Protests and the Glorious Revolution**

The religious leaders of Massachusetts, led by Cotton and Increase Mather, were opposed to the rule of Andros and organized dissent targeted to influence the court in London. Increase Mather and other Massachusetts agents traveled to England in 1688 and were received by King James II, who promised to address the colony's concerns.

However, James II became increasingly unpopular in England and faced opposition from the Anglican church hierarchy when he issued the Declaration of Indulgence, establishing some freedom of religion. With the birth of his son and potential successor James III in June 1688, factions of English conspired with the Dutch prince to replace James with his Protestant son-in-law, William of Orange. The nearly bloodless "Glorious Revolution" followed in November and December of 1688 and established William and his wife Mary as co-rulers of England.

After the Glorious Revolution and the ascent of William and Mary, the Massachusetts agents then petitioned the new monarchs and the Lords of Trade (who oversaw colonial affairs) for restoration of the Massachusetts charter. Furthermore, Mather convinced the Lords of Trade to delay notifying Andros of the revolution. He had already dispatched to previous colonial governor Simon Bradstreet, a letter containing news of a report (prepared before the revolution), that the annulment of the Massachusetts charter had been illegal, and that the magistrates should "prepare the minds of the people for a change." Rumors of the revolution apparently reached some individuals in Boston before official news arrived.

### **1.5.7 – The Dissolution of the Dominion**

When the other New England colonies in the Dominion were informed of the overthrow of Andros, pre-Dominion colonial authorities moved to restore their former governments to power. Rhode Island and Connecticut resumed governance under their earlier charters, and Massachusetts resumed governance according to its vacated charter after being temporarily governed by a committee composed of magistrates, Massachusetts Bay officials, and a majority of Andros' council. The committee was disbanded after some Boston leaders felt that radical rebels held too much sway over it.

The dissolution of the Dominion presented legal problems for both Massachusetts and Plymouth. Plymouth had never had a royal charter, and Massachusetts had been legally vacated. As a result, the restored governments lacked legal foundations for their existence. This was particularly problematic for Massachusetts because its long frontier with New France was exposed to French and American Indian raids with the 1689 outbreak of King William's War. The cost of colonial defense resulted in a heavy tax burden, and the war also made it difficult to rebuild the colony's trade.



Agents for both colonies worked in England to rectify the charter issues. The Lords of Trade decided to solve the issue by combining the two provinces. The resulting Province of Massachusetts Bay, whose charter was issued in 1691 and began operating in 1692 under governor Sir William Phips, combined the territories of both colonies, along with the islands south of Cape Cod (Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, and the Elizabeth Islands) that had previously been part of New York.

## 2 – Self-Government in the Colonies

### 2.1 – The Habit of Self-Government

In a self-governing colony such as Plymouth, elected rulers make most decisions without referring to the imperial power that nominally controls the colony.

#### 2.1.1 – Introduction

A self-governing colony is a colony in which elected rulers are able to make most decisions without referring to the imperial power (such as England), with nominal control of the colony. Colonies have sometimes been referred to as *self-governing* in situations where the executive has not been under the control of the imperial government; the term self-governing can refer to the direct rule of a Crown Colony by an executive governor elected under a limited franchise. This type of government was seen in Plymouth Colony between 1630 and 1684.

#### 2.1.2 – Plymouth and the Mayflower Compact



*The Mayflower Compact, by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris: In 1620, the Mayflower Compact became the first governing document of Plymouth Colony.*

The Mayflower Compact was the first governing document of Plymouth Colony. It was written by separatists, or Puritans who were fleeing religious persecution by King James of England. They traveled aboard the *Mayflower* in 1620 along with adventurers, tradesmen, and servants. The *Mayflower* was originally bound for the Colony of Virginia, financed by the Company of Merchant Adventurers of London. Storms forced them to land at the hook of Cape Cod, however, in what is now Massachusetts. This inspired the passengers to

proclaim, since the settlement would not be made in the Virginia territory as agreed, that they would use their own liberty and that no one had power to command them.



*Copy of the text of the Mayflower Compact created by William Bradford ca. 1645: The Mayflower Compact was signed on November 11, 1620, by 41 passengers while the Mayflower was anchored at the tip of Cape Cod.*

Many of the colonists chose to establish a government. The Mayflower Compact was based simultaneously on a majoritarian model (even though the signers were not in the majority) and the settlers' allegiance to the king. It was in essence, a social contract in which the settlers consented to follow the compact's rules and regulations for the sake of survival. Thus, the colonists sincerely believed that they had the right to govern themselves, being separated from Britain by an ocean and having founded an entirely new society. In Plymouth's form of self-government, the colony was led by a governor and local legislature elected by a local oligarchy; the governor was appointed by the colonial power rather than the English Crown.

### 2.1.3 – Self-Government through the 17th and 18th Centuries

The idea of self-government was encouraged by the Glorious Revolution and the 1689 Bill of Rights which established that the British Parliament—and not the king—had the ultimate authority in government. In the 1730s, the Parliament began to pass laws regulating their colonies in the Americas. The Sugar Act established a tax of six pence per gallon of sugar or molasses imported into the colonies, and by 1750, the Parliament had begun to ban, restrict, or tax several more products. This provoked much anger among the colonists, despite the

fact that their tax burdens were quite low when compared to most subjects of European monarchies of the same period. Slowly, as interference from the Crown increased, the colonists felt more and more resentful about British control over the colonies.

## **2.2 – Governors and Assemblies**

Colonial governors were appointed by the Crown, while assemblies were elected by local colonists.

### **2.2.1 – Colonial Governors**

In the British Empire, a governor was originally an official appointed by the British monarch or cabinet to oversee one of the colonies and be the head of the colonial administration. The governor was invested with general executive powers and authorized to call a locally elected assembly. In addition to advising the governor, the governor's council would sit as an upper house when the assembly was in session. The governor had the power of absolute veto and could prorogue (i.e., delay) and dissolve the assembly at any time. The governor lived in an official residence, known in most of the colonies simply as Government House.

A governor's power could diminish as the colony gained more representative government. This representation could come in the form of an Executive Council to help with the colony's administration or, in a further stage of self-government, Legislative Councils and Assemblies in which the governor often played a role. In some colonies, the colonial assembly shared power with a royally appointed governor. On a more local level, governmental power was vested in county courts, which were self-perpetuating—the incumbents filled any vacancies and there never were popular elections.

### **2.2.2 – Colonial Assemblies**

The colonial assemblies had a variety of titles, such as House of Delegates, House of Burgesses, or Assembly of Freemen. Assemblies were made up of representatives elected by the freeholders and planters (landowners) of the province. The assemblies usually met for a single, brief session, although the council or governor could and sometimes did call a special session.

The assembly's role was to make all local laws and ordinances, ensuring they were not inconsistent with the laws of England. In practice, this was not always achieved, because many of the provincial assemblies sought to expand their powers and limit those of the governor and crown. Laws could be examined by the Board of Trade, which also held veto power over legislation. The Board of Trade (originally known as the Lords of Trade or Lords of Trade and Plantations) was a committee of the Privy Council of the United Kingdom, first established as a temporary committee of inquiry in the 17th century that evolved gradually into a government department with a diverse range of functions. Taxes and government budgets also originated in the assembly, and the budget was connected with the raising and equipping of the militia.

The House of Burgesses was the first assembly of elected representatives of English colonists in North America. The House, which consisted of delegates elected by the colonists, was established by the Virginia Company, who created the body as part of an effort to encourage English craftsmen to settle in North America. The word *burgess* means an elected or appointed official of a municipality or the representative of a borough in the English House of Commons.

### **2.2.3 – Tensions between Governors and Assemblies**

Conflicts over taxation and budgets contributed to the tensions between assemblies and governors that would eventually lead to the American Revolution. In 1769, the Virginia House of Burgesses asserted that only

Virginia's governor and legislature could tax its citizens. The members drafted a formal letter to the King, completing it just before the legislature was dissolved by Virginia's royal governor.



*Maryland Governor's Mansion: Government House is the official residence of the governor of Maryland and is located at State Circle in Annapolis, Maryland. It has been the home of the governor since 1870. It was designed by Baltimore architect R. Snowden Andrews (1830–1903). Jennings House was the residence of the governors of Maryland from 1777 until 1870.*

As the Revolution drew near, colonial assemblies began forcibly ejecting their governors from office. Maryland was the only colony that did not forcibly eject its last proprietary governor from office, choosing instead a formal and largely courteous transfer of power. By 1775, the authority of its English governor, Sir Robert Eden, had been effectively usurped by the Annapolis Convention, and Eden was eventually asked by the Maryland Council of Safety to step down as governor. The Maryland Convention had been pressed by the Continental Congress (and the Virginians in particular) to arrest and detain Eden, but they demurred, preferring to avoid such an “extreme” measure. Eventually, the Maryland Convention formally asked the governor to leave, and Governor Eden finally departed Maryland for England on June 23, 1776.

## 2.3 – New France and Louisiana

New France, colonized by France in the 16th century, included the colonies of Canada, Acadia, Hudson Bay, Newfoundland, and Louisiana.

### 2.3.1 – Background

New France was the area colonized by France in North America during a period from 1534 until the cession of New France to Spain and Great Britain in 1763. At its peak in 1712, the territory of New France extended from Newfoundland to the Rocky Mountains and from Hudson Bay to the Gulf of Mexico. The territory was then divided into five colonies, each with its own administration: Canada, Acadia, Hudson Bay, Newfoundland (Plaisance), and Louisiana.

In 1534, Jacques Cartier claimed the first province of New France. However, initial French attempts at settling the region met with failure. French fishing fleets, however, continued to sail to the Atlantic coast and into the St. Lawrence River. French merchants soon realized the St. Lawrence region was full of valuable fur-bearing



animals, especially the beaver, which were becoming rare in Europe. Eventually, the French crown decided to colonize the territory to secure and expand its influence in America.



*New France (orthographic projection)—Maximal expansion in 1712, before Treaty of Utrecht:  
This global map illustrates the geographic location of New France, which stretched from  
Newfoundland to the Rocky Mountains and from Hudson Bay to the Gulf of Mexico.*

### **2.3.2 – French Population in Its Colonies**

For the first few decades of the colony's existence, the French population numbered only a few hundred, while the English colonies to the south were much more populous and wealthy. In 1627, France invested in New France, promising land parcels to hundreds of new settlers with the hope of turning the area into an important mercantile and farming colony. Samuel Champlain was named governor of New France. The colony forbade non-Roman Catholics from living there, and Protestants were required to renounce their faith to establish themselves in New France. Many therefore, chose instead to move to the English colonies.

The economic development of New France was marked by the emergence of successive economies based on staple commodities, each of which dictated the political and cultural settings of the time. During the 16th and early 17th centuries, New France's economy was heavily centered on its Atlantic fisheries. This would change in the latter half of the 17th and 18th centuries as French settlement penetrated farther into the continental interior. Here, French economic interests would shift and concentrate on the development of the fur trade. Furs would soon become the staple goods that would strengthen and drive New France's economy, in particular that of Montreal, for the next century.

Louisiana was an administrative district of New France and was under French control from 1682–1763 and 1800–1803. It originally covered an expansive territory that included most of the drainage basin of the Mississippi River and stretched from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Appalachian Mountains to the Rocky Mountains.

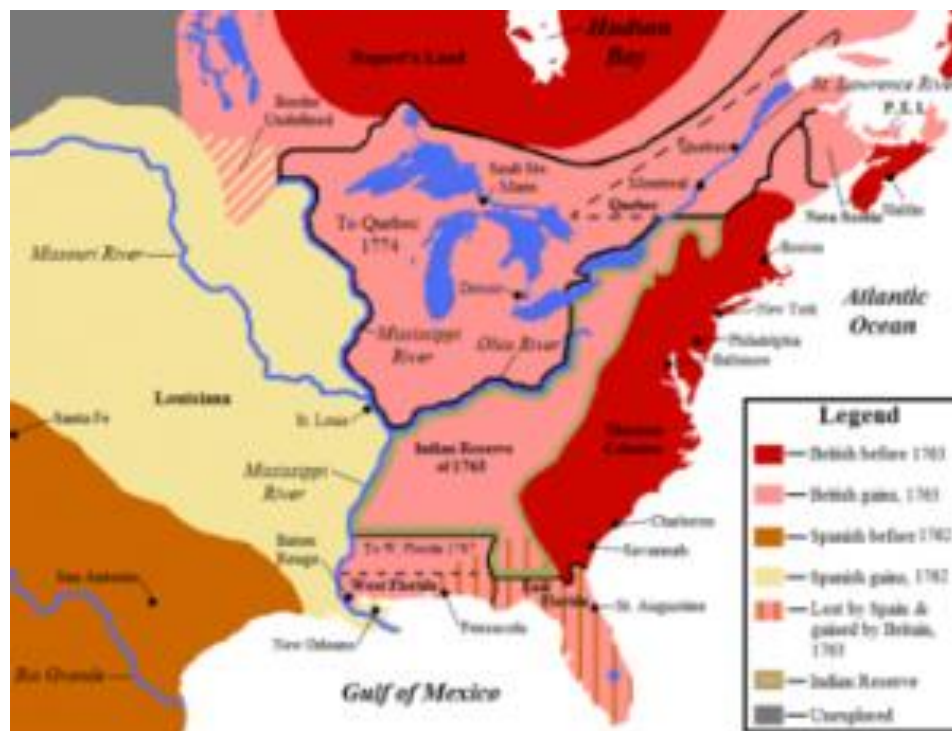
### **2.3.3 – New France and American Indians**

Although the fur trade was lucrative, many French saw Canada as an inhospitable frozen wasteland, and by 1640, fewer than 400 settlers had made their home there. The sparse French presence meant that colonists depended on the local Algonquian people; without them, the French would have perished. French traders in

America quickly realized the economic benefits of working with American Indians to exploit fur and timber exports. The French needed help to survive in the difficult climate of North America, and the Algonquian people were influential in showing them how to establish themselves in this New World. The Algonquian helped them to hunt for food and to use the furs from their prey to keep warm during the winter months. Later on, intermarriage allowed the French to deepen relations with indigenous nations and have access to their hunting and trapping grounds.

