3

Family Labor and the Growth of the Northern Colonies

1640–1760

After Michael and Hannah Emerson married in 1657 and settled on a small farm in Haverhill, Massachusetts, they worked at shoemaking as well as running the farm and household. To Hannah fell much of the work of raising a growing family, and for her, this work would have been long and arduous, for she eventually gave birth to fifteen children. This was an unusual number even for colonial New England, where large families were common. Five of the Emerson children died before adulthood, but the other ten survived to expect to marry and begin their own families. In New England, as elsewhere in the northern colonies, family households were at the center of society and of economic activity.

New England, growing from the Puritan settlements of the 1620s and 1630s, developed differently from the Chesapeake and Lower South. There were no tobacco or rice plantations. Rather than extracting wealth through the forced labor of others, the majority of colonists sought a "decent competency" by steady family toil on the land. Family labor was also important in the Middle Colonies—New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania—that developed to the south of New England. New York, originally the Dutch territory of New Netherland, was seized by the English in 1664. King Charles II gave it to his brother the Duke of York, who renamed it after himself. In the 1670s and 1680s, further land grants by the English crown led to the settlement of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Though the Middle Colonies differed from New England in important respects, all the northern colonies came to share the same economic foundation: family-run farming.

Colonial Trades
These illustrations were published in the American edition of *The Book of Trades*, a British survey of crafts that were practiced in the colonies. *The Book of Trades, or Library of the Useful Arts* (1807) — American Social History Project.

Like the colonies to the south, the northern colonies attracted diverse peoples. Most came from the British Isles, among them English, Highland Scots, Scots-Irish, Welsh, and a few Catholic Irish, but substantial numbers migrated from mainland Europe: Dutch (in New Netherland), Huguenot (Protestant) French, and many Protestant Germans. A few Sephardic Jews also arrived from the Mediterranean. Scandinavians, who settled in the Delaware Valley, introduced the log house to North America. Many northern settlers were working people of moderate means who migrated more or less willingly, hoping to obtain land and become independent farmers or to secure independence as skilled artisans, small merchants, midwives, or dressmakers. Puritan migrants to Massachusetts Bay, Quakers who settled Pennsylvania, and the Amish who later followed them there were prominent among those who sought to build societies that could embody their religious ideals.

But though rural families formed its backbone, northern colonial society was not made up solely of independent yeoman farmers. In some areas, such as New York's Hudson River Valley, ambitious, privileged men were assembling great estates on which they would earn wealth from the labor of tenants. There were also, along the coasts and estuaries, port towns whose inhabitants linked the rural interior to the commerce and fishing grounds of the Atlantic Ocean.

Most northern colonists were free, but not all. Many poorer white immigrants, especially in Pennsylvania and the northern Chesapeake, had signed on for periods of indentured servitude. At times in the eighteenth century, indentured servants made up half of the immigration from Europe. There were also slaves in the North. In 1645, Emmanuel Downing of Salem, Massachusetts, urged Governor John Winthrop to sponsor slave imports, arguing: "I do not see how we can thrive until we get a stock of slaves sufficient to do all our business." New York imported sizable numbers of slaves, and in the mid-eighteenth century, over one-fifth of New York City's population was of African origin, either enslaved or free. Northern slavery could be as harsh and oppressive as that in the South but was much less widespread. In the absence of staple crops and with the prevalence of family farming, slavery never became the crucial underpinning of society that it did in southern plantation regions.

Many parts of the northern colonies grew rapidly in population, and some became very prosperous. As in the South, growth entailed conflict. The spread of settlement provoked confrontations with Indians, many of whom resented and tried to resist the European incursion. The nations that were well inland, such as the Iroquois, managed to hold off the colonists' encroachment. Conflict with Indians became entwined with fierce international rivalries, first between the Dutch and the English and then, for almost

a century, between the English and the French in Canada. Repeated wars put New Englanders and other frontier settlers under arms. Social and religious tensions, some arising from the religious revivals known as the Great Awakening, and disputes between colonies meant that the northern settlers were far from united.

Early New England

From the start of European migration to the northern colonies, most settlers found themselves in a healthier, less economically exploitative environment than did their counterparts in the South. Early migrants to the Chesapeake faced high mortality from disease (see Chapter 2) and harsh treatment, but those who reached New England soon established stable, flourishing societies. The availability of land and food enabled the first generation of Massachusetts settlers to enjoy life expectancies that were longer than any in Europe. Even as Indians died from Europeans' diseases, white northern settlers began to build large families and doubled their populations every twenty years or so.

The goals held by their organizers also explain why the northern colonies became quickly established. While Virginia's founders had come to the New World intending to get rich and get out, the founders of New England—and later Pennsylvania—intended to build stable communities for which families were essential. Seven out of eight migrants to Massachusetts in the 1630s traveled with at least one relative, and three out of four came in a family group.

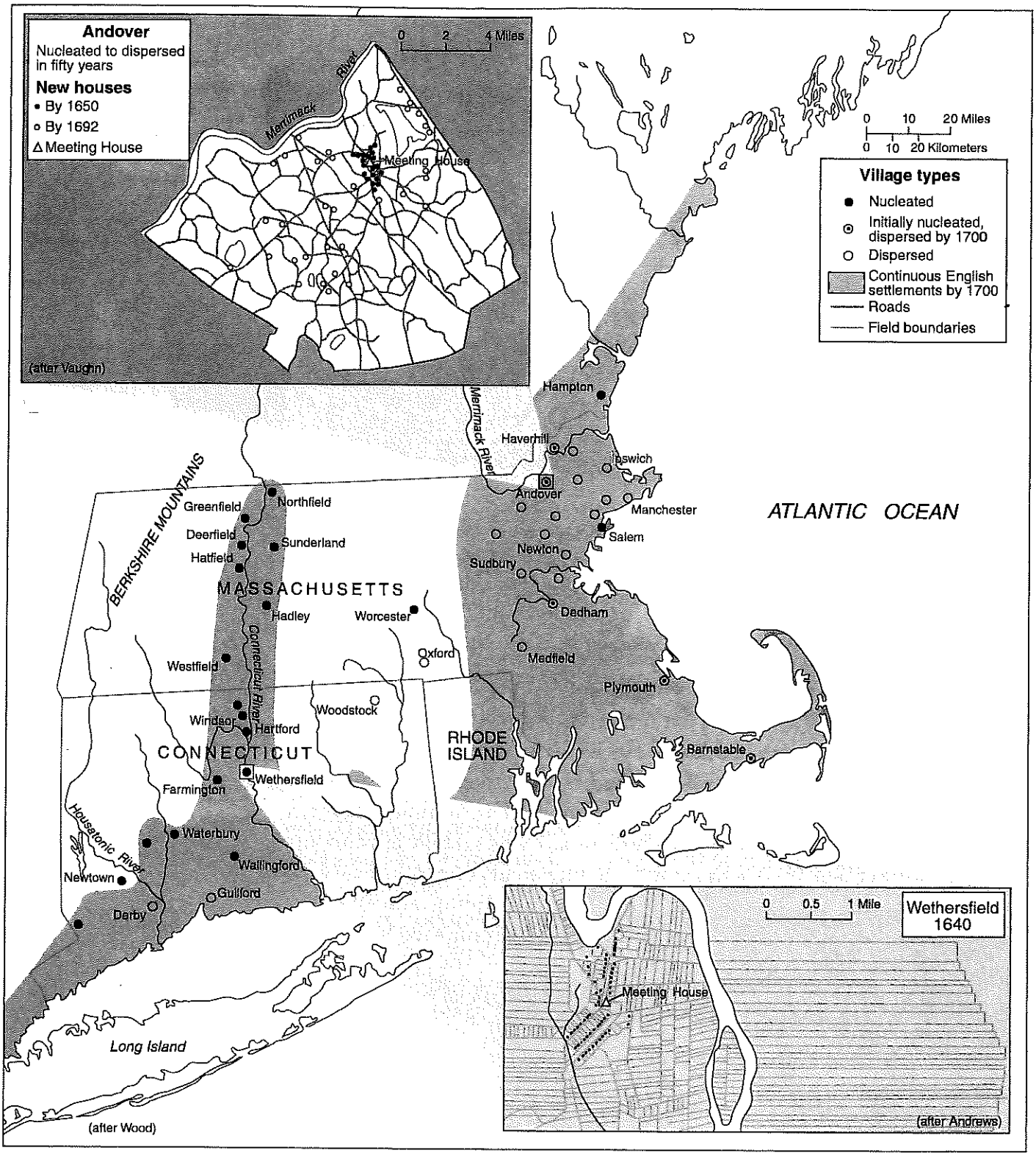
Women were present in significant numbers from the start. In the Chesapeake, men outnumbered women by three to two even in 1700, but in New England, the ratio was almost balanced half a century earlier. This was another reason for rapid population growth. Most men and women found marriage partners, women bore an unprecedented number of children, and children survived infancy at an unprecedented rate. Husbands, wives, and children supplied most basic requirements for labor. Men and women divided tasks between them, and children worked for the family, too. If a family obtained other assistance, as often happened, it was usually to supply a need that, for the time being, the family could not meet itself. Even though the flow of emigrants to New England ceased in the early 1640s as England became embroiled in civil war, high birth rates and low mortality enabled the settlements there to survive and thrive. In these stable, growing colonies, the majority of white men owned land, and the colonies' Puritan leaders enforced strict social and religious boundaries. Yet the colonists' attitudes about the meaning of land ownership and their desire for ever more land led to increasing conflict with local Indian groups.

A Freeholders' Society One key to New England's survival was the widespread availability of land that was not monopolized by the wealthy or by those with the right connections (Map 3.1). Landownership in New England usually conferred outright title, or "freehold," to a property. In England, most land had been held by large landholders, who might lease it in portions to tenant farmers in return for rent or who even retained feudal or manorial rights to payments, labor services, and other obligations from the people who occupied and worked it. New Englanders took pride in their absolute property rights and in the freedom this conferred to pass on their land as they wished without owing tribute to landlords. They came to see freeholding as an essential part of their "English liberties."

Yet largely rejecting competitive individualism and aiming to shape their lives to achieve spiritual grace and social harmony, most early New Englanders avoided the kind of free-for-all that had marked planters' acquisition of land in Virginia. In Massachusetts, the government usually made grants of land not to individuals but to whole communities, known as "towns." Sometimes at meetings of all freemen in the town and sometimes through special committees, townsmen themselves decided how to allocate the grant. Dedham, Massachusetts, and other early towns divided land into large open fields rather than separate enclosed farms, a pattern that was familiar especially to those who had come from eastern England. People lived together in central villages, offering one another mutual support and defense. Each landowner had individual strips in the different fields, but townspeople collaborated at work, from the first plowing to the harvest.

Requests for town grants met with generous response from the colonial government. Andover's founders received more than 38,000 acres of land for a population that, as late as 1662, numbered only forty families. Towns often held most of their land in reserve. When the town of Sudbury made its first division, it handed out only 751 acres, in grants ranging from 4 acres to 76 acres. Individuals—almost always male household heads—received their land on the basis of the town's judgment about how much each needed. A man's prestige (being the minister or having a good name from England), community need (for a miller or a blacksmith), and individual necessity (the number of children in a family) all influenced the allocation. Towns held back undivided land for distribution to newcomers and, especially, for the next generation of townspeople. The towns' distribution of land helped to secure the authority and economic position of male property owners.

Equality and Inequality in Puritan Society But towns were much more than devices for managing land. Town meetings of all freemen were the basic unit of local government, while to Puritan leaders, towns were also the means for gathering communities of believers. Each town had an



MAP 3.1 Settlement in Seventeenth-Century New England

New England colonists quickly spread out from their initial settlements of Plymouth and Boston, reaching down to Long Island Sound, up the Connecticut River valley, and up the coast toward what became New Hampshire and Maine. But warfare and continued Indian resistance helped to prevent the further spread of settlement beyond these areas until the next century. Meanwhile, within New England, settlement patterns changed. Early nucleated towns such as Wethersfield were succeeded by towns such as Andover, where most residents lived on dispersed farms.

Harvesting
A woodcut from a Pennsylvania almanac published in the 1760s shows a farm family at work in the fields. *Father Abraham's 1760 Almanac* (1759) — American Antiquarian Society.

independent Congregational church with power to appoint its own minister. Although town membership and church membership were never identical, Puritans saw their churches as central to the creation of an ordered commonwealth.

Puritan society had both egalitarian and hierarchical aspects. It avoided extremes of wealth and poverty and rejected ostentation or formal hereditary distinction. Yet it also stressed authority and hierarchy as instruments of social order. Even in New England, wrote Governor John Winthrop, "some must be rich some poore, some highe and eminent in power and dignitie; others meane and in subjeccion." At public worship, people were seated according to their rank in town. Respect was to be accorded to age, gender, piety, and social standing. Clergy and magistrates were cast as "fathers" to the community.

Only men with property exercised influence in towns and churches, and they curbed the voices of women and youths. Though Puritans regarded men and women as spiritual equals and women were economically vital, this did not mean that women were socially equal. Puritans shared the patriarchal assumptions of all early settlers that men were superior to women and that property-owning men should exercise authority over the members of their families, which included their wives, children, and any servants or other dependents living with them. Parents or employers could lawfully administer whippings or beatings for wrongdoing, and although the courts punished excessive cruelty, they also admonished parents or masters for showing too much laxity.

Puritans saw orderly households as the germ of social order. Personal freedom and individuality were suspect. To ensure that everyone resided under the discipline of family life, young single men and women were obliged to live with families as servants. They formed up to one-third of New England's workforce before 1650, although their relative importance declined after that. Servants were obliged to remain with uncongenial employers and could be returned to them if they ran away, and the law looked with similar disfavor on wives who sought to escape cruel husbands or neglected the household duties they were expected to perform.

Women who spoke up or stood out posed a threat to social order. In 1637, Anne Hutchinson, a prominent Boston woman, was tried and

"The 7th of this month I sowed turnips": A Farmer's Diary

Thomas Minor was a prosperous farmer in the coastal Connecticut town of Stonington, who attended to town and other public affairs as well as his own farm. His diary for the summer and autumn months of 1660 reflects the variety of farming tasks, the produce and livestock Minor traded, the use of family and locally hired labor, and exchanges with neighbors. The butter Minor delivered would have been made by his wife, Grace, or by another female member of the household. Until the mid-eighteenth century, the English colonists started the New Year in March—hence Minor's numbering of the months in his diary.

The fifth month is July 31 days & Sabbath day the first. This week I agreed with Rogers about John's 2 Cows & a calf & Sabbath day the 8. The 7th of this month I sowed turnips. The 13 there was a town meeting & Sabbath day the 15. I pulled hemp. Ephraim & Joseph [Thomas Minor's sons] mowed in the orchard Friday & Saturday 20 and 21. We had a court at Captain Denison's Sabbath day 22. 23 I looked horses fetched one load of hay & Saturday the 28 I cut peas & Sabbath day 29 & Tuesday the 31.

The sixth month is August 31 days and Wednesday the first. I cut fence & carried them Wednesday the 8. I carried my wheat Thursday the 9. I carried the Ram to the Island & Wednesday the 15. Friday 17 Thomas & Ephraim [Thomas Minor's sons] was at Samuel Cheesbrough's. The 13 day I had the gelding at Captain Denison's. The 20th day John Tower came here & Wednesday the 22 we Carried 5 loads of hay & made a rick next to the barn. Wednesday 29 I was at town & took up things for John. I was at Prentice to show the horse Friday 31.

The seventh month is September 30 days & Saturday the first. Mr. Winthrop [John Winthrop, Jr., son of the Massachusetts Bay leader and a governor of Connecticut] was at New London. . . .

The eight month is October 31 days & Monday the first. This day Hannah her child [possibly Grace Minor's sister Hannah] died before day & Monday the 8 the moon was Eclipsed. I was to go with Mr. Bridgen [sic] toward Mohegan & Monday the 29 I carried the firkin of butter to Mr. Smith for Amos. . . .

The ninth [month] is November 30 days & Thursday the first. Friday the 2 I weighed Amos his firkin of butter at Mr. Smith's. It was 70 pounds & there is 13 pounds to pay. The 8 day being Thursday we had Carried 45 loads of muck out of the yards. There was a meeting to be at Smith's of the whole Town & Thursday the 15. This week we killed the steer. I was at New London & had the axes & guns mended. The steer came to six pounds. The 20 we began the little house. Thursday 22 it snowed the second time. Thursday the 29 we appointed a meeting to be at Cheesbrough's. That day fortnight I began to clean clapboards. Friday the 30 we had home all the timber for the little house.

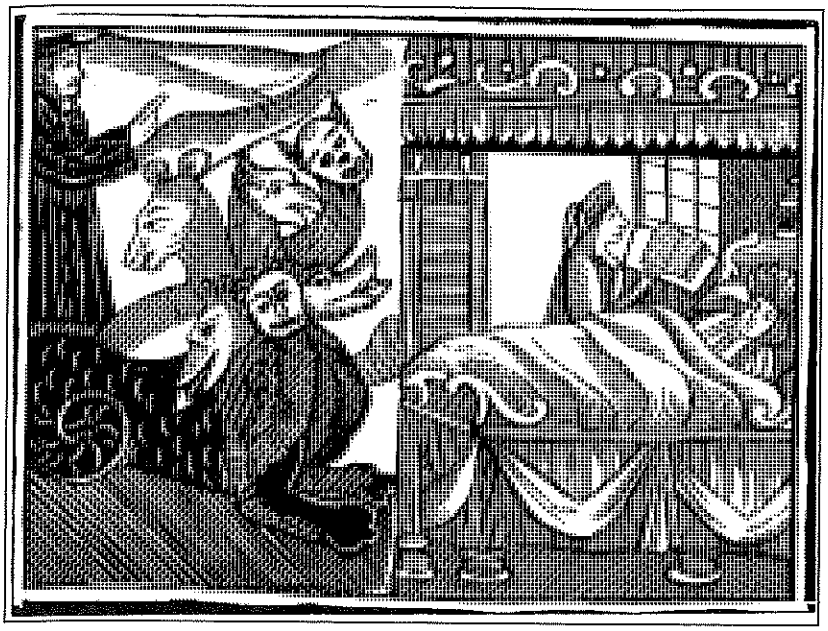
Thomas Minor, *The Diary of Thomas Minor of Stonington, Connecticut,* 1653–84 (New London, CT: The Day Publishing Co., 1899).

banished from Massachusetts after attracting a religious following and "casting reproach upon the faithful Ministers of this Country." Governor John Winthrop claimed that she had "a very voluble tongue, more bold than a man" and feared that her opinions would "spread like a Leprosie, and infect farr and near." When a few Quaker preachers, including women, entered Massachusetts in the late 1650s, they were jailed, whipped, and banished. Four of them were executed, including Mary Dyer, who was hanged in 1660 after she defied the courts and returned to Boston from exile in Rhode Island to preach.

