



4

American Society Transformed

1720–1770

The crime was devastating, the punishment terrible. Marie-Joseph Angélique, a Portuguese-born slave of African descent, was hanged in Montréal on June 21, 1734. Judges had convicted Angélique of setting a fire that destroyed the merchant quarter of the town, the Hotel-Dieu, a convent, and a hospital. Under torture, she confessed, insisting she had acted alone. Afterward, her body was left hanging for hours, then it was burned and her ashes scattered.

Angélique had been a slave in an English colony—probably New York—before being purchased nine years earlier by a Montreal wealthy merchant, Sieur de Francheville, and his wife. She worked in their large household with several free laborers and an enslaved Indian boy. She was one of 150 or so bondspeople living among the 3,000 Montreal residents.

Angélique was the immediate suspect. After her master's death in late 1733, she asked her mistress for her freedom, presumably so she could leave Montréal with her lover, Claude Thibault, a former French soldier who was also a Francheville servant. Denied, she threatened to “roast” her mistress, who retaliated by preparing to sell her to a French Caribbean island. She and Claude set fire to another house in January, before attempting unsuccessfully to flee together. Witnesses testified that Angélique had earlier hinted at plans to burn down the Francheville house. Yet until she was tortured, Angélique proclaimed her innocence. She never implicated Claude Thibault, who vanished from New France.

Angélique's tragic story as a woman of African descent who had spent time in the English colonies points up the movement of peoples around the Atlantic world that after 1720 brought new groups to the British colonies. A massive eighteenth-century migration of European and African peoples changed the nature of the North American population. Ethnic diversity was especially pronounced in the small cities of Anglo America, although the colonies south of New England drew the largest number of newcomers, many to the fertile countryside. They swelled the

Chapter Outline

Geographic Expansion and Ethnic Diversity

Spanish and French Territorial Expansion | France and the Mississippi | Involuntary Migrants from Africa | Newcomers from Europe | Scots-Irish, Scots, and Germans | Maintaining Ethnic and Religious Identities

VISUALIZING THE PAST *Slaves' Symbolic Resistance*

Economic Growth and Development in British America

Commerce and Manufacturing in the British Colonies | Wealth and Poverty | Regional Economies

Colonial Cultures

Genteel Culture | The Enlightenment | Oral Cultures | Religious and Civic Rituals | Rituals of Consumption | Tea and Madeira | Rituals on the “Middle Ground”

LINKS TO THE WORLD *Smallpox Inoculation*

Colonial Families

Indian and Mixed-Race Families | European American Families | African American Families | Forms of Resistance | City Life

Politics: Stability and Crisis in British America

Colonial Assemblies | Slave Rebellions in South Carolina and New York | Rioters and Regulators

A Crisis in Anglo-American Religion

George Whitefield | Impact of the Awakening | Virginia Baptists

LEGACY FOR A PEOPLE AND A NATION *“Self-Made Men”*

SUMMARY

population, altered political balances, and introduced new religious sects. Unwilling immigrants (slaves and transported convicts), too, clustered primarily in the middle and southern colonies.

Several key themes marked the development of Europe's North American colonies in the mid-eighteenth century: population growth (through natural increase and immigration), new ethnic diversity, the increasing importance of urban centers, the creation of a prosperous urban elite including merchant families like the Franchevilles, rising consumption, and the new significance of internal markets. In the French and British mainland colonies, exports dominated the economy. Settlers along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts were tied to an international commercial system that fluctuated wildly. Yet expanding local populations demanded greater quantities and types of goods, and Europe could not keep up. Therefore, colonists increasingly depended on their own resources. Intermarried networks of wealthy families developed in Europe's American possessions by the 1760s. These well-off, educated colonists participated in transatlantic intellectual life, such as the Enlightenment, whereas some colonists of the "lesser sort" could neither read nor write. Most colonists worked with their hands from dawn to dark. Divisions were most pronounced in British America, the largest and most prosperous settlements. By the last half of the century, social and economic distance among different ranks of Anglo-Americans had widened and produced new conflicts.

In 1720, much of North America was under Indian control. Fifty years later, indigenous peoples still dominated the interior, yet their lives were altered as European settlements expanded. As France moved from the St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico and Spanish outposts expanded east and west from a New Mexican heartland, and as British colonies filled the territory between the Appalachian Mountains and the Atlantic, North America was transformed.

As you read this chapter, keep the following questions in mind:

- * What were the effects of demographic, geographic, and economic changes on Europeans, Africans, and Indian nations alike?
- * What were the key elements of eighteenth-century colonial cultures?
- * What developments at midcentury began the process of political and religious change in British North America?

Geographic Expansion and Ethnic Diversity

What spurred population growth in the British colonies in the thirty years before 1775?

In the mid-eighteenth century, dramatic population growth, along with geographic expansion, characterized British mainland colonies. About 250,000 European-Americans and African Americans resided in the colonies in 1700. Thirty years later, that number had more than doubled, reaching 2.5 million by 1775.

Although migration from Africa, Scotland, Ireland, England, and Germany contributed to population growth, most came from natural increase. Once the difficult early decades of settlement had passed, the American population doubled

Chronology

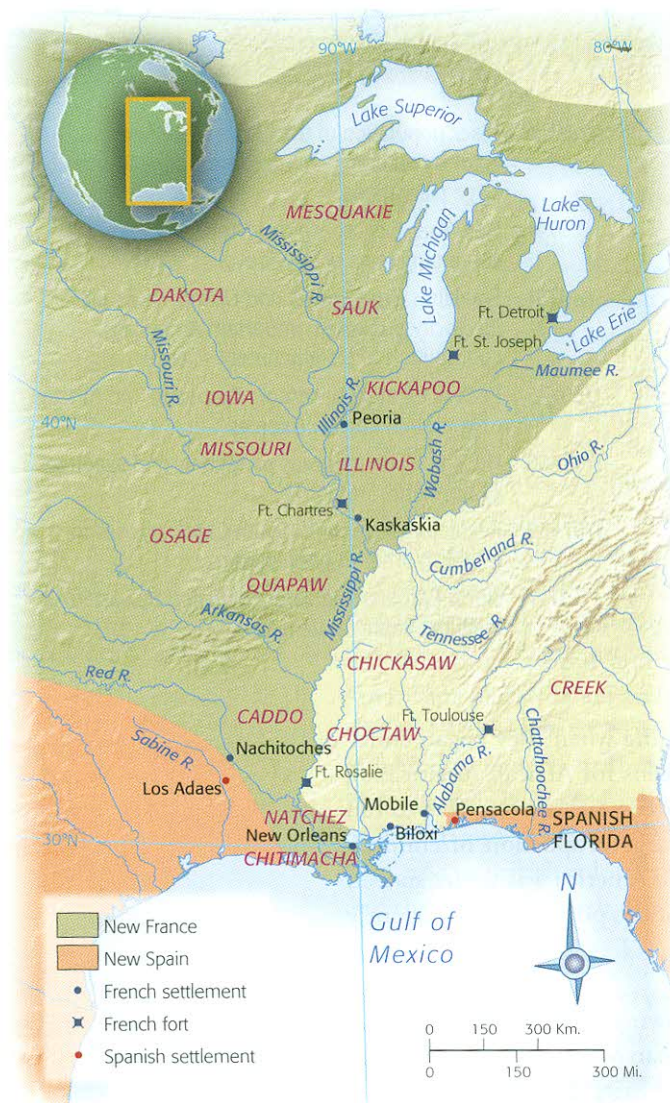
1690	Locke's <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> published, a key example of Enlightenment thought	1740s	Black population of the Chesapeake begins to grow by natural increase, contributing to rise of large plantations
1718	New Orleans founded in French Louisiana	1741	New York City "conspiracy" reflects whites' continuing fears of slave revolts
1721–22	Smallpox epidemic in Boston leads to first widespread adoption of inoculation in America	1751	Franklin's <i>Experiments and Observations on Electricity</i> published, important American contribution to Enlightenment science
1732	Founding of Georgia	1760–75	Peak of eighteenth-century European and African migration to English colonies
1733	John Peter Zenger is tried for and acquitted of "seditious libel" in New York	1765–66	Hudson River land riots pit tenants and squatters against large landlords
1739	Stono Rebellion (South Carolina) leads to increased white fears of slave revolts	1767–69	Regulator movement (South Carolina) tries to establish order in backcountry
	George Whitefield arrives in America; Great Awakening broadens	1771	North Carolina Regulators defeated by eastern militia at Battle of Alamance
1739–48	King George's War affects American economies		

approximately every twenty-five years. Women were young when they began child-bearing (early twenties for European-Americans, late teens for African Americans), and married women became pregnant every two or three years, having five to ten children. With the colonies' healthy environment, a large proportion of children reached maturity. About half of the population of Anglo America was under sixteen years old in 1775. (Less than one-quarter of the United States population is currently under sixteen.)

Spanish and French Territorial Expansion

British North America's growing population was sandwiched between the Appalachian Mountains (on the west) and the Atlantic coast (on the east). By contrast, Spanish and French territories expanded across North America with modest population increases. At the end of the eighteenth century, Texas had only about three thousand Spanish residents and California fewer than one thousand; the largest Spanish colony, New Mexico, included twenty thousand or so. Mainland French colonies' population increased from approximately fifteen thousand in 1700 to about seventy thousand in the 1760s, clustered in a few scattered locations. Still, French and Spanish geographic expansion dramatically affected native peoples.

