The American South

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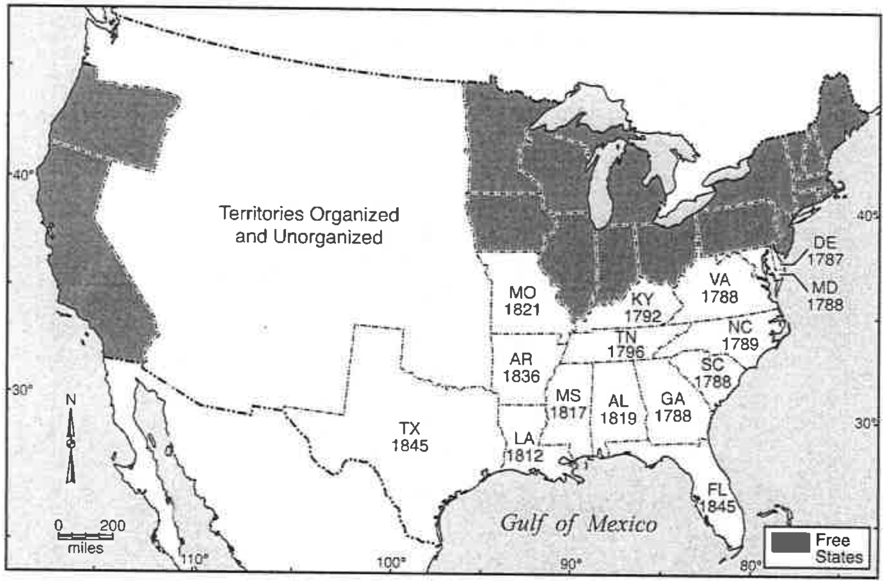

The Slave States in 1860

Major Indian Tribes Encountered by the Colonists

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The Beginnings

Young George Percy landed in Virginia in May 1607. He arrived as one of 105 settlers who had sailed across the Atlantic from England in three small ships. In honor of their king, James I, they named their settlement Jamestown. A former soldier and the eighth son of an English nobleman, the twenty-six-year-old Percy and his compatriots were imbued with the notion that they were engaged in a great enterprise to benefit both England and the English.

Percy left an eyewitness account of the early months at Jamestown. His "first sight" of "faire meddowes and goodly Tall trees and such Fresh-waters running through the woods" entranced him. Abundance matched beauty. "Mussels and Oysters . . . lay upon the ground as thicke as stones." This new land also offered "fine and beautifull Strawberries, foure times bigger and better than ours in England." Exploring, Percy discovered the "most pleasant Springs" and "the goodliest Corn fields that ever was seene in any Countrey." "The soile," he reported, was "good and fruitfull, with excellent good Timber." "The ground all flowing over with faire flowers of sundry colours and kindes" reminded Percy of a "Garden or Orchard in England."

Percy found that the natives could be as inviting as the land. They "entertained" the English "very kindly." "After they had feasted us," Percy wrote, "they shewed us, in welcome their manner of dancing." To Percy it seemed that he and the other settlers had landed in "Paradise."

But thorns infested Percy's garden. Relations with the natives were not always friendly. Percy recorded that one night, "when wee were going abord [our ship]," the natives appeared "creeping upon all foure . . . like Beares, with their Bowes in their mouthes." They "charged us very desperately in the faces" and wounded two Englishmen. The English fired, according to Percy, and "the sharpnesse of our shot" helped drive the natives "into the Woods."

Armed conflict, in which both natives and settlers died, alternated with amity, but it never disappeared.

Other thorns tore at the English. Noting that "our men were destroyed with cruell diseases," Percy catalogued the horrors of "Swellings, Flixes, Burning Fevers." Death visited regularly, "many times three or foure in a night; in the morning, their bodies trailed out of their Cabines like Dogges to be buried." Percy's melancholy list of the dead reads like a daily obituary, complete with cause of death. In September he cried out, "There were never Englishmen left in a foreigne Countrey in such miserie as we were in this new discovered Virginia."

Rapid, unexpected death remained a constant for many decades, but the English did not give up their colony. Percy himself rose to the governorship before he returned to England in 1612. His "Paradise" kept drawing replacements for the settlers who succumbed to the "miserie." They enabled Jamestown to survive to become the first permanent English settlement in North America. As Percy indicated, the English gazetteer of the New World located Jamestown in Virginia. Named in the 1580s in honor of Elizabeth I, the Virgin Queen, Virginia was the most significant English claim in North America. Virginia became the first, and thus the oldest, English colony in what was to become the United States. It was obviously the oldest in that part of the United States that came to be called the South.

ENGLISH BACKGROUND

The English began seriously to discuss the possibilities of colonization during the reign of Elizabeth I, queen of England from 1558 to 1603. During Elizabeth's time the English were emerging from a period of turmoil and tribulation, both political and religious. Under her the English rejoiced over a newly discovered unity and sense of common purpose. Elizabeth and her advisers recognized that England lived in a precarious political world, in which powers jockeyed for position while keeping an eye on the greatest among them: Spain. Elizabeth wanted to establish England's sovereignty beyond any question; she also wanted to secure her country's place among the great powers of Europe.

England's turn toward colonization of the New World naturally followed. Among the Englishmen who determined that England's flag must be planted in the New World, Sir Walter Raleigh stood out. A favorite of Elizabeth's, Raleigh received her blessings on his attempt to colonize the land the queen authorized him to call Virginia. Raleigh took action upon the precepts laid down by the leading English thinker on colonization, Richard Hakluyt the younger. In 1584, in *A Discourse Concerning Westerne Planting*, Hakluyt eloquently pleaded for colonization. England, he piously asserted, had a duty to extend Protestantism, but his emphasis was on economics and politics: England needed to build up its trade and to supply domestic requirements from English colonies, not from foreign nations. In Hakluyt's scheme, prosperous colonies would enrich the mother country. He also saw colonies as a means to build up the royal navy and as critical military bases. After all, Hakluyt reminded his readers, England was involved in a great economic and political contest with Spain. Accordingly, England must act or risk disaster. Thus, for Hakluyt, colonization held out the combined promise of financial gain and political security.

While Hakluyt talked of national goals, such men as Raleigh mingled these noble ends with personal ambition. Gain and glory for England could also mean gain and glory for the Englishmen who carried out the great mission set forth by Hakluyt. Raleigh's first colonizing expedition left England in April 1585 for the Outer Banks of North Carolina, the finger islands that stretch along the Atlantic coast. The previous year a reconnaissance party had decided upon this location as the best place for Raleigh to begin his colonial enterprise. In the summer of 1585, the colonists, all male, went ashore on Roanoke Island, almost at the center of the Outer Banks. The colony did not last; after only one checkered year all the survivors returned to England. Undaunted, Raleigh prepared for another try. This time he made more complete preparations, and by including whole families he signaled to his country and his queen that he meant to succeed. Although Raleigh intended this second group of colonists to settle in the Chesapeake, they ended up in July 1587 on Roanoke Island, the site of the failed first attempt. No matter; the colonists set about the work of constructing shelter, providing food, and establishing relations with the Indians.

Raleigh intended to support and resupply his colony, but war with Spain delayed him. To confront the great Spanish Armada of 1588, all ships and sailors were needed at home. By the time a relief party reached Roanoke Island, in the summer of 1590, three years after the establishment of the second colony, it came upon one of the great mysteries of American history. No English man, woman, or child could be found, only the word "Croatoan," the name of a nearby island, carved on a tree. A search of Croatoan turned up no trace of the colony. Precisely what became of the second Roanoke colony remains unknown. Most probably the settlers were either killed or absorbed by the local Indians. Most authorities believe that both killing and absorption took place.

OTHERS, EUROPEAN AND NATIVE

The English were not the first Europeans to set foot on the territory later known as the southern colonies. Spain, the greatest power in Europe in the sixteenth century, had led the European movement into the New World. The Spanish advance began in 1492, when Christopher Columbus, searching for a western route to Asia, discovered America. The Spanish colonial empire, which extended

Early Exploration in the South

from Mexico through Central America into South America and was a powerful presence in the Caribbean, had outposts in southeastern North America as well. The first Spaniard—indeed, the first European—to set foot in the region was Juan Ponce de Leon, who in 1513 claimed Florida for Spain. In 1539 Hernando de Soto landed on the western coast of Florida and headed inland. Over the next four years de Soto's expedition traversed an immense territory, from North Carolina to the Mississippi River. Although de Soto's journey resulted in no consequential Spanish influence, the Spanish did establish the first permanent European settlement in North America in 1565, at St. Augustine, Florida.

Still another great European colonizing power touched the shores of the Atlantic South. Exploring for France, the Italian Giovanni Verrazzano made landfall on the North Carolina coast in 1524. Afterward he sailed along the eastern seaboard, though he did not establish a settlement. In the 1560s France did attempt settlements in southern South Carolina and in northern Florida, but the French had even less success and impact than did the Spanish, who promptly drove them out of Florida. The French, however, made their chief effort not in the Southeast but along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. In 1682 the Sieur de La Salle, starting from French Canada, eventually paddled down the Mississippi River all the way to the gulf. The Mississippi Valley he claimed for his king, Louis XIV, and in his honor named it Louisiana. A few years later La Salle returned by sea with the goal of setting up a French colony. His expedition ended in his death at the hands of his own men.

The Europeans who explored and colonized the Southeast and the lower Mississippi Valley did not enter an unpopulated land. A substantial native, or "Indian," population lived throughout the region and in the Northeast as well. The designation "Indian" originated with Christopher Columbus, who gave it to the natives he encountered because he thought he had reached the Indies, off the coast of Asia.

How many Indians lived in what became the United States when Columbus arrived in the West Indies is a vexing question. Various figures have been suggested, with precision impossible and disagreement among experts; still, around 5 million is not an unreasonable estimate. The most detailed investigation of the native population starts with the late seventeenth century, when the data are more generally reliable. This study estimates that in 1685 about 113,000 Indians lived in the area from the Atlantic coast west to Cherokee and Choctaw country. Pushing on to the Mississippi River and into Louisiana raises the total to 190,000.

Contact with the Europeans was a demographic disaster for the Indians. By 1775 the native population had dwindled to only 35,600 in the Southeast and 55,600 including the lower Mississippi Valley. Military conflict, a constant from initial settlement, certainly contributed to the decimation, but the chief ravager was disease. Biologically unprepared for the diseases the Europeans brought with them, like smallpox, the Indians were devastated. At times entire tribes disappeared within a single generation.

The Europeans did not find a unified people. Several major tribes interacted with the English—the Powhatan Confederacy in Virginia, the Tuscarora in North Carolina, the Yamassee in South Carolina, the Cherokee in the western portions of both Carolinas, and the Creek in Georgia. The Creek also had substantial contact with Spanish Florida. Farther west the Chickasaw, the Choctaw, and the Natchez were the dominant tribes that first met the French.

These native American tribes did not live isolated from each other in some kind of sylvan paradise. They had cleared forests to build their villages and to grow their crops. They also engaged in trade as well as war with each other. As a result, a considerable transportation network traversed the South. It included pathways that served chiefly local populations, like the maze permeating Cherokee country in the Appalachian highlands of western Carolina, northern Georgia, and eastern Tennessee. Hubs, where trails heading in different directions met and crossed, grew up in places that would remain transportation centers, like present-day Montgomery, Alabama, and Chattanooga, Tennessee. Then there were the connecting trails that tracked across the region, like the route from St. Augustine to Mobile to Natchez that then crossed the Mississippi River and eventually reached Mexico City.

The Indians were culturally unprepared to deal with the Europeans. They had difficulty coping with a people who had a written language, which permitted coordination and planning over time. Additionally, the Europeans had superior weapons. Although the natives understood something about private property, they had no comprehension of accumulation or stockpiling. For the Indians, day-to-day subsistence along with a sense of generosity motivated trading patterns. They did not exchange for profit.

Trade first brought natives and settlers together. For the earliest European immigrants, trade with the native tribes was essential for survival. It also became important for the economic development of the colonies. Initially the exchange of goods took place on the Indians' terms and within their rules of interaction. In the beginning white traders relied on Indian guides and followed Indian trails. They responded to invitations issued by the natives. Traders who failed to respect Indian customs did not succeed. At first the Indians were eager for glass beads, simple metal goods like nails, and liquor, for which they willingly bartered deerskins and slaves captured from enemy tribes.

By the eighteenth century the relationship had changed, with the colonials getting the upper hand, a process that began along the Atlantic seaboard and spread westward to the Mississippi River. Deerskins remained critical, along with slaves, on the European side, while the Indians became dependent on more sophisticated goods such as textiles, edged tools, and weapons. In fact, the tribes nearer to the settlements began to act like intermediaries. They concentrated on producing items like straw baskets, which they traded with more distant tribes to obtain deerskins. Then the deerskins went to the Europeans for coveted weapons. Although the dominant partner had definitely changed, the Indian-settler trade remained a key element in the economy of most colonies up to the American Revolution.

JAMESTOWN

In the beginning Jamestown provided no clue that it would be merely the first step in a process that in the next century and a half would colonize the Southeast. On the contrary, Jamestown often seemed headed toward the fate of its predecessor, Roanoke Island. Settlement at Jamestown was the project of the London Company of Virginia, also known simply as the Virginia Company, a joint-stock company authorized in 1606 by James I. Designed to permit the cost of colonization to be spread among several or several hundred investors, the joint-stock

company offered a means to avoid the need for a single investor, such as Sir Walter Raleigh, to finance an expensive colonial venture without help. To attract settlers the Virginia Company offered shares to people who would invest their labor in Virginia as well as to those who would invest their money in England. The charter of the company also permitted a measure of self-government through a council that the colonists in Virginia would set up. Thus from the outset the profit motive was fundamental to the people who founded and settled Virginia.

For at least the first two decades a secure future for Jamestown was far from certain. For the voyage out, 105 settlers signed on to plant the British flag in Virginia. As George Percy's narrative makes clear, these colonists soon found themselves in a desperate position. During the first winter the population dwindled to 38. Poor planning and a lack of leadership resulted in near starvation, which invited disease and brought the colony to the brink of extinction. In fact, Jamestown hung on only because of the assistance, especially the food, given by the Powhatans.

