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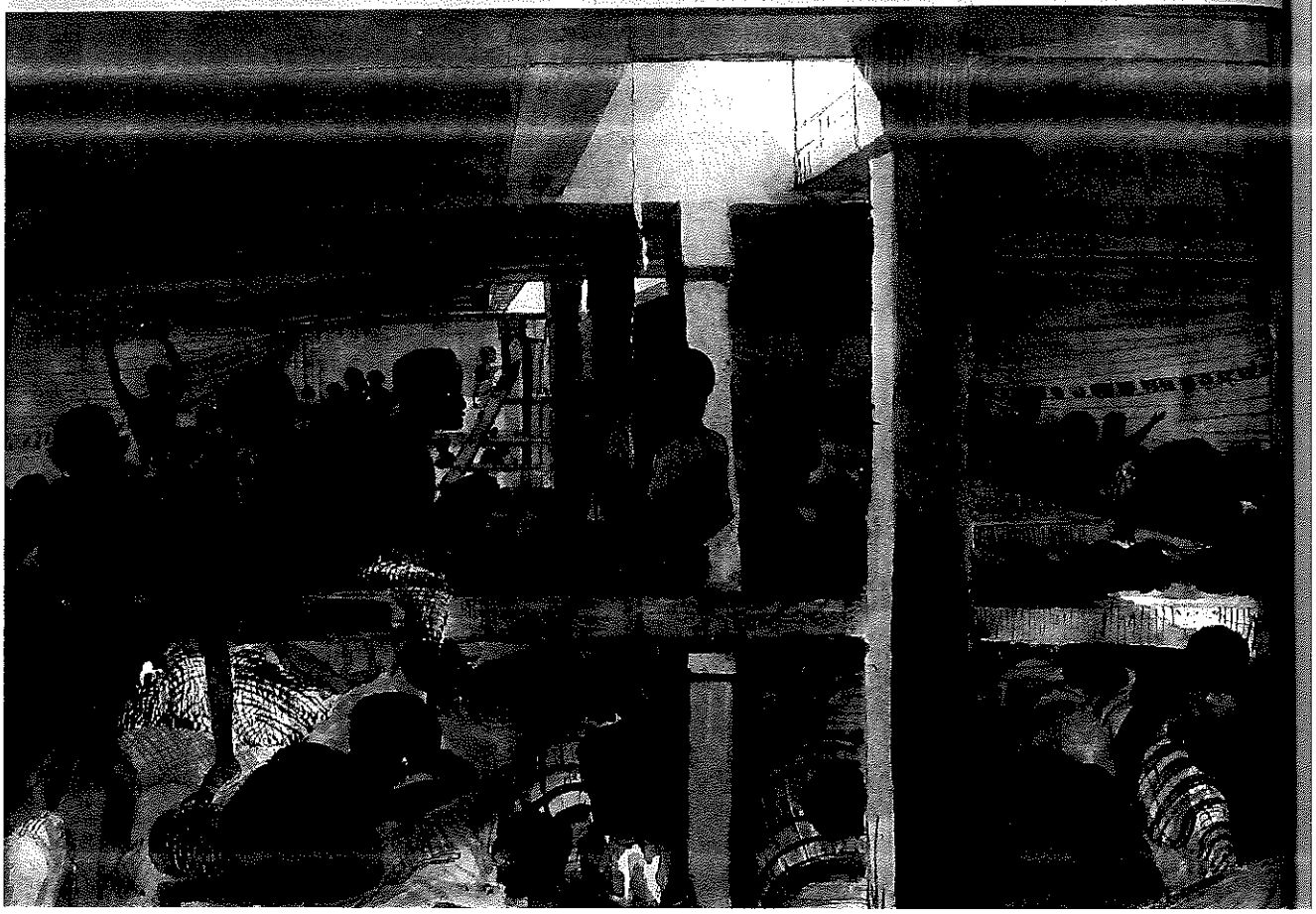
Servitude, Slavery, and the Growth of the Southern Colonies

1620–1760



ANTHONY JOHNSON arrived in Virginia early in the 1620s, one of the first African slaves to be brought to the colony, and was set to work on the land, like other Africans and thousands of English servants. He married Mary, another slave. By the 1650s, both had obtained their freedom, and he owned 250 acres of land on Virginia's Eastern Shore. Their son and grandson also became landowners, and Anthony Johnson may have been the first black Virginian to possess a slave of his own. Asserting that "I know myne owne ground[.] I will worke when I please and play when I please," Johnson expressed aspirations for economic independence held by many migrants. But in the mid-seventeenth century, such opportunities were reserved increasingly for whites. Harassed by white landowners, Anthony and Mary Johnson sold their acreage in the 1660s and moved to a settlement in Maryland where they were more welcome. Their experience exemplified a growing racial rigidity that would see the emergence of racially based slavery as a distinctive labor system and its extension from Virginia and Maryland into the new English Lower South colonies of the Carolinas and Georgia.

Originating as commercial ventures, England's North American colonies were all open to settlers from the British Isles and other parts of Europe. By 1700, an estimated 130,000 migrants had journeyed from the British Isles to the Chesapeake colonies of Virginia and Maryland alone. After the near-disastrous early settlement in Jamestown, English men and women learned to survive in Virginia; to make their colony and its neighbor, Maryland, economically viable; to organize local governments; and to adapt their Old World values, habits, and expectations to New World realities. They used the land to grow tobacco for export to Europe, making the

Below Decks
This sketch shows the interior of a Spanish slave ship called the *Albanez*, bound for the West Indies. After a British naval frigate captured the slaver, one of its officers descended below decks to record the horrible conditions of the Africans' Middle Passage.
Francis Meynell, *The Slave Deck of the* Albanez, watercolor, c. 1860 — National Maritime Museum.

Chesapeake a prototype staple-crop producer and tobacco the crop around which their entire economy revolved (Map 2.1).

Tobacco was a "poor man's crop" in that it could be produced on small landholdings with a limited supply of labor. Most tobacco farmers were men of modest but independent means, although some were tenants of larger landholders and a few were servants hoping to acquire land of their own. But at the top of the social hierarchy were large tobacco planters, who could harness the labor of others to grow their crops for them. For half a century or so after 1620, most laborers were indentured servants; only a small proportion were African slaves. After the injustices and instability of early colonial life sparked open rebellion among Virginia servants in the 1670s, however, planters began to rely more and more on slave labor, and the number of slaves increased. Initially, the Chesapeake had been what historians call a "society with slaves," but by the early eighteenth century, it had been transformed into a "slave society," in which slavery was essential to the economic and social fabric and in which the two most significant groups were slaves and the master class who owned them. This change, the single most important development in the early Chesapeake region, set a pattern for the other southern colonies as they too expanded.

Tobacco Plant
This woodcut in *Stirpium Adversaria Nova*, a botanical study published in 1570, was the first published illustration of the plant. (Pierre van der Borcht?) Pierre Pena and Mathias de Lobel, *Stirpium Adversaria Nova* (1570) — Arents Collection, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

By the time David George was born into slavery in Surry County, Virginia, around 1740, the slave system was well entrenched. Put to work in the tobacco fields with members of his family, he experienced slavery's cruelty firsthand. He was whipped by his owners "many a time on my naked skin . . . sometimes until the blood has run down over my waist band," had to watch his mother and sister being whipped, and saw a brother tortured for trying to run away. David himself escaped but was re-enslaved by Indians, and later by a South Carolina planter. Growing up during the religious revivals known as the Great Awakening, which stirred both white and black communities, David George was one of a increasing number of slaves who embraced Christianity. In due course, he became a pioneering Baptist minister. His life reflected one of the many ways in which, even as they were confined by the shackles of slavery, African Americans in the South carved out a degree of cultural autonomy.

The Development of the Southern Colonies

The southern colonies' reliance on the exporting of crops tied them closely to the broader trading patterns of the Atlantic, to British policies for regu-

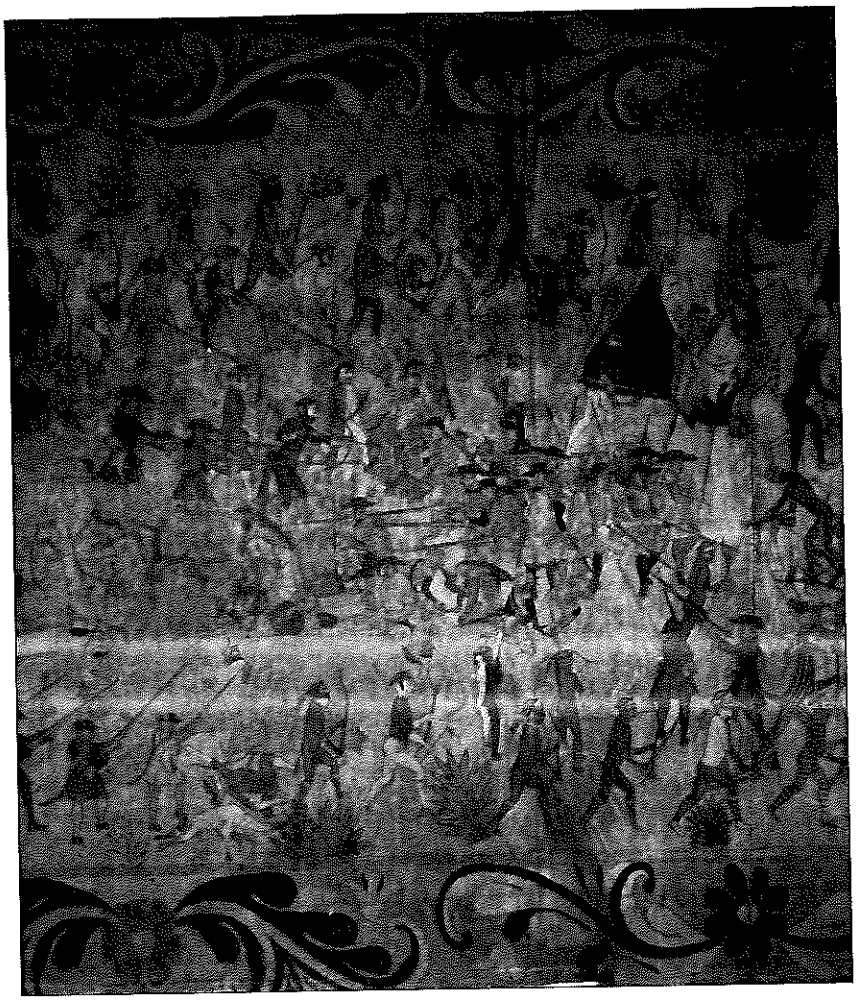
lating commerce, and to overseas sources of labor and manufactured goods. They had important links with the growing number of British colonies on the islands of the West Indies such as Barbados and Jamaica; after the Dutch introduced sugar cane to Barbados in 1636, sugar plantations worked by African slaves came to dominate these islands. As in all British American colonies, the inhabitants lived alongside Native Americans and the neighboring territories of other European powers, especially France and Spain. Despite crucial differences between the French, Spanish, and British colonies, their proximity to one another would influence the British colonies' development. Elite British colonists needed labor to extract the profits they envisioned in this new land, and they turned to indentured servants to supply it. But large disparities in wealth and opportunity soon resulted in challenges from within colonial society.

The Southern Colonies in Context French and Spanish settlements in North America represented marked contrasts to the patterns that evolved in English colonies, including those of the South. Neither the French nor the Spanish government successfully encouraged large numbers of its own people to move to the colonies. The Hispanic population of Spanish North America, in particular, remained tiny and predominantly male.

France established permanent agricultural settlements in Quebec and an extensive trading network that extended far across the Great Lakes region and ultimately down the Mississippi Valley to the colony of Louisiana, where the port and administrative center of New Orleans was established in 1718. French missionaries sought to convert Indians across this vast territory to Christianity. Since, except in Quebec and in parts of Louisiana, the French were primarily traders rather than settlers on the land, they often established reciprocal relations with the indigenous peoples they encountered.

Spanish missionaries also sought religious converts in New Mexico and Florida but with less harmonious consequences. Spain's military conquests and efforts to harness native labor often provoked resistance, including the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, which temporarily drove Spanish settlers out of New Mexico (see Chapter 1). From the viewpoint of the Spanish government, the missions and fortifications of Florida and New Mexico, even the military bases, or *presidios*, that they later established in their North American territories, were marginal northern outposts of Spain's richer, more important colonies in Mexico and South America.

Nevertheless, the European powers jockeyed for position in North America, not least to restrain their rivals' influence. French traders in the Mississippi Valley and Louisiana, for instance, made contact with native Apaches and Comanches of the Southwest, providing them with horses and firearms that they used to attack settlements in New Mexico. Partly to

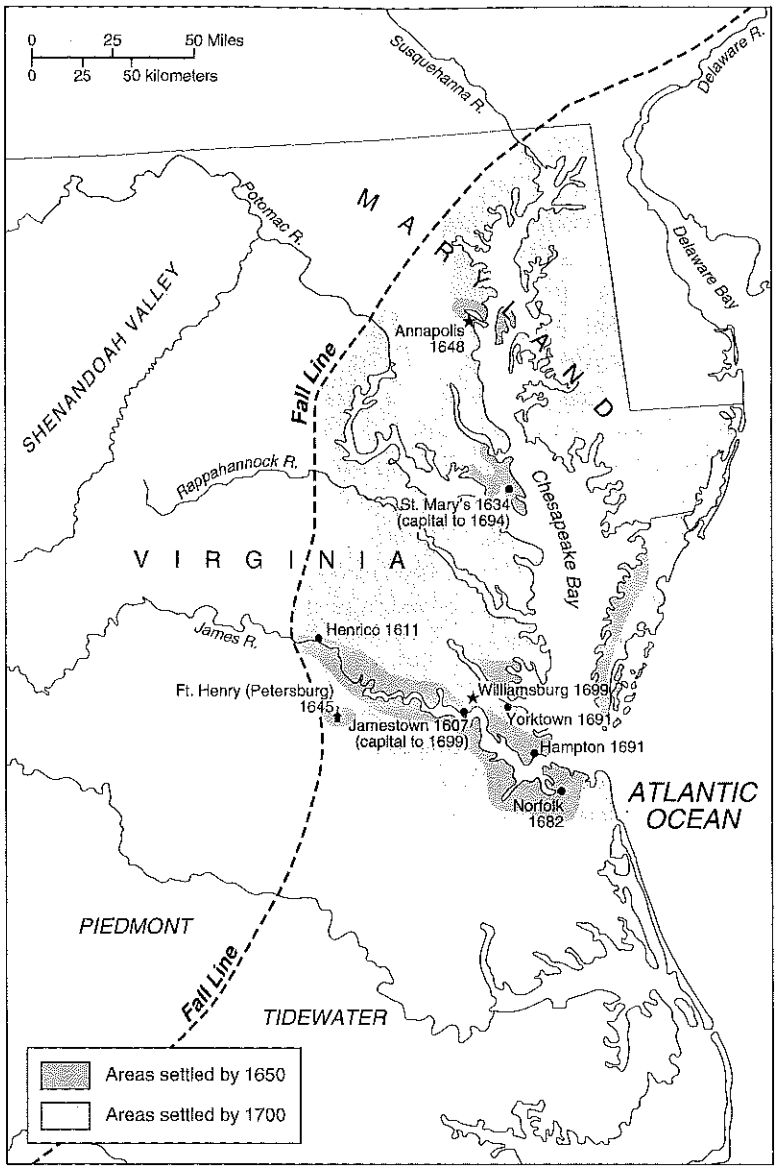


Recording an Ambush

These paintings on buffalo hide, produced by an anonymous New Mexican artist sometime between 1720 and 1750, are the first known depictions of Spanish colonial life in the United States. In the summer of 1720, Lt. Governor Pedro de Villasur led Spanish soldiers northward from the New Spain capital of Santa Fe to attack French forces that, with their Apache allies, planned to seize the colony. In this detail of the hide painting, the Spaniards are shown surrounded by their Indian and French foes in an ambush that killed one-third of the Santa Fe garrison. Detail, Segesser II Hide Painting, Villasur expedition, battle of August 13, 1720, painted c. 1720–29 — Palace of the Governors (MNM/DCA), Neg. 158345.

counter the French, Spain extended its military and missionary activity into Texas in the eighteenth century. Spain and Britain, meanwhile, eyed one another warily over Florida; the Spanish were keen to protect their sea routes to the Caribbean and Central America, and the English were anxious about their colonies in the Carolinas and Georgia, fearing them vulnerable to Spanish influence. Early in the eighteenth century, the English helped Florida Indians attack and roll back the Spanish network of missions. The Spanish towns of St. Augustine and Pensacola, however, for a while remained potential refuges for fugitive slaves from the Lower South colonies.