Women who were seen as too independent or assertive also faced suspicion of witchcraft or complicity with the devil, a crime that was punishable by death. Eighty percent of accused witches in seventeenth-century New England were women, many of them widowed or in some sense independent. The fear of disorder such women instilled helped to bring about the notorious Salem Village trials of 1692, when magistrates put credence in rampant accusations of witchcraft in a local community. Of nineteen alleged witches who were eventually hanged at Salem, fourteen were women. The first three to be accused—a West Indian slave, a poor widow, and an old semi-invalid woman who lived on the edge of town—were at the margins of Salem society, but among the others were women of means who had exercised some discretion over their own affairs.

There were also substantial inequalities among men, however. Not all towns developed in the manner of Dedham, Sudbury, or Andover. The ports and fishing camps northeast of Boston were dominated by traders and shipowners, for whom poorer men worked as crews on fishing boats and as seamen. Such places were never as egalitarian as some of the inland towns. In mid-seventeenth-century Ipswich, 75 percent of families owned less than 90 acres of land each, almost 25 percent owned more than 100 acres, and five men owned over 1,000 acres. Yet most New Englanders upheld the ideal of a society based on widespread freehold landownership by independent households. This ideal helped to seal the fate of New England's Indians; it also shaped colonists' attitudes to English rule in the later seventeenth century.

Conflict with Indians The destruction of the Pequot tribe in the late 1630s (see Chapter 1) did not end the friction between growing populations of settlers and native groups. Most settlers wanted to clear the forest; fence in their fields; build houses and barns, meetinghouses and stores; plant English crops; and raise livestock. Native Americans and Europeans had very different understandings of what it meant to possess and work the land. For most Native Americans, a land title was collective and relative. All members of a tribe owned the land; there was no such thing as rent or purchase. But



Witchcraft

Women were accused, prosecuted, and occasionally executed for the crime of witchcraft in seventeenth-century New England. Although Anne Hutchinson was never accused outright of being a witch, the Puritan fathers interpreted the delivery of a stillborn and allegedly deformed infant to one of her female associates, Mary Dyer, in 1637 as the Devil's work. This illustration from an eighteenth-century chapbook (a cheaply printed pamphlet) presents a "monstrous" birth as a sign of witchcraft. John Ashton, *Chap-books of the Eighteenth Century* (1882) — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

for New England's freeholders, ownership was individual and absolute. Colonists asserted that Indians did not, according to English law, actually own their land but merely occupied it, because they built no permanent buildings and used no draft animals. No fences and hedges marked where one person's fields ended and another's began. Native men, settlers claimed, were idle while women tended crops and exerted themselves only to hunt or fish, activities that were suitable for aristocrats or poachers but unworthy of sturdy independent yeomen.

Differing assumptions had tragic consequences. To Europeans, land that natives had not actually cleared was not really theirs. To natives, "selling" the land to Europeans merely meant allowing them to use it. Even the settlers' introduction of livestock had huge effects. Following English custom, colonists let their animals roam free in the woods, to be rounded up when needed, and they built fences to keep the animals out of their own crops. But their pigs and cattle invaded Indians' unfenced fields and destroyed their crops. Roger Williams, a founder of Rhode Island, was one of the few early colonists to acknowledge the violation of natives' rights: "Swine," he noted, "are most hateful to all Natives, and they call them filthy cutthroats." But many settlers convinced themselves that natives would have to move out of their way or be removed.

Their defeat of the Pequots helped colonists to expand across southern New England. They established Connecticut and the small colony of New Haven and soon began to settle Long Island. Making alliances with some native groups against others, they were able to hold off any united resistance to their expansion. They made deals, often with minor sachems (chiefs), by which native groups agreed to cede land or pay tribute in return for protection.

The responses of natives to this intrusion varied. Some ceded land simply because they were outnumbered. At New Haven, five dozen or so Quinnipiacs and others, their population depleted by disease and displacement, faced 2,500 arriving colonists. In eastern Connecticut, however, the large Mohegan tribe made an alliance with the English so as to strengthen their own hold over smaller native groups and in hope of protecting themselves against encroachment. Inhabitants of the fourteen "praying Indian" towns in Massachusetts accepted greater association with colonists until King Philip's War (see Chapter 1) breached the bonds of trust between them

"We Must Be One as They Are . . .": The Narragansett Seek Alliances

In the Pequot War of the late 1630s, the Narragansett Indians of Rhode Island had allied with the English, and they had absorbed some of the surviving Pequots into their settlements after the war ended. Soon, however, Narragansett leaders became alarmed at continued English incursions on their land and hunting grounds. In 1642, the Narragansett sachem Miantonomi traveled to Long Island to forge alliances with members of the Montauk and other groups. Outmaneuvered by the English and their Mohegan allies, Miantonomi was eventually captured, tried, and executed. Though this English account of Miantonomi's efforts to form an Indian alliance was part of the case against him, it amply summarizes New England Indians' grievances.

A while after this came Miantenomie from Block-Island to Mantacut with a troop of men . . . ; and instead of receiving presents, which they used to do in their progress, he gave them gifts, calling them brethren and friends, for so are we all Indians as the English are, and say brother to one another; so must we be one as they are, otherwise we shall be all gone shortly, for you know our fathers had plenty of deer and skins, our plains were full of deer, and also our woods, and of turkies, and our coves full of fish and fowl. But these English having gotten our land, they with scythes cut down the grass, and with axes fell the trees; their cows and horses eat the grass, and their hogs spoil our clam banks, and we shall all be starved; therefore it is best for you to do as we, for we are all the Sachems from east to west, both Moquakues and Mohauks joining with us, and we are all resolved to fall upon them all, at one appointed day; and therefore I am come to you privately first, because you can persuade the Indians and Sachem to what you will, and I will send over fifty Indians to Block-Island, and thirty to you from thence, and take an hundred of Southampton Indians with an hundred of your own here; and when you see the three fires that will be made forty days hence, in a clear night, then do as we, and the next day fall on and kill men, women, and children, but no cows, for they will serve to eat till our deer be increased again. . . .

Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, third series, volume 3 (1833), 152–155.

and caused many Indians to be banished. Defensive alliances to stem the settlers' invasion, such as that attempted by the Narragansetts in the 1640s, could be outmaneuvered by the English in conjunction with other Indian groups, such as the Mohegans. King Philip's War itself marked the high tide and then collapse of native resistance in southern New England. Subse-

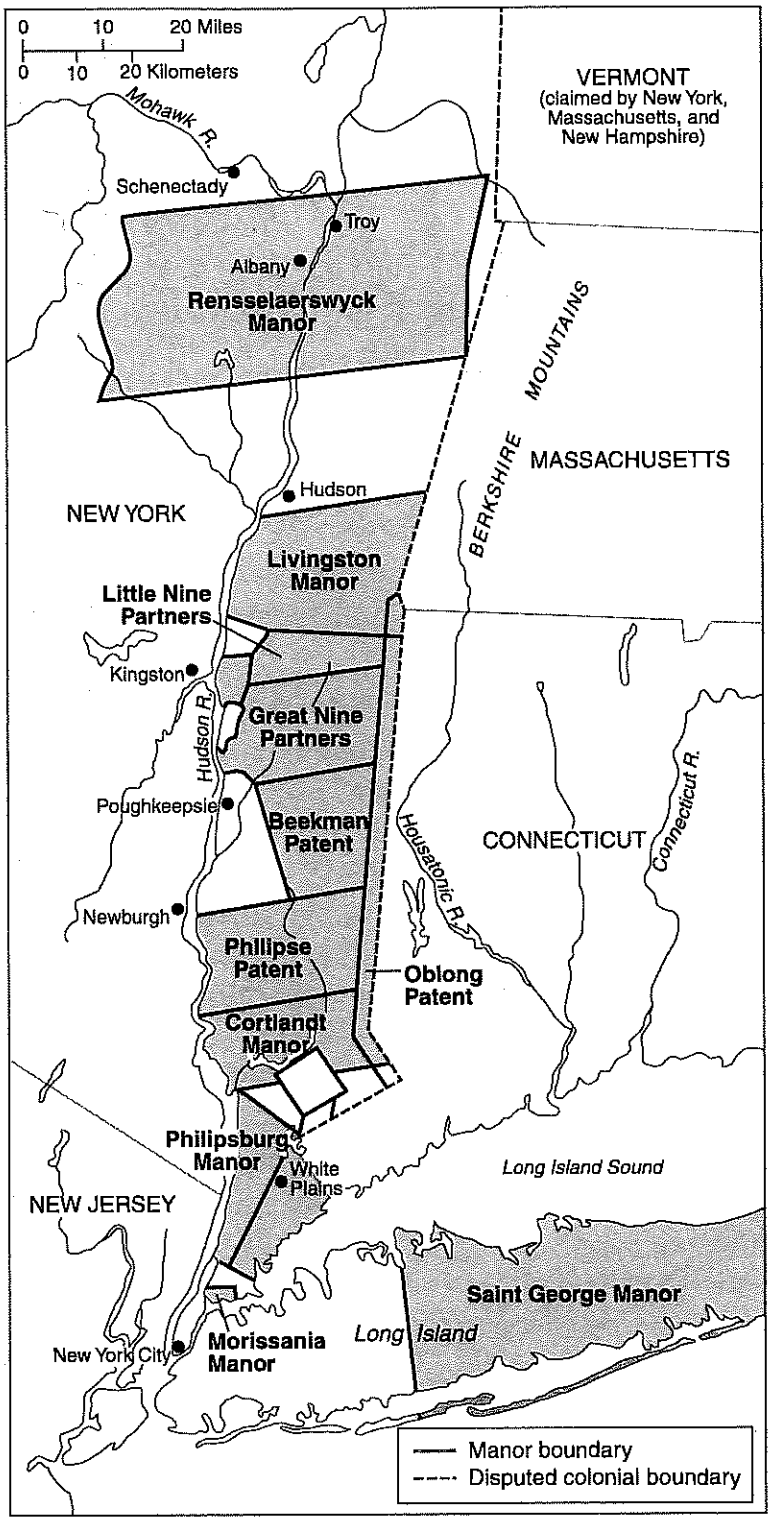
quently, native peoples were dispersed across this region, obliged to live on marginal lands, hunting and fishing where they could or supporting themselves by laboring for white communities, their children often put into white families as servants. By the eighteenth century, many Indians lived like the parents of the Mohegan Samson Occom, who "Chiefly Depended upon Hunting, Fishing and Fowling for their Living and had no connection with the English except to Traffic with them in their small Trifles." They preserved a degree of independence but had largely lost control of their lands.

America and England in the Late Seventeenth Century

Overcoming native resistance did not, however, assure New Englanders that they would be secure on their freehold lands. The ending of the English civil war by the restoration of the monarchy in England in 1660 (see Chapter 1) brought renewed aristocratic visions of great landed estates in the New World, threatening the freehold ideal. New Englanders' ambition to build a Puritan commonwealth and their sympathy with English Puritans brought them under scrutiny by the restored monarchy of Charles II. English Puritans now faced a hostile political climate, and the crown seemed likely to undermine New England's distinctiveness and relative independence, including its freehold land titles.

Developments in the territory south of New England and north of the Chesapeake soon demonstrated the fragility of the freehold ideal as huge areas became the subject of royal grants to favored landed proprietors. The creation of great proprietorships in the Middle Colonies suggested that English North America might become a society of great estates on the English pattern, in which aristocrats would, for their own benefit and profit, employ tenant farmers and other dependents to cultivate the land. While English colonists controlled ever greater amounts of land in coastal areas, the strength and diplomacy of some Indian groups in the interior, such as the Iroquois, meant that settlers and Indians negotiated various forms of cooperation and exchange.

The Establishment of the Middle Colonies The small population of New Netherland could do little to discourage the land-hungry English from invading Dutch claims. When Charles II granted land including the Dutch colony to his brother James, Duke of York, James moved quickly to take power from the governor, Peter Stuyvesant. After three English attacks, the Dutch relinquished control of New Netherland in 1664, and it became the English colonies of New York and later New Jersey. The Dutch had already created large landholdings, known as patroonships, in New Netherland. The English did the same, granting large tracts of land on feudal terms to manor lords, who gained the right to hold court and sit in judgment over their

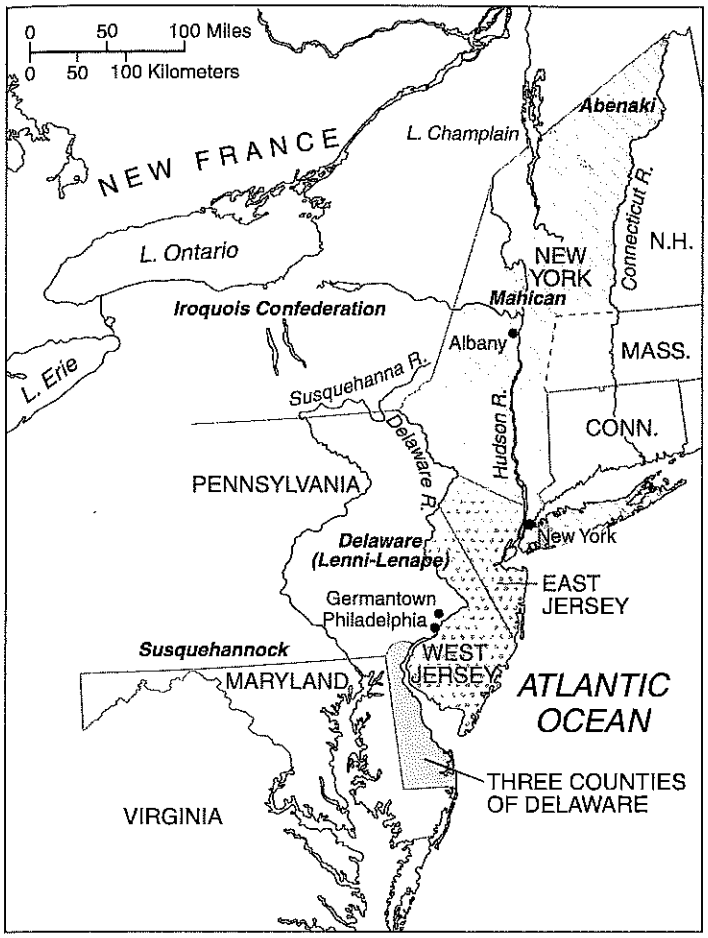


MAP 3.2 The Manors of the Hudson River Valley

From the seventeenth century, large manorial grants occupied most of the eastern side of the Hudson River valley after first the Dutch, then the English awarded them to wealthy landowners. Farmed by tenants, not freeholders, the manors both blocked migration from crowded parts of New England and fed New England farmers' greatest fear — that they, too, might be "reduced to lordships."

tenants. No landowner actually exercised that right, but three manorial families would control what amounted to private seats in the New York colonial assembly.

The development of great estates in the Hudson and Mohawk river valleys was a notable feature of New York society over the next several decades



MAP 3.3 The Middle Colonies in the Late Seventeenth Century

This map shows the principal land grants made by the government of King Charles II after the English capture of Dutch New Netherland, with some of the main Indian groups that lived there. Colonial settlements soon surrounded or displaced the Mahicans and Delawares, but the Iroquois successfully resisted white encroachments until the American Revolution in the 1770s.

Robert A. Divine, et al., *America: Past and Present*, 5th edition (1999).

(Map 3.2). Families such as the Van Rensselaers, the Johnsons, the Livingstons, the Schuylers, the Philipses, and the Morrises acquired large manors derived from Dutch or English land-grants. Livingston Manor, some forty miles south of Albany, grew to occupy 160,000 acres of prime farmland. Landlords rented farms to tenants, over whom they acquired considerable power. The result was class division and landlords' expectation of deference from their tenants. Sir William Johnson, the eighteenth-century "Mohawk Baronet," owned the local courthouse, jail, and Anglican church on his estate. A tenant could sell his leasehold only with the landlord's consent. When one landlord's daughter was married, "tenants gathered before the manor hall" in deferential attendance, "as on rent day."

The Duke of York had meanwhile given New Jersey to his close associates, Lord John Berkeley and Sir George Carteret. In 1676, William Penn and three other Quaker gentlemen acquired Carteret's share. By the early 1680s, the well-connected Penn had negotiated control of even more territory, accepting a large mass of land, which he named "Pennsylvania," in return for forgiving a large debt owed him by the king. The Penns became hereditary proprietors of their new province, and its governorship descended in their family until the American Revolution. Having created an American proprietorship on a grand scale, William Penn drew up an ambitious scheme of settlement, advertising for colonists in 1681. A year later, his first party of emigrants reached the Delaware River, founding the city of Philadelphia and settling the land nearby (Map 3.3).

Pennsylvania, however, did not follow the Hudson Valley pattern. William Penn was primarily concerned with creating a prosperous haven for oppressed Quakers and an experiment in religious toleration, so he never set up the lesser lordships permitted by his charter. Instead, the Penns encouraged migrants by selling them land directly, fixing only modest sums for the annual "quitrents" to which their grant entitled them, and setting aside fifty-acre allotments of land for male servants completing their terms. In practice, Pennsylvania's land system worked little differently from the freehold tenure of New England. Purchasers who did become landlords in their own right never enjoyed the power of a New York manor patroon.

