

Colonial Life

Colonial Life. The colonial period in United States history, from 1607, when the first permanent English colony was established, to 1776, when the colonists declared their independence from Britain, saw rough wilderness settlements grow into prosperous and sophisticated provinces. Colonists upon arriving were preoccupied with personal goals such as family and farm, but they left descendants who possessed broader visions. In time they established distinctly American customs so pervasive as to overcome regional differences and to enable those of European descent to consider themselves a new people. For blacks and Indians, however, the American experience led to bondage and oppression rather than to freedom and independence.

Within a generation after Columbus' arrival in America, Spain, Portugal, England, and France had each staked a claim to parts of the New World. For more than a century, Spain was the only European nation strong enough to exploit its claims in the Caribbean Sea and South America. Then at the beginning of the 17th century, France established several fishing stations and fur-trading posts along the North American coast and in the valley of the St. Lawrence River. Neither the Spanish nor the French settlements attracted many Europeans, however, and England became the major colonizing power in the New World.

Before 1600, Englishmen concluded that their nation should plant colonies in America to develop raw materials for the mother country and become markets for its manufactures. Undoubtedly its spirit of international competition in commerce was partly responsible for England's ultimate success. The primary reason for the empire's greatness, however, was the thousands of Englishmen who left their homeland to settle in the New World. Some were adventurers, who returned to England when their dreams of an easy fortune came to naught. But most sought religious freedom or improvement of their lot in life. Throughout the colonial period they were joined by thousands of other Europeans with similar goals. In pursuing their individual livelihoods these colonists, without realizing it, laid the foundations for a new nation.

The territory settled by Englishmen varied from the chilly, granite coasts of Maine to the verdant, semitropical lands of the Carolinas and Georgia. Poor farming conditions and the hostile interior led many New Englanders to earn their living from the sea. Others turned to the northern woods for timber and furs. The geography south of New England was kinder to the prospective farmer. The river valleys of the Hudson, Mohawk, and Delaware yielded thousands of acres of rich, rolling farmland. Here, too, milder climate and gentler topography encouraged large-scale farming. Even more significant differences prevailed in the Chesapeake Bay region, where broad rivers opened up a rich interior all the way to the fall line nearly 100 miles (160 km) inland. Still farther south, in the Carolinas and Georgia, coastal plains protected by offshore islands provided ideal conditions for plantations.

Despite wide differences between geographical regions and ways of earning a livelihood, American colonists had much in common. The stark reality of survival in a harsh environment gave them one important bond. And because most white Americans were farmers, the abundance of land gave them the opportunity to improve their economic position. Most colonists shared as well a belief that a man could better himself by his own efforts. This willingness to work hard made colonists increasingly self-sufficient. By the mid-18th century, 150 years of shared experience in the New World created a new man in America—a man largely independent of European authority and tradition.

Society

National Origins. The men and women who settled in the English colonies came from a wide variety of backgrounds. While most New England inhabitants could trace their roots to the mother country itself, the middle colonies attracted numerous immigrants from Germany, northern Ireland (the Scots-Irish), and the Netherlands (from the days when New York had been a Dutch colony), and a scattering of settlers from Finland and Sweden. To the back country of Virginia and the Carolinas came additional groups of Germans and Scots-Irish as well as Highlanders. New York City and Newport, R. I., became homes for small numbers of Jewish immigrants, and French Huguenots settled in several colonies from Massachusetts to South Carolina.

The largest single minority group at the end of the colonial period were blacks from Africa, while the English represented the dominant majority (about 60 percent) of the population. Except for the Germans, most immigrants abandoned their native language within a generation, but such words as "boss" and "cruller" (from the Dutch), "bureau" (from the French), and numerous terms from the native Indians ("canoe," "moccasin," and "skunk") became a part of the American language. The blacks made a considerable imprint on pronunciation in the Southern colonies.

The Extended Family. For most Americans life centered around the family. In addition to his parents and several sisters and brothers, a colonial child was likely to share his home with at least one grandparent, an unmarried uncle or aunt, and perhaps a cousin or two whose mother had died. In time, his older brother might bring a wife into the household, and soon after nephews and nieces would join the family group. It was not unusual to find households numbering 12 or more as generation succeeded generation. The large, extended family served an important economic function, for without laborsaving devices, many hands were needed to make a household self-sufficient.

Class Structure. Most colonial Americans lived out their lives within a vaguely defined social class. Among the bottom third stood the blacks, both slave and free, along with white indentured servants and other landless whites, including apprentices and other laborers both urban and rural. But the poorest white held one distinct advantage over the less fortunate blacks—no burden of racial prejudice prevented him from improving his lot in life. At the other extreme were the wealthy planters, merchants, and professional men whose property and personal prestige commanded respect, however grudgingly, from those less fortunate. Less than 10 percent of the population could claim such distinction.

The majority of colonists, around 60 percent, comprised an amorphous middle class—farmers for the most part, along with the artisans and shopkeepers of urban communities. Within this class could be found a wide variety of men. At one end of the scale were subsistence farmers owning a few acres of inferior soil, semiskilled carpenters with a little property, and small entrepreneurs struggling to make a living. At the other end were well-to-do craftsmen or successful farmers who produced a surplus for market.

The gulf between these classes varied according to location. It was less pronounced in rural areas than in the seaports, in Northern colonies less than in the South. In all regions the middle class was relatively large and possessed considerable political and economic strength. Among freemen, property was distributed far more evenly in America than in European countries of the era.

What particularly struck commentators about colonial America was the high degree of social and economic mobility. While the proportional distribution of people among the lower, middle, or upper ranks remained more or less stable throughout the period, a family's place on that scale might vary considerably through the course of two or three generations. Several factors account for this relatively high degree of social mobility. For one, America had no titled aristocracy monopolizing positions of political and economic power. For another, labor was constantly in great demand, and a man willing to work hard was relatively well rewarded. Still more significant was the availability of cheap land in the unsettled interior to which people discontented with their lot in established communities could move in search of new opportunity.

Still another factor was the steady increase in population, which doubled every 25 years. The frontier could not absorb this growth all at once, and therefore small villages became towns, and towns grew into cities along the Eastern Seaboard. As a result, new demands for the services of blacksmiths, millers, and other artisans created new opportunities. Another result was the revolution in agriculture brought on by the rising demand for foodstuffs in the urban centers. Rapid increase in population meant social dislocation as well, for family farms could not be divided indefinitely among three or four sons. But the opportunities generally outweighed the drawbacks. Furthermore, the steady influx of impoverished immigrants and the rapid growth of slavery as the primary labor system of the Southern colonies improved the relative standing of the native-born whites.

Government. The most important political development during the colonial period was the tradition of self-government. With slight regional variations, the basic principle was that local political decisions should be made by the property owners residing in the area. In most farming communities this meant that perhaps

three quarters of all adult white males had a voice in political matters if they cared to exercise their right. In urban communities property qualifications usually restricted the franchise to about two thirds of the adult males.

Local. In New England with its pattern of condensed settlement, the town was the local unit of government. At the town meeting voters determined such matters as local taxes; appropriations for schools and highways; and the choice of selectmen, assessors, and overseers of the poor. In the 17th century, town meetings had attempted to operate on the principle of consensus, but increasing differences between villagers and "outlivers," farmers and artisans, rich and poor eroded the earlier spirit of community, with the common result that dissident groups left to form their own settlements or forced a permanent partition of the original town.

In the relatively thinly settled Southern colonies, the parish or the county was the local political unit. In all regions both law and custom often restricted candidates for elective office to men of more than average economic and social position. Many artisans or small farmers did not aspire to office because they could not afford the time. Besides, many colonists looked to men of wealth and status for leadership in civic affairs. This "habit of deference," though on the wane throughout the 18th century, meant that not every white freeman had an equal opportunity to become a political leader.