The colonists also found a leader who had the ability and conviction to drive them to save themselves. The first in a long line of Virginia notables, Captain John Smith took over leadership of the colony in 1608. Around forty years of age when he assumed responsibility for the precarious settlement on the banks of the James, Smith brought a military background to his task. He had been a soldier of fortune who had fought on the Continent. A member of the Virginia Company, he arrived at Jamestown with the first party of settlers. Once there, he concentrated on exploration and securing food from the Indians. On an exploring venture during the first summer, Smith participated in one of the most famous episodes of early American history. By his own account—and there is no solid reason to disbelieve him—he was captured by Chief Powhatan and scheduled for execution. The chief's daughter Pocahontas, then twelve or thirteen years old, rushed forward and took Smith's head in her arms, thus preventing his executioners from clubbing him to death. After this dramatic incident, Pocahontas spent much time in Jamestown. She converted to Christianity and in 1614 married one of the settlers, John Rolfe. Two years later she and their young son accompanied him to England, where she "carried her selfe as the Daughter of a King, and was accordingly respected." Pocahontas never saw her homeland again; in 1617, just as the Rolfes were starting back to Virginia, she fell ill and died.

During Smith's year as president of the council he organized the colonists for work. He also focused their attention on developing an agriculture that would provide a consistent supply of food. When Smith left the colony, he had not guaranteed success but he had staved off disaster. In 1624 Smith published his *Generall Historie of Virginia*, in which he presented Virginia as a natural paradise that offered a bountiful future for the English. Never underestimating his own role in the brief history of the colony, John Smith believed that Virginia was destined for greatness.

Despite Smith's enormous contributions to the security of Jamestown, the settlement remained in jeopardy. Jamestown, along with the farms and homes that grew up around it, confronted three serious challenges. First, the Virginia Company never provided properly for the sustenance of the colony. For almost twenty years ruin seemed imminent. Financial problems plagued the company back in London, and the ensuing loss of interest in the enterprise afflicted the colonists in Virginia. Finally, in 1624 King James I revoked the company's charter, and Virginia became a royal colony. Second, the colonists had to contend with their more powerful Indian neighbors. During the initial decade, relations between colonists and Indians were reasonably good, but they deteriorated after the death of Powhatan. Then, in 1622, came an attack—the colonists called it a massacre—in which at least one-fifth of the population was killed. Desultory fighting went on until the mid-1640s, when the colonists finally overpowered the Powhatan Confederacy. Their triumph was almost total. One hundred years after settlement the 200 Powhatan villages had been reduced to twelve.

GROWTH AND CONFLICT IN VIRGINIA

Even more deadly than either the negligence of the company or the danger from the Indians was disease. Between 1607 and 1622, more than 4,000 men, women, and children had come to the colony. After the Indian assault only around 1,240 people remained. The Indians had killed 347 colonists; some 3,000 others had lost their lives to disease. The mortality rate that had frightened George Percy was staggering. Between 1625 and 1640, new colonists arrived at the rate of 1,000 annually, but by 1640 the population had reached only 8,000. Because there were just over 1,000 people in the colony in 1625, the total went up by some 7,000, less than half the number of new arrivals. A new disease environment, multiplied by the typhus that resulted from contaminated water, ravaged the immigrants. John Smith's description of Virginia as a natural paradise notwithstanding, what nature provided most colonists in Virginia was an early grave.

The easy availability of land and the hope of financial reward kept hopeful people coming to the pestilential place. Those who succeeded in this rough, dangerous world were not noted for honesty and kindness. William Tucker came to Virginia before 1620 to sell goods entrusted to him by a group back in England. Although he evidently sold what he brought, he delivered neither cash nor accounts to the people in England whom he represented. While he cheated his backers, he was dealing with his fellow colonists in similar fashion. Settlers objected to merchants "who have by needlesse and unprofitable Commodities . . . ingaged the inhabitants of debts of Tobacco, to the value almost of theire ensuinge croppe . . . amonge whom we have good cause to complayne of Captayne Tucker, who hath farr exceeded all other marchaunts in the [prices] of their goodes." Tucker did not outperform Abraham Peirsey, who arrived in Virginia in 1616 as manager of the company's storehouse. Though Peirsey sold his goods for two or three times more than the intended price, the business always showed a loss. Even after a decade he had never paid the company for its goods. That practice helped him leave upon his death in 1628 "the best Estate that was ever yett knowen in Virginia." Edward Blancy rose in part by marrying a widow and grabbing the estate of a man who happened to have a surname identical to that of his wife's first husband. Even a treasurer of the colony who desired more servants simply assigned sixteen tenants of the company as his own servants.

Tobacco held the key to potential wealth. Unlike the Spanish colonies in Mexico and South America, Virginia yielded no gold and no silver, but it had the golden weed: tobacco. The success of tobacco in Virginia resulted in large part from the efforts of John Rolfe. Although Rolfe is known primarily for his marriage to Pocahontas, he made a far more lasting impact on the colony, and ultimately on American history, by developing tobacco marketable in Europe. The plant was not native to Virginia. Englishmen had learned to like it from the Spanish, who had brought it to Europe from the West Indies at an early date. The Indians of Virginia did grow and smoke a kind of tobacco, but the English found it bitter. Obtaining some seed from the West Indies, Rolfe managed to produce a milder and more palatable product. Others rushed to follow his lead; tobacco grew even in the streets of Jamestown. The first shipments left for England in 1617.

Although tobacco brought wealth to colonial Virginia, even in the seventeenth century the English disagreed sharply about its use. Those who championed it described the plant as a gift from a bountiful nature. The "esteemed weed" moved one of its partisans to write:

> Earth ne're did breed
> Such a joviall weed,
> Whereof to boast so proudly.

Its enemies, however, denounced tobacco as the "chopping herbe of hell." And the opponents counted among their number King James himself. The king had no use for the chief commodity of his first North American colony. Three years before Jamestown, in a condemnation quite modern in its particulars, he castigated smoking as "a custome lothsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmfull to the braine, dangerous to the lungs, and in the blacke stinking fume thereof, neerest resembling the horrible Stigian smoke of the pit that is bottomelesse." James was on the losing side, however, for his own subjects as well as the continental Europeans eagerly took up the tobacco habit.

If Virginia was to realize fully the economic promise tobacco offered, changes had to be made. The introduction of fruit trees added to the vitamin supply. After mid-century the colony required ship captains to disembark new arrivals in either fall or winter so that they might become somewhat acclimatized before the rigors of summer. Although these measures did not make Virginia a healthy place, they probably helped somewhat to curb the spread of disease. Still, an increase in population depended chiefly on migration from England, which after 1640 included more women than had previously entered the colony. The additional women improved the male-female balance and contributed to the rise in the colonial birthrate. The population rose from 8,000 in 1644 to more than 14,000 in 1653, then to almost 32,000 in 1662, and to just under 45,000 in 1680. By 1700 it topped 58,000.

These years also witnessed the rise of many of the families that were to dominate the colony in the eighteenth century. Among the men who came in the 1650s and 1660s, many were younger sons of the English landed gentry; some were even members of the aristocracy. Though not of the nobility, these individuals were neither the common folk nor the riffraff. They were gentlefolk who wanted to replicate the society they had left behind. They left because their England afforded them no opportunity to rise to the wealth and influence they believed they deserved. In Virginia these gentry strove to give substance to title.

William Byrd I, progenitor of one of the most notable families in colonial Virginia, reached the colony about 1670. He came to live with an uncle, Thomas Stegg Jr., whose father had migrated a generation earlier. Upon Stegg's death, Byrd inherited his estate, and with determination and ruthlessness he transformed his inheritance into one of the greatest of colonial fortunes. He raised tobacco, and he also moved forcefully into other endeavors. Setting up a trading station at the falls of the James River—the future site of Richmond—on the outer edge of English settlement, Byrd traded over hundreds of miles with various Indian tribes. He also dealt extensively in indentured servants and slaves. Passing up no opportunities, Byrd became an accomplished looter when times became unsettled.

Hardship, competition, risk of failure—nothing daunted Byrd or the other immigrants. Virginia remained in large part a rude frontier where ordinary planters lived chiefly on Indian corn and water. Beef in summer, pork in fall, and game supplemented the monotonous regular diet. This open, mostly unregulated environment gave hard-driving men the chance to make their mark. And they were not always scrupulous about how they did it. Colonel Philip Ludwell, for example, used the stroke of a pen to give himself a comparative advantage. Every man who came to the colony received 50 acres of land for every person he brought with him. Ludwell had forty people, so he was entitled to 2,000 acres. But he wanted more, and with his own hand he added a zero to each number. He did not bring 400 immigrants, but he did get 20,000 acres of land. In this hurly-burly world, the likes of the first William Byrd and Philip Ludwell laid the foundations for the life of cultivation and graciousness later enjoyed by their families and by such others as the Carters, the Lees, the Randolphs—the first families of Virginia.

Social conflict pervaded this process. The conflicting interests among the older colonial elite, the hard-driving newcomers, and newly freed indentured servants—the unfree whites who formed the bulk of the labor force before 1675—made for tense, even violent times. By 1660 the peopling of the older sections of the tidewater counties made readily available acres scarce indeed. Newly freed servants and new immigrants found it more and more difficult to obtain decent land in settled areas. Their alternatives were to rent from established landowners, not their choice, or to take up land farther inland, a move that often meant trouble with the Indians. The land-hungry saw the Indians as their enemies, as possessing the land they desired. Yet the royal governor and others among the elite did not want a renewed struggle with the Indians. After the triumph of the mid-1640s, the colonial government designated its near neighbors, who now lived peaceably beside the whites and paid tribute in kind, as "tributary" Indians.

Governor William Berkeley in 1667 captured precisely the background of the strife rankling Virginia society: "Consider us as a people press'd at our backes with Indians, in our Bowills with our servants." This tension exploded in Bacon's Rebellion, which shook the colony between the spring and fall of 1676. At that time eager, ambitious young men, such as William Byrd I, rallied behind the leadership of thirty-year-old Nathaniel Bacon, who had been in Virginia only a year. Bacon arrived with close ties to the elite; Governor Berkeley had even placed his future foe on his council. Disagreement over Indian policy eventually led Berkeley and Bacon to armed combat. Bacon demanded a commission from the governor to attack the Indians, but Berkeley, fearful of the repercussions, refused. Despite the governor's refusal, Bacon and his followers set out.

In the ensuing conflict the upper hand seemed to belong first to one side, then to the other. In May Berkeley branded Bacon a rebel and proceeded to capture his former associate. But once he had Bacon in his grasp, the governor imposed no punishment. Instead, hoping to end the trouble and reunite his colony, he pardoned the rebel. Bacon was not to be deterred, however. In June he brought a strong force to Jamestown and at gunpoint forced the governor to give him the commission he sought, authorizing a move against the Indians. With Bacon on the march, the governor declared the commission fraudulent and called on the people to help him stop Bacon. But it was Berkeley who was stopped. Defeated, the governor retreated to the eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay while the victorious Bacon entered Jamestown with 400 men on foot and 120 horsemen. On September 19 he and his men torched the town—the church, public buildings, private homes, even the tavern. Outside of Jamestown homes and plantations were looted, including the governor's. William Byrd got his share.

Yet in the end Bacon's Rebellion failed. In late October Bacon died, probably of dysentery. No one else rose to replace him as leader. When Governor Berkeley returned and regained control, he had at least twenty of Bacon's lieutenants executed. The governor retained his authority, but the brutality of both sides underscored the severity of the crisis.

Bacon's Rebellion was the most violent episode in the social melee that was seventeenth-century Virginia. The future, however, was not on the side of continued turmoil. Colonists' willingness to move to new land along with the firm adoption of a new labor system worked for a more settled social order. The new century would usher in social peace and a more ordered society, though the new order commanded a heavy price.

MARYLAND

While the story in Virginia unfolded, just to the north and on the Chesapeake another colony was being established. The origins of Maryland differed from those of its older neighbor. Maryland grew out of a land grant and charter Charles I gave in 1632 to George Calvert, Lord Baltimore, though technically they went to George's son Cecilius, the second Lord Baltimore, because George died before completion of the transaction. The charter gave Calvert proprietorship of Maryland, which meant that initially he had title to all the land and that he could establish the rules for colonization. A Roman Catholic, Calvert wanted a colony in which no discrimination would be practiced against his fellow Catholics, though he never saw Maryland simply as a haven for his coreligionists. At the same time, Calvert wanted to profit from his landholdings like any other English lord. To that end he envisioned a land system dominated by lords of manors who controlled immense acreages.

The first group of 200 settlers, including a cadre of Roman Catholic priests, landed in southern Maryland in 1634 and established St. Mary's City as the first colonial capital. By summer their numbers had grown to 350. Like the settlers who journeyed to Virginia, the original Marylanders all hailed from England. And in fact the social and economic course of Maryland followed a pattern quite similar to that of Virginia.

The structured, almost medieval, social organization that Calvert planned for Maryland never came to pass. His system of literal lords of the manor never became important; after a decade only sixteen were in place. Instead, the almost wide-open practices common in Virginia prevailed. Without question large landowners stood at the top of Maryland's social order, but as in Virginia, many had made their way up through ambition, drive, and good fortune. By the end of the century, again as in Virginia, the great families that would dominate affairs in the eighteenth century had emerged from the grasping pack.

On the religious front Roman Catholics retained their security throughout the century. Almost from the beginning Protestants outnumbered them, but the Catholics' association with the proprietor helped their cause. Then the Maryland Toleration Act of 1649 gave legislative sanction to nondiscriminatory practices. Although the law did not declare religious diversity a public good, it did require toleration. And toleration became the hallmark of the colony until 1691, when Protestants succeeded in obtaining a royal charter, which turned Maryland into a royal colony and ended the proprietorship of the Calvert family. Substantial changes occurred: The capital was moved from St. Mary's City, in the center of the Catholic population, to Annapolis, a Protestant stronghold; the Church of England became the established church; Roman Catholics were denied the right to vote, to hold office, and to hold religious services outside their homes.

Maryland was the only southern colony in which the royal period did not last until the Revolution. In 1715, after only a quarter century, the crown restored the proprietorship of Maryland to the fourth Lord Baltimore, who had converted to Protestantism. With the restoration the original charter of 1632 again became valid. Although the anti-Catholic statutes remained on the books, the political proscriptions were lifted from Catholics who professed allegiance to the king, and the colonial government did not rigorously enforce the prohibition against public religious services.

For the growth of Maryland it really did not matter who had basic authority. By 1650, 4,500 settlers were in the colony. In 1690, on the eve of the royalist takeover, their numbers had increased more than fivefold, to 24,000. In 1720, after the reinstatement of the proprietor, the population stood at just about 66,000. And by the eve of the Revolution it had edged above 200,000.

