
A NEW WORLD

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THE FIRST AMERICANS



Christopher Columbus. A contemporary portrait by Sebastiano del Piombo.

At daybreak on the morning of Friday, August 3 1492, an Italian adventurer named Christopher Columbus set sail from Spain to find a new way from Europe to Asia. His aim was to open up a shorter trade route between the two continents. In Asia, he intended to load his three small ships with silks, spices and gold, and sail back to Europe a rich man.

Columbus first sailed south to the Canary Islands. Then he turned west across the unknown waters of the mid-Atlantic Ocean. Ten weeks after leaving Spain, on the morning of October 12, he stepped ashore on the beach of a low sandy island. He named the island San Salvador—Holy Savior. Columbus believed that he had landed in the Indies, a group of

islands close to the mainland of India. For this reason he called the friendly, brown-skinned people who greeted him “los Indios”—Indians.

In fact, Columbus was not near India. It was not the edge of Asia that he had reached, but islands off the shores of a new continent. Europeans would soon name the new continent America, but for many years they went on calling its inhabitants Indians. Only recently have these first Americans been described more accurately as “native Americans” or Amerindians.

There were many different groups of Amerindians. Those north of Mexico, in what is now the United States and Canada, were scattered across the grasslands and forests in separate groups called “tribes.” These tribes followed very different ways of life. Some were hunters, some were farmers. Some were peaceful, others warlike. They spoke over three hundred separate languages, some of which were as different from one another as English is from Chinese.

Europeans called America “the New World.” But it was not new to the Amerindians. Their ancestors had already been living there for maybe 50,000 years when Columbus stepped on to the beach in San Salvador.

We say “maybe” because nobody is completely sure. Scientists believe that the distant ancestors of the Amerindians came to America from Asia. This happened, they say, during the earth’s last ice age, long before people began to make written records.

At that time a bridge of ice joined Asia to America across what is now the Bering Strait. Hunters from Siberia crossed this bridge into Alaska. From Alaska the hunters moved south and east across America, following herds of caribou and buffalo as the animals went from one feeding ground to the next. Maybe 12,000 years ago, descendants of these first Americans were crossing the isthmus of Panama into

South America. About 5,000 years later their camp fires were burning on the frozen southern tip of the continent, now called Tierra del Fuego—the Land of Fire.

For many centuries early Amerindians lived as wandering hunters and gatherers of food. Then a more settled way of life began. People living in highland areas of what is now Mexico found a wild grass with tiny seeds that were good to eat. These people became America's first farmers. They cultivated the wild grass with great care to make its seeds larger. Eventually it became Indian corn, or maize. Other cultivated plant foods were developed. By 5000 BC Amerindians in Mexico were growing and eating beans, squash and peppers.

The Pueblo people of present day Arizona and New Mexico were the best organized of the Amerindian farming peoples. They lived in groups of villages, or in towns which were built for safety on the sides and tops of cliffs. They shared terraced buildings made of adobe (mud and straw) bricks, dried in the sun. Some of these buildings contained as many as 800 rooms, crowded together on top of one another. The Pueblo

made clothing and blankets from cotton which grew wild in the surrounding deserts. On their feet they wore boot-shaped leather moccasins to protect their legs against the sharp rocks and cactus plants of the desert. For food they grew crops of maize and beans. Irrigation made them successful as farmers. Long before Europeans came to America the Pueblo were building networks of canals across the deserts to bring water to their fields. In one desert valley modern archaeologists have traced canals and ditches which enabled the Pueblo to irrigate 250,000 acres of farmland.

A people called the Apache were the neighbors of the Pueblo. The Apache never became settled farmers. They wandered the deserts and mountains in small bands, hunting deer and gathering wild plants, nuts and roots. They also obtained food by raiding their Pueblo neighbors and stealing it. The Apache were fierce and warlike, and they were much feared by the Pueblo.

The Buffalo Hunt by Charles M. Russell. Amerindians hunting buffalo.



