

Colonial Society on the Eve of Revolution

Chapter 5: 1700-1775

- The British had 32 colonies in the Americas; only the 13 seaboard countries revolted (others such as Canada and Jamaica did not)

Conquest by the Cradle

- There was a greatly growing population in the seaboard colonies
 - Population doubled every 25 years
 - 300,000 → 2,500,000 from 1700-1775
- Many of the Americans were young; mean age around 16
- By 1775 only three English citizens per American one
- Most people (90%) lived in rural areas
- Virginia, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania most populous states; Philadelphia, New York, Boston most populous cities

A Mingling of the Races

- Demographics were diverse, including:
 - Germans (7%). They were fleeing religious (persecution), economic (depression), and political (war) problems, and were mostly Lutheran (Protestant). They settled mostly in Pennsylvania and kept to their language and customs
 - Scots-Irish (7%). They were Scottish, moved to Ireland, fared badly, and came to the Americas. Many also came to Pennsylvania. They were often restless and did not create steady farms or lifestyles; they fought with white and native citizens for land and exhausted farming land quickly. Many lived on the frontier and pushed the line. Many became revolutionaries in the American Revolutionary war
 - Led the Paxton Boys, an armed march in Philadelphia against the aristocracy's leniency towards the Indians
 - Led the Regulator movement in North Carolina against their political domination
 - Other (5%): "French Huguenots, Welsh, Dutch, Swedes, Jews, Irish, Swiss, Scots Highlanders"
 - African (slaves, 19%)
- The South had most of the black population; the middle Americas were the most diverse (half not English); New England mostly Puritan English (least diverse)
- African and Native American populations became more diverse as different groups were forced together: the "African American" race formed

Migration and Settlement: The great influx of people from a diverse background led to the creation of the United States as a melting pot of races and religions. The Germans, for example, brought the Lutheran Church and the German language; the Scots-Irish brought their inherent restlessness to the frontierlands, affecting European-indigenous interactions by pushing their territory and instigating numerous conflicts within the colonies. Other, more minor groups such as the French Huguenots also contributed their bit of religion, language, and culture to the

diverse land of America. The massive importation of slaves allowed for the prevalence of the African-American culture and the future struggles with slavery that would define civil rights movements. The demographics of the Americas were also unique in other ways: for example, the great number of young people, with the colonies having a mean age of 16, set the stage for revolutionary and religious fervor that still resonates among the youthful. The population boom also set a stage of discomfort (great portion of England's population) and helped to precipitate conflict.

Africans in America

- Life terrible for all African American slaves
 - In the low south (South Carolina), slaves worked in oppressive weather and tended to crops such as rice and indigo. Slaves died quickly, and the slave trade was very important throughout.
 - In the Chesapeake (Virginia), slaves were slightly better off with tobacco. The plantations were larger and closer to one another, allowing for more closely-knit slave populations. As a result, the slave population actually populated itself quickly enough to survive, a rare occurrence.
 - In New England, slaves often worked for craftsman, but many still worked in the fields
- A unique African-American culture formed
 - A new mixture of language was formed, called "Gullah," with many words that still exist in the American language, such as "voodoo"
 - African music mixed with Europe's music, forming jazz; the banjo and the bongo were also introduced
 - African religion also adopted Christianity, but kept traditional views of heaven and had slightly different interpretations that favored their freedom
- Slaves also revolted for freedom
 - The New York slave revolt (1712) ended in nine white and 21 black deaths
 - The South Carolina slave revolt (1739) involved over fifty slaves, stopped by police, along the Stono River
 - No black slave uprising as great as that of the indentured servants (i.e., Bacon's Revolution)

Culture and Society: Fear and oppression ruled supreme in African American culture, beginning from these days of slave owners. African lives were subjected to a life of labor and little chance of social mobility or freedom, whether it was in the deep South or New England. Like the colonists against their dictatorial royalist leaders, they too rebelled, as was the case with the New York and South Carolina slave revolts; these were unsuccessful and marked the European dominance over the black population that would continue for many years to come. The oppression of African Americans did give a positive contribution to society, however: out of the hardships came ways to cope, especially through music. African music, culture, and religion tended to mix with that of the Europeans, creating in-betweens such as jazz. Even with such a strained relationship with the Europeans, the African-Americans still managed to use their enemy's culture to create a new culture of hope through art, which symbolized the will of the impoverished and suppressed to survive, as they did.