While the French and Spanish monarchies sought close control of their empires and were unwilling to admit to their colonies immigrants from other European powers, English governments permitted much freer migration. In the South, arrivals from England and the West Indies, as well as the



MAP 2.1 The Chesapeake Colonies, 1607–1700
Early English colonists in Virginia and Maryland kept close to the easily navigable coastal inlets around Chesapeake Bay that facilitated travel between the settlements. As Native Americans were pushed back from the bay and the colonial population expanded, settlement spread across much of the low-lying region known as the Tidewater. By the eighteenth century, small farmers and larger planters were settling land in the higher piedmont region above the fall line.

importation of slaves, ensured relatively rapid population growth and expanding settlements. By increasing the demand for land, however, such growth fueled the potential for conflict with Native Americans. Plans to establish missions and schools for southern tribes rarely came to much. Largely unable to exploit Indians' labor and often uninterested in saving their souls, English settlers became increasingly bent on removing or destroying them. As Virginia's English population grew, it pushed well to the west most of the area's Indian inhabitants.

The Demand for Labor: Servitude in the Chesapeake New North American colonies faced an inescapable fact: The availability of land made gathering and keeping a labor force difficult. People who could make a living for themselves from the land had little reason to work for others. For hunters and small farmers whose family members provided sufficient labor, this posed few problems, but owners of large plantations could not work their fields solely with their own labor and that of wives and children. In tobacco, the leaders of the Chesapeake colonies had found a staple crop that could make them prosperous if they could grow it on a large scale, but to do that, they needed to find and discipline a labor force that would make their land yield its wealth.

Virginia's first promoters expected to make Native Americans the colony's labor force. They hoped that English goods and civility would seduce and domesticate a native population that they regarded as inferior to themselves. When the Powhatan people refused to play this role, planters considered enslaving them. But for four decades after 1607, the Chesapeake tribes were too well armed, too numerous, and too familiar with the countryside to be easily enslaved, and the 1622 and 1644 wars with the Powhatans convinced planters to drive them away from areas of English settlement.

So planters had to look elsewhere for laborers. English authorities assisted by forcibly transporting some of London's orphans to work in the tobacco fields. Between 1617 and 1624, several hundred orphans, scores of whom had declared "their unwillingness to go to Virginia," were turned over to planters to be worked until they reached the age of twenty-one. Having been "brought to goodness under severe Masters," they could then be set free. Most of these involuntary migrants, however, died prematurely after months or years of hard labor. The crown also proposed shipping convicts to Virginia, but planters opposed the plan. Not wishing to employ men and women who had already demonstrated a readiness to break the law, they were until the next century able to limit the number of convicts transported to Virginia.

Planters had little choice but to recruit young, poor English adults as servants. Population growth, economic depression, and enclosures had worsened poverty and unemployment in England and produced a supply of recruits who were willing to sign an indenture, a contract by which they agreed to work for a term of four to seven years in exchange for passage to the colonies. At the end of their period of service, each would get freedom, a set of new clothes, some tools, and fifty acres of land. Over half of early indentured servants came from agricultural backgrounds, and another 20 percent were from the textile or clothing trades. Few had any other prospect of acquiring that much land.

MAP 2.2 Spanish and French Settlements in North America before 1750

Early Spanish mission building in Florida and New Mexico was followed in the first half of the eighteenth century by the occupation of parts of Texas (and, from 1769, of the coast of California, too). Meanwhile, the far-flung activities of French fur traders in the Great Lakes and Mississippi Valley led to the establishment of numerous forts and trading centers, such as New Orleans. British colonies were confined to the eastern part of the continent.

THE INCONVENIENCIES

THAT HAVE HAPPENED TO SOME PERSONS WHICH HAVE TRANSPORTED THEMSELVES

from *England* to *Virginia*, vvithout prouiſions neceſſary to ſuſtaine themſelues, hath *greatly hindred the Progreſſe of that noble Plantation: For preuention of the like diſorders* hereafter, that no man ſuffer, either through ignorance or miſinformation; it is thought requiſite to publiſh this ſhort declaration: wherein is contained a particular of ſuch neceſſaries, as either priuate families or ſingle perſons ſhall haue cauſe to furniſh themſelues with, for their better ſupport at their firſt landing in Virginia, whereby alſo greater numbers may receiue in part, directions how to prouide themſelues.

Apparrell.

Apparrell for one man, and ſo after the rate for more.

	li.	s.	d.
One Monmouth Cap	—	01	10
Three falling bands	—	01	03
Three ſhirts	—	07	06
One waſte-coate	—	02	02
One ſuite of Canuaſe	—	07	06
One ſuite of Frize	—	10	00
One ſuite of Cloth	—	15	00
Three paire of Iriſh ſtockins	—	04	—
Foure paire of ſhooes	—	08	08
One paire of garters	—	00	10
One doozen of points	—	00	03
One paire of Canuaſe ſheets	—	08	00
Seuen ells of Canuaſe, to make a bed and boulſter, to be filled in *Virginia* 8.s.	—	08	00
One Rug for a bed 8. s. which with the bed ſeruing for two men, halfe is	—	04	00
Fiue ells coorſe Canuaſe, to make a bed at Sea for two men, to be filled with ſtraw, iiij.s.	—	05	00
One coorſe Rug at Sea for two men, will coſt vj.s. is for one	—	04	00
	—	18	00

Victuall.

For a whole yeere for one man, and ſo for more after the rate.

	li.	s.	d.
Eight buſhels of Meale	02	00	00
Two buſhels of peaſe at 3.s.	—	06	00
Two buſhels of Oatemeale 4.s. 6.d.	—	09	00
One gallon of *Aquauitæ*	—	02	06
One gallon of Oyle	—	03	08
Two gallons of Vineger 1. s.	—	02	00
	03	03	00

Armes.

For one man, but if halfe of your men haue armour, it is ſufficient ſo that all haue Peeces and ſwords.

	li.	s.	d.
One Armour compleat, light	—	17	00
One long Peece, fiue foot or fiue and a halfe, neere Musket bore	01	02	—
One ſword	—	05	—
One belt	—	01	—
One bandaleere	—	01	06
Twenty pound of powder	—	18	00
Sixty pound of ſhot or lead, Piſtoll and Gooſe ſhot	—	05	00
	03	09	06

Tooles.

For a family of 6. perſons and ſo after the rate for more.

	li.	s.	d.
Fiue broad howes at 2.s. a piece	—	10	—
Fiue narrow howes at 16.d. a piece	—	06	08
Two broad Axes at 3.s. 8.d. a piece	—	07	04
Fiue felling Axes at 18.d. a piece	—	07	06
Two ſteele hand ſawes at 16.d. a piece	—	02	08
Two two-hand ſawes at 5. s. a piece	—	10	—
One whip-ſaw, ſet and filed with box, file, and wreſt	—	10	—
Two hammers 12.d. a piece	—	02	00
Three ſhouels 18.d. a piece	—	04	06
Two ſpades at 18.d. a piece	—	03	—
Two augers 6.d. a piece	—	01	00
Sixe chiſſels 6.d. a piece	—	03	00
Two percers ſtocked 4.d. a piece	—	00	08
Three gimlets 2.d. a piece	—	00	06
Two hatchets 21.d. a piece	—	03	06
Two froues to cleaue pale 18.d.	—	03	00
Two hand-bills 20. a piece	—	03	04
One grindleſtone 4.s.	—	04	00
Nailes of all ſorts to the value of	—	02	00
Two Pickaxes	—	03	—
	—	06	00

Houſhold Implements.

For a family of 6. perſons, and ſo for more or leſſe after the rate.

	li.	s.	d.
One Iron Pot	—	00	07
One kettle	—	00	06
One large frying pan	—	01	06
One gridiron	—	01	06
Two skillets	—	01	05
One ſpit	—	01	02
Platters, diſhes, ſpoones of wood	—	01	04
	—	06	08

For Suger, Spice, and fruit, and at Sea for 6 men — 00 12 06

So the full charge of Apparrell, Victuall, Armes, Tooles, and houſhold ſtuffe, and after this rate for each perſon, will amount vnto about the ſumme of — 12 10 —

The paſſage of each man is — 06 00 —

The fraight of theſe prouiſions for a man, will bee about halfe a Tun, which is — 01 10 —

So the whole charge will amounts to about — 20 00 00

Nets, hookes, lines, and a tent muſt be added, if the number of people be greater, as alſo ſome kine.

And this is the vſuall proportion that the Virginia *Company doe beſtow vpon their Tenants which they ſend.*

Whoſoeuer tranſports himſelfe or any other at his owne charge vnto *Virginia*, ſhall for each perſon ſo tranſported before Midſummer 1625. haue to him and his heires for euer fifty Acres of Land vpon a firſt, and fifty Acres vpon a ſecond diuiſion.

Imprinted at London by FELIX KYNGSTON. 1622.

Inconveniences

Directed to British free men and their families, this 1622 notice lists the necessities that prospective voluntary immigrants should obtain before embarking for Virginia — or risk becoming a detriment to the colony. John Carter Brown Library, Brown University.

Between 75 and 85 percent of those who migrated to Virginia and Maryland in the seventeenth century did so as indentured servants, and three-fourths of these were single men between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four. Most worked with one or two other indentured servants on tobacco farms, performing the routine but delicate tasks of sprouting, transplanting, and curing tobacco. During growing season, the fields had to be hoed often, and much additional work was required to eke out a subsistence through gardening, hunting, and foraging.

"To Be in England Again": An Indentured Servant in Virginia

On March 20, 1623, Richard Frethorne, an indentured servant, wrote to his parents in England; he had landed in Virginia three months earlier. The dangers posed by disease and hostile Indians, the pain of separation from home, and the persistent problem of securing adequate food left many new settlers in a state of despair. Two-thirds of Frethorne's fellow ship passengers had died since arriving in the colony. Frethorne asks his parents to "redeem," that is, buy out, his indenture.

Loving and kind father and mother . . . this is to let you understand that I your child am in a most heavy case by reason of the nature of the country [which] is such that it causeth much sickness, [such] as the scurvy and the bloody flux, and diverse other diseases, which maketh the body very poor and weak. And when we are sick there is nothing to comfort us, for since I came out of the ship, I never ate anything but peas and loblollie (that is water gruel); as for deer or venison I never saw any since I came into this land; there is indeed some fowl, but we are not allowed to go and get it, but must work hard both early and late for a mess of water gruel, and a mouthful of bread and beef. A mouthful of bread, for a penny loaf must serve for 4 men which is most pitiful if you did know as much as I, when people cry out day and night—Oh! that they were in England without their limbs—and would [sacrifice] any limb to be in England again. . . .

We live in fear of the enemy every hour, yet we have had to combat with them . . . and we took two alive, and make slaves of them . . . for we are in great danger, for our Plantation is very weak, by reason of the dearth, and sickness, of our company. . . .

But I am not half, a quarter so strong as I was in England, and all is for want of victuals, for I do protest unto you that I have eaten more in a day at home then I have allowed me here for a week. . . . If you love me you will redeem me suddenly, for which I do entreat and beg, and if you cannot get the merchants to redeem me for some little money then for God's sake get a gathering or entreat some good folks to lay out some little sum of money, in meal, and cheese and butter, and beef. . . .

Good father do not forget me, but have mercy and pity my miserable case. I know if you did but see me you would weep to see me, for I have but one suit, but it is a strange one, . . . and as for my part I have set down my resolution that . . . the answer of this letter will be life or death to me, therefore good father send as soon as you can . . .

Susan Kingsbury, ed., *The Records of the Virginia Company of London* (1935).

Indentured women, who accounted for nearly all unmarried female immigrants from England, made up only a small percentage of the population. Only a few hundred went to Maryland, where in the early decades of settlement, men outnumbered women six to one. More women went to Virginia, but the sex ratio was still unbalanced: men outnumbered women

by four to one in 1625 and remained in the majority for most of the century. An indentured woman's work depended on the social status of her employer. If indentured to a small planter, she labored in the fields. Wealthier planters and merchants employed their female servants in domestic tasks such as washing clothes, sewing, preparing food, and child rearing.

Some planters also purchased slaves and set them to work alongside English indentured servants. Nearly all the earliest slaves in North America were male Africans who had been enslaved for several years on the tobacco or sugar plantations of the Caribbean and so arrived in the Chesapeake already "seasoned." Many of this first generation of American slaves were from the trading societies of the West African coast and had some familiarity with the commercial system that had ensnared them, as well as with the languages (English or various pidgins) that were spoken in the English Atlantic world.

Although the first slaves reached Virginia in 1619, their numbers remained small for decades. By 1660, the English population of the Chesapeake had reached 30,000, but there were probably fewer than 1,500 people of African birth or descent in the region. Though most of them labored as slaves for life, some worked as indentured servants and were freed when their terms of service expired. Black and white servants worked together, but

From Rags to Riches

This British engraving represents a fictional colonial success story. Polly Haycock, pregnant and unmarried, was sentenced to transportation to Virginia as an indentured servant. Brutalized by her master, Polly was released from her servitude by a Virginia magistrate, whom she married. The end of the tale depicts Polly as a rich plantation mistress who mistreats her own servants. Anonymous, *The Fortunate Transport. Rob Theif: or the Lady of ye Gold Watch Polly Haycock*, engraving, 1760–80, 11 1/4 × 15 3/4 inches — Colonial Williamsburg.