Provincial. On the provincial level, towns, parishes, and counties were represented in the legislature through the delegates they elected to lower houses of assembly. Generally speaking, law and customs likewise restricted membership in these bodies to the more well-to-do colonists. But they had to stand for election annually and were often specifically instructed by their constituents to support particular local interests. Provincial politics were characterized in the 18th century by a "chaotic factionalism," by which various groups struggled for domination over their political rivals. These battles rarely centered on ideological differences. Rather, their object seemed to be the attainment of power for such self-serving purposes as land grants, military contracts, or simply prestige.

Although colonial politicians squabbled among themselves within the legislature, they usually formed a united front against royal authority as represented by the governor and other crown-appointed officials. In colonies such as Pennsylvania and Maryland the governor represented the interest of the hereditary proprietors, the Penns and Calverts. Battles between governors and the legislatures were likewise fought for political rather than ideological ends, for few colonists seriously challenged their sovereign's right to appoint administrative officials. But they did view executive authority with considerable suspicion and strove to strengthen the power of their assemblies at every opportunity.

By the mid-18th century, colonists had attained a large measure of self-government in almost all of the provinces. Yet the political system remained something far less than democratic—if that term is taken to mean government *by* the people. For significant numbers of inhabitants—women, servants, and blacks, as well as adult males without property—could not participate in governmental affairs.

Religion. One of the strongest influences on the daily lives of colonial Americans was religion. Throughout the colonies one could find, by the mid-1700's, a wide range of religious groups including Quakers, Pietists, Catholics, and Jews in addition to the more common Protestant denominations. Encouraged by the abundance of free land and by the religious toleration in most colonies, other persecuted Europeans continually migrated to the New World.

Denominations. Religion, in fact, had provided the prime motivation for the founding of several colonies. As the Puritans approached the shores of New England in the spring of 1630, their leader, John Winthrop, reminded them of their holy mission: "We shall be as a City upon a Hill, the Eyes of all People are upon us; so that if We shall deal falsely with our God in this Work We have undertaken ... We shall open the mouths of enemies to speak Evil of the ways of God. ..." The Puritans had made a covenant with God to establish a community governed by his holy laws as revealed in the Bible. Their church was therefore of central importance because the minister helped his followers interpret the word of God, and the members of the congregation strengthened each other in the continuing battle against sin. Many New Englanders must have experienced the guilt to which Michael Wigglesworth confessed in 1653: "This morning God let in

some comfortable persuasion of His love to me; yet after, vain thoughts prevailed. ... Instead of admiring God I admire myself; for this I loath myself."

Although the Puritans founded their New England colonies so that they could practice their religion without interference, they saw no reason to extend toleration to other groups. Accordingly, Catholics, Quakers, and Baptists found asylum in other colonies such as Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island. Quakers were particularly vulnerable to persecution by other colonists, for they maintained that God communicated directly to man through an inner voice, a belief that Calvinists considered heresy. Furthermore, they were pacifists, and when Quaker leaders in Pennsylvania refused to raise arms to defend the colony against Indian attacks, the frontiersmen, who bore the brunt of the fighting, were understandably bitter. Finally, the Quakers believed in perfectionism and would make no compromises to accommodate the views of those around them. But they ruled well in Pennsylvania, and the province prospered both spiritually and materially.

Throughout the tidewater regions of the Southern colonies the Church of England had the largest number of followers, but the influence of Anglicanism in America was never very strong. Plantations and settlements were widely scattered in this area, making it difficult for a parish minister to establish cohesion among his followers. Furthermore, the dominant characteristic of the Anglican Church was conservative respectability, and its religious currents, therefore, tended to run quietly. In the piedmont and backcountry areas of the Southern colonies, religion played a more direct role in the lives of the inhabitants. Most of the settlers were Presbyterians, Methodists, or members of a variety of evangelical sects. There were few resident ministers, and church services depended on the visits of itinerant preachers. On arriving at a backcountry settlement, the minister generally had much business to conduct, including baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Because many months often would have passed since the inhabitants had attended church, services tended to be highly emotional.

Emotionalism occasionally swept through the more staid communities of the Eastern Seaboard as well. During a particularly bleak period in the history of Massachusetts at the end of the 17th century, a severe wave of witchcraft mania broke out in Salem Village. Before the charges and countercharges of consorting with the devil had ended, 19 inhabitants had been hanged as witches and yet another pressed to death for refusing to deny the accusations against him.

Revival. On a happier note, a religious revival known as the Great Awakening swept through the colonies in the 1730's and 1740's. English evangelists such as George Whitefield exhorted audiences of 8,000 or more, often twice a day for weeks on end. A Connecticut farmer later recorded his reaction to the news that Whitefield was to preach in nearby Middletown. "I was in my field at work. I dropped my tool that I had in my hand and ran to my wife, telling her to make ready quickly. ... I with my wife soon mounted the horse and went forward as fast as I thought the horse could bear." Hearing Whitefield preach, the farmer recalled, "gave me a heart wound. By God's blessing, my old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me."

As a result of the Great Awakening, many colonists were divided thereafter into "old light" adherents to what had become orthodox practices and "new lights," who had embraced the more expressive practices of the revivalists. Yet another result of the Great Awakening was to increase the participation of the common people in religious activities.

Education. Like religion, education was more firmly established in the North than in the South. Not only did the compact settlements of New England make the founding of schools more practical, but the Puritan doctrine that God's will was revealed in the Bible put a religious premium on literacy. Massachusetts and Connecticut enacted laws requiring the town fathers to provide for the education of youth by tax-supported, public elementary schools. Attendance was compulsory unless the parents made alternative arrangements for the instruction of their children with a private tutor.

Public schoolmasters were expected to instruct their pupils "both in humane learning and good literature, and likewise in point of good manners and dutiful behavior towards all, especially their superiors." To assist in this latter goal *The New England Primer* taught the young scholar by such rhymes as "In Adam's fall/We

sinned all," and "The Idle *Fool*/Is Whipped at school." Under the heading "The Dutiful Child's Promises" were found such precepts as "I will honor my father and mother" and "I will submit to my elders." Among the "Lessons for Youth" was the doctrine "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it from him." School was usually kept in one-room buildings, where pupils of various ages demanded the attention of the teacher in recitation and came under his strict discipline. The younger pupils studied their alphabet from "hornbooks," while the older scholars struggled through more advanced readers.

More promising students were often sent to grammar schools in preparation for college. Here they learned the basics of Latin grammar, classical history, and the rudiments of Greek over the course of six or seven years. Pupils who were willing and able to continue their education might then, at the age of 16 or so, enter one of the several colonial colleges, such as Harvard, Yale, or the College of William and Mary. A few were sent to England for further training at Oxford or Cambridge. Harvard's curriculum offered a broadly liberal education in "good literature, arts and sciences and all other necessary provisions that may conduce to the education of English and Indian youth of this Country in knowledge and godliness." Most of the books and all of the instruction was in Latin at first, although by the mid-18th century the introduction of new subjects required a relaxation of this pattern.

Next to Massachusetts, Pennsylvania took the most active role in education. Here the primary purpose was utilitarian rather than religious. When Benjamin Franklin proposed the establishment of an academy in 1749, he suggested that the pupils be taught "those things that are likely to be most useful and most ornamental," by which he meant arithmetic, geometry, geography, and gardening as well as the more obvious skills of reading and writing. South and west of Philadelphia, however, educational institutions were few in number, mainly because of the pattern of scattered settlement.

By no means did all education take place in schools. Through the system of apprenticeship inherited from Europe, many a colonial youth acquired a trade or craft by working under contract to a master artisan for a period ranging from three to seven years. The apprentice generally lived in his master's household and received clothing and other necessities in addition to his keep. The master instructed his charge in "the art and mystery of his craft" and at the end of the apprenticeship period usually gave him enough tools or other equipment to set him up in business for himself. Girls often were indentured as household servants, learning how to cook and manage the multitude of other tasks necessary to keep a family fed and clothed. Masters generally took their obligations seriously and instructed their servants in reading and writing as well as in the practical arts. It was not uncommon for apprentices and servants to marry into their masters' families at the end of their period of service. At the other end of the scale, men interested in learning a profession such as medicine or law usually studied with an established doctor or lawyer for several years until pronounced ready by their mentors to set up for themselves.