The Iroquois were a group of tribes—a “nation”—who lived far away from the Pueblo and the Apache in the thick woods of northeastern North America. Like the Pueblo, the Iroquois were skilled farmers. In fields cleared from the forest they worked together growing beans, squash and twelve different varieties of maize. They were also hunters and fishermen. They used birch bark canoes to carry them swiftly along the rivers and lakes of their forest homeland. The Iroquois lived in permanent villages, in long wooden huts with barrel-shaped roofs. These huts were made from a framework of saplings covered by sheets of elm bark. Each was home to as many as twenty families. Each family had its own apartment on either side of a central hall.

The Iroquois were fierce warriors. They were as feared by their neighbors as the Apache of the western deserts were feared by theirs. Around their huts they built strong wooden stockades to protect their villages from enemies. Eager to win glory for their tribe and fame and honor for themselves, they often fought one another. From boyhood on, male Iroquois were taught to fear neither pain nor death. Bravery in battle was the surest way for a warrior to win respect and a high position in his tribe.

Many miles to the west, on the vast plains of grass that stretched from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains, there was another warrior nation. This group called themselves Dakota, which means “allies.” But they were better known by the name which other Amerindians gave to them—Sioux, which means “enemies.”

The Sioux grew no crops and built no houses. For food, for shelter and for clothing they depended upon the buffalo. Millions of these large, slow-moving animals wandered across the western grasslands in vast herds. When the buffalo moved, the Sioux moved. The buffalo never remained on one pasture for long, so everything the Sioux owned was designed to be carried easily. Within hours they could take down the tipis, the conical buffalo-skin tents that were their homes, pack their belongings in lightweight leather bags—“parfleches”—and move off after the buffalo. They even carried fire from one camp to the next. A hot ember would be sealed inside a buffalo horn filled with rotted wood. There it would smolder for days, ready to bring warmth from the old village to the new.

The Sioux Creation

In 1933 a Sioux Chief named Luther Standing Bear wrote down some of the ancient legends of his people. This one tells how the Sioux people began:

“Our legends tell us that it was hundreds and perhaps thousands of years ago that the first man sprang from the soil in the great plains. The story says that one morning long ago a lone man awoke, face to the sun, emerging from the soil. Only his head was visible, the rest of his body not yet being shaped. The man looked about, but saw no mountains, no rivers, no forests. There was nothing but soft and quaking mud, for the earth itself was still young. Up and up the man drew himself until he freed his body from the clinging soil. At last he stood upon the earth, but it was not solid, and his first few steps were slow and uncertain. But the sun shone and the man kept his face turned toward it. In time the rays of the sun hardened the face of the earth and strengthened the man and he ran and leaped about, a free and joyous creature. From this man sprang the Dakota nation and, so far as we know, our people have been born and have died upon this plain; and no people have shared it with us until the coming of the European. So this land of the great plains is claimed by the Dakotas as their very own.”

To many people the tepee is a symbol of the Amerindian way of life. This large cone-shaped tent was invented by the buffalo hunters of the western grasslands. It was built round a framework of about twelve slim, wooden poles approximately twenty feet long. The thin ends of the poles were tied together with strips of buffalo hide and the poles were raised and spread until their bottom ends formed a circle about fifteen feet in diameter. As many as forty buffalo hides were sewn together then spread over the frame, their ends fastened to the ground by pegs. A doorway covered with a flap of skin was left in the side and an opening at the top acted as a chimney. The outside of the tepee was decorated with painted designs that had religious or historical meanings.

Amerindian tepees.

The lifestyle of the people of North America's northwest coast was different again. They gathered nuts and berries from the forests, but their main food was fish, especially the salmon of the rivers and the ocean. Each spring hundreds of thousands of salmon swam in from the Pacific and fought their way up the

fast-flowing rivers to spawn. A few months' work during this season provided the people of the Pacific coast with enough food to last a whole year.

This abundance of food gave the tribes of the Pacific coast time for feasting, for carving and for building. Tribes like the Haida lived in large houses built of wooden planks with elaborately carved gables and doorposts. The most important carvings were on totem poles. These were specially decorated tree trunks which some tribes placed in front of their houses, but which the Haida made part of the house itself. The carvings on the totem pole were a record of the history of the family that lived in the house.