"The Air Is Sweet and Clear, the Heavens Serene": William Penn Advertises for Colonists for Pennsylvania

William Penn, a well-placed English gentlemen and a Quaker, took great pains in setting up his colony; twenty drafts survive of his First Frame of Government, the colony's 1682 constitution. Penn was determined to deal fairly with the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians and maintain friendly relations with them. He sent back glowing accounts of the colony to his English friends and patrons. This Letter to the Free Society of Traders, *published in 1683, has been recognized as the most effective of Penn's promotional tracts. And it proved successful; by 1700, Pennsylvania's population reached 21,000.*

I. The country itself in its soil, air, water, seasons, and produce, both natural and artificial, is not to be despised. The land contains divers sorts of earth, as sand, yellow and black, poor and rich; also gravel, both loamy and dusty; and in some places a fast fat earth, like to our best vales in England, especially by inland brooks and rivers. God in His wisdom having ordered it so, that the advantages of the country are divided, the back lands being generally three to one richer than those that lie by navigable waters. . . .

II. The *air* is sweet and clear, the heavens serene, like the south parts of France, rarely overcast; and as the woods come by numbers of people to be more cleared, that itself will refine.

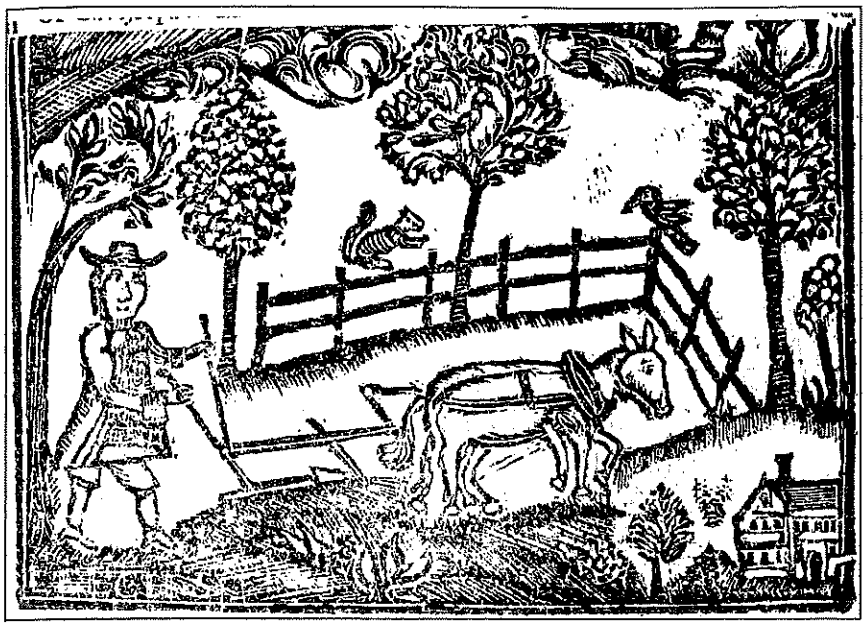
III. The *waters* are generally good, for the rivers and brooks have mostly gravel and stony bottoms, and in number hardly credible. . . .

XI. The NATIVES I shall consider in their persons, language, manners, religion, and government, with my sense of their original. For their persons, they are generally tall, straight, well built, and of singular proportion; they tread strong and clever, and mostly walk with a lofty chin. Of complexion black, but by design, as the gypsies in England. They grease themselves with bear's fat clarified, and using no defense against sun or weather, their skins must needs be swarthy. Their eye is little and black, not unlike a straight-looked Jew. . . .

XVII. If a European comes to see them, or calls for lodging at their house or wigwam, they give him the best place and first cut. If they come to visit us, they salute us with an *Itah,* which is as much as to say "Good be to you," and set them down, which is mostly on the ground, close to their heels, their legs upright. . . .

XIX. But in liberality they excel; nothing is too good for their friend. Give them a fine gun, coat, or other thing, it may pass twenty hands before it sticks; light of heart, strong affections, but soon spent, the most merry creatures that live, [they] feast and dance perpetually; they never have much, nor want much. Wealth circulates like the blood, all parts partake; and though none shall want what another has, yet [they are] exact observers of property. . . .

William Penn, *A Letter from William Penn, Proprietary and Governor of Pennsylvania in America, to the Committee of the Free Society of Traders of that Province, residing in London* (London, 1683), 2–9.



The Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689 After 1660, New Englanders were apprehensive that the crown would seek greater control of their colonies and impose on them some form of aristocracy or enforce the practices of the Anglican church. Royal officials began to scrutinize colonists' conformity to trade regulations, including the new Navigation Acts (see Chapter 2), and the close connections—except in Rhode Island—between Puritan churches and colonial governments. Complaints reached England from people who were denied political rights because they were not members of a Puritan church or who had been punished for infractions of tight Puritan laws. Massachusetts in particular feared that the crown would overturn the colony's original charter and bring the Puritan experiment in godly government to an end.

The crown suspended the Massachusetts charter in 1684 and the next year placed the colony with Plymouth, Maine, and New Hampshire in a united "Dominion of New England." Connecticut and Rhode Island were also pressed to join, under the royal governor of New York, Sir Edmund Andros. Massachusetts lost its elected General Court and was ruled by a council appointed by Andros. The Dominion's creation followed the Duke of York's accession to the English throne as James II in 1685; that James was suspected of autocratic designs and Catholic sympathies underscored colonists' fears for the future of their religious and political autonomy and of their freehold land titles.

Events in England helped the colonies to evade disaster. Protestant Whig opposition to James mounted, and in what its supporters came to call the "Glorious Revolution," he was deposed and forced to flee to France in 1688. Parliament confirmed James's son-in-law, the Protestant Dutch ruler William III, as the new king and passed laws to secure its own powers and exclude Catholics from the English throne. News of James's flight touched off rebellions in Maryland and New York, while Massachusetts leaders ousted Governor Andros, reinstituted their own government, and petitioned London for a new charter. By 1689, the Dominion of New England was shattered. All awaited a new political settlement.

Two years later, Massachusetts received its new charter, which ended the Puritans' autonomy, reduced the churches' influence in government, and

created a royal governorship like those in New York and Virginia. But the charter also restored Massachusetts' elected assembly, the General Court, and confirmed the colony's freehold land titles. After decades of uncertainty, New Englanders could celebrate their escape from the "reduction to lordships" that the English Restoration had threatened.

Iroquois Diplomacy and the Limits of Colonial Expansion By the early eighteenth century, many Indians along the East Coast acknowledged the king of England's sovereignty over his colonies, but they also insisted that this sovereignty did not confer control over native peoples or how they used their lands. In most seaboard regions, unfortunately, such insistence did little to prevent the conquest and near-destruction of native cultures.

In the interior, however, more powerful groups such as the Iroquois held off European settlement remarkably well. In the 150 years before the American Revolution, the boundary of white settlement moved inland by at most a few hundred miles. Beyond it, Native Americans imposed limits on the seizure and occupation of their land and exploited alliances with both the English and the French as they fought colonial wars with one another. In northern New England, native groups harassed colonial villages and held back the spread of settlement until the 1720s and 1730s. Raids, like that of Indians and French fighters on Deerfield in western Massachusetts in 1704, resulted in the death or capture of dozens of whites and discouraged frontier expansion. Of some 300 people captured between 1690 and 1730, over one in ten of males and one in four of females chose to adopt their captors' way of life. Neither native nor settlers' culture could simply dominate the other.

The Iroquois-speaking Mohawks, Senecas, Onondagas, Oneidas, and Cayugas played a key part in containing white settlement. Their territory stretched from Canada to New York's Finger Lakes, and in the seventeenth century, the Iroquois used their power mainly to expel other native groups from the region. Controlling the fur-rich Adirondack Mountains and key routes toward the west, they could induce both the French in Montreal and the Dutch and English at Albany to pay court to them. Meanwhile they continued to absorb other groups. In 1716, they adopted a sixth Iroquois-speaking tribe, the Tuscaroras, who had been driven out of North Carolina by white settlement. By the 1740s and 1750s, after a deal with the Pennsylva-

A
NARRATIVE
OF THE
CAPTIVITY, SUFFERINGS AND REMOVES
OF
Mrs. *Mary Rowlandſon*,

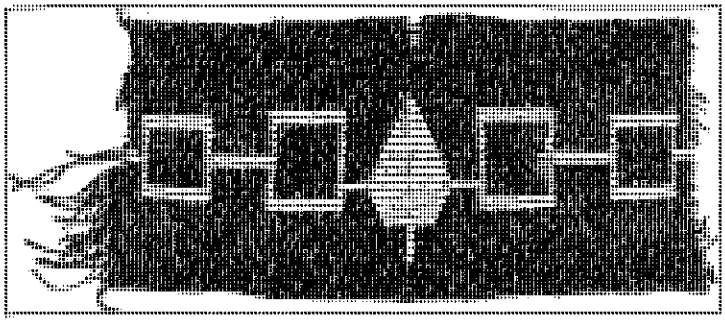
Who was taken Priſoner by the INDIANS with ſeveral others, and treated in the moſt barbarous and cruel Manner by thoſe vile Savages: With many other remarkable Events during her TRAVELS.

Written by her own Hand, for her private Uſe, and now made public at the earneſt Deſire of ſome Friends, and for the Benefit of the afflicted.

BOSTON

Printed and Sold at JOHN BOYLE's Printing-Office, next Door to the *Three Doves* in Marlborough-Street. 1773.

Captivity
In 1676, during King Philip's War, Mary Rowlandson was captured by Indians raiding Lancaster, Massachusetts. After being held for three months, she was ransomed and freed. She later wrote *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God: A Norrative . . .*, which was published in 1682 and often reprinted (here in a 1773 edition). It was the first of many "captivity" narratives, which portrayed captivity as a test of the protagonists' Puritan faith. Mary Rowlandson, *A Narrotive of the Captivity, Sufferings and Removes of Mrs. Mary Rowlondson* (1773) — Rare Books and Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.



Hiawatha Wampum Belt
This belt depicted the Haude-no-saunee, "the people of the Longhouse," called the Iroquois Confederacy by the French. The Great Tree of Peace was the central symbol, unifying the five Iroquois-speaking nations. Courtesy of the Onondaga Nation and the New York State Museum.

nia government, the Iroquois were taking Delawares under their supervision in the upper Susquehanna valley.

The Iroquois learned much from observing the subjugation or destruction of other tribes. Because French Jesuit missionaries respected Iroquois culture, they had some success in converting them to Christianity. The grave of Kateri Tekakwitha, a Mohawk woman noted for her penitent life, became an object of Catholic pilgrimage after her death in Canada in 1680. But knowing how the "praying Indians" of Massachusetts had been crushed by Puritans who had converted them and then changed their way of life, the Iroquois remained wary of Protestant missionaries well into the eighteenth century.

The Iroquois could fight fiercely and might severely torture men they captured in war, but they also adopted captives into the tribe. Such people might rise to high rank. Hendrick Peters, born around 1680, adopted by the Mohawk as Tee Yee Neen No Ga Row, became a prominent leader at Canajoharie, west of Albany. Women elders usually determined the fate of captives. Female prisoners were not sexually molested, and those who accepted adoption sometimes became honored matriarchs in a society in which women wielded considerable power. Both Eunice Williams, taken from Deerfield as a child by the Mohawks, and Mary Jemison, captured by the Senecas in 1758, refused to return to their white families and lived out long lives in their new Native American communities.

Using the advantages of their position, the Iroquois became as adept at diplomacy as any European nation, playing off the rival contenders for their lands against each other. For well over a century, they balanced the Dutch against the French, then the French against the English, and finally the English against their own colonists. Iroquois fighters played an important part in the succession of wars between English and French colonies that took place from the 1680s to the 1760s. The Iroquois Confederacy held together and managed to curb colonial expansion. Only later, when the American Revolution decisively altered the balance of power against them, would the Iroquois' diplomacy finally fail.

Rural Societies in the Eighteenth Century

By the eighteenth century, the rural population of the northern colonies was growing, both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of the total. The rural North was divided between the relatively small areas of New York and New Jersey, where tenancy and large estates were common, and the bulk of New England and Pennsylvania, where most land was controlled by

independent farmers. Though landownership patterns varied, the majority of farms in all these regions were maintained by the families who lived on them, and this shaped the opportunities and constraints they faced.

New York and Pennsylvania Though geographically close to one another, the colonies of New York and Pennsylvania developed very differently. At first, when their land was still unsettled by whites, New York's proprietary landlords made tenancy attractive so as to secure scarce labor. They provided mills, roads, help with livestock, and rent-free periods in order to lure new settlers onto uncultivated land grants. But such benefits came at a price. Some manors obliged tenants to work a certain number of days for the landlord, give the landlord first option to buy their crops, and grind their grain at his mill. Landlords could require tenants to plant certain kinds of trees or build certain kinds of houses. Tenants could not buy the land they farmed. They could expect payment from the landlord for any improvements they made, but if they wanted farms of their own, they were obliged to sell their leases and move to freehold land elsewhere. When a lease was sold, the landlord could demand up to one-third of the purchase price. For some landlords, the manorial system created immense wealth.

Landlords' relations with tenants varied. Some, including Frederick Philipse at Philipse Manor and Sir William Johnson in the Mohawk Valley, tried to create stable, paternalistic communities. Although Philipse raised rents when he inherited his manor in 1760, he promised never to do so again and kept his word. But others were out to gain all they could. While Philipse held rents steady, his brother-in-law Colonel Beverly Robinson raised his rents three times. Tenants resented the shaky legal basis of some estate grants. Only 6,000 of Livingston Manor's 160,000 acres had been included in the original grant to the first manor lord. Poorly drawn surveys and outright fraud had contributed the rest, and the tenants knew it.

Poor conditions for many tenants served to limit New York colony's growth. In 1770, its population stood at approximately 162,000. By contrast, Pennsylvania, founded decades later, had by then already surpassed 240,000. By making land relatively attractive and affordable, William Penn had sown the seeds of rapid growth. Most settlers created small or moderately sized family farms. At first, they raised cattle and other livestock, but they soon switched to grain farming, which on modest farms could better provide livelihoods for their children. To a significant degree, settlers realized William Penn's founding vision of a middling rural society in which family and neighborhood cooperation would be complemented by the commerce generated by grain exports.

Pennsylvania's people were especially diverse, including English Quakers of the "middling sort," many of them skilled artisans; Germans of peasant origin who came to found religious communities on Pennsylvania's rich farmland; and tens of thousands of Protestant Scots-Irish migrants from the

"Oak Tree Stumps Are Just as Hard in America . . .": A German Emigrant's Story

Though many poor Europeans were attracted to Pennsylvania, some travelers, like Gottlieb Mittelberger, warned that the vision of prosperity there was exaggerated. Mittelberger came to America from Germany in 1750, experiencing the hardships of the Atlantic crossing and of indentured servitude in Pennsylvania. He returned home after four years and wrote a book urging his countrymen not to emigrate to America. His descriptions of shipboard conditions, the sale of servants at Philadelphia, and farm work bear strong similarities to accounts of the African slave trade.

When the ships have weighed anchor for the last time, usually off Cowes in Old England, then both the long sea voyage and misery begin in earnest. For from there the ships often take eight, nine, ten, or twelve weeks sailing to Philadelphia, if the wind is unfavorable. But even given the most favorable winds, the voyage takes seven weeks.

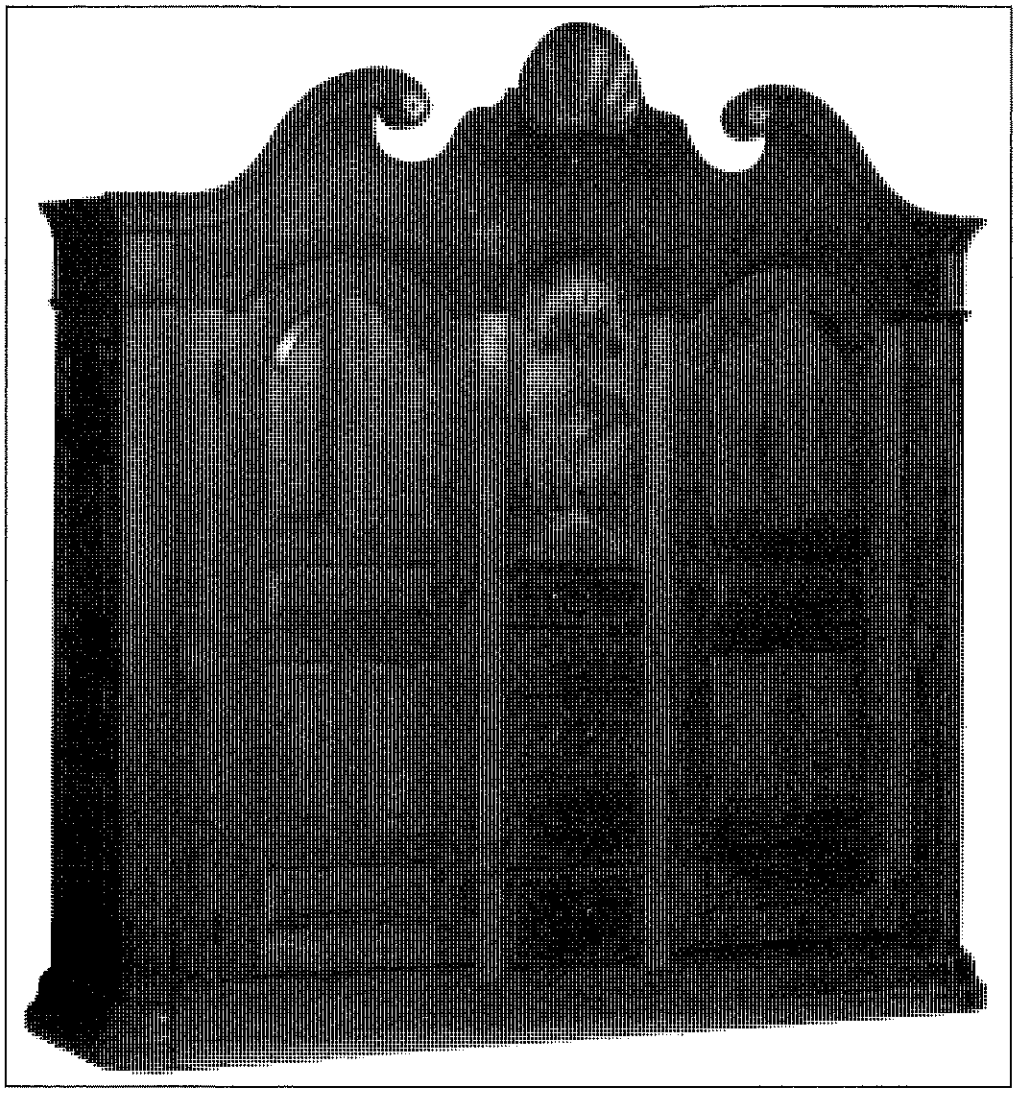
During the journey the ship is full of pitiful signs of distress—smells, fumes, horrors, vomiting, various kinds of sea sickness, fever, dysentery, headaches, heat, constipation, boils, scurvy, cancer, mouth-rot, and similar afflictions, all of them caused by the age and the highly salted state of the food, especially of the meat, as well as by the very bad and filthy water, which brings about the miserable destruction and death of many. Add to all that shortage of food, hunger, thirst, frost, heat, dampness, fear, misery, vexation, and lamentation as well as other troubles. Thus, for example, there are so many lice, especially on the sick people, that they have to be scraped off the bodies. All this misery reaches its climax when in addition to everything else one must also suffer through two to three days and nights of storm, with everyone convinced that the ship with all aboard is bound to sink. In such misery all the people on board pray and cry pitifully together. . . .