French fishermen, explorers, and fur traders made extensive contacts with the Algonquian. The Algonquian, in turn, tolerated the French because the colonists supplied them with firearms for their ongoing war with the Iroquois. Thus, the French found themselves escalating native wars and supporting the Algonquian against the Iroquois, who received weapons from their Dutch trading partners. These 17th-century conflicts centered on the lucrative trade in beaver pelts, earning them the name of the Beaver Wars. In these wars, fighting between rival American Indian peoples spread throughout the Great Lakes region.

### 2.3.4 – Disintegration of New France



*Map of British and Spanish territorial gains : This map illustrates the British and Spanish territorial gains following the Treaty of Paris that ended the French and Indian War. Also shown are boundary changes within the territory the British had acquired between 1763 and 1783.*

The Treaty of Utrecht was signed in 1713 between several European states including Spain, Great Britain, France, Portugal, Savoy, and the Dutch Republic to end the War of the Spanish Succession. The treaty resulted in the relinquishing of French claims to mainland Acadia, the Hudson Bay, and Newfoundland, and the establishment of the colony of Île Royale (Cape Breton Island) as the successor to Acadia.

France ceded the rest of New France, except the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, to Great Britain and Spain in the Treaty of Paris in 1763, which ended the Seven Years War (also known as the French and Indian War). Britain received the lands east of the Mississippi River, including Canada, Acadia, and parts of Louisiana, while Spain received the territory to the west—the larger portion of Louisiana. Spain returned its portion of Louisiana to France in 1800 under the secret Treaty of San Ildefonso, but French leader Napoleon Bonaparte sold it to the



United States in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, permanently ending French colonial efforts on the North American mainland.

## **3 – Early Conflicts**

### **3.1 – European Wars in the Colonies**

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the European powers fought many wars over control of the colonies in North America.

#### **3.1.1 – A Progression of Wars**

As various European imperial powers settled on the new continent of North America, their conflicts became transatlantic. The British and the Dutch vied over the colony of New Netherland, the British and the Spanish fought the War of Jenkins' Ear, and the British and the French fought in a series of wars that concluded in 1763 with the French and Indian War.

#### **3.1.2 – Wars with Spain and The Netherlands**

The Anglo-Dutch Wars (1652–1674) were a series of conflicts fought largely at sea over Britain's power to restrict trade to the colonies. Their impact on the colonies was mostly limited to their shifting ownership of New Netherland.

The War of Jenkins' Ear (1739–1748) began over Britain's supplying slaves and goods to the Spanish colonies in North America. The Spanish became suspicious that British ships were overreaching and began boarding and seizing British ships. The war gained its colorful name from a Spanish threat against British captain Robert Jenkins, whose ear was severed when his ship was boarded; he was told to show his ear to Parliament and tell the king that the Spanish would do the same to him. Its conflicts included a siege of St. Augustine in Florida by Georgian colonists and a counter-invasion of Georgia by Spanish forces. The war was largely subsumed by the War of the Austrian Succession in 1742.

#### **3.1.3 – Wars with France**

Beginning in 1689, the British colonies became involved in a series of major wars between Britain and France for control of North America. Britain and France fought four wars that became known as the French and Indian Wars—followed in 1778 with another war when France joined the Americans in the American Revolution. The French settlers in New France were outnumbered nearly 15 to one by settlers in the 13 British colonies, so the French relied heavily on American Indian allies.

#### **3.1.4 – King William's War**

King William's War (1689–1697), also known as the "Nine Years War" and the "War of the League of Augsburg," was a phase in the larger Anglo-French conflict for colonial domination throughout the world. New France and the Wabanaki Confederacy thwarted New England expansion into Acadia by raiding settlements in present-day Maine, whose border New France defined as the Kennebec River in southern Maine. Toward this end, they executed raids against targets in Massachusetts Colony (including present-day Maine), starting with the Northeast Coast Campaign.

With his New England militia, Sir William Phips moved in 1690 to take the French strongholds at Port Royal and at Quebec. Having to reckon with Quebec's formidable natural defenses, its superior number of soldiers, and the coming of winter, Phips sailed back to Boston with his hungry, smallpox-ridden, and demoralized force.

His failure showed a growing recognition of the need to replicate European combat techniques and war policy in order to achieve military success.

The Iroquois suffered heavily in King William's War and were brought, along with other western American Indians, into the French trading network. The British colonists' treatment of American Indian tribes led directly to the Wabanaki tribe's involvement in the war. Unlike tribes in southern New England, the Wabanaki retained significant power relative to the colonists and rejected the latter's attempts to exert authority over them. Expanding settlements fueled tensions and offered an opportunity to the French, who wanted to counter English influence in the region. New England's lack of stability and authority, the Wabanakis' existing grievances, and French encouragement led to Wabanaki attacks on settlements on the Northeast coast, a pattern that would be repeated until the withdrawal of the French in 1763.

### 3.1.5 – Queen Anne's War



*Portrait of Francis Nicholson, ca. 1710: Francis Nicholson, British commander during the Conquest of Acadia*

Queen Anne's War (1702–1713) was the second war for control of the continent and was the counterpart of the War of the Spanish Succession in Europe. The conflict also involved a number of American Indian tribes as well as Spain, which was allied with France.

In 1702, Carolina governor James Moore led an unsuccessful attack on St. Augustine, the capital of Spanish Florida, as well as one of several raiding expeditions that wiped out much of Florida's American Indian population in 1704–1706. Thomas Nairne, the Province of Carolina's Indian agent, planned an expedition of British soldiers and their American Indian allies to destroy the French settlement at Mobile and the Spanish

settlement at Pensacola. The expedition never materialized, but the British did supply their allies with firearms, which the Tallapoosas used in their siege of Pensacola. The English failed to compensate the Tallapoosas adequately, and by 1716, the Tallapoosas and other tribes had shifted allegiance and were prepared to strike against South Carolina settlements.

Meanwhile, French privateers inflicted serious losses on New England's fishing and shipping industries. The privateering was finally curbed in 1710 when, under the command of Francis Nicholson, Britain provided military support to American colonists, resulting in the British Conquest of Acadia (which later became peninsular Nova Scotia), the main base used by the privateers.

The war ended in 1713, and by the Treaty of Utrecht, Britain gained Acadia, the island of Newfoundland, the Hudson Bay region, and the Caribbean island of St. Kitts. France was required to recognize British authority over the Iroquois. Following Queen Anne's War, relations between Carolina and the nearby American Indian populations deteriorated, resulting in the Yamasee War of 1715 and Father Rale's War a few years later, which very nearly destroyed the province.

### **3.1.6 – King George's War**

King George's War, 1744–1748, was the North American phase of the concurrent War of the Austrian Succession. In 1745, naval and ground forces from Massachusetts in the Siege of Louisbourg captured the strategic French base on Cape Breton Island. During the war, the French made four attempts to regain Acadia by capturing the capital, Annapolis Royal. The French led American Indian allies in numerous raids, such as the destruction of the village of Saratoga, New York, killing and capturing more than 100 of its inhabitants. The war merged into the War of Jenkins' Ear against Spain and ended with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, under which the French regained Fortress Louisbourg.

### **3.1.7 – The French and Indian War**



*The Capture of Louisbourg, 1745 by Peter Monamy: In the attack on Louisbourg in 1745, naval and ground forces from Massachusetts captured the strategic French base on Cape Breton Island.*

The final imperial war, the French and Indian War (1754–1763), known as the Seven Years' War in Europe, proved to be the decisive contest between Britain and France in America. The war began over competing land claims between Britain and France in what is now western Pennsylvania. The war continued until 1763, when the French signed the Treaty of Paris and essentially forfeited the land of New France, ending their power on the continent. The British Empire had now gained mastery over North America and become a truly global empire. This last of the wars for empire, however, also sowed the seeds of trouble. The war led Great Britain

deeply into debt, and in the 1760s and 1770s, efforts to deal with the debt through imperial reforms would have the unintended consequence of causing stress and strain that threatened to tear the Empire apart.

## **3.2 – Changes in American Indian Life**

### **3.2.1 – Introduction**

The invasion of North America by European powers had widespread effects on American Indian life.

From the 16th through the 19th centuries, the population of American Indians drastically declined due to epidemic diseases brought from Europe, genocide and warfare at the hands of Europeans, displacement from their lands, internal warfare, enslavement, and a high rate of intermarriage. After 1492, European exploration and colonization of the Americas revolutionized how the Old and New Worlds perceived themselves. With the meeting of the two worlds, animals, insects, plants, cultures, and diseases were carried from one to the other, both deliberately and by chance, in what is called the Columbian Exchange.

### **3.2.2 – Conversion in the New World**

The European colonists in North America often rationalized their expansion of their empire with the assumption that they were saving—as they perceived—a barbaric, pagan world by spreading Christian civilization. In the Spanish colonization of the Americas, the policy of Indian Reductions resulted in the forced conversions to Catholicism of the indigenous people. What developed during the colonial years and since, has been a syncretic Catholicism that absorbed and reflected indigenous beliefs.

### **3.2.3 – The Spread of Diseases**

Smallpox proved particularly fatal to American Indian populations. Epidemics often immediately followed European exploration and sometimes destroyed entire village populations. While precise figures are difficult to determine, some historians estimate that at least 30% (and sometimes 50% to 70%) of some American Indian populations died after first contact due to Eurasian smallpox.

In 1618–1619, smallpox killed 90% of the American Indians in the area of the Massachusetts Bay. Historians believe many Mohawk in present-day New York became infected after contact with children of Dutch traders in Albany in 1634. The disease swept through Mohawk villages, reaching the Onondaga at Lake Ontario by 1636, and the lands of the western Iroquois by 1679, as it was carried by Mohawk and other tribes who traveled the trading routes. The high rate of fatalities caused breakdowns in American Indian societies and disrupted generational exchanges of culture.

Smallpox epidemics in 1780–1782, and 1837–1838, brought devastation and drastic depopulation among the Plains Indians. By 1832, the federal government established a smallpox vaccination program for American Indians, known as the Indian Vaccination Act. It was the first federal program created to address a health issue among American Indians.

### **3.2.4 – Exchange of Animals**

Sheep, pigs, horses, and cattle were all Old World animals that were introduced to contemporary American Indians. In the 16th century, Spaniards and other Europeans brought horses to the Americas. The early American horse had been game for the earliest humans on the continent; it was hunted to extinction about 7000 BCE, just after the end of the last glacial period. The reintroduction of the horse to North America had a profound impact on the American Indian culture of the Great Plains. The tribes trained and used horses to ride, carry goods for exchange with neighboring tribes, hunt game, and conduct wars and raids. The people fully incorporated the use of horses into their societies and expanded their territories.

## **Expansion of the Early American Colonies**

### 3.2.5 – Slavery

When Europeans arrived as colonists in North America, many American Indian tribes began selling war captives to Europeans rather than integrating them into their own societies as they had done before. As the demand for labor in the West Indies grew with the cultivation of sugar cane, Europeans enslaved American Indians in the 13 North American colonies, and some were exported to the “sugar islands.” The British settler-invaders, especially those in the southern colonies, purchased or captured American Indians to use as forced labor in cultivating tobacco, rice, and indigo. Accurate records of the numbers enslaved do not exist; scholars estimate tens of thousands of American Indians may have been enslaved by the Europeans.

The slave trade of American Indians lasted only until around 1730 and gave rise to a series of devastating wars among the tribes, including the Yamasee War. The Indian Wars of the early 18th century, combined with the increasing importation of African slaves, effectively ended the American Indian slave trade by 1750. Colonists found that American Indian slaves could easily escape, as they knew the country. The wars cost the lives of numerous colonial slave traders and disrupted their early societies. The remaining American Indian groups banded together to face the Europeans from a position of strength.



*James Oglethorpe presenting the Yamacraw Indians to the Georgia Trustees: Yamacraw Creek Native Americans meet with the trustee of the colony of Georgia in England, in July 1734. The painting shows a Native American boy (in a blue coat) and woman (in a red dress) in European clothing.*

In the 1790s, Benjamin Hawkins was assigned as the U.S. agent to the southeastern tribes that became known as the Five Civilized Tribes, for their adoption of numerous Anglo-European practices. Hawkins advised the tribes to take up slaveholding to aid them in European-style farming and plantations. He thought their traditional form of slavery, which had looser conditions, was less efficient than chattel slavery. In the 19th century, some members of these tribes began to purchase African American slaves.

## 4 – The Growth of the Colonies

### 4.1 – A Diverse Population

Immigration and migration patterns in the early colonies were diverse and varied greatly from one region to the next.