The Structure of Colonial Slavery

- Besides the slaves, people were equal in general; nobility was frowned upon
- High level of social mobility, unlike in Europe
- Aristocracy class beginning to form in the 1700s
 - Rich gained wealth through selling weapons that fueled the conflicts
 - People were seated in Church and State based on social rank and wealth
- A greater number of people became poor and had dead family members due to war
- Many people found it difficult to find land, because much of the land had already been claimed
- In the South, the rich became richer: those who owned a lot of slaves had enormous amounts of wealth
- Many (over 50,000) prisoners of England were dumped in the colonies; because they mostly hated England only, they were not always disrespectful in the colonies, which had different systems of governance
- Some people tried to stop slave owning, but the rich slave owners in the south and the British government tried to preserve the slave trade and slavery

Politics and Power: Although the colonies were founded on strict terms against a class of an aristocracy as there was back at Europe, politics naturally began to favor the rich and wealthy as opposed to giving an equal opportunity for all. Although social mobility was high and the equality was better than in Europe, the rich became wealthier, and the suppressed more suppressed. Highly profitable jobs, such as the weapons industry and slave-owning, began to hold higher seats in politics and in religion—this decreased the power of and rekindled the repugnance of the ordinary people to an oligarchical system. The only exception to this were the slaves, who retained their position as the sewer of society.

Clerics, Physicians, and Jurists

- Christian ministers were the most honorable position
 - Christian faith declining, but still very prevalent
- Doctors (physicians) not well trained and somewhat dishonored
 - Plagues of smallpox and diphtheria still were rampant in the Americas
- Lawyers were dishonored because people usually presented their own cases and did not require lawyers

Workaday America

- 90% of the people farmed
 - Tobacco was common in Virginia; later wheat was common
 - Led to a general high standard of living
- In New England, fishing was a large industry that also fostered shipbuilding and other maritime industries
 - Trade was very common and supported by this
 - Continued trade with the West Indies (food and supplies)
 - Carried gold and oranges to Europe for trading
 - Triangular Trade was a profitable form of trade in the Atlantic (profit at every part)
 - New England rum → Africa
 - African slaves → West Indies

- West Indies' molasses → New England (refineries)
- Industry to a small extent
 - Rum distilleries
 - Beaver cap makers
 - Iron forges
 - Household manufacturing (textiles)
 - Craftspeople
 - Lumbering (most important industry)
 - Needed by shipbuilders in colonies and Britain alike
 - Britain wanted to retain its maritime control, kept ample supply from the americas
- The Americas began to look for other markets because of limited market in Britain
 - Molasses Act passed by the British to attempt to restrict America's foreign trade in order to maintain their trading exclusiveness
 - The people worked around this with illegal markets and smuggling

Work, Exchange, and Technology: Like the demographics of the colonies, the range of jobs performed by the colonists was highly diverse. Jobs concerning religion, medicine, industry, trade, amongst others, gave people a wide choice of profession to choose from; combined with the diverse backgrounds and origin that the immigrants come from, this choice provides the essential range of options to suit most everyone's needs to pursue the "American Dream." There is also a focus on slave-owning plantations and maritime trading, both of which cause major contentions in the future (ethics of slave trade and the British incompetency in trade that leads to the Molasses Act, respectively). The Triangular Trade was a popular and profitable manifestation of the latter; however, it proved to be controversial later on with the concerns about the slave trade.