The Amerindian peoples of North America developed widely varied ways of life. All suited the natural environments in which the tribes lived, and they lasted for many centuries. But the arrival of Europeans with their guns, their diseases and their hunger for land would eventually destroy them all.

Potlatches

The "potlatch" was a popular ceremony amongst the wealthy Pacific coast tribes of North America. The word means "gift giving." A modern potlatch is a kind of party at which guests are given gifts, but the original potlatch ceremonies went much further. A chief or head of a family might give

away everything that he owned to show how wealthy he was and gain respect. To avoid disgrace, the person receiving the gifts had to give back even more. If he failed to do so his entire family was disgraced.

*A Haida potlatch.*

EXPLORERS FROM EUROPE

If you ask “Who discovered America?”, the answer that you will usually receive is “Christopher Columbus.” But did he? We have seen that the Asian ancestors of the Amerindians arrived in America long before Columbus. Was Columbus the next to arrive?

In the centuries after 1492 stories and legends grew up about other adventurous seamen having reached the New World long before Columbus. One legend tells how a Buddhist monk named Hwei-Shin sailed from China to Mexico in AD 459. Another claims that an Irish monk named Brendan the Bold landed in America in AD 551. Yet another says that the first European to reach the New World was Leif Ericson, “Lucky Leif,” a Viking sailor from Iceland. And as recently as 1953 a plaque was set up at Mobile Bay in

the modern American state of Alabama which reads “In memory of Prince Madoc, a Welsh explorer who landed on the shores of Mobile Bay in 1170 and left behind, with the Indians, the Welsh language.”

All these stories have their supporters. But only in the case of the Vikings have modern scholars found firm evidence to support the old legends. In the 1960s archaeologists uncovered traces of Viking settlements in both Newfoundland and New England.

In Newfoundland the archaeologists found the foundations of huts built in Viking style. They also found iron nails and the weight, or “whorl,” from a spindle. These objects were important pieces of evidence that the Vikings had indeed reached



Leif Ericson sighting America. An impression by a nineteenth-century artist.



An Aztec drawing of the Spanish conquest.

America. Until the arrival of Europeans none of the Amerindian tribes knew how to make iron. And the spindle whorl was exactly like those used in known Viking lands such as Iceland.

The Vikings were a sea-going people from Scandinavia in northern Europe. They were proud of their warriors and explorers and told stories called “sagas” about them. The saga of Leif Ericson tells how he sailed from Greenland to the eastern coast of North America in about the year AD 1000. When he found vines with grapes on them growing there, he named the place where he landed “Vinland the Good.”

Other Vikings followed Leif to Vinland. But the settlements they made there did not last. The hostility of the local Amerindians and the dangers of the northern seas combined to make them give up their attempt to colonize Vinland. The Vikings sailed away and their discovery of Vinland was forgotten except by their storytellers.

It was the Spanish who began the lasting European occupation of America. When Columbus returned to Spain he took back with him some jewelry that he had obtained in America. This jewelry was important because it was made of gold. In the next fifty years thousands of treasure-hungry Spanish

Why is America called “America”

Why did European geographers give the name America to the lands that Columbus discovered? Why did they not name them instead after Columbus?

The reason is that to the end of his life Columbus believed that his discoveries were part of Asia. The man who did most to correct this mistaken idea was Amerigo Vespucci. Vespucci was an Italian sailor from the city of Florence. During the late 1490s he wrote some letters in which he described two voyages of exploration that he had made along the coasts of South America. He was sure, he wrote, that these coasts were part of a new continent.

Some years later Vespucci’s letters were read by a German scholar who was revising an old geography of the world. The letters convinced the scholar that Vespucci was correct, and that the lands beyond the Atlantic were a new continent. To honor Vespucci the scholar named them America, using the feminine form of Vespucci’s first name as the other continents had female names.