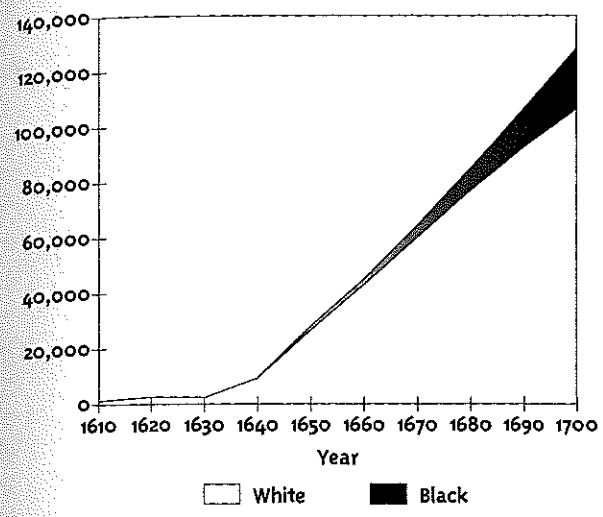


Figure 2.1 Population in the Seventeenth-Century Southern Colonies

This chart illustrates the slow population growth among whites during the early decades of settlement, followed by steady growth after 1640; it also shows the population increase among the initially small black population from the 1670s on as slavery expanded.

black servants' terms of service tended to be longer, and punishments for infractions tended to be more severe. Nevertheless, there were still chances to obtain freedom. By 1650, a small free black population had grown up in the Chesapeake, finding employment as craft workers, laborers, and tenants or—like Anthony Johnson—acquiring land and becoming independent farmers.

Between the 1620s and the 1650s, as the tobacco economy expanded, thousands of English immigrants flocked to Virginia and Maryland (Figure 2.1). Servants and slaves found themselves scattered on farms and plantations across the Tidewater, the low-lying region that lay close to Chesapeake Bay's many navigable rivers and inlets, where crops could easily be loaded onto ships. Virginia's elected assembly, the House of Burgesses, emerged as the protector of the interests of large planters. Yet because planters' lives revolved so completely around the competitive scuffle for tobacco and money, public institutions often remained scanty or neglected. One member of the House of Burgesses was so busy getting rich from tobacco that he attended only one session in eight years. Schooling was poor or nonexistent, and no public provision for education would be made for generations. Some planters could not even be persuaded to organize, much less to participate in, a militia.

To ensure that their servants actually worked, masters exercised considerable power. Colonial laws gave them wider authority over servants than they would have enjoyed in England. Unlike their English counterparts, Virginia servants lacked, for example, the right to take masters to court for maltreatment or breach of contract, and the local magistrates to whom they might have appealed were in any case often the very men who employed them. Labor discipline was maintained largely by brute force. One woman was beaten "like a dogge," another "sore beaten and her body full of sores and holes." Even when the authorities did act to protect servants, masters could show their contempt. A Captain William Odeon, on being convicted in 1662 of repeated maltreatment of servants, promptly "struck and abused his servant" right there in the courtroom.

Colonial indentured servants, unlike English servants, could be repeatedly bought and sold, and those who were accused of insubordination could be fined, branded, or whipped or have their terms of service extended. Serious offenders faced execution, usually at a public ceremony attended by fellow servants, staged to act as an example to the discontented among them. The Virginia House of Burgesses required each county court to install a

ducking stool (a chair in which offenders were ducked in water) with which to punish misbehaving women. Combined with the fact that most servants had no family in the Chesapeake, such conditions often resulted in lives of abject misery. "So the truth is," the servant Edward Hill wrote to his brother in England, "we live in the fearfullest age that ever Christians lived in."

Disease, poor diet, and maltreatment meant that before 1650, nearly two-thirds of servants died before their indentures expired, so planters often escaped the obligation to provide land to servants on completion of their terms. Even in Maryland, where survival rates exceeded those in Virginia, only one in three of the servants who arrived before 1642 eventually acquired land. After midcentury, however, although labor remained harsh, improvements in diet and living conditions did produce a higher survival rate among indentured servants.

The Chesapeake colonies also faced the problem of regulating sexual contacts and marriages with scarce white women in a predominantly male society. Unmarried servant women who became pregnant, as did an estimated 20 percent, were punished by additional years of service. It took Virginia until 1662 to recognize the obvious incentive this gave owners to impregnate their own servants; the House of Burgesses then passed a law requiring that the extra service be with a new master. Some women had their infants taken from them and sold, for a few pounds of tobacco, to another master. Masters permitted these female servants to marry only if the servants compensated them for the loss of their labor, a financial obligation that was beyond most servants' means.

Only rarely did female servants acquire property or political rights after gaining their freedom. For a time, however, it was possible for freed men who obtained land to aspire to minor political offices and to vote for the prominent planters who filled nearly all important public positions. Nevertheless, the planter elite continued to protect its own interests. In both Virginia and Maryland, new laws lengthened the years of indentured service, denied freed men their promised fifty acres, or narrowed economic and political opportunities for small landowners. As more servants survived their terms and clamored for the land they had been promised, the system of indentured servitude began to lose its attractiveness to planters. Unwilling to share wealth and power with their former servants, planters found this growing group of free, landless people menacing. Their geographical isolation on Tidewater plantations heightened planters' sense of vulnerability. After midcentury, their lives would be dominated by a constant balancing of their need for labor against their fear of social disorder.

Power and Society in the Chesapeake: 1650s–1670s At the top of this fragile new society were the men who had been most successful at reaping wealth from the fertile soil through the hard work of their servants. Many of

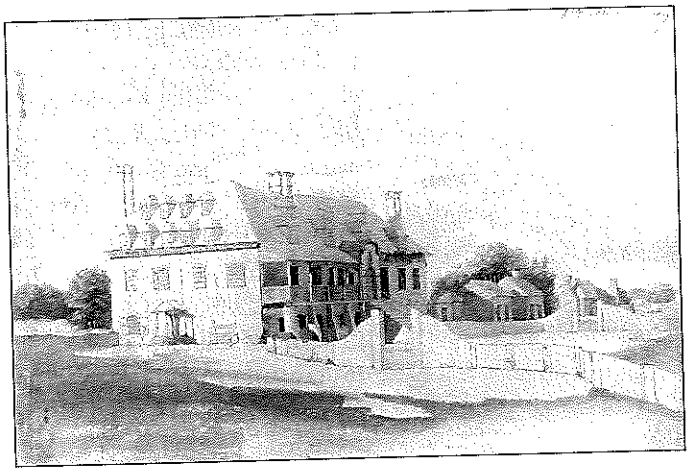
those who sat in the House of Burgesses and on the judicial bench had married the widows of wealthy planters, made the best deals, or paid the highest bribes to other men to do their bidding. By midcentury, some planters had obtained thousands of acres of land apiece. Colonel Philip Ludwell acquired his land simply by altering documents so that he received ten times the acreage he was entitled to. Planters' exercise of power through government and law was an unconcealed effort to use the tools of civil authority to keep the upper hand in a continuing battle for profit.

The Chesapeake colonies' reputation improved as they achieved a measure of stability. Rather backhandedly, an English pamphleteer noted in 1656 that they were no longer "a nest of Rogues, whores, desolute and rooking persons" but somewhere planters might prosper. The Chesapeake attracted a new group of men: immigrants who were richer and better connected with the aristocracy in England. They acquired assembly seats, joined court benches, and obtained other important positions. Many were the younger sons of English gentry. Barred from their fathers' status and wealth by England's laws of primogeniture, by which an eldest son inherited his father's whole estate, these men found in America the chance to begin life at the top of society. Some had inherited thousands of acres originally purchased from the Virginia Company; others arrived with the cash to buy plantations or uncleared land. In the 1660s and 1670s, these men formed a new ruling elite, using their wealth as tobacco planters to make political connections and filling political offices with relatives. By 1700, 90 percent of Virginia's burgesses were linked by ties of blood or marriage.

The rise of this new colonial elite took place during a time of great turmoil in England. Between 1640 and 1660, England had been too preoccupied with its civil war to pay much attention to what was happening in the colonies. Virginia planters turned to Dutch merchants to carry tobacco to Europe and ship cattle to the West Indies, and access to Caribbean markets encouraged them to shift some land from growing tobacco to raising cattle and grains, which they traded for rum, sugar, and slaves, largely without paying duties to the English government. Planters came to regard free trade as a right and any English law not ratified by their own assemblies as invalid.

Their notions did not survive challenge from England, both before and after the restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660. Commercial rivalry between England and Holland provoked three wars between the 1650s and 1670s and led English governments to curb colonists whose trade conflicted with England's interests. New trade regulations known as the Navigation Acts, introduced in 1651 and extended in the early 1660s, required colonial products to be carried in vessels built, owned, and crewed by Englishmen or English colonials. Tobacco, whatever its ultimate destination, had to be shipped to England, Ireland, or another English colony, where it incurred an import duty, and cargoes shipped on from there were assessed export duties

as well. These rules enriched the crown and English merchants but burdened Chesapeake planters. To make matters worse, overproduction of tobacco in the 1660s and 1670s drove the price of the crop to an all-time low, just as the second and third Anglo-Dutch wars disrupted trade and colonists were obliged to raise taxes to pay for troops and fortifications.



Plantation House

The architect Benjamin Latrobe sketched Virginia's first great plantation house in 1796. At the time, the principal part of the house, built by Sir William Berkeley, was more than 147 years old. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *View of "Greenspring," home of William Ludwell Lee*—Maryland Historical Society.

To ensure that planters paid the taxes they owed, Charles II relied on his friend and supporter, Virginia's governor William Berkeley. Royal officialdom in Virginia, often at odds with the House of Burgesses, comprised Berkeley and those he chose to favor with office. Though officials and burgesses overlapped in membership and goals, the crown and planters faced a basic conflict of interests. Planters' fortunes rose and fell with the price of tobacco and the consequent profits they could earn from the crop; overproduction, which drove prices down, was a major concern to them. Crown revenues depended on the quantity, not the price, of tobacco shipped, so officials had no interest in curbing output or promoting agricultural diversification.

In many respects, the Chesapeake colonies were more successful by the mid-seventeenth century than they had been in their early years. Life expectancy for the second generation of colonists was at least as good as the forty years enjoyed by their English cousins. Immigrants found opportunities in the colonies, and the crown and merchants benefited financially from them. Still, the Chesapeake was far from idyllic. Death rates were still such that one in four white newborns died within a year, and half of white Virginians did not live to be twenty-one. Men outnumbered women by at least three to one in 1660, and by six to one in some areas, so marriages were not the rule, and mortality often disrupted those that did occur: two out of three marriages lasted less than ten years. Orphans were common; half of seventeenth-century Virginia children had lost one or both parents by the age of nine. Society still seemed crude and unstable.

It was also unequal. The great majority of colonists were either landowners or servants. Wealthy planters stacked the odds in their own favor and against their poorer neighbors. They made up 5 percent or less of the landowners, but they reserved the best land for themselves and their children, including much of the fertile Tidewater. They had pushed westward most of the region's Indians, who maintained uneasy contacts with English traders and the colonists who settled near them.

Planters' need for a large workforce did not lead them to improve conditions for their laborers. Instead, like most English employers of the period, they tried to exploit to the full the men and women they could recruit. Of the servants who survived long enough to achieve their freedom, only a small proportion were able to acquire land—between 9 and 17 percent in Virginia in the 1670s, depending on the county. Even these fortunates often had land that was of poor quality, controlled by Indians, or too far from navigable water to permit tobacco to be marketed. Large planters often controlled the shipping that took tobacco to market and could gouge smaller competitors, and the planter-dominated House of Burgesses fixed taxes and fees to the disadvantage of small landholders. These conditions combined to create a large group of frustrated, debt-ridden small farmers who also, if they lived on the frontier of settlement, faced conflicts with nearby Indians.

Bacon's Rebellion of 1676: A Turning Point For Governor Berkeley and wealthy planters, this discontent posed a threat. Small landowners, Berkeley told the Privy Council in London, set a bad example for servants and alienated both from the colonial government, which, he wrote in 1667 during one of the Anglo-Dutch wars, was "pressed at our backes with Indians, in our Bowills with our servants . . . and invaded from without by the Dutch." He feared that free smallholders and servants would rise together to support the Dutch "in hopes of bettering their condition by sharing the Plunder of the Country with them." Six years later, he thought that even without foreign provocation, the population, of whom "Six parts of Seven at least are Poore, Indebted, Discontented, and Armed," might rebel at any time. These fears were grounded in growing numbers of servant runaways and small revolts in the early 1660s, one of which (led by Isaac Friend) resulted in several executions and laws tightening curbs on servants' and slaves' freedom of movement.

Freemen and servants resented not just the elite as such, but also the colonial government's perceived indifference to their interests. By 1675, skirmishes with Indians had intensified, and many frontier settlers had come to see all Indians, friendly or not, as enemies. Governor Berkeley and the burgesses planned measures against local tribes but hesitated for fear of igniting a widespread Indian war. The following spring, armed groups of small farmers pressing for action adopted as their leader Nathaniel Bacon, a young and well-to-do member of the gentry who, with other prosperous planters, was frustrated by Berkeley's leniency. With a mixed group of farmers and planters, Bacon led an unauthorized assault on a native village in May 1676, massacring friendly as well as hostile Indians and seizing stocks of pelts.

"The Declaration of the People": Bacon's Rebellion

In announcing the rebellion in 1676, Nathaniel Bacon issued "The Declaration of the People," in which he detailed a set of grievances of the common people against Governor Berkeley's administration and argued the revolutionary notion that Berkeley's authority could not be considered legitimate without the people's consent.

For having upon specious pretenses of Public works raised unjust Taxes upon the Commonality for the advancement of private Favorites and other sinister ends. . . .

For having abused and rendered Contemptible the Majesty of Justice, [by] advancing to places of judicature scandalous and Ignorant favorites.

For having wronged his Majesty's Prerogative and Interest by assuming the monopoly of the Beaver Trade.

By having in that unjust gaine Bartered and sold his Majesty's Country and the lives of his Loyal Subjects to the Barbarous Heathen [the Indians].

For having protected, favored, and Imboldened the Indians against his Majesty's most Loyal subjects, never contriving, requiring, or appointing any due or proper means [to prevent] their many Invasions, Murders, and Robberies Committed upon us. . . .

For having . . . forged a Commission by we know not what hand, not only without but against the Consent of the People, for raising and effecting of Civil Wars and distractions. . . .

Of these the aforesaid Articles we accuse Sir William Berkeley, as guilty of each and every one of the same, and as one, who has Traitorously attempted, violated and Injured his Majesty's Interest here. . . .

These are therefore in his Majesty's name, to Command you forthwith to seize the Persons above mentioned as Traitors to your King and Country, . . . and if you want any other Assistance, you are forthwith to demand it in the Name of the People of all the Counties of Virginia.

Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, I (1893–94).

Bacon sought a military commission from the governor to pursue further attacks, but Berkeley declared him and his followers to be rebels and had Bacon captured. Having made Bacon write a confession, Berkeley nevertheless pardoned him in an effort to conciliate Bacon's followers and reassert his own authority. Instead, during the summer of 1676, Bacon's supporters drove Berkeley out of Virginia, tried to capture Maryland's governor, plundered the estates of their prosperous opponents, and continued to attack Indians. In September, when Berkeley tried to restore his government in Virginia, Bacon and over five hundred armed men attacked Jamestown and burned it to the ground. The ranks swollen by servants and [illegible] of Berkeley's supporters who had joined the cam-

Bacon's Castle, Surrey, Va.
No portrait of Nathaniel Bacon survived. This engraving in an 1866 weekly newspaper shows a house that Bacon and his followers reputedly used as a stronghold in 1676. Albert Berghaus, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, September 8, 1866 — American Social History Project.

paign on being promised their freedom, Bacon's movement had become a full-scale rebellion against Virginia's rulers. Women such as the affluent Sarah Drummond helped to stir Bacon's supporters to action.

Bacon's sudden death from dysentery in October 1676 blunted the rebellion, and the subsequent arrival of armed vessels from England cooled the enthusiasm of his more prosperous supporters, but many servants, slaves, and "Freemen that had but lately crept out of the condition of Servants" fought on for a period. By January 1677, the rebellion was over, and Berkeley's restored government exacted punishment by hanging twenty-three rebels, including Sarah Drummond's husband, the governor. But although the rebellion had collapsed, it marked an important turning point in the emergence of a distinctly southern form of colonial society. Having almost succeeded in toppling the Virginia elite, Bacon's Rebellion alerted colonial leaders to the dangers they faced from the concerted actions of freeholders, servants, and slaves in opposition to them.

Nathaniel Bacon was himself no social leveler. In fact, he was related by marriage to Berkeley and was a member of the governor's council. But in rallying supporters against Berkeley, he drew no distinctions between whites and blacks, freemen and slaves, speaking only of a "common people" united by oppression from "unworthy favourites and juggling parasites" among the colony's rulers. Bacon's own resentment toward the governor's ruling clique became the vehicle for a more popular uprising of the poor against the

wealthy. As many as one in ten of all Virginia's black males joined the rebellion, and among the last rebels to surrender were eighty slaves and four hundred white laborers. Leading planters, terrified by such interracial and interclass solidarity, were determined that no such challenge should threaten them again.

The Making of Southern Slave Societies

Population growth and the westward migration of former servants, who settled in the backcountry, increased pressure on the frontiers and intensified demands from white settlers for military action against Indians. Tensions between rich and poor and between backcountry settlers and Tidewater inhabitants threatened to divide Chesapeake society along class lines. The elite saw particular danger in the potential for a union of poorer whites and blacks to rise up against them. They resolved to place less reliance on white servants and to recruit increasing numbers of black slave laborers. Such changes altered landowners' plans for working their properties. Thomas Gerard, lord of the manor of St. Clement's in St. Mary's County, Maryland, had expected to make his money from renting land to tenants, as he might have done in England. He purchased indentured servants to work on his farms and recruited settlers and freed servants who were willing to rent land from him. But this increasingly became a difficult venture. Freed servants with means wished to purchase their own land, and the poor could neither buy nor rent. By 1670, Gerard had sold much of his manor to freeholders and was preoccupied with purchasing slaves to work other land he owned in Virginia. In previous decades, Virginia and Maryland had been societies with slaves, in which slaves had provided some of the labor. By the end of the seventeenth century, they were being transformed into slave societies, in which slaves formed the bulk of the subordinate labor force.

From Servitude to Slavery in the Chesapeake Demographic changes and a new sense of permanence contributed to the emergence of a new labor system. White farmers, artisans, tenants, and laborers—the men among them, at least—secured some rights and economic opportunities that were denied to the growing number of black slaves, who would increasingly be kept in racially based subjugation.

Among the first steps taken after Bacon's Rebellion were efforts to reduce social tensions among whites. Disagreements between local and royal authorities diminished as Charles II limited the power of his council in Virginia and extended that of the House of Burgesses. Freed servants' access to land was improved. New laws curbed land speculation, such as that

lands in Virginia. There was a campaign to drive the Indians over the mountains into present-day Kentucky and Tennessee. The English Parliament began investigating the treatment of indentured servants. The crown now prosecuted recruiters who used illegal tactics such as kidnapping, misrepresentation, and fraud.

Continuing a process begun before the rebellion, a series of measures sought to place black people—both free and slave—in greater subjection and to break the ties between white and black laborers. Free blacks faced new restrictions on their legal and political rights. Laws passed in the 1660s had formally recognized slavery and begun to define it in racial terms. Any child born to a slave woman would be enslaved, too. Although "Christians" could not be slaves, Africans were to be excluded from this principle; in 1682, those whose parents or homeland were not Christian at the time of their purchase were defined as slaves. Other laws prohibited interracial cohabitation or marriage, banned "Negroes and other slaves" from carrying arms or joining the militia, made freeing slaves more difficult, and prevented slaves from owning land. Laws against rape excluded slave women from their protection. By 1705, the contempt earlier generations of planters had shown for Indians and English indentured servants had reached its logical culmination in a slave code that gave masters unrestricted power over a permanently unfree labor force.

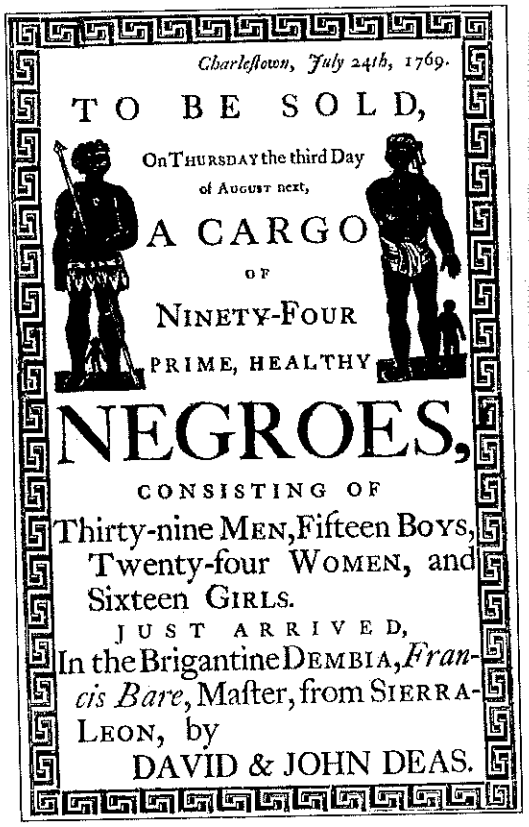
As many blacks lost what freedom they had, whites now benefited from preferential treatment. Guaranteed their own freedom, even poor whites could see themselves as superior to blacks. With laws that placed all whites above and separate from blacks, Virginia's elite fostered racial bonds among whites that overcame the economic and political inequalities between them and reduced the chance that poor whites would join blacks against their masters. Planters drove a wedge between slaves and white servants and so ensured their own continued dominance.

Other changes reinforced these efforts to differentiate white from black labor. Opportunities elsewhere curbed both the free white migration to the region and the supply of new white indentured servants. A revival of the English economy improved opportunities for the poor in England, while the attraction of newly opening colonies, such as Pennsylvania (see Chapter 3), also reduced the flow of servants available to do farm and craft labor in the South. Indentured servants continued to come to the Chesapeake, but an increasing proportion were young women, purchased to perform domestic work in prosperous households.

As white labor became scarcer, more and more planters followed Thomas Gerard's lead in buying slaves to work as field hands. Until 1698, the Royal Africa Company held a monopoly on the slave trade with English colonies, and although company slave shipments increased after 1672, the Chesapeake planters' demand for slaves induced them to resort to illegal

purchases whenever they could. Abolition of the monopoly increased the supply, and the number of slaves imported from Africa continued to rise markedly. Virginia's slave population rose from 3,000 in 1680 to 13,000 in 1700, of whom half had been brought from Africa and the remainder were born either locally or in the Caribbean. By 1720, there were 27,000 slaves in Virginia, and imports from Africa exceeded 1,000 a year. In St. Mary's County, Maryland, where servants outnumbered slaves by almost four to one in 1680, by 1710 slaves outnumbered servants by five to one. Instead of the society of landlords, tenants, and servants that wealthy settlers had once envisioned, the Chesapeake Tidewater was turning into a society of large and small landowners, poor white laborers, and African slaves.

Unlike many among the first American slaves, newly imported slave men and women spoke no English and had had no experience of even near-equality with whites. Most came from the African interior, where there was little contact with the languages or commerce of the Atlantic trade system, as there was in coastal West Africa. After suffering capture and a brutal voyage, they reached the Chesapeake to be put on sale. According to one observer around 1700, "slaves can be selected according to pleasure, young and old, men and women. They are entirely naked when they arrive, having only corals of different colors around their necks and arms." They were usually dispersed singly or in small groups among different slave owners.


Charleſtown, July 24th, 1769.

TO BE SOLD,

On THURSDAY the third Day of AUGUST next,

A CARGO OF NINETY-FOUR PRIME, HEALTHY

NEGROES,

CONSISTING OF

Thirty-nine MEN, Fifteen BOYS, Twenty-four WOMEN, and Sixteen GIRLS.

JUST ARRIVED,

In the Brigantine DEMBIA, *Francis Bare*, Maſter, from SIERRA-LEON, by

DAVID & JOHN DEAS.

"To Be Sold"
This handbill announcing an auction of African captives was posted around the city of Charleston in 1769. American Antiquarian Society.

The strange society into which they were forced was becoming increasingly comfortable for its white inhabitants. After two generations of imbalanced sex ratios and high mortality, the Chesapeake's white population was growing naturally, as well as through immigration, by the late seventeenth century. A better food supply and improved living conditions increased life expectancy. The proportion of women rose: in St. Mary's County, Maryland, where men outnumbered women by three or four to one before 1670, the ratio had reached 1.22 to 1 by 1712. Marrying young, women bore considerable numbers of children, an increasing proportion of whom survived infancy. Marriages, less frequently broken by death, lasted longer; among the gentry, the average length of marriage rose from fifteen years in the late seventeenth century to twenty-five years for those commenced after 1700. Planters and small farmers began to build more permanent houses and farm buildings. A settled southern society, based on slavery, was starting to

The Lower South As these changes were taking place in the Chesapeake, immigrants began to colonize the Lower South. They settled in the area that at first was called Carolina, granted to a company of proprietors by Charles II after his restoration to the throne in 1660. From this original grant, the colonies of North and South Carolina (formally separated in 1719) and Georgia would eventually be formed.

At first, the Lower South differed from the Chesapeake. Although migrants from Virginia brought tobacco and slavery to the Albemarle region, which became North Carolina, early South Carolinians rejected both tobacco and exclusive reliance on slave labor. They grew a variety of crops with a mixed workforce that, in addition to slaves, included family members, indentured servants, and wage laborers. By the early eighteenth century, however, South Carolina too was making the transition from a society with slaves to a slave society.

The original principles of government for Carolina, the Fundamental Constitutions, were drawn up in the late 1660s, chiefly by the English political philosopher John Locke. He envisaged a harmonious agricultural society with an economy based on mixed farming, cattle raising, and a trade in deerskins with local natives. Though his subsequent writings helped to inspire, among a later generation of Americans, the belief that all men were created equal, here Locke proposed an ordered, hierarchical society in which the right of large landowners to govern would receive the formal assent of the majority of settlers. However, despite repeated attempts, the colony's proprietors failed to persuade settlers to approve the Fundamental Constitutions. Carolina society would indeed be unequal and hierarchical but along lines of race and class quite different from those Locke had projected.

Carolina's proprietors planned to recruit only "seasoned" colonists from the Caribbean who would pay their own passage, be offered land at a low price, and be encouraged to form communities of self-sufficient family farms. The crown granted all colonists political and religious freedom and promised adult white males the right to vote for assemblymen, who were to govern the colony with the help of noblemen drawn from England.

Migrants flocked to Carolina. Children of some of the richest planters of the Caribbean sugar islands came, bringing hundreds of slaves and the customs of the West Indian gentry. Still, independent, non–slave-owning white farmers at first outnumbered slave owners, indentured servants, propertyless laborers, and slaves. Many migrants were Barbadians who owned too few slaves and too little land on Barbados to make a success of sugar growing and who by the 1650s had few prospects on their already crowded, overcultivated island. They were generally older than the first Chesapeake colonists, and many had families. Immigrant families from Scotland, Germany, and Ireland likewise took up mixed-crop farming in Carolina. Most

"All Things Are Very Dear in the Town": An Early South Carolina Settler Writes Home

In this letter, the Oxford University–educated Thomas Newe describes to his father his first impressions of the South Carolina colony. Not surprisingly, Newe focuses on the issues that were most pressing to colonists in the growing settlement: subsistence and relations with local Indian groups.

. . . As for the Countrey I can say but little of it as yet on my one [own] knowledge, but what I hear from others. The Town which two years since had but 3 or 4 houses, hath now about a hundred houses in it, all which are wholy built of wood, tho here is excellent Brick made, but little of it. All things are very dear in the Town . . . the common drink of the Countrey is Molossus [molasses] and water, I don't hear of any malt that is made hear as yet . . . Severall in the Country have great stocks of Cattle and they sell so well to new comers that they care not for killing, which is the reason provision is so dear in the Town, whilst they in the Country are furnisht with Venison, fish, and fowle by the Indians for trifles, and they that understand it make as good butter and cheese as most in England. The land near the sea side is generally a light and sandy ground, but up in the Country they say there is very good land, and the farther up the better, but that which at present doth somewhat hinder the selling [settling] farther up, is a war that they are ingaged in against a tribe of Barbarous Indians being not above 60 in number, but by reason of their great growth and cruelty in feeding on all their neighbours, they are terrible to all other Indians, of which, there are above 40 severall Kingdoms, the strength and names of them all being known to our Governer who upon any occasion summons their Kings in. We are at peace with all but those common enemies of mankind, those man eaters before mentioned, by name the Westos, who have lately killed two eminent planters that lived far up in the Country, so that they are resolved now if they can find their settlement (which they often change) to cut them all off. There is a small party of English out after them, and the most potent Kingdome of the Indians armed by us and continually in pursuit of them. . . .

Alexander S. Salley, Jr., ed., *Narratives of Early Carolina, 1650–1708* (New York, 1911), 181–87.

colonists lived on modest farms, close to the coast, where they grew their own food and raised cattle for export to the Caribbean.