### Expansion of the Early American Colonies

### **4.1.1 – The Colonial Population**

The population of the American colonies through the 18th century was primarily a mixture of immigrants from different countries in Europe and slaves from Africa. By 1776, about 85% of the white population in the British colonies was of English, Irish, Scottish, or Welsh descent, with 9% of German origin and 4% Dutch. These populations continued to grow at a rapid rate throughout the 18th century primarily because of high birth rates and relatively low death rates. Over 90% were farmers, with several small cities that were also seaports linking the colonial economy to the larger British Empire. As time went on, many new immigrants ended up on the frontiers because of the cheaper availability of land. By 1780, about 287,000 slaves had been imported into the 13 colonies, most into the southern colonies.

### **4.1.2 – New England**

In New England, the Puritans created self-governing communities of religious congregations of yeoman farmers and their families. High-level politicians gave out plots of land to male settlers, or proprietors, who then divided the land amongst themselves. Large portions were usually given to men of higher social standing, but every white man—who wasn't indentured or criminally bonded—had enough land to support a family.

The New England colonists largely originated from England, Ireland, and Scotland. They tended to include more educated men as well as many skilled farmers, tradesmen, and craftsmen. They settled in small villages, many for common religious activities, and Puritans initially dominated the region. The eastern and northern frontier around the initial New England settlements was mainly settled by the Yankee descendants of the original New Englanders. Between 1742 and 1753, roughly 1,000 Germans settled in Broad Bay, Massachusetts (now Waldoboro, Maine). Many of these colonists later moved to Boston, Nova Scotia, and North Carolina.

Shipbuilding, commerce, and fisheries were important in coastal towns. New England's healthy climate (the cold winters killed the mosquitoes and other disease-bearing insects) and abundant food supply resulted in the lowest death rate and highest birth rate of any of the colonies. Education was widespread in the northern colonies, which had established colleges led by Harvard College, College of New Jersey (Princeton), and Yale College, while the College of William and Mary trained the elite in Virginia. Public schooling was rare outside New England.

### **4.1.3 – Middle Colonies and the Western Frontier**

Unlike New England, the mid-Atlantic region gained much of its population from new immigration. By 1750, the combined populations of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania had reached nearly 300,000 people after an influx of German, Swiss, and Irish immigrants. Meanwhile, William Penn, who founded the colony of Pennsylvania in 1682, attracted many British Quakers with his policies of religious liberty and freehold ownership.

The middle colonies' settlements were scattered west of New York City and Philadelphia. The former Dutch colony of New York had the most eclectic collection of residents from many different nations and prospered as a major trading and commercial center after about 1700. The Pennsylvanian colonial center was dominated by the Quakers for decades after their initial immigration, from about 1680 to 1725. Many more settlers arrived during this time as well, especially Protestant sects seeking freedom of religion. The main commercial center of Philadelphia was run mostly by prosperous Quakers, supplemented by many small farming and trading communities with strong German contingents located in the Delaware River Valley.





*William Penn at age 22, possibly by Sir Peter Lely: William Penn advocated religious tolerance in the New World and strengthened the Quaker movement in North America.*

A tide of German immigration to Pennsylvania swelled between 1725 and 1775, with immigrants arriving as redemptioners or indentured servants. By 1775, Germans constituted about one-third of the population of the state. German farmers were renowned for their highly productive animal husbandry and agricultural practices. Politically, they were generally inactive until 1740, when they joined a Quaker-led coalition that took control of the legislature. The Germans, comprising Lutherans, Reformed, Mennonites, Amish, and other sects, developed a rich religious life with a strong musical culture; collectively, they came to be known as the Pennsylvania Dutch.

The colonial western frontier was mainly settled from about 1717 to 1775, mostly by Presbyterian settlers who were feeling hard times and persecution in northern England border lands, Scotland, and the northern portion of Ireland. Many initially landed in family groups in Philadelphia or Baltimore but soon migrated to the western frontier, where land was cheaper and restrictions less onerous.

#### **4.1.4 – Southern Colonies**

The Southern Colonies were economically dominated by the wealthy planters in Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina even though much of the population of the south consisted of enslaved Africans. The Anglican Church of England was officially established in most of the South; however, there were no bishops, and the churches had only local roles. The colony of Maryland was originally created with the aim of being a haven for English Catholics, most of which were well-to-do nobles who could not worship in public. However, with extremely cheap land prices, many Protestants moved to Maryland and soon became a majority of the population.

Current and former indentured servants made up as much as 80% of the population in Virginia in the 17th century. In Carolina, English plantation owners from the tiny Caribbean island of Barbados, already a well-established English sugar colony fueled by slave labor, migrated to the southern part of the colony to settle

there. Slavery developed quickly in the Carolinas, largely because so many of the early migrants came from Barbados, where slavery was well established. By the end of the 1600s, a very wealthy class of rice planters who relied on slaves had attained dominance in the southern part of the Carolinas, especially around Charles Town. By 1715, South Carolina had a black majority because of the number of slaves in the colony.

Georgia was envisioned by its founder, General Oglethorpe, as a colony which would serve as a haven for English subjects who had been imprisoned for debt—essentially a province for the resettlement of “the worthy poor.” Oglethorpe banned alcohol, disagreed with slavery, and thought a system of smallholdings more appropriate than the large plantations common in the colonies to the north.

## 4.2 – Evolution of Protestantism

The First Great Awakening illustrated the evolution of Protestantism in the British colonies.

### 4.2.1 – Protestantism in Colonial America

The 18th century saw a host of social, religious, and intellectual changes across the British Empire. In the colonies, this could be seen in the evolution of Protestantism over the centuries.

### 4.2.2 – The First Great Awakening



*Drawing of Roger Williams statue, by Franklin Simmons, 1903: Roger Williams, president of the Colony of Rhode Island, was a religious reformer and early Baptist.*

During the 18th century, the British Atlantic experienced an outburst of Protestant revivalism known as the First Great Awakening. (A Second Great Awakening would take place in the 1800s.) During the First Great Awakening, evangelists came from the ranks of several Protestant denominations: Congregationalists, Anglicans (members of the Church of England), and Presbyterians. They rejected what appeared to be sterile,

formal modes of worship in favor of a vigorous emotional religiosity. Whereas Martin Luther and John Calvin had preached a doctrine of predestination and close reading of scripture, new evangelical ministers spread a message of personal and experiential faith that rose above mere book learning. Individuals could bring about their own salvation by accepting Christ, an especially welcome message for those who had felt excluded by traditional Protestantism—women, the young, and people at the lower end of the social spectrum.

The Great Awakening saw the rise of several Protestant denominations, including Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists (who emphasized adult baptism of converted Christians rather than infant baptism). These new churches gained converts and competed with older Protestant groups like Anglicans (members of the Church of England), Congregationalists (the heirs of Puritanism in America), and Quakers. The influence of these older Protestant groups, such as the New England Congregationalists, declined because of the Great Awakening. Nonetheless, the Great Awakening touched the lives of thousands on both sides of the Atlantic and provided a shared experience in the 18th-century British Empire.

### **4.2.3 – Deism**

Deism is a loosely used term that describes the views of certain English and continental thinkers. These views gained a small, unorganized, but influential number of adherents in America in the late 18th century. Deism stressed morality and rejected the orthodox Christian view of the divinity of Christ, often viewing him as a sublime, but entirely human, teacher of morality. Deism influenced the development of Unitarianism in America. By 1800, all but one Congregationalist church in Boston had Unitarian preachers teaching the strict unity of God, the subordinate nature of Christ, and salvation by character. Harvard University, founded by Congregationalists, became a source of Unitarian training.

### **4.2.4 – Mennonites**

The Mennonites are a religious group which immigrated to America from Europe. Some came in 1683 to settle in Pennsylvania. The Mennonites left Germany because they were persecuted for refusing to perform military service on the basis of religious objections. Later groups of Mennonites came to North America from Switzerland, Prussia, the Ukraine, and Russia. The Mennonites tended to be very conservative and had their own hymns and Psalters.

### **4.2.5 – Methodism**

Methodism spread to America in the late 1760s. Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore were both preachers appointed as missionaries by John Wesley. They traveled to the new world in 1769 to start American Methodist societies; Pilmore in Philadelphia, and Boardman in New York. Pilmore was more effective in spreading the cause in Philadelphia and even traveled into the south to preach and promote the society. Methodism spread along the east coast during the years leading up to the American Revolution.

### **4.2.6 – Moravians**

The Moravians, like John and Charles Wesley, arrived in America in 1735. The group left Moravia and Bohemia in response to harsh persecution for their religious beliefs and practices. The Moravians wished to serve as Christian missionaries for the different ethnic groups in America. They first settled in Georgia, then moved to Pennsylvania and North Carolina. The Moravians were deeply involved with the religious use of music. They practiced hymn singing daily, and some wrote instrumental music.

## **4.3 – Colonial Society's Social Structure**

Lifestyles among British colonists in North America varied dramatically by region.

### 4.3.1 – New England



*Old Ship Church, Hingham, Massachusetts, ca. 1880: Religious meetinghouses were important centers of community life in the colonies.*

In New England, high-level politicians gave out plots of land to male settlers, or proprietors, who then divided the land amongst themselves. Large portions were usually given to men of higher social standing, but every white man who wasn't indentured or criminally bonded had enough land to support a family. Every male citizen had a voice in the town meeting. The town meeting levied taxes, built roads, and elected officials who managed town affairs. The towns did not have courts—that was a function of a larger unit, the county, whose officials were appointed by the state government.

The Congregational Church, founded by the Puritans, was not automatically joined by all New England residents because of Puritan beliefs that God singled out only a few specific people for salvation. Instead, membership was limited to those who could convincingly *test* before members of the church that they had been saved. They were known as the *elect* or *Saints*.

### 4.3.2 – The Middle Colonies

Unlike New England, the mid-Atlantic region gained much of its population from new immigration. Many of these mid-Atlantic immigrants were limited to occupations as small-scale farmers and artisans. Large farmers and merchants became wealthy, while farmers with smaller farms and artisans only made enough for subsistence. The mid-Atlantic region, by 1750, was divided by both ethnic background and wealth.

### 4.3.3 – Southern Colonies

The Southern Colonies were economically dominated by the wealthy planters in Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina, even though much of the population of the south consisted of enslaved Africans. Slavery in colonial America was very oppressive, as it passed on from generation to generation and slaves had no legal rights. The colonies that were the most specialized in the production of goods, such as sugar and coffee, relied the most heavily on slaves. Consequentially, they had the highest per capita income in the New World. However, the slaves did not accrue wages or benefit from any of this profit.

### **4.3.4 – Agriculture, Industry, and Trade**

Charter companies played an important role in England's success at colonizing what would become the United States. Charter companies were made up of groups of stockholders, usually merchants and wealthy landowners, who sought personal economic gain and, in some cases, wanted to advance England's national goals. While the private sector financed the companies, the King provided each project with a charter or grant conferring economic rights and political and judicial authority. Most of the colonies were slow to make profits, however, and the English investors often turned over their colonial charters to the settlers. The political implications, although not realized at the time, were enormous. The colonists were left to build their own lives, their own communities, and their own economy.

By the mid-18th century, shipbuilding was a staple in New England. These shipyards were aided by cheap wood sold by merchants who exploited the vast amounts of timber along the coasts and rivers of northern New England. Other New England merchants took advantage of the rich fishing areas along the Atlantic coast. A variety of artisans, shopkeepers, and merchants also arose during this time to provide services to the growing farming population.

Before 1720, most colonists in the mid-Atlantic region worked with small-scale farming and paid for imported manufactures by supplying the West Indies with corn and flour. In New York, a fur pelt export trade to Europe flourished, adding wealth to the region. After 1720, mid-Atlantic farming was stimulated with the international demand for wheat. A massive population explosion in Europe brought wheat prices up, and by 1770, a bushel of wheat cost twice as much as it did in 1720. Farmers also expanded their production of flaxseed and corn due to the high demand of flax in the Irish linen industry and corn in the West Indies.

The plantations of the Southern colonies mainly grew tobacco, indigo, and rice for export and raised most of their own food supplies. In addition, many small subsistence farms were family owned and operated by yeoman farmers.

### **4.3.5 – Colonial Cities**

Most colonial cities were seaports. By 1750, the population of Philadelphia had reached 25,000; New York had reached 15,000; and the port of Baltimore had reached 7,000. Merchants dominated seaport society and about 40 merchants controlled half of Philadelphia's trade. Wealthy merchants in Philadelphia and New York, like their counterparts in New England, built elegant Georgian-style mansions.

Shopkeepers, artisans, shipwrights, butchers, coopers, seamstresses, cobblers, bakers, carpenters, masons, and many other specialized professions made up the middle class of seaport society. Wives and husbands often worked as a team and taught their children their crafts to pass on through the family. Many of these artisans and traders made enough money to create a modest life. Laborers stood at the bottom of seaport society. These people worked on the docks unloading inbound vessels and loading outbound vessels with wheat, corn, and flaxseed. Many of these were African American; some were free while others were enslaved.

### **4.3.6 – Education**

Education in the colonial era was primarily the responsibility of families. However, numerous religious groups, especially the Puritans in New England, established tax-supported elementary schools so their children could learn to read the Bible. These religiously-affiliated schools may be reflective of the fact that New Englanders wrote journals, pamphlets, books, and especially sermons—more than all of the other colonies combined.

### 4.3.7 – The Status of Women

The experiences of women during the colonial era varied greatly from colony to colony and among different ethnic groups. In New England, the Puritan settlers brought their strong religious values with them to the New World, which dictated that a woman be subordinate to her husband and dedicate herself to rearing “God-fearing” children to the best of her ability.