THE CAROLINAS

After the founding of Maryland, colonization in the Southeast subsided for almost forty years. Internal problems in the mother country, which eventually led to civil war and the execution of Charles I in 1649 and to the temporary end of the monarchy, accounted for this considerable loss of momentum. But just as the fall of the monarchy halted colonization, its restoration under Charles II in 1660 signaled a resurgence. To reward eight of his major supporters, Charles gave them a substantial land grant in the New World. This land, which stretched southward from Virginia, was called Carolina—from Carolus, the Latin form of Charles—and its owners were known as the Lords Proprietors of Carolina.

In planning a colony for Carolina the proprietors certainly wanted to profit, and, like Cecilius Calvert, they envisioned an almost medieval social organization. A document known as the Fundamental Constitutions formed their blueprint. Prepared chiefly by John Locke, the great English philosopher and political theorist, the Fundamental Constitutions blended notions advanced for the seventeenth century with an archaic social structure. The plan guaranteed religious freedom, but it authorized the establishment of the Church of England. It also provided for a stratified, hereditary nobility with such exotic titles as landgrave and cacique. Although the Fundamental Constitutions provided a master plan for the Lords Proprietors' new colony, converting theory into practice proved to be impossible.

In 1680, ten years after the proprietors established their colony, they relocated their settlement a short distance, to the present site of Charleston. The proprietors hoped to promote Carolina not only among their English compatriots, but also in New England and Barbados, an English-owned colony in the West Indies, which they believed was overpopulated. New Englanders had no impact on South Carolina, but Barbadians had an enormous influence. During the initial decades the Barbadian immigrants became the driving force in the colony. They were willing to relocate in the new colony because Barbados's land area was not large enough to permit all its ambitious families to establish rich plantations. The Barbadians arrived in South Carolina with the goal of creating in their new home the plantation economy they had envied back in Barbados. Despite their commitment to plantation life, the colony remained basically a wilderness until the turn of the century.

French Huguenots soon joined the Barbadians in Carolina. Driven out of France by the Catholic majority, these French Protestants had no difficulty accepting the Barbadians' vision for the colony. The career of one Huguenot immigrant testifies both to the harsh conditions in South Carolina and to the determination of its settlers. Judith Manigault and her husband left France in the mid-1680s and, after a stop in England, traveled on to South Carolina. Arriving in 1689, the Manigaults settled in the swampy country along the Santee River, approximately 40 miles north of Charleston. Judith and her husband worked side by side felling trees, sawing wood, and raising crops. Their life was difficult. "I have been for six months together without tasting bread, working the ground like a slave; and I have even passed three or four years without always having it when I wanted it," she wrote a brother back in Europe. Even so, she thanked God for the good things in her life, especially the strength to bear the rigors of South Carolina. By the time of Judith's death in 1711 at age forty-two, some seventy families lived in this Santee region, where they farmed and traded with the Indians.

The early settlers struggled until the success of rice. In the beginning the South Carolina economy was based on livestock and skins, chiefly deerskins, which colonists traded with the Indians. A staple crop to support a growing, prosperous economy remained elusive. Although attempts to grow rice were made in the 1670s and 1680s, these efforts did not even produce enough for home consumption and certainly not enough for export. Even by 1690, when growers managed to increase their yields, they still had severe problems with the task of removing the husks from the grains of rice. But over the next twenty

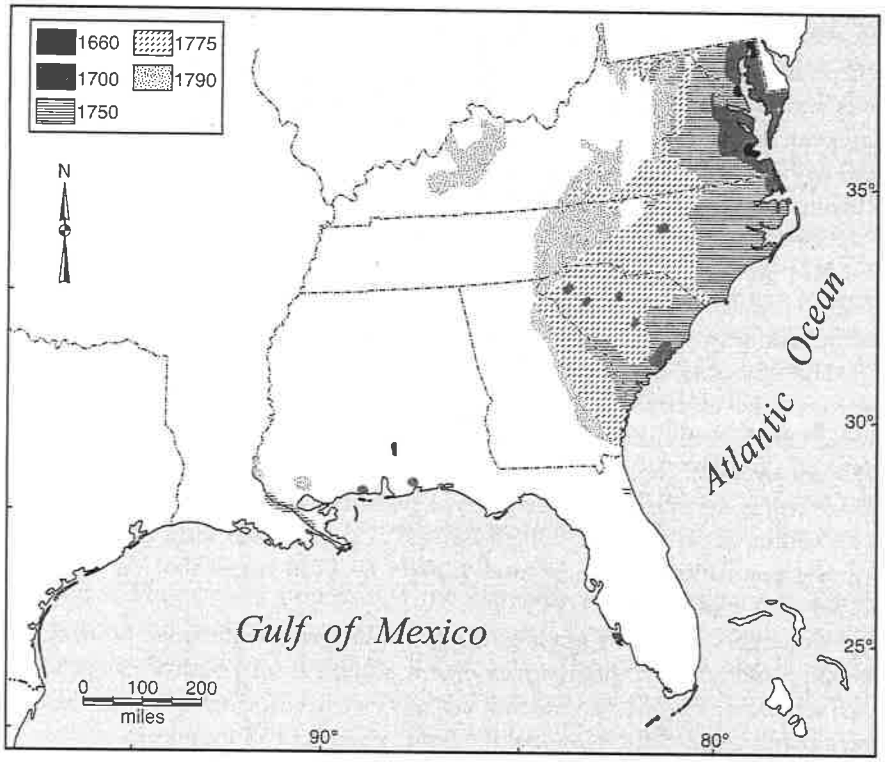
years Carolinians did learn to produce an economically viable crop. This success came in conjunction with the importation of slaves into the colony. Some of the slaves entering South Carolina came from areas of western Africa where rice had long been a mainstay of the diet. It seems likely that the newly arrived Africans were key to the development of South Carolina's rice culture. They knew how to plant, cultivate, harvest, and thresh rice. The slaves surely supplied the labor in the rice fields, and it is probable that they also helped provide the knowledge critical to the successful cultivation of what became the great Carolina staple. A report to London in 1700 made the point that South Carolinians had "now found out the true way of raising and husking Rice."

The favorable outcome of the venture with rice significantly affected the growth of the colony's population. In 1680 no more than 1,000 people lived around Charleston, and by 1700 their numbers had reached only 2,260, of whom 900 were women. Then, with the success of rice cultivation, prosperity and confidence began to take hold. Many of the planters who prospered with rice and rose to eminent positions in the colony had Barbadian and Huguenot roots. By 1710 the population moved beyond 10,000; by 1730 it had shot up to 30,000; and by 1770 it stood at 125,000.

Although Charles II's grant to the Lords Proprietors included North Carolina, that colony had a different settlement pattern from South Carolina's. The initial settlements in the seventeenth century occurred before 1650, in the same Outer Banks area where the Roanoke Island colonies had foundered back in the 1580s. The colony was originally known as Albemarle, the name of one of the sounds separating the outer banks from the mainland. In 1691 North Carolina replaced Albemarle as the name of the colony. This second and permanent colonization originated in Virginia, when some settlers made the short journey from the James River region to the Outer Banks and the colony of Albemarle became the colony of North Carolina. By mid-century a few hundred people were raising livestock and attempting to grow tobacco there.

When the Lords Proprietors assumed control of North Carolina, they experienced some of the same problems they confronted in South Carolina. Despite the proprietors' intentions, the Fundamental Constitutions were never enforced. They were just as impractical in North Carolina as they were in South Carolina. The interests of the settlers in North Carolina often differed from those of the Lords Proprietors, and tension governed the relationship between the two factions. Finally, in 1719, the Lords Proprietors formally surrendered their charter and North Carolina became a royal colony.

During the last twenty years of the seventeenth century, settlement expanded inland. In that period and in the early years of the eighteenth century, the colony greeted a variety of groups that broadened its ethnic base. French Huguenots and German and Swiss Protestants joined the colony. In the colonial



Growth of Settlement in the Southern Colonies 1660–1790

era North Carolina never became as prosperous as Virginia or South Carolina, but its population steadily increased. Between 1680 and 1700 the number of North Carolinians doubled, from about 5,000 to 10,000. During the next three decades the population rose to 30,000. As in the other southern colonies, growth in North Carolina was enormous after 1730. By 1750 almost 73,000 people lived in the colony, and by 1770 their numbers exceeded 197,000. Some North Carolinians emulated their prosperous neighbors, growing tobacco in the Virginia border areas and rice in the southeastern corner, close to South Carolina. But most North Carolina farmers concentrated on animals, corn, and other foodstuffs. Naval stores—turpentine, pitch, and rosin—obtained from the abundant pine forests formed a critical part of the colonial economy.

GEORGIA

The boundaries of Georgia, the last English colony established in the South, were initially within the area granted to the Lords Proprietors of Carolina. The first

plans to settle Georgia were devised in South Carolina in an effort to create a buffer between that colony and Spanish Florida, but none of these early attempts succeeded. After both Carolinas became royal colonies, the English government took a different tack. In 1732 the crown approved a charter setting up a Board of Trustees and granting to the trustees a twenty-one-year lease on Georgia.

In colonizing Georgia the trustees had two major goals. The first was the traditional strategic aim of establishing a barrier between increasingly prosperous South Carolina and the Spanish in Florida. Then the trustees had the notion that Georgia would serve as a haven for certain social unfortunates, such as debtors, who in eighteenth-century England faced imprisonment. This philanthropic vision extended beyond the creation of a new home for people trapped by unfortunate circumstances; the trustees envisioned a new society unlike any that existed in the older colonies. The trustees would restrict landholding to a maximum of 500 acres per person, and they banned slavery. The trustees wanted Georgians to benefit the mother country by developing crops and products not available elsewhere in the empire: Instead of the veterans of colonial southern agriculture like tobacco and rice, Georgians would cultivate mulberry trees to feed silkworms, grapes for wine, and spices.

The first settlers landed in 1733 at a place they called Savannah. Leading the 115 original settlers was James Oglethorpe, the only trustee to come to Georgia. The thirty-seven-year-old Oglethorpe became the dominant figure in early Georgia. Born in London into a prominent family, Oglethorpe served in Parliament, where his chairmanship of a committee on the condition of English jails stirred his interest in America. He made the journey to Georgia to see that the colony started off in the right direction. This original contingent included few of the social unfortunates the trustees wanted to aid. Neither did it have many who knew anything about agriculture. These new Georgians were chiefly artisans and tradespeople from small English towns. Led by Oglethorpe, who proved himself an able colonizer and leader, they set about clearing land for homes and crops, erecting a fort for defensive purposes, and laying out the town of Savannah. In the initial years the trustees sent over assistance and some 1,800 charity colonists, whose passage the trustees paid. Scottish soldiers and German Protestants supplemented the English majority. From Savannah the colony expanded inland and down the coast to the Altamaha River.

Michael Burkholder was the kind of settler the trustees hoped would immigrate to their colony. A German who still spoke his native tongue, Burkholder in the early 1740s owned about 500 acres outside Savannah. The Burkholder family farmed the land, and in addition they worked as skilled artisans. Michael Burkholder had mastered several crafts, including carpentry, millwrighting, and wheelwrighting. His oldest son and his son-in-law were shoemakers and carpenters, and his eldest daughter was a seamstress. Burkholder made sure that his five younger children learned the trades that their father and older siblings practiced.

Despite the great hopes of the trustees and the immigration of such colonists as the Burkholders, Georgia did not prosper, and many of the colonists blamed the trustees' cherished goals: restrictions on landowning, exotic crops, and the absence of slaves. After 1745 the interest of the trustees waned. Simultaneously the colonists grew more independent, and some of the inland settlements became practically autonomous. Finally, in 1752, at the end of the trustees' lease, the crown assumed control of the colony. Even before Georgia became a royal colony, however, the trustees had begun to relax some of the old restrictions; the authorized size of landholdings was increased and slaveholding was permitted. The kind of determination and drive that produced the economic elite in the Chesapeake and in Carolina became evident in Georgia. These people constantly pressed for the changes they believed would permit them to match the prosperity of the planters in South Carolina. In the two decades remaining before the Revolution, the economic fortunes of Georgia improved so strikingly that the population grew from just over 5,000 in 1750 to more than 23,000 in 1770.

FLORIDA

Spain had claimed Florida since its discovery by Ponce de Leon in 1513, but another half century passed before the Spanish effected a lasting settlement. In 1565 an expedition led by Pedro Menendez de Aviles established St. Augustine. Concerned by the arrival of the French in the northeast corner of present-day Florida in 1564, the Spanish crown acted to protect its claims as well as its land and water communication lines to the heart of the Spanish Empire in Mexico and South America. At the outset Menendez attacked and basically annihilated the small French garrison. Then he attempted, unsuccessfully, to establish outlying settlements to the east, as near as the coast of South Carolina and as far as the Chesapeake Bay.

The ambitious plans of the Spanish monarchy for Florida failed. Unlike Mexico and South America, Florida had no precious metals to generate the investment key for sixteenth-century Spanish colonization. Florida welcomed few colonists. In 1600 the population of St. Augustine barely exceeded 500, including men, women, and children. That about half were single men underscores the settlement's function as a military outpost. Known for poor soil, hurricanes, Indians, and pirates, St. Augustine repelled settlers instead of attracting them. In 1700 the population was only 1,500, and it stood almost alone. Not until the founding of Pensacola, 350 miles to the west on the Gulf of Mexico, in 1698 did a second consequential Spanish settlement appear.

Spanish Florida did not really grow in the eighteenth century. The goal of creating a flourishing agricultural economy never made any headway, though ranches did exist. In fact the major activity in Florida was religious. Some forty to seventy Roman Catholic priests were engaged in a missionary effort to convert Indians to Christianity. They ministered to more than 20,000 natives, though the actual number is in dispute. By the last quarter of the seventeenth century, missions dotted the countryside from St. Augustine toward Pensacola.

This substantial effort did not last long. Disaster resulted when the English, from their base in South Carolina, attacked St. Augustine and the Spanish missions in the very early 1700s. Although the colony at St. Augustine survived, the English, with their Indian allies, literally wiped out the chain of missions that ran north and west of the town. By 1706 all had collapsed. The Spanish could count neither their economic nor their religious endeavors as successes.