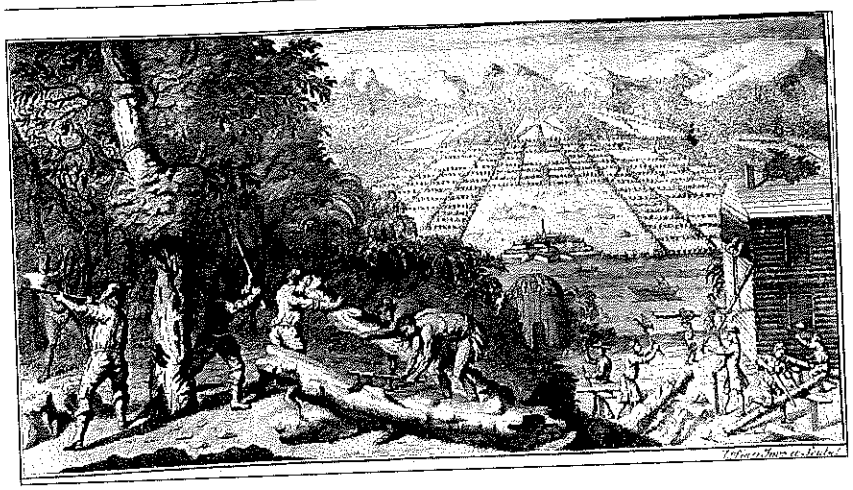
Mixed subsistence farming generated little revenue, however, and the hoped-for deerskin trade with Indians failed to materialize. Instead, some colonists organized a new slave trade, capturing Indians to sell in the West Indies in exchange for rum and sugar. Meanwhile, the small minority of wealthy migrants acquired huge tracts of land and seized political control, [illegible] in Charleston, which soon became the largest port

town in the South. Before 1705, these Charleston families owned most of the colony's slaves. But successful traders and farmers also employed laborers, some American-born whites, some indentured servants from England and Ireland, and some African-born slaves brought from the Caribbean.

Settling the Carolina coastal region, or low country, involved interactions with Indian groups. As elsewhere, early cooperation was followed by colonists' provocations that caused first resentment against whites and then resistance to them. In what would become North Carolina, settlers captured Tuscarora women and children to sell as slaves and then encroached on the group's lands. After a two-year war, beginning in 1711, settlers defeated the Tuscarora, displacing them inland. In South Carolina, English settlers removed the Westo people in the 1680s with the help of the neighboring Yamasees, who then formed a thirty-year-long alliance with English governments, directed in part against Spanish Florida farther down the coast. But English demands and encroachments eventually sparked Yamasee resistance as well. Shifting their alliance to the Spanish and the Creeks, the Yamasee attacked South Carolina settlements in 1715, but they were defeated, and the survivors were sold into slavery. The English formed a new alliance with the stronger inland Cherokees, who for another half-century held their position, trading in slaves and establishing settled agriculture while maintaining some of their traditional ways; Cherokee women, for instance, maintained rights over land and agricultural produce. By the 1760s, however, the English and the Cherokees were themselves coming into conflict.

Conditions in early South Carolina were difficult for all settlers, white and black. Work was hard. All suffered from inadequate shelter, poor nutrition, and semitropical diseases. Even those who survived their first few years had a relatively short life expectancy. For instance, Judith Manigault, who settled with her husband on the Santee River in 1689 and worked with him to clear and plant land, died in 1711, aged 42. Though mortality rates fell with each generation, only after 1750 did births outnumber deaths.

Some harsher aspects of the Chesapeake's labor regime were absent from South Carolina, however. Restrictions placed on masters in 1676 and the availability of land in other colonies gave prospective indentured servants some bargaining power. Slaves, too, had slightly more freedom of action than was the case in Virginia or Maryland. Commercial cattle farmers, unlike tobacco planters, needed a mobile, self-reliant labor force, and they recognized the skill of Africans at raising livestock in a subtropical climate. Cattle were unfenced, and slaves who tended them had to move with the herds and run down strays. Male servants and slaves also had some access to public life. As late as 1706, petitioners complained that in "the last election Jews, Strangers, Sailors, Servants, Negroes, and almost every French Man came down to elect, and their votes were taken." The need to defend the colony from hostile Spanish troops in Florida even required—in



Establishing the Colony of Georgia

An illustration from a 1733 book that advocated colonization depicts Georgia as an idyllic, bountiful land — the perfect setting for the creation of a well-ordered, hierarchical society. Note the well-dressed gentleman in the lower right corner supervising the work. B. Martyn, *Reasons for Establishing the Colony of Georgia* (1733) — Rare Books and Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

contrast to Virginia — that slaves sometimes be mobilized and armed. A Carolina official noted in 1710 that "enrolled in our Militia [are] a considerable Number of active, able, Negro Slaves; and Law gives everyone of those his freedom, who in Time of an Invasion kills an Enemy."

In 1732, the southernmost territory of the original Carolina grant was organized as the new colony of Georgia. Initially, Georgia was to be a military buffer between South Carolina and Spanish Florida, and its founders hoped for a colony not based on slavery. Early settlers were Englishmen who had signed up for the colony's militia as an alternative to debtor's prison. The colony's promoters, led by James Oglethorpe, recruited skilled workers from Italy, who they hoped would develop a silk industry, and unskilled laborers from Scotland, Ireland, and Germany. Women and children were not included in their original plans because they could not contribute to the colony's defense. In 1735, slavery was prohibited on military grounds as a potential source of internal rebellion, and some Georgia settlers also expressed moral objections to slavery. Whites, wrote some petitioners to the king in 1738, would one day pay a heavy price for enslaving men and women who held freedom as "dear" as they did.

The Growth of Slavery in the Carolinas and Georgia But in the Lower South, as in the Chesapeake, various factors led to the expansion and hardening of slavery. After 1680, the number of white indentured servants arriving in the Carolinas fell. Determined to reap profits from staple-crop production, the wealthy planters who had migrated from Barbados consolidated their low-country farms into large plantations and concentrated on growing rice, thus squeezing out mixed-crop farmers and cattle raisers. By the early eighteenth century, the rice grown on these plantations became

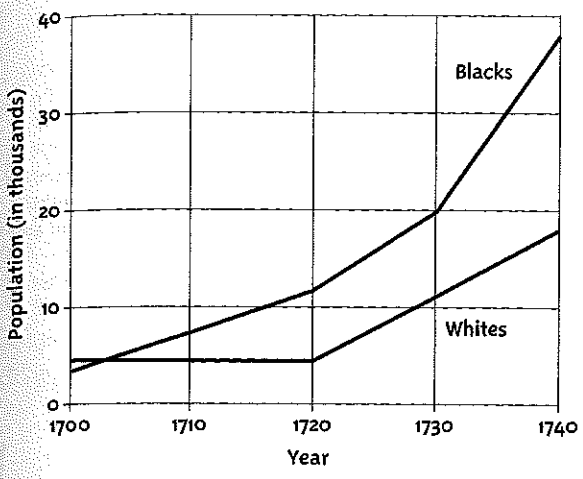


FIGURE 2.2 The Emergence of a Black Majority in South Carolina
As planters imported more and more slaves to grow rice and other crops, South Carolina's black population quickly exceeded that of whites, growing rapidly into the mid-eighteenth century.

South Carolina's chief export, and planters turned almost exclusively to imported African slaves for their workforce. Some of these slaves had grown rice as free men and women in West Africa. South Carolina's slave population rose from 2,400 in 1700 to 12,000 in 1720, of whom nearly three-fifths were African-born (Figure 2.2). Moreover, by 1708, for the first time in any North American colony, Carolina's blacks outnumbered the white population.

Rice cultivation also spread quickly to the Georgia low country after the colony's founding, and in 1749, Georgia rescinded its ban on slavery. A plantation economy then developed, and the lure of profits helped to overcome the original proprietors' military and moral objections to slavery. In addition, slave owners in other colonies had objected to Georgia's prohibition of slavery, viewing it as an enticement to their own slaves to escape.

Slaves growing rice were not subject to the regimentation and close supervision that were imposed on those in the tobacco regions. Rice did not, like tobacco, require constant daily attention. Slaves spent part of the year repairing dams, building canals, and mending fences. Many had done similar work in Africa, and their experience helped both to shape the system of labor and to enhance their bargaining position with English masters who did not know how to grow rice. Even so, conditions were very difficult. Planting and harvesting rice in water-filled fields involved backbreaking, unhealthy labor; work on dikes and canals was heavier still. Hard work, poor diet, disease, and maltreatment contributed to high mortality rates. Masters had unrestricted authority over their slaves and did not hesitate to use it. Brute force maintained discipline. In South Carolina, the law prescribed amputation as the punishment for recaptured runaway slaves: females could have their ears cut off, males their testicles.

As the rice economy spread and a structured, race-bound society emerged, slavery became more rigid. An English immigrant wrote in 1711 that freemen could do well in the colony if they could "get a few slaves and beat them well to make them work hard." Slaves had little chance of obtaining freedom. Free black servants, too, could expect extended terms of bondage, and free black women were forced to "apprentice" their children who were born during their servitude, which often lasted into their early thirties. Opportunities for escape became scarcer as the loose supervision of cattle farms gave way to a tighter plantation regime and the Yamasee war wiped out the runaway slaves' chief allies.

View of Mulberry House and Grounds

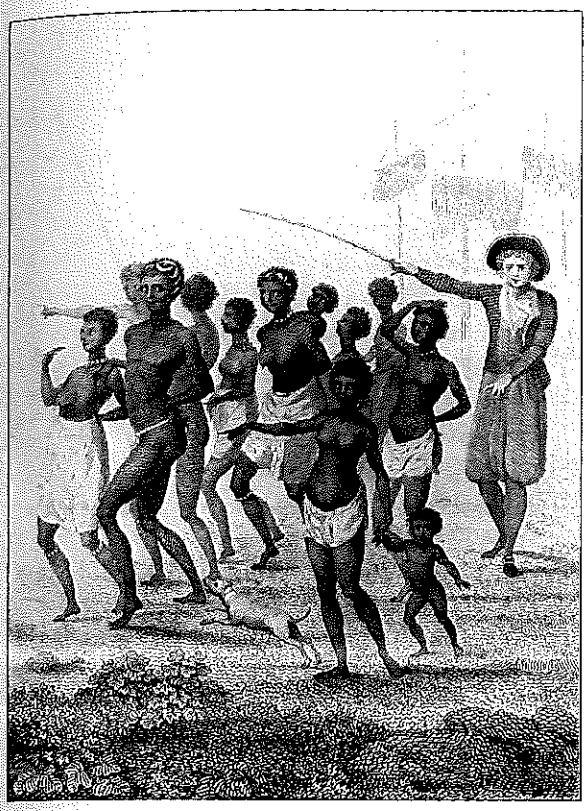
In this painting of a rice plantation near Charleston in the 1770s, the master's house is framed by the slave quarters. The artist probably depicted the size of the slave cabins inaccurately, suggesting a height and spaciousness that the one-room cabins did not possess.

Thomas Coram, oil on paper — Gibbes Art/Carolina Art Association, Charleston, 1968.18.01.

Beginning in the 1720s, successful South Carolina rice planters left overseers in charge of their plantations and moved to Charleston, where the climate was pleasanter, diseases such as malaria less prevalent, and the society more stimulating than that in the countryside. In Charleston, they formed an aristocracy at least as wealthy and elegant as that of Virginia. Many slaves in Charleston were hired out, working for master craft workers as shipbuilders, rope makers, leather workers, and carpenters or as dock workers or general laborers. In contrast to those on plantations, many urban slaves were literate, worked as artisans, and were of mixed English and African origin. Women also formed a higher proportion of urban slaves than of slaves in the countryside. By 1776, half of Charleston's 12,000 inhabitants were black. Interaction with their masters, more frequent than on the plantations, also provided the occasional opportunity to buy or be granted freedom.

African American Culture in the South

By 1760, the American slave system, which would last another century, was firmly in place. It defined most black people as the property of white men, yet within slavery's confines, blacks created their own fragile institutions through which to assert their dignity and humanity. They established kinship and community networks that extended beyond the limits of any one plantation and strove to survive the slave sales that separated husband from wife and parent from child. African Americans also practiced their own religions, composed songs, created dances, devised ceremonies, and established ways of thinking that distinguished them from both their masters and their



Group of Negroes Imported to Be Sold as Slaves
A late-eighteenth-century engraving from a British abolitionist report shows newly arrived captive Africans being driven to an auction. (William Blake) John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a five-years expedition against the revolted Negroes of Surinam . . . from the year 1772, to 1777* (1796) — Rare Books and Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

African ancestors. African American culture evolved as some half-million transported Africans and their descendants learned to resist the degradation and oppression of their enslavement and to assert some control over their day-to-day existence. This culture was neither English nor African, neither imposed by the master class nor simply a relic of a lost African past, but was instead a blend of cultures, adapted to the peculiar needs of a people in bondage. Slaves retained what they could of their African heritage and reconciled it with what they were forced to do, or had learned to do, to survive in America.

The First African American Generation This evolving African American culture contrasted with the experiences of the first two generations of slaves and free blacks in the Chesapeake. For early slaves, a distinctive new culture had been impossible. Their numbers were small, and contact among them was limited by their dispersal among a much larger English population. Closely supervised by their masters, slaves had little time for themselves. There were also no rigid barriers yet to divide white from black laborers, and some slaves could expect to gain their freedom. So slaves adopted the culture of their English fellow servants, with whom they drank, "frolicked," conspired, and escaped.

A distinctly African American culture began to emerge only as the number of Africans increased, as racial laws began restricting their contact with whites, and as the chances of freedom from slavery dwindled. Wrenched from different societies in Africa, most newly arrived slaves faced a life among strangers. They had been robbed of their land, tools, and possessions, so they could not ply their trades or even dress as they had previously done. Separated from others from their own societies, they could not speak their native languages, play their assigned kinship roles, or practice their religions — the things that had distinguished them as belonging to diverse African villages and regions. Forcibly separated from their families, most slaves began life in America without kin or other acquaintances around them.

As the number of slaves grew rapidly in the first half of the eighteenth century, different circumstances in the Chesapeake and the Lower South determined how long it would take for new arrivals to establish relationships with one another and with those who had preceded them (Figure 2.3)

In the Chesapeake, many slaves were sold to small planters and so lived separately from each other. Perhaps as many as one in three Chesapeake slaves lived in groups of five or fewer, and they had quite close contact with whites. As slavery spread across the Virginia piedmont region in the eighteenth century, only about one-third of slaves lived on plantations with more than twenty slaves each. South Carolina rice plantations were larger, on average, than Chesapeake tobacco farms. Here, newly imported slaves were more often sold in large groups to single planters and so were less likely to be separated from one another and more likely to live apart from whites. Consequently, slaves in the Chesapeake tended to speak English, while those in South Carolina and Georgia combined various African languages with English to form Gullah, which became a common and unifying language among low-country slaves.