The Military Establishment. Self-defense was a fact of life in colonial America, not only against hostile Indians, who resisted the European invasion of their homeland, but against the French and Spaniards as well. A few professional soldiers in each colony helped to train all white males 16 and older in local militia units, which in time of war became the components of companies and regiments. Some local units elected their own officers, while the governor, who served as commander-in-chief of his colony's forces, appointed the higher officers. Each man was expected to provide his own weapon, a small quantity of powder and ball, and a few other necessities, but in time of emergency the legislature usually appropriated sufficient funds to supplement these supplies.

The colonists balked at maintaining large standing armies, for few farmers were willing to spend long months of garrison duty in frontier fortresses. Some of these posts were manned by as few as eight or ten men during peacetime. Not surprisingly, they were quickly overrun whenever the French or Indians made a surprise attack. The authorities then hastily organized an expedition of militiamen to retaliate. Under the circumstances, only by superior numbers and equipment did the English settlers prevail over their opponents in wilderness warfare.

At the end of the 17th century there began a series of wars between England and France that taxed the resources of the colonists to the very limit. During a span of nearly 80 years the mother country assisted its

colonies by sending regiments of troops, providing arms and other military supplies, and compensating the various assemblies for much of their expenditures. Fighting side by side often created more friction than friendship between British regulars and colonial militia, however, particularly because the redcoats tended to look down upon their provincial cousins. For their part, the colonists were understandably skeptical of the kind of tactics that led to the ambush of Gen. James Braddock in 1755. By the end of the colonial period, thousands of colonists had acquired sufficient military experience to face the British regulars with some confidence in the battles that marked the outbreak of war in 1775.

From the 1740's on, American shipowners outfitted vessels to attack the merchantmen of Spain and France. The valuable prizes were divided among successful owners and crews, and the enemy's commerce was seriously disrupted as well. But privateers cannot attain command of the sea, and the ultimate triumph over France in America depended on the power of the British fleet, which time and again prevented the enemy from bringing in fresh troops and supplies to its land forces. Few Americans willingly served in the British Navy, although during wartime a number of hapless mariners were impressed into service by desperate British captains. Working toward the common goal of ousting the French from America, Americans and Britons succeeded by 1763. By that time as well, the danger of Indian attack had been drastically reduced. Thereafter, military defense to most Americans meant defense against the British Army itself.

The Legal System. In most colonies the governor and his council sat as the highest court of justice. In some they were also authorized to establish inferior courts, and in most they appointed justices and other officials to the various tribunals. Governors in the 17th century often complained about the lack of trained lawyers qualified to serve on the bench, although matters improved somewhat in the 18th century. Colonial courts were expected to make rulings according to English common law, which most Americans viewed as a means of maintaining public order. Beyond this, virtually every colony adopted its own code of laws governing personal conduct, proscribing numerous misdeeds, and establishing punishments.

The criminal codes, like other laws, were derived for the most part from English precedents, and the full range of corporal punishments, including branding, mutilation, and whipping, remained on the books throughout most of the colonial period. However, in some respects the penal system in America was more humane than in England. Because labor was so scarce in the colonies, offenders were less likely to be left languishing for months or years in a crowded, filthy, disease-ridden prison. Rather, it was hoped that public humiliation in the stocks or at the whipping post would reform the offender and serve as a warning to others.

Whether because of or in spite of this system of punishment, there seems to have been comparatively little crime in colonial America. Most people, of course, lived in rural areas, traditionally less troubled by public disorder. On the frontier, however, lawlessness occasionally reached serious proportions. Attacks on peaceful Indians, occupation of land without proper title, and theft of livestock were not uncommon. In the seaports, bands of unruly sailors sometimes got out of hand. But it is a wonder that the cities were not more tumultuous, for there were no policemen in the modern sense. Part-time constables maintained law and order as best they could, calling on the general citizenry to lend assistance when necessary. By and large, the American colonists were law-abiding people. Wages were relatively high, land was cheap, and the opportunities for an honest living were sufficiently numerous to make a life of crime unappealing.

Economy and Technology

Agriculture—

Landholding. In several parts of the American colonies during the 17th century large landholders attempted to attract Europeans to settle as tenant farmers paying rent. Wealthy Dutch patrons in the Hudson Valley had a little success for a while, as did some of the Calverts and their followers in Maryland. But for the most part, Europeans saw no reason to exchange their dependent status at home for a similar dependence in the New World. Every attempt to restrict the tenure of land in America inevitably failed because so much land was available on a freehold basis.

In the Southern colonies anyone paying for the passage of an immigrant to America received a "headright," or title to 50 acres (20 hectares) of land. Although later modified, this system enabled planters, shipmasters, and others to amass large tracts of land during the 17th century. In New England the various legislatures granted entire townships to approved groups of immigrants, who then distributed some of it to prospective inhabitants while reserving the rest for common use or for later grants as the population grew. If one failed to acquire land by headright or outright grant, he might be able to purchase it from a colonial proprietor or speculator. Failing that, a man might brave the wilderness and carve out a holding without benefit of legal title by simply "squatting" on the tract of his choice.

Plantations and Farms. In the Southern colonies, where an individual could acquire several thousand acres, the plantation system soon emerged as the most suitable means of agricultural production. Devoted almost entirely to the cultivation of a single marketable crop, plantations around Chesapeake Bay became the world's largest producers of tobacco. In South Carolina, rice and indigo were the staple crops. This one-crop system rapidly depleted the soil, however, and required a constant search for new lands. Few tidewater planters knew or cared about methods of soil conservation until late in the colonial period. The existence of a seemingly inexhaustible supply of land had already begun to make an impact on Americans as "the people of plenty." In addition to land, tobacco and rice plantations required a large labor supply for efficient operation. After initial efforts to enslave the Indians failed and white indentured servants discovered how easy it was to escape into the wilderness, Southern planters increasingly relied upon Africans imported against their will and forced into permanent slavery.

In contrast, farmers in the Northern colonies developed different methods of production. Climate, soil conditions, and the method of land distribution itself all contributed to the predominance of the small family farm in New England. The township system perpetuated for several generations an emphasis on general farming rather than specialization in a marketable crop. Thus each settler held a small tract for pasturage, several small fields for cultivation, and perhaps another tract for an orchard. Not until the 18th century did many New England farms begin to produce a surplus marketable in a nearby town such as Boston, Newport, or Hartford. Still, diversification rather than specialization remained characteristic of Northern farming, and a marketable surplus was more a welcome dividend to the year's labors than a planned goal.

The New England farm was almost entirely self-sufficient. It provided a wide variety of foodstuffs for the family and the materials necessary to house and clothe it. The skills needed to preserve food for winter and to make furniture, utensils, and warm clothes were taught by father to son and by mother to daughter down through successive generations. The family was dependent on the outside world only perhaps for a plow from the blacksmith, boots from the shoemaker, and imported English iron pots from the storekeeper.

In Pennsylvania still another kind of agriculture developed. Palatine Germans, with their conservative use of land, rotation of crops, and loving care of livestock, were by far the best farmers in America. As they prospered, they turned to wheat as a marketable commodity. By the mid-18th century the middle colonies produced enough of this and other grain to feed most of the major settlements along the Atlantic seaboard. The Germans took their methods with them as they spread southwest. There they grew wheat, barley, and corn and raised cows and pigs. Flour and whiskey, made from grain, along with beef and pork from grain-fed animals, became the chief cash products of the interior.

Methods and Markets. Most farm implements were made of wood. Harrows had teeth of tough hickory or oak, and scythes were later equipped with wooden "cradles" to catch the stalks. Scythe blades, of course, were of metal as were plowshares to break the sod. Other wooden implements included rakes, pitchforks, flails for threshing, and woven baskets for winnowing. Not surprisingly, such tools broke easily and required constant repair or replacement. Most farms had a two-wheeled cart hauled by a yoke of oxen, but much of the heavy work was done by sledge.