The failure of the mission struggle was directly related to events on the eastern and western borders of Florida that diminished Spanish influence with the Indians and threatened Spanish control of Florida itself. Even before 1710 the English had dealt a crippling blow to the mission enterprise. Then the victory of the English over the Spanish in 1742 at the Battle of Bloody Marsh on the Georgia coast confirmed English possession of Georgia. The triumphs of the English coupled with the movement of the French into Louisiana knocked out the chief economic activity of Spanish Florida—trading with the Indians. Both the English and the French were more experienced trading partners, and they offered the Indians more abundant goods. Neither Spanish priests nor Spanish traders could compete.

When Spain surrendered Florida to England in 1763 following Britain's victory in the French and Indian War, Florida remained fundamentally what it had been two centuries before: a small military garrison. Almost every Spanish settler departed before the English took control—slightly more than 3,000 from St. Augustine, with 380 slaves and 79 free blacks, and around 700 from Pensacola. The lack of economic and population growth in Spanish Florida contrasted sharply with the course of events in the English colonies to the north and east.

LOUISIANA AND THE LOWER MISSISSIPPI VALLEY

While the Spanish struggled unsuccessfully in Florida, the French were trying with little more luck to build a colony to the west in Louisiana. Although La Salle had claimed Louisiana for France in 1682, and within two decades settlements were established on Biloxi Bay and at Mobile, no serious colonizing took place until the founding of New Orleans in 1718 by the Sieur de Bienville. The French crown saw Louisiana as the southern end of New France down the Mississippi waterway from Canada, the oldest part of the French Empire in North America.

Even after designating New Orleans as the capital of Louisiana, French colonization was sporadic and halting. By 1726 the grand total of colonists in the lower Mississippi Valley numbered only 3,784, including soldiers and slaves.

Almost fifty years later, in 1763, the population had edged up to around 9,500, chiefly because of an increase in black slaves, who had outnumbered white settlers since 1730.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, settlement and trade expanded slowly and in conjunction with each other. Settlers clung to the Mississippi while they moved upriver and downriver from New Orleans. A patchwork of farming, herding, hunting, gathering, trade, and transportation blended commercial and subsistence activities. Plantations raising crops for export were few, and they were not central to the colony's economy. Free Europeans and both free and enslaved Africans interacted with the natives in a frontier environment generally without central control. The attempts by French authorities, with support from New Orleans merchants, to construct a more ordered and regulated colonial society largely failed, though they did cause tension in the colony. Like Florida, Louisiana was Roman Catholic, with priests accompanying settlers and trying to convert Indians.

This sputtering enterprise on the margin of the French Empire received a new owner in 1763. France's defeat in the French and Indian War forced its latecomer ally Spain to relinquish Florida to Great Britain. In return, France had to give Louisiana west of the Mississippi River, including New Orleans, to Spain in payment for Spain's loss of Florida. Simultaneously, that portion of Louisiana

The Cabildo, New Orleans, constructed in 1799, The Governmental Center of Spanish Louisiana and the Site of the Transfer of Louisiana to the United States in 1803
Courtesy of Patricia H. Cooper

east of the Mississippi River went to Great Britain. The British designated the area as West Florida to differentiate it from old Spanish Florida, which they renamed East Florida, with the Apalachicola River as the boundary between the two Floridas.

The colonial population in Louisiana, though small, did not welcome its new rulers. Unwilling to give up their French allegiance, they forcibly rejected the first Spanish effort to take control. Not until 1769 and the arrival as governor of General Alejandro O'Reilly, with a sizable military contingent, was Spain able to secure the colony. Vigorously asserting Spanish authority, O'Reilly punished the colonial insurgents, imprisoning and executing their leaders. The Spanish takeover did not initially change the character of the colonial society and economy. Roman Catholicism continued. The population remained small; it did not match even that of Georgia, though spread over a considerably larger area.

By the 1780s, however, Louisiana was clearly heading in a new direction, one much closer to the Southeast. After being defeated in the American Revolution, Great Britain had to return both Floridas to Spain because Spain had assisted France and the United States in the war. Spain used attractive land grants as magnets that encouraged new settlers to the lower Mississippi Valley, from Canary Islanders to loyalists from the rebellious British colonies. The black forced labor population also increased measurably, with slaves imported from the Caribbean and brought in by Anglo planters.

In the mid-1780s the colonial population in the lower Mississippi Valley had grown to 30,000—13,000 whites, 16,000 slaves, and 1,000 free blacks—triple the population of twenty years earlier. At the same time a frontierlike trading economy was being replaced by a plantation economy that utilized black slaves and raised crops for export, with tobacco, indigo, and timber products leading the way.

UNFREE LABOR, WHITE AND RED

All the colonies had one overpowering need: able-bodied men and women to work. The colonists faced the enormous task of converting the forests of their new domain into cultivated fields that would produce the tobacco, the rice, and the other crops necessary not merely for their survival but for the generation of the wealth they dreamed about. In the premachinery days of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that feat required the strong backs, arms, and legs of many human beings. Those who could pay their way across the Atlantic could never achieve that goal. First, and fundamentally, this group never had the numbers to get the work done. Second, many of these people had been lured to the New World by the hope of making a fortune, and to succeed they had to have others working for them. And the pestilent environment of the seventeenth century provided few incentives to free persons of limited means. People who could exercise some choice over their destination in the New World tended to choose healthier areas, such as New England.

To fill this critical need the southern colonists looked to unfree labor. That was a familiar concept to the colonists, for English law provided for the hiring out of servants to masters, usually for a fixed term. In the seventeenth century the powerful magnet of land drew to the Chesapeake colonies a substantial number of indentured servants, English men and women who paid for their transatlantic voyage by selling their labor for a specified period, usually five to seven years. These landless, unfree laborers—chiefly young, unmarried, and unskilled men but also young, unmarried women—expected their labor to enable them in time to become landowners. Of course, they expected that as landowners they would acquire servants to work for them.

In seventeenth-century Virginia and Maryland, indentured servants were the mainstays of the labor force. Probably between one-half to three-quarters of all new arrivals in the Chesapeake between 1630 and 1680 came as indentured servants. Until the end of the terms specified in their contracts, these laborers were considered the chattel property of the masters who had purchased their indentures. According to the usual contract, masters had to provide clothing, food, and shelter; in return the indentured servants contributed their labor. The servants did have the basic civil rights shared by all the king's subjects, regardless of circumstances. In the colonies a body of statute law developed to govern the master-servant relationship.

At times the system seemed to work as intended. Servants performed their required labor and subsequently became landowners themselves. John Cage was an illiterate indentured servant in Maryland in the 1640s. The owner of Cage's service evidently tried to keep him in servitude past his legal term, but Cage won a court judgment against his master. The records indicate that in 1650 Cage held title to 150 acres of land. He also served for a time as a county juror and later on apparently possessed a few servants of his own. In Virginia during the same period, the Seager family made even greater strides. Oliver Seager, most likely a former servant, in 1652 had 200 acres of land in Middlesex County. After Oliver's death his son Randolph took charge of the property. Randolph Seager, too, became a county official, but a more successful one than John Cage, for in the next few years he held a variety of offices—juror, estate appraiser, and constable. At his death in his early thirties he was a respected property owner.

Indentured servitude did not always lead to such careers, however. The fate that befell Elizabeth Abbott and Elias Hinton in Virginia in the 1620s indicates the horror that could await an indentured servant. Abbott and Hinton labored for the Proctors, husband and wife, who had at least four other servants. Hinton toiled chiefly in the tobacco fields; Abbott apparently worked mostly in or around the Proctor home. Both Proctors inflicted corporal punishment on their

servants, and they certainly did not discriminate between the sexes. Both of them beat Abbott and Hinton unmercifully. Abbott claimed that on one occasion she was beaten with fishhooks. Hinton's final beating seems to have been with a rake. Neither Abbott nor Hinton survived their common ordeal; in October 1624 the Proctors were arrested and charged with beating both servants to death.

Most indentured servants probably did not fare so well as Cage and Seager or suffer so incredibly as Abbott and Hinton. Regardless of individual experiences, indentured servants dominated the labor force in the seventeenth century, but they practically disappeared after 1700. They never were so important in the Carolinas, Georgia, and the Gulf South as in Virginia and Maryland. This different experience of the older and younger colonies testifies to an especially momentous shift in the source and the identity of unfree laborers. Between 1650 and 1700 indentured servitude gave way to another form of unfree labor: slavery.

From an early date the colonists enslaved Indians, though the extent of Indian slavery varied widely. Indian slavery never became fundamental to the labor system of the Chesapeake. Over the course of much of the seventeenth century some Virginians tried to make slaves of Indians. Although the historical record is not absolutely clear on this issue, it is probable that few Indians in Virginia or Maryland ended up as slaves. The experience in Florida and Louisiana was similar; few Indians became slaves. But in South Carolina between 1670 and 1700, Indian slavery became widespread. Many Indians lived in and near the colony, and the various tribes traded their captives from tribal wars to the whites for enslavement. Shortly after the beginning of the eighteenth century, frontier conflicts boosted Indian slaves to their largest total, around 1,400, but by then the days of Indian slavery were almost over. The Indian population, even in South Carolina, never was large enough to provide a sufficient labor force for the whites. Moreover, the susceptibility of Indians to the whites' diseases made them unsatisfactory as slaves. Besides, the possibility always existed that Indian slaves could escape and melt back into the Indian population of the interior.

UNFREE LABOR, BLACK

By 1700, colonists from the Chesapeake to South Carolina had fixed on a much more plentiful group to serve as their slaves. Like the Indians, these people were not white, but unlike the Indians, they were not native to the New World. Neither were the whites' diseases so lethal to them, nor did they have a nearby hinterland. Black Africans became the great slave force of the colonial South. The enslavement of blacks did not begin in one location at one point in time. It developed in the Chesapeake, particularly in Virginia, over several decades. The first blacks, some possibly slaves, appeared in Jamestown in 1619; by 1660 a system of black slavery was clearly in place. Black slaves had not yet generally replaced white indentured servants as the major souce of unfree labor, but their introduction signaled the beginning of significant change. Intimate ties bound together those two complementary developments—the rise of black slavery and the decline of white indentured servitude.

Until 1650 the black population of Virginia grew very little. The first blacks who arrived in 1619 numbered around twenty; a half dozen years later the total remained basically unchanged at twenty-three, compared to more than 1,200 whites. During the next quarter century the whites far outdistanced the blacks. In 1649 the white population stood at approximately 15,000, while the black had reached only 300.

The historical record does not make precisely clear the status of the blacks in Virginia between 1619 and 1649. The evidence does permit two generalizations, however. First, not all of these blacks were slaves; in fact, most probably were not. Some were free people; others, probably the majority, were indentured servants. Second, at times they were treated quite differently from whites. The first census, in 1629, distinguished white people from black people and often provided no personal names for blacks. In 1640, blacks were denied the right to bear arms, and they received harsher penalties than whites who had committed the same offenses. On occasion punishment for blacks was a lifetime in servitude. In 1640 three runaway servants, two white and one black, were captured. Each of the white servants was sentenced to four additional years of servitude; the black found himself bound for life. That some blacks were also being sold for life, a condition never applied to whites, also indicates that white society viewed the servant status of at least some blacks differently. Executors settling an estate in 1647 gave eight blacks to a master "to have hold occupy posesse and injoy and every one of the afforementioned Negroes forever." In addition, black servants commanded a higher price than white servants, which certainly indicates a different kind of servitude.

Although in 1650, white indentured servants still overwhelmingly supplied the unfree labor, changes taking place in the colony were setting the circumstances that would foster the massive growth of black slavery. The disparity between the costs of white and black servants dramatized that shift. In the 1640s and early 1650s, a white servant with an indenture of five years or more cost around 1,000 pounds of tobacco, but a black commanded approximately 2,000 pounds of tobacco. A seasoned male or female black could bring between 2,000 and 3,000 pounds. Late in the 1650s prices rose for both blacks and whites, but a substantial differential still held. While white servants brought as much as 3,000 pounds, blacks sold for 4,000 pounds. That white masters would pay 50 percent and even 100 percent more for blacks than for whites underscores the fundamental transformation that was taking place.

Worsening relations between white servants and their masters significantly influenced the new direction. The growing number of young men completing

their servitude and clamoring for their own land led to social and political strain. This increasing tension among the whites finally erupted in 1676 in Bacon's Rebellion. The white elite had to decide whether it wanted to sustain a system that seemingly guaranteed social turmoil and strife.

To the Virginia elite, blacks offered two powerful advantages over whites as the major source of unfree labor. A black could be held in bondage for life, a condition that could never apply to an English person. A black man could also be permanently barred from the company of landowners and placed outside political life, as no Englishman could be.

The embrace of Africans as the servant class had a further important ramification for the leaders of colonial Virginia and for the subsequent history of the South. Whites of every social class could join together as whites vis-à-vis the black slaves. Thus racial identity became a powerful force for white unity. The growth of black slavery did help the cause of social peace among whites. The turmoil that sparked Bacon's Rebellion and racked Virginia in much of the seventeenth century did not carry over into the eighteenth.

The enslavement of blacks satisfied many needs for the white colonists. Certainly the English in Britain and in Virginia had knowledge of both blacks and slavery before the introduction of blacks into the colony. White Virginians were aware that for the bulk of the sixteenth century, blacks had been transported from Africa to work as slaves in Spanish colonies in the New World. They also knew that the English colony of Barbados had instituted African slavery in the 1630s.

Critical was the black color of the Africans. To the English of the Elizabethan age, that blackness separated Africans from themselves. And just as important, it signified inferiority. In the eyes of the English, the black Africans were not only different from but inferior to themselves. The reasons for that attitude were complex. In the sixteenth century no two words in the English language carried more psychological power than black and white. White stood for goodness and purity; black, for sinfulness and evil. Color symbolism alone, however, did not construct racism. What the English learned about the living conditions and social activities of equatorial Africa reinforced the sharp contrast conveyed by white and black. Of course, few English people had visited tropical Africa; they formed their impressions by reading the accounts of travelers. Those reports described men and women wearing loincloths and living in straw huts. Moreover, those Africans did not worship the Christian God. To the English convinced of the superiority of their own civilization and cultural attainments, the Africans appeared uncivilized, heathen, even savage. In their minds a people who wore practically no clothes, who had no grand buildings, and who were not Christian could in no way be equal to the English or to any other Europeans. That these uncivilized Africans had black skin only underscored the fundamental distinction the English perceived between themselves and the Africans. Then the actual enslavement of Africans in the New World confirmed for many English people their perception of the basic inferiority of blacks. A calculus of racial debasement and prejudice took hold.