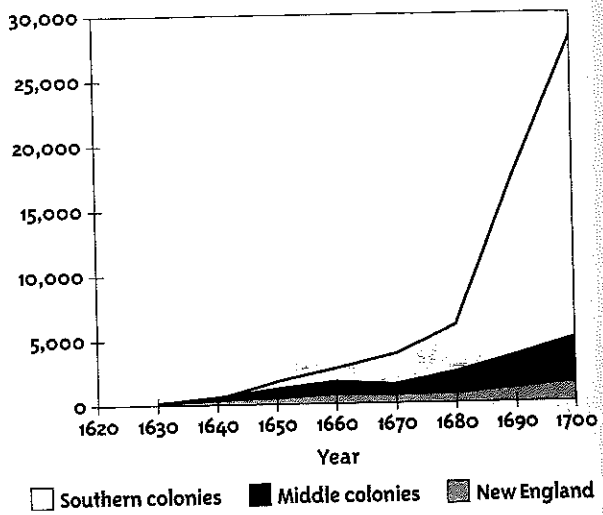


FIGURE 2.3 The Distribution of African Americans in the Seventeenth-Century Colonies
Even though slavery existed throughout the colonies, its rapid expansion in the South after the 1670s meant that the great majority of African Americans lived there, rather than in New England or the Middle Colonies.

Conditions of Work and Kinship Differences between tobacco and rice production also shaped regional patterns in slave life. Work on large Chesapeake tobacco farms was fairly continuous, conducted by gangs of slaves who worked for long hours under the supervision of overseers. Carolina rice cultivation, by contrast, involved more strenuous but more varied work and was not suited to gang labor. Rice planters introduced a task system, in which slaves remained more free of direct supervision; upon the completion of allocated jobs, they were allowed time to hunt, fish, or cultivate their own "provision grounds" (garden plots). As a result, South Carolina slaves found themselves with greater relative autonomy and greater responsibility for providing their own food than those in the Chesapeake. At the same time, though, they were more vulnerable to the whims of overseers left in charge by absentee planters who had taken up residence in Charleston.

Despite these differences, slave cultures throughout the South also developed much in common with one another. The strong emphasis African societies placed on kinship, and especially on ties between brothers and sisters, helped uprooted people to survive enslavement. Even aboard slave ships, unrelated captives began to refer to each other as brothers and sisters, and sexual intercourse between such "siblings" was forbidden. Children were taught to call former shipmates "aunt" and "uncle." Over several generations, kinship practices helped slaves from diverse backgrounds to order their lives and maintain connections that extended beyond a single

These bonds were easily strained by the constant arrival of new immigrants and by the sending of slaves from one plantation to another, fracturing communities. Even so, because such movements often occurred within the same geographical area, kin connections and knowledge of family histories could, with effort, be maintained. In southern Maryland in the 1760s, between 120 and 300 slaves claimed their descent from a couple called Butler, who had started having children eighty years before. After 1720 in the Chesapeake and 1760 in the Lower South, various impediments to slave family life diminished: death rates fell, the number of men and women equalized, and slave importation from Africa declined in relative importance. Among Robert "King" Carter's slaves in Virginia, over half lived in households with children by 1733, including almost all the women. Of fifty-five slaves belonging to a North Carolina owner in 1761, only eight were single; the rest lived in six families.

Accordingly, by contrast with the slaves of Caribbean and Brazilian plantation societies, where sex ratios and mortality remained unfavorable, the Chesapeake's slave population began to sustain its numbers by natural increase — the first in the Americas to do so. By the 1740s, a majority of Chesapeake slaves were native-born, and this would be the case throughout the South by 1800. Increasingly, young black Americans were not "seasoned" by white masters like their predecessors, but were raised by African American parents in an emerging African American culture.

Yet masters still defined the character of daily life and limited the ways in which slaves could act. Masters set working conditions, enforced slave codes, and ultimately held the power of life and death. They could break up slaves' families at will, and their indebtedness, bankruptcy, or death could do so unintentionally. However, if slavery was to work for them, masters had to depend on their slaves' ability to take care of each other, to raise children, to learn English, to perform a variety of tasks, and, in some cases, to manage other slaves. Slaves did all of these things and taught their children to do likewise.

Slaves' living arrangements also evolved. In the seventeenth century, when the majority of field hands were men, many lived together in rough barracks. But as the sex ratio became more balanced in the early eighteenth century and many slaves established families, an increasing number lived in separate dwellings. Cabins sprang up in the slave settlements near plantation houses. They reminded one visitor to South Carolina of the "wooden cottages [of] poor villagers" in England, but many that were constructed by slaves themselves reflected an African influence. Often scantily built, these dwellings offered basic shelter but little material comfort or adornment. Still, in the family cabin, slaves enjoyed a space that was mostly theirs, where to some extent they could shape their own lives. Within this private sphere, they took last names that were different from their masters' and named

Advertisements for Slaves in the *Maryland Gazette*

Although most slaves worked as field hands, there was also demand for men and women slaves with craft skills, particularly in districts with large plantations. Some male slaves were trained as carpenters, shoemakers, blacksmiths, and masons or as coopers who made barrels for shipping tobacco and other goods. A smaller number of women slaves escaped field labor to become household servants or to work at spinning yarn and weaving cloth. These advertisements from the Maryland Gazette *reflect the market in skilled slaves.*

[April 27, 1748]

TO BE SOLD BY THE SUBSCRIBER, IN ANNAPOLIS

A brisk likely Country-born Negro Wench about 18 or 19 years of Age, who is a good Spinner; with a Child, about 18 months Old.

William Reynol

Very good Nutmegs, by the Pound, or Ounce, to be sold by the same Reynolds.

[May 29, 1751]

TO BE SOLD

A likely, strong Negro Girl, about 16 Years of Age, fit for Plantation Work, or very capable of making a Good House Wench, having for some Months served as such in a small Family. For further Particulars, Enquire of the Printer Hereof.

[May 28, 1752]

TO BE SOLD BY PUBLIC VENDOR

At the House of Mr. Samuel Middleton, in Annapolis, on Wednesday the 10th Day of June next at 4 o'clock in the afternoon:

The Hull of a New Vessel lying now at the Town Dock, together with her Masts, and some of her Yards. . . .

Also at the same time will be sold a Blacksmith and a Wheelright, with their Tools; both being excellent workmen. Also a Collier and a Sawyer, who have each about 5 Yeares to Serve. . . .

Likewise a Country-born Negro Wench, About 27 Years of Age, very sober and healthy; and understands Household Business very well, with a Mulatto Boy about a year and a half old, who is the said Negro's Child.

Whoever is inclinable to purchase, on giving security (if required), may have two Months time for Payment.

[December 17, 1761]

TO BE SOLD BY THE SUBSCRIBER, being near Upper Marlborough, in Prince George's County, on the Second Day of January next, for good Bills of Exchange:

A Choice Parcel of Country-born Slaves, consisting of Men, Women, Boys, and Girls, all Young and healthy, chief between 10 and 20 years of Age; among these Slaves there are two Wenches about 16 or 17 Years of Age, who Understand Spinning and Knitting, and a young Fellow of 20 Years of Age, a good Plowman and Cartman.

The Sale to be on a Plantation now Mr. William Beall's.

William Parker

Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the* [illegible] (University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 405

The Old Plantation
This unusual late-eighteenth-century painting by an unknown artist indicates the blending of cultural influences in the slaves' quarters. African and American culture merge in the slaves' dress, dance, and musical instruments (a drum and banjo). The ceremony shown is probably a wedding at which, by African custom, the bride and groom jump over a stick. Anonymous, watercolor, c. 1800 — Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Williamsburg, Virginia.

children for grandparents and great-grandparents — Cuffee, Quash — linking them to an African past and the memory of freedom.

Many masters, intent on destroying the remnants of their chattels' free identities, discouraged African customs and languages, so the work habits, family arrangements, and religious beliefs that were most similar to English practices were those most likely to survive. Even so, slaves retained non-Christian beliefs, dances, songs, and funeral practices. African influences persisted in foodways; child-rearing practices; the work of artisans who made pottery, musical instruments, and metal goods; and the objects slaves placed in the graves of their dead. By building bonds of family and kinship and by preserving aspects of African culture, slaves fashioned a social identity that enabled them to maintain their dignity despite captivity and oppression.

Slave Resistance and Rebellion In addition to forging social and cultural bonds, slaves tried actively to resist captivity. By 1760, African Americans accounted for about two-fifths of the Chesapeake's population. In South Carolina, with its larger rice plantations, they were a substantial majority, and here, particularly, the threat of slave rebellion led plantation owners to create more repressive arrangements. But wherever slavery existed, the fear and actuality of resistance produced harsh laws and institu-

"A Bloody Tragedy": Slave Insurrection Averted in Charleston

Full-scale rebellion was rare, but the very possibility of such insurrection terrified southern whites, as this letter, printed in the October 22, 1730, issue of the Boston Weekly News-Letter, *reveals. A slave uprising planned to begin in Charleston, South Carolina, on August 15, 1730, was uncovered in advance. This report hints at how slaves planned to spread their actions out of the city into the countryside.*

I shall give an Account of a bloody Tragedy which was to have been executed here last Saturday night (the 15th Inst.) by the Negroes, who had conspired to Rise and destroy us, and had almost brought it to pass: but it pleased God to appear for us, and confound their Councils. For some of them proposed that the Negroes of every Plantation should destroy their own Masters; but others were for Rising in a Body, and giving the blow at once on surprise; and thus they differed. They soon made a great Body at the back of the Town, and had a great Dance, and expected the Country Negroes to come & join them; and had not an overruling Providence discovered their Intrigues, we had been all in Blood. . . . The Chief of them, with the others, is apprehended and in Irons, in order to a Tryal, and we are in Hopes to find out the whole Affair.

Boston Weekly News-Letter, October 22, 1730.

From time to time, slaves did overtly rebel. As many as two hundred slaves took part in a revolt near Norfolk, Virginia, in 1730. Four of them were executed, and whites enlarged local militias. The Stono Rebellion in South Carolina in 1739 began when about twenty slaves marched off in the direction of Florida from the Stono River, not far from Charleston. Many of them had recently arrived from Angola and may have been prompted to resist their enslavement by an outbreak of war between England and Spain. After stealing arms and decapitating two storekeepers, they began burning buildings and murdering whites at the plantations they passed, while recruiting an additional fifty or more slaves into their ranks. At the Edisto River, a white militia confronted them, shooting fourteen slaves dead immediately and killing two dozen more after they had surrendered. In the brutal repression that followed, fleeing rebels were rounded up and executed. Their heads were displayed at mileposts along the roadsides as a warning to others.

Such outright rebellion was rare. But fear of it was common, and periodic panics gripped the white population. Planters were also wary of "intestine enemies" and "dangerous domestics." Women employed as cooks, who were intimately connected to their white owners and in a unique position to harm them, came under suspicion. Slaves were known to have brought

"Barns Being Burnt . . .": Slave Resistance in South Carolina

Slaves' resistance took many forms. In South Carolina, slaves involved in rice production often burned down the barns where the harvested rice was stored. This October 14, 1732, letter, printed in the South Carolina Gazette, *reveals how common the slave "custom" of barn-burning had become in one part of the colony.*

I have taken notice for Several Years past, that there has not one Winter elapsed, without one or more Barns being burnt, and two Winters since, there was no less than five. Whether it is owing to Accident, Carelessness, or Severity, I will not pretend to determine; but am afraid, chiefly to the [latter two causes]. I desire therefore, as a Friend to the Planters, that you'll insert the following Account from Pon Pon, which, I hope, will forewarn the Planters of their Danger, and make them for the future, more careful and human:

About 3 Weeks since, Mr. James Gray worked his Negroes late in his Barn at Night, and the next Morning before Day, hurried them out again, and when they came to it, found it burnt down to the Ground, and all that was in it.

South Carolina Gazette, October 14, 1732.

the knowledge of poisons from Africa, and those who were suspected of plotting to use it faced savage punishment.

Slaves resisted in less violent ways as well. As their numbers grew and a sense of community developed among them, they worked together to protect one another and reduce the harshness of labor. Though whippings for disobedience or insolence were a near-certainty, slaves conspired to break tools, feign illness, slow down or neglect work, and avoid learning new tasks. When a Virginia planter skimped on his field hands' clothing so that they were almost naked, one of his neighbors noted that he got "nothing by his injustice but the scandal of it," because the slaves produced poor crops. The Virginia planter Landon Carter railed at the frequency with which his slaves fell ill on Mondays.

Slaves also made bids for freedom. Running away, individually or in small groups, was common. Most left only for short periods, to visit kin on other farms or escape punishment. Much truancy occurred during planting, hoeing, or harvesting seasons. The majority of runaways were men, though women frequently harbored fugitives. Returned runaways could expect a whipping, but some persistent fugitives had their toes cut off; one planter wrote that "nothing less than dismemberment" would "reclaim" an "incorrigeble rogue" who kept absconding. Some escapees paid with their lives. Twenty-one-year-old Henry Carter, sold to a new master with a fearsome reputation, ran away, only to be stoned to death by an overseer who caught him crossing a river.

Suppression of a Runaway Slave Community

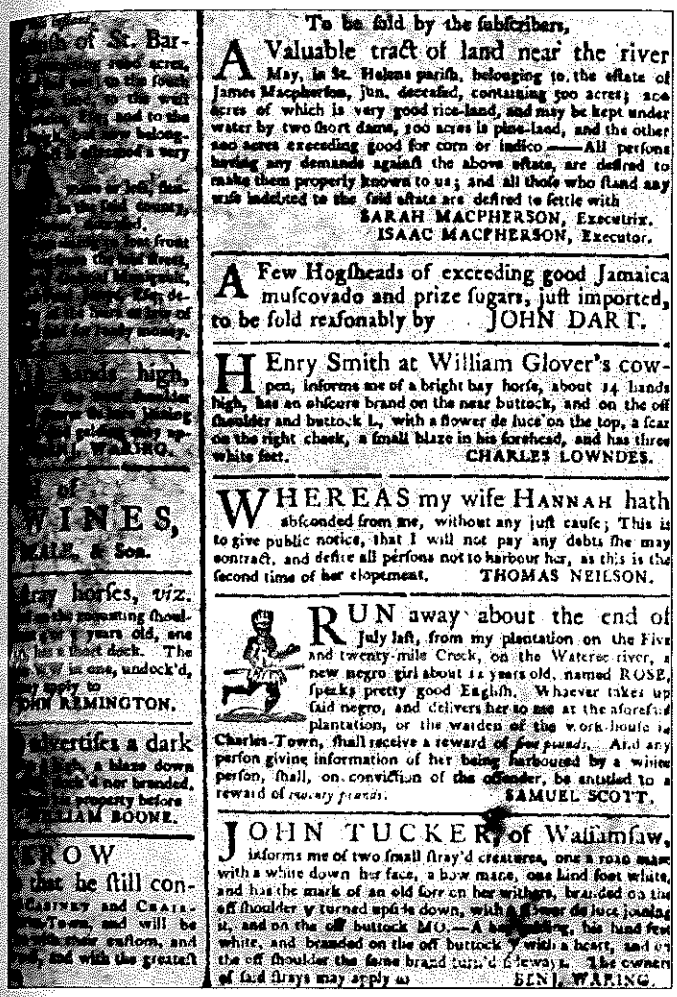
In a letter to the Board of Trade in London, written in 1729, Virginia's lieutenant-governor, Sir William Gooch, describes measures taken by planters and colonial governments to curb slave runaways.