Farming in the 18th century as in the 20th required long hours of hard toil, for animals required constant care and feeding, and crops had to be planted, cultivated, and harvested according to nature's schedule, not personal convenience. Even a wealthy planter such as George Washington spent many hours a day overseeing the work of his laborers, experimenting with new crops and methods, and arranging to market his produce to the best advantage. With the possible exception of the rice and indigo planters of South

Carolina, few colonial farmers enjoyed much leisure time.

Farming was a risky venture in the 18th century. In addition to natural disasters such as drought and pestilence, which could destroy a season's crop, the farmers who raised a commodity such as wheat or tobacco for market were at the mercy of the merchants and factors who purchased their crops. Overproduction was a major problem, for it drove down prices and tempted the farmer to plant more the season following, which resulted in still greater overproduction. Wealthy Southern planters were habitually in debt to English merchants, just as Northern farmers were to seaport merchants who supplied them with the manufactured articles they had come to consider necessary for a comfortable living. Only the subsistence farmer could remain free of this dependence on others, but his standard of living improved more slowly as a price for his independence.

Trade. Trade had been the chief interest of the various companies that had founded several of the American colonies in the 17th century. Englishmen hoping for profits invested capital in these New World enterprises but without much success. Individual settlers took up where the joint-stock companies left off, and by the end of the 17th century a number of settlers had begun to amass considerable fortunes.

The New England fisheries formed one important cornerstone to this enterprise. In addition to the cod and herring banks of Newfoundland, the broad Atlantic also became the scene of the Nantucket whaling industry, for oil was a valued fuel for lamps. Another basic resource was found in the Northern woods, where timber abounded for sawn lumber, shingles, barrel staves, and ship timber and masts (the largest pine trees being reserved for the Royal Navy). From Albany the Dutch (and later the English) carried on a flourishing fur trade with the Iroquois, although they could not compete with the French trade that reached out from Montreal into the Great Lakes region and beyond. Hunters in the Southern colonies brought in quantities of deerskins for sale in local and foreign markets as well. The abundance of the North American continent offered the basis for commercial prosperity.

Because England had little use for the fish and timber of the Northern colonies, however, New Englanders were forced to build sturdy vessels and carry the produce of forest and sea to the Southern colonies and the West Indies. There they exchanged their fish and timber for tobacco, rice, and sugar—all marketable in England. These exports, in turn, permitted the Northern merchants to purchase the manufactured articles so necessary to their expanding economy. They also carried dried and salted fish to the Atlantic islands and the Mediterranean to exchange for wine, fruit, and salt. The importation of molasses from the West Indies fed the distilleries of New England. Rum not only helped keep Northern farmers and fishermen warm through the long winters but also was a staple in both the fur trade with the Indians and the infamous slave trade with Africa. The middle colonies carried on a lively coastal trade with the other continental colonies, providing flour and breadstuffs to all regions.

The goal of all this commercial activity was to provide the American colonies with the commodities they needed most—manufactured articles from the mother country, labor from Africa, and sugar and molasses from the West Indies. Thousands of mariners and shipwrights, hundreds of merchants and captains, and scores of customs officials all made a livelihood from the burgeoning commerce of colonial America. As the result of this trade throughout the Atlantic world, the colonies grew steadily richer.

Manufacture. The shipyard was in one sense America's first factory, for here on one site were assembled the various materials and craftsmen needed to build a fine vessel. The work of many specialists and many kinds of materials went into the process, and in a large yard more than one vessel could be built at a time.

Another highly developed colonial industry involved the manufacture of iron. An operation such as Alexander Spotswood's works in Virginia required a capital investment of £12,000, thousands of acres of ore-field, and 2 square miles (6 sq km) of woodland for fuel. Water-powered bellows brought the blast furnace to a high temperature to drive out the impurities from the ore. The Spotswood furnace could produce almost 20 tons of iron a week, some of it exported to England but most of it used in America itself.

Still another heavy industry was the merchant mill that ground wheat and other grains for flour. Many of these mills were located along the rivers around Philadelphia and Wilmington, for waterpower drove both

the big grinding stones and the auxiliary machinery as well. On a smaller scale almost every village had its local sawmill powered by waterwheel. Paper mills, fulling mills, and other factories appeared along the fast-flowing streams of the Northern colonies in increasing profusion.

On a still smaller scale was the master craftsman, who owned his own shop. At first many basic crafts, such as baking and weaving, were carried on in each colonist's home. Special products such as clocks and furniture were imported. This pattern continued in rural areas. But the increasing population and specialization of labor made possible the establishment of professional craftsmen in towns and villages. Such a man required only his tools, materials, and place to work, often the ground floor of his house. He worked by hand, with the help of his family and perhaps an apprentice or two and usually made his own designs. Craftsmen in a typical 18th century town included bakers, cabinetmakers, clockmakers, potters, weavers, dyers, hatters, tailors, and cordwainers (shoemakers). Other skilled artisans, such as housewrights and bricklayers, did their work on site.

In smaller villages, craftsmen usually made goods on order only, but in larger towns the artisan was a shopkeeper as well. He publicized his wares by a sign over his door and perhaps by advertising in the local newspaper, but his best advertisement was the quality of his work. The most successful craftsmen enjoyed a market well beyond the limits of their own communities.

Colonial America was far from the free-enterprise paradise that modern businessmen like to think it was. British regulations attempted to restrict the exportation of certain American-made goods, such as hats and woolens. Far more effective a restraint were the various local regulations, which held artisans to high standards of quality in their work, thus affording the buyer some protection from shoddy produce, underweight goods, and unscrupulous practices. A further check on colonial manufacture was the fact that many colonists preferred imported to native goods. For example, Americans bought English woolens and Irish linens whenever they could afford them. The importation of these fabrics continued to be the mainstay of Anglo-American commerce even after the colonists had declared political independence from the mother country. So strong was this habit of reliance on English goods that French and continental textiles could never offer serious competition.

Urban Life. While most colonists lived in the country, by the mid-18th century, America boasted cities such as Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Charleston that offered a stimulating cultural and economic environment. It was no accident that of the 20 largest urban centers all but Lancaster, Pa., were located on tidewater, for the 18th century city was first of all a seaport. For this reason, however, cities were confined to rather narrow peninsulas or strips along the waterfront. Land became expensive, and, as nearby timber resources disappeared, building costs soared. Crowded into these cities were artisans and their apprentices, shopkeepers, sailors and merchants, longshoremens, and professional men.

Many of the problems of urban life so familiar to later generations plagued the city dwellers of the 18th century. Sanitation was poor and public health problems a constant threat to life. Streets were poorly lighted at best, law enforcement difficult, and fire an ever-present danger. Nevertheless, the cities of colonial America offered a dynamic and exciting alternative to rural drudgery and attracted increasing numbers of sons and daughters from the farms.

Transportation. Despite the attraction of the cities, the average colonist had little opportunity to travel beyond a semiannual trip to the nearest market town. As a result, he knew nothing about his fellow settlers in other colonies except what he might occasionally read in newspapers in the village tavern. The main barrier to better communications, beyond the fact that farmers had little time for travel, was the abominable condition of roads. Most were only wide enough to permit passage of a single man on horseback and too rough for any vehicle resembling a stagecoach, at least until the mid-18th century. Even then it took three days to journey from New York to Philadelphia. Small streams were crossed by fording and larger rivers by ferries.

Travel was so slow by land that overnight facilities became a necessity. Yet the American roadside inn was legendary for its bad food, surly keeper, and spartan accommodations, which one had to share with other guests. The wise traveler booked passage on a coastal sailing vessel, on which accommodations were at

least no worse than at most inns, and distant points often could be reached more quickly by sea than by land. Regular (if slow) post roads linked the larger communities by mid-18th century, especially after Benjamin Franklin improved the service. Even so, Americans remained rather isolated, not only from each other but more particularly from their European origins. While one could cross the Atlantic in four to six weeks, the passage was tedious, often dangerous, and always expensive.