When the ships finally arrive in Philadelphia after the long voyage only those are let off who can pay their sea freight or can give good security. The others, who lack the money to pay, have to remain on board until they are purchased. . . .

This is how the commerce in human beings on board ship takes place. Every day Englishmen, Dutchmen, and High Germans come from Philadelphia and other places, some of them very far away, . . . and go on board the newly arrived vessel that has brought people from Europe and offers them for sale. From among the healthy they pick out those suitable for the purposes for which they require them. Then they negotiate with them as to the length of the period for which they will go into service in order to pay off their passage, the whole amount of which they generally still owe. When an agreement has been reached, adult persons by written contract bind themselves to serve for three, four, five, or six years, according to their health and age. The very young, between the ages of 10 and 15, have to serve until they are 21, however. . . .

Our Europeans, who are purchased, must always work hard, for new fields are constantly laid out; and so they learn that stumps of oak-trees are in America certainly as hard as in Germany. . . .

Linda R. Monk, ed., *Ordinary Americans: U.S. History Through the Eyes of Ordinary People* (1994).



A German Wardrobe — with a Dash of English Drawers

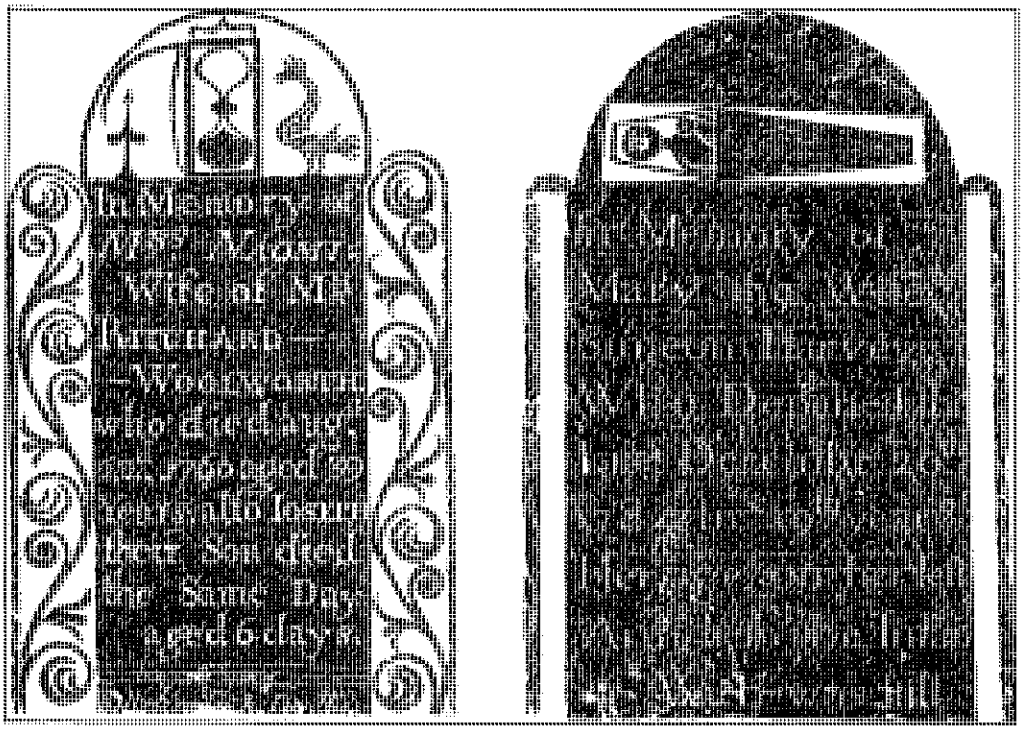
German immigrants formed the largest non-British white community in the colonies by the time of the Revolution. Many managed to balance their German ethnicity and the English culture they encountered — in religious institutions, residential patterns, marriage partners, and the furniture they used every day. David Hottenstein built this wardrobe (or *shrank* in German) to store clothing and other household items in Berks County, Pennsylvania, in 1781. While the wardrobe's shape, decoration, and mode of construction were inspired by styles that were common in Germany at the time, Hottenstein added a set of drawers, an English innovation. Winterthur Museum.

northern part of Ireland, many of whom — like the Germans — came as indentured servants. As they migrated to the colonial frontier, friction with Indians and other settlers often led to trouble. Pennsylvanians had a reputation for sturdy independence. When the gentleman pamphleteer John Dickinson wanted to emphasize Americans' independence of spirit during one of the 1760s disputes with Britain, he could find no better way than to style himself "a farmer in Pennsylvania."

Rural Families and Independence Wherever they lived and whether they were tenants or freeholders, northern farm families shared many common circumstances. In most places, the open-field villages of the earliest New England settlements had given way to dispersed settlements and scattered farmsteads, though ideals of social harmony persisted. Church membership, town government, family ties, and the mutual exchange of goods and labor sustained a sense of "neighborhood" in much of New England. In the

Middle Colonies, too, tenants and farmers maintained ties to their neighborhoods and to the wider commercial world. For all farm families, a central concern was how to pass on land and livelihoods to their children.

In a pre-contraceptive age, almost every married woman spent a good part of her life pregnant and caring for children. The women of Andover, Massachusetts, had more than five births per marriage in every decade between 1650 and 1720, and between 1690 and 1710, the rate was higher than seven. Yet, though childbirth risked women's lives in some cases, the life expectancy of women in New England was better than that in England or the southern colonies and almost as good as that of men. In four out of every five early New England marriages, both partners survived to at least the end of normal childbearing years. In legal terms, a colonial woman ceased to exist as an independent being when she married. Unless there were special prenuptial arrangements, a wife could not control her own property or make a binding contract. Her husband controlled the family's property, whether he had purchased it himself, inherited it, or acquired it through her. In day-to-day life, however, a wife was her husband's partner. The operation of a household depended heavily on women's work—not just the raising of children, but also a host of other tasks. Women made cheese and butter, which were vital sources of cash income; women also made the beer or cider and much of the food that sustained the family's members. Women made and repaired clothing, produced the soap that kept the family clean, and made the tallow candles that provided lighting. During harvest, farm

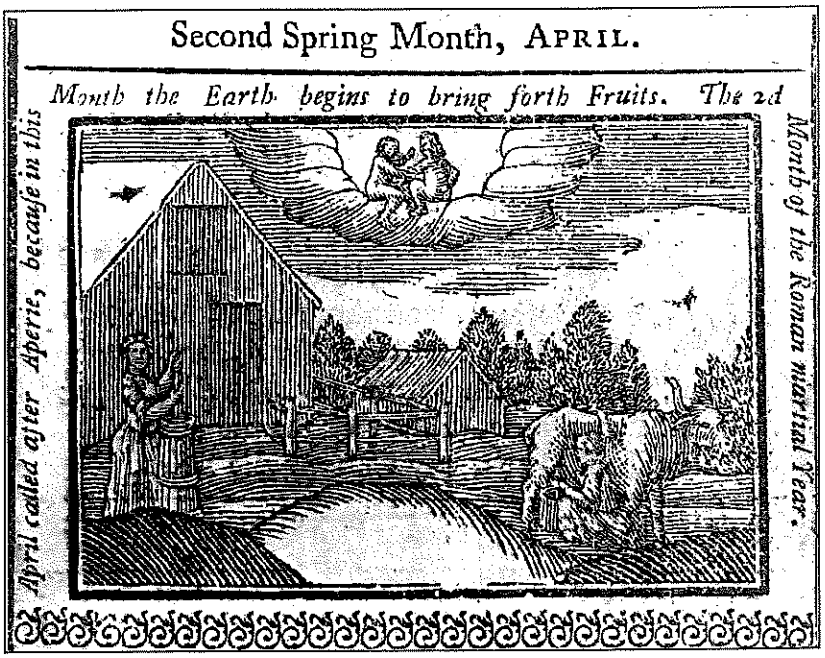


Untimely Deaths

Although women in colonial New England could expect to live longer than their counterparts in England or the southern colonies, early American graveyards testify to the hazards of childbirth for colonial women and their babies.
Edmund Vincent Gillon, Jr., *Early New England Gravestone Rubbings* (1966).

women joined in gathering crops. An artisan's wife was likely to acquire some of her husband's craft skills and take a hand in production.

In a rural community, unmarried women faced great hardships. Some did venture outside the conventional expectations of their roles, daring (as one put it) to be "as independent as circumstances will admit [i.e., permit]." But often the best they could hope for was to have a room in a relative's house in exchange for performing household chores. Widows also encountered difficulties. The law guaranteed the "widow's portion," usually one-third, of a husband's real estate, but her right was not to the freehold, only to the use of it during her lifetime; in some colonies, even this right eroded over time. Many widows were as dependent on their sons or sons-in-law as they had once been on their fathers and husbands.

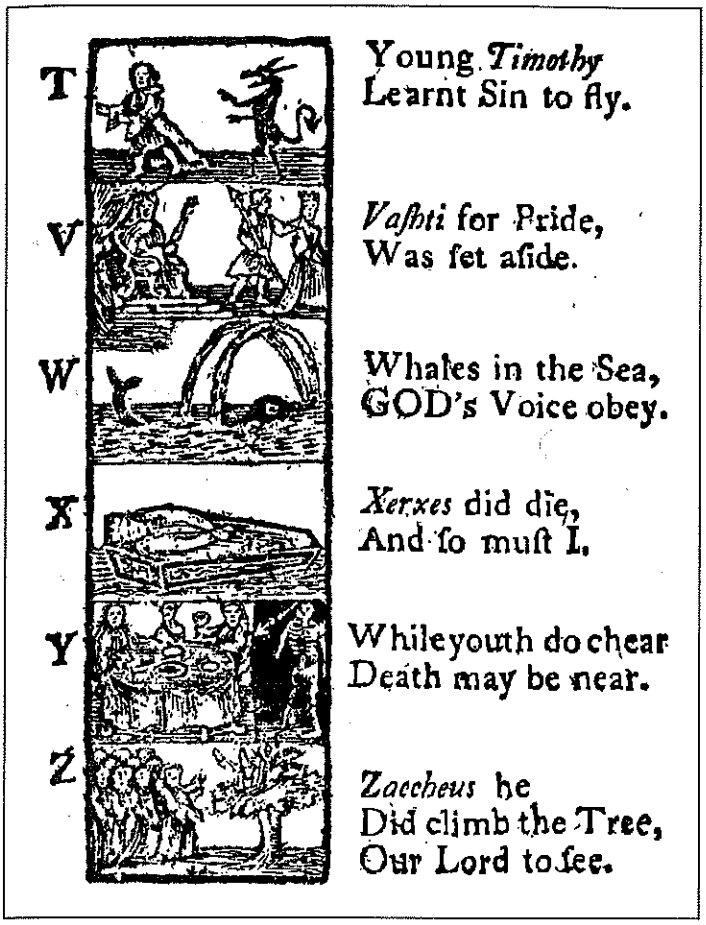


Farm Work

An engraving from a 1760 New York almanac showed one woman milking a cow and another churning butter. Women typically took charge of the dairy on rural farms, making cheese and butter to sell or trade. *Hutchin's Improved: being an Almanack for 1761* (1760) — American Antiquarian Society.

Children were expected to submit to parental authority. As they grew older, children became important to the work of most rural households, first performing simple tasks, then assuming the roles that, according to their sex, would fall to them as adults. Unmarried daughters usually assisted with household and garden tasks and undertook dairy work or home manufacturing. Boys and young men, as well as helping with farm work, often provided crucial labor for felling trees, clearing land, and other tasks involved in creating and maintaining new settlements. Fathers could use the promise of land to keep their sons at home and working for the household until well into the sons' adulthood. It was a form of labor control that shaped and fitted the family life cycle and the transmission of economic power from one generation to another in families with property. Poor or orphaned children were often sent to live with and work for other families, where their labor earned them no future security.

Some farm neighborhoods were largely self-sufficient, with families growing or making much of what they needed and swapping labor, or "'changing works," among households. Farmers grew mixed crops and built local networks of exchange, in which a tradesman might accept "wheat, rye, Indian corn, as well as cash, or anything that is good to eat," in return for his services. Farm wives traded cloth, butter, and beer as well as nursing, midwifery, and child care. Many farmers also bought and sold land to build holdings large enough to provide for their children and to set them up for similar lives of modest prosperity and independence, which contemporaries often referred to as a "competency."



New England Primer

As a page from a 1767 edition of the widely used schoolbook demonstrates, children learning the alphabet also received lessons in obedience and restraint. *New England Primer* (1767) — Rare Books and Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

Constraints in Rural Society For most country people, competency also involved producing surpluses to be marketed. The role of this surplus produce in broader patterns of commerce and in farm families' own strategies varied according to circumstances. In much of eastern and southern New England by the mid-eighteenth century, settlements were becoming crowded, and families were dividing up landholdings. Of farms in Andover, Massachusetts, only one in three exceeded 200 acres in size. The land in many parts of New England was relatively infertile, and crop surpluses there were low. Families seeking land on which to settle their offspring might well look to frontier regions. From the 1730s onward, their demand for land led to a powerful outward migration from old to new areas of North America.

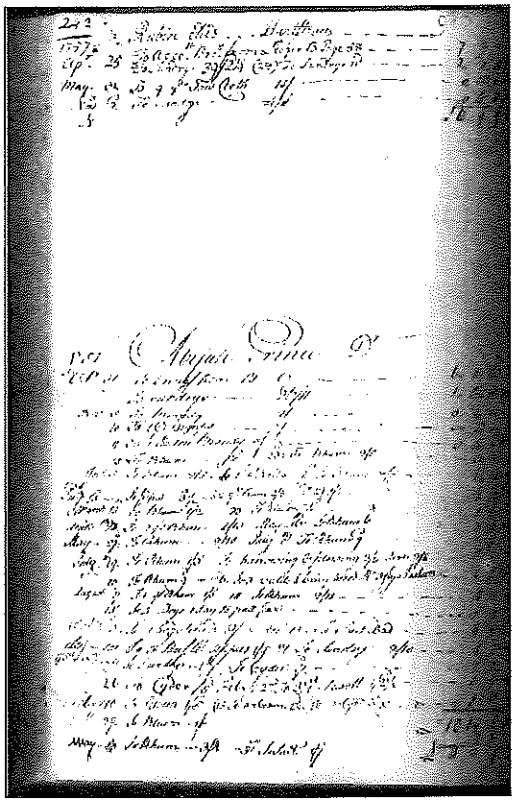
In the Middle Colonies, many landholdings were larger, and more fertile land was available. In the Delaware Valley in the mid-eighteenth century, two-thirds of farms exceeded 500 acres in size. By concentrating their efforts on grain production, farmers there were able to raise market income from the sale of wheat and other crops, and they used these resources to provide for their children. Eighty percent of Pennsylvania farms had crop surpluses, and 40 percent of the total crop was sent to market for export. By the 1760s, wheat from New York, Pennsylvania, and the northern Chesapeake fed people all around the Atlantic basin. Farm women, too, contributed to marketable surpluses through dairying and raising poultry.

But the demands of wheat farming also altered patterns of labor, especially on the larger farms in Pennsylvania's English-speaking areas. An increasing number of servants, some of them indentured to work off the cost of transatlantic passages, were employed to assist with crop raising. Many were German or Scots-Irish and were unrelated to their employers. Conflicts arose over harsh treatment or monotonous work. Servants—like George Owens of Chester County, Pennsylvania, who was driven to despair because his only work was chopping wood—often ran away. Married servants known as "inmates" occupied cottages on farm lands. Others worked as day laborers. In Chester County in 1750, there was one inmate or free laborer for roughly every four householders, but a decade later, the proportion had risen to nearly one for every two. Wage labor was a growing part of the grain-exporting rural economy.

Although independent farm families dominated northern agriculture, slavery also became important in a few localities: along Rhode Island's

Narragansett Bay and in parts of southern Connecticut, Long Island, and New Jersey. Around 1700, 13 percent of Long Island's inhabitants were slaves, while slaves and free black people accounted for one-fifth of the population of Bergen County, New Jersey. In contrast to southern plantations, however, most northern slaveholders owned only one slave. As a result, northern slaves often lived separate lives, without their own families or distinctive culture.

Social stratification among rural whites also grew in the eighteenth century. The Connecticut River valley in western Massachusetts became dominated politically by wealthy families, whose influence earned them the title of "River Gods." Members of these families intermarried, filled town delegations to the General Court in Boston, secured provincial appointments as colonels of militia or county court judges, and became pastors of some of the region's churches. Although the New England freeholding ethos sometimes bred resentment against the powerful and well-to-do, deference toward age, wealth, and family remained common. Only during times of political crisis was it sometimes disrupted.



Accounting for Trade

Account books are the most common documents left by ordinary people who lived in eighteenth-century rural communities. Historians rely on these valuable sources to reconstruct the economic world of preindustrial societies. As shown in the 1756 and 1757 accounts of merchant Elijah Williams of Deerfield, Massachusetts — chronicling his transactions with Abijah Prince, a free black town resident — rural shopkeepers, farmers, and craftsmen used these books to keep track of their customers' indebtedness. Williams sold textiles, food, spirits, and other wares; he accepted cash, labor, and agricultural products in return. Account book of Elijah Williams, Ledger C, Vol. 4 — Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Library, Deerfield, MA.

Urban America

By 1770, about 93 percent of all colonists lived in places with populations under 2,500. However, one way in which the northern colonies differed from most parts of the South was in the relative significance of the port towns that grew up along their coasts and river estuaries.