My Lords:

. . . Sometime after my Last a number of Negroes, about fifteen, belonging to a new Plantation on the head of James River formed a Design to withdraw from their Master and to fix themselves in the fastness of the neighboring Mountains. They had found means to get into their possession some Arms & Ammunition, and they took along with them some Provisions, their Cloaths, bedding and working Tools; but the Gentleman to whom they belonged with a Party of Men made such diligent pursuit after them, that he soon found them out in their new Settlement, a very obscure place among the Mountains, where they had already begun to clear the ground, and obliged them after exchanging a shot or two by which one of the Slaves was wounded, to surrender and return back, and so prevented for this time a design which might have proved as dangerous to this Country, as is that of the Negroes in the Mountains of Jamaica to the Inhabitants of that Island. Tho' this attempt has happily been defeated, it ought nevertheless to awaken us into some effectual measures for preventing the like hereafter, it being certain that a very small number of Negroes once settled in those Parts, would very soon be encreas'd by the Accession of other Runaways and prove dangerous Neighbours to our frontier Inhabitants. To prevent this and many other Mischiefs I am training and exercising the Militia in the several counties as the best means to deter our Slaves from endeavouring to make their Escape, and to suppress them if they should.

Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Harvard University Press, 2001), 30.

Unlike some Caribbean islands, such as Jamaica, whose black majority populations and mountainous terrain sheltered communities of escaped slaves (known as maroons), the southern colonies provided only slender chances for permanent escape. Hostile whites inhabited land surrounding Chesapeake plantation districts, for example. Near present-day Lexington, Virginia, in 1728–1729, one group of runaway slaves did create a village. They built homes like those they had known in Africa, established a government under a chief, and (with stolen implements) grew crops using African methods. Whites soon destroyed the village, killed the chief, and returned the residents to their masters. The Carolinas held somewhat more promise, but not much. Escape to Indians such as the Cherokee or Creeks might offer a



To be ſold by the ſubſcribers,
A Valuable tract of land near the river May, in St. Helena parish, belonging to the eſtate of James Macpherſon, jun. deceaſed, containing 500 acres; 200 acres of which is very good rice-land, and may be kept under water by two ſhort dams, 300 acres is pine-land, and the other 200 acres exceeding good for corn or indico.——All perſons having any demands againſt the above eſtate, are deſired to make them properly known to us; and all thoſe who ſtand any wiſe indebted to the ſaid eſtate are deſired to ſettle with
SARAH MACPHERSON, Executrix.
ISAAC MACPHERSON, Executor.

A Few Hogſheads of exceeding good Jamaica muſcovado and prize ſugars, juſt imported, to be ſold reaſonably by JOHN DART.

HEnry Smith at William Glover's cowpen, informs me of a bright bay horſe, about 14 hands high, has an ahſcore brand on the near buttock, and on the off ſhoulder and buttock L, with a flower de luce on the top, a ſcar on the right cheek, a ſmall blaze in his forehead, and has three white feet. CHARLES LOWNDES.

WHEREAS my wife HANNAH hath abſconded from me, without any juſt cauſe; This is to give public notice, that I will not pay any debts ſhe may contract, and deſire all perſons not to harbour her, as this is the ſecond time of her elopement. THOMAS NEILSON.

RUN away about the end of July laſt, from my plantation on the Five and twenty-mile Creek, on the Wateree river, a new negro girl about 12 years old, named ROSE, ſpeaks pretty good Engliſh. Whoever takes up ſaid negro, and delivers her to me at the aforeſaid plantation, or the warden of the work-houſe in Charles-Town, ſhall receive a reward of *four pounds*. And any perſon giving information of her being harboured by a white perſon, ſhall, on conviction of the offender, be entitled to a reward of *twenty pounds*. SAMUEL SCOTT.

JOHN TUCKER of Williamſaw, informs me of two ſmall ſtray'd creatures, one a roan mare with a white down her face, a bow mare, one hind foot white, and has the mark of an old ſore on her withers, branded on the off ſhoulder Y turned up ſide down, with a flower de luce joining it, and on the off buttock MO.—A ſorrel gelding, his hind feet white, and branded on the off buttock Y with a heart, and on the off ſhoulder the ſame brand turn'd ſideways. The owners of ſaid ſtrays may apply to BENJ. WARING.

Ran Off

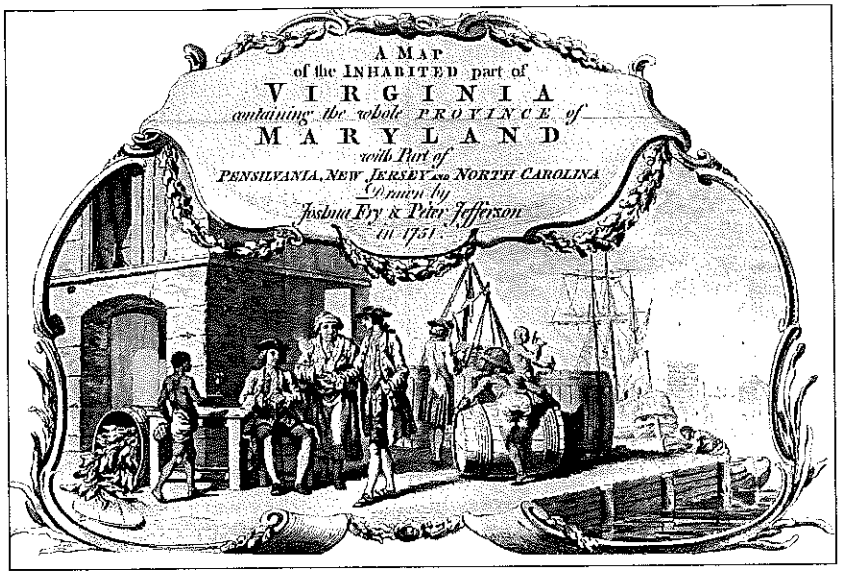
The September 18, 1762, edition of the *South Carolina Gazette* includes notices about escaped slaves, stray animals, and runaway wives. *South Carolina Gazette*, Supplement, September 18, 1762 — Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

chance for assimilation but was equally likely to lead to re-enslavement by the tribe to which they fled. Small groups of maroons did survive in the swamps behind rice plantations but in isolated and harsh conditions.

The Spanish in Florida gave Carolina slaves one other chance of escape. In 1693, Spain promised freedom to fugitives who would convert to Catholicism. Some slaves evaded capture on the dangerous march south, and in Florida, groups of runaways lived among Native Americans or in their own communities. Even so, they were vulnerable. English troops seized the largest maroon village, Santa Teresa de Mose near St. Augustine, in 1740. Although the Spanish later recaptured it, Mose never regained its former size and disintegrated when Florida became a British possession in 1763.

Prosperity, Inequality, and Shifting Ideas in Slave Societies

By the 1750s, the population of the southern colonies numbered just over 300,000 whites and about 200,000 black slaves, together with small numbers of free blacks and Indians who had not yet been forced west. Nearly two-thirds of all southerners lived in Virginia and Maryland, and a third lived in the two Carolinas; only about 5,000 people had settled in Georgia by this time. Each colony had a colonial assembly and court system that governed in accordance with English precedents. The king's representatives included a royal governor in each colony, customs collectors, and other officials charged with overseeing trade. The Church of England had become part of the fabric of life; as in England, it was closely identified with the elite and with the enforcement of social hierarchy. Southern customs and lifestyles no longer horrified English visitors as they had in earlier decades. Though few of the increasing numbers of white people born in the South would ever see England, many shared an English cultural identity and to some extent duplicated the social norms of their English peers. The availability of abundant land meant that more white men



Exporting Tobacco
A detail from a map published in 1775 shows slaves packing tobacco in barrels on a Virginia wharf for shipment abroad.
Joshua Frye and Peter Jefferson, *A Map of the Most Inhabited Part of Virginia . . . (1775)* — Maryland Historical Society.

owned land than in England, yet great disparities in wealth remained. A small network of wealthy families, mainly located in coastal regions, largely dominated politics and society and demanded deference, but inland settlers and later the rise of evangelical religious beliefs frequently challenged this elite authority.

Hierarchy and Society Men no longer outnumbered women in the southern colonies, and the family became the center of social life. Like their counterparts in England, many white women contributed to the family income by spinning, weaving, gardening, and selling dairy products. Slavery and the plantation economy were securely in place. There had been some diversification of agriculture. Chesapeake farmers and planters exported cattle and wheat. From the Lower South went shipments of the dyestuff indigo—first grown on the plantation of a resourceful young woman planter, Eliza Lucas Pinckney—as well as naval stores such as pitch, tar, and timber. But the main staple crops of each region remained dominant. In the Chesapeake, tobacco production rose from twenty-eight million pounds in 1700 to eighty million in 1760; from coastal South Carolina and Georgia, rice exports rose from ten thousand barrels in 1720 to one hundred thousand in 1760.

Export crops and slave labor gave the southern colonies a prosperity unmatched elsewhere in eighteenth-century North America. White wealth per capita in Virginia and South Carolina was double that in New England or the Middle Colonies. Land was easier to acquire in the South than in England, and European visitors noted the abundance of food and preva-

"Pity Your Distressed Daughter": Inequality in the Eighteenth-Century South

In this 1756 letter to her parents in England, Elizabeth Sprigs, a female servant in Maryland, describes the harsh conditions of her life and labor. Well into the eighteenth century, many women committed themselves to indentured servitude in exchange for passage to the North American colonies.

Honored Father

My being forever banished from your sight will I hope pardon the boldness I now take of troubling you with these [words]. . . . O Dear Father, believe that I am going to relate the words of truth and sincerity, and balance my former bad conduct [to] my sufferings here, and then I am sure you'll pity your distressed daughter. What we unfortunate English people suffer here is beyond the probability of you in England to conceive. Let it suffice that I, one of the unhappy number, am toiling almost day and night, and very often in the horses' drudgery, with only this comfort that "you bitch you do not half enough," and then tied up and whipped to that degree that you'd not serve an animal. Scarce anything but Indian corn and salt to eat and that even begrudged nay many Negroes are better used, almost naked no shoes nor stockings to wear, and the comfort after slaving during Master's pleasure, what rest we can get is to wrap ourselves up in an blanket and lay upon the ground. This is the deplorable condition your poor Betty endures, and now I beg if you have any bowels of compassion left show it by sending me some relief, clothing is the principal thing wanting, which if you should condescend to, may easily send them to me by any ships bound to Baltimore Town, Patapsco River, Maryland, and give me leave to conclude in duty to you and Uncles and Aunts, and respect to all friends, Honored Father

Your undutiful and disobedient child
ELIZABETH SPRIGS

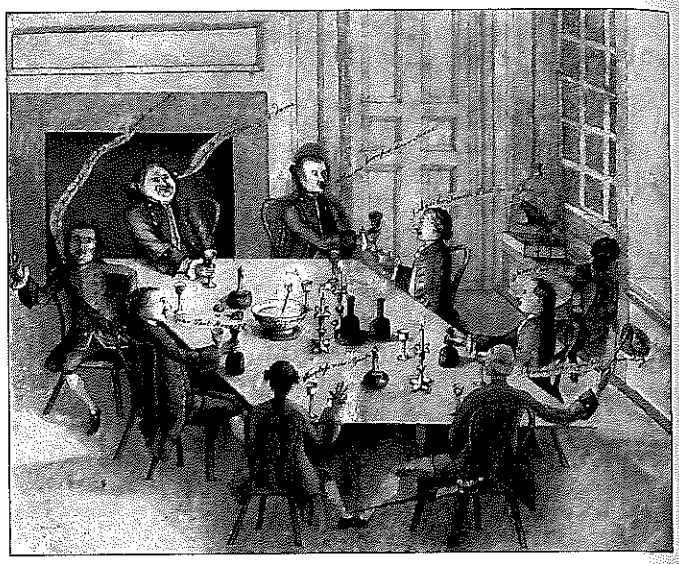
Elizabeth Sprigs, "Letter to Mr. John Sprigs in White Cross Street near Cripple Gate, London, September 22, 1756," in Isabel Calder, ed., *Colonial Captivities, Marches, and Journeys* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1935), 151–152. Reprinted by permission of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America.

farmed their own land in 1750, consuming roughly 60 percent of what they produced and bartering the surplus for tools and other goods they could not make. In the Carolinas, the proportion of white households with land was higher still.

Yet the South's wealth was very unequally distributed. Dramatic distinctions existed between rich and poor. Those at the lower end of the scale slipped easily into poverty, and at least one-fifth of the white population owned little more than the clothes they wore. Owning slaves enhanced the advantages of the rich over the poor. Tobacco and rice, speculation in west-

wealthy. When he died in 1732, Virginia's richest planter, Robert "King" Carter, owned 300,000 acres and almost one thousand slaves. Across the southern colonies, the richest 10 percent of the population owned half of all wealth, including one-seventh of the people.

Wealthy planters mimicked the English gentry. By the 1720s, they were building spacious brick mansions in parklike surroundings, and Charleston's elite built elegant townhouses too. The rich imported elaborate furnishings, adorned their wives and daughters in European fashions, and maintained large numbers of slaves as house servants. They hired tutors for their sons or sent them to be educated in Scotland or England. They raised their children to exercise authority, sometimes by purchasing young slaves to be their personal servants.



Charleston Entertainment, 1760 Having served supper and then after-dinner drinks, a young slave dozes while members of Charleston's merchant-planter elite carouse around the dining room table. The drawing is set in the home of Peter Manigault (seated at the left center), scion of one of the wealthiest families in colonial Carolina. George Roupell, *Peter Manigault and His Friends*, c. 1760, black ink and wash, 10 3/16 × 13 3/16 inches — Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum.

Most white southerners lived in humbler surroundings. Their houses were small and built of wood; they had no servants, slaves, or silverware and relied on their own labor. Though many had land, significant numbers of whites in the Chesapeake owned none. In Maryland, a majority of small farmers were tenants, renting land from large landholders and living in relative poverty. Landless whites relied on intermittent work or settled and hunted on marginal land or in frontier areas. Landless men worked as tenants on large estates or as wage laborers in agriculture, shipping, or craft trades; most landless women worked as domestic servants.

Also in humble surroundings were the growing numbers of white men and women who lived in the less-settled areas of the South, away from the coast. This backcountry attracted both the children of poorer native-born southerners and recent immigrants from Ireland, Scotland, and Germany. A midcentury visitor to the South Carolina backcountry found many inhabitants who "have nought but a Gourd to drink out of, nor a Plate, Knive or Spoon, a Glass, Cup, or anything." Many were tenants who rented from large landowners and speculators. Backcountry society was less structured and authority less established than on the coast. There were few great plantations or large concentrations of slaves. In western North Carolina, for example, only about 12 percent of the white population owned slaves, and very few of those owned more than five.