Venturing into the Mississippi Valley in the early eighteenth century, the French and Spanish encountered powerful Indian nations like the Quapaws, Osages, and Caddos. A few Europeans—priests, soldiers, farmers, traders, ranchers—met native peoples who wanted access to manufactured goods, and who accordingly sought friendly relations. The Spanish and French invaders had to adapt to Indian diplomatic and cultural practices. French officials, for example, often complained of being forced to endure lengthy calumet ceremonies; and Spaniards, unaccustomed to involving women in diplomacy, had to accede to Texas Indians' use of female representatives. The European nations established neighboring outposts

**MAP 4.1****Louisiana, ca. 1720**

By 1720, French forts and settlements dotted the Mississippi River and its tributaries in the interior of North America. Two isolated Spanish outposts were situated near the Gulf of Mexico.

Source: Copyright © Cengage Learning



Link to Eulalia Perez's account of her work in a California Spanish mission.

The shortage of European women led to interracial unions between French men and Indian women, creating mixed-race people known as *metis*. French expansion helped reshape native alliances elsewhere. For example, the equestrian Comanches of the Plains, who could now trade with the French, no longer needed Spanish goods or their previous allies, the Utes. Deprived of powerful partners, the Utes negotiated peace with New Mexico in 1752. Once enslaved by Spaniards, Utes enslaved Paiutes and other nonequestrian peoples. They exchanged hides and slaves—mostly young women—for horses and metal goods until the end of Spanish rule in the region.

in the lower Mississippi region in 1716—the French at Natchitoches (west of the Mississippi), the Spaniards at Los Adaes (see Map 4.1). France had settled Biloxi Bay (in the modern state of Mississippi) in 1699, and strengthened its presence near the Gulf of Mexico by establishing New Orleans in 1718.

Spaniards focused first on Texas (establishing San Antonio in 1718), then the region they called Alta (upper) California. After learning that Russians who hunted sea otters along the northwest coast wanted to colonize the region, they sent expeditions north from their missions in Baja California. From a base at San Diego, where the Franciscan Junipero Serra set up the first mission in Alta California in July 1769, they traveled by land and sea to Monterey Bay, where in April 1770 they claimed Alta California for Spain. Over the next decades, they established presidios and missions along the coast from modern San Francisco to San Diego. There, Spanish Franciscan friars and a few settlers from Mexico lived amid thousands of Indians who had converted to Christianity.

France and the Mississippi

Along the Mississippi, French posts north of New Orleans became

the glue of empire. *Coueurs de bois* (literally, “forest runners”) used the American interior’s waterways to carry goods between Quebec and the new Louisiana territory. Indians traded furs and hides for guns, ammunition, and other items. The Osages were so eager to acquire firearms that they became, in effect, commercial hunters; their women were sometimes so fully occupied processing hides that older men prepared the communities’ meals. The largest French settlements, known collectively as *le pays de l’Illinois* (“the Illinois country”), never totaled much above three thousand people

To French officials, Louisiana's chief function was protection of the valuable Caribbean islands and prevention of Spanish and British expansion. Profit-seeking farmers and Indian traders from Canada demanded slaves from the French government. Officials dispatched more than six thousand Africans, mostly from Senegal, in the decade after 1719. But residents never developed a successful plantation economy. Skins and hides from the Indians, along with tobacco and indigo, composed Louisiana's major eighteenth-century exports. Enslaved Africans were carried north to the Illinois country, where as farm laborers and domestic servants they made up nearly 40 percent of the population in the 1730s.

Louisiana's expansion claimed lands belonging to Natchez Indians. In 1729, the Natchez and newly arrived slaves attacked the colony's northern reaches, killing more than 10 percent of Europeans. The French retaliated, slaughtering the Natchez and their allies, but under French rule, Louisiana remained a fragile colony.

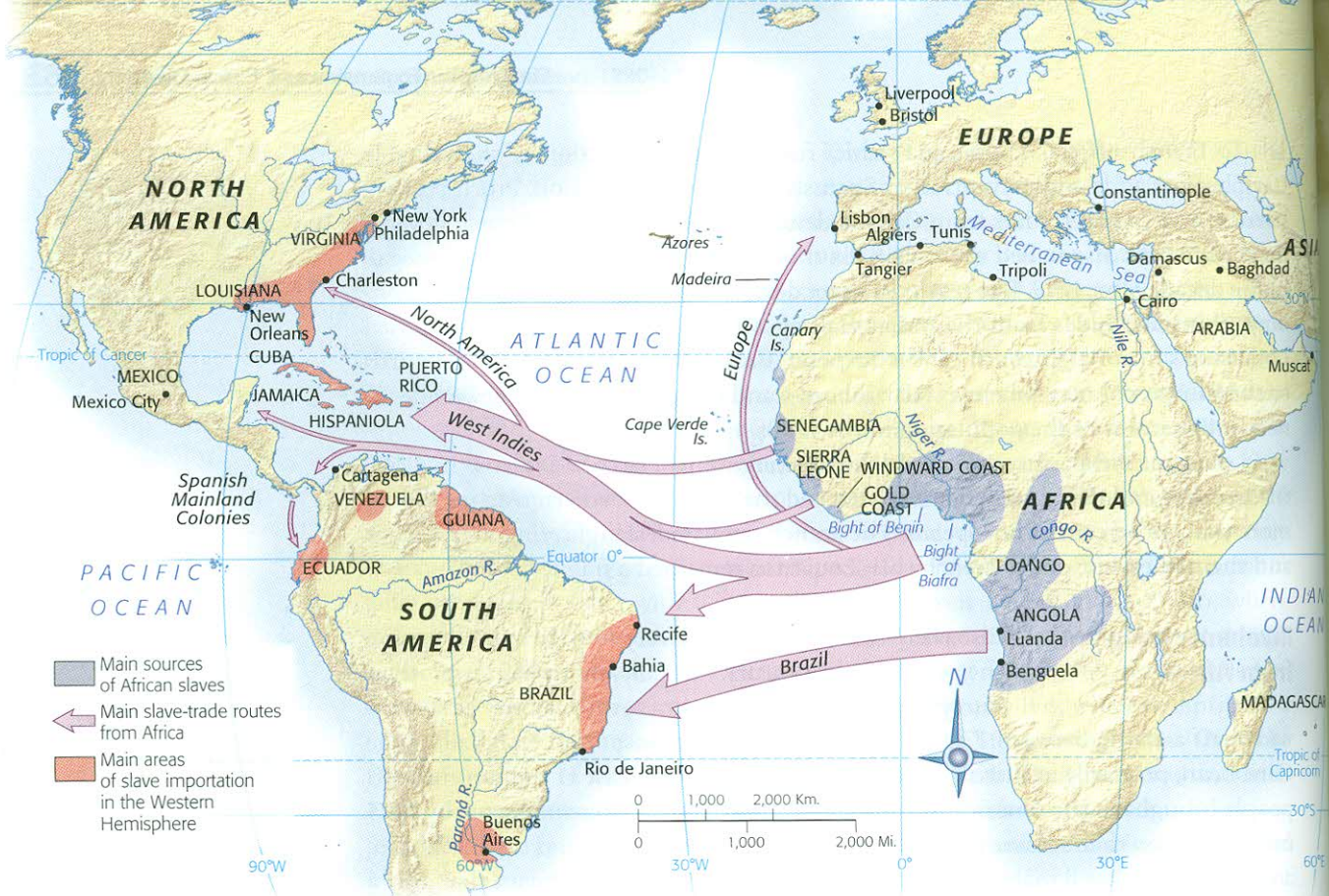
Involuntary Migrants from Africa

Elsewhere in the Americas, slavery took firm hold during the eighteenth century. In all, more Africans than Europeans came to the Americas—the majority as slaves—with half arriving between 1700 and 1800. Most were transported to Brazil or the Caribbean, primarily in British or Portuguese vessels. Of at least 11 million enslaved people brought to the Americas during slavery, only 260,000 were imported by 1775 into the region that became the United States. In South America and the Caribbean, a surplus of enslaved males over females and high mortality rates meant that only a continuing influx of slaves could maintain a consistent work force. On the North American mainland, South Carolina, where rice cultivation was difficult and unhealthy (because malaria-carrying mosquitoes bred in rice swamps), similarly required an inflow of slaves.

Slaves came from various ethnic groups and regions of Africa (see Map 4.2). More than 40 percent embarked from West Central Africa (modern Congo and Angola), nearly 20 percent from the Bight of Benin (modern Togo, Benin, and southwestern Nigeria), about 13 percent from the Bight of Biafra (today's Cameroon, Gabon, and southeastern Nigeria), and approximately 9 percent from the Gold Coast (modern Ghana and neighboring countries). Smaller proportions came from East Africa and the Windward and Rice Coasts (modern Senegal, Gambia, and Sierra Leone).