The Fountain of Youth

To sixteenth century Europeans America was a land of marvels, a place where nothing was impossible. Some even believed that there they might discover a way to regain their lost youth.

Ponce de León was a Spanish conquistador who came to the New World with Columbus on the explorer's second voyage. He became the governor of the Caribbean island of Puerto Rico. The Amerindian people of Puerto Rico told de León that to the north lay a land rich in gold. This northern land, they said, also had an even more precious treasure—a fountain whose waters gave everlasting youth to all those who drank from it. In the spring of 1513 de León set off in search of the magic fountain. He landed in present day Florida and sailed all round its coast searching for the miraculous waters.

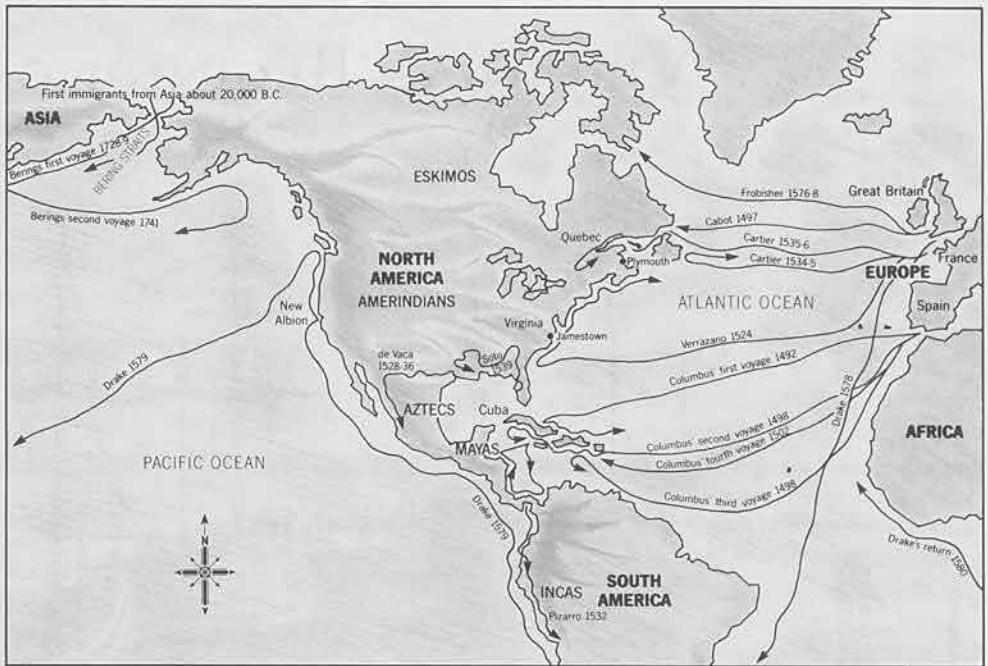
Ponce de León never found the Fountain of Youth. But he did claim Florida for Spain. In 1565 Spanish settlers founded St. Augustine there, the first permanent European settlement on the mainland of North America.

adventurers crossed the Atlantic Ocean to search for more of the precious metal. It was a lust for gold that led Hernán Cortés to conquer the Aztecs in the 1520s. The Aztecs were a wealthy, city-building Amerindian people who lived in what is today Mexico. In the 1530s the same lust for gold caused Francisco Pizarro to attack the equally wealthy empire of the Incas of Peru. A stream of looted treasure began to flow across the Atlantic to Spain from a new empire built up by such conquerors—“conquistadores”—in Central and South America.

In the years that followed, other Spanish conquistadores took the search for gold to North America. Between 1539 and 1543 Hernando de Soto and Francisco Coronado, working separately, explored much of the southern part of what is now the United States. De Soto landed in Florida from Cuba. He led his expedition westward, discovering the Mississippi River and traveling beyond it into Texas and Oklahoma. Coronado traveled north from Mexico, searching for the “Seven Cities of Gold” that Amerindian legends said lay hidden somewhere in the desert. He never found them. But he and his men became the first Europeans to see the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River and they journeyed as far east as Kansas before returning to Mexico.