Among Puritan settlers in New England, wives almost never worked in the fields with their husbands. In German communities in Pennsylvania, however, many women worked in fields and stables. German and Dutch immigrants granted women more control over property, which was not permitted in the local English law. Unlike English colonial wives, German and Dutch wives owned their own clothes and other items and were also given the ability to write wills disposing of the property brought into the marriage. Much later during the colonial experience, as the values of the American Enlightenment were imported from Britain, the philosophies of such thinkers as John Locke weakened the view that husbands were natural “rulers” over their wives and replaced it with a (slightly) more liberal conception of marriage. However, women continued to have very few rights. They were not allowed to vote and lost most control of their property (if they had any to begin with) in marriage. They could not divorce, and even single women could not make contracts, or sue anyone or be sued, at least until the late 18th century.

The typical woman in colonial America was expected to run a household and attend to domestic duties such as spinning, sewing, preserving food, animal husbandry, cooking, and cleaning while raising children. Families tended to be large, and childbearing could be dangerous prior to advancements in medicine and health care. Death in childbirth was common enough that the term *now-wife* was coined to refer to a man’s present wife as compared to those that he had previously lost.

Often, women were taught to read so that they could learn the Bible, but few were taught to write, as it was thought there was no reason a woman should know how to write. A colonial woman was expected to be subservient to her father until she married, at which point she became subservient to her husband. Ministers often told their congregations that women were inferior to men and more inclined to sin and err.

## 5 – Social Class in the Colonies

### 5.1 – The Colonial Elite

#### 5.1.1 – Introduction

In New England and the mid-Atlantic colonies, the elite were wealthy farmers or urban merchants; in the South, they were wealthy planters.

British Americans’ reliance on indentured servitude and slavery to meet the demand for colonial labor helped give rise to a wealthy colonial class—the gentry—in the Chesapeake tobacco colonies and elsewhere. To be *genteel*, that is, a member of the gentry, meant to be refined; free of all rudeness. The British American gentry modeled themselves on the English aristocracy, who embodied the ideal of refinement and gentility.

One of the ways in which the gentry set themselves apart from others was through their purchase, consumption, and display of goods. An increased supply of consumer goods from England that became available in the 18th century led to a phenomenon called the “Consumer Revolution.”



### 5.1.2 – New England

In New England, high-level politicians gave out plots of land to male settlers, or proprietors, who then divided the land among themselves. Large portions were usually given to men of higher social standing, but every white man who wasn't indentured or criminally bonded had enough land to support a family.

Many New Englanders took part in a sophisticated system of trade in which they exported products to the West Indies, where they were traded for molasses, sugar, gold coins, and bills of exchange (credit slips). They carried the West Indian products to New England factories where the raw sugar was turned into granulated sugar and the molasses distilled into rum. The gold and credit slips were sent to England where they were exchanged for manufactures, which were shipped back to the colonies and sold along with the sugar and rum to farmers.

Other New England merchants took advantage of the rich fishing areas along the Atlantic coast. Collectively, they financed a large fishing fleet and then transported the catch of mackerel and cod to the West Indies and Europe. Some merchants exploited the vast amounts of timber along the coasts and rivers of northern New England. They funded sawmills that supplied cheap wood for houses and shipbuilding. Hundreds of New England shipwrights built oceangoing ships, which they sold to British and American merchants.

### 5.1.3 – Middle Colonies

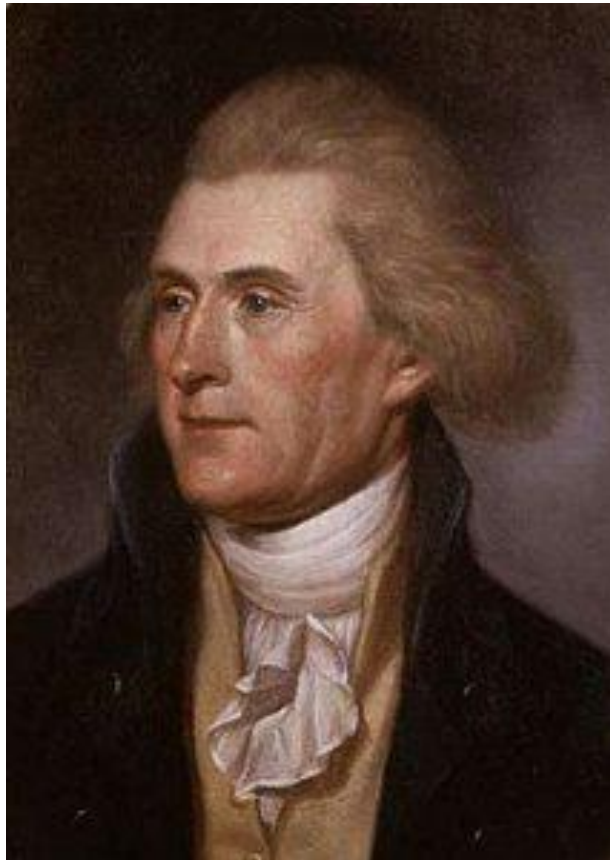
As in New England, the majority of the elite in the Middle Colonies were merchants. Merchants dominated urban society; about 40 merchants controlled half of Philadelphia's trade. Wealthy merchants in Philadelphia and New York, like their counterparts in New England, built elegant Georgian-style mansions. Many merchants became wealthy by providing goods to the agricultural population; many of this group came to dominate the society of seaport cities. Unlike the life of yeoman farm households, these merchants lived lives that resembled those of the upper classes in England. Mimicking their English peers, they lived in elegant two and a half-story houses. Unlike the multipurpose interior spaces common to yeoman houses in which each room had to meet many different needs, each of the rooms in a wealthy town merchant's home served a separate purpose.



*Mount Vernon: Mount Vernon was the plantation home of George Washington, who was a member of the Virginia gentry class prior to becoming the first U.S. president.*

Merchants often bought wool and flax from farmers and employed newly arrived immigrants who had been textile workers in Ireland and Germany, to work in their homes spinning the materials into yarn and cloth. Large-scale farmers and merchants became wealthy, while farmers with smaller farms and artisans only made enough for subsistence.

### 5.1.4 – Southern Colonies



*Thomas Jefferson, by Charles Willson Peale, 1791: Thomas Jefferson, along with George Washington and Robert E. Lee, epitomizes the American gentry class in the South.*

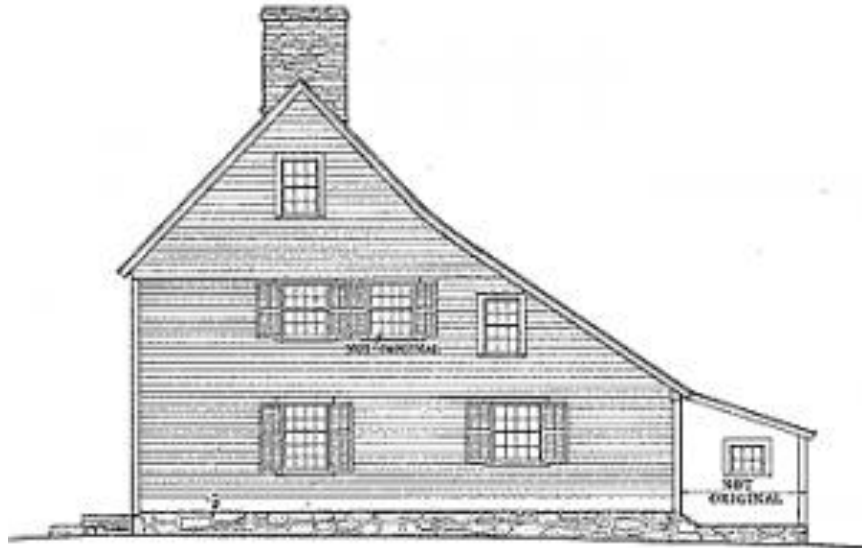
The Southern elite consisted of wealthy planters in Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina. In terms of the white population of Virginia and Maryland in the mid-18th century, the top five percent were estimated to be planters who possessed growing wealth and increasing political power and social prestige. They controlled the local Anglican church, choosing ministers and handling church property and disbursing local charity. They owned increasingly large plantations that were worked by African slaves. Of the 650,000 inhabitants of the South in 1750, about 250,000 or 40%, were slaves. The plantations grew tobacco, indigo, and rice for export and raised most of their own food supplies. By the end of the 1600s, a very wealthy class of rice planters who relied on slaves had attained dominance in the southern part of the Carolinas, especially around Charles Town.

## 5.2 – The Middle Classes

The middle classes of colonial America consisted mostly of yeoman farmers and skilled craftsmen.

### 5.2.1 – New England: Farmers, Craftsmen, Merchants

In New England, the Puritans created self-governing communities of religious congregations of farmers (yeomen) and their families. High-level politicians gave out plots of land to male settlers, or *proprietors*, who then divided the land among themselves. Every white man who was not an indentured servant was intended to have enough land to support a family. Many middle-class farmers lived in a style of home known as saltbox houses.



*Illustration of a saltbox house: Saltbox-style homes of the middle class became popular in New England after 1650.*

Most New England parents tried to help their sons establish farms of their own. When sons married, fathers gave them gifts of land, livestock, or farming equipment; daughters received household goods, farm animals, and/or cash. Families increased their productivity by exchanging goods and labor with each other. They loaned livestock and grazing land to one another and worked together to spin yarn, sew quilts, and shuck corn. Migration, agricultural innovation, and economic cooperation were creative measures that preserved New England's yeoman society until the 19th century.

By 1750, a variety of artisans, shopkeepers, and merchants provided services to the growing farming population. Blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and furniture makers set up shops in rural villages. There they built and repaired goods needed by farm families.

### **5.2.2 – Mid-Atlantic Colonies**

Economic patterns of the middle class in the mid-Atlantic region were very similar to those in New England, with some variations for the ethnic origins of various immigrant communities. For instance, German immigrants were renowned for their skill with animal husbandry, and unlike women in New England, women in German immigrant communities worked in the fields.

Before 1720, most colonists in the mid-Atlantic region worked with small-scale farming and paid for imported manufactures by supplying the West Indies with corn and flour. In New York, a fur pelt export trade to Europe flourished, adding additional wealth to the region. After 1720, mid-Atlantic farming was stimulated by the international demand for wheat. A massive population explosion in Europe brought wheat prices up, and by 1770, a bushel of wheat cost twice as much as it did in 1720. Farmers also expanded their production of flaxseed and corn, as flax was in high demand in the Irish linen industry and corn was in high demand in the West Indies.

In cities, shopkeepers, artisans, shipwrights, butchers, coopers, seamstresses, cobblers, bakers, carpenters, masons, and many other specialized professions made up the middle class. Wives and husbands often worked as a team and taught their children their crafts to pass skills on through the family. Many of these artisans and traders made enough money to create a modest life.

### 5.2.3 – Southern Colonies

While the Southern Colonies were mainly dominated by the small class of wealthy planters in Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina, the majority of settlers were small subsistence farmers who owned family farms. About 60 percent of white Virginians, for example, were part of a broad middle class that owned substantial farms; by the second generation of settlers, death rates from malaria and other local diseases had declined so much that a stable family structure was possible. Most white men owned some land and, therefore, could vote.

## 5.3 – Poverty in the Colonies

### 5.3.1 – Introduction

The poorest inhabitants of the American colonies tended to be subsistence farmers, day laborers, indentured servants, and slaves.

The lowest and poorest classes in colonial America differed in occupation and lifestyle by region. In rural areas, nearly every resident was a farmer of some description, and economic status was determined by the amount of land owned, the quality of that land, and intangible factors such as a given farmer's luck in raising and selling crops.

Laborers stood at the bottom of urban society. In cities, poorer colonists worked on the docks unloading inbound vessels and loading outbound vessels with wheat, corn, and flaxseed. Many of these were African Americans; some were free while others were enslaved. Some new immigrants who did not own their own property served as day laborers for wages on farms or for merchants and artisans producing goods.

### 5.3.2 – Indentured Servitude



*Indenture contract signed with an X by Henry Meyer in 1738: Indentured servitude was often how immigrants were able to fund their passage to the Americas.*

To meet the increasing labor demands of the colonies, many farmers, merchants, and planters relied on indentured servants. An indenture is a labor contract that young, impoverished, and often illiterate Englishmen and occasionally Englishwomen signed in England, pledging to work for a number of years (usually between five and seven) in the colonies. In return, indentured servants received paid passage to America and food, clothing, and lodging, or sometimes acquittal for a crime. At the end of their indenture, servants received “freedom dues,” usually food and other provisions and in some cases, land provided by the colony. The promise of a new life in America was a strong attraction for members of England’s underclass, who had few, if any, options at home. For example, in the Chesapeake Bay alone, some 100,000 indentured servants arrived in the 1600s looking for work; most were poor young men in their early twenties.

Life in the colonies proved harsh, however. Indentured servants could not marry, and they were subject to the will of the farmers or merchants who bought their labor contracts. If they committed a crime or disobeyed their masters, they found their terms of service lengthened, often by several years. Nonetheless, those indentured servants who completed their term of service often began new lives as planters, farmers, or merchants themselves.

### **5.3.3 – Slavery in the South**

The economy of the South, in particular, depended largely on slave labor, and there was effectively a large underclass of African slaves who had no economic, social, or political freedom. In the early 17th century, many Africans who were brought to the British colonies worked as servants and, like their white counterparts, could acquire land of their own. Some Africans who converted to Christianity became free landowners with white servants. The change in the status of Africans in the Chesapeake to that of slaves occurred in the last decades of the 17th century.

Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676 helped to catalyze the creation of a system of racial slavery in the Chesapeake colonies. At the time of the rebellion, indentured servants made up the majority of laborers in the region. Wealthy whites worried over the presence of this large class of laborers and the relative freedom they enjoyed, as well as the alliance that black and white servants had forged in the course of the rebellion. Replacing indentured servitude with black slavery diminished these risks, alleviating the reliance on white indentured servants who were often dissatisfied and troublesome, and creating a caste of racially defined laborers whose movements were strictly controlled. It also lessened the possibility of further alliances between black and white workers. Racial slavery even served to heal some of the divisions between wealthy and poor whites, who could now unite as members of a “superior” racial group.

While colonial laws in the colonies had made slavery a legal institution before Bacon’s Rebellion, new laws passed in the wake of the rebellion severely curtailed black freedom and laid the foundation for racial slavery. Several colonies passed laws prohibiting free Africans and slaves from bearing arms, banning Africans from congregating in large numbers, and establishing harsh punishments for slaves who assaulted Christians or attempted escape. Unlike indentured servitude which had an end-date promising freedom, slaves were enslaved for life and their children were born into slavery with no choice. The increasing reliance on slaves especially in the Southern colonies—and the draconian laws instituted to control them—not only helped planters meet labor demands but also served to assuage English fears of further uprisings and alleviate class tensions between rich and poor whites.

## **6 – Slavery in the Colonies**

### **6.1 – Slavery and Empire**

Slave labor and the African slave trade formed the backbone of the American colonial economy.

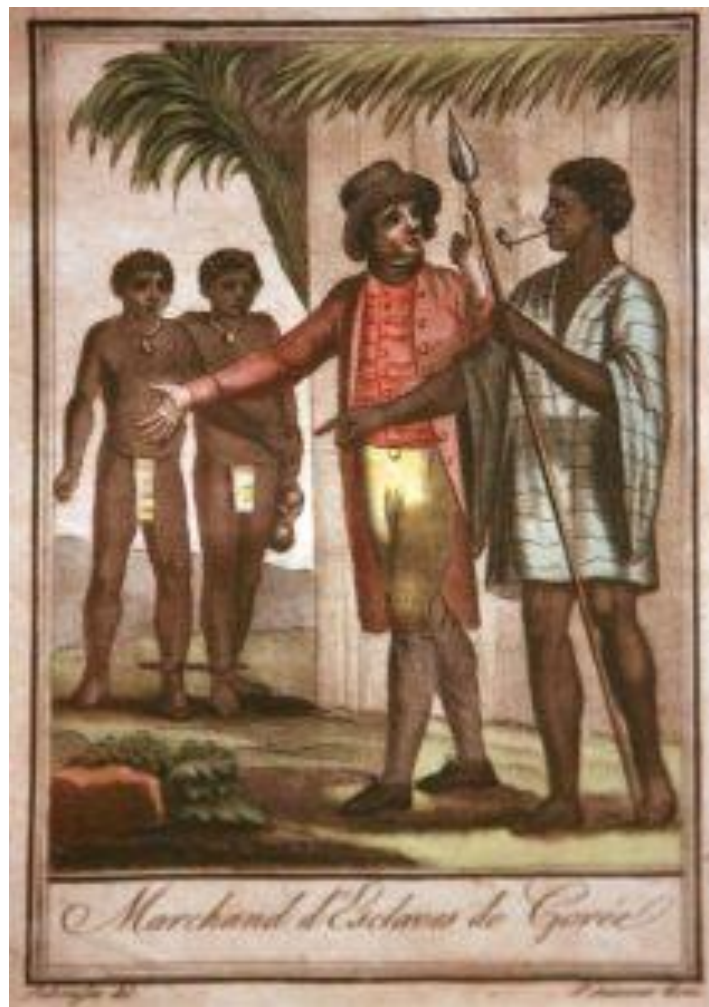


### 6.1.1 – Introduction

Slavery formed a cornerstone of the British Empire in the 18th century. Every colony had slaves, from the southern rice plantations in Charles Town, South Carolina, to the northern wharves of Boston. Slavery was more than a labor system; it also influenced every aspect of colonial thought and culture. The uneven relationship it engendered gave white colonists an exaggerated sense of their own status. English liberty gained greater meaning and coherence for whites when they contrasted their status to that of the unfree class of black slaves in British America. African slavery provided whites in the colonies with a shared racial bond and identity.

### 6.1.2 – Increasing Demand for Slave Labor

Slavery, as a theory, had been a commonly accepted European practice long before the exploration of the New World. Drawing on ancient Greek and Roman history, pro-slavery defenders noted that enslaving prisoners of war was an acceptable alternative to execution—once an enemy had surrendered, it was believed to be the victor's right to claim the life of their enemy through death or enslavement. Hence, when the Portuguese slave traders started exploring the coast of Africa where it was customary for warring indigenous tribes to enslave each other, they began to buy these slaves for export to the New World colonies. Other pro-slavery advocates argued that it was their mission to convert African non-Christians (whom they referred to as “heathens”) to Christianity and that slavery allowed them to do this more effectively.



*Slave traders in Gorée, by Jacques Grasset de Saint-Sauveur:  
Depiction of European and African slave traders.*



The European demand for New World cash crops, especially sugar, tobacco, rice, and cotton, led to a demand for labor to cultivate these crops. Although the practices of indentured servitude and the enslavement of American Indians was already in place, planters in the southern British colonies quickly came to favor enslaved Africans. Not only were Africans well suited to tropical climates, they also brought special skills and husbandry knowledge for crops such as rice, which the British found useful. Slavery and the African slave trade quickly became a building block of the colonial economy and an integral part of expanding and developing the British commercial empire in the Atlantic world.

Only a fraction of the enslaved Africans brought to the New World ended up in British North America. The vast majority of slaves shipped across the Atlantic were sent to the Caribbean sugar colonies, Brazil, or Spanish America. Throughout the Americas, but especially in the Caribbean, tropical disease took a large toll on the population. Unlike American Indians, Africans had a limited natural immunity to yellow fever and malaria; however, malnutrition, poor housing, inadequate clothing allowances, and overwork contributed to a high mortality rate which further increased the demand for the importation of Africans to replenish the labor supply.

### **6.1.3 – Slavery in the British Colonies**

The transport of slaves to the American colonies accelerated in the second half of the 17th century. In 1660, Charles II created the Royal African Company to trade in slaves and African goods. His brother, James II, led the company before ascending the throne. Under both these kings, the Royal African Company enjoyed a monopoly to transport slaves to the English colonies. Between 1672 and 1713, the company bought 125,000 captives on the African coast, losing 20% of them to death on the Middle Passage, the journey from the African coast to the Americas.

In the North American colonies, the importation of African slaves was directed mainly southward, where extensive tobacco, rice, and later, cotton plantation economies, demanded extensive labor forces for cultivation. In contrast to the high mortality rates of the Caribbean sugar plantations, North American slave populations tended to live longer. By the 19th century, many southern farmers found that natural increase was a viable alternative to importation in order to replenish their slave populations.

### **6.1.4 Slave Resistance**

Slaves everywhere resisted their exploitation and attempted to gain freedom through armed uprisings and rebellions, such as the Stono Rebellion and the New York Slave Insurrection of 1741. Other less violent means of resistance included sabotage, running away, and slow labor paces on the plantations. Unlike their counterparts in the Caribbean, however, American slaves never successfully overthrew the system of slavery in the colonies and would not gain freedom until legislative decree made after the United States Civil War.

## **6.2 – The Triangular Trade**

Triangular Trade was a system in which slaves, crops, and manufactured goods were traded between Africa, the Americas, and Europe.

### **6.2.1 – The Atlantic Slave Trade**

The Atlantic slave trade took place across the Atlantic Ocean, predominantly from the 16th to the 19th centuries. The vast majority of slaves transported to the New World were Africans from the central and western parts of the continent, sold by African tribes to European slave traders who then transported them to the colonies in North and South America. Most contemporary historians estimate that between 9.4 and 12 million Africans arrived in the New World from the 16th through 19th centuries.

Various African tribes played a fundamental role in the slave trade by selling their captives or prisoners of war to European buyers, which was a common practice on the continent. The prisoners and captives who were sold to the Europeans were usually from neighboring or enemy ethnic groups; sometimes, African kings sold criminals into slavery as a form of punishment. The majority of African slaves, however, were foreign tribe members obtained from kidnappings, raids, or tribal wars.

### **6.2.2 – The First Atlantic System**

The First Atlantic System is a term used to characterize the Portuguese and Spanish African slave trade to the South American colonies in the 16th century—which lasted until 1580, when Portugal was temporarily united with Spain. While the Portuguese traded enslaved people themselves, the Spanish empire relied on the *asiento* system, awarding merchants (mostly from other countries) the license to trade enslaved people to their colonies. During the First Atlantic System, most of these traders were Portuguese, giving them a near-monopoly during the era, although some Dutch, English, and French traders also participated in the slave trade. After the union with Spain, Portugal was prohibited from directly engaging in the slave trade as a carrier and so ceded control over the trade to the Dutch, British, and French.

### **6.2.3 – The Second Atlantic System**

The Second Atlantic System, from the 17th through early 19th centuries, was the trade of enslaved Africans dominated by British, French, and Dutch merchants. Most Africans sold into slavery during the Second Atlantic System were sent to the Caribbean sugar islands as European nations developed economically slave-dependent colonies through sugar cultivation. It is estimated that more than half of the slave trade took place during the 18th century, with the British as the biggest transporters of slaves across the Atlantic. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, most of the international slave trade was abolished (although American slavery continued to exist well into the late 19th century).

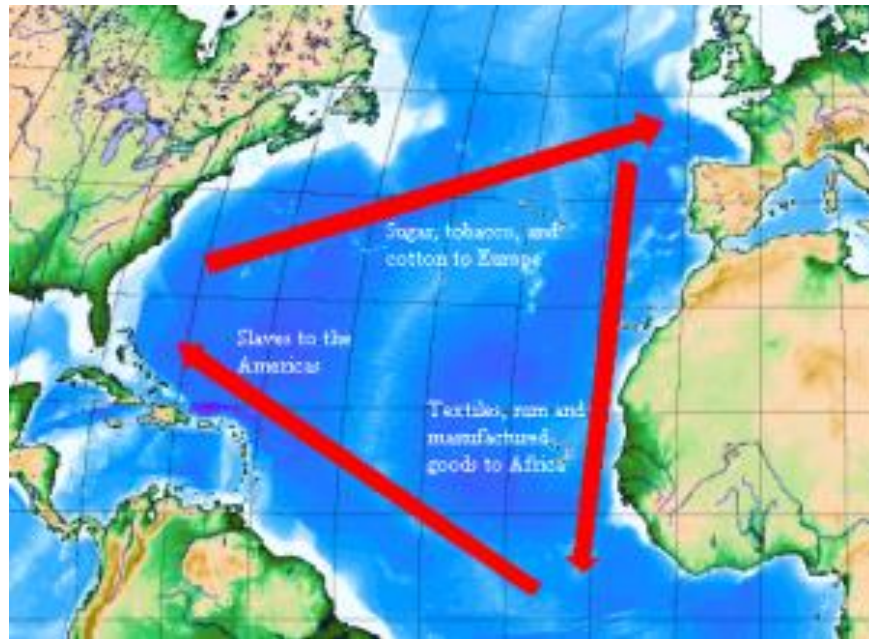
### **6.2.4 – Slavery in the Americas**

European colonists in the Americas initially practiced systems of both bonded labor and indigenous slavery. However, for a variety of reasons, Africans replaced American Indians as the main population of enslaved people in the Americas. In some cases, such as on some of the Caribbean Islands, warfare and disease eliminated the indigenous populations completely. In other cases, such as in South Carolina, Virginia, and New England, the need for alliances with American Indian tribes, coupled with the availability of enslaved Africans at affordable prices, resulted in a shift away from American Indian slavery.

The resulting Atlantic slave trade was primarily shaped by the desire for cheap labor as the colonies attempted to produce raw goods for European consumption. Many American crops (including cotton, sugar, and rice) were not grown in Europe, and importing crops and goods from the New World often proved to be more profitable than producing them on the European mainland. However, a vast amount of labor was needed to create and sustain plantations that would be economically profitable. Western Africa (and later, Central Africa) became a prime source for Europeans to acquire enslaved peoples, to meet the desire for free labor in the American colonies, and to produce a steady supply of profitable cash crops.

### **6.2.5 – Triangular Trade**

The term *triangular trade* is used to characterize much of the Atlantic trading system from the 16th to early 19th centuries, in which three main commodity-types—labor, crops, and manufactured goods—were traded in three key Atlantic geographic regions.