Standard slave-trading practice—of loading an entire cargo at one port and selling them in another—meant that people from the same area were typically taken to the Americas together. That was heightened by planter partiality for particular ethnic groups. Virginians favored Igbo from the Bight of Biafra, whereas South Carolinians and Georgians selected Senegambians and people from West Central Africa. Rice planters' desire for Senegambians, who were experienced rice cultivators, makes sense, but historians disagree about the reasons behind other preferences.

Possibly tens of thousands of enslaved Africans were Muslims, some of whom were literate in Arabic and came from aristocratic families. The discovery of noble birth could lead to slaves' being returned home. Job Ben Solomon, for example, a slave trader from Senegal, had been captured by raiders while selling bondpeople in Gambia and sent to Maryland in 1732. A letter he wrote in Arabic so impressed his owners that he was liberated the next year. Despite the approximately 260,000 slaves brought to the mainland, after 1740 American-born people of African descent came to dominate the enslaved population because of natural increase.



MAP 4.2

Major Origins and Destinations of Africans Enslaved in the Americas

As this schematic map shows, enslaved Africans were drawn from many regions of western Africa (with some coming from the interior of the continent) and were shipped to areas throughout the Americas.

Source: Copyright © Cengage Learning

Although about 40 percent of the Africans were male, women and children composed a majority of slave imports; females were valued for their reproductive and productive capacities. A planter who owned adult female slaves could watch his labor force expand steadily—through the births of their children, designated as slaves in every colony.

In the Chesapeake, the number of bondspeople grew rapidly because imports were added to an enslaved population that also expanded through natural increase. Work routines for cultivating tobacco, coupled with a roughly equal sex ratio, reduced slave mortality and increased fertility. Even in unhealthy South Carolina, American-born slaves outnumbered the African-born by 1750.

Newcomers from Europe

About 500,000 Europeans moved to British North America during the eighteenth century, most after 1730.

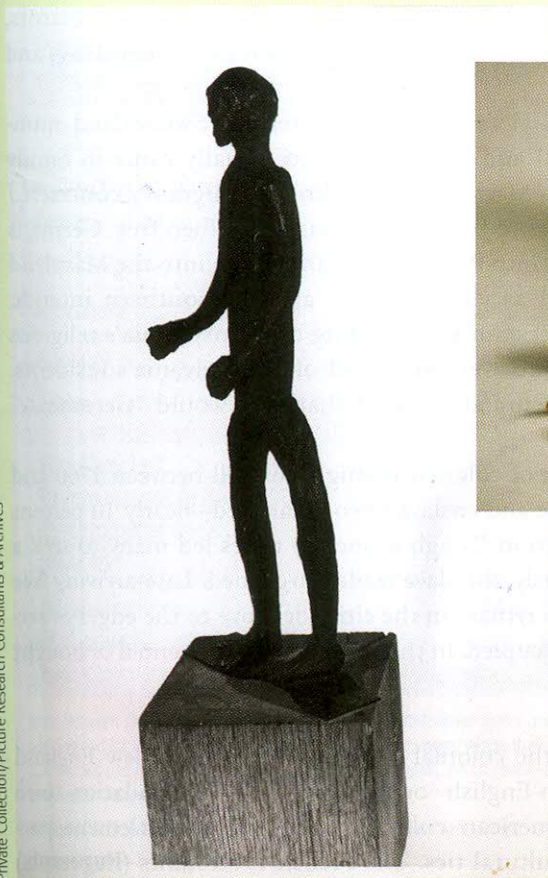
Influenced by mercantilist thought, British authorities regarded a large, industrious population at home as an asset. They deported “undesirables”—vagabonds and Jacobite rebels (supporters of the deposed Stuart monarchs)—but otherwise discouraged emigration. Instead, they recruited German and French Protestants to the colonies by promising free land and religious

Visualizing the Past

Slaves' Symbolic Resistance

Although revolts and running away have been the focus of many studies of enslaved Africans' resistance to bondage in North America, archaeological finds from the mid-eighteenth-century such as those illustrated here have revealed important aspects of slaves' personal lives and other forms of resistance. The set of objects found in Annapolis constitutes a *minkisi*, or West African spiritual bundle. Africans and African Americans placed such bundles of objects, each with a symbolic meaning (for example, bent nails reflected

the power of fire), under hearths or sills to direct the spirits, who entered and left houses through doors or chimneys. Their primary purpose was to protect bondspeople from the power of their masters—for example, by preventing the breakup of a family. The statue of a man was uncovered in an enslaved blacksmith's quarters. It too reflects resistance, but of a different sort: the quiet rebellion of a talented craftsman who used his master's iron and his own time and skill to secretly create a remarkable object. Can students today derive insights about enslaved people's lives from such artifacts as these, even though the illiterate bondspeople left no written records? If so, what?



Private Collection/Picture Research Consultants & Archives

Artifact found in an excavation in Alexandria, Virginia.



Photograph courtesy of Archaeology in Annapolis, University of Maryland, College Park

A *minkisi* from the eighteenth century found under the floor of the Charles Carroll house in Annapolis, Maryland.



Link to Benjamin Franklin's "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, 1751."

toleration. After 1740, they relaxed citizenship requirements to a small fee, seven years' residence, Protestantism, and an oath of allegiance to the king.

The most successful migrants came well prepared, having learned from earlier migrants that land and resources were abundant and that they would need capital. People who arrived penniless did less well; approximately 40 percent of the newcomers fell into that category, immigrating as bound laborers. Worst off were the 50,000 or so migrants who came as criminals convicted of such offenses as theft and murder. Many unskilled and perhaps one-third female, they were typically dispatched to Maryland to work in tobacco fields, as ironworkers, or as household servants.

Scots-Irish, Scots, and Germans

One of the largest groups of immigrants—over 150,000—were families from Ireland or Scotland. About 70,000 Scots-Irish descendants of Presbyterian Scots who had settled in Northern Ireland during the seventeenth century joined 35,000 who came to America from Scotland (see Table 4.1). Another 45,000 Protestants and Catholics migrated from southern Ireland (often as individuals). High rents, poor harvests, and religious discrimination (in Ireland) pushed people from their homeland. Such immigrants usually landed in Philadelphia or New Castle, Delaware. They moved into the western Pennsylvania backcountry. Later migrants moved to the backcountry of Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas. Frequently unable to afford land, they lived illegally on acreage belonging to Indians, land speculators, or colonial governments. They gained a reputation for lawlessness, drinking, and fighting.

Migrants from Germany and German-speaking areas of Switzerland numbered about 85,000 between 1730 and 1755. They, too, usually came in family groups and landed in Philadelphia. Many, like earlier English migrants, contracted to work as servants for several years to pay for their passage. When free, Germans settled together. Many moved west into Pennsylvania and south into the Maryland and Virginia backcountry as well as Charles Town and the southern interior. Germans belonged to various Protestant sects, adding to Pennsylvania's religious diversity. By century's end, Germans were one-third of Pennsylvania's residents. Benjamin Franklin predicted inaccurately in 1751 that they would "Germanize" Pennsylvania.

The most concentrated period of colonial immigration fell between 1760 and 1775, when more than 220,000 free and enslaved people arrived—nearly 10 percent of British North America's population. Tough economic times led many to seek a better life in America; simultaneously, the slave trade burgeoned. Late-arriving free immigrants had little choice but to remain in the cities or move to the edges of settlement; land elsewhere was fully occupied. In the peripheries, they rented or bought property from land speculators.

Maintaining Ethnic and Religious Identities

Half of the colonial population south of New England had non-English origins by 1775. Assimilation into Anglo-American culture depended on settlement patterns, group size, and migrants' cultural ties. The French Protestants (**Huguenots**) who migrated to Charles Town or New York City were unable to sustain their language or religious practices for more than two generations, whereas Huguenots settling in the Hudson Valley remained recognizably French and Calvinist for a

Huguenots: French Calvinist dissenters from that country's dominant Catholicism.

TABLE 4.1 Who Moved to America from England and Scotland in the Early 1770s, and Why?

	English Emigrants	Scottish Emigrants	Free American Population
Destination			
13 British colonies	81.1%	92.7%	—
Canada	12.1	4.2	—
West Indies	6.8	3.1	—
Age Distribution			
Under 21	26.8	45.3	56.8%
21–25	37.1	19.9	9.7
26–44	33.3	29.5	20.4
45 and over	2.7	5.3	13.1
Sex Distribution			
Male	83.8	59.9	—
Female	16.2	40.1	—
Unknown	4.2	13.5	—
Traveling Alone or with Families			
In families	20.0	48.0	—
Alone	80.0	52.0	—
Known Occupation or Status			
Gentry	2.5	1.2	—
Merchandising	5.2	5.2	—
Agriculture	17.8	24.0	—
Artisanry	54.2	37.7	—
Laborer	20.3	31.9	—
Why They Left			
Positive reasons (e.g., desire to better one's position)	90.0	36.0	—
Negative reasons (e.g., poverty, unemployment)	10.0	64.0	—

Note: Between December 1773 and March 1776, the British government questioned individuals and families leaving ports in Scotland and England for the American colonies to learn who they were, where they were going, and why they were leaving. This table summarizes just a few of the findings of the official inquiries, which revealed a number of significant differences between the Scottish and English emigrants.

Source of data: Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West* (New York: Knopf, 1986), Tables 4.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.7, 5.23, and 6.1.

century. The equally small group of colonial Jews maintained a distinct identity wherever they settled. In places like New York and Newport, Rhode Island, they established synagogues and preserved their religion.