Horsepower and Sailpower

- Colonies had bad methods of transportation
 - Roads were often dirt roads: slow, dangerous, dusty in the summer and muddy in the winter
- Waterways were also often used for transportation, especially when roads were not available
- Taverns sprung up around roadways
 - Were often places where political discussions were brought up, such as with Samuel Adams
- Public mail system created in the mid-1700s
 - Mail carriers notorious for reading letters to pass time

Geography and the Environment: The inhibition and facilitation of widespread communication and transportation were both done by way of natural means. Dirt roads were subject to being dusty, muddy, and/or uneven and dangerous, making them largely impassable. However, they were sometimes the only practical method of transportation between two spots, especially in the spread-out South. Large delays in communication or transportation like this prohibited any major successful rebellious action, because a lack of communication left the country largely divided. On the other hand, the environment also helped the colonists: in lieu of roads, the waterways that most towns were built around were a means of transportation when necessary.

With the use of waterways and the roads that greatly improved in the 1700s, communication became more reliable. A system of mail and newspaper could be established, and this was a major catalyzing factor that gave way to propaganda and a unified political zeal.

Dominant Denominations

- “Established church” = tax-supported church
 - The Anglican and Congregational churches were established churches
 - Anglican Church was the English church and supposed to be a way of imposing English culture on the colonies, but it was unfavorable and not strict enough
 - Congregational Church sprung out of Puritanism, was established in most of the New England colonies
 - Not many people belonged to these two churches
- Politics and religion began to get mixed up, with revolutionary thoughts at some sermons
 - The Anglicans, however, kept to English beliefs, but were limited by lack of local bishop
- People were generally religiously free

The Great Awakening

- Religion was weakening, especially the Puritan Church:
 - Very complex beliefs systems
 - Elaborate schemes to lower membership requirements and increase participation
- Many sermons became boring, and people worried that holy men had lost the original inspiration (the “fire”) of religion
- New liberal beliefs challenged traditional Church values
 - Arminianism (Jacobus Arminius) said that a person’s free will could save them; that it was not predestination but the acceptance of God’s will that could save a person
 - Church reluctantly accepted this under popular pressure
- The Great Awakening (1730s-1740s, Jonathan Edwards, Northampton, MA) was when Edwards proclaimed that salvation through God’s grace and not one’s free will (as in Arminianism) was the only way
 - Greatly detailed explanation of hellfire
 - George Whitefield continued this trend; was an amazing orator
 - Inspired Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin, as well as many other followers who copied him
- “Old lights” were the old, orthodox priests; “new lights” formed this revivalist movement
 - The Revivalist movement greatly weakened the old lights, who were based on scholarly teachings and education, while the new lights were based on this populist fervor
- New lights created competition between different religions
- New lights formed the first major all-American movement; a unified interaction that destroyed walls

Culture and Society: This is a classic example of cause-effect in societal movement: people lose interest in religion, and an opportunistic populist religious leader takes advantage of the situation and revives the loss of faith. In this case, the Church was losing support because the people began to take more liberal approaches to their lives that did not have to do with the superstitions of religion. This was especially carried out by Arminianism, a populist liberal movement that swept the colonies. Later, however, cunning orators created the Revivalist movement, also a populist movement that swept people back to religion, albeit in a more unorthodox sense (a “new light” view). Both of these represent the strong response of the people to popular movements, especially in relation to religion, as well as a unity of all of the colonies towards a common goal for the first time in their history. Both of these factors will be in place for the Revolutionary War, when a quick sweep of revolutionary passion takes over the nation.