THE SUCCESS OF SLAVERY

Thus both economics and race made essential contributions to the enslavement of blacks. Although scholars disagree as to which of the two factors had primary importance as a motivating force, all students of colonial slavery concur that both were critical ingredients in the origins of slavery. Each reinforced the other.

Between 1650 and 1700 black slavery went into the bedrock of Chesapeake society, which went from a society with slaves to a slave society in which slavery was fundamental to both economic production and social organization. By 1670 Virginia counted some 2,000 blacks, considerably more than the 300 of twenty years earlier. The number grew steadily through the remainder of the century, until by 1700 at least 10,000 blacks lived in the colony. Maryland went from just over 1,000 blacks in 1670 to more than 3,000 in 1700. The increasing statutory recognition of slavery matched the growing numbers. Between 1660 and 1670 a succession of statutes dealt in increasing detail with various aspects of slavery. Finally, in 1705, the first codification of slave law took place in Virginia. In the new century the number of slaves increased massively.

South of the Chesapeake no such lengthy incubation period occurred. The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina made provision for slavery. And coming from a society where slavery was firmly implanted, the Barbadian immigrants to South Carolina thought in terms of slavery from the beginning. Although indentured servants did come into Carolina, they never occupied a central place there. By 1700 approximately a third of South Carolina's population was black, and only ten years later blacks outnumbered whites. Even Georgia turned to black slaves as the chief source of unfree labor within twenty years of its settlement. In Spanish Florida and French Louisiana, slavery basically accompanied settlement. Already extant in other parts of both empires, it followed the flag. The southern colonies made no more momentous decision in all of the seventeenth century than the establishment of black slavery.

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The Economic and Social World

The availability of land had an enormous impact on the social, economic, and political structure of the colonial South. As a South Carolinian wrote in the aftermath of the Revolution, "From the first settlement in this country . . . the facility of procuring landed property gave every citizen an opportunity of becoming an independent freeholder." Land was the greatest economic asset of the colonies, in the North as in the South. Not only was land plentiful throughout the colonial period, its price remained generally reasonable. Over time land in the older, coastal regions did increase substantially in cost, but prices in newer areas remained within the financial reach of multitudes of colonists. In addition to general availability and reasonable cost, land was owned in fee simple; in other words, the overwhelming majority of landowners possessed their acres with none of the encumbrances associated with feudal land tenure.

Landownership was important for a great deal more than economic advancement. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, landownership provided the necessary key to respected social position and to participation in politics. Although laws generally excluded the landless from political participation, the proscription had a much broader base than statutes. A general societal attitude placed the landless outside social respectability. As a result, ownership of land became a basic requirement for both social mobility and broad political activity.

The male heads of southern colonial families surely owned land. Heading the list of landowners in the colonial South, and certainly impressing most historians, were the plantation magnates, planters who possessed enormous acreages. William Byrd II, who at one time counted 174,000 acres as his own, and Robert "King" Carter, with 300,000 acres, exemplify the grandees. Often these men did not simply appear and disappear within a generation, though dissipation of fortunes did occur. Many of the great families of the Revolutionary era—the Carrolls, the Lees, the Masons—benefited from the economic success of their forebears.

THE BREADTH OF LANDOWNING

Despite the grandeur of great names and plantations, the most striking feature of landownership in the colonial South was its breadth. Although social conflict over landowning had plagued Virginia for a time in the mid-seventeenth century, by the eighteenth century the great majority of white male southerners owned their own land. At the end of the colonial period no more than 30 percent of the white population in Virginia made up the landless group. In North Carolina the figure dropped to 25 percent, and in South Carolina scarcely 14 percent of the white population occupied the landless category. These figures on landownership compare favorably with those of the northern colonies, where the landless totaled approximately 25 percent of the population.

Within the landowning class a middle group occupied a prominent place. In South Carolina, 30 percent owned more than 500 acres, but fully 60 percent held between 100 and 500 acres, while 30 percent had title to between 100 and 300 acres. The landed aristocracy was less important in North Carolina, where middle-class farmers or yeomen formed a clear majority of the population. By the middle of the eighteenth century many of these farmers were prospering, and the ongoing westward expansion that characterized the century made it entirely possible for a yeoman to become rich and even for a poor person to achieve economic independence. The geographic mobility across the broad expanse of the Southeast helped maintain a significantly high rate of social mobility. Westward expansion permitted the continuing creation of new elites—people who garnered the power and prestige accorded to the large planters. Even before 1750 this expansion spilled into the Piedmont of Virginia and the Carolinas; by the close of the Revolution it crossed the Appalachians.

The creation of new elites meant a constant renewal of the upper classes. In fact, the upper class of the colonial South never became a fixed, static order. Although many of the great Virginia families, such as the Byrds, Lees, and Randolphs, could date their status back to the seventeenth century, new families constantly moved into the upper orders. In addition, however, families who made their mark as late as 1720 contributed to the leadership of the colony. In the younger colonies to the south the social order was even more fluid. Individuals moved into the upper class on past mid-century.

The pervasive ownership of land, along with social mobility, had enormous political and social consequences. Together they muted the potential for class conflict, though class differences and economic disparities clearly existed. But because landownership allowed participation in politics and prevented any upper class from formally stigmatizing those below as perpetually inferior or worthless, the possession of land guaranteed social and political status to most whites in the eighteenth century.

THE PLANTATION SYSTEM

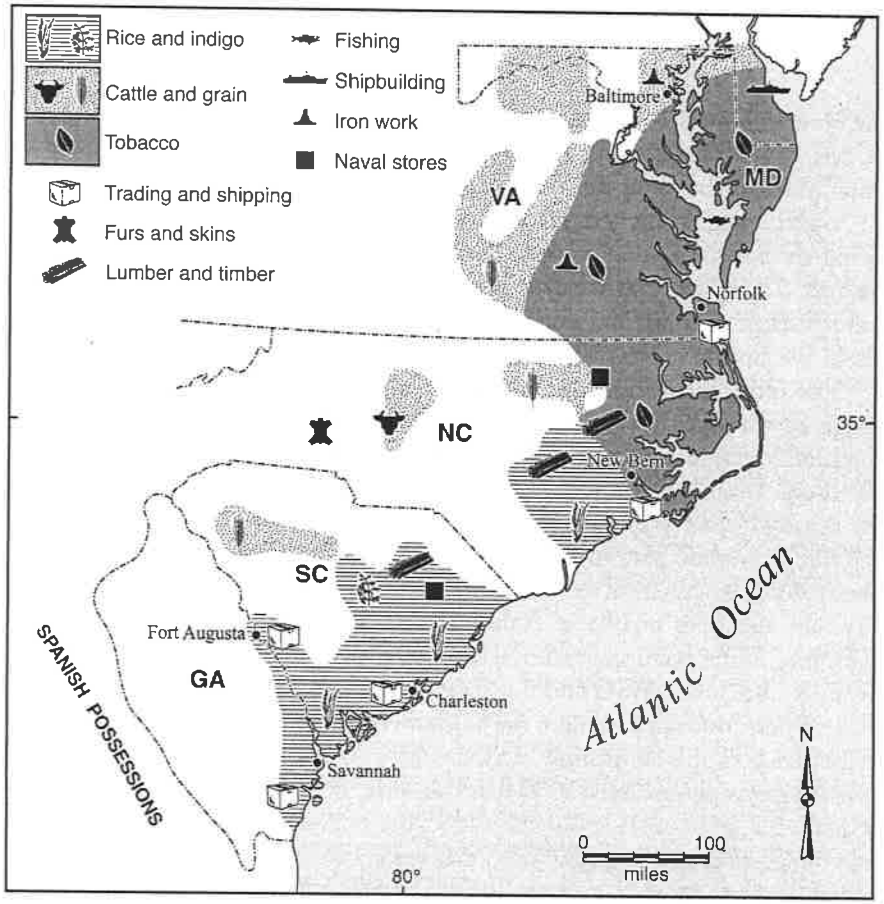
The chief economic importance of land lay in the production of crops for the market. Fewer than twenty years after the settlement of Virginia, commercial agriculture had become the engine driving the economy of the colony. The first tobacco shipments left Jamestown for England in 1617. During the following decade a burst of tobacco-backed prosperity created the first colonial fortunes. Those fortunes were inextricably tied to the land and to the production of a staple crop for an overseas market. Plantations and planters got an early start in the South.

The term "plantation system" aptly describes this economic activity, even though agriculturalists of all sorts engaged in it. Almost from the beginning the plantation, or large commercial farm, provided the main impetus to the southern agricultural machine. Smaller farmers often raised the same money crops, and they usually hoped to expand their farms into plantations.

The economic pattern established in Virginia formed the model for subsequent colonies. Settled in 1634, Maryland early committed itself to tobacco, just as its older neighbor had done. Although tobacco did not become the economic mainspring of the younger colonies south of the Chesapeake, staple crop agriculture surely became their economic activity. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, only thirty years after the settlement of South Carolina, its colonists were turning to the cultivation of rice, which in the new century generated an astonishing prosperity. Even in North Carolina, where the plantation system did not attain the importance it did elsewhere, the richest areas embraced the system. The youngest colony, Georgia, tried desperately to emulate its nearest neighbor, South Carolina. By mid-century, after a brief, unsuccessful effort with exotic crops and an equally unsuccessful attempt to do without the plantation system, Georgians had embraced both rice and slaves.

The system of plantation agriculture grew and flourished despite massive social and economic changes. The initial crops of tobacco and rice remained important throughout the eighteenth century and even into the nineteenth, but others appeared early, and over time an increasingly smaller proportion of southern farmers cultivated the two crops that first brought wealth to southern planters. By the middle of the eighteenth century, indigo had become a major supplement to rice in South Carolina, and before the Revolution wheat had become a major money crop of the Virginia and Maryland tidewater. Cotton, which became the monarch of nineteenth-century southern agriculture, had no economic importance during the colonial period. Afterward, however, it fit perfectly into a time-tested economic machine.

Tobacco governed the colonial Chesapeake. In 1697 the Maryland assembly recognized that "the trade of this province ebbs and flows according to the rise



The Colonial Economy in the Southeast

or fall of tobacco in the market of England." That observation held for Virginia as well as Maryland throughout the colonial era. Although little evidence is available on the size of the crop, figures on British imports provide a good sense of tobacco production because most tobacco was exported, and the bulk of it made at least its first stop in England. In Virginia the production of tobacco underwent three basic phases. From the beginning of tobacco cultivation in the first decade after Jamestown until the 1680s production soared. During the next thirty years the output leveled off at around 28 million pounds annually, then in 1715 began another round of growth, which lasted until the Revolution. By 1740 some 50 million pounds were being produced each year; on the eve of the Revolution the poundage reached 100 million.

Over the course of the colonial period, tobacco prices experienced substantial movement. They fell consistently during the seventeenth-century growth, but gains in productivity maintained income for growers. Prices remained stable from

the 1680s until the middle of the eighteenth century, with a slight increase early in the period. As demand increased from mid-century to the Revolution, prices moved upward. Although tobacco dominated the Chesapeake, other crops and products contributed to the agricultural economy. Grains, chiefly wheat, became more and more important through the eighteenth century. Even in the tidewater, the birthplace of tobacco cultivation, some planters and farmers began to shift from the weed to wheat. In the Shenandoah Valley, settled in the middle of the century, grain assumed prime importance from the beginning. The production of beef and pork assisted in the diversification of Chesapeake agriculture.

Farther south, rice predominated. Between 1700 and 1750 rice generated enormous wealth in South Carolina. Production expanded rapidly, from 1.5 million pounds in 1710 to 20 million pounds in 1730. The increase never ceased; by 1750 rice production rose more than two and a half times, to 50 million pounds, and during the next twenty-five years it doubled again. During this mighty surge in production the price fluctuated, but from mid-century stability prevailed, so that rice planters could count on a rise in income as production increased. After 1750 rice cultivation expanded into lower North Carolina and southward into Georgia. Still, South Carolina remained indisputably the center of rice production; in 1770, for example, South Carolina exported four and a half times more rice than did Georgia.

Rice clearly led in the southernmost colonies, but by mid-century a second crop became a notable supplement. Indigo was an important source of dye for the British textile industry. It had been grown earlier in South Carolina, but not successfully until Eliza Lucas tried her hand at it. A remarkable individual, Eliza Lucas—she later became Eliza Pinckney—at age twenty was managing her father's plantation. With indigo seed sent by her father from the West Indies and with technical help from an experienced West Indian, she made a rousing success of indigo farming. Scores of planters rushed to emulate her. With encouragement from both the colonial and British governments, production boomed. In 1748 exports from Charleston totaled just under 140,000 pounds; by 1775 more than a million pounds left the port. Indigo was also grown on a smaller scale in Georgia.

Of course, not every farmer in the southern colonies raised staple crops for export. Especially in the backcountry, numerous farmers cared not at all about tobacco, rice, or indigo; their concern was to provide food for themselves. The chief thrust of southern agriculture, however, was indisputably commercial, and increasing numbers of backcountry farmers ambitious for economic and social advancement moved toward the goal by selling grain and meat both within their colony and to other colonies. In addition, they hunted and trapped to take advantage of the vigorous market for skins, particularly deerskins. During the second quarter of the eighteenth century, when tobacco cultivation moved into the Virginia Piedmont, farmers already there greeted it warmly. In sum, there was no substantial brake on the commercial engine propelling colonial southern agriculture.

OTHER ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Although agriculture clearly dominated the colonial economies, it did not stand alone. Probably the two most important nonagricultural economic activities were the mining and processing of iron and the extraction of pitch, tar, and other naval stores from the southern forests. Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania were the major iron producers among the colonies. Mining began in Virginia as early as 1716. Furnaces, forges, and rolling mills followed, especially in the Shenandoah Valley and in western Maryland. The Virginians and Marylanders produced chiefly bar iron and pig iron, which they marketed primarily in the colonies, though exports did take place. Forest products also contributed substantially to the South's economy. Although the production of pitch, tar, and other naval stores occurred almost everywhere, the Carolinas led the way by a wide margin, with North Carolina at the top. By the eve of the Revolution the Carolinas accounted yearly for about 200,000 barrels of pitch, tar, and turpentine. Timber production also contributed to the economic development of the lower Mississippi Valley. Another, but sharply different, kind of forest product also added to the economic health of the more southerly British colonies as well as those farther west: deerskins. Trade in deerskins thrived in South Carolina until the middle of the eighteenth century and in Louisiana even later. This trade often originated with Indian hunters who dealt with white traders. Early in the century some 53,000 skins left Charleston each year for England. By 1740 annual exports totaled between 600 and 700 hogsheads of skins. Between 1720 and 1780 Louisiana exported an average of 50,000 skins annually.