Members of larger migrant groups (Germans, Irish, and Scots) found it easier to sustain European ways. Some ethnicities dominated certain localities. Where migrants from different countries settled the same region, ethnic antagonisms surfaced. One German clergyman in Pennsylvania, for example, claimed that Scots-Irish migrants were “lazy, dissipated and poor.” Anglo-American elites fostered antagonisms to maintain their power and frequently subverted naturalization laws to depriving even long-resident immigrants a voice in government.

Ultimately, elites would need the support of non-English Americans. When they moved toward revolution in the 1770s, they deliberately began speaking of “the rights of man,” rather than “English liberties,” to attract recruits.

Economic Growth and Development in British America

How were the colonies’ economic fates increasingly linked to world markets?

The dramatic population increase of Anglo America caused colonial economies to grow, despite the vagaries of international markets. By contrast, the population and economy of New Spain’s northern Borderlands stagnated, for the isolated settlements produced few items for export. French Canada exported large quantities of furs and fish, but the government’s trade monopoly ensured that profits primarily ended up in the home country. The Louisiana colony required substantial government subsidies to survive. Of France’s American possessions, only the Caribbean islands flourished.

Commerce and Manufacturing in the British Colonies

In British North America, the rising population demanded more goods and services, fueling the development of small-scale colonial manufacturing and a complex internal trade network. Roads, bridges, mills, and stores were built to serve new settlements. A lively coastal trade developed; by the late 1760s, more than half of the vessels leaving Boston sailed to other mainland colonies, collecting goods for export and distributing imports and American-made items. Colonies no longer depended wholly on European goods, and the American population generated sufficient demand to support local manufacturing.

Iron making became the largest industry, surpassing England’s by 1775. Ironworks in the Chesapeake and middle colonies required sizable investments and substantial workforces—usually indentured servants, convicts, and slaves—who dug the ore, chopped trees for charcoal production, and smelted and refined the ore. Because the work was dirty, dangerous, and difficult, convicts and servants often fled, but enslaved men could learn valuable skills and accumulate property when paid for doing extra assigned tasks.

Colonial prosperity nevertheless depended heavily on overseas demand for tobacco, rice, indigo, fish, and timber products. By selling such items, colonists earned credit to purchase English and European imports. If demand for American exports slowed, the colonists’ income and purchasing power dropped, producing economic downswings.

Wealth and Poverty

Despite fluctuations, the American economy grew during the eighteenth century, partly from higher earnings from exports. That produced better living standards for property-owning Americans. Early in the century, as the price of British manufactures fell, households acquired amenities such as chairs and earthenware dishes. Diet also improved as trade brought more varied foodstuffs. After 1750, luxury items could be found in the wealthy's homes, and the "middling sort" imported English ceramics and teapots. Even the poorest property owners had better household goods.

New arrivals did not have the advancement opportunities of their predecessors. Still, at least two-thirds of rural householders owned their own land by 1750. But in the cities, laborers' families lived close to destitution. By the 1760s, applicants for assistance overwhelmed public urban poor-relief systems, and some cities built workhouses or almshouses to shelter growing numbers of elderly and infirm people along with widows and their children.

Regional Economies

Within this overall picture, varying regional patterns emerged, in part because of **King George's War**, also called the War of the Austrian Succession (1739–1748).

New England's export economy rested on trade with the Caribbean: northern forests supplied the timber to build ships that carried salt fish to feed slaves on sugar plantations. The war increased demand for New England's ships and sailors, thus invigorating the economy; but New Englanders suffered major losses of men and materiel in Caribbean battles and in their successful attack on the fortress of Louisbourg (in modern Nova Scotia), which guarded the sea-lanes leading to New France. When the shipbuilding boom ended with the war, the economy stagnated, and widows and orphans crowded relief rolls. Britain even returned Louisbourg to France in the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748).

By contrast, King George's War and its aftermath brought prosperity to the middle colonies and the Chesapeake, because the fertile soil and longer growing season in both regions readily produced an abundance of grain. After 1748, when several poor harvests in Europe caused flour prices to skyrocket, Philadelphia and New York took the lead in the foodstuffs trade. Some Chesapeake planters began to convert tobacco fields to wheat and corn. Tobacco remained the largest single export from the mainland colonies, yet grain cultivation significantly changed Chesapeake settlement by encouraging the development of port towns (like Baltimore), where merchants and shipbuilders would handle the new trade.

That South Carolina's staple crop was rice determined its distinctive economic pattern, as did its vulnerability to Atlantic hurricanes. Storms periodically devastated its rice and indigo crops, causing hardship and bankruptcies. Yet after Parliament in 1730 removed rice from the list of enumerated products, South Carolinians prospered by trading directly with Europe. The outbreak of war disrupted that trade, and the colony entered a depression that ended in the 1760s. Overall, though, South Carolina grew faster than other British colonies and had the highest average wealth per freeholder in mainland Anglo America by the American Revolution.

The newest British settlement, Georgia, was chartered in 1732 as a haven for imprisoned English debtors. Its founder, **James Oglethorpe**, envisioned Georgia as a garrison where farmers who would defend the southern flank of English settlement against Spanish Florida. Accordingly, its charter prohibited slavery, but neighboring

King George's War: Also known as the War of Austrian Succession, started out as a conflict between Britain and Spain, but then escalated when France sided with Spain.

James Oglethorpe: Founder of Georgia colony.

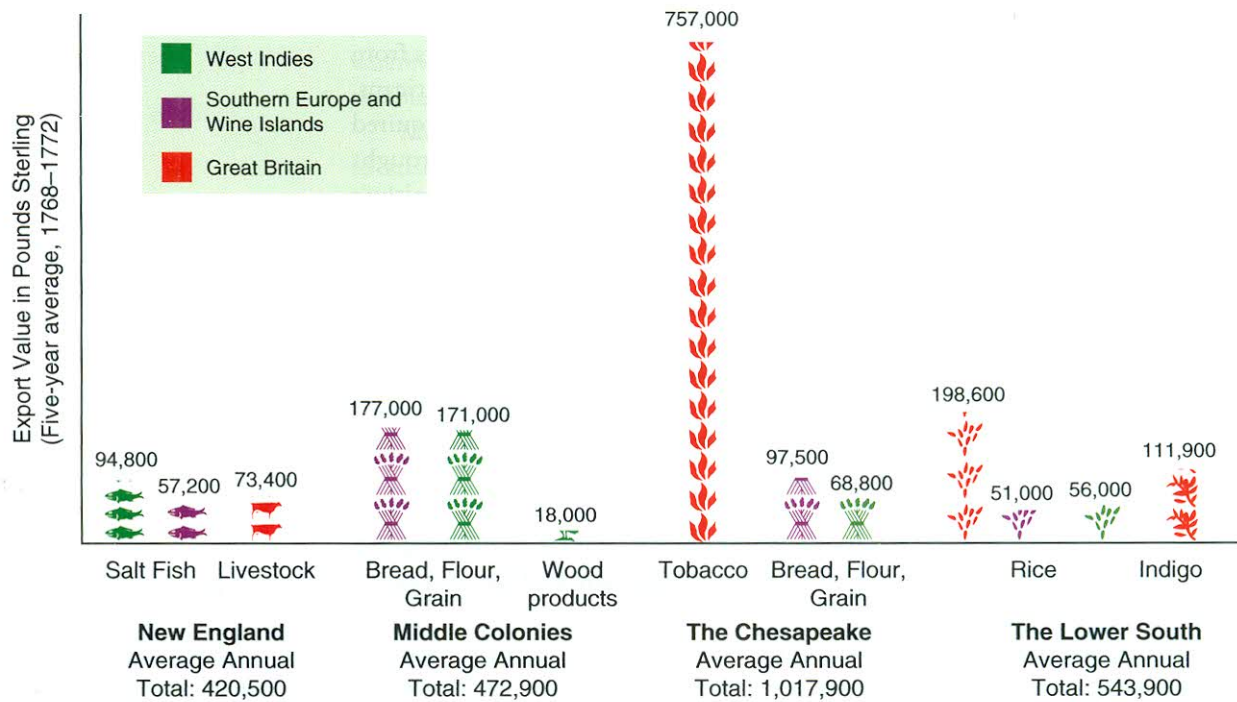


FIGURE 4.1
Regional Trading Patterns

As this figure shows, the different regions of the British mainland colonies had distinct trading patterns: they exported diverse products to different markets. By far the most valuable export was the tobacco grown by Chesapeake slaves.

Source: Adapted from James F. Shepard and Gary M. Walton, *Shipping, Maritime Trade, and the Economic Development of Colonial North America* [Cambridge: University Press, 1972].

Carolina rice planters had the restriction removed in 1751. Thereafter, Georgia developed into a rice-planting slave society resembling South Carolina.

Regional variations highlight the British mainland colonies' disparate experiences within the empire. Despite increasing coastal trade, the colonies' economic fortunes depended on the shifting markets of Europe and the Caribbean. Without an unprecedented crisis in the British imperial system (discussed in Chapter 5), it seems unlikely they could have been persuaded to join in a common endeavor. Even with that impetus, unity proved difficult to maintain.