Food, Drink and Clothing. At the outset of settlement, colonists lived extremely simple lives by necessity. Foodstuffs such as corn, squash, and wild game—turkey, deer, pigeon, and rabbit—provided the principal fare at most dinner tables. Along the northern coast and by the rivers of the middle colonies, fish offered variety to the main meal, while backcountry people relied on pork. Later generations of settlers could afford beef on occasion, along with oysters, crabs, and other shellfish in season. Preserving food for the long winter was a constant challenge. Meat was smoked or salted; fish, dried or pickled. Many vegetables could be stored in the root cellar, and potatoes, reintroduced to America in the 18th century, were a good vegetable for winter consumption. By then, orchards produced apples and other fruit that could be dried for the winter months. In addition to cornmeal, ingenious housewives used flour from a wide variety of grains for baking bread and mixing with other foodstuffs.

Many farm families kept a cow for milk. In addition, beer (in the middle colonies), rum (in New England), and cider (in the backcountry) were all popular beverages. In the homes of the Southern planters and urban merchants, wine, tea, chocolate, and coffee had begun to be common by the 18th century. Sugar was rarely found outside of such wealthy households, the ordinary people relying on molasses or honey. Spices were also rare but sought-after commodities.

Most American colonists dressed much as they had in England. Men wore coats, vests, shirts, knee breeches, and long stockings. Women wore long, full dresses and shawls. People who could afford them imported clothes from England—in linen, wool, velvet, and silk. Common folk used coarser domestic materials such as linsey-woolsey and homespun. The middle class copied the fashions of their social "betters" whenever possible. Sumptuary laws prohibiting such aspirations were difficult to enforce. On the frontier, people dressed in deerskins and furs. "Buckskins" became a term of opprobrium for the simple backcountry folk. At the other extreme, overdressed city dandies were disparagingly known as "macaronis."

The Household. Throughout most of the colonial period the fireplace provided the only means of cooking food as well as of heating the house. Since coal was not available until the very end of the period, every household required considerable quantities of firewood. In the Northern colonies the central chimney heated the entire house. In the more elaborate Southern plantations where the kitchen was in an outbuilding, the main house had end chimneys, which permitted a central hallway to carry refreshing breezes through the structure. Germans in Pennsylvania constructed iron heating stoves, which stood out into the room. From these models Benjamin Franklin developed his famous Pennsylvania fireplace, known as the Franklin stove. Long-handled warming pans and other portable heating devices were also relied on to fight the bitter cold of American winters. Women secreted small metal footwarmers filled with hot coals beneath their skirts during church services, an idea originating with the Dutch in New York.

Iron pots hung from cranes over the open fire, while meats turned on spits. Brass and iron pots, kettles, skillets and other utensils were costly items, much prized by the housewife. Meals were served in wooden platters and bowls for the most part, sometimes in painted tinware, although pewterware was common in richer homes. Planters and merchants could afford silverware made by English or colonial craftsmen, and expensive china plates and teacups were the pride of well-to-do ladies.

Colonial houses were poorly lighted by modern standards. Not only was window glass expensive but so were spermaceti candles and whale-oil lamps. Most homes were lighted by tallow candles, rush and betty lamps, or simply the flames of a roaring fire. Few colonists in rural areas stayed up after dark anyway, their daily routine being regulated by sun time through most of the year. The absence of running water meant considerable labor for the women and children of the family, whose task it was to keep the water buckets filled from nearby wells or springs. Inside toilet facilities were unknown, and the backyard privy, or necessary house, was a common structure.

Because the colonists made so much of their own clothing and utensils, the well-equipped household required a number of specialized tools. Spinning wheels for the preparation of yarn and looms for weaving were only the largest of these pieces. The housewife had need for a wide variety of vats and pans for preparing dyes, curing hides, and processing cloth. The husband required a workbench at which he could fashion the various household and farm tools needed for the season ahead. From attic rafters herbs hung to dry, and shelves held seeds for next year's kitchen garden. If the farmer made maple syrup, he needed many buckets to collect the sap and a large vat in which to boil it. If he cut ice from a nearby pond, he needed different sets of implements. Husband and wife together had to master a score of techniques and to improvise when conditions or materials were not quite right. These circumstances were reflected in the country adage "make do or do without." By the mid-18th century, life in the New World had made the American an ingenious jack-of-all trades.

Cultural Life and Leisure Pursuits Colonial American cultural life was largely underdeveloped until well into the 18th century. Even then it depended heavily on the mother country for its sources and standards.

Literature. Although few Americans possessed extensive libraries, many households had an almanac and a Bible. Some households might also have a book on home remedies, perhaps a classical history, and a work or two on law. The more affluent might own several religious tracts, a collection of poems or essays, and perhaps a practical guide such as *The Complete Gentleman or Of Domestic Duties*. City dwellers unable to afford their own books might join a subscription group such as Franklin's famous Library Company of Philadelphia.

One of the most popular subjects for ambitious American authors was the history of their colony. The goal of these works was often to encourage further immigration or to justify a particular pattern of behavior in the past. Among the best of these works were Robert Beverley's *History and Present State of Virginia* (1705) and Thomas Hutchinson's *History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay* (3 vols., 1764–1828).

The better-known ministers published many of their sermons along with other tracts extolling the virtues of a Christian life. During such periods of religious fervor as the Great Awakening, major disputes were fought out in books and pamphlets. Political arguments found similar expression, especially at the end of the colonial period. Another favorite theme was the "Indian captivity" tale. Mary Rowlandson struck horror into her readers as they relived her experiences during King Philip's War. The Reverend John Williams made the account of his capture at Deerfield into a religious tract as well as a historical description. The colonial period produced several talented poets, such as the Puritans Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor and, later, the black slave Phillis Wheatley.

Surely the most widely read works of the era were almanacs and newspapers, the popularity of which attested to the colonists' preference for practical works. Almanacs were filled with all sorts of useful (and some useless) information concerning phases of the moon, sunrises, high and low tides, and various astronomical orbits and juxtapositions. In his famous *Poor Richard's Almanack*, Benjamin Franklin treated his readers to numerous aphorisms and other sayings for their moral and practical guidance. Newspapers carried the "freshest advices," often months old by necessity, on the doings of the colonial legislature and the arrival of vessels at the waterfront. One of their most valuable features was the myriad of commercial advertisements for goods and services offered by local craftsmen and shopkeepers. By the mid-18th century, more than 20 newspapers circulated through the colonies, each copy avidly devoured by numerous readers in taverns, inns, and private homes.

Architecture and Art. The evolution of American architecture illustrates the pattern of cultural development in the colonial period. Houses built by the earliest inhabitants had to be simple to construct with the materials at hand. Often they had to provide shelter from severe weather conditions and protection against Indian attack. These first homes were crude huts or even tents and caves. Log cabins appeared only when the Scandinavians settled along the Delaware River in the mid-1600's. As soon as possible, each group of settlers built a heavily timbered garrison house for protection.

Pioneers who survived several seasons could build more permanent homes. These later houses reflected the general lines of 17th century European architecture, but gradually each region went its own way in

architectural styles. By the early 1700's the wooden New England farmhouse, with its center chimney, four rooms on each floor, and lean-to attached behind took on its characteristic "saltbox" appearance. In the middle and Southern colonies a large number of houses were of brick. There, too, Georgian architecture appeared in the 1730's. As planters and merchants of the Chesapeake Bay area accumulated wealth, they sought, in architecture as in other matters, to follow the model of the English ruling class. So also did their counterparts in the North. These substantial houses copied the Georgian styles of the most up-to-date English books. But here and there an American touch appeared, such as the widow's walk atop New England seaport houses or the separate summer kitchen in many Southern homes. Indigenous American architecture was much more common in country villages and on farms. In some rural areas true improvisation took place, as planters such as Thomas Jefferson designed their own mansions. But such departures from English models were unusual.

Other art forms grew more slowly in America because practical demands precluded the early emergence of a leisure class with the wealth to become patrons. Even so, itinerant, self-taught portrait painters roamed the colonies looking for business. By the eve of the Revolution two artists of major importance, John Singleton Copley and Benjamin West, were at the peak of their careers. Generally speaking, however, American art took a more practical path. Colorful designs on walls, furniture, and even buildings themselves brightened the home. The Pennsylvania Germans were also skilled in the art of *fraktur*, illuminating documents and other papers with brilliant decorations. Other common art forms were carved weathervanes and figureheads, the gaily painted signs advertising shops and taverns, and fancifully carved gravestones.