With iron, forest products, deerskins, and a host of lesser activities all supplementing agriculture, the southern colonies enjoyed a generally prosperous economy. Comparative studies of British colonial wealth underscore that conclusion; the most thorough study used data from the year 1774. The sum of private physical wealth, including land and slaves, placed the southern colonies substantially ahead of both the middle colonies and New England: southern colonies, £60.5 million; the middle colonies, £26.8 million; New England, £22.2 million. The per capita values formed a similar pattern, with the southern colonies again clearly in front. Slaves accounted for one-third of the total physical wealth of the southern colonies. When slaves are removed from consideration, however, the southern colonies were still in first place, though with a reduced margin. In nonfarm business equipment and inventory, however, New England and the middle colonies far outdistanced the South. That fact underscores the overwhelming importance of agriculture to the colonial southern economy. When all factors are considered, the evidence points clearly to a strong, productive economy.

The activities of town merchants, often also planters or at least future planters, facilitated the smooth operation of the economic system. Such towns as Annapolis and Charleston supported an enterprising, energetic merchant class.

In Virginia the most important merchants were often agents of British firms; in South Carolina the merchants tended to be independent, though they worked closely with British firms. One of South Carolina's leading merchants was Henry Laurens. In 1744, at age twenty, the short, swarthy Laurens was sent to London for commercial training and to establish business contacts. Upon returning to Charleston in 1747, he received a considerable inheritance from his father, who had built up the largest saddlery business in the city. Young Henry went into the mercantile business and prospered. The export of rice and the import of African slaves dominated his affairs. In time Laurens extended the range of his activities by buying land and slaves and growing rice. By the eve of the Revolution he was primarily a planter.

In the overwhelmingly rural world of the colonial South, villages and towns were widely scattered; there were no cities in any modern sense. Yet to the colonists their towns performed vital functions as the seats of colonial government, the loci of trade, and the centers of cultural activities.

Henry Laurens, Merchant, Slave Trader, and Planter
Source: Library of Congress

By the time of the Revolution, the total population of the southeastern colonies numbered more than 1 million people, but no more than 25,000, or only 2.5 percent, lived in towns of more than 1,000 inhabitants. Although population statistics for the colonial period do not permit a detailed analysis, information does exist that provides a good sense of the size of southern towns. In the seventeenth century no single place had enough inhabitants to be called even a good-sized town. Throughout the eighteenth century the largest town by far was Charleston. From a population of just over 2,000 in 1700, Charleston advanced to 6,800 in 1740, to 8,000 in 1760, and to 12,000 in 1770. The fastest growing town in the late colonial era, however, was Baltimore, Maryland, which leaped from a village of about 200 in 1750 to a bustling port of 6,000 in 1775. In 1720 Williamsburg could count only 500 residents, and in 1780 just under 1,500. On the eve of the Revolution, Savannah had only 750 inhabitants; Wilmington, North Carolina, at the same time was home to only 500. Far to the west, New Orleans grew from 900 in 1726 to 5,000 in 1785.

THE PLANTERS

Great planters, located chiefly in the Chesapeake and the low country of the Carolinas and Georgia, dominated the economy and the society of the colonial South. In the eighteenth century these grandees were usually sons and grandsons of men who had made their mark or at least made a substantial beginning on the family position and fortune in the second half of the seventeenth century or very early in the eighteenth. These men ruled over thousands of acres and hundreds of slaves. Quite often they constructed impressive mansions on their plantations, and some of them also owned elegant town houses, especially in Charleston and Annapolis. Their children either went to school in England or studied at home under private tutors.

Landon Carter of Virginia, born in 1710, was one of the men at the very top of the southern social order. The fourth son of Robert "King" Carter, whose regal nickname signals his standing, Landon did his father proud. After an educational sojourn in England, Landon returned to Virginia at seventeen and entered his father's planting-trading business. His determination to succeed and his careful attention to his agricultural pursuits underlay Landon's enormous success as a planter. Starting with some 15,000 acres, he accumulated 50,000 acres and owned some 500 slaves by the time of his death in 1778. From his plantation headquarters, Sabine Hall in Richmond County, he managed his agricultural empire. He focused his efforts on tobacco and cereals, though he also raised flax and hemp. An avid reader as well as a committed agriculturalist, Carter read books on history, medicine, and religion in addition to agricultural literature. In the manner of his class, Carter provided a governess and tutors for his children. He had

Robert "King" Carter, Great Colonial Planter
Source: Portrait by an unknown artist, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

clothing and wine shipped from England. A glimpse at his wealth comes from his gift of £800 sterling to each of his four daughters upon their marriages—at a time when an annual living wage for a laborer was around £20 sterling.

Nothing set such grandees as Landon Carter so visibly apart from the mass of whites or so impressed later generations as the plantation mansions they constructed. These palaces in the wilderness represented to their builders—and still

Westover, the Plantation Seat of the Byrd Family
Source: Thomas Waterman, photographer HAS, Library of Congress

do to many people today—the ideal of a landed gentry. Mansions such as Carter's Sabine Hall, William Byrd II's Westover, and Thomas Lee's Stratford Hall, all in Virginia, and John Drayton's Drayton Hall in South Carolina are more famous than the names of the great planters who lived in them. Most of these country seats are of Georgian architecture, the classically influenced style that predominated in English public and private buildings during the eighteenth century. And without question the great planters attempted to replicate the English manor house. The

Drayton Hall, Home of the Drayton Family, Near Charleston
Source: South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC

first of this type erected in the colonies was the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg, completed about 1720, which set the tone for plantation mansions until the Revolution. The more impressive town houses, such as the Hammond House in Annapolis and the Miles Brewton House in Charleston, also followed the Georgian pattern. Architectural handbooks available from Britain after 1720 provided invaluable assistance to every family determined to build a palace of its own.

Plantation magnates often set their homes in rural, parklike surroundings, preferably fronting on a river. To travelers along the streams of the Virginia tidewater and the South Carolina low country, the numerous structures stretching away from an impressive mansion gave the appearance of a country village. An Englishman who traveled on the Virginia rivers in the 1730s observed "pleasant Seats on the Bank which Shew like little villages, for having Kitchins, Dayry houses, Barns, Stables, Store houses, and some of them 2 or 3 Negro Quarters all Separate from Each other but near the mansion houses. . . . Most of these have pleasant Gardens and the Prospect of the River render them very pleasant." The centrally located mansion of two or even three stories, most often brick, conveyed opulence and grandeur. The exterior image was matched by an interior that featured paneled and plastered walls, parquet floors, molded ceilings, marble fireplaces, and a magnificent staircase.

At times wealthy planter-merchants constructed their showplaces in towns, especially in Annapolis and Charleston. One of the most impressive homes in Charleston belonged to Miles Brewton. Like Henry Laurens, Brewton started as a merchant, prospered in the slave trade, and invested his profits in rice acreage and slaves. Around 1765 he built an exquisite town house separated from the street by a magnificent iron fence with a double gateway. Marble steps led up to a marble platform before the front door. Inside, a mahogany staircase with triple arched window ascended to the second floor. A visitor in 1773 commented on the blue satin curtains, the blue wallpaper emblazoned with gilt, the elegant glassware, and the finely crafted goblets. Landscaped gardens and extensive servant or slave quarters dominated the grounds. Whether in countryside or town, these grand houses stood as monuments to the determined, hard-driving, wealthy individuals and families who rose to the top of the southern colonial world.

THE FARMERS OR YEOMEN AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

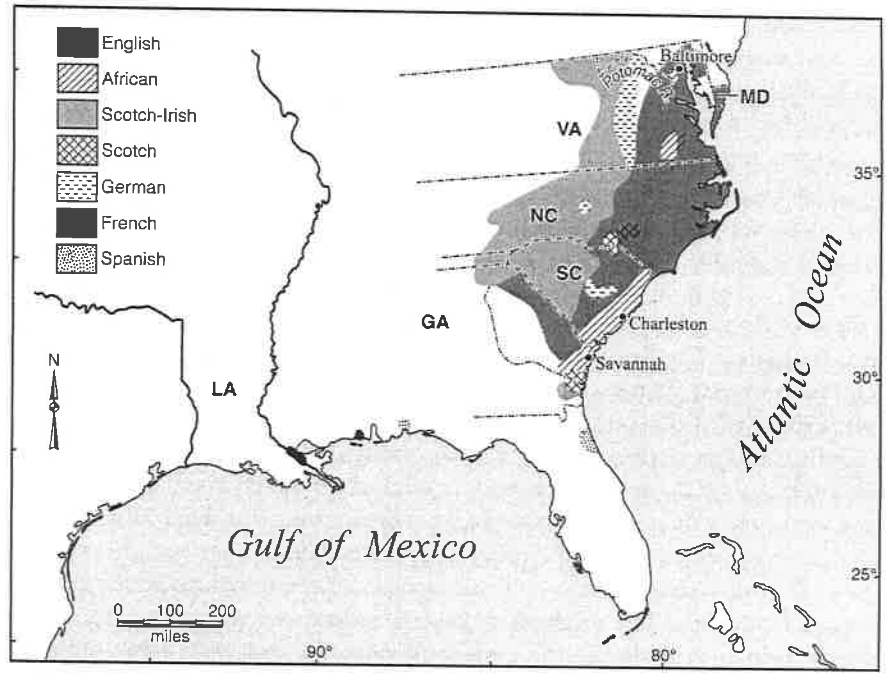
Of course, the vast majority of southern whites possessed neither wealth, plantation manor houses, nor elegant town houses. They lived in far simpler dwellings, though the construction of their homes changed over time. In seventeenth-century Virginia the cottage predominated. Built of plaster and laths, often with thatched roofs, these cottages frequently lacked finished floors, and even windows and doors. Sometimes they had chimneys of logs chinked with clay, but just as commonly the family's meals were cooked in a fire pit in the middle of a room; a hole through the roof permitted the smoke to escape. After the cottage came the simple rectangular frame house of one story; a half story could be added later as the family grew and its fortunes improved. The log cabin did not appear until after 1720, and throughout the colonial period it was found chiefly in the Piedmont, where the Scots-Irish replicated the cabins they had known in Pennsylvania.

Farmers who prospered in the backcountry and the Piedmont built their own plantation houses. Although considerably more substantial than the commonplace small frame houses and log cabins, they did not begin to match in sophistication and scale the manor houses of the tidewater and low-country magnates. Like many of the smaller houses, they were of frame construction. Private homes of brick rarely appeared in the pre-Revolutionary backcountry. Tall and thin, normally of two stories, these frame houses usually had roofed porches with simple wooden columns over the ground floor. A massive chimney at either end spoke of stability and substance.

Without question economic and social mobility marked the backcountry. The abundance of land and the relative ease of obtaining it ensured the upward movement of numerous folk. In the middle decades of the eighteenth century, Lunenburg County, Virginia, south of the James River in the area known as the Southside, offered substantial opportunity to new settlers, even to those who had been landless. Lydell Bacon, who bought 197 acres of land there in 1747, had increased his holdings to 1,060 acres by 1769. In 1748 John Hix worked for a small planter, but by 1769 he had acquired 395 acres and two slaves. Not quite so successful was George McLaughlin, who started as a laborer in 1748 and by 1769 owned 250 acres; still, those acres gave him the status of independent landowner.

The rolling, heavily forested Piedmont was Scots-Irish country. Most of these people moved south from Pennsylvania in the middle third of the eighteenth century, though a smaller number arrived in southern ports directly from Northern Ireland. In the Piedmont they cleared land, built cabins, and raised crops and children. Within a generation they turned a wild, rude country into farms and plantations. At the outset the new Scots-Irish differed from the established English. Socially and economically the Scots-Irish ranked below the English colonists, whose wealth and social position they could not yet match.

Many of the settlers who opened the Piedmont prospered with the development of their new homeland. In the early 1730s the Calhoun family joined hundreds of their fellow Scots-Irish in emigrating from Northern Ireland to the New World. In 1733 they settled in western Pennsylvania, but a few years later they headed southward through the Shenandoah Valley to Augusta County, on the southwestern Virginia frontier. There they set about accumulating a considerable acreage. Within a decade these frontier settlers had become prosperous independent farmers. But in the mid-1750s they again looked south, this time toward Piedmont South Carolina, where land had been opened by agreement between



Concentrations of Key Immigrant Groups at the End of the Colonial Period

colonial officials and the Cherokees. The Calhouns became the first white family to settle in northwestern South Carolina. One of the Calhouns, Patrick, received an initial land patent of 200 acres, and through hard work and enterprise he added significantly to that total. In 1770 Calhoun was elected to the colonial assembly. Twenty years later he was one of the largest slaveholders in his section of the state, with 31 slaves. Patrick Calhoun had traveled not only from Pennsylvania through Virginia to South Carolina but also from frontier settlement to farm to plantation. His son spent his life defending his vision of the land Patrick had pioneered; his name was John C. Calhoun.

Not everyone in the Piedmont experienced the success of the Calhouns. In 1747 James Carter made his way down from Virginia to the Yadkin River country in North Carolina. One of the first settlers in the area, he seemed to prosper with it. Six years after arriving he bought 350 acres and became a deputy surveyor in charge of purchasing and surveying the town lands of Salisbury, soon to become the major town in Carter's county. He became a major in the militia and in 1754 went to the colonial assembly, or legislature. But then Carter's creditors pressed for payment of money he had borrowed, evidently to help him get started. In 1756 he raised money by selling two slaves, but not enough to keep his creditors from taking legal action against him. The next year the sheriff sold

Carter's land to pay his debts. Carter also faced charges of embezzlement, extortion, and misappropriation of state funds. The unpaid debts and the accusations cost him his reputation as well as his land. He had recovered neither when he died in 1765. Carter's sad career demonstrates that times and places of opportunity do not automatically guarantee success for everyone.

WOMEN

In the seventeenth century two critical conditions governed the lives and roles of female colonists. The first was a highly unbalanced sex ratio. Early in the century, men outnumbered women by 3 or 4 to 1 in the Chesapeake. In colonies settled toward the end of the century a similar pattern prevailed. Of almost 700 settlers in South Carolina during the 1670s, only about 200 were women. Though the imbalance in the Chesapeake lessened through the century, there were always so many more men than women that every woman who wanted a husband could easily find one, whatever her financial or social position. The second critical factor was the initial status of many of the women who immigrated to the southern colonies. More than half of them arrived as indentured servants; as indentured servants women came under the same legal restraints and were subjected to the same compulsion as men. The owners of their indentures controlled their work.