Colonial Cultures

How did rituals function in colonial America?

By 1750, British America was denser and more diverse than a half-century earlier with new extremes of wealth and poverty, especially in the growing cities. Native-born colonial elites sought to distinguish themselves from ordinary folk as they consolidated their hold on local power.

Genteel Culture

Colonists who acquired wealth through trade, agriculture, or manufacturing spent their money ostentatiously, dressing fashionably, traveling in horse-drawn carriages, and hosting lavish parties. They built large houses containing rooms for dancing, cardplaying, or drinking tea. Sufficiently well-off to enjoy "leisure" time (a first for North America), they attended

concerts and the theater, gambled at horse races, and played billiards and other games. They also cultivated polite manners. Although the effects of accumulated wealth were most pronounced in Anglo America, elite families in New Mexico, Louisiana, and Quebec set themselves off from the "lesser sort." Together, these wealthy families deliberately constructed a genteel culture different from that of ordinary colonists.

Men from such families prided themselves on their possessions, their positions in the political and economic hierarchy, their education, and their intellectual connections to Europe. Many had been tutored by private teachers; some attended college. (Harvard, the first colonial college, founded in 1636, was joined by William and Mary in 1693 and Yale in 1701.) In the seventeenth century, only aspiring clergymen attended college, but by the mid-eighteenth century, as colleges broadened their curricula to include mathematics, science, law, and medicine, young men from elite or upwardly mobile families slowly enrolled. American women were mostly excluded from advanced education, except those who joined nunneries in Canada or Louisiana.

The Enlightenment

The intellectual current known as the **Enlightenment** deeply affected the clergymen who headed colonial colleges and their students. Around 1650, some European thinkers analyzed nature to determine the laws governing the universe. They employed experimentation and abstract reasoning to discover general principles behind phenomena like the motions of planets. Enlightenment philosophers emphasized acquiring knowledge through reason, challenging previously unquestioned assumptions. **John Locke's** *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) disputed the notion that human beings are born imprinted with innate ideas. All knowledge, Locke asserted, derived from observations. Belief in witchcraft and astrology and similar phenomena thus were attacked.

The Enlightenment supplied educated, well-to-do people in Europe and America with a common vocabulary and a unified world-view, one that insisted the enlightened eighteenth century was better and wiser than previous ages. It joined them in the common endeavor to make sense of God's creation. Thus American naturalists like John and William Bartram supplied European scientists with information about New World plants and animals for newly formulated classification systems. A prime example of America's participation in the Enlightenment was **Benjamin Franklin**, who retired from a successful printing business in 1748 at age forty-two, devoting himself to scientific experimentation and public service. His *Experiments and Observations on Electricity* (1751) established the basic theory of electricity still used today.



Elizabeth Murray, the subject of this 1769 painting by John Singleton Copley, was the wife of James Smith, a wealthy rum distiller. Her fashionable dress and pose would seem to mark her as a lady of leisure, yet both before and during her marriage this Scottish immigrant ran a successful dry goods shop in Boston. She thus simultaneously catered to and participated in the new culture of consumption.

Gift of Joseph W. R. Rogers and Mary C. Rogers. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Reproduced with permission. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Enlightenment: Intellectual revolution that elevated reason, science, and logic.

John Locke: British philosopher and major Enlightenment thinker; known for his emphasis on the power of human reasoning.

Benjamin Franklin: American who embodied Enlightenment ideas.



Links to the World

Smallpox Inoculation

Smallpox, the world's greatest killer of human beings, repeatedly ravaged North American colonists and Indians. Thus, when the vessel *Seahorse* arrived in Boston from the Caribbean in April 1721 with smallpox-infected people on board, New Englanders feared the worst and quarantined the ship. It was too late: smallpox escaped into the city, and by June several dozen people were afflicted.

But the Reverend Cotton Mather, a member of London's Royal Society (an Enlightenment organization), had read years earlier of a medical technique

previously unknown to Europeans but widely employed in North Africa and the Middle East. Called inoculation, it involved taking pus from the pustules (or poxes) of an infected person and inserting it into a small cut on the arm of a healthy individual. With luck, that person would experience a mild case and gain lifetime immunity. Mather's interest was further piqued by his slave Onesimus, a North African who had been inoculated as a youth and who described the procedure in detail.

With the disease coursing through the city, Mather promoted inoculation to the local medical community. But the city's doctors ridiculed his ideas, except for Zabdiel Boylston, a physician and apothecary. The two men inoculated their children and about two hundred others. After the epidemic ended, Bostonians could see the results: of those inoculated, just 3 percent had died; among the thousands who contracted the disease naturally, mortality was 15 percent. Even Mather's most vocal opponents supported inoculation thereafter.

Thus, through transatlantic links forged by the Enlightenment and enslavement, American colonists learned how to combat the deadliest disease. Today, thanks to a successful campaign by the World Health Organization, smallpox has been eradicated.

An Historical
ACCOUNT
OF THE
SMALL-POX
INOCULATED

IN
NEW ENGLAND,
Upon all Sorts of Persons, *Whites, Blacks,*
and of all Ages and Constitutions.

With some Account of the Nature of the Infection
in the NATURAL and INOCULATED Way, and their
different Effects on HUMAN BODIES.

With some short DIRECTIONS to the UNEXPERIENCED
in this Method of Practice.

Humbly dedicated to her Royal Highness the Princess of
WALES, by *Zabdiel Boylston*, Physician.

L O N D O N:
Printed for S. CHANDLER, at the Cross-Keys in the Poultry.
M. DCC. XXVI.

Private Collection/Picture Research Consultants & Archives

Several years after he and Cotton Mather combated a Boston smallpox epidemic by employing inoculation, Zabdiel Boylston published this pamphlet in London to spread the news of their success. The dedication to the Princess of Wales was designed to indicate the royal family's support of the procedure.

Enlightenment rationalism affected politics, too. Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1691) and works by French and Scottish philosophers challenged a divinely sanctioned, hierarchical political order originating in the power of fathers over families. Men created governments and could alter them, Locke declared. A ruler who broke the social contract and failed to protect people's rights could legitimately be ousted from power peacefully or violently. Enlightenment theorists proclaimed God's natural laws governed even monarchs.

Oral Cultures

The world in which such ideas were discussed was select. Most residents of North America were illiterate. Those who could read often could not write. Books were scarce until the 1750s, and colonial newspapers did not appear until the 1720s. Parents, older siblings, or local widows who needed extra income taught youngsters to read. More fortunate boys (and genteel girls after the 1750s) might learn to write in private schools. Few Americans other than some Church of England missionaries in the South tried to instruct enslaved children. And only the most zealous Indian converts learned Europeans' literacy skills.

Thus, the cultures of colonial North America were primarily oral, communal, and local. Face-to-face conversation was the major means of communication. Different locales developed divergent cultural traditions. Through public rituals colonists forged their cultural identities.

Religious and Civic Rituals

Church attendance was perhaps the most important ritual. In early New England, men and women sat on opposite sides of a central aisle, arranged by age, wealth, and church membership. By the mid-eighteenth century, wealthy husbands and wives sat in privately owned pews; their children, servants, slaves, and the less fortunate sat in sex-segregated fashion at the rear, sides, or balcony of the church. In eighteenth-century Virginia, planter families purchased pews, and in some parishes landed gentlemen strode in as a group before the service, deliberately drawing attention to their exalted position. In Quebec City, formal processions celebrated Catholic feast days; each participant's rank determined his place in the procession. By contrast, Quaker meeting houses in Pennsylvania and elsewhere used an egalitarian but sex-segregated seating system. The various seating and entrance rituals symbolized social rank and local values.

Communal culture also centered on civic involvement. In New England, governments proclaimed official days of thanksgiving (for good harvests, military victories, etc.) and days of fasting and prayer (during difficulties such as droughts or epidemics). Everyone was expected to participate. Because able-bodied men between ages sixteen and sixty were required to serve in local militias, monthly musters also brought the community together.

In the Chesapeake, important rituals occurred on court and election days. When the county court met, men came to file lawsuits, appear as witnesses, or serve as jurors. Court attendance provided civic education; from the proceedings men learned what behavior was expected. Elections served the same purpose, for property-holding men voted in public. An election official, often flanked by the candidates for office, would call each man forward to declare his preference. Voters would then be thanked politely by the gentleman selected, often treated later to rum at nearby taverns.



Library Company of Philadelphia

This trade card (advertisement) issued by a Philadelphia tobacco dealer in 1770 shows a convivial group of wealthy men at a tavern. Both the leisurely activity depicted here and the advertisement itself were signs of the new rituals of consumption. Merchants began to advertise only when their customers could choose among different ways of spending money.

Throughout colonial North America, the public punishment of criminals served to humiliate the offender and remind the community of proper behavioral standards. Public hangings, whippings, and sitting in the stocks expressed community outrage and restored harmony. Judges often assigned penalties that shamed miscreants. When a New Mexico man assaulted his father-in-law, he was directed to pay medical expenses and kneel before him publicly to beg his forgiveness. Even after pardoned of capital offenses, New Englanders were frequently ordered to wear nooses around their necks for years, as a reminder to all of their violation of community norms.