In 1700, even the largest of these towns — Boston, New York City, and Philadelphia — had been little more than overgrown villages, with a few thousand inhabitants each. But by 1760, they were substantial places whose people lived differently from their rural counterparts. In these port towns, merchants and shipowners rubbed shoulders with professional men, with master artisans and their apprentices, with the day laborers who worked on the wharves, and with seamen from many places who crewed cargo ships and fishing vessels. Public emblems still commemorate the work of these early colonists. In Boston's State House hangs the gilded image of a codfish, symbol of New England's early wealth from fishing and the sea. New York City's official seal bears the sails of a windmill, two barrels, a beaver, and the figures of a Native American and a white man. It recalls the port's initial prosperity from the trade in native-trapped furs and from grain grown by farmers, ground by millers, and shipped in barrels made by coopers. In towns, as in the country, many economic activities were organized around families and households. But all who worked in the port towns were not free, and not all had their own families and households. A growing number of slaves and indentured servants worked as laborers, domestic servants,

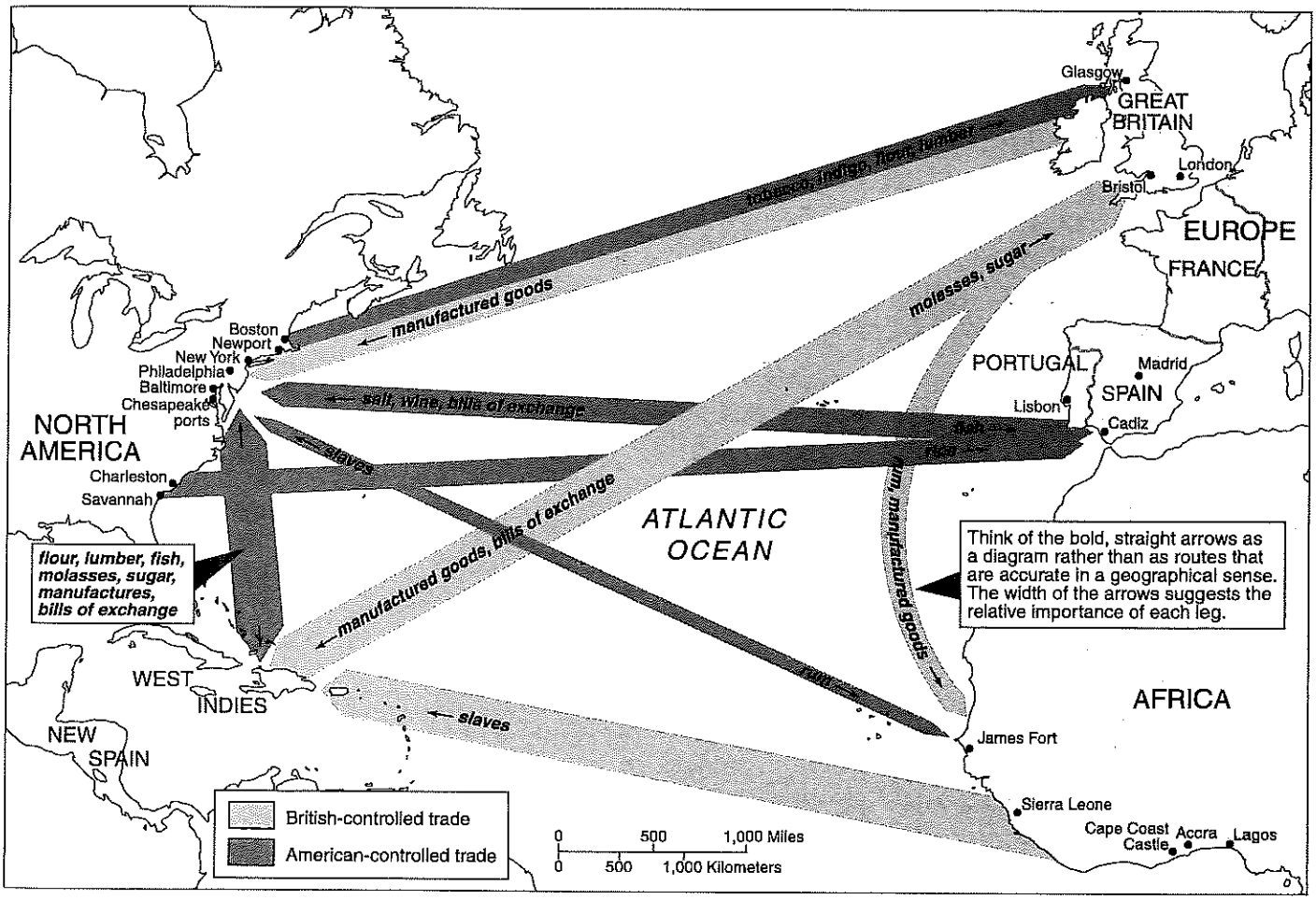
and dock workers; slaves in particular tended to live in their masters' houses, isolated from other African Americans.

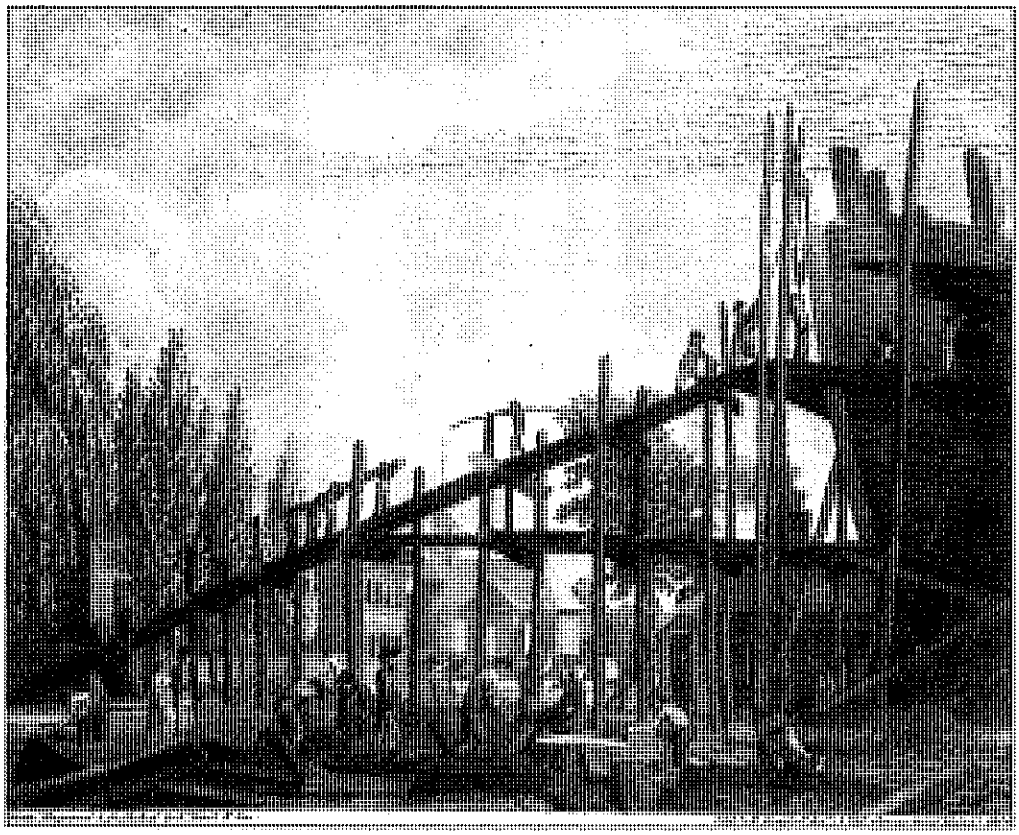
Cities by the Sea Even so, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia had established themselves as places where trade and manufacturing, rather than farming, formed the essential basis of life (Map 3.4). Lesser centers, such as Newport, Albany, and Baltimore, which expanded in the eighteenth century, developed in the same direction. None was large by modern standards. Even the biggest were "walking towns," easily crossed on foot, full of places and faces familiar to their residents.

Boston occupied no more than a small peninsula that jutted into Massachusetts Bay, linked to the mainland by a narrow spit called Boston Neck. Although the town grew steadily for a century, around 1750 its population leveled off at about 15,000. It governed itself by the same town meetings of freemen that were used in the smallest New England settlements. Ordinary Bostonians highly valued these open meetings, in which they had a voice. As early as 1708, they resoundingly defeated a proposal to abandon town meetings and create a mayor and a board of aldermen, not least because people objected to the 1,000-pounds wealth qualification for holders of the new

MAP 3.4 British and American Atlantic Trade Patterns in the Eighteenth Century

American merchants based in the North carved out for themselves a substantial share of Anglo-American trade. The Navigation Acts gave British traders dominance over many routes, but merchants from the northern port towns captured business with the Mediterranean and the West Indies, shipping crops produced in the southern colonies and importing slaves for sale.





Shipbuilding
A late-eighteenth-century engraving depicts work in a Philadelphia shipyard. Construction of a ship usually took about a year, employing large numbers of men with various skills that focused on different parts of the vessel. "[A]bove 30 Denominations of Tradesmen and Artificers," according to one 1749 observer, were involved in building a ship, including carpenters who worked on the hull and masts, joiners who constructed the interior, and ropemakers and sailmakers. William Birch, *Preparation for War to defend Commerce*, line engraving, 11 1/2 × 13 5/8 inches, 1800 — Free Library of Philadelphia.

offices. As one pamphleteer argued, "The rich will exert that right of Dominion, which they think they have exclusive of all others . . . and then the Great Men will no more have the Dissatisfaction of seeing their Poorer Neighbours stand up for equal Privileges with them." Boston would retain its town meeting until 1821, when it was deemed large enough for a city form of government.

New York and Philadelphia exceeded Boston in size but not by much. As late as 1770, New York filled only the southernmost part of Manhattan Island, where the financial district now stands, and boasted a mere 21,000 inhabitants. Philadelphia was North America's fastest-growing city. Its population of 25,000 in 1770 made it, after London, one of the largest settlements in the English-speaking world. Even so, its people occupied little more than the modern downtown area. Both cities were governed differently from Boston. In New York, a mayor was picked by the colony's royal governor, but aldermen were chosen by election. Philadelphia, like many English boroughs, was run by a "closed" corporation, a body of officials who picked their own successors.

Port towns fulfilled many functions. They were important commercial centers, whose merchants dispatched and received ships and their cargoes over thousands of miles. Colonial ships carried fish from the Grand Banks, flour from Pennsylvania, barrel staves from New York's forests, flaxseed for Irish linen growers, lemons, salt, oil, and wine. They also carried slaves; from

the 1720s onward, merchants in Boston, Providence, Newport, and other New England ports became active in the Atlantic slave trade. After the mid-eighteenth century, Newport was the largest slave port in North America; its ships carried slaves from Africa either to the West Indies or to the mainland for sale to southern planters. As their commerce grew, the port towns increasingly became centers of wealth as well, and some of their richest merchants enjoyed fortunes that were respectable even by British standards.

The main ports were also centers of politics and the arts. They were provincial capitals, where men with a claim to rule gathered to conduct public business. They were home to colleges, playhouses, concerts, and artists, such as the painters Benjamin West and John Singleton Copley, who matched Europe's best. Philadelphia in particular was emerging as an intellectual hub, noted for its contributions to science and high-quality craftsmanship.

Colonial towns fostered manufactures as well as upper-class culture. Shipyards, ropewalks, iron foundries, and sailmaking shops arose in Boston and other New England ports to build, equip, and supply fishing boats and cargo-carrying vessels. Skilled artisans and laborers ran the yards and shops, and the ships they built earned a high reputation around the Atlantic. By 1760, American shipyards were building one-third of all new British commercial ships, and their growing number of employees with wages to spend attracted other occupations. Towns became hives of activity, where craft workers, wagoners, seamstresses, laborers, coopers, dressmakers, midwives, and prostitutes plied their trades.

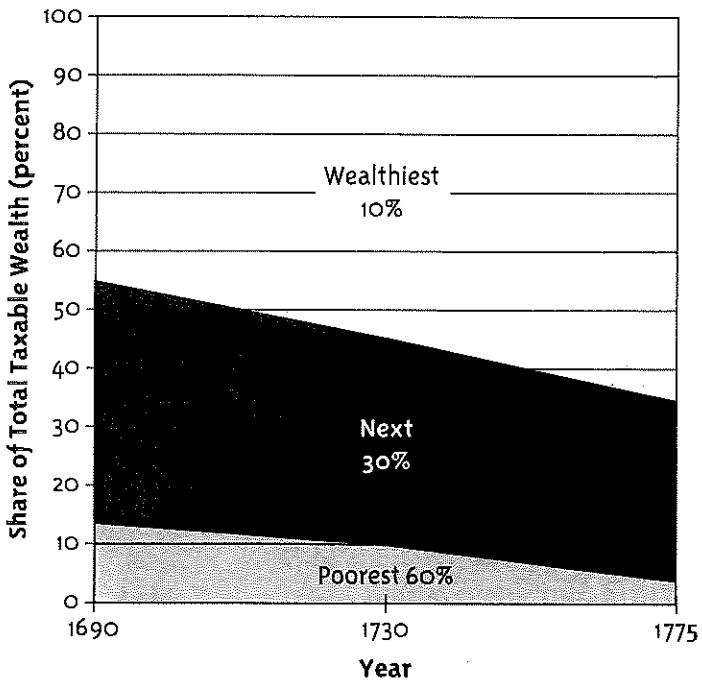


FIGURE 3.1 Growing Inequality in the Northern Port Towns

This chart illustrates the urban elites' expanding share of wealth and the decreasing shares enjoyed by the middling and poorer sections of the towns' populations. By 1775, the poorest three-fifths of urban inhabitants owned less than one-twentieth of taxable wealth.

Urban Elites Northern towns developed their own social order, with different classes following distinct ways of life. Wealthy "elites," or upper classes, emerged, enjoying connections in international networks and colonial administrations. The richest were likely to be merchants trading across the Atlantic; others, usually less wealthy, conducted trade along the American coast and to the Caribbean. A professional class, too, began to take shape, starting with the Protestant ministry. In the eighteenth century, lawyers emerged as a second group, using their specialized skills to serve landowners and merchants as laws became more elaborate and business expanded. Ministers and lawyers formed an intellectual elite, producing much of early America's writing and scholarship.

Merchant elites varied in character. Boston's divided between Puritan descendants of early settlers and more recent arrivals, many of whom were Anglican. Philadelphia's early Quaker merchants were joined later by those of other faiths. Boston and Philadelphia merchants were relatively uninvolved in rural landholding, since New England's and Pennsylvania's independent farming economies kept them at arm's length. Some of New York's prominent merchant families, however, were also among the colony's manorial estate holders.

Some women, mostly widows, succeeded in business, most of them running small stores. A few of these "she-merchants" prospered as long-distance traders. Perhaps the most notable was the Bostonian Elizabeth Murray Smith, whose wealth enabled her, as she proudly put it, "to live and act as I please." But even she did not attain public positions. In 1733, some New York businesswomen complained to the governor that "We are Housekeepers, Pay our Taxes, carry on Trade and most of us are she Merchants, and as we in some measure contribute to the Support of Government, we ought to be entitled to some of the Sweets of it." Even when financial independence was not a factor, gender remained an obstacle to political power.

Clothes Make the Man
In colonial New England, merchants commissioned paintings that would display not only their faces but their place in society as well. Made of fine imported fabric, Boston merchant Joseph Sherburne's ostentatious outfit signaled his social rank and wealth in this portrait by John Singleton Copley, painted in the late 1760s. John Singleton Copley, *Joseph Sherburne*, oil on canvas, 1767–70, 50 × 40 inches — Metropolitan Museum of Art.

During the eighteenth century, urban elites increased their share of colonial wealth (Figure 3.1). In 1687 in Philadelphia, the top 5 percent of taxpayers owned 30 percent of all property, but by 1774, they owned 55 percent. In Boston, the share of wealth held by the top 10 percent of taxpayers rose from 46 percent in 1687 to 63 percent in 1771. A few had connections to the highest circles in England. By 1750, a daughter of New York's DeLancey family had married a knighted British admiral, and one of the DeLancey sons was close to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Such families lived in a cosmopolitan world in which events thousands of miles away were just as important as those close at hand and where men and women adopted European customs and fashions to demonstrate that they were not mere colonists.

Artisans, Laborers, and Seamen Most townspeople, however, were not merchants, ministers, or lawyers but belonged to the "laboring classes" and worked with their hands. Workmen's practical dress—leather work-aprons and long trousers—contrasted with the elite's satin coats, wigs, and knee

Commerce Makes the Man
Other merchants, such as James Tilley in this 1757 painting attributed to Copley, preferred to emphasize the source of their wealth: the shipping wharf and ropewalk glimpsed through the window in the portrait. John Singleton Copley, *James Tilley*, oil on copper, 1757, 13 3/4 × 10 1/4 inches — M. Knoedler and Company, New York.

breeches. Women's clothing that was made for the rigors of kitchen work, sewing, and washing was clearly distinct from the silk garments of well-to-do women.

Seamen lived in a shipboard world with its own conditions and customs. Inhabitants of the ocean as much as any port town, they faced low pay, constant discomfort, and harsh discipline, as well as the danger of shipwreck and the fear that the British navy might forcibly "impress" them into its service or that a privateer or enemy warship might capture them. Landsmen, too, worked in connection with maritime commerce, though often under considerably better circumstances. Shipwrights and ironworkers employed in the largest manufacturing establishments had skills and status that gave them considerable freedom and control of their own time.