Frontier land was cheaper than land on the coast, and thousands of white people obtained legal title through squatter's rights—that is, by

Nondescripts . . . near Oaks, Virginia

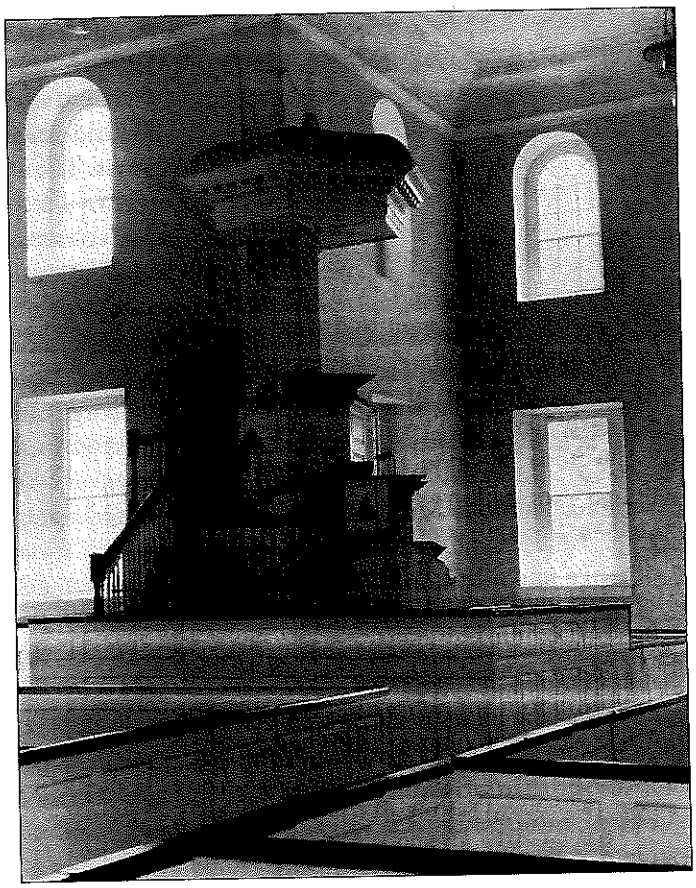
"A family of poor White children," architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe noted in his sketchbook, "observed from the Stage carrying peaches to a neighboring Barbecue for Sale." The woman and children in this 1796 sketch wore large, stiff bonnets common to that part of Virginia. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *Nondescripts attracted by a neighbouring barbecue, near the Oaks, Virginia*, 1796, pencil, pen and ink, wash, 6 15/16 × 10 15/16 inches — Maryland Historical Society.

settlement to expand in this way could help a colonial government bolster its claims to the interior against the counterclaims of Indians, English speculators, or other colonies. Though few settlers achieved more than a decent subsistence, they established communities in which a rough equality prevailed. The backcountry could also provide the opportunity for social mobility. In Virginia's newly settled Southside, for instance, John Hix and George McLaughlin were landless laborers in 1748, but by 1769, McLaughlin owned two hundred and fifty acres, and Hix had acquired almost four hundred acres and two slaves.

Deference and Conflict Along with crown officials, the South's wealthy men controlled government, courts, and church, forming a stable gentry class. By the eighteenth century, the Beverlys, Randolphs, Carters, Harrisons, Lees, and Byrds, with their relatives and connections, had secure hold of Virginia's House of Burgesses. Between 1700 and 1760, members of just nine families held one-third of places in the Virginia governor's council. John Randolph wrote that "person[s] of note in [Virginia] . . . are almost all related, or so connected in our interests, that whoever of a Stranger presumes to offend any one of us will infallibly find an enemy of the whole." Pinckneys, Rutledges, Draytons, and some others gained even greater relative prominence in South Carolina.

Gentry power was locally rooted. Planters controlled the vestries, or governing bodies, of the established Church of England (or Anglican church), and individual parishes levied taxes to pay clergymen, who were mostly educated and ordained in England. County courts, the local centers of political as well as legal power, were dominated by the gentry too. Planters' houses were centers of social and political activity, of hospitality and patronage for farmers and voters, and of sociable rituals of gambling, horse racing, and other entertainment.

It was assumed that in an unequal society, the wealthy and powerful were owed deference and respect by the majority. One Virginian recalled that "we were accustomed to look upon . . . gentle folks as beings of a superior order." Nonelite white men could participate in the benefits of privilege. By the mid-eighteenth century, the proportion of small slaveholders was rising, particularly in coastal regions. About half the white farmers in coastal Maryland owned one or more slaves, as did a majority of Charleston's white artisans. Property holding or taxpaying was widespread enough that many



Three-Decker Authority
The Aquia Church in northern Virginia's Stafford County (built in 1754–57) offered its congregants light and space while also reinforcing the colony's social hierarchy. Its imposing three-decker pulpit, of a style that made its appearance in Virginia by the late seventeenth century, accentuated the authority of the clergy and heightened the respectability of the gentry. Aquia Church, Stafford County, Virginia, Harold Wickliffe Rose Papers — Yale University Library.

South. The 10 to 40 percent of men who could not qualify were disenfranchised, as were all blacks and women. Even elite single women, such as the pioneer landowner Mistress Margaret Brent, were unable to translate financial and political influence into the formal right to vote. But no white men, however poor, shared the inferior economic and political status of women or the burdens and penalties of slavery. These circumstances sustained notions of deference.

But powerful as the gentry were, their relationship with the poorer whites around them was not just one of domination. The Chesapeake gentry had noted the lessons of Bacon's Rebellion, dispensing credit and employment to the less affluent and making court sessions and elections a theater in which white property owners enjoyed a measure of equality. Sociability at taverns, racecourses, militia musters, and court days and the hospitality of the planter houses bridged distinctions between rich and poor whites and reflected their interdependence.

Even so, sharp conflicts over religion, politics, and economic issues

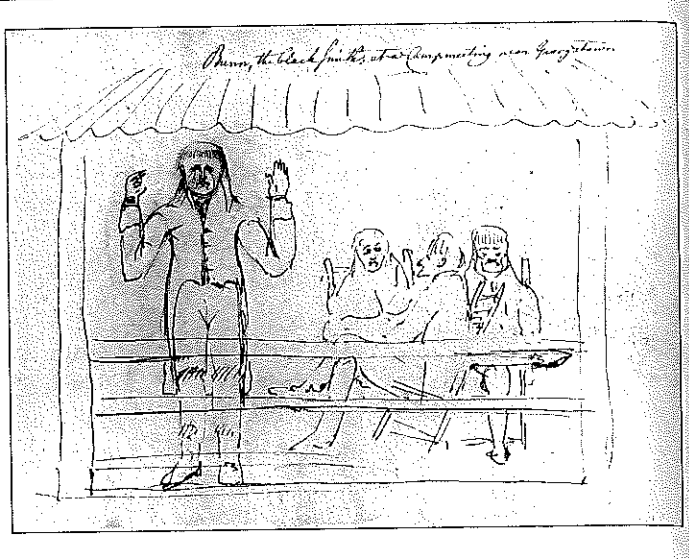
planters and royal officials vied for power and the spoils of office. Planters complained about the "exorbitant" salaries they had to pay governors and other officials and thought them too eager to exploit the region. Struggles over land and markets often pitted wealthy landowners and speculators against middling and poorer whites. In the 1730s, Virginia planters secured the passage of tobacco inspection laws that threatened to squeeze out smaller growers of the crop. Small farmers protested, burning down tobacco warehouses in several counties, but in vain.

In the Carolinas, there was conflict between the dominant coastal elites and poorer inhabitants of the backcountry. Frontier settlers claimed the right of all freeborn Englishmen to oppose illegitimate authority. People expected the wealthy to rule but also to protect the larger interests of the community. When they did not, ordinary men and women claimed the right to take action on the community's behalf. Backcountry people in the Lower South seriously challenged coastal elites in the 1760s. Grievances mostly concerned access to the land and representation in colonial assemblies. Complaints readily escalated into violent confrontations because frontier dwellers were already organized into armed militias for action against the Indians in the area. Though coastal authorities in the Carolinas and Georgia accused frontier dwellers of living "out of the bounds of the law," such people were not overly violent or reckless. They were simply less deferential, more irreverent, and more egalitarian than their low-country peers.

The Challenge of the Great Awakening A less violent but broader challenge emerged in the 1740s, when poor and politically disenfranchised whites joined a religious movement—called "the Great Awakening" by historians—that spread rapidly across the northern and southern colonies (see Chapter 3). For decades, the Anglican clergy and educated colonists had adopted the view, increasingly current among secular intellectuals in Europe, that God was rational and kind. This stance fit well with elite concepts of a decorous form of religious observance in which popular participation would pose no threat to social order or the authority of rulers. But evangelicals, many from the middling and lower classes, rejected the rationalists' refined, philosophical religious discourse. Their God was wrathful and disgusted at humankind's sinfulness. Individuals could be saved only by recognizing their own helplessness and depravity in the face of God's might and by surrendering to God through an emotional conversion and begging forgiveness.

Figures who were at the heart of profound religious changes in England during the 1730s helped to spread the Great Awakening in America. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, preached in Georgia in 1736, and a tour of the colonies three years later by his colleague George Whitefield prompted widespread revivals. From early revival meetings grew new sects that

challenged Anglicanism and appealed to people of moderate and poor means. "New Lights," as they were known, disputed with the clergy; attacked gambling, horse racing, and other leisured activities as sinful; and proclaimed the spiritual equality of all men and women before God. In Virginia, small farmers enthusiastically denounced the gentry's way of life. Itinerant preachers taught their growing flocks that ordinary folk were more likely candidates for divine inspiration than were the gentry and educated clergymen who led them.



Bunn, the Blacksmith, at a Campmeeting near Georgetown
In 1809, Benjamin Henry Latrobe attended a Virginia Methodist revival meeting, at which he sketched the effective performance of a self-educated, artisan preacher. "A general groaning was going on," Latrobe wrote in his journal, "in several parts of the Camp, women were shrieking, and just under the stage there was an uncommon bustle, and cry, which I understood arose from some persons who were under conversion." Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *Bunn, the blacksmith, at a Campmeeting near Georgetown*, August 6, 1809, pencil, pen and ink, 8 × 12 3/4 inches — Maryland Historical Society.

The egalitarianism of the Great Awakening challenged more than planters' habits. It called their control into question, and it also threatened to break through the racial barriers that had become an essential facet of slave societies. Although Whitefield did not question slavery itself, he did condemn the mistreatment of slaves and referred to the recent Stono Rebellion as God's judgment on planters. Others went further. In 1741, Hugh Bryan, a South Carolina planter and politician who had been converted in the revival, began prophesying a day of doom that would bring "Deliverance of the Negroes from servitude." The colonial assembly forced him to retract and apologize for his remarks because, as another planter put it, "we dreaded the consiquence of such a thing being put in to the head of the slaves and the advantage they might take of us." The doctrine of spiritual equality had subversive potential in a slave society.

Revivalist religion, unlike Anglican hierarchicalism, spread Christianity among slaves, as well as poor whites, in the mid-eighteenth century. Slaves like David George converted in large numbers, and the proportion of Christianized slaves would rise, though faster in the Chesapeake than in the Lower South. Some evangelicals—considered by Virginia's well-to-do to be "continual fomenters of discord"—held the radical belief that equality before God extended to all men and women, black and white; all could surrender to God and be saved. In the Virginia backcountry, the Presbyterian preacher Samuel Davies attracted growing numbers of black and white members to his churches in the 1750s, while Methodist churches regularly became forums of biracial worship. The evangelical movement as a whole, white and black, raised the level of religious involvement in the colonies and was particularly influential among women.

Davies assured leading Virginians that he was not seeking to undermine

An Overseer Doing His Duty
A relaxed overseer watches two slave women at work in a Virginia scene sketched by Benjamin Henry Latrobe in 1798. Latrobe (who would become one of the most influential architects in nineteenth-century America) had been in the United States only two years, but during that brief time, he grew to detest slavery (as suggested in the sarcastic title of the sketch). Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *An overseer doing his duty. Sketched from life near Fredericsburg, March 13, 1798*, pencil, pen and ink, watercolor, 7 × 10 1/4 inches — Maryland Historical Society.

helped to erode some of the deference with which blacks and most whites were expected to regard the gentry. Groups such as the Separate Baptists became open critics of slavery and slave trading. Calling slavery into question and bringing white and black worshippers together on an equal footing, the Awakening weakened the gentry's formula, worked out in the aftermath of Bacon's Rebellion, for preserving order in a slave society.

The Awakening also helped to popularize the belief that government was merely the human mechanism through which God would ensure equality among individuals from various classes. In this belief, illiterate craft workers, backwoods farmers, and female servants sought salvation for themselves and for society. Disdaining planters' excessive comforts and pleasures, evangelicals questioned the legitimacy of their rule and the superiority of their culture.

Conclusion: Southern Society at Mid-Eighteenth Century

Social tensions in the English southern colonies did not undermine their position with regard to the Indians or other European powers whose territory lay adjacent to them. Population growth and frontier settlement maintained pressure on Native American groups. Wars and skirmishes across the border to the South weakened Spanish control of Florida and would lead to the British acquisition of East Florida in 1763. Meanwhile, in the Mississippi Valley, the French were also having difficulty sustaining their projected plantation society. Having imported several thousand African slaves to

themselves unable to build the kind of slave society that had emerged in the English South. Slaves and members of the local Natchez tribe revolted in 1729, weakening an already tenuous French control of society. The European population grew more slowly than the African, and Louisiana soon had a black majority. Slaveholding was concentrated in the hands of a small elite of planters and merchants, but racial distinctions were weakly defined, and intermarriage became frequent. In contrast with the English slave colonies, Louisiana ceased to be dominated by the existence of slavery; it became a "society with slaves."

From Maryland to Georgia, by contrast, wealthy landowners convinced many poor whites that the division between white and black meant more than that between rich and poor. The existence of slavery shaped virtually all social relations in the English southern colonies, where planters held sway over economic and political activity and exercised relatively unconstrained power. This made the South different, not only from Florida and Louisiana, but also from the other English settlements to the north.

The Years in Review

1607
- The first permanent English settlement in the New World is created at Jamestown (Virginia).

1611
- Tobacco production is introduced in Virginia; Indians teach whites how to cultivate the crop.

1617
- Several hundred London orphans are forcibly transported to Virginia to work in the tobacco fields.

1619
- The first African slaves arrive in America.
- The Virginia House of Burgesses (the first colonial legislature) meets for the first time.

1622
- Powhatan Indians attack white settlers in Virginia in the War of 1622.

1634
- Lord Baltimore establishes a colony in Maryland that welcomes both Protestants and Catholics.

1636
- The Dutch introduce sugar cane into Barbados; it soon becomes the major crop in the West Indies; by 1645, Barbados has 6,000 slaves, most of them working on sugar plantations.