Rituals of Consumption By 1770, Anglo-American households allocated one-quarter of their spending to consumer goods, which fostered new rituals centered on consumption and created what historians have termed “an empire of goods.” In the seventeenth century, settlers acquired necessities by bartering with neighbors or ordering from a home-country merchant. By the middle of the eighteenth century, specialized shops selling nonessentials proliferated in cities like Philadelphia and New Orleans. In 1770, Boston had more than five hundred stores, offering millinery, sewing supplies, tobacco, gloves, tableware, and the like. Even small towns had one or two retail establishments. Colonists would set aside time to “go shopping,” a novel and pleasurable leisure activity that initiated consumption rituals.

Colonists took pleasure in owning and displaying lovely objects for neighbors and kin to see: a mirror, a ceramic bowl, or clothing made from special fabric. A rich man might hire an artist to paint his family using the objects, thereby creating a record to be admired.

Poor, rural people similarly took pleasure in inexpensive purchases. One Virginia woman traded hens and chickens for a pewter dish. Local slaves exchanged cotton they had grown in their free time for colorful ribbons and hats they must have worn proudly.

Tea and Madeira

Tea drinking, a consumption ritual dominated by women, played an important role throughout Anglo America. Households with aspirations to genteel status sought the necessary items for proper tea consumption: pots, cups, strainers, sugar tongs, bowls, and special tables. Tea provided a focal point for socializing and, because of its cost, served as a status symbol. Wealthy women regularly entertained friends at afternoon tea parties. Tea also appeared healthful; thus even poor households consumed it, although without the fancy equipment of their wealthier neighbors. Another genteel drink was Madeira wine from the Portuguese islands. By 1770, Madeira had become the elite's favored drink, expensive to purchase. Opening the bottle, letting it breathe, decanting and serving it with appropriate glassware were accomplished with elaborate ceremony. After the 1750s, urban dwellers could buy Madeira at specialized stores.

Rituals on the "Middle Ground"

Other rituals allowed the disparate cultures of colonial North America to interact. Particularly important rituals developed on what the historian Richard White has termed the "middle ground"—the psychological and geographical space in which Indians and Europeans encountered each other, primarily via trade or warfare.

When Europeans sought to trade with Indians, they encountered an indigenous exchange system that stressed gift giving over buying and selling. Successful bargaining required French and English traders to present Indians with gifts (cloth, rum, gunpowder, and other items) before negotiating for pelts and skins. Only after those gifts were reciprocated could formal trading begin. For example, Indians in northeastern North America wanted heavy cloths called strouds. Because British manufacturers produced such material in response to natives' demands, British traders acquired an important advantage over their French competitors. Rum became a crucial component, as traders concluded that drunken Indians would sell their furs more cheaply, and some Indians refused to hunt or trade unless they first received rum. Alcohol abuse hastened the deterioration of villages already devastated by disease and dislocation.

Intercultural rituals also developed to deal with murders. Where Europeans sought primarily to punish the murderer, Indians regarded such "eye for an eye" revenge as just one possible response. Compensation could also be accomplished by capturing another Indian or a colonist to take the dead person's place, or by "covering the dead"—providing the deceased's family with goods. Eventually, the French and the Algonquians evolved an elaborate ritual from both societies' traditions: murderers were identified but deaths were usually "covered" by trade goods rather than blood revenge.

Colonial Families

Families constituted the basic units of colonial society, constituting the chief mechanism for production and consumption. Never-married adults were rare. Yet family forms and structures varied widely, and not all were headed by couples.

How did European American families differ from those of Indians or African Americans?

Indian and Mixed-Race Families

As Europeans consolidated their hold on North America, Indians had to adapt. Bands reduced by disease and warfare recombined into new units; for example, the Catawbas emerged in the 1730s in the western Carolinas by merging several earlier peoples, including Yamasees and Guales. Likewise, European authorities reshaped Indian family forms. Whereas many Indian societies had permitted easy divorce, European missionaries frowned on it; societies that had allowed polygynous marriages (including New England Algonquians) redefined them, designating one wife as “legitimate” and others as “concubines.”

With continued high mortality, extended kin became increasingly important, with other relatives—sometimes nonkin—assuming child-rearing responsibilities when parents died. Once Europeans established dominance in any region, Indians were unable to pursue traditional modes of subsistence, driving them to unusual family structures and new economic strategies. In New England, for instance, Algonquian husbands and wives survived by working, and sometimes living, separately (perhaps wives as domestic servants, husbands as sailors). Some native women married African American men due to sexual imbalances in both populations. In New Mexico, detribalized Navajos, Pueblos, Paiutes, and Apaches employed as servants by Spanish settlers clustered in the small Borderlands towns. Known as *genizaros*, they lost contact with Indian cultures, instead living on the fringes of Latino society.

Wherever the population contained relatively few European women, sexual liaisons occurred between European men and Indian women. The resulting mixed-race population of *mestizos* and *métis* worked as a familial “middle ground” to ease other cultural interactions. In New France and the Anglo-American backcountry, such families resided in Indian villages and their children sometimes became prominent Native American leaders. By contrast, in the Spanish Borderlands the offspring of Europeans and *genizaros* were shunned. Largely denied legal marriage, they bore generations of “illegitimate” children of various racial mixtures, giving rise in Latino society to multiple labels describing precise degrees of skin color.

European American Families

To eighteenth-century Anglo-Americans, the word *family* meant everyone in one household (including servants or slaves). In 1790, the average home in the United States contained 5.7 free people; few included extended kin, such as grandparents. Family members worked together to produce goods for consumption or sale. The head of the household represented it to the outside world, voting in elections, managing the finances, and holding legal authority over the rest of the family—his wife, children, and servants or slaves.

In English, French, and Spanish America, the vast majority of European families supported themselves by cultivating crops and raising livestock. While the work differed by region or crop, tasks were allocated by sex. The mistress oversaw her female helpers in what Anglo-Americans called “indoor affairs”—preparing food, cleaning the house, doing laundry, and making clothes. Along with cooking, food preparation involved cultivating a garden, harvesting and preserving vegetables, salting and smoking meat, drying apples and pressing cider, milking cows and making butter and cheese. The husband and his male helpers managed “outdoor affairs,” cultivating fields, building fences, chopping wood, harvesting and marketing crops, tending livestock, and butchering cattle and hogs. Farm work was so extensive that a married couple could not do it alone; if childless, they needed servants or slaves.

African American Families

Most African American families lived as components of European American households. More than 95 percent of colonial African Americans were held in perpetual bondage. In South Carolina, a majority of the population was of African origin; in Georgia, about half; and in the Chesapeake, 40 percent. Portions of the Carolina low country were nearly 90 percent African American by 1790.

Where African Americans lived determined the shape of their families. In the North, the scarcity of other blacks often made it difficult for bondspeople to form stable households. In the Chesapeake, men and women who regarded themselves as married (slaves could not legally wed) frequently lived on different quarters or different plantations. Children generally resided with mothers. On large Carolina and Georgia rice plantations, enslaved couples usually lived together and accumulated property by working for themselves completing daily "tasks." Some Georgia slaves sold surplus produce, earning money for clothing or such luxuries as tobacco, but rarely enough for their freedom.

Forms of Resistance

Because all British colonies legally permitted slavery, bondspeople had few options for escaping servitude other than fleeing to Florida, where the Spanish offered protection. Some recently arrived Africans stole boats or ran off to join the Indians or establish independent communities on the frontier. Among American-born slaves, family ties strongly affected such decisions. As one South Carolina planter wrote, slaves "love their families dearly and none runs away from the other." Consequently, many owners sought to keep families together. In the Chesapeake, where family members often lived separately, affectionate ties could cause slaves to run away, especially if family members were sold.

Although colonial slaves rarely rebelled collectively, they resisted in other ways. Bondspeople rejected owners' attempts to commandeer their labor on Sundays without compensation. Extended-kin groups protested excessive punishment of relatives and sought to live near one another. If parents and children were separated by sale, other relatives helped with child rearing. Just as among Indians, the extended family served a more important function for African Americans than for European-Americans.

Most slave families carved out some autonomy, especially in their working and spiritual lives, particularly in the Lower South. Some African Americans preserved traditional beliefs or Islamic faith; others converted to Christianity, comforted by its assurances that everyone would be free and equal in heaven. South Carolina and Georgia slaves jealously guarded their ability to control their time after completing their "tasks." Even on Chesapeake tobacco plantations, slaves planted gardens, trapped, or fished to supplement their meager diets. Late in the century, some Chesapeake planters began to hire slaves out, often allowing the workers to keep some of their earnings.

City Life

In cities, African Americans and European Americans resided in neighborhoods together. (In 1760s Philadelphia, one-fifth of the work force was enslaved, and by 1775 blacks composed nearly 15 percent of New York City's population.) Such cities were medium-sized towns by today's standards. In 1750, the largest, Boston and Philadelphia, had just seventeen thousand and thirteen thousand inhabitants, respectively. Unlike their rural



Stokes Collection, The New York Public Library

Fire posed a major hazard to colonial cities; several suffered considerable damage in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from fires that raged out of control for hours. In the mid-eighteenth-century, cities like New York organized volunteer companies, such as the Hand-in-Hand company pictured here on an unidentified city street about 1750. The firemen are passing buckets of water from the well on the left to the engine on the right, where men on each side operate the pump that directs a stream of water on the fire. The chief is shouting orders through his trumpet at the right of the engine, and the people on the far right are carrying items from the burning building.

counterparts, city dwellers purchased food and wood, and men's jobs frequently took them away from home, giving them more contact with the broader world.