Discovery of the Mississippi, a romanticized nineteenth-century painting by William H. Powell. De Soto and his followers are shown displaying their cannon and a cross to a group of frightened Amerindians.



The exploration and settlement of America.

The journeys of men such as de Soto and Coronado gave Spain a claim to a large amount of land in North America. They also led to the founding of some of the earliest permanent European settlements there. In 1565 Spanish settlers founded St. Augustine on the coast of present-day Florida. In 1609 other settlers founded Santa Fe in New Mexico.

The growing wealth of Spain made other European nations envious. They became eager to share the riches of the New World. In 1497 King Henry VII of England hired an Italian seaman named John Cabot to explore the new lands and to look again for a passage to Asia. Cabot sailed far to the north of the route Columbus had followed. Eventually he reached the rocky coast of Newfoundland. At first Cabot thought that this was China. A year later he made a second westward crossing of the Atlantic. This time he sailed south along the coast of North America as far as Chesapeake Bay.

Cabot found no gold and no passage to the East. But his voyages were valuable for the English. In later years English governments used them to support their claims to own most of the east coast of North America.

The French also sent explorers to North America. In 1524 the French king, Francis I, sent an Italian sailor named Giovanni Verrazano for the same purpose as

Columbus and Cabot—to find lands rich in gold and a new sea route to Asia. Verrazano sailed the full length of the east coast of America, but found neither. However, he anchored his ship in what is now the harbor of New York. Today a bridge which carries his name, the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, is one of the city's most impressive sights.

Ten years later another French explorer, a fisherman from Normandy named Jacques Cartier, discovered the St. Lawrence River. He returned to France and reported that the forests lining the river's shores were full of fur-bearing animals and that its waters were full of fish. The next year he sailed further up the river, reaching the site of the present-day city of Montreal. Cartier failed to find the way to Asia that he was looking for, but he gave France a claim to what would later become Canada.

Claiming that you owned land in the New World was one thing. Actually making it yours was something quite different. Europeans could only do this by establishing settlements of their own people. By the seventeenth century plenty of people in Europe were ready to settle in America. Some hoped to become rich by doing so. Others hoped to find safety from religious or political persecution. In the hundred years after 1600, Europeans set up many colonies in North America for reasons like these.

VIRGINIAN BEGINNINGS



Replicas of the ships that carried the first settlers to Jamestown in 1617.

All through the night the storm blew the three small ships northwards. For hours the frightened sailors struggled with wet ropes and snapping canvas sails. At last, as dawn colored the eastern skies, the storm came to an end. Men dropped to the decks, exhausted. Some fell asleep. Excited shouts awoke them. "Land! Land!" The sailors rushed to the sides of the ships. There, at last, was the land for which they had been searching – Virginia. It was the morning of April 26 in the year 1607.

A few weeks later, on May 20, the sailors tied their ships to trees on the banks of a broad and deep river. They named the river the James, in honor of James I, king of England, the country from which they had set sail five long months before. Just over a hundred men went ashore. On the swampy banks they began cutting down bushes and trees and building rough shelters for themselves. By the end of the year two out of every three of them were dead. But their little group of huts became the first lasting English settlement in America. They named it Jamestown.

The early years of the Jamestown settlement were hard ones. This was partly the fault of the settlers themselves. The site they had chosen was low-lying and malarial. And although their English homeland was many miles away across a dangerous ocean, they failed to grow enough food to feed themselves. They were too busy dreaming of gold.

The settlers had been sent to Jamestown by a group of rich London investors. These investors had formed the Virginia Company. The Company's purpose was to set up colonies along the Atlantic coast of North America, between 34° and 38° north latitude. It was a joint stock company – that is, the investors paid the costs of its expeditions and in return were given the right to divide up any profits it made. The Jamestown settlers were employees of the Virginia Company. The Company's directors hoped that the settlers would find pearls, silver, or some other valuable product in Virginia and so bring them a quick profit on their investment. Most of all, they hoped that the colonists would find gold, as the Spanish conquistadores had done in Mexico.