Most laboring townsmen aimed to become master artisans or "mechanics," which meant serving several years of apprenticeship, learning the skills of a trade while legally bound in service to a master. On completing an apprenticeship, the laborer became a journeyman, hired for a time as he

"Plough Deep, While Sluggards Sleep": *Poor Richard's Almanack*

Benjamin Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanack *was perhaps the most popular advice book published in colonial America. Although many of Franklin's proverbs and homilies are now clichés, at the time, they reflected the abiding belief of farmers and skilled artisans in the dignity and importance of their labor in northern colonial society.*

Industry need not wish, as Poor Richard says, and he that lives upon Hope will die fasting. There are no Gains without Pains; then Help Hands, for I have no Lands, or if I have, they are smartly taxed. And, as Poor Richard likewise observes, He that hath a Trade hath an Estate; and he that hath a Calling, hath an Office of Profit and Honour; but then the Trade must be worked at, and Calling well followed, or neither the Estate nor the Office will enable us to pay our taxes. If we are industrious, we shall never starve; for, as Poor Richard says, At the working Man's House Hunger looks in, but dares not enter. Nor will the Bailiff or the Constable enter, for Industry pays Debts, while Despair encreaseth them, say Poor Richard. What though you have no Treasure, nor has any rich Relation left you a Legacy, Diligence is the Mother of Goodluck, as Poor Richard says, and God gives all Things to Industry. Then plough deep, while Sluggards sleep, and you shall have Corn to sell and to keep, says Poor Dick. . . . If you were a Servant, would you not be ashamed that a good Master should catch you idle? Are you then your own Master, be ashamed to catch yourself idle, as Poor Dick says. When there is so much to be done for yourself, your Family, your Country, and your gracious King, be up by Peep of Day; Let not the Sun look down and say, Inglorious here he lies.

Richard Saunders, ed., *Poor Richard: The Almanacks for the Years 1753–1758* (1964).

saved to acquire a shop of his own. A master in his own right had to be many things: a producer, using his tools to turn out goods; a businessman, buying raw materials and selling finished products; a teacher, training apprentices; and an employer, hiring journeymen as he himself had once been hired. Just as on farms, urban work was based in households. Most master craftsmen had the support of a hardworking wife who provided housing, food, clothing, and laundry services for her husband and his apprentices.

Some master artisans, such as the Boston silversmith Paul Revere, achieved considerable comfort. Under special circumstances, an artisan might claim international fame; the Philadelphia printer Benjamin Franklin, for example, became one of the foremost scientific figures of the eighteenth century. The mottoes he printed in *Poor Richard's Almanack* showed Franklin's belief that hard work and self-discipline would carry a man far in the world. Yet more typical was the life of the Boston shoemaker George Robert Twelves Hewes, who never grew wealthy. Financial uncer-

Crafts Make the Man

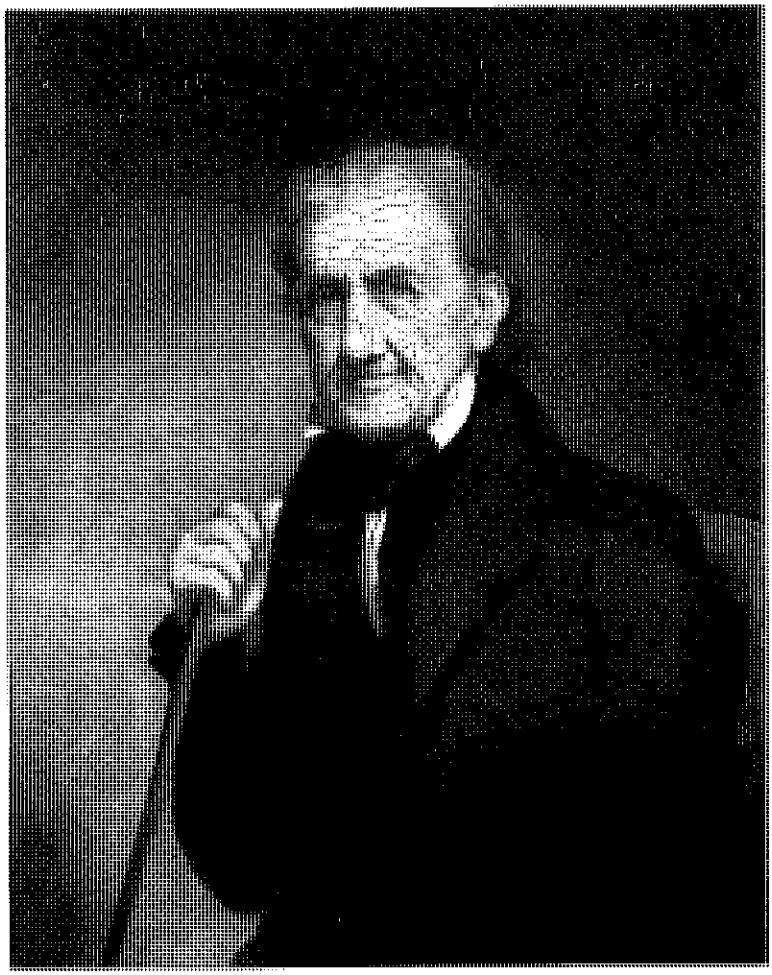
Boston silversmith Paul Revere was one of the few colonial craftsmen painted by Copley. In this painting, dating from about 1770, Revere poses at his workbench, wearing the artisan's plain linen shirt and vest and displaying his engraving tools and an unfinished teapot. John Singleton Copley, *Paul Revere*, oil on canvas, 1768–70, 35 × 28 1/2 inches — Gift of Joseph W., William B., and Edward H. R. Revere, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

tainty and poverty were very real for someone like Hewes, for whom one bad year could mean the humiliation of debtors' prison or the poorhouse. Such difficulties were worse still for the day laborers who loaded and unloaded ships or carted goods and for the growing numbers of widows and orphans who could barely support themselves adequately in the absence of a male wage earner. For them, economic insecurity was part of life.

Larger towns offered women more options than the countryside did. Women took in lodgers, ran taverns, made fashionable clothes for the well-to-do, or practiced midwifery. One Boston midwife, a Mrs. Phillips, was said to have delivered over 3,000 babies by the time she died in her early forties in 1761. Widows of artisans quite often took charge of their husbands' shops. Elizabeth Holt succeeded her husband as the publisher of the *New York Journal*, and she became New York State's official printer during the Revolution. But most working women were confined to tasks that paid little money or just bed and board. Some women worked as prostitutes. In smaller ports, such as Salem, Massachusetts, women formed a majority of the working population because many men were away at sea. Rarely able to obtain well-paid employment, women also formed a significant proportion of the poor in port towns. With their husbands at sea amid the hazards of accident, disease, and shipwreck, many of these women could also expect to face the trials of premature widowhood.

Indeed, poverty was increasingly common in eighteenth-century towns. In Boston, the problem was economic stagnation. In the 1760s, the town spent almost six times as much per person for poor relief as it had forty years before. But Philadelphia's expanding economy also provided a struggle for laboring people, as a constant flow of migrants from the countryside and overseas competed for jobs. Of Philadelphia laborers and journeymen who got married in 1756, for example, one-fifth owned no property at all, and another three-fifths owned only the bare necessities for setting up a home. Over the next eleven years, only about one in four of them improved their position. The share of property held by the bottom 30 percent of Philadelphia taxpayers fell from 2.6 percent in 1687 to barely 1 percent in 1774.

Poor though they might be, laborers and journeymen could console themselves that they were at least free. At the bottom of the colonial

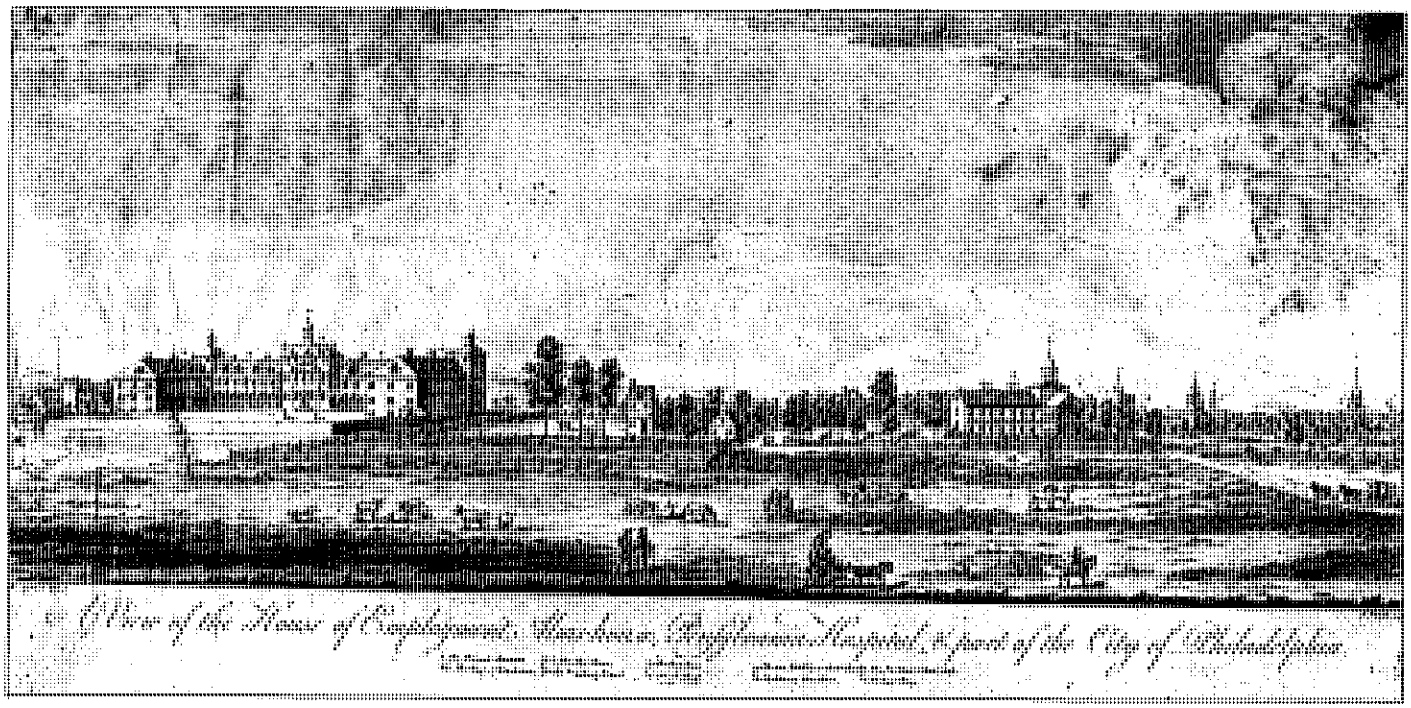


The Centenarian
Despite its title, George Robert Twelves Hewes was ninety-three when Joseph G. Cole painted this portrait in 1835. On the basis of Hewes's clothes and demeanor, viewers of the painting probably did not know about his artisanal background or that he was destitute. Bostonian Society, Old State House, Boston.

social scale were many people—white and black, indentured servants and slaves—who were not.

The Unfree: Servants and Slaves Indentured servants came to the Middle Colonies, as they did to the South, throughout the colonial period. At first, most were single males from London and the south of England, who reached colonial ports such as Philadelphia, where they worked off their indentures and stayed on. More than half were artisans, and another quarter were laborers and personal servants. The iron and construction industries were hungry for skilled workers, and some servants bargained themselves into good situations. By the mid-eighteenth century, a growing proportion of bound servants arriving in Pennsylvania were from places other than England, especially the north of Ireland and Germany.

Young families also came as indentured servants. They tended to work off their indentures in agricultural areas such as western New York, at the edges of colonial settlement, where they hoped to find land of their own



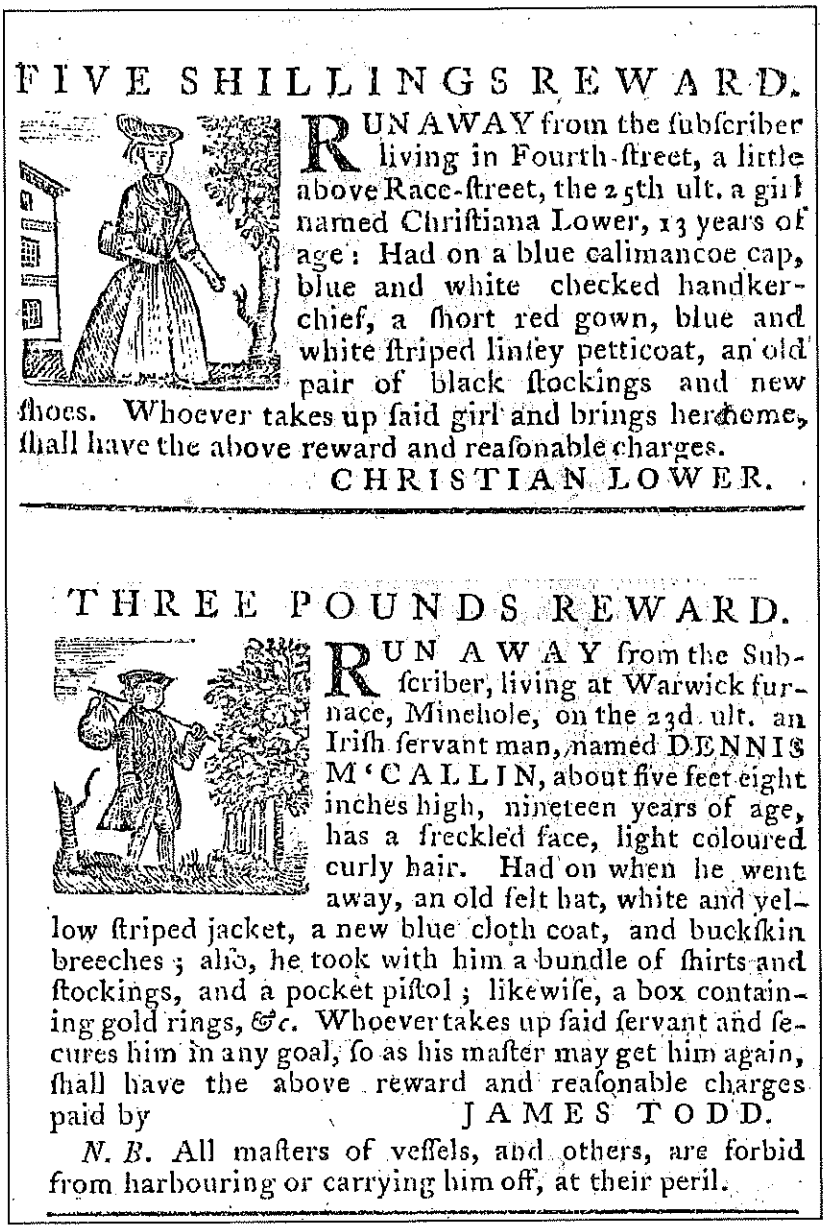
Poverty Incarcerated
Increasing numbers of urban poor taxed the resources of northern colonial towns and cities. Many were incarcerated in almshouses and workhouses, but these institutions grew overcrowded. This 1767 engraving commemorated the opening of new facilities on the outskirts of Philadelphia. Typically, the print emphasizes the institution's bucolic setting rather than the less picturesque activities within its walls. James Hulett, *A View of the House of Employment, Almshouse, Pennsylvania Hospital, & part of the City of Philadelphia,* line engraving, c. 1767, 13 1/2 × 18 5/8 inches — Library Company of Philadelphia.

when their service was complete. These were people whose circumstances in Europe were so hard that they were willing to sell a portion of their adult lives to escape, knowing that in America, they would be sold to a stranger who would govern them for four to seven years. Not surprisingly, their "fondness for freedom" often led to disputes with their masters, complaints of harsh treatment, or bids to escape.

Unlike the majority of indentured servants, most northern slaves were town dwellers. In the late seventeenth century, they were often employed as domestics, but their functions broadened with the North's involvement in the slave trade. From 1710 to 1742, the number of slaves in Boston quadrupled, to about 1,300, or 8.5 percent of the population. Slaves made up 18 percent of New York's population in 1731 and 21 percent in 1746. Perhaps half of New York City households owned a slave by the 1740s.

These urban slaves usually lived in their master's house without the company of other slaves. Most were men, working as general laborers, porters, or dockworkers; women slaves tended to work in domestic service, meaning that they were particularly isolated. One New Yorker advertised his slave for sale, noting that "she drinks no Strong Drink, and gets no Children" and was, consequently, "a very good Drudge." A few blacks lived as freemen in northern cities, although they could neither vote nor own property.

Many whites were hostile toward this growing African American population, fearing slave insurrection. In 1712, twenty New York slaves set a



FIVE SHILLINGS REWARD.

RUNAWAY from the ſubſcriber living in Fourth-ſtreet, a little above Race-ſtreet, the 25th ult. a girl named Chriſtiana Lower, 13 years of age: Had on a blue calimancoe cap, blue and white checked handkerchief, a ſhort red gown, blue and white ſtriped linſey petticoat, an old pair of black ſtockings and new ſhoes. Whoever takes up ſaid girl and brings her home, ſhall have the above reward and reaſonable charges.

CHRISTIAN LOWER.

THREE POUNDS REWARD.

RUN AWAY from the Subſcriber, living at Warwick furnace, Minehole, on the 23d ult. an Iriſh ſervant man, named DENNIS M'CALLIN, about five feet eight inches high, nineteen years of age, has a freckled face, light coloured curly hair. Had on when he went away, an old felt hat, white and yellow ſtriped jacket, a new blue cloth coat, and buckſkin breeches; alſo, he took with him a bundle of ſhirts and ſtockings, and a pocket piſtol; likewiſe, a box containing gold rings, &c. Whoever takes up ſaid ſervant and ſecures him in any goal, ſo as his maſter may get him again, ſhall have the above reward and reaſonable charges paid by JAMES TODD.

N. B. All maſters of veſſels, and others, are forbid from harbouring or carrying him off, at their peril.

Reward

These reward notices for the capture of runaway servants appeared in a 1772 edition of a Pennsylvania newspaper. *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser*, February 10, 1772 — Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

blaze and then fired on a group of whites who arrived to put it out, touching off a major panic. The white militia quickly routed the slaves, but for weeks, there were arrests, trials, suicides, and executions. Nineteen convicted slaves were hanged or burned alive and cut into pieces. But even such brutal punishment did little to quell the fear of slave revolt, and the New York events spurred efforts by Pennsylvanians to curb slave imports into their province. In another episode in 1741, New York slaves accused of arson and theft were alleged to have conspired with Irish and free black laborers to kill white inhabitants. Eighteen blacks were hanged or burned to death along with four white servants who were implicated in the conspiracy.

"Forty Shillings Reward": Advertisements for Runaway Servants

Indentured servants had an extremely difficult time in colonial America, as evidenced by the number of servants who ran away from their masters. Masters were often reduced to placing advertisements in local newspapers to announce the disappearance of their servants, as these notices—from a New York shipmaster in 1737 and from an Albany merchant in 1761—suggest.