*Depiction of the classical model of the triangular trade: The triangular trade was a system in which slaves were transported to the Americas; sugar, tobacco, and cotton were exported to Europe; and textiles, rum, and manufactured goods were sent to Africa.*

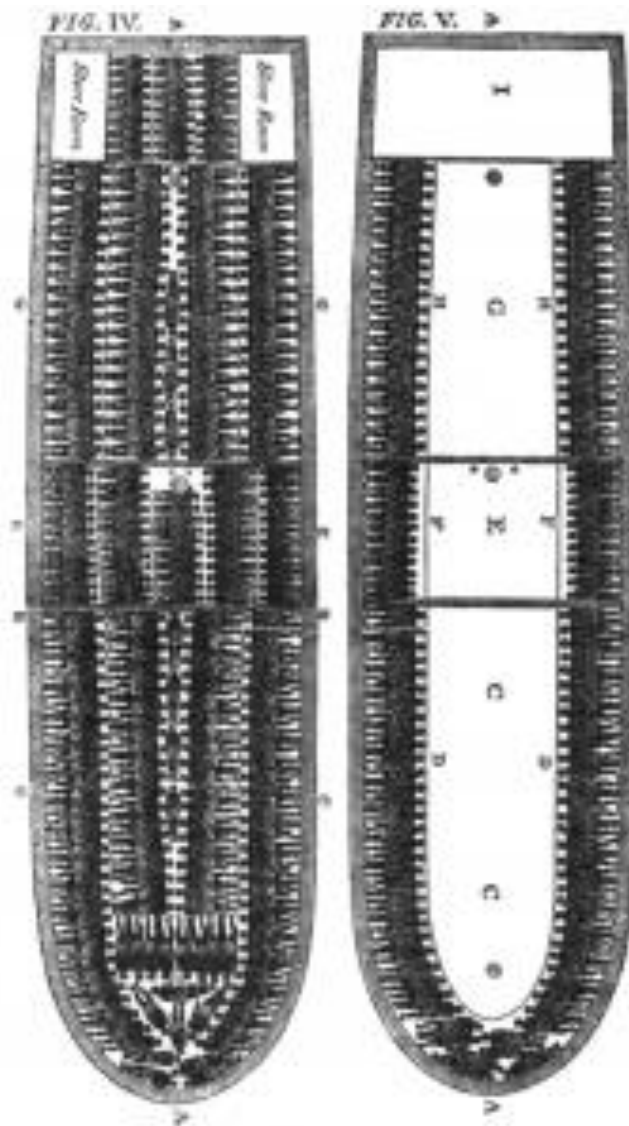
Ships departed Europe for African markets with manufactured goods which were traded for purchased or kidnapped Africans. These Africans were transported across the Atlantic as slaves and were then sold or traded in the Americas for raw materials. The raw materials would subsequently be transported back to Europe to complete the voyage.

A classic example would be the trade of sugar (often in its liquid form, molasses) from the Caribbean to Europe, where it was distilled into rum. The profits from the sale of sugar were then used to purchase manufactured goods, which were then shipped to West Africa where they were bartered for slaves. The slaves were then brought to the Caribbean to be sold to sugar planters. The profits from the sale of the slaves were then used to buy more sugar, which was shipped to Europe, and so on. This particular triangular trip took anywhere from five to 12 weeks and often resulted in massive fatalities of enslaved Africans on the Middle Passage voyage.

### **6.2.6 – The Middle Passage**

The Middle Passage was the stage of the triangular trade where millions of enslaved people from Africa were shipped to the New World for sale. Voyages on the Middle Passage were a large financial undertaking generally organized by companies or groups of investors, rather than individuals. The duration of the transatlantic voyage varied widely, from one to six months depending on weather conditions. An estimated 15% of African slaves died during the Middle Passage; historians estimate that the total number of African deaths directly attributable to the Middle Passage voyage is approximately two million.

African kings, warlords, and private kidnappers sold captives to Europeans who held several coastal forts. The captives were usually force-marched to these ports along the western coast of Africa, where they were held for sale to the European slavers. Once sold to the European traders, African captives were brought to the slave ships for the voyage to the Americas. Typical slave ships contained several hundred slaves with approximately 30 crew members. Captives were normally chained together in pairs to save space and, at best, were fed one meal a day with water. Sometimes captives were allowed to move around during the day, but on most ships captives spent the entire journey crammed below decks.



*Slave ship: Diagram of a slave ship from the Atlantic slave trade. Slaves were chained together in incredibly close quarters, and overcrowding led to the spread of deadly diseases.*

During the Middle Passage voyage, disease (especially dysentery and scurvy) and starvation were the major killers. Furthermore, outbreaks of smallpox, syphilis, and measles were fatally contagious in close-quarter compartments. The rate of death increased with the length of the voyage as the quality and amount of food and water diminished. While the treatment of slaves on the Middle Passage varied by ship and voyage, it was often horrific. Captive Africans were considered by many Europeans to be less than human; they were instead seen as cargo or goods to be transported as cheaply and quickly as possible for trade. Corporal punishment was very common, with whippings used to punish melancholy or any form of resistance.

Slaves resisted in a variety of ways during the Middle Passage, usually by refusing to eat or committing suicide. In turn, crews and slave traders often force fed or tortured slaves and put nets on the sides of ships to keep slaves from attempting suicide. There are some recorded incidents of coordinated mass slave uprisings; however, most failed and were met with repercussions.

## 6.3 – Chesapeake Slavery

The economy of the Chesapeake region revolved around tobacco and relied heavily on slave labor.

### Expansion of the Early American Colonies

### 6.3.1 – Slavery in the Chesapeake Region



*Tobacco and slavery: In this 1670 painting by an unknown artist, slaves work in tobacco-drying sheds.*

The Chesapeake region was composed of Virginia—with Jamestown, its first successful settlement established in 1607—and Maryland. Each of these colonies developed a similar agricultural system that revolved around tobacco, which was later diversified with the introduction of cotton and indigo.

During the later part of the 17th century, the development of the Chesapeake region revolved around tobacco cultivation, which required intensive labor. At first, Chesapeake farmers hired indentured servants—men and women from England who sold their labor for a period of five to seven years in exchange for passage to the American colonies—to harvest tobacco crops. However, by the 1680s, fluctuating tobacco prices and the growing scarcity of land in the region made the Chesapeake less appealing to men and women willing to indenture themselves. The scarcity of indentured servants meant that the price of their labor contracts increased, and Chesapeake farmers began to look for alternative, cheaper sources of bonded labor.

As a result, many Chesapeake farmers turned toward imported African slaves to fulfill their desire for cheap labor. Although African chattel slavery was a more expensive investment than white indentured servitude, it guaranteed a lifetime service of free labor. As the demand for Chesapeake cash crops continued to grow, planters began to increasingly invest in the Atlantic slave trade.

### 6.3.2 – Support for Slavery

A great deal of support for the system of chattel slavery came from the wealthy white's fear of rebellions from the labor force. In the late 17th century, indentured servants made up the majority of laborers in the region. Wealthy whites worried over the presence of this large class of laborers and the relative freedom they enjoyed, as well as the alliances between black and white servants. Replacing indentured servitude with black slavery diminished these risks, alleviating the reliance on white indentured servants, who were often dissatisfied and troublesome, and creating a caste of racially defined laborers whose movements were strictly controlled. It also lessened the possibility of further alliances between black and white workers. Racial slavery even served to heal some of the divisions between wealthy and poor whites who could now unite as members of a “superior” racial group.

While laws in the tobacco colonies had already made slavery a legal institution, new laws were passed toward the end of the 17th century that severely curtailed black freedom and laid the foundation for racial slavery. Virginia passed a law in 1680 prohibiting free Africans and slaves from bearing arms, banning Africans from congregating in large numbers, and establishing harsh punishments for slaves who assaulted Christians or attempted escape. Two years later, another Virginia law stipulated that all Africans brought to the colony would



be slaves for life. Thus, the increasing reliance on slaves in the tobacco colonies—and the draconian laws instituted to control them—not only helped planters meet labor demands, but also served to assuage English fears of uprisings and alleviate class tensions between rich and poor whites.

### 6.3.3 – Rural Economy and Society: Slavery as a Social Identifier

The local economy in the Chesapeake was overwhelmingly agrarian, rural, and rooted in the headright system, which guaranteed numerous acres of land to any immigrant who paid their own passage to the New World and settled in the region. The headright system was designed to promote immigrant settlement and the cultivation of key staple crops that increased the prosperity of the Chesapeake region. As the headright system attracted more and more settlers to the Chesapeake, an increasing divide between coastal planters and farmers on the frontier began to emerge, with those in the westernmost areas usually poorer than planters in the east.

With the importation of African slaves, most social and economic divisions between wealthy and poor farmers in the Chesapeake increased. As African slaves were generally more expensive to purchase than indentured servants, the wealthy planters invested heavily in African slaves and agricultural technology and expanded their lands, while poor farmers struggled to maintain their smaller agricultural enterprises.

These wealthy slave-owning planters came to dominate the top of the social and political hierarchy in the Chesapeake, placing pedigree and wealth as significant social identifiers. However, small farmers composed the largest social class in the Chesapeake. These agriculturalists owned small amounts of property and a limited (if any) enslaved labor force. The class division between wealthy planters and small farmers continued well into the 19th century, until the Civil War united these factions against the Northern states.

## 6.4 – Slavery in the Rice Kingdom

South Carolina was the first colony founded deliberately on slave labor to support its growing rice economy.

### 6.4.1 – Overview: Slavery in South Carolina

Ledger of sale in South Carolina			
Charleston, South Carolina, 1754			
Name	Age	Gender	Price
John Smith	25	M	£100
Mary Jones	20	F	£80
James Brown	18	M	£60
Elizabeth White	15	F	£40
Thomas Green	12	M	£30
Sarah Black	10	F	£20
William Grey	8	M	£15
Ann King	6	F	£10
Robert Lee	4	M	£5
Jane Hall	3	F	£3
Michael Adams	2	M	£2
Rebecca Baker	1	F	£1
David Clark	0	M	£0
Elizabeth Davis	0	F	£0
John Evans	0	M	£0
Mary Foster	0	F	£0
James Gibson	0	M	£0
Elizabeth Harris	0	F	£0
Thomas Hill	0	M	£0
Sarah Young	0	F	£0
William King	0	M	£0
Ann Wright	0	F	£0
Robert Scott	0	M	£0
Jane Green	0	F	£0
Michael Brown	0	M	£0
Rebecca White	0	F	£0
David Black	0	M	£0
Elizabeth Grey	0	F	£0
John Lee	0	M	£0
Mary Hall	0	F	£0
James Adams	0	M	£0
Elizabeth Baker	0	F	£0
Thomas Clark	0	M	£0
Sarah Evans	0	F	£0
William Foster	0	M	£0
Ann Gibson	0	F	£0
Robert Harris	0	M	£0
Jane Hill	0	F	£0
Michael Young	0	M	£0
Rebecca King	0	F	£0
David Wright	0	M	£0
Elizabeth Scott	0	F	£0
John Green	0	M	£0
Mary Brown	0	F	£0
James White	0	M	£0
Elizabeth Black	0	F	£0
Thomas Grey	0	M	£0
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William Hall	0	M	£0
Ann Adams	0	F	£0
Robert Baker	0	M	£0
Jane Clark	0	F	£0
Michael Evans	0	M	£0
Rebecca Foster	0	F	£0
David Gibson	0	M	£0
Elizabeth Harris	0	F	£0
Thomas Hill	0	M	£0
Sarah Young	0	F	£0
William King	0	M	£0
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Robert Scott	0	M	£0
Jane Green	0	F	£0
Michael Brown	0	M	£0
Rebecca White	0	F	£0
David Black	0	M	£0
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South Carolina, later dubbed the “Rice Kingdom,” was one of the first North American colonies to be deliberately founded on slave labor. In the 17th century, wealthy planters from Barbados, accompanied by their African slaves, immigrated to South Carolina looking for arable lands. The planters were well aware that African slaves had skills and attributes well suited to the semi-tropical environment of South Carolina. Hence, South Carolinian planters began importing Africans in large numbers, and in 1710, African-born slaves outnumbered American-born people. By 1720, South Carolina’s population was 65% enslaved. Wealthy planters cultivated rice and other cash crops along the southeastern coast, while backwoods subsistence farmers were pushed out to the Appalachian Mountains and backcountry in the later part of the 18th century. These backcountry farmers, like their counterparts in the Chesapeake, seldom owned slaves.

### 6.4.2 – The Rice Economy and the Role of Slavery



*The Old Plantation, c. 1790. Painting of slaves on a South Carolina plantation.*

The principle cash crop harvested by the South Carolina slave population in the early 18th century was rice, a crop which probably originated in Madagascar and had been introduced into South Carolina in 1694. Once rice was established as the principle cash crop of South Carolina, it brought unprecedented wealth and prosperity to planters and the region. By 1850, a South Carolinian rice planter, Joshua John Ward, was the largest American slaveholder, with an estate that held 1,130 slaves and gave him the title, “King of the Rice Planters.”

It is no coincidence that white planters in the region started importing African slaves when rice cultivation was introduced into the South, as the first English planters in South Carolina knew little about rice cultivation. The planters relied on the expertise of their African slaves imported from the Rice Coast. For instance, enslaved Africans showed planters how to properly dyke the marshes, periodically flood the rice fields, and use sweetgrass baskets for milling the rice quicker than wooden paddles. These innovations increased the efficiency and profitability of cultivation. In later years, water-powered mills, designed by millwright Jonathan Lucas, also helped expand rice cultivation in the South. Rice plantations were larger than their tobacco counterparts in the Chesapeake, and planters expected slaves to cultivate up to five acres of rice a year, in addition to growing their own vegetables to feed themselves and their families.

Rice cultivation in the southeastern United States became less profitable with the loss of slave labor after the American Civil War, and it finally died out just after the turn of the 20th century.

## 6.5 – Slavery in the North

While Northern states had fewer slaves and eventually outlawed slavery entirely, they were still economically dependent on the institution.