The colonists eagerly obeyed the Company's orders to search for gold. By doing so they hoped to become rich themselves. There was "no talk, no hope nor work, but dig gold, wash gold, load gold", wrote one of their leaders, Captain John Smith.

And then the colonists began to die—in ones, in twos, finally in dozens. Some died in Amerindian attacks, some of diseases, some of starvation. By April 1608, out of a total of 197 Englishmen who had landed in Virginia only fifty-three were still alive. "Our men were destroyed by cruel diseases," wrote a colonist who survived, "swellings, fluxes, burning fevers and by wars. But most died of famine. There were never Englishmen left in a foreign country in such misery as we were in Virginia."

Jamestown reached its lowest point in the winter of 1609–1610. Of the 500 colonists living in the settlement in October 1609, only sixty were still alive in March 1610. This was "the starving time." Stories reached England about settlers who were so desperate for food that they dug up and ate the body of an Amerindian they had killed during an attack.

Yet new settlers continued to arrive. The Virginia Company gathered homeless children from the streets of London and sent them out to the colony. Then it sent a hundred convicts from London's prisons. Such emigrants were often unwilling to go. The Spanish ambassador in London told of three condemned criminals who were given the choice of being hanged or sent to Virginia. Two agreed to go, but the third chose to hang.

Some Virginia emigrants sailed willingly, however. For many English people these early years of the seventeenth century were a time of hunger and suffering. Incomes were low, but the prices of food and clothing climbed higher every year. Many people were without work. And if the crops failed, they starved. Some English people decided that it was worth risking the possibility of hardships in Virginia to escape from the certainty of them at home. For Virginia had one great attraction that England lacked: plentiful land. This seemed more important than the reports of disease, starvation and cannibalism there. In England, as in Europe generally, the land was owned by the rich. In Virginia a poor man could hope for a farm of his own to feed his family.

The captain and the princess

Captain John Smith was the most able of the original Jamestown settlers. An energetic 27-year-old soldier and explorer, he had already had a life full of action when he landed there in 1607. It was he who organized the first Jamestown colonists and forced them to work. If he had not done that, the infant settlement would probably have collapsed.

When food supplies ran out Smith set off into the forests to buy corn from the Amerindians. On one of these expeditions he was taken prisoner. According to a story that he told later (which not everyone believed), the Amerindians were going to beat his brains out when Pocahontas, the twelve-year-old daughter of the chief, Powhatan, saved his life by shielding his body with her own. Pocahontas went on to play an important part in Virginia's survival, bringing food to the starving settlers. "She, next under God," wrote Smith, "was the instrument to preserve this colony from death, famine and utter confusion."

In 1609 Smith was badly injured in a gunpowder explosion and was sent back to England. Five years later, in 1614, Pocahontas married the tobacco planter John Rolfe. In 1616 she travelled to England with him and was presented at court to King James I. It was there that the portrait you see here was painted. Pocahontas died of smallpox in 1617 while waiting to board a ship to carry her back to Virginia with her newborn son. When the son grew up he returned to Virginia. Many Virginians today claim to be descended from him and so from Pocahontas.

A portrait of Pocahontas, painted during her visit to London.



Brides for sale

Very few women settled in early Virginia, so in 1619 the Virginia Company shipped over a group of ninety young women as wives for its settlers. To obtain a bride the would-be husbands had to pay the Company "120 pounds weight of best tobacco leaf." The price must have seemed reasonable, for within a very short time all the young women were married.

For a number of years after 1611, military governors ran Virginia like a prison camp. They enforced strict rules to make sure that work was done. But it was not discipline that saved Virginia. It was a plant that grew like a weed there: tobacco. Earlier visitors to America, like Sir Walter Raleigh, had brought the first dried leaves of tobacco to England. Its popularity had been growing ever since, for smoking, for taking as snuff, even for brewing into a drink. In Virginia a young settler named John Rolfe discovered how to dry, or "cure," the leaves in a new way, to make them milder. In 1613 Rolfe shipped the first load of Virginia tobacco to England. London merchants paid high prices because of its high quality.