Schools and Colleges

- Education was in England only for the rich
- In the Americas, especially in New England, education was meant to promote religiosity
- Later in the 1700s was religion shaped more towards general education
- New Englanders established many schools (primary and secondary)
- In the middle colonies, education was less prevalent
- In the southern colonies, being very spread out inhibited the growth of the school system
- Schools generally taught classical language and orthodox thinking; creativity was suppressed
 - Discipline was high, included whipping
- College was created mainly to prepare men to become clergymen
 - People who wanted a “real” education of non-religious basis sent their children to England for education
 - Movement towards newer, more modern education in the 1700s

A Provincial Culture

- Americans still very much inclined to similar tastes as the Europeans, but American art was not as developed
 - Many artists had to travel to Europe to have a market (e.g., John Trumbull, Benjamin West, John Singleton Copley)
- Literature was unimportant
 - Phillis Wheatley (a slave girl poet) and Benjamin Franklin (with the pithy sayings of *Poor Richard's Almanack*) were notable exceptions
- Science was not very advanced, except for Benjamin Franklin's numerous inventions

American and National Identity: The institution of education, as well as the fields of art and science, were still highly based on religion by the beginning of the 1700s in the colonies. Schools were taught in a (quite literally) “old-school” fashion, stressing orthodoxy and religiosity. Art and science were mostly unconsidered in the Americas because of their unimportance to religion. America at this time period, as a whole, was almost solely based on religion (or lack thereof) as the defining factor of institutions, fields, and entire colonies. However, this began to change in the later 1700s, as people began to note the importance of secular institutions; many people began sending their children to England to receive a full, unbiased education, and many

artists and scientists received their training and recognition back in Europe. This marked a shift in the interest of non-religiosity, because that is what the people wanted. This is an overall trend in American history: a societal system ever the more secular, a trend broken only by blips like the Great Awakening.

Pioneer Presses

- Printed books became more prevalent, created by the rich and having membership by subscription
- Newspapers were also becoming more prevalent
 - Often had long essays signed by pseudonyms
 - Newspapers were slow to deliver news, especially overseas
 - Were used to rally patriot support against British
- **Zenger trial** (John Peter Zenger, 1734) involved charges against accusing the royal governor
 - Andrew Hamilton defended him, won with eloquence and argument of the freedom of speech
 - Successful defense symbolic of American freedom of speech and press; set a precedent that allowed future printers to print revolutionary content

Politics and Power: After the Zenger trial, newspapers became a usable form of political propaganda. Now that improved roadways were being built, newspapers became a primary form of long-range communication that was otherwise absent in the lives of many Americans. This ability to print whatever one wishes is exemplary of the freedom to speech and press, two of the guiding principles of the Bill of Rights (the Constitution); in the case of the lead-up to the Revolutionary War, it can be used as a political weapon to garner support.

The Great Game of Politics

- Governments were diverse in the different colonies
 - Eight royal colonies with governors appointed by king
 - Three had proprietors choose governors (proprietary colonies)
 - Two self-governed ones
- Most colonies had two-house system; the higher chosen by same system that chooses the governor, the lower by the people
 - Higher one usually incurred hate because it was misrepresented (majority by rich landowners)
 - Lower one could appoint taxes as necessary; considered an important privilege
- Colonial governors were generally disliked
 - Most were able, but some were corrupt and bad (Lord Cornbury)
 - Represented England, 3,000 miles away and ignorant
 - Colonies withheld salary until governor did as they wished
- The South was governed by county governments; New England by town-hall meetings
 - New England had democracy to some extent
 - Not everyone was allowed in, but people could work to get to be the entry-level status

Colonial Folkways

- Most people working all the time

- Americans ate much more than Europeans on average
- Life was generally uncomfortable, especially without heating
- The military met in “musters,” short training periods
- People danced and played games when they could
- All colonies generally:
 - English and Protestant
 - Had a form of self-rule
 - Was religiously tolerant
 - Had social mobility
 - Had methods of communication and transportation

Culture and Society: There is an interesting dynamic between the social and political aspects of society. The government is becoming more and more independent, and the colonies are more united in their beliefs. Although they have slightly differing political systems, they are mostly the same at the core. The culture of the different colonies was becoming slightly homogenized as well, with all of the colonies primarily English and Protestant, religiously tolerant, and socially mobile. The colonies develop as a whole unit now, with links showing an unprecedented cultural stability. This is the cultural stability and unity that will be necessary to challenge the British Empire in the American Revolutionary War.