### 6.5.1 – Slavery in the Colonial North

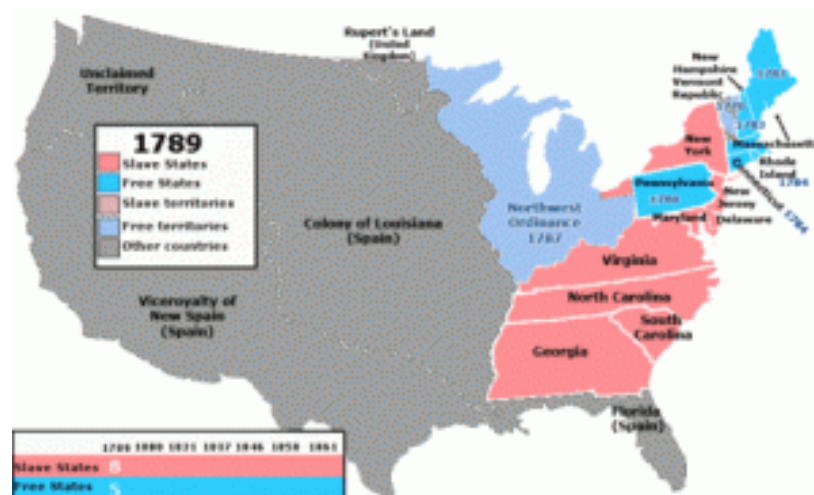
The northeastern and mid-Atlantic states, including Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, had legally permitted slavery in the 17th and 18th centuries. However, during the decades leading up to the American Civil War, almost all slaves in the North had been emancipated through a series of state legislature statutes, creating the northern “free states” in opposition to southern “slave states.”

Even though slavery was permitted, northern states characteristically had far smaller slave populations than the South. Few slave ships arrived in New York, Philadelphia, or Boston, which instead became trade centers for manufactured goods. Slaves that lived in the North were often domestic servants or bondsmen to small farmers and rural ironworks. Unlike in the South, northern farms were not large-scale enterprises that focused on producing a single cash crop; instead they were often smaller, more agriculturally diversified enterprises that required fewer laborers. Hence, the need for enslaved bondsmen gradually dwindled—especially as rapid soil depletion and the growth of industry in northern cities attracted many rural northerners to wage labor.

### 6.5.2 – The Gradual Abolition of Slavery

The first U.S. region to abolish slavery was the Northwest Territory under the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. The states created from this region—Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota—were generally settled by New England farmers and American Revolutionary War veterans who were granted land in this area. This territory was entirely slave-free from its inception and separated by the Ohio River from the South, which was pushing for an expansion of legal slavery into the West. The concept of “free states” developed in contrast to these “slave states” by the early 19th century. After the Northwest Ordinance, Massachusetts abolished slavery in its state constitution, and several other northern states followed suit by drafting statutes that provided for gradual emancipation. In 1804, New Jersey became the last northern state to abolish slavery.

### 6.5.3 – Continued Dependency on Slavery



*Free States in 1789: This map illustrates the free states in the United States in 1789, which included Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine. The Northwest Ordinance was also a free territory, though it was not yet incorporated as a state.*

Even though slavery was not a prevalent institution in the North, the commercial urban centers that sprang up in these colonies meant that most northerners had a vested stake in ensuring that American slavery flourished in the South. This is particularly true after the advent of the cotton gin, which supplied the North with the surplus of raw cotton necessary to produce finished goods for export. Northern industry and commerce relied on southern cash crop production; therefore, while slavery was actively abolished in the North, most northerners were content to allow slavery to flourish in the southern states. Indeed, it wasn't until later arguments over the admission and representation of states in the union and the threat of southern states overpowering their northern counterparts because of their higher slave populations, that many northerners began to oppose the expansion of southern slavery.

## **6.6 – Slavery in the South**

The rise of large-scale plantations in the South led to the widespread use of slavery to support the colonial economy.

### **6.6.1 – Slavery in the Southern Colonies**

Slavery formed a cornerstone of the British Empire in the 18th century. Every colony had slaves, from the southern rice plantations in Charles Town, South Carolina, to the northern wharves of Boston. However, it was in the large agricultural plantations in the South where slavery took hold the strongest. Early on, enslaved people in the South worked primarily in agriculture —on farms and plantations growing indigo, rice, and tobacco. Cotton did not become a major crop until after the American Revolution. The invention of the cotton gin in 1793 enabled the cultivation of short-staple cotton in a wide variety of areas, leading to the development of large areas of the Deep South as cotton country in the 19th century.

Tobacco was very labor-intensive, as was rice cultivation. The Chesapeake region and North Carolina thrived on tobacco production, while South Carolina and Georgia thrived on rice and indigo. The rapid expansion of large-scale plantations and single-crop agriculture in the Deep South greatly increased demand for slave labor, and slavery became the backbone of the British colonies.

### **6.6.2 – North Carolina**

While the southern part of Carolina produced thriving economies on rice and indigo (a plant that yields a dark blue dye used by English royalty) throughout the 18th century, the northern part of Carolina—later established as the separate colony of North Carolina—turned more toward tobacco production, like its neighbor Virginia. North Carolina continued to produce items for ships, especially turpentine and tar, and its population increased as Virginians moved there to expand their tobacco holdings. Tobacco was the primary export of both Virginia and North Carolina, which increasingly came to rely on slave labor from Africa.

### **6.6.3 – Georgia**

In the 1730s, Enlightenment principles prompted the founding of a new colony: Georgia. James Oglethorpe, a member of Parliament and advocate of social reform, sought to create a colony for England's "worthy poor" to start anew. To encourage industry, he gave each male immigrant 50 acres of land, tools, and a year's worth of supplies. In Savannah, the Oglethorpe Plan provided for a utopia: "an agrarian model of sustenance while sustaining egalitarian values holding all men as equal."

Unlike the other southern colonies, Oglethorpe's vision called for slavery to be banned. However, colonists who relocated from other colonies, especially South Carolina, disregarded this prohibition and brought with them their slaves. Despite its proprietors' early vision of a colony guided by Enlightenment ideals and free of slavery, by the 1750s, Georgia was producing quantities of rice grown and harvested by slaves.



*James Edward Oglethorpe, by Alfred Edmund Dyer: James Oglethorpe was a British general, Member of Parliament, and philanthropist, as well as the founder of the colony of Georgia. Unlike the southern colonies around him, Oglethorpe originally envisioned Georgia to be a slave-free society.*

## **7 – Slave Culture and Rebellion**

### **7.1 – Slave Culture**

Influenced by restrictive laws and brutal treatment, slaves combined African and Christian customs to form a culture of survival and resistance.

#### **7.1.1 – Overview**

Slave culture in colonial North America was largely a combination of tribal African culture, Christian worship, and resistance. In many respects, American slave culture was a culture of survival and defiance against the American slave system. In the absence of a successful slave revolution, as in Haiti (although there were some abortive attempts by black slaves to violently claim their freedom), American slaves practiced other forms of resistance. Running away, suicide, slow paces of work, deliberate sabotage of plantation equipment or crops, and poisoning of slave masters were the most common manifestations of African slave resistance. In all of these instances, slave culture enabled a significant amount of resistance to the plantation economy and created a relatively cohesive slave identity that shaped southern life and relationships between slaves and whites in the colonial era.

#### **7.1.2 – Treatment of Slaves**

Although the treatment of slaves varied depending on the plantation, more often than not it was characterized by brutality. Whippings, executions, beatings, and rapes were commonly suffered by slaves. Some slaves were

treated differently according to their value or skill sets; for example, artisans, medical practitioners, skilled laborers, or technical experts were usually given preferential treatment and more liberties than field hands. In most states, slaves were forbidden to read or write. Sexual abuse of female slaves was endemic in the colonies, where cultural patriarchy treated all women (black and white) as property or chattel. Sexual relations with enslaved women resulted in a high increase of mixed-raced children born into slavery.



*Abuses of slavery: Slaves commonly suffered horrid abuses from their masters, as depicted by the scars on the back of this former slave named Peter.*

To regulate the relationship between slave and owner, including legal support for keeping slaves as property, state legislatures adopted various slave codes to reinforce white legal sanctions over the enslaved black population. While each state had its own slave code, they shared many similarities. Such laws commonly forbade slaves to learn to read or write or to associate with free Africans, and free blacks were forbidden from voting or holding public office. Some states denied slaves the right to carry firearms, drink liquor, or leave the plantation without their master's written consent.

### **7.1.3 – Slave Identity, Rooted in African Culture**

Slaves strove to adapt to their new lives by forming new communities among themselves, often adhering to traditional African customs and healing techniques. Slave culture stressed the primacy of family and cooperation; indeed, the development of families and communities formed the most important response to the trauma of being enslaved.

Because slaves were proscribed from reading or writing, American slaves adopted a strong oral tradition—passing down songs, prayers, laments, and stories through music and storytelling. Oral tradition was a strong feature of many African tribal customs and allowed many African American slaves to feel a sense of cultural connection with the continent of their origins. African-based oral traditions became the primary means of preserving slave history, mores, and cultural information, and this was consistent with the practices of oral history in African cultures. Music, folktales, and storytelling provided an opportunity for the enslaved to educate each other in the absence of literacy, and songs and enthusiastic public worship were often used as a way of channeling and coping with hardships and voicing grievances to others in the slave community.

Slaves also drew on other aspects of tribal African culture, such as herbal medicine and prayer. Many slaves were renowned for their medical skills; often, whites would enlist the expertise of slave midwives or nurses over white doctors for remedies and cures for various ailments. Knowledge of herbal medicine could also be used as a form of resistance for poisoning slave masters and killing prized livestock.

When slaves were brought to American plantations, they were slowly stripped of their African religions and converted to Christianity. However, many African cultural elements were incorporated into slave prayer patterns, such as shouting, dancing, and enthusiastic singing using African rhythms. Many of these cultural styles and patterns still characterize worship in African American churches today.

Many slaves cultivated private gardens that were granted to them by their masters. These “kitchen gardens” were used to produce a slave family’s yearly supply of food. Some slaves were able to sell a surplus of these crops at Sunday markets for a cash profit. Many white masters allowed the “kitchen garden economy” to thrive, letting some slaves leave the plantation on Sundays to sell their wares. Some slaves managed to purchase their own freedom through their kitchen gardens, saving their earnings for years to allow themselves and their children to achieve manumission.

### **7.1.4 – Slave Culture as Resistance**

Many slaves dealt with the trauma of their situation by actively resisting their condition, whether by defying their masters or running away. Runaway slaves formed what were called “maroon” communities—groups that successfully resisted recapture and formed their own autonomous groups. The most prominent of these communities lived in the interior of Jamaica, controlling the area and keeping the British away. Slaves who ran away were often fed and sheltered by slaves on neighboring plantations, which enabled them to evade their masters. Literate slaves taught illiterates how to read and write, despite state laws that forbid slaves from literacy. In these respects, slave communities were formed that stretched across plantations and slaves developed a culture of cooperation and opposition to coercive white rule.

## **7.2 – Resistance to Slavery**

### **7.2.1 – Introduction**

Slaves resisted oppression in several ways ranging from rebellions and uprisings to sabotage, running away, and destruction of plantation property.

African slaves resisted enslavement and the southern plantation economy in a variety of ways, ranging from violent rebellion to sabotage, infanticide, suicide, running away, and the deliberate destruction of plantation property. Although African slaves never successfully revolted and overturned the institution of slavery like their counterparts in Haiti, there was a near-constant undercurrent of resistance to enslavement in the American colonies. While most slave uprisings were unsuccessful and historical evidence remains scarce about the overall aims and intentions of slave rebel leaders, they effectively intensified public debate over the American institution of slavery.



The institution of slavery created a false sense of superiority in whites, while simultaneously fueling fears of slave revolt. White responses to such revolts, or even the threat of them, led to gross overreactions and further constraints on slaves' activities.

### 7.2.2 – The Stono Rebellion

One notable uprising that became known as the Stono Rebellion took place in South Carolina in September of 1739. A literate slave named Jemmy led a large group of slaves in an armed insurrection against white colonists, killing several before militia stopped them. The militia suppressed the rebellion after a battle in which both slaves and militiamen were killed, and the remaining slaves were executed or sold to the West Indies.

Jemmy is believed to have been taken from the Kingdom of Kongo, an area where the Portuguese had introduced Catholicism. Other slaves in South Carolina may have had a similar background: Africa-born and familiar with whites. If so, this common background may have made it easier for Jemmy to communicate with the other slaves, enabling them to work together to resist their enslavement even though slaveholders labored to keep slaves from forging such communities.

In the wake of the Stono Rebellion, South Carolina passed a new slave code in 1740 called An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes and Other Slaves in the Province—also known as the Negro Act of 1740. This law imposed new limits on slaves' behavior, prohibiting slaves from assembling, growing their own food, learning to write, and traveling freely.

### 7.2.3 – The New York Conspiracy Trials of 1741



*The New York Conspiracy Trials of 1741: In the wake of a series of fires throughout New York City, rumors of a slave revolt led authorities to convict and execute 30 people, including 13 black men who were publicly burned at the stake.*

Eighteenth-century New York City contained many different ethnic groups, and conflicts among them created strain. In addition, one in five New Yorkers was a slave, and tensions ran high between slaves and the free population, especially in the aftermath of the Stono Rebellion. These tensions burst forth in 1741.

That year, 13 fires broke out in the city, one of which reduced the colony's Fort George to ashes. Ever fearful of an uprising among enslaved New Yorkers, the city's whites spread rumors that the fires were part of a massive slave revolt in which slaves would murder whites, burn the city, and take over the colony. The Stono Rebellion was only a few years in the past, and throughout British America, fears of similar incidents were still fresh. Searching for solutions and convinced slaves were the principal danger, nervous British authorities interrogated almost 200 slaves and accused them of conspiracy. Rumors that Roman Catholics had joined the suspected conspiracy and planned to murder Protestant inhabitants of the city only added to the general hysteria. Very quickly, 200 people were arrested, including a large number of the city's slave population.