Leading furniture makers of 18th century America depended heavily on English design books such as Thomas Chippendale's *The Gentleman and Cabinetmaker's Directory*. The best American craftsmen, such as Benjamin Randolph of Philadelphia and the Goddard brothers of Newport, put something of their own design in each piece. For the middle class, Boston joiners turned out chairs and tables by the hundreds for export to the rural areas of many colonies, but Philadelphia's craftsmen remained preeminent.

Many merchants and planters converted their profits into silverware. Much of it was imported from the mother country at first. By the mid-18th century, however, such silversmiths as Joseph Richardson, John Coney, and Paul Revere had established reputations far beyond their own towns. Pottery, easily made from local clays, was popular. Especially decorative types were Pennsylvania German slipware and Bennington stoneware. Glassware, requiring costly equipment and highly trained workers, was less common. By the mid-18th century, however, the rich could buy glassware of great beauty from glassworks such as those of John Frederick Amelung in Maryland and Henry William Stieglitz in Pennsylvania. Textiles gave the housewife, especially in the countryside, the opportunity to display her skill and ingenuity in dyeing, weaving, embroidery, and quilting. In her leisure time she made blue-and-white woven coverlets, gay crewel-embroidered hangings, and patchwork and appliqué quilts.

Drama and Music. Of all art forms, probably drama suffered most from New World conditions. The first settlers had little time for such diversion. Besides, Puritans strongly opposed theatrical entertainment, as did the Quakers. By the beginning of the 18th century, however, traveling theatrical companies began to receive increasing public approval, particularly in such seaports as New York and Charleston. Philadelphia's Thomas Godfrey was America's only accomplished playwright in the colonial period. Other forms of public entertainment included waxworks, the display of elephants and other exotic beasts, and performances by trapeze artists. Scientific demonstrations and lectures on intellectual topics were also popular.

Americans enjoyed singing perhaps more than any other form of public entertainment. Every major religious denomination except the Quakers gave an important place in their services to the singing of hymns, and the first book printed in English America was in fact the Puritans' *Bay Psalm Book* (1640). The organ, introduced by the Anglicans, was resisted at first by stricter groups but gradually gained acceptance by the 18th century. The music of backcountry folk was not only a form of entertainment but also a means of recalling their past and preserving it for future generations. The blacks similarly relied on singing, for song gave them a solidarity, which the plantation system constantly threatened, and helped them to retain through note and rhythm the rich heritage of their native Africa. American music owes much of its musical tradition to blacks.

On a more formal plane, cities such as Boston, New York, and especially Charleston, where interested citizens formed the St. Cecilia Society in 1762, offered professional concerts on a regular basis by the eve of the Revolution. As for composition, however, hymns were about the only kind of music actually written by colonists with any degree of skill.

Science. Given the conditions of frontier life in America, it is not surprising that intellectual life should be dominated by utilitarian interest. Both Europeans and early colonists shared a compelling curiosity about the natural history of the New World. As time and circumstances permitted, a number of 17th century Americans examined their environment by the best scientific methods available, not so much for the sake of pure knowledge as in the hope of making practical discoveries. Botany aided the search for medicinal herbs, metallurgy the quest for iron ore and other useful metals. Before the end of the century, Harvard College was offering courses in astronomy and physics, as well as in the more traditional subjects of algebra and geometry. In Boston the Reverend Cotton Mather championed the new technique of inoculation against smallpox, and other ministers, too, were interested in practical science.

In the early 18th century, Mark Catesby and later John Bartram advanced the frontiers of natural history by their studies of American species of animal, bird, and plant life. The founding by Benjamin Franklin of the American Philosophical Society in 1743 for the "promotion of useful knowledge" symbolized his own primary interests along with those of other American scientists. Franklin's experiments with electricity, while fraught with theoretical value, were turned to practical application by his invention of the lightning rod. Another Philadelphian, David Rittenhouse, was a self-taught astronomer who built America's first orrery (a working model of the universe) in 1767. His contributions to the field were second only to Harvard's John Winthrop in the New World and demonstrated that even an amateur could advance the frontiers of knowledge. By the eve of the Revolution at least two score Americans had been elected to the Royal Society in London, and all colonists could take pride in the honorary degrees conferred on Benjamin Franklin by Edinburgh University in 1759 and Oxford in 1762.

A number of Americans applied their scientific knowledge to the field of medicine, experimenting with a wide variety of herbs and other remedies to combat the deadly effects of dysentery, measles, diphtheria, and smallpox. The vast majority of practitioners were self-taught, however, and could do little to cure the seriously ill. But by the Revolution two medical schools had been established along with numerous hospitals, and the practice of quarantine for the crews of incoming vessels helped prevent the spread of contagious infections. Superstition continued to hamper major medical advances throughout the period. Many colonists, for instance, objected to smallpox inoculation as an interference with God's will. Change came slowly even in America.

Leisure Pursuits. The seriousness of purpose that brought most immigrants to America combined with the challenge of settling the wilderness left little leisure time during the 17th century. Almost all Americans had to work hard six days a week, and Sunday was reserved for rest and worship. Every colony adopted laws severely restricting social activities on the Sabbath, the most effective bans being observed in Puritan New England. In addition to actual recreation, household work, travel, and even a family stroll were prohibited at first. Sunday was the Lord's day, and the good Puritan spent most of it in church or in meditation at home. Gradually these standards fell out of favor, and by the 18th century most New Englanders gave them token recognition at best. In the Southern colonies, where population remained relatively dispersed, visiting became a favorite leisure-time activity. George Washington's diary records numerous callers at Mount Vernon, who threatened to drink and dine him into bankruptcy. The American custom of hospitality had firm roots in the colonial era.

Simpler folk everywhere made a party out of every possible occasion, from quilting and spinning bees for the women to barn raisings and community construction projects for the whole family. Another necessary activity that was a source of recreation as well was hunting. Fishing too gave pleasure as well as the possibility of food for the table. In New York the Dutch introduced the sport of ice skating, and Benjamin Franklin urged his fellow Americans to learn how to swim for the sheer pleasure of it (as well as for its practical value, of course). But outdoor sport in the colonial period had not yet become the great American diversion it proved to be for later generations.

Men who lived in the towns and cities of the Northern colonies had the opportunity to enjoy each other's company at the local inn or tavern, where they smoked, played cards, and gambled. Billiards and backgammon were favorite games. In the Southern colonies especially, gentlemen aped the English aristocratic love for horse racing, which gave them an opportunity to display their favorite mounts and bet a little money on the outcome. Cockfighting was also popular, although often outlawed, along with bearbaiting and other brutalities.

Colonial children, like their descendants, found ingenious ways to amuse themselves, not always with parental approval. The boys of Boston devised a kind of stickball game played in the street, and a primitive form of football was also popular. As usual, country children had even greater opportunity for recreation, exploring the endless challenges of farm life such as rat hunting and turtle "gigging," as well as hunting and fishing. By the mid-18th century, newspapers advertised toys for sale, although most children made do with homemade hoops, balls, and other devices for their games.

Perhaps the most popular pastime for colonial Americans was dancing. Rich merchants and planters held assemblies either in their own spacious ballrooms or in a suitable public room in the larger cities. In many communities professional dancing masters instructed the youth in the steps and formations of this graceful accomplishment. A dance might mark almost any of several public festivities, such as muster day, the king's birthday, or a thanksgiving day. In Boston, Harvard's commencement day was celebrated by the entire community, while Southerners made a public festivity of elections. Sometimes these public celebrations dissolved into drunken brawls. Pope (Guy Fawkes) Day in Boston, for instance, became the occasion for a pitched battle between gangs of the rival north and south ends. For the most part, however, colonial Americans enjoyed the company of their fellows without reaching such extremes.

Legacy The colonial period saw the establishment of many institutions, attitudes, and values that differentiated Americans from other peoples of the era and have since found a permanent place in the American way of life. Many have been altered through the years, and others are no longer appropriate to the realities of the late 20th century, but the basic shape of American national institutions was discernible by the mid-18th century.