Women performed a wide variety of tasks. The indentured servants, of course, had little say about what they did. Many of them worked in fields alongside men. Although promotional literature designed to attract women in Britain to sign on as indentured servants promised no fieldwork, such promises often turned out to be no more than propaganda. But many wives and daughters not bound by indentures also knew the rigors of fieldwork. In addition, the chores of milking cows, making butter and bread, raising chickens, butchering and preserving meat, growing vegetables, brewing cider and beer, sewing and washing and mending clothes, and, of course, child care all fell to women.

Free women tended to marry between the ages of twenty and twenty-three, earlier by three years than their counterparts in England and servants in the colonies. Servants usually married quite soon after the removal of their indentures, and many of them made a significant leap upward socially by becoming the wives of substantial farmers or planters. Colonial women tended to have more children than did women in England. Most families needed the labor of many children, and infant mortality was high. Mothers had responsibility for the control and rearing of children, both boys and girls. The terrible mortality rates of the seventeenth century, which affected adults as well as infants, often made for nontraditional families of complex composition. A family might include a widow, a widower, adults who had not yet married, stepchildren, and orphans along with servants.

The legal status of women in England carried over to the colonies. Women could not vote or hold public office or serve in the militia or on juries. Despite this political proscription, they did have the right to own land and to engage in business. In fact, during the seventeenth century women not uncommonly became executors of their husbands' estates. When a woman married, however, she legally surrendered all her possessions to her husband. Any money she might earn was legally his, and he had the right to beat her so long as he used a stick no wider than his thumb. To this day we speak of a general principle based on observation rather than precise measurement as a "rule of thumb."

The increasing stability of the colonies in the eighteenth century affected women's lives in ways that were not always favorable. As the imbalance in the sex ratio declined, women had fewer opportunities to move rapidly upward through marriage. Now a woman was more likely to marry a man of her own social class, and her social mobility depended on his fortunes. With the turn to slavery and the resulting decline of indentured servants, fewer women and men entered the colonies as servants. This drop in the number of female indentured servants helped to lower the age of women at marriage. The growing distinction among classes also had an effect on women; the line separating the plantation mistress from the laborer's wife was sharper than it had been in the 1600s. In the eighteenth century, labor was divided more clearly along gender lines. A far smaller proportion of women engaged in fieldwork: certainly not the plantation ladies and often not the wives and daughters of independent farmers. With the decline in fieldwork most women spent their time in housework. The specific nature of that work varied considerably according to class. On plantations women were occupied chiefly in the supervision of the slaves who actually performed the various tasks—preserving and cooking food, cleaning the house, caring for the children, making and mending clothes for the slaves as well as for the family of the master. White women, a step down the social ladder, actually performed all the duties only supervised by the plantation mistress. Of course the arduousness of those labors depended on the family's wealth, on the geographical location of the home, and on the family's individual circumstances.

Quite a few women, however, found pursuits outside the home, out of either necessity or choice. From the Chesapeake to Georgia, all midwives were women. One of the most active and successful midwives, Catherine Blaikly of Williamsburg, had delivered some 3,000 babies by the time of her death in 1771 at seventy-six years of age. A talented woman who moved with striking success into an area usually reserved for men was Clementina Rind, whose husband owned the *Virginia Gazette* of Williamsburg. When he died in 1773, she took over the paper, and she did so well with it that she was named state printer by the Virginia assembly. In mid-century, Eliza Lucas Pinckney, by successfully cultivating indigo, made a major contribution to southern agriculture.

In the eighteenth century the legal status of women changed little, but in practice notable differences appeared. Fathers less frequently gave daughters land; ownership was concentrated more and more in male hands. More husbands wrote wills directing that their widows' inheritances were to be reduced if they remarried. And fewer and fewer wives served as executors of their husbands' estates. These shifts did not necessarily signify a substantial reduction either in the place of women in the society or in their treatment. Their primary significance lies in the evidence they provide of increasing social stability in the southern colonies and simultaneously a growing concern for the family continuity represented by the male line.

THE BREADTH OF SLAVE OWNING

Land provided the foundation for economic advancement, social status, and political activity in the colonial South, and black slavery reinforced that foundation. From the seventeenth century, ownership of black slaves in addition to land identified the economically privileged. The possession of slaves became a badge of upper-class status; practically every family of the colonial aristocracy counted black bondsmen and bondswomen among its most prized possessions.

From the very beginning slave owning was associated with planting, and the large planters came to own hundreds of slaves. After all, the chief purpose of slaves was agricultural labor, and the more acres a family cultivated, the more slaves it was likely to own. Large holdings appeared early and grew over time. Robert "King" Carter owned more than 700 slaves before 1730. George Mason of Virginia, Gabriel Manigault of South Carolina, and the Marylander Charles Carroll of Carrollton also numbered their human property in the hundreds.

The breadth of slave owning was even more impressive than the size of some holdings, and this breadth equaled in importance the extent of landowning, though the number of whites who owned slaves was always smaller than the number who owned land. Slaves did not belong only to wealthy planters. In early Louisiana slave owning was largely concentrated among the small elite who ruled the colony, but with increasing slave numbers, especially after 1763, ownership became more widely distributed throughout the white population. Evidence abounds that in the eighteenth century the middle levels of white society also participated directly in slave ownership. By the 1770s nearly half the families in the Chesapeake counties of Maryland owned slaves. Charleston's merchants and mechanics bought slaves just as eagerly and readily as did planters. Almost half of the city's mechanics who left wills between 1760 and 1785 were slave owners. Of the 190 artisans of colonial Charleston who could be identified in the 1790 census, 159 were specified as slave owners. An account of a Charleston slave sale in 1756 lists merchants, a mariner, and a widow along with planters as purchasers. Most bought fewer than five slaves.

The westward movement spurred the growth of slavery, for slavery generally accompanied colonial expansion. As white settlers pushed toward the Piedmont from the older tidewater section, they carried slaves and slavery as part of their economic and cultural baggage. Most white southerners on the frontier envisioned a prosperous future for themselves, and they saw slavery as a necessary function in the equation that yielded prosperity. Exceptions did exist, however. The Germans who settled in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and around Salem, North Carolina, generally eschewed slaveholding.

Such deviations did not stem the westward march of slavery. When the center of tobacco cultivation in Virginia moved away from the tidal rivers to the shadow of the Appalachian Mountains, slaves still toiled in the fields. The great Charleston merchant and slave trader Henry Laurens attested to the intimate connection between geographical expansion and the growth of slavery. Laurens wrote to associates in England in 1763, "We have now a large field for Trade opening in these colonies & a vast number of people seting [*sic*] down upon our frontier Lands . . . will take . . . a Cargo by one or two [slaves] in a Lot and it has been from such folks that we have always obtain'd the highest prices."

THE CASE OF GEORGIA

The best testimony to the intermixing of slavery with expansion and prosperity comes from Georgia. Georgia did not welcome its first British settlers until 1733, some 126 years after Jamestown. More to the point, the first Englishmen arrived in Georgia long after slavery had become an integral part of the society of both the Chesapeake colonies and the Carolinas. Yet the philanthropic founders of the new colony wanted to dispense with such institutions as slavery and large plantations, and the laws set up by the governing trustees outlawed both. These restrictions, however, did not last long.

Early on Georgia coveted slaves. Mired in what they viewed as poverty and backwardness, Georgians by the 1740s demanded new materials with which to build prosperity. Slaves stood high on their list. In this issue as in political matters, Georgia looked for guidance to its older neighbor, South Carolina. By the 1740s slaves and rice had made South Carolina prosperous indeed. White Georgians saw the introduction of slavery as the solution to their economic problems. The agitation of the colonists prevailed, and in 1750 the trustees repealed their prohibition of slavery. Five years later the Georgia assembly enacted its first slave code, modeled on the South Carolina code of 1740.

The drive for slavery in Georgia derived from both individual and community interests. Individual Georgians believed slavery to be the surest means to guarantee their personal advancement. Even before the 1750 repeal, settlers had circumvented the slavery prohibition by leasing slaves from South Carolina for ninety-nine years, with the full purchase price paid as advance rent. Collectively, Georgians wanted their colony to develop and to prosper, and almost everyone saw slavery as an essential part of that development. When Georgia did in fact begin to prosper after 1750, many people pointed to slavery as the primary cause. Increasing real estate values, burgeoning production of rice, and growing personal fortunes all stemmed, in the minds of many planters and merchants, from Georgia's commitment to the peculiar institution.

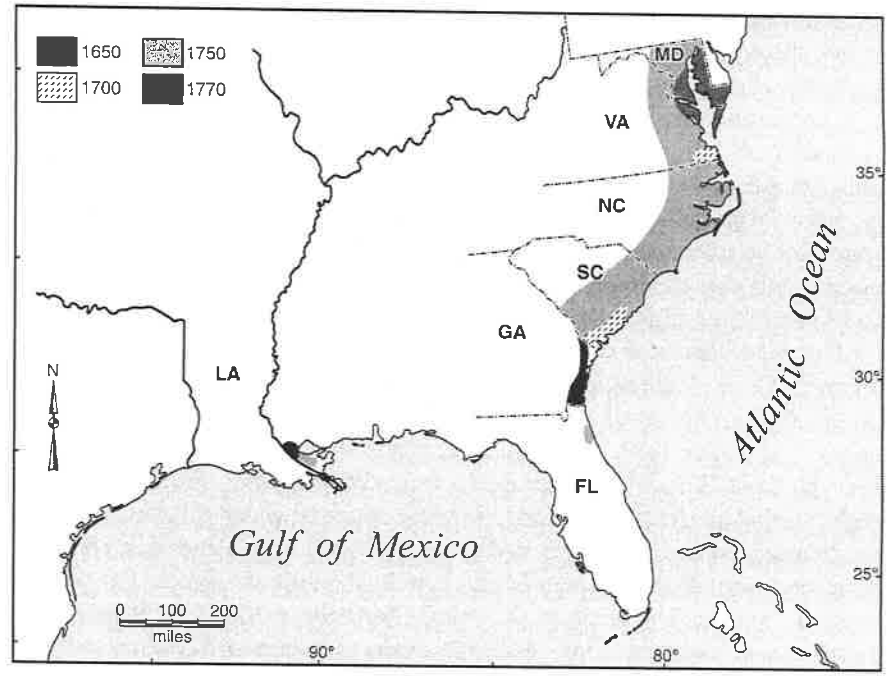
THE SLAVE TRADE AND THE GROWTH OF SLAVERY

By the middle of the eighteenth century, each of the southern colonies from the Chesapeake to the Mississippi had firmly committed itself to black slavery. Of course slavery was legal in all British colonies because it was legal in the British Empire, though it never became so important north of the famous Mason-Dixon Line—the name given to the boundary between Maryland and Pennsylvania—as it did south of the line. By 1770 the colonies below the line had nearly nine times more slaves than the colonies above it. Across the southern colonies the percentage of slaves in the population grew substantially, but only in South Carolina did the number of blacks exceed the number of whites. That situation dated from at least 1710. By 1740, slaves numbered fully one-quarter of the southern colonial population. During the next three decades the proportion of slaves increased by more than half, until, on the eve of the Revolution, they accounted for almost 40 percent of the population of the southern colonies.

In the seventeenth century most slaves who arrived in both the Chesapeake and Carolina came from the West Indies, but in the next century slave traders brought them directly from Africa. The slave trade was part of a larger pattern, a three-cornered trade often called the triangular trade. From Europe to Africa went such items as liquor, tobacco products, textiles, jewelry, and firearms; to pay for these things, Africa sold slaves to the New World; and finally, the products of slave plantations in the New World, chiefly sugar, tobacco, and rice, were shipped to Europe.

That the beginning of colonial empires in the New World occasioned a transatlantic slave trade surprised no one. For centuries black slaves had been brought out of central Africa, first across the northern desert, then, after the middle of the fifteenth century, by ship to the Iberian Peninsula. When the European empire builders thought about filling the demand for labor in their new colonies, Africa came readily to mind. The Portuguese became the first great transporters of African slaves, but soon other competitors shouldered them aside. The Dutch and the French participated vigorously. The greatest slave traders, however, were the English, who dominated the trade at its peak in the eighteenth century.

The European traders operated along the African coast. The massive European takeover of central Africa did not commence until the mid-nineteenth



The Spread of Slavery, 1650–1770

century, in the waning decades of the transatlantic slave trade and after England had relinquished its place as the number one slave trader to become the staunchest opponent of the trade. On the coast the Europeans set up what they termed castles or factories—in reality trading posts. Agents of the European powers lived in them and managed the transfer of goods for human beings. The slave-trading vessels, known as slavers, anchored offshore until a full cargo of slaves was available. Once loaded, the ships headed west for the plantations of South America, the West Indies, and North America.

The Europeans could not have functioned so effectively as they did without the assistance of Africans. The arrival of seaborne European slave traders did not introduce slavery to Africans. The overland slave trade with the Mediterranean world was long established. Moreover, slavery was practiced in equatorial Africa. Africans became slaves of other Africans, usually because of defeat in battle or for the payment of debt. In certain tribes, possession of slaves meant prestige for their owners. Although this kind of slavery had become a part of the African world, it often had neither the motive nor the outcome of the commercially driven slavery that characterized the institution in the New World. The voracious demand created by the colonial empires had a thunderous impact on African society. Now Africans mounted expeditions designed to capture other Africans to sell to the

Europeans. Sometimes the captors marched the captives over hundreds of miles to reach the coast and the slavers. The cooperation of Africans made it unnecessary for the Europeans to attempt to conquer the African interior.

The numbers of people forcibly transported across the Atlantic stagger the imagination. Although precision is impossible, the best estimates place the total number of Africans removed to the New World at around 12 million. This massive, enforced population movement occurred over more than three and a half centuries. The transatlantic slave trade began in the very early sixteenth century, grew through the seventeenth century, flourished in the eighteenth, and tapered off and finally died in the nineteenth.