After a quick series of trials at City Hall, known as the New York Conspiracy Trials of 1741, the government executed 17 New Yorkers. Thirteen black men were publicly burned at the stake, while the others (including four whites) were hanged. Seventy slaves were sold to the West Indies. Little evidence exists to prove that an elaborate conspiracy, like the one white New Yorkers imagined, actually existed. The events of 1741 in New York City illustrate the racial divide in British America, where panic among whites spurred great violence against and repression of the feared slave population. In the end, the Conspiracy Trials furthered white dominance and power over enslaved New Yorkers.

## **8 – The Role of Women in the Colonies**

Women played an integral role in the development of colonial America, despite having few legal rights.

### **8.1 – The Status of Women throughout the Colonies**

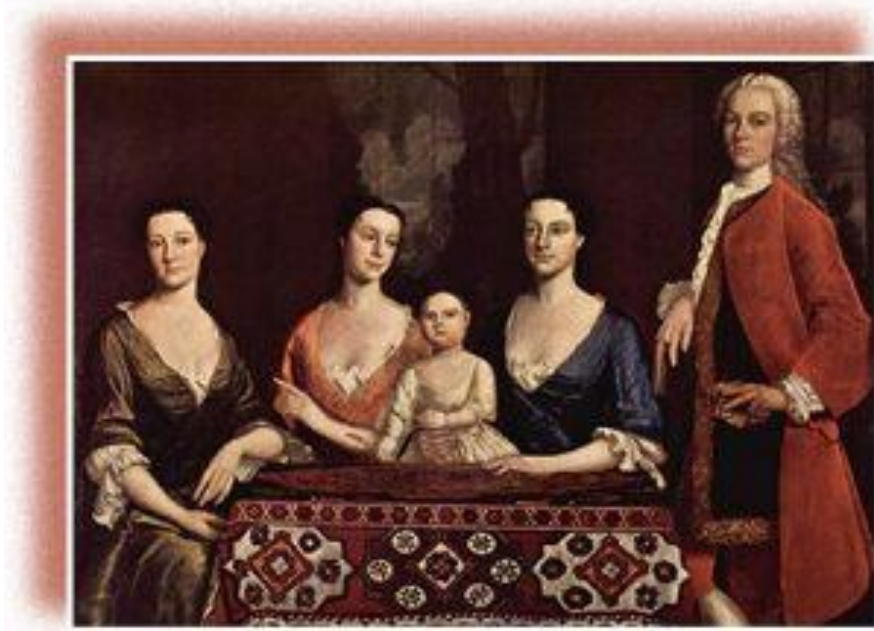
The experiences of women during the colonial era varied greatly from colony to colony and among different ethnic groups. In New England, for example, the Puritan settlers brought their strong religious values with them to the New World, which dictated that a woman be subordinate to her husband and dedicate herself to rearing “God-fearing” children to the best of her ability. Among Puritan settlers in New England, wives almost never worked in the fields with their husbands. In German communities in Pennsylvania, however, many women worked in fields and stables. German and Dutch immigrants granted women more control over property, which was not permitted in the local English law. Unlike English colonial wives, German and Dutch wives owned their own clothes and other items and were also given the ability to write wills disposing of the property brought into the marriage.

Often, women were taught to read so that they could learn the Bible, but few were taught to write, as it was thought there was no reason for a woman to know how to write. A colonial woman was expected to be subservient to her father until she married, at which point she became subservient to her husband. Ministers often told their congregations that women were inferior to men and more inclined to sin and err.

Much later during the colonial experience, as the values of the American Enlightenment were imported from Britain, the philosophies of such thinkers as John Locke weakened the view that husbands were natural “rulers” over their wives and replaced them with a (slightly) more liberal conception of marriage. However, women continued to have very few rights. They were not allowed to vote and lost most control of their property (if they had any to begin with) in marriage. They could not divorce, and even single women could not make contracts, sue anyone, or be sued, at least until the late 18th century.

In 1756, Lydia Chapin Taft of Uxbridge, Massachusetts, became the only colonial woman known to vote, casting a vote in the local town hall meeting in place of her deceased husband. From 1775 until 1807, the state constitution in New Jersey permitted all persons worth 50 pounds who resided in the state for one year to vote; free black people and single women therefore had the vote until 1807, but not married women, as their property ownership was invariably limited.

## 8.2 – The Role of Housewife



*Isaac Royall and his family, 1741 portrait by Robert Feke: Women in colonial America typically held the role of housewife and were responsible for domestic chores and child rearing.*

The typical woman in colonial America was expected to run a household and attend to domestic duties such as spinning, sewing, preserving food, animal husbandry, cooking, cleaning, and raising children. Families tended to be large, and childbearing could be dangerous prior to advancements in medicine and health care. A responsible housewife was supposed to be resourceful with her family's budget, which led to manufactured goods being a vital contribution to the success of a household. Home manufactured goods such as dairy products and textiles were usually created by women, while the woman's husband was the owner of the goods and received whatever money they sold for.

When necessary, it was the responsibility of the colonial housewife to help her husband in agriculture or artisanal endeavors. Mothers were also responsible for the spiritual and civic well-being of their children. In the colonial era, the commonly held idea was that good housewives would raise good children who would become upstanding citizens in the community. As a wife, the woman was to be dutiful, obedient, faithful, and subservient to her husband. Legal statutes and societal norms allowed for husbands to exert power over their wives, which could result in violent circumstances. Some housewives were able to file for divorces, but these instances were not the norm.

## 8.3 – The Diary of Martha Ballard

Martha Moore Ballard (1735–1812) was an American midwife and healer who is known for keeping a diary during the latter half of her life, with thousands of entries over nearly three decades. This diary has provided historians with invaluable insight into the lives of women in the colonial era.

From when she was 50 (1785) until her death in 1812, Martha Ballard kept a diary that recorded her work and domestic life in Hallowell on the Kennebec River, District of Maine. The log of daily events, written with a quill pen and homemade ink, records numerous babies delivered and illnesses treated as she traveled by horse or canoe around the Massachusetts frontier in what is today the state of Maine. Ballard delivered 816 babies over the years that she wrote her diary and was present at more than 1,000 births. Her diary also records her administering medicines and remedies, which she made from local plants and occasionally from ingredients

bought from a local physician. Ballard was sometimes called to observe autopsies, and she also took testimonies from unwed mothers that were used in paternity suits. In addition to her medical and judicial responsibilities, Ballard frequently carried out tasks such as trading, weaving, and social visits.

## **8.4 – The Salem Witch Trials**

The Salem witch trials of 1692 were the earliest examples of mass hysteria in the country.

### **8.4.1 – Introduction**

The Salem witch trials were a series of hearings and prosecutions of people accused of witchcraft in colonial Massachusetts between February 1692 and May 1693. The trials resulted in the executions of 20 people, 14 of them women and all but one by hanging. Five others (including two infant children) died in prison.

Twelve other women had previously been executed for witchcraft in Massachusetts and Connecticut during the 17th century. The episode is one of colonial America's most notorious cases of mass hysteria. It has been used in political rhetoric and popular literature as a vivid cautionary tale about the dangers of isolationism, religious extremism, false accusations, and lapses in due process. What happened in colonial America was not unique, but rather an example of the much broader phenomenon of witch trials that occurred during the early modern period throughout England and France.

### **8.4.2 – Puritan Beliefs and Witchcraft**

Like many other Europeans, the Puritans of New England believed in the supernatural. Every event in the colonies appeared to be a sign of God's mercy or judgment, and it was commonly believed that witches allied themselves with the Devil to carry out evil deeds or cause deliberate harm. Events such as the sickness or death of children, the loss of cattle, and other catastrophes were often blamed on the work of witches.

Women were more susceptible to suspicions of witchcraft because they were perceived, in Puritan society, to have weaker constitutions that were more likely to be inhabited by the Devil. Women healers with knowledge of herbal remedies—things that could often be deemed “pagan” by Puritans—were particularly at risk of being accused of witchcraft.

Hundreds were accused of witchcraft including townspeople whose habits or appearance bothered their neighbors or who appeared threatening for any reason. Women made up the vast majority of suspects and those who were executed. Prior to 1692, there had been rumors of witchcraft in villages neighboring Salem Village and other towns. Cotton Mather, a minister of Boston's North Church (not to be confused with the later Anglican North Church associated with Paul Revere), was a prolific publisher of pamphlets, including some that expressed his belief in witchcraft.

### **8.4.3 – The Salem Trials**

In Salem Village, in February 1692, Betty Parris, age 9, and her cousin Abigail Williams, age 11, began to have fits in which they screamed, threw things, uttered strange sounds, crawled under furniture, and contorted themselves into peculiar positions. A doctor could find no physical evidence of any ailment, and other young women in the village began to exhibit similar behaviors. Colonists suspected witchcraft and accusations began to spread.

The first three people accused and arrested for allegedly causing the afflictions were Sarah Good (a homeless beggar), Sarah Osborne (a woman who rarely attended church), and Tituba (an African or American Indian

slave). Each of these women was a kind of outcast and exhibited many of the character traits typical of the “usual suspects” for witchcraft accusations. They were left to defend themselves.



*The Salem Witch Trials: The central figure in this 1876 illustration of the courtroom is usually identified as Mary Walcott, one of the “afflicted” girls called as a witness at the Salem Witch Trials in 1692-93.*

Throughout the year, more women and some men were arrested, including citizens in good standing, and colonists began to fear that anyone could be a witch. Many of the accusers who prosecuted the suspected witches had been traumatized by the American Indian wars on the frontier and by unprecedented political and cultural changes in New England. Relying on their belief in witchcraft to help make sense of their changing world, Puritan authorities executed 20 people and caused the deaths of several others before the trials were over.

## 9 – Conclusion

The 17th and 18th centuries saw the unprecedented expansion of English power in North America, changing the landscape of the New World forever.

### 9.1 – English Presence in the Americas

At the start of the 17th century, the English had not established a permanent settlement in the Americas. Over the next century, however, they outpaced their rivals. The English encouraged emigration far more than the Spanish, French, or Dutch. They established nearly a dozen colonies, sending swarms of immigrants to populate the land. England had experienced a dramatic rise in population in the 16th century, and the colonies appeared a welcoming place for those who faced overcrowding and grinding poverty at home.

Thousands of English migrants arrived in the Chesapeake Bay colonies of Virginia and Maryland to work in the tobacco fields. Another stream, this one of pious Puritan families, sought to live as they believed scripture demanded and established the Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, New Haven, Connecticut, and Rhode Island colonies of New England.



## 9.2 – Jamestown and Plymouth

After Roanoke Colony failed in 1587, the English found more success with the founding of Jamestown in 1607 and Plymouth in 1620. The two colonies were very different in origin. The Virginia Company of London founded Jamestown with the express purpose of making money for its investors, while Puritans founded Plymouth to practice their own brand of Protestantism without interference. Both colonies battled difficult circumstances, including conflict with neighboring American Indian tribes as they invaded into their land. Conflicts flared repeatedly in the Chesapeake Bay tobacco colonies and in New England, where a massive uprising against the English in 1675 to 1676—King Philip’s War—nearly succeeded in driving the English intruders back to the sea.

## 9.3 – Colonial Growth and Expansion

The 18th century witnessed the birth of Great Britain (after the union of England and Scotland in 1707) and the expansion of the British Empire. By the mid-1700s, Great Britain had developed into a commercial and military powerhouse; meanwhile, the population rose dramatically in Britain’s North American colonies. In the early 1700s, the population in the colonies had reached 250,000; by 1750, over a million British migrants and African slaves had established a near-continuous zone of settlement on the Atlantic coast from Maine to Georgia. By the mid-18th century, the 13 original New England, Middle, Chesapeake, and Southern colonies had all been established.

In addition to wresting control of New York and New Jersey from the Dutch, King Charles II of England established the Carolinas and Pennsylvania as proprietary colonies. Each of these colonies added immensely to the empire, supplying goods not produced in England, such as rice and indigo. These new colonies also contributed to the rise in population in English America as many thousands of Europeans made their way to the colonies. Their numbers were further augmented by the forced migration of African slaves.

## 9.4 – Effects of Colonization

As Europeans moved beyond exploration and into colonization of the Americas, they brought changes to virtually every aspect of the land and its people, from trade and hunting to warfare and personal property. European goods, ideas, and diseases shaped the changing continent.



*Slaves in the tobacco colonies: In this 1670 painting by an unknown artist, slaves work in tobacco-drying sheds.*

As Europeans established their colonies, their societies also became segmented and divided along religious and racial lines. Most people in these societies were not free; they labored as indentured servants or slaves, doing



the work required to produce wealth for others. By 1700, the American continent had become a place of stark contrasts between slavery and freedom and between the haves and the have-nots.

The development of the Atlantic slave trade forever changed the course of European settlement in the Americas. Other transatlantic travelers, including diseases, goods, plants, animals, and even ideas like the concept of private land ownership, further influenced life in America during the 16th and 17th centuries. The exchange of pelts for European goods including copper kettles, knives, and guns played a significant role in changing the material cultures of American Indian peoples. During the 17th century, many American Indians tribes grew increasingly dependent on European trade items; at the same time, death from the introduction of European diseases was widespread and devastated their populations.

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**Source:** <https://brewminate.com/expansion-of-the-early-american-colonies-1650-1750/>

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