Self-Government. Largely because of the dispersal of population, political authority rose from the grass-roots level, where most important decisions were made. English sovereignty was felt through the presence of the royal governor, but colonial legislatures derived great strength from the fact that they represented local, not imperial, interests. Although not very democratic at first, this structure encouraged the later development of democracy throughout the political system after the Revolution. Since then, the scope of such national problems as defense, the economy, and social justice has grown so large as to reduce the power of local authority, but the American government nevertheless remains more closely tied to the grass roots than that of any other industrialized nation.

Public Education. The most significant social institution established in the colonial period was the system of public education first founded in New England. The colonists' insistence on at least a minimum education for their children had far-reaching effects on both the economy and the social structure of the nation-to-be. Education became a principal route upward, especially for the children of later immigrants.

Religious Toleration. Despite a slow start in New England, religious toleration became firmly established in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and other colonies in the 17th century. By the mid-18th century a host of small denominations flourished in all the provinces under principles of religious freedom that became a cornerstone of the future nation.

Faith in Progress. Perhaps the most common belief shared by the colonists was their faith in progress. Americans continually made short-term sacrifices and took great risks in the hope of long-term gains, as evidenced by the men and women who moved to the frontier. The continent's bountiful natural resources imbued Americans with a fervent faith in the future. The fertile soil, forests of virgin timber, and rich grazing lands seemed to stretch endlessly westward. Even in colonial days the West held the promise of future greatness for America so richly fulfilled in the 19th century.

The Model American. Out of the colonial heritage there emerged a symbolic ideal citizen for the new nation—the yeoman farmer, embodying the virtues that colonists had come to cherish. He was free and independent, owning his own farm and calling no man lord and master. Of a practical bent, he devised tools and techniques to meet every challenge. He was not afraid of hard work, so eager was he to improve his lot and that of his children. Above all, he was an individualist, determined to make it on his own, somewhat wary of outsiders, particularly of city folk, who seemed to him almost "un-American."

The yeoman farmer served as the model for more than a century after the Revolution. Although the ideal American is no longer a farmer, the virtues embodied by the yeoman of the mid-18th century remain largely intact. The American still prides himself on his independence, his willingness to work hard, his practicality, and his individualism. His belief in progress may now be somewhat restricted by the problems of modern-day society—dwindling natural resources, recurring business recessions, and persistent racial discrimination; but through it all, Americans have continued to display that buoyant faith in the future that gave birth to a new nation 200 years ago.

Benjamin W. Labaree
Author of *America's Nation-Time, 1607–1789*

Bibliography

Material Culture

Baumgarten, Linda, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America; The Colonial Williamsburg Collection* (Colonial Williamsburg Fnd./Yale Univ. Press 2002).

Beaudry, Mary C., *Documentary Archaeology in the New World* (1988; reprint, Cambridge 1993).

Craven, Wayne, *Colonial American Portraiture: The Economic, Religious, Social, Cultural, Philosophical, Scientific, and Aesthetic Foundations* (Cambridge 1986).

Deetz, James, *In Small Things Forgotten*, rev. ed. (Anchor Bks. 1996).

Deetz, James, and Patricia Scott Deetz, *The Times of Their Lives* (2000; reprint, Anchor Bks. 2001).

Ferguson, Leland, *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America, 1650–1800* (1992; reprint, Smithsonian Bks. 1995).

Wright, Louis B., et al., *The Arts in America: The Colonial Period* (1966; reprint, Schocken Bks. 1976).

Domestic Life, Culture, and Customs

Anderson, Virginia DeJohn, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (Oxford 2004).

Bercovitch, Sacvan, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (1975; reprint, Yale Univ. Press 1977).

Bloch, Ruth H., *Gender and Morality in Anglo-American Culture, 1650–1800* (Univ. of Calif. Press 2003).

Bonomi, Patricia, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America*, rev. ed. (Oxford 2003).

Bridenbaugh, Carl, *Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America, 1625–1742*, 2d ed. (1955; reprint, Knopf 1966).

Bridenbaugh, Carl, *Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743–1776* (Knopf 1955).

Brown, Kathleen M., *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Univ. of N.C. Press 1996) [published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture].

Burns, William E., *Science and Technology in Colonial America* (Greenwood Press 2005).

Butler, Jon, *Becoming America: The Revolution before 1776* (Harvard Univ. Press 2000).

Carson, Cary, et al., eds., *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Univ. Press of Va. 1994).

Clark, Charles E., *The Public Prints: The Newspaper in Anglo-American Culture, 1665–1740* (Oxford 1994).

Cohen, Patricia Cline, *A Calculating People: The Spread of Numeracy in Early America* (Univ. of Chicago Press 1982).

Cronon, William, *Changes in the Land* (1983; reprint, Hill & Wang 2003).

Demos, John P., *Circles and Lines: The Shape of Life in Early America* (Harvard Univ. Press 2004) [The William E. Massey, Sr., Lectures in the History of American Civilization].

Demos, John P., ed., *Remarkable Providences: Readings on Early American History*, rev. ed. (Northeastern Univ. Press 1991).

Fischer, David Hackett, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*, new ed. (Oxford 1991).

Foster, Stephen, *The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570–1700* (1991; reprint, Univ. of N.C. Press 1996) [published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture].

Greene, Jack P., *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Univ. of N.C. Press 1988).

Hinderaker, Eric, and Peter C. Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press 2003).

Hoffer, Peter C., *Sensory Worlds in Early America* (2003; reprint, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press 2005).

Hoffman, Ronald, et al. eds., *Through a Glass Darkly: Reflections on Personal Identity in Early America* (Univ. of N.C. Press 1997) [published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture].

Innes, Stephen, *Creating the Commonwealth: The Economic Culture of Puritan New England*, new ed. (R. S. Means Co. 1998).

Innes, Stephen, ed., *Work and Labor in Early America* (Univ. of N.C. Press 1988) [published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture].

Isenberg, Nancy, and Andrew Burstein, eds., *Mortal Remains: Death in Early America* (Univ. of Pa. Press

2003).

Johnson, Claudia Durst, *Daily Life in Colonial New England* (Greenwood Press 2002).

Kornwolf, James D., and Georgiana W. Kornwolf, *Architecture and Town Planning in Colonial North America*, 3 vols. (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press 2002).

Kulikoff, Allan, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Univ. of N.C. Press 2000).

Morgan, Edmund, *The Puritan Family*, rev. ed. (1966; reprint, Greenwood Press 1980).

Morgan, Philip D., *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Univ. of N.C. Press 1998) [published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture].

Norton, Mary Beth, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* (1996; reprint, Vintage 1997).

Oliver, Sandra L., *Food in Colonial and Federal America* (Greenwood Press 2005).

Parrish, Susan Scott, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Univ. of N.C. Press 2006) [published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture].

Pencak, William, et al., eds., *Riot and Revelry in Early America* (Pa. State Univ. Press 2002).

Rath, Richard C., *How Early America Sounded* (Cornell Univ. Press 2003).

Salinger, Sharon Vineberg, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press 2002).

Scanlan, Thomas, *Colonial Writing and the New World, 1583–1671: Allegories of Desire* (Cambridge 1999).

Shields, David S., *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Univ. of N.C. Press 1997).

Smith, Billy G., ed., *Down and Out in Early America* (Pa. State Univ. Press 2004).

Struna, Nancy L., *People of Prowess: Sport, Leisure, and Labor in Early Anglo-America* (Univ. of Ill. Press 1996).

Wall, Helena M., *Fierce Communion: Family and Community in Early America* (Harvard Univ. Press 1990).

Warner, Michael, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (1990; reprint, Harvard Univ. Press 2006).

Wilson, Lisa, *Ye Heart of a Man: The Domestic Life of Men in Colonial New England* (Yale Univ. Press 1999).

Wolf, Stephanie Grauman, *As Various as Their Land: The Everyday Lives of Eighteenth-Century Americans* (1993; reprint, Univ. of Ark. Press 2000).