By the 1750s, most major cities had at least one weekly newspaper. Anglo-American newspapers combined local reports with the latest "advices from London" (usually two to three months old). People who could not afford newspapers could either read them (or listen to them read aloud) at taverns and coffeehouses. Contact with the outside world, however, meant sailors sometimes brought deadly diseases into port. Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and New Orleans endured smallpox and yellow fever epidemics, which Europeans and Africans in the countryside largely escaped.

Politics: Stability and Crisis in British America

Early in the eighteenth century, Anglo-American political life exhibited new stability. Despite substantial migration, most mainland residents were born in America. Men from genteel families dominated the political structures, for voters (free male property holders) typically deferred to their well-educated “betters” in election.

What were the myths and realities of colonial assemblies?

Colonial Assemblies Throughout the Anglo-American colonies, political leaders sought to increase the powers of elected assemblies relative to that of governors and other appointed officials. Assemblies began to claim privileges associated with the British House of Commons, such as initiating tax legislation and controlling the militia. Assemblies also influenced British appointees by threatening to withhold their salaries. In some colonies (Virginia and South Carolina, for example), elite assemblymen presented a united front to royal officials, but in others (such as New York), they fought among themselves bitterly. To win hotly contested elections, New York’s genteel leaders began competing for votes. Yet in 1735 the New York government imprisoned newspaper editor **John Peter Zenger**, who vigorously criticized it on the charge of “seditious libel.” Arguing that the truth could not be defamatory, his lawyer helped establish a free-press principle in American law.

John Peter Zenger: Central figure in a trial that opened the way for freedom of the press.

Assemblymen saw themselves as acting to prevent encroachments on colonists’ liberties—for example, by preventing governors from imposing oppressive taxes. By midcentury, they were comparing the structure of their governments to Britain’s balanced polity, equating their governors with the monarch, their councils with the aristocracy, and their assemblies with the House of Commons. All three were believed essential to good government, but Anglo-Americans viewed governors and appointed councils as Britain’s representatives and potential threats to colonial ways of life. Many colonists saw the assemblies, however, as the people’s protectors. And the assemblies regarded themselves as the people’s representatives.

In reality, the assemblies, controlled by dominant families whose members were reelected year after year, rarely responded to poorer constituents’ concerns. They also failed to reapportion themselves to provide representation for new settlements; this led to grievances among backcountry dwellers, especially non-English ethnic groups. The colonial ideal of the assembly as the defender of liberty was a myth. In truth, the most ably represented were wealthy male colonists, particularly the assembly members themselves.

At midcentury, the political structures that had stabilized in a period of relative calm confronted a series of crises—ethnic, racial, economic, regional—that exposed internal tensions and foreshadowed the disorder of the revolutionary era. Significantly, they demonstrated that the political accommodations arrived at after the **Glorious Revolution** could no longer adequately govern Britain’s American empire.

Glorious Revolution: Overthrow of James II in favor of William and Mary.

Slave Rebellions in South Carolina and New York

Early on Sunday, September 9, 1739, about twenty enslaved men, most likely Catholics from Kongo, gathered near the Stono River south of Charles Town. September fell in the midst of the rice harvest (and thus a stressful time for male Africans, less accustomed than women to rice cultivation), and September 8 was, to Catholics, the birthday of the Virgin Mary. Seizing guns and ammunition,

Stono Rebellion: A slave uprising in 1739 in South Carolina.

the slaves killed storekeepers and nearby planter families. Then, joined by other bondsmen, they headed toward Florida in hopes of finding refuge. By midday, however, the militia attacked the nearly one hundred fugitives, killing some and dispersing the rest. A week later, most of the remaining conspirators were captured and executed. But for two years, rumors about escaped renegades haunted the colony.

After the **Stono Rebellion**, laws governing African Americans were stiffened throughout British America. In New York City, the site of the first mainland slave revolt in 1712, the Stono news, coupled with fears of Spain generated by the outbreak of King George's War, set off a reign of terror in the summer of 1741. Colonial authorities suspected a biracial gang of thieves and arsonists of fomenting a slave uprising under the guidance of a European thought to be a Spanish priest. By summer's end, thirty-one blacks and four whites had been executed for participating in the alleged plot. The Stono Rebellion and the New York "conspiracy" confirmed Anglo-Americans' deepest fears about the dangers of slaveholding and revealed the assemblies' inability to prevent internal disorder.

Rioters and Regulators By midcentury, with most fertile land east of the Appalachians purchased or occupied, conflicts over land titles and conditions of landholding escalated. In 1746, for example, some New Jersey farmers clashed violently with agents of the East Jersey proprietors, who claimed the farmers' land and demanded annual payments, called quit-rents. The most serious land riots occurred along the Hudson River in 1765–1766. Late in the seventeenth century, the governor of New York had granted huge tracts in the lower Hudson Valley to prominent families. They then divided these estates into small farms, which they rented to poor Dutch and German migrants who regarded tenancy as a step toward independence.

After 1740, though, New Englanders and Europeans increasingly migrated to the region, resisting tenancy and often squatting. In the mid-1760s, the Philipse family sued farmers who had lived on Philipse land for two decades. New York courts ordered squatters to make way for tenants with valid leases. Instead, farmers rebelled, terrorizing proprietors and tenants, and on one occasion battling a county sheriff and his posse. The rebellion lasted nearly a year, ending only when British troops captured its leaders.

Violent conflicts erupted in the Carolinas as well. The Regulator movements of the late 1760s (South Carolina) and early 1770s (North Carolina) pitted backcountry farmers against wealthy eastern planters who controlled colonial governments. In South Carolina, Scots-Irish settlers protested their lack of an adequate voice in political affairs. For months, they policed the countryside in vigilante bands known as Regulators, complaining of lax and biased law enforcement. North Carolina Regulators, who objected to heavy taxation, lost a battle with eastern militiamen at Alamance in 1771.

A Crisis in Anglo-American Religion

What was the social and political impact of the Great Awakening?

The most widespread crisis was religious. From the mid-1730s through the 1760s, waves of religious revivalism—today known as the **First Great Awakening**—swept over various colonies, primarily New England (1735–1745) and Virginia (1750s–1760s). Orthodox Calvinists sought to combat Enlightenment rationalism, which denied innate human depravity.

The economic and political uncertainty accompanying King George's War made colonists receptive to **evangelists'** messages. With no prior religious affiliation, many recent immigrants and backcountry residents became potential converts.

The Great Awakening began in New England, where descendants of the Puritan founding generation composed Congregational church memberships. While church members were predominantly female, men and women responded with equal fervor to the Awakening. In the mid-1730s, the Northampton, Massachusetts, preacher and theologian Reverend Jonathan Edwards, gained new youthful followers with Calvinist-based message that individuals could attain salvation only by acknowledging their depraved nature and surrendering completely to God's will.

George Whitefield

The effects of such conversions remained isolated until 1739, when **George Whitefield**, a Church of England clergyman already celebrated for leading revivals in England, arrived in America. A gripping orator, Whitefield toured the British colonies for fifteen months, effectively generating the Great Awakening. One historian has termed him "the first modern celebrity" because of his skillful self-promotion and clever manipulation of his listeners and the newspapers. Everywhere he traveled, his fame preceded him. Readers snapped up books by and about him, the first colonial bestsellers. Thousands of free and enslaved folk from Boston to Savannah heard him speak and experienced conversion. Whitefield's journey created new interconnections among the previously distinct colonies.

Regular clerics initially welcomed Whitefield and his American-born imitators, but many soon concluded that the "revived" religion ran counter to their doctrines. They disliked the emotional style of the revivalists, who took churchgoers away from their usual church services. Particularly troublesome to the orthodox were the female exhorters who publically proclaimed their right to expound God's word.

Impact of the Awakening

Opposition to the Awakening heightened rapidly, further splintering the already fragmented American Protestantism. Congregationalists and Presbyterians split into "Old Lights"—traditional clerics and their followers—and "New Light" evangelicals. New sects such as Methodists and Baptists gained adherents. Paradoxically, the angry fights and the rapid rise in the number of distinct denominations eventually created an American willingness to tolerate religious diversity. Since no single sect could make an unequivocal claim to orthodoxy, they had to coexist if they were to survive.

Most significantly, the Awakening challenged traditional social patterns, particularly the colonial tradition of deference. Itinerant preachers, only a few of whom were ordained, claimed they understood the will of God better than elite college-educated clerics. They and their followers divided the world into the saved and the damned without respect to gender, age, or status. New Lights also defended the rights of people to dissent from a community consensus, thereby challenging the fundamental tenets of colonial political life. The Awakening's egalitarian themes simultaneously attracted ordinary folk and repelled the elite.

Virginia Baptists

By the 1760s, Baptists had gained a secure foothold in Virginia; inevitably, their beliefs clashed with genteel lifestyles. They dressed plainly, in contrast to the gentry's opulence. They addressed one another as "Brother" and "Sister" regardless of social status, and they elected their

Great Awakening: Protestant revival movement that emphasized each person's urgent need for salvation by God.

evangelist: A preacher or minister who enthusiastically promotes the Christian gospels.