The great bulk of these Africans did not, however, end up in what became the United States. Imports into British North America up to 1790 totaled around 275,000. From 1790 until the outlawing of the trade in 1808, another 70,000 came in. Then, after 1808, the illegal trade probably smuggled in a possible 50,000 before the Civil War. Those figures add up to 395,000 slaves the trade landed in British North America. To this total, however, must be added the 28,000 brought into Louisiana during the French and Spanish periods, which ended in 1803. The sum approaches 425,000 human beings, surely a significant figure, but one that represents less than 4 percent of all Africans brought to the New World. More than twice that many Africans—860,000—were transported to the great French sugar island of Saint-Domingue between 1681 and 1791. Yet in 1791, at the end of the slave trade to Saint-Domingue, only 480,000 slaves survived there. In contrast, despite the tiny percentage of Africans who were brought to the United States, the United States became the only major slave country in which slaves sustained and even increased their population. By 1800 the number of slaves in this country reached almost 1 million. In the next six decades the American slave population more than quadrupled, to more than 4 million. During those sixty years no more than around 70,000 slaves entered the country, both legally and illegally—a number too small to affect this impressive growth.

Why the slave population reproduced itself with such success in the United States but nowhere else has no simple explanation. Several circumstances, however, undoubtedly influenced this outcome. The milder climate in the American South generally subjected the slaves to a less frightful disease environment. The more evenly balanced sex ratios that obtained in the South were more conducive to a family structure and natural reproduction. Perhaps most important, southern planters never adopted the basic philosophy prevalent in some other slave societies, especially some of the sugar islands: that of working slaves to death and then replacing them. It seems that on the whole, slaves in the southern colonies and states received better physical care than did those in bondage in the Caribbean and South America.

For the slaves bound for the New World, the oceanic passage was an unspeakable horror. Men, women, and even children were crammed into narrow

spaces averaging no more than four feet high. Rarely did they receive proper food and water, and the ship captains had little concern about sanitation in the slave areas. Almost unbelievable discomfort pervaded the densely packed slave deck. Seasickness and dysentery—both almost inevitable in the circumstances—resulted in frightful conditions.

Many accounts of slavers overwhelm our sensibilities. An observer described "400 wretched beings . . . crammed into a hold 12 yards in length . . . and only 3½ feet in height." According to this eyewitness, "the suffocating heat of the hold" created a panic among the Africans desperate for air. Stark terror resulted. "The smoke of torment and the 54 mangled crushed bodies lifted up from the slave deck" testified to the horror.

For the captains of the slavers and for their employees, of course, slaving was an economic enterprise designed to make money. Thus they had a vested interest in landing as many Africans alive and reasonably healthy as possible. Available evidence indicates that they learned how to make the trip safer. Over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the rate of loss among the slaves declined. Statistics from the slavers of the Royal African Company, which dominated the English trade in the eighteenth century, reveal distinct improvement in mortality rates. In the 1680s the mean loss stood at 23.4 percent; by 1791 it had dropped to 8.8 percent. Although substantial annual variations occurred over time, they did so in a lower range. The death rate among the crews of slavers, by contrast, remained around 20 percent throughout the period. The white crewmen were devastated by tropical diseases, mainly malaria and yellow fever, for which no successful treatment existed during the life of the trade.

SLAVES IN A NEW WORLD

Before 1670 the Africans arriving in the Chesapeake often had already had experience with whites, either on the African coast or in the Caribbean, areas included in what scholars term the Atlantic rim. Many of these blacks were familiar with European languages and even Christianity. In the beginning black slaves worked alongside black and white indentured servants and their owners to create farms out of wildernesses. In Virginia between 1650 and 1700, the average number of slaves per holding was eight. In the Chesapeake, slaves entered an economy committed to tobacco, which had become the key to prosperity before slavery became important. The social fluidity of the early years occasionally permitted slaves and servants to work for themselves. A slave economy developed in which some slaves maintained themselves and, in turn, exchanged and sold items with neighbors and owners.

The fundamental shift to slavery after 1670 altered these arrangements. In Virginia the number of slaves quintupled between 1670 and 1700, to 10,000.

The work of this much larger slave force focused on the master's enterprise; under close white supervision the possibility of the slaves' economy withered. Also, with the masses of new slaves coming directly from Africa, the character of the slave population changed. That planters imported more than twice as many males as females hindered the creation of families. Moreover, much that the slaves had known and cherished—family, tribe, religion—remained behind. Owners replaced African names with new designations. Africans could end up on farms or plantations with no one else from their home tribe. Because Africans spoke a variety of languages, they had to overcome barriers to establish communication with fellow slaves and masters. In addition, many found themselves isolated from religion because fewer older people, such as religious leaders, crossed the Atlantic. Plants and other materials used in native religion were seldom available. And in the colonial period no central religious experience pervaded the slave world.

In this cultural vacuum the Africans had to find their way. They did have one immediate bond: their color. Their blackness separated them from their white masters and helped them overcome lost tribal identities. In areas of extremely heavy slave population, especially when owners had purchased slaves from the same African areas and tribes, slaves were able to retain their own languages. The slaves also developed pidgin languages combining various African tongues with English, which permitted them to communicate among themselves. Probably the most famous of these pidgin languages, Gullah, the language of the sea islands of South Carolina and Georgia, survived well into the twentieth century.

Before the eighteenth century the small number of slaves was scattered over a broad geographic area, and most masters owned few slaves. This pattern made it extraordinarily difficult for the newly arrived Africans to create families or even to look to each other for emotional and psychological support in the face of the incredible experience of their ocean passage and the unknown future of servitude to white masters. With slaves so spread out geographically, complete slave families were not common. On a single farm or plantation they were rare indeed. Although slaves surely did establish families in the seventeenth century, especially after 1660, quite often they did not live together under a single master. Most owners, however, permitted visiting privileges so that husbands could see wives and children, and many owners tried to keep mothers and small children together. The seven children born in the 1670s and 1680s to Ann Joice, a slave of the Darnall family of Prince George's County, Maryland, either remained on the Darnall plantation or ended up with nearby planters.

Farther south the commitment to slavery occurred much more rapidly. Thirty years after settlement, slaves accounted for one-third of South Carolina's population. There was another difference: The presence of a dominant staple did not precede the arrival of slaves. The evidence indicates that masters and slaves struggled together to find the Carolina version of tobacco. When in the 1690s the Carolina planters settled upon rice as their ticket to economic success, slaves contributed significantly to that decision. The colony would become at the same time enormously wealthy and the home of the largest percentage of slaves in the colonies.

SLAVE FAMILIES AND RELIGION

A sharp difference existed between the two chief slave areas, the Chesapeake and Carolina. With large holdings the norm in the latter and most planters remaining in place because rice did not significantly deplete the soil, slaves could build communities reaching across generations. Moreover, the majority of blacks labored in rice fields without constant white contact or supervision. Accordingly, although their work was often strenuous, at times almost backbreaking, and their diet restricted, they lived much of their time apart from their masters, and thus their culture remained more African and black. In contrast, slaves in the Chesapeake experienced more contact with the whites who outnumbered them. The cultivation of tobacco, though generally less arduous, required more care, and masters more closely supervised their bondspeople and provided a better diet. Tobacco also led to soil exhaustion that engendered geographic mobility on the part of planters and farmers. This mobility, in turn, produced more breaking up of black families, a circumstance made more frequent because the normally smaller size of tobacco plantations ensured that many slaves had spouses on other estates. In sum, while the material welfare of slaves was better in the Chesapeake, there was less cultural autonomy.

With the massive increase of the slave population during the eighteenth century, conditions for the slaves changed markedly. While the numbers of imported Africans shot up, the numbers of blacks born in the colonies also increased substantially. Slaves fresh from Africa were not flung utterly alone into a totally white world. Moreover, this constant mixture gave rise to a culture both African and colonial.

Still, no doubt can exist about the presence of slave families. The Virginian John Carter bought a woman and her children who had been separated from their husband and father by the terms of their owner's will. A runaway carpenter, Sam, came back to another Carter master after only a week because Sam thought "it a hard case to be separated from his wife." A 1761 list of 55 slaves belonging to a Mrs. Allen of North Carolina details family ties across generations. The list specifies that the slaves lived in six families, except for the 8 who were single. It also indicates that most of the 55 were the children of three sets of parents. Names surely crossed generational boundaries. Some slaves were named for their fathers, and a child born in 1759 was named for her maternal grandmother. As slave families proliferated in the colonial South, a common African practice, polygamy, became a casualty. The colonies simply had too few women to permit polygamy to succeed.

Of course, the religion of the masters did not encourage polygamy. Yet in the colonial era Christianity did not penetrate the slave world as it would in the nineteenth century. Before the Great Awakening, which shook the southern colonies in the 1740s, religion did not occupy a central place in the lives of most whites, either. Even after the Great Awakening many Anglicans did not share in the fervor it aroused, and most substantial slave owners belonged to the Church of England. In any case, some slave owners feared that converting the slaves to Christianity might ultimately lead to emancipation. A major argument for slavery turned on the heathenism of the enslaved. Removal of that condition, in the minds of some masters, might lead to questions, even within the Anglican establishment, about the legitimacy of an institution that kept Christians in bondage for life. Of course, in Roman Catholic Louisiana a different situation prevailed. There from the beginning priests worked to convert African slaves as well as Indians. Although some slaves embraced Christianity, it is impossible to know precisely how many.

Because Christianity did not generally become the religion of slaves, no single religious experience predominated among them. Some slaves did profess Christianity; their conversion had been prompted by individual owners or by zealous preachers. Discovering how many were actually believing Christians is impossible, though during the colonial era the number probably remained small. Other slaves, particularly newcomers from Africa, clung to their native religions, which did retain influence. But maintaining the African practices in the colonies proved difficult. For the great majority of slaves religion most likely meant a combination of their African heritage, including charms and folk beliefs, and a smattering of Christian practices and teachings. But in all probability religion did not assume the importance for colonial slaves that it would for their descendants in the nineteenth century.

THE WORK AND CONTROL OF SLAVES

Whatever their religious preferences, slaves had one chief purpose: work. And work they did. Overwhelmingly slaves toiled in the fields to grow tobacco, rice, indigo, and grain. The hard physical labor essential for agricultural production before the age of mechanization was the lot of the slave. On farms and plantations slaves also engaged in a variety of other jobs, such as caring for animals, repairing buildings, and clearing new land.

The routinized labor that characterized so many agricultural tasks did not confront most slaves with unfamiliar work patterns. Many slaves had been exposed to similar activities in Africa. Consider the work of slaves in growing rice. Slaves who dropped grains of rice into a hole they had created by pressing a heel into the soft dirt and who then brushed earth over the seeds with a foot were following a pattern familiar in West Africa. Later in the season, when slaves walked in line through rice fields with hoes in hand, another African practice appeared in the colonial South. To winnow or "fan" the harvested rice the slaves made broad, flat baskets based on African designs.

Although the majority of slaves, male and female, were field hands, most engaged in several activities and some of them became skilled artisans. Especially on large plantations masters prided themselves on the abilities of the carpenters, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, brick masons, and masters of other crafts within their slave force. Some plantations boasted spinners, weavers, tanners, and even distillers. Other slaves on large estates devoted their time to caring for the manor house and for their owner's family. The tasks given Ben, a slave belonging to Landon Carter, illustrate the variety of jobs assigned even to individual slaves. Ben waited upon his master, served as a coachman, tended horses, and occasionally labored in the tobacco house. Carter, who thought that Ben "work[ed] very well," also designated him to pick up and bring to the plantation such items as oysters, salt, and wool.

But no matter their specific job assignment, from common field hand to liveried coachman, all were slaves. They or their fathers or occasionally their grandfathers had been involuntarily sold into slavery in a strange land. They had been bought and paid for along the African coast. Once they were landed in a port such as Charleston, they ended up in the hands of a slave trader, who sold them for any service the new owner decreed, wherever the owner desired. Others, particularly in the Chesapeake, were hauled along the tidal rivers by the ship captain, who displayed his human wares at docks and landings.

In Louisiana the small white population diffused across a large area made for a generally less tightly structured black-white world. Slaves occasionally acted as quasi-free people, setting conditions, for example, for their compliance with masters' authority. In addition, the paucity of white women and more tolerant racial attitudes and policies of the French and Spanish authorities led to more widespread interracial sexual contact. Compared to the British colonies, racial lines were not sharply defined. The designations free, slave, white, and black were not always clearly perceived or enforced. By the 1790s, however, a growing population and evidence of slave unrest compelled major slave owners and government officials to redirect slave control into a path more akin to that of the Southeast. Slave life could be brutal. As in eighteenth-century England, where the theft of a loaf of bread could lead to the gallows, punishment could be harsh. A visitor to South Carolina reported seeing a suspended cage containing a bound slave. Birds had already attacked. Blood and wounds covered his body, and his eyes had been plucked out of their sockets. A planter explained that the offending slave had killed a plantation official and that "the laws of self-preservation rendered such execution necessary." Some planters criticized their peers' treatment of slaves. The great Virginia planter William Byrd II complained that his neighbor's "poor

Negroes are a kind of Adamites, very scantily supply'd with cloaths and other necessaries." Byrd considered such lack of care a "Scandal."

Most planters, however, provided their slaves with adequate food, clothing, and shelter. To the planters, their own self-interest required no less. After all, slaves were valuable property; they represented a good portion of the wealth of the master class. While masters generally attempted to provide for the physical well-being of their bondsmen and bondswomen, they were conscious of the raw power fundamental to the master-slave relationship. And most did not hesitate to exercise their authority. Again Byrd offers pertinent testimony. He recognized that force was an integral part of the system. "Numbers make them insolent," he observed, "& then foul means must do what fair will not . . . these base Tempers require to be rid with a tort [*sic*] rein, or they will be apt to throw their Rider."

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The Intellectual, Political, and Religious World

Although the political development of the southern colonies shared much with that of the other mainland colonies, particular aspects of the southern experience had a profound impact on the subsequent history of the region's political culture. Specific ideas, institutions, and practices shaped the form of southern politics even before the Revolution.

Liberty was the central political idea of the English southern colonies. Although before the 1760s southerners spent little time writing about the theoretical and philosophical dimensions of liberty, they had no doubt as to its fundamental meaning: according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "freedom from arbitrary, despotic rule or control." In the immediate political context of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, liberty meant some kind of representative government that would ensure such freedom. In England the Parliament represented the interests and protected the liberty of the king's subjects.

The distance that separated the New World from the mother country prevented any agency of the British government from performing this critical task in the colonies. An ocean voyage of 3,000 miles, requiring at least three months for the round trip, made the possibility of immediate guardianship precarious indeed. Living in a relatively small country, politically active Englishmen, both rural and urban, felt something akin to political control. Thus political liberty included connotations of geographic propinquity between the government and the governed. The colonists' intellectual defense of their assemblies clearly revealed this conjunction between liberty and local governmental control.