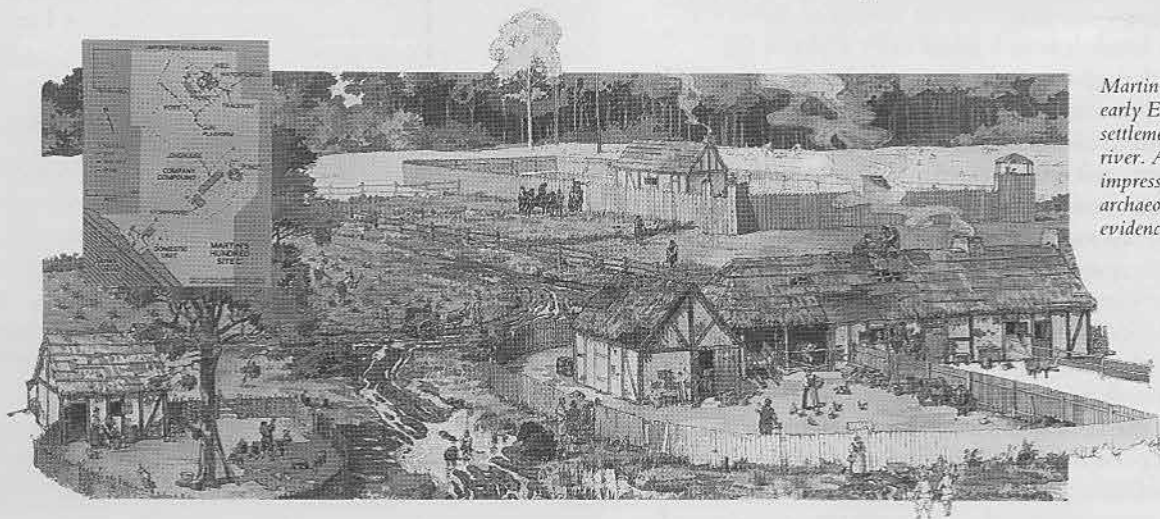
Soon most of the Virginia settlers were busy growing tobacco. They cleared new land along the rivers and ploughed up the streets of Jamestown itself to plant more. They even used it as money. The price of a good horse in Virginia, for example, was sixteen pounds of top quality tobacco. The possibility of becoming rich by growing tobacco brought wealthy



A label from Wills tobacco. Wills was one of the most famous English tobacco companies.

men to Virginia. They obtained large stretches of land and brought workers from England to clear trees and plant tobacco. Soon the houses and barns of their estates, or "plantations," could be seen through the trees along the banks of the James river.

Most of the workers on these early plantations were "indentured servants" from England. They promised to work for an employer for an agreed number of years—about seven was average—in exchange for food and clothes. At the end they became free to work for themselves. Luckier ones were given a small piece of land to start a farm of their own—if they were still alive. Life in Virginia



Martin's Hundred, an early English settlement on the James river. A modern artist's impression, based on archaeological evidence.

continued to be hard. "I have eaten more in a day at home than I have here for a week," wrote a young man named Richard Frethorne in a letter to his parents back in England.

The same was true for many in Virginia. Nor was hunger the only problem. Diseases like malaria and wars against the Amerindians continued to kill hundreds of settlers. Between 1619 and 1621 about 3,560 people left England to settle in Virginia. Before those years were over, 3,000 of them were dead.

But the survivors stayed. In 1619 there was an important change in the way they were governed.

Virginia's affairs had been controlled so far by governors sent over by the Virginia Company. Now the Company allowed a body called the House of Burgesses to be set up. The burgesses were elected representatives from the various small settlements along Virginia's rivers. They met to advise the governor on the laws the colony needed. Though few realized it at the time, the Virginia House of Burgesses was the start of an important tradition in American life—that people should have a say in decisions about matters that concern them.

The House of Burgesses met for the first time in August 1619. In that same month Virginia saw another important beginning. A small Dutch warship anchored at Jamestown. On board were twenty captured black Africans. The ship's captain sold them to the settlers as indentured servants.