Run away from the Brigantine Joanna . . . an Irish Servant man, named Charles McCammel, aged about 25 Years, a tall lusty Man, wearing his own black Hair. . . . N.B. The Servant having been offr'd 8 shillings for his Hair, it's suppos'd he may have cut it off. He speaks very good English.

New-York Weekly Journal, August 29, 1737.

FORTY SHILLINGS REWARD. For taking up and securing Mary Brown, alias Edwards, a Pennsylvania born indented Servant, who ran away from the Service of . . . her Master a few days ago: She is a so-so-sort of a looking Woman, inclinable to Clumsiness, much Pock pitted, which gives her an hard Favour and a frosty Look, wants several of her Teeth, yet speaks good English and Dutch, about 26 or 28 Years old, perhaps 30. Had on and about her when she went off a red quilted Pettycoat, a crossbarr'd brown and white Josey [jersey], a sorry red Cloak and the making of a new stuff Wrapper, supposed to be gone towards Philadelphia, via New York. —James Crofton, Albany

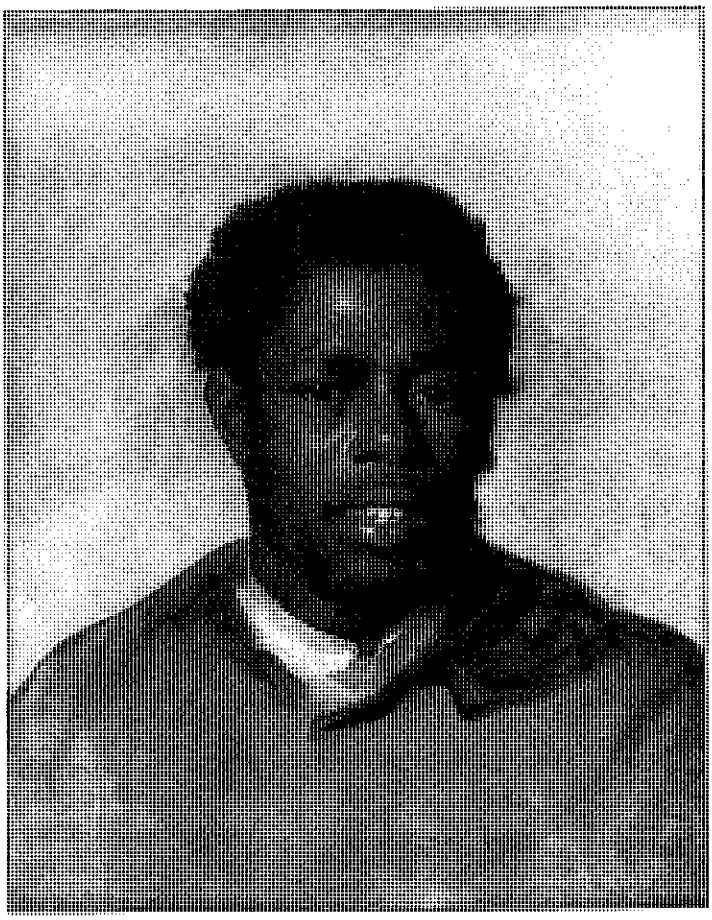
New-York Mercury, March 19, 1761.

Hierarchy and Equality in Northern Societies

By modern standards, the northern colonies were not democratic. Most people had no official part to play in public life. Only men who owned some property and who could claim to be independent of others' authority had the right to vote or hold political office. This excluded slaves, servants, women, youths, and adult men who did not meet the minimum property requirements. The last group amounted to almost half of free adult males. Altogether, up to 80 or 90 percent of the population was disenfranchised.

War and economic fluctuations in the mid-eighteenth century added to the strains already emerging in rural and urban societies, tending to reinforce and even enhance the inequalities contained within them. At the same time, however, there were patterns of opportunity in both towns and the countryside that helped the northern colonies to avoid the wider economic disparities that were evident farther south. And changes in both political and religious culture produced challenges to the most hierarchical assumptions of colonial life and to the power of rural and urban elites.

Government and Power Even men who did vote frequently deferred to their social "betters"—the merchants, planters, lawyers, and large landowners who occupied most seats in the colonial assemblies. Rarely did genuine farmers or artisans reach the circles that wielded real political power. In New England, where each organized town normally chose its own assembly delegate, farmers were frequently elected, but even there, the voices that counted most belonged to great merchants, to graduates of Harvard and Yale, and to the well-connected "River Gods" of the Connecticut River valley. In New York's provincial government, there was little pretense of democracy. The assembly had fewer than thirty seats, three of them effectively hereditary, and members of the landed and mercantile elite expected to fill them. In 1761, Abraham Yates, an Albany shoemaker turned lawyer, tried to win a seat in the New York assembly but was defeated by no less a figure than Sir William Johnson. This rebuff would spur Yates to try, during the American Revolution, to overturn the elite's hold on government.



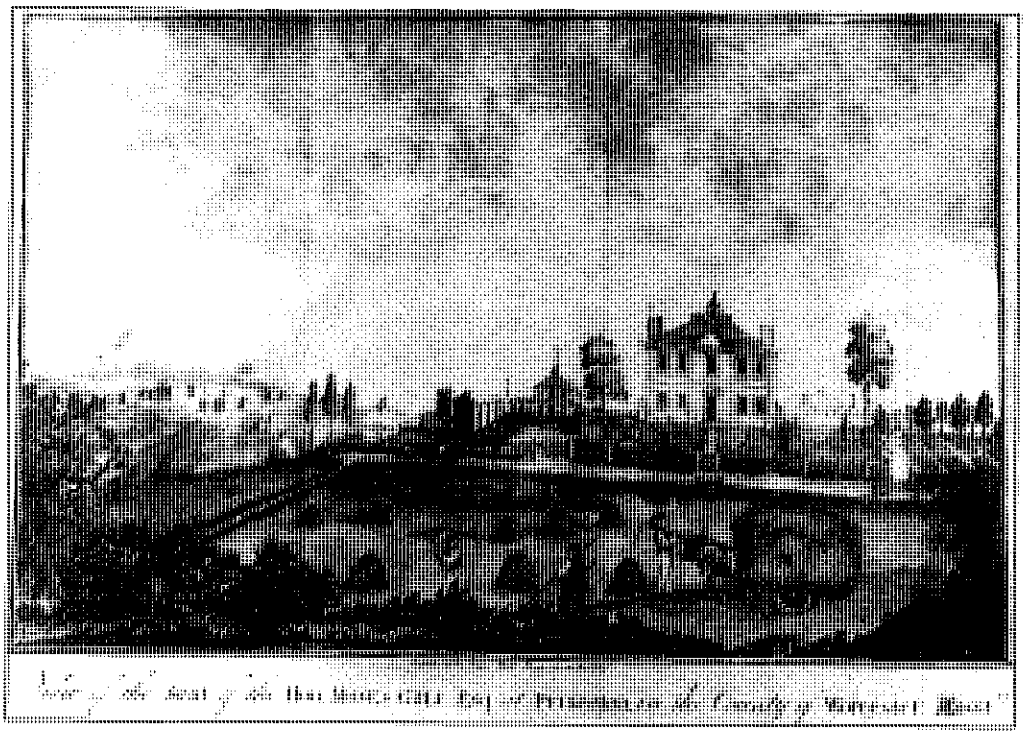
Head of a Negro
This portrait painted in the late 1770s by John Singleton Copley, possibly of a London dockworker, was unusual in this era in portraying a person of color as an individual. John Singleton Copley, *Head of a Negro*, oil on canvas, 1777–78, 21 × 16 1/4 inches — The Detroit Institute of the Arts. Founders Society Purchase, Gibbs-Williams Fund.

Much power in fact lay with wealthy men who held appointive rather than elective offices. These included the royal governor in most colonies, whichever member of the Penn family occupied the Pennsylvania proprietorship, and members of the governors' councils (except in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island) as well as mayors, judges, sheriffs, and the members of Philadelphia's closed corporation.

Yet in comparison with almost anywhere else in the eighteenth century, the northern colonies were quite democratic. Following the Glorious Revolution and the granting of new charters for these colonies, voting rights in New England were no longer tied to church membership, and eligibility to vote followed the same basic rule that held in England: a man had to have a freehold valued at 40 pounds or a tenancy worth 40 shillings per year. In England, this limit was high enough to deny the vote to the vast majority, but in America, where land was more easily obtained, a little over half of free adult males met the requirement. This included most of the tenants on New York's great estates, although there was no secret ballot and voice voting meant that the landlord's candidate rarely lost. There were other ways to be eligible to vote as well. In New York City and in Albany, the status of "free-

A Seat Fit for a Merchant Prince

Moses Gill was a hardware merchant who married well, becoming one of the largest landowners in Worcester County, Massachusetts. When he built one of the first mansion houses in the mid-eighteenth-century colonies, he chose a Georgian style with four chimneys, a central hall, gardens, and fences set on a 3,000-acre tract with a magnificent view of Boston. Samuel Hill, *View of the Seat of the Hon. Moses Gill Esq. at Princeton, in the County of Worcester, MASS*, reproduced in *Massachusetts Magazine* (November 1792) and Francis Blake, *History of Princeton, Massachusetts* (Boston, 1915) — American Social History Project.



man," open to most male craft workers, conferred voting rights and was an important avenue to political expression among urban workingmen.

For women, no such possibilities for voting existed. They found the churches their best arena for public involvement. The radical sects of seventeenth-century England had flirted boldly with the idea of gender equality. Quaker women could preach. Even some mainstream Puritans leaned toward the notion of equality. Puritan women were sometimes members of a church while their husbands were not. Though this gained the women no formal voice in church affairs, such as men enjoyed, they nevertheless had the prestige of being "visible saints" and publicly affirming their faith. Yet they still risked censure if they overstepped their "proper" roles, and they remained unable to preach or to exercise authority.

Outside their churches, colonists governed themselves under their own version of the British political system. In each colony, a governor represented the king, and in most, he was appointed by the king. Often, he was a fortune hunter intent on increasing his own wealth. But he found himself having to placate both his royal master, who issued detailed instructions, and the leading figures of the province, who often had distinct interests of their own. The other main political institutions were the council, a pale imitation of the House of Lords, and the assembly, whose members liked to compare themselves with the House of Commons and to assert similar constitutional privileges. The governor had an absolute veto on colonial laws, as did the crown (a power it ceased to exercise in Britain itself after the early

eighteenth century). Some governors also exercised considerable patronage through grants of land and appointments to public offices.

Although most colonists, particularly urban dwellers, depended in one way or another on commerce, the Navigation Acts and other British regulations meant that they were not free to organize trade as they chose. Although in theory colonial economies were meant to supply the mother country with goods that it needed, the northern colonies posed more of a challenge to Britain than did the South, with its staple export crops. A higher proportion of northern output was either of little use to, or duplicated goods produced in, Britain. As colonial manufacturing grew and threatened to undercut British producers, Parliament sought to restrain it. An act of 1699 banned the export of woolen goods from the colonies, and in 1732, Parliament prohibited the sale of hats across provincial boundaries. By 1750, colonial ironworks, mainly in the Middle Colonies, were producing one-eighth of the world's crude iron. Parliament that year prohibited the colonies from refining iron, requiring that it be shipped to Britain for further processing. Yet these restrictions did little to alter the pattern of colonial work or production. The laws were poorly enforced, and in some instances, they directly benefited the colonies. Laws defining colonial-built ships as "British," for instance, enabled American shipyards to become important suppliers to British as well as colonial shipowners.

Colonial governments also regulated commerce, particularly in urban areas. European thinkers debated the advantages of letting an open market determine supplies and prices. The foremost proponent of free markets, the Scottish political economist Adam Smith, would publish his arguments in a book called *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* in 1776. But these were new and uncommon ideas. Most colonists accepted an older view of trade: that government had an obligation to see that the market provided what people needed at a quality they would accept and at a price they could afford.

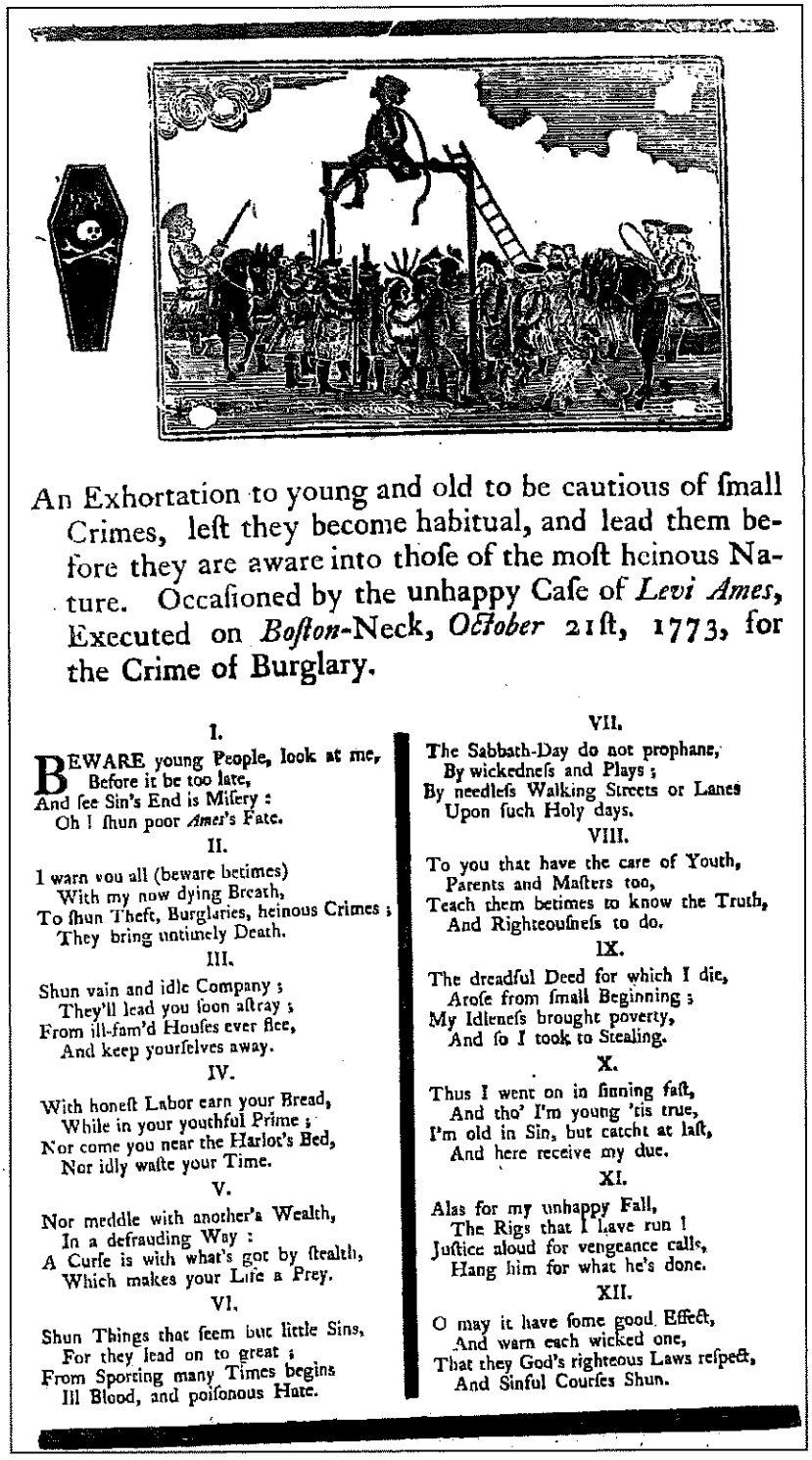
In New York, both the Dutch and English authorities set up controlled markets, in which it was illegal to influence or speculate on price changes by "engrossing" (buying a crop that was still in the fields), "forestalling" (buying provisions on their way to market), or "regrating" (buying in the market in order to sell again). Cities also regulated the price and weight of an ordinary loaf of bread. Such measures aimed to provide farmers and bakers with a decent return on their work and to protect purchasers—especially the poor—against sudden price rises or unscrupulous dealing when supplies were scarce. In crises, the authorities took even stronger steps. In 1748, New York's mayor and aldermen warned that "great and unusual exportations" of wheat had made it "most excessive dear, to the very great oppression of all degrees of people, but more especially to the industrious poor" of the city and its surroundings. They asked the provincial assembly to lay an embargo

on export shipments to conserve the city's supplies and keep the price of wheat within people's means. Their call expressed a traditional concept of justice: that private profit should not take priority over public needs.

Popular Politics and Direct Action If the authorities failed to uphold these principles, ordinary people sometimes took matters into their own hands. "Food riots" were common in eighteenth-century North America, as they were in Britain and elsewhere. Most often, food rioters aimed to prevent suppliers from taking advantage of scarcity at the expense of the poor. When, in 1713, the Boston merchant Andrew Belcher ignored Boston selectmen's pleas not to ship his grain to the Caribbean and so create a shortage in the town, two hundred women and men broke into Belcher's stores and seized the grain. The lieutenant-governor was wounded when he tried to intervene. The rioters' object was not to steal supplies outright but to regulate distribution at a price they deemed fair.

Similar crowd actions demonstrated popular opinion about a variety of other issues, exerting the people's presence and the threat or actuality of violence at individuals or officials who were regarded as unjust or incompetent. As in many food riots, participants often included women. In 1704, Boston women fed up with a failed military campaign doused returning soldiers with the contents of their chamber pots. Bostonians resisted elite efforts to curb street vendors and restrict the sale of produce to public market-houses; in the 1730s, women led protests to get the public markets abolished, culminating in a riot in 1737. Private actions, such as a creditor's efforts to collect debts, also provoked collective resistance if they were perceived as unjust. Violence was rarely indiscriminate. There was a common view that, despite being outside the law, crowd action could be justified. Even the Massachusetts chief justice and lieutenant-governor Thomas Hutchinson observed that "Mobs, a sort of them at least, are constitutional."