George Whitefield: English preacher who toured the colonies and played a major role in the Great Awakening.



Link to excerpts from letters to Whitefield from "Deborah Sherman."



Private Collection/The Bridgeman Art Library

This painting by John Collet shows the charismatic evangelist George Whitefield preaching out of doors in Britain, but the same scene would have been repeated many times in the colonies, especially after the clergy of established churches denied him access to their pulpits, deeming him too radical for their liking. Note the swooning woman in the foreground; women were reputed to be especially susceptible to Whitefield's message. Is the worker offering him a mug of ale derisively or devotedly? The answer is not clear, except that the gesture underscores the diversity of Whitefield's audience—not all were genteel or middling folk.

congregations' leaders. Their monthly meetings, which attracted hundreds of people, introduced new public rituals that rivaled weekly Anglican services.

Strikingly, almost all the Virginia Baptist congregations included free and enslaved members, and some had African American majorities. Church rules applied equally to all members; interracial sexual relationships, divorce, and adultery were forbidden. Congregations forbade masters from breaking up slave couples through sale. Biracial committees investigated complaints about members' misbehavior. Churches excommunicated slaves for stealing from their masters and masters for physically abusing their slaves.

By injecting an egalitarian strain into Anglo-American life at midcentury, the Great Awakening had important social and political consequences, calling into question habitual modes of behavior in the **secular** as well as the religious realm.

secular: Not specifically relating to religion or to a religious body.



Legacy for a People and a Nation

"Self-Made Men"

Americans universally celebrate the "self-made man" (always someone explicitly *male*) of humble origins who gains prominence through extraordinary efforts. Most commonly cited examples are Andrew Carnegie (a poor immigrant from Scotland) and John D. Rockefeller (born on a hardscrabble farm in upstate New York).

The initial exemplars of this tradition, though, lived in the eighteenth century. Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* chronicled his method for achieving success after beginning life as the seventeenth child of a Boston candle maker. From such humble origins Franklin became a wealthy, influential man active in science, politics, education, and diplomacy. Yet Franklin's tale is rivaled by that of a man apparently born a slave in South Carolina. He acquired literacy, worked as a sailor, purchased his freedom, became an influential abolitionist, married a wealthy Englishwoman, and published a popular autobiography that predated Franklin's. His first master called him Gustavus Vassa, but when publishing his *Interesting Narrative* in 1789, he called himself Olaudah Equiano.

In that *Narrative*, Equiano said he was born in Africa in 1745, kidnapped at age eleven, and transported to Barbados and then to Virginia, where a British naval officer purchased him. For years, scholars have relied on that account for its insights into the middle passage. But evidence recently uncovered by Vincent Carretta, although confirming much of Equiano's autobiography, shows that Equiano twice identified his birthplace as Carolina and was three to five years younger than he claimed. Carretta speculates that the *Narrative* gained its credibility from Equiano's African birth and that admitting his real age would have raised questions about his early life.

Equiano, or Vassa, thus truly "made himself," just as Benjamin Franklin and many others have done. (Franklin typically omitted, rather than altered, inconvenient parts of his history—for example, having an illegitimate son.) Equiano used information undoubtedly gleaned from acquaintances who *had* experienced the middle passage to craft an accurate depiction of its horrors. In the process, he became one of the first Americans to explicitly reinvent himself.

Summary

Over the half-century before 1770, North America was transformed, partly by the dramatic geographic expansion of French and Spanish settlements and partly by newcomers from Germany, Scotland, Ireland, and Africa who brought their languages, customs, and religions. Such transformations affected America's Native residents as well as the newcomers. European immigrants were concentrated in the growing cities and backcountry of British North America. By contrast, slaves from Africa lived and worked within 100 miles of the Atlantic coast. In many colonial South regions, 50 to 90 percent of the population was of African origin.

The economic life of Europe's North American colonies proceeded simultaneously on two levels. On the farms, plantations, and ranches where most colonists resided, arduous labor alike dominated people's lives while providing goods for consumption or sale. Simultaneously, an intricate international trade network affected the economies of the British, French, and Spanish colonies and their Native trading partners and allies. The bitter wars fought by European nations during the eighteenth century inevitably created new opportunities for overseas sales or disrupted traditional markets. The few who reaped the profits of international commerce were the wealthy class of merchants and landowners who dominated colonial life.

A century and a half after European first settled in North America, the colonies mixed diverse European, American, and African traditions into a novel cultural blend. Europeans who interacted regularly with peoples of African and American origin—and with Europeans from other nations—developed new methods of accommodating intercultural differences while also creating ties within their own potentially fragmenting communities. Initially, many colonists continued to identify themselves as French, Spanish, or British rather than as Americans, but in the 1760s some Anglo-Americans began to realize that their interests did not necessarily coincide with Great Britain's and challenged British authority.

Chapter Review

Geographic Expansion and Ethnic Diversity

What spurred population growth in the British colonies in the thirty years before 1775?

Immigration—particularly Scots-Irish and Germans—contributed to some of the population growth among European Americans, but the largest single factor was natural increase (live births). Once the difficult years of early settlement passed and the sex ratio evened out in the South, the population doubled every twenty-five years. Natural increase also boosted the African American enslaved population after 1740, and in some regions the slave population was further augmented by new imports of enslaved people.

Commerce and Manufacturing in British North America

How were the colonies' economic fates increasingly linked to world markets?

As colonies became more entwined in overseas trade, their fortunes were increasingly tied to the ups and downs of those economies. Although colonists developed small-scale manufacturing and broader trade networks to meet increased local demand for goods and services, they nonetheless required external markets for their products—tobacco, rice, indigo, fish, and timber. They used the money made from these items to purchase European and English imports. If demand for American goods fell, so did colonists' income, causing economic downturns. The outbreak of King George's War, for example, increased overseas demand for grain grown in the Chesapeake and led tobacco farmers to convert more of their acreage to the crop, while New England suffered when the shipbuilding boom of the war years ended.

Colonial Cultures

How did rituals function in colonial America?

Cultural rituals played a central role in colonial life, both to create community and to reinforce social status. Church rituals were among the most important, but also the most revealing, with seating arrangements organized by sex, class, age, or wealth. Civic rituals likewise generated community involvement and revealed the behavior communities expected of their members. In New England, everyone was required to participate in official holidays or local militia musters; in the Chesapeake, rituals centered on court or election days; and public punishment of criminals throughout North America was designed to reinforce behavioral standards. Even simple rituals, such as tea-drinking, reinforced gender norms and distinctions of wealth and status. Finally, colonists adapted rituals to facilitate trade with Indians, who had vastly different customs. Europeans seeking to trade with Indians engaged in the gift-giving system typical of native cultures before trade could begin.

Colonial Families

How did European American families differ from those of Indians or African Americans?

Anglo Americans used the word “family” to describe everyone in a household: parents, children, extended kin, and slaves. Families typically supported themselves by farming, with each member assigned a task according to gender norms. (Women did indoor work and related tasks; men did outdoor work.) Indian families were more fluid; before contact with Europeans, they permitted divorce, for example. After contact, extended kin became more important, particularly as families were decimated by disease. Shortages of European women in some colonies

led to increased intermarriages, with children raised in Indian villages rather than among settlers. Most African Americans were enslaved, and their families subsumed under European American households. In the Chesapeake, slaves couples who considered themselves married (despite laws prohibiting slave marriage) often lived apart, in different quarters or plantations, with children residing with mothers (and potentially sold off at any time.)

Politics: Stability and Crisis in British America

What were the myths and realities of colonial assemblies?

Anglo-American assemblymen believed they safeguarded colonists' liberties from encroachments by the British government, such as oppressive taxation. Regarding Britain's appointed councils and governors as potential threats, colonists looked to assemblies as their protectors. In truth, elite, wealthy families dominated the assemblies and paid little regard to poorer constituents' concerns, nor did they reapportion themselves so that new settlements would gain representatives, which angered backcountry residents and non-English immigrants.

A Crisis in Anglo-American Religion

What was the social and political impact of the Great Awakening?

Socially, the Great Awakening challenged traditional norms and patterns. Women, for example, began

to claim an equal right to preach, and Protestant denominations further split into the "Old Lights"—who followed traditional teachings and ministers—and the "New Light" evangelicals. While initially sparking animosity, ultimately the rise of new denominations promoted greater tolerance for religious diversity. The Great Awakening's egalitarianism also challenged the colonial tradition of deference, in which people knew their place and respected their so-called "betters." New Lights attracted ordinary people as followers and preachers and argued that the world was divided into the saved and the damned without respect to gender, age or status.

Suggestions for Further Reading

- Marilyn Baseler, *"Asylum for Mankind": America 1607–1800* (1998)
- Richard R. Beeman, *The Varieties of Political Experience in Eighteenth-Century America* (2004)
- James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (2002)
- William E. Burns, *Science and Technology in Colonial America* (2005)
- Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (1992)
- Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (2006)
- Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790* (1982)
- Jill Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan* (2005)
- Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (1991)
- Stephanie G. Wolf, *As Various as Their Land: The Everyday Lives of 18th Century Americans* (1992)



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