Wright, Louis B., *The Cultural Life of the American Colonies*, ed. by Henry Steele Commager and Richard Brandon Morris (1957; reprint, Dover 2002).

Social and Political Relations

Axtell, James, *Natives and Newcomers: The Cultural Origins of North America* (Oxford 2000).

Bailyn, Bernard, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Harvard Univ. Press 2002).

Bailyn, Bernard, and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Univ. of N.C. Press 1991) [published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture].

Beeton, Richard, *Varieties of Political Experience in Eighteenth-Century America* (Univ. of Pa. Press 2004).

Boorstin, Daniel J., *The Colonial Experience*, vol. 1 of *The Americans* (1958; reprint, Vintage Bks. 1964).

Breen, T. H., *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (2004; reprint, Oxford 2005).

Ciment, James, ed., *Colonial America: An Encyclopedia of Social, Political, Cultural, and Economic History* (M. E. Sharpe 2006).

Conforti, Joseph A., *Saints and Strangers: New England in British North America* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press 2006).

Egnal, Marc, *New World Economies: The Growth of the Thirteen Colonies and Early Canada* (Oxford 1998).

Greene, Jack P., *Imperatives, Behaviors, and Identities: Essays in Early American Cultural History* (Univ. Press of Va. 1992).

Greene, Jack P., *Negotiated Authorities: Essays in Colonial Political and Constitutional History* (Univ. Press of Va. 1994).

Hall, David D., et al., eds., *Saints and Revolutionaries: Essays on Early American History* (Norton 1984).

Henretta, James A., et al., eds., *The Transformation of Early American History: Society, Authority, and Ideology* (Knopf 1991).

Hoffer, Peter C., ed., *Early American History*, 18 vols. (Garland 1988) [series reprints articles that first appeared over 1897–1983].

Hofstadter, Richard, *America at 1750: A Social Portrait* (1971; reprint, Vintage Bks. 1973).

Holton, Woody, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the Revolution in Colonial Virginia* (Univ. of N.C. Press 1999) [published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture].

Isaac, Rhys, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790* (1982; reprint, Univ. of N.C. Press 1999) [published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture].

Kammen, Michael, *People of Paradox: An Inquiry concerning the Origins of American Civilization* (1972; reprint, Cornell Univ. Press 1990).

Labaree, Benjamin W., *America's Nation-Time, 1607–1789* (Norton 1976).

Landsman, Ned C., *From Colonials to Provincials: American Thought and Culture, 1680–1760* (1997; reprint, Cornell Univ. Press 2000).

Maier, Pauline, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765–1776* (1972; reprint, Norton 1992).

Merritt, Jane T., *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700–1763* (Univ. of N.C. Press 2003) [published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture].

Morgan, Ted, *Slavery and Servitude in Colonial North America: A Short History* (N.Y. Univ. Press 2001).

Nash, Gary B., *Race, Class, and Politics: Essays on American Colonial and Revolutionary Society* (Univ. of Ill. Press 1986).

Nash, Gary B., *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America*, 5th ed. (Prentice Hall 2005).

Pestana, Carla Gardina, and Sharon V. Salinger, eds., *Inequality in Early America* (Univ. Press of New England 1999).

Richter, Daniel K., *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (2001; reprint, Harvard Univ. Press 2003).

Tomlins, Christopher L., and Bruce H. Mann, eds., *The Many Legalities of Early America* (Univ. of N.C. Press 2001) [published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture].

Vaughan, Alden T., *Roots of American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience* (Oxford 1995).

Vickers, Daniel, ed., *A Companion to Colonial America* (2003; reprint, Blackwell 2006).

Whisker, James B., *The American Colonial Militia*, 5 vols. (Mellen Press 1997).

Colonial Sites

Three kinds of colonial sites represent the colonial period in U. S. history. First are buildings that have been preserved intact, usually on their original sites. They rank first in authenticity, and most cities and towns along the Eastern Seaboard have fine examples. However, often these buildings remain in private use and are not open to the public. Second are the museum "villages" comprising restored and reconstructed buildings, at least some of which have been moved from other locations. A restored building is basically the original structure with the necessary repairs and replacements; reconstructions are structures newly built according to original specifications. A third kind of historic site comprises totally reconstructed buildings. These categories should not be confused with commercial amusement parks in colonial settings. Of the hundreds of colonial sites open to the public, the following, arranged geographically, are among the most authentic and interesting:

Shelburne, Vt. The Shelburne Museum includes a number of houses dating from the late 1700's and exhibiting an outstanding collection of antiques.

Portsmouth, N.H. The original settlement at the mouth of the Piscataqua River, known as Strawberry Banke has restored historic buildings dating from 1695 to 1830. In addition, there are a number of fine homes in their original settings along Pleasant Street.

- Salem, Mass. The Essex Institute has restored one 17th and several 18th century houses with authentic furnishings. The House of Seven Gables is another good example of early architecture. Pioneer Village is a modern reconstruction of the original settlement at Salem. Chestnut Street has many fine late colonial and early Federalist homes.
- Boston, Mass. Within the city are many 17th and 18th century houses. Many of the historic structures are indicated on maps of the "Freedom Trail."
- Plymouth, Mass. On the outskirts of modern Plymouth is "Plimouth Plantation," a reconstruction of the Pilgrims' first village.
- Deerfield, Mass. As a result of cooperation among the townspeople, the local historical society, and the privately endowed Heritage Foundation, Deerfield has become one of the most impressive "lived in" historic sites. The main street has been restored to very nearly its 18th century appearance.
- Sturbridge, Mass. "Old Sturbridge Village" is one of the most authentic of the museum villages. Houses, shops, and other buildings are arranged in a natural setting, and visitors may travel by horse-drawn wagon.
- Newport, R.I. Newport is carrying out a major restoration campaign that promises to preserve many of its 18th century buildings from further decay.
- Mystic, Conn. "Mystic Seaport" is a skillful re-creation of an early 19th century seaport village with many colonial buildings and vessels. Most of the houses have been moved to the site and restored. The overall effect is highly authentic.
- Cooperstown, N.Y. The "Village Crossroads," a reconstructed farming village, and the Farmer's Museum have preserved many relics of early country life.
- Philadelphia, Pa. In the Independence Hall area are many well-known public buildings that have been preserved, while the "Society Hill" section of the city is composed of privately owned town houses restored to their 18th century exterior appearance.
- Wilmington, Del. Within a small radius are three important historic institutions: The Hagley Museum, a group of restored and reconstructed mill buildings along the Brandywine River; the Eleutherian Mills, the du Pont family's first powder factory in America; and Winterthur, a museum housing the antiques collection of Henry F. du Pont.
- Alexandria, Va. George Washington's estate, Mount Vernon, has been carefully preserved and gives the observer a graphic idea of an 18th century plantation.
- Williamsburg, Va. The most famous historic site in America, "Colonial Williamsburg" includes more than 80 original buildings preserved from Virginia's colonial capital and many skillful reconstructions. Guides in costume complete the authentic setting. At the nearby site of Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in America, the Jamestown Festival Park includes replicas of 17th century buildings.
- Charlestown, S.C. Many buildings from the colonial era, both public and private, have been preserved, and some are open for inspection.
-

How to cite this article:**MLA (Modern Language Association) style:**

Labaree, Benjamin W. "Colonial Life." *Encyclopedia Americana*. 2009. Grolier Online. 20 Jan. 2009 <<http://ea.grolier.com/cgi-bin/article?assetid=0101570-00>>.

Chicago Manual of Style:

Labaree, Benjamin W. "Colonial Life." *Encyclopedia Americana*. Grolier Online <http://ea.grolier.com/cgi-bin/article?assetid=0101570-00> (accessed January 20, 2009).

APA (American Psychological Association) style:

Labaree, B. W. (2009). Colonial Life. *Encyclopedia Americana*. Retrieved January 20, 2009, from Grolier Online <http://ea.grolier.com/cgi-bin/article?assetid=0101570-00>

[CLOSE](#)

Copyright © 2008 Scholastic Inc. All rights reserved.