Crowd protests were often ritualized, forming part of a broader tradition of unofficial popular participation in public life. Poorer Bostonians gathered each November 5th to commemorate "Pope's Day," when in 1605 English Catholic conspirators had been discovered preparing to blow up the King and Parliament. Laborers, seamen, and artisans, demonstrating their Protestantism and claim to the benefits of "English liberty," paraded effigies through the streets and burned them on a bonfire. New York and Albany slaves gathered for the annual festival of "Pinkster," whose name derived from the feast of Pentecost but that incorporated African traditions, while slaves in several parts of New England had initiated annual "Negro Election Days," which enacted and satirized the political activities from which slaves were excluded. Crowd actions also extended other avenues by which ordinary people—men in particular—could take part in northern public life. Militia units, sheriff's posses, and volunteer fire companies were vehicles for



An Exhortation to young and old to be cautious of ſmall Crimes, leſt they become habitual, and lead them before they are aware into thoſe of the moſt heinous Nature. Occaſioned by the unhappy Caſe of *Levi Ames*, Executed on *Boſton*-Neck, *October* 21ſt, 1773, for the Crime of Burglary.

I.

BEWARE young People, look at me,
Before it be too late,
And ſee Sin's End is Miſery:
Oh! ſhun poor *Ames*'s Fate.

II.

I warn you all (beware betimes)
With my now dying Breath,
To ſhun Theft, Burglaries, heinous Crimes;
They bring untimely Death.

III.

Shun vain and idle Company;
They'll lead you ſoon aſtray;
From ill-fam'd Houſes ever flee,
And keep yourſelves away.

IV.

With honeſt Labor earn your Bread,
While in your youthful Prime;
Nor come you near the Harlot's Bed,
Nor idly waſte your Time.

V.

Nor meddle with another's Wealth,
In a defrauding Way:
A Curſe is with what's got by ſtealth,
Which makes your Life a Prey.

VI.

Shun Things that ſeem but little Sins,
For they lead on to great;
From Sporting many Times begins
Ill Blood, and poiſonous Hate.

VII.

The Sabbath-Day do not prophane,
By wickedneſs and Plays;
By needleſs Walking Streets or Lanes
Upon ſuch Holy days.

VIII.

To you that have the care of Youth,
Parents and Maſters too,
Teach them betimes to know the Truth,
And Righteouſneſs to do.

IX.

The dreadful Deed for which I die,
Aroſe from ſmall Beginning;
My Idleneſs brought poverty,
And ſo I took to Stealing.

X.

Thus I went on in ſinning faſt,
And tho' I'm young 'tis true,
I'm old in Sin, but catcht at laſt,
And here receive my due.

XI.

Alas for my unhappy Fall,
The Rigs that I have run!
Juſtice aloud for vengeance calls,
Hang him for what he's done.

XII.

O may it have ſome good Effect,
And warn each wicked one,
That they God's righteous Laws reſpect,
And Sinful Courſes Shun.

Crowd Justice

Public executions were occasions for common people to express approval of the punishment of those who broke the moral code. This broadside, printed and distributed in Boston in 1773, tells the story of a twenty-one-year-old convicted burglar, Levi Ames. The ritual of execution extended over a period of two months. On Sundays, Ames was conveyed in shackles through the streets of Boston, followed by crowds of men, women, and children. Each Sabbath journey ended at a different church, where Ames stood while the minister delivered a moralizing sermon. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

popular public involvement, as were craft societies, such as the Carpenters' Company founded by Philadelphia builders in 1724, which were formed to assist members in difficulty but also began to regulate prices, decide who could enter the trade, and set rules for apprenticeship.

Popular involvement also became part of formal politics. In New England town meetings, participants could discuss whatever issues they chose.

Several times in eighteenth-century Boston, popular efforts prevented the town meeting from becoming a preserve of the wealthy and privileged. Between 1718 and his death in 1733, the physician Elisha Cooke, Jr., helped form the Boston Caucus to represent artisans and small shopkeepers in the town meeting, backed policies to promote local manufacturing, and helped to mobilize opposition to market reforms. After Cooke died, the Massachusetts governor tacitly acknowledged his success at being a thorn in the side of privilege, referring to Cooke as "the late . . . head of the scum." After 1750, however, Boston's economic decline put popular participation at risk by sinking many men below the property qualification for voting. New York had no town meeting, but public life there was more open than that in any other city. New York had the highest proportion of men able to vote, and laboring men were a powerful presence at elections. Thirty percent of the councilmen chosen in New York in the early 1760s were artisans—three times the proportion in Boston.

Workingmen in the northern port towns found themselves neither wholly included nor wholly excluded from the political arena. They might be courted at election time by popular politicians like Cooke or even by rich men such as New York's Morrises, DeLanceys, and Livingstons. They made their voices heard in the parades that often accompanied elections. A politician who scorned the popular element, such as Boston's Thomas Hutchinson, might find himself despised. "Let it burn," a crowd shouted when Hutchinson's house caught fire in 1750. More prudent political leaders let it be known that they would find it "an honour to receive a visit from the meanest freeholder, nay condescend to shake hands with the dirtiest mechanic in the country." Public power remained a privilege of elites, but popular politics was becoming more important.

Social and Political Tensions By 1760, the northern colonies were mature societies with rapidly growing populations. Two of the great ports in particular, New York and Philadelphia, grew increasingly prosperous as international and domestic trade increased dramatically in midcentury. A colonial elite of landlords, lawyers, and merchants had emerged and was busily consolidating its power. Its members treated themselves to elegant houses, fine furniture, and imported carriages. The new colleges they founded—Princeton, Brown, the College of Philadelphia, and King's College in New York—joined Harvard and Yale as places at which to educate their sons. Colonial writers praised America as a good place to live, and immigration from Europe, especially to the Middle Colonies, rose.

But maturity brought poverty and conflict as well as prosperity. War was part of the problem. Since the 1680s, a great struggle had been under way between England and France for mastery of the Atlantic world. Four major wars occupied no fewer than forty-one of the seventy-five years from

1689 to 1763. Colonial farmers' sons and workingmen fought in all of them. In the French and Indian War that began in 1754, one-third of all Massachusetts men of fighting age served in the military. Some perceived that wartime suffering was not shared equally, that some grew rich—or even richer—in war years, and that some elite achievements came at the expense of working people.

In eastern New England, population densities approached English levels, and the agricultural system could not support all the inhabitants. The small, worn-out farms that some would inherit would not permit all New Englanders to remain in the places where they had been born. Laborers without property or regular work and male and female servants seeking employment swelled the slowly rising numbers of the "strolling poor."

From the second quarter of the eighteenth century, rigid patriarchal controls over women and children were also starting to weaken. In longer-settled regions, such as eastern Massachusetts and the outskirts of Philadelphia, few household heads now controlled enough land to promise farms for all their sons. Young men had to turn to other occupations than their fathers' to seek their livelihoods. This led many young people to challenge their parents' authority.

Parents, for instance, expected to control their children's choice of marriage partners, but many sons and daughters circumvented their parents and chose for themselves. A growing number of young Quakers were "disowned" by the sect for marrying outside it. In Massachusetts by the 1720s and 1730s, between one-third and one-half of brides were pregnant at marriage, almost always by the prospective husband, obliging parents to accept spouses of whom they might otherwise have disapproved.

Migrant New Englanders opened up new town sites in the Massachusetts and Connecticut highlands and trekked northward to New Hampshire, Maine, and an ill-defined region, claimed by both New Hampshire and New York, that lay between the upper Connecticut River valley and Lake George and Lake Champlain. Moving helped to solve some of the migrants' problems, for they found land in abundance. But migration created new problems, too: disputes over control of newly settled land and conflict with the natives already living there.

The Great Awakening in the North These social tensions both encouraged and were intensified by the spread of the Great Awakening in the northern colonies. The movement first took root in New England, following publication of the minister Jonathan Edwards's account of a religious revival in his church at Northampton, Massachusetts. Edwards's sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" remains one of the masterpieces of American preaching. A Scots-Irish Pennsylvanian, Gilbert Tennent, encouraged religious fervor among Presbyterians in the Middle Colonies. Edwards

"There Was a Great Multitude . . . Assembled Together"

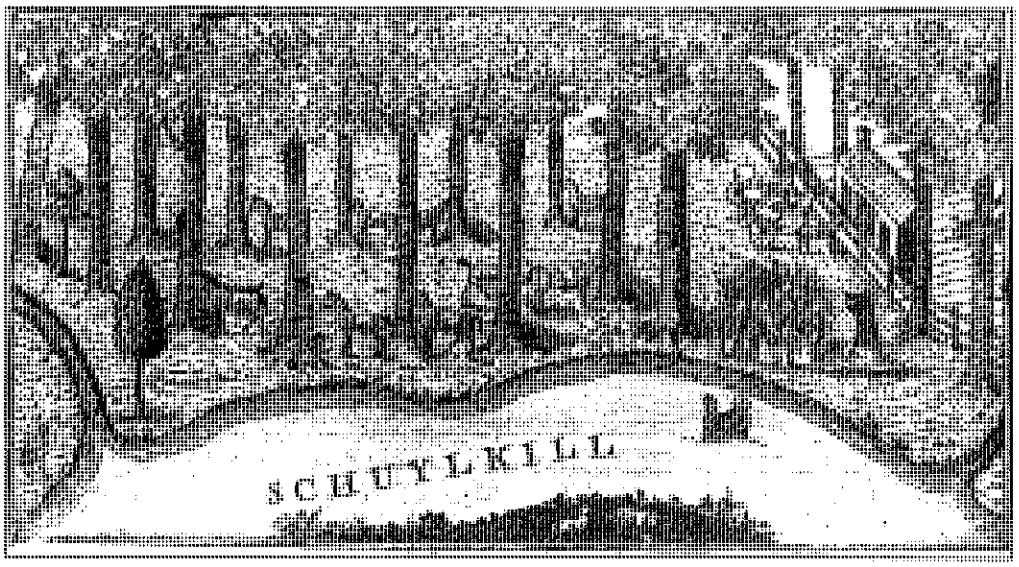
This account by a Connecticut farmer, Nathan Cole, captures the spiritual frenzy of the Great Awakening, as thousands flocked to hear the preaching of the English evangelical preacher George Whitefield in 1740. Cole and his wife, riding double, dashed twelve miles on their horse in little more than an hour to join the throng gathered at Middletown, Connecticut.

Now it pleased God to send Mr. Whitefield into this land; and my hearing of his preaching at Philadelphia, like one of the old apostles, and many thousands flocking to hear him preach the Gospel, and great numbers were converted to Christ. I felt the Spirit of God drawing me by conviction; I longed to see and hear him and wished he would come this way. . . .

Then on a sudden, in the morning about 8 or 9 of the clock there came a messenger and said Mr. Whitefield preached at Hartford and Wethersfield yesterday and is to preach at Middletown this morning at ten of the clock. I was in my field at work. I dropped my tool that I had in my hand and ran home to my wife, telling her to make ready quickly to go and hear Mr. Whitefield preach at Middletown, then ran to my pasture for my horse with all my might, fearing that I should be too late. . . .

When we got to Middletown old meeting house, there was a great multitude, it was said to be 3 or 4,000 of people, assembled together. We dismounted and shook off our dust, and the ministers were then coming to the meeting house. I turned and looked towards the Great River and saw the ferry boats running swift backward and forward bringing over loads of people, and the oars rowed nimble and quick. Everything, men, horses, and boats seemed to be struggling for life. The land and banks over the river looked black with people and horses; all along the 12 miles I saw no man at work in his field, but all seemed to be gone. When I saw Mr. Whitefield come upon the scaffold, he looked almost angelical; a young, slim, slender youth, before some thousands of people with a bold undaunted countenance. And my hearing how God was with him everywhere as he came along, it solemnized my mind and put me into a trembling fear before he began to preach; for he looked as if he was clothed with authority from the Great God, and a sweet solemn solemnity sat upon his brow, and my hearing him preach gave me a heart wound. By God's blessing, my old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me.

George Leon Walker, *Some Aspects of the Religious Life of New England* (New York: Silver, Burdett, and Company, 1897), 89–92.



Baptism on the Schuylkill
The frontispiece to *Materials Towards a History of the American Baptists*, published in Philadelphia in 1770, depicts the ritual immersion of adults baptized into the church. (James Smithers) Morgan Edwards, *Materials Towards a History of the American Baptists*, I (1770) — Library Company of Philadelphia.

and Tennent, along with such men as the Englishman George Whitefield and James Davenport of Connecticut, abandoned the dry, logical arguments of the traditional Puritan sermon style and reached straight for the heart. Their message was simple: only sinners who cast themselves on God's mercy would be saved. This message was particularly appealing to people whose communities were undergoing upheaval and who were anxious to measure up to the standards of an earlier generation.

Preachers and worshippers influenced by the revival challenged the authority of their established ministers. Whitefield, Tennent, Davenport, and others were "itinerants," who traveled from place to place to preach. Their audiences could be huge. Whitefield's last appearance in Boston in 1740 was before a crowd of 20,000 on the Common. Where itinerants went, disruption often followed. Connecticut passed a law against wandering preachers, and a number of them were jailed.

Like their counterparts in the southern colonies, northern revivalists began to recapture the visions of equality that had seized the poor of England during the Civil War a century earlier. Their sermons addressed contentious political and economic questions, especially whether Massachusetts should set up a land bank, which would serve ordinary people, or a silver bank, which would serve the rich. Men without formal religious training became exhorters and preachers; in some cases, women did so, too. Churches split. New denominations such as the Baptists began to grow, challenging the established Congregational churches. Church separations exacerbated the divisions within towns and spurred migration to new regions. Antirevivalist ministers were outraged at the challenge that the Awakening posed to their authority and the threat that it implied to established patterns of cultural and political hierarchy.

Conclusion: Prosperity and Inequality at Midcentury

Yet even as tensions spread across the north, the colonies themselves continued to expand in both population and trade (Table 3.1). Pressure to occupy more land for farm settlements remained strong. Traders, farmers, and artisans with control of their own property and households valued their personal independence and their "English liberties." They carefully guarded their freehold rights. They sought obedience and respect from the dependents in their own households, and this helped to preserve their deference for officials and colonial rulers. But this public deference was conditional on the recognition of their own rights and interests. As prosperity and inequality grew in the eighteenth century, challenges to authority became more common. In politics, in their churches, and in direct action to uphold what they saw as just, ordinary people had started to make their influence felt.

The 1750s would bring renewed war between Britain and France, the climax of their long rivalry for empire in North America. The war would tie the people of the colonies more closely than ever before to the web of British colonial interests, but it would also intensify the inequalities and disputes that had been growing in colonial life. People who were already used to challenging others' power would start to question the very nature of their colonies' connections with Britain. Ordinary people and popular politics would play a crucial part in the crisis that ensued.

TABLE 3.1 Estimated Population of the British American Colonies, 1720–1760

Estimated Population of the British American Colonies, 1720–1760

Year	Race	New England Colonies	Middle Colonies	Southern Colonies
1720	White	166,937	92,259	138,110
	Black	3,956	10,825	54,098
1730	White	211,233	135,298	191,893
	Black	6,118	11,683	73,220
1740	White	281,163	204,093	270,283
	Black	8,541	16,452	125,031
1750	White	349,029	275,723	309,588
	Black	10,982	20,736	204,702
1760	White	436,917	398,855	432,047
	Black	12,717	29,049	284,040

New England Colonies New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut

Middle Colonies New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware

Southern Colonies Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and (after 1740) Georgia

Source: *The American Colonies* by R.C. Simmons © 1976 by R. C. Simmons. Reprinted by permission of Harold Matson Company, Inc.

The Years in Review

1637

- Massachusetts Bay Colony banishes Anne Hutchinson for religious heresy. Six years later, she is killed in New York by Mahican Indians.

1648

- Massachusetts Bay Colony authorizes shoemakers to create the first labor organization in America.

1649

- The English Civil War results in the arrest and beheading of King Charles I by parliamentary forces; England becomes a republic under Oliver Cromwell.

1653

- Dutch colonists in Nieuw Amsterdam build a wall across Manhattan to stop English attacks; it later becomes the source of the name "Wall Street."

1658

- Oliver Cromwell dies.

1660

- Charles II restores the English monarchy.
- Mary Dyer, a Quaker, is hanged after she defies the courts by trying to preach in Boston.
- A Massachusetts law forbids the celebration of Christmas.

1664

- New Netherland is captured by English and renamed New York.
- The colony of New Jersey is chartered.

1675

- In King Philip's War, Mohawk Indians led by Metacom (called "King Philip") attack English settlements in New England in an effort to reclaim their land; one-tenth of the adult white male population of New England is captured or killed, but colonial forces ultimately triumph in 1676.

1680

- The colony of New Hampshire is chartered.

1681

- William Penn founds the colony of Pennsylvania.

1684

- Massachusetts' charter is suspended; the next year, Massachusetts is placed with Plymouth, Maine, and New Hampshire in a united "Dominion of New England."

1685

- King James II succeeds to the English throne; he is suspected of autocratic designs and Catholic sympathies.

1688

- In what becomes known as the Glorious Revolution, Parliament removes James II from the throne and replaces him with a new Protestant king, William III.

1691

- Massachusetts receives a new colonial charter, which ends Puritan autonomy but restores the elected assembly.

1692

- Salem witchcraft trials result in the hanging of nineteen alleged witches, fourteen of them women.

1699

- In an effort to restrain colonial manufacturing, England bans the export of woolen goods from the colonies.

1704

- An Indian raid on Deerfield, Massachusetts, leads to the death or capture of dozens of whites and discourages frontier expansion.

1705

- Massachusetts outlaws intermarriage between blacks and whites; the law is not repealed until 1843.

1712

- Twenty New York slaves light a blaze and then fire on a group of whites who try to put it out; in the aftermath, nineteen convicted slaves are hanged or burned alive.

1719

- America's first streetlight (a single lantern in Boston) is a sign of the growth of towns in the New World.

1724

- Philadelphia builders found the Carpenters' Company, a voluntary association that assists members in difficulty, regulates prices, decides who can enter the trade, and sets rules for apprenticeship.

1740

- The Great Awakening, a wave of evangelical religious fervor, sweeps over the American colonies in the late 1730s and early 1740s.

1741

- New York slaves are accused of arson and theft and of conspiracy to kill whites; eighteen blacks are hanged or burned to death.

- Jonathan Edwards preaches his famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," at Enfield, Connecticut.

1754

- The French and Indian War starts.

1776

- Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* makes arguments for a free market.

Additional Readings

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