The blacks were set to work in the tobacco fields with white indentured servants from England. But there was a very serious difference between their position and that of the whites working beside them. White servants were indentured for a fixed number of years. Their masters might treat them badly, but they knew that one day they would be free. Black servants had no such hope. Their indenture was for life. In fact they were slaves—although it was years before their masters openly admitted the fact.

The Virginia Company never made a profit. By 1624 it had run out of money. The English government put an end to the Company and made itself responsible for the Virginia colonists. There were still very few of them. Fierce Amerindian attacks in 1622 had destroyed several settlements and killed over 350 colonists. Out of nearly 10,000 settlers sent out since 1607, a 1624 census showed only 1,275 survivors.

But their hardships had toughened the survivors. Building a new homeland in the steamy river valleys of Virginia had proved harder and taken longer than anyone had expected. But this first society of English people overseas had put down living roots into the American soil. Other struggles lay ahead, but by 1624 one thing was clear—Virginia would survive.

The lost colony

The Jamestown settlers were not the first English people to visit Virginia. Twenty years earlier the adventurer Sir Walter Raleigh had sent ships to find land in the New World where English people might settle. He named the land they visited Virginia, in honor of Elizabeth, England's unmarried Queen.

In July 1585, 108 English settlers landed on Roanoke Island, off the coast of what is now the state of North Carolina. They built houses and a fort, planted crops and searched—without success—for gold. But they ran out of food and made enemies of the local Amerindian inhabitants. In less than a year they gave up and sailed back to England.

In 1587 Raleigh tried again. His ships landed 118 settlers on Roanoke, including fourteen family groups. The colonists were led by an artist and mapmaker named John White, who had been a member of the 1585 expedition. Among them were White's daughter and her husband. On August 18th the couple became the parents of Virginia Dare, the first English child to be born in America.

In August White returned to England for supplies. Three years passed before he was able to return. When his ships reached Roanoke in August 1590, he found the settlement deserted. There was no sign of what had happened to its people except a word carved on a tree—"Croaton," the home of a friendly Indian chief, fifty miles to the south. Some believe that the Roanoke settlers were carried off by Spanish soldiers from Florida. Others think that they may have decided to go to live with friendly Indians on the mainland. They were never seen, or heard of, again.

PURITAN NEW ENGLAND

“Pilgrims” are people who make a journey for religious reasons. But for Americans the word has a special meaning. To them it means a small group of English men and women who sailed across the Atlantic Ocean in the year 1620. The group’s members came to be called the Pilgrims because they went to America to find religious freedom. Sometimes Americans call them the Pilgrim Fathers. This is because they see them as the most important of the founders of the future United States of America.

The Europe that the Pilgrims left behind them was torn by religious quarrels. For more than a thousand years Roman Catholic Christianity had been the religion of most of its people. By the sixteenth century, however, some Europeans had begun to doubt the teachings of the Catholic Church. They were also growing angry at the wealth and worldly pride of its leaders.

Early in the century a German monk named Martin Luther quarreled with these leaders. He claimed that individual human beings did not need the Pope or the priests of the Catholic Church to enable them to speak to God. A few years later a French lawyer named John Calvin put forward similar ideas. Calvin claimed that each individual was directly and personally responsible to God. Because they protested against the teachings and customs of the Catholic Church, religious reformers like Luther and Calvin were called “Protestants.” Their ideas spread quickly through northern Europe.

Few people believed in religious toleration at this time. In most countries people were expected to have the same religion as their ruler. This was the case in England. In the 1530s the English king, Henry VIII, formed a national church with himself as its head. In the later years of the sixteenth century many English people believed that this Church of England was still too much like the Catholic Church. They disliked the power of its bishops. They disliked its elaborate ceremonies and the rich decorations of its churches. They also questioned many of its teachings. Such people wanted the Church of England to become

more plain and simple, or “pure.” Because of this they were called Puritans. The ideas of John Calvin appealed particularly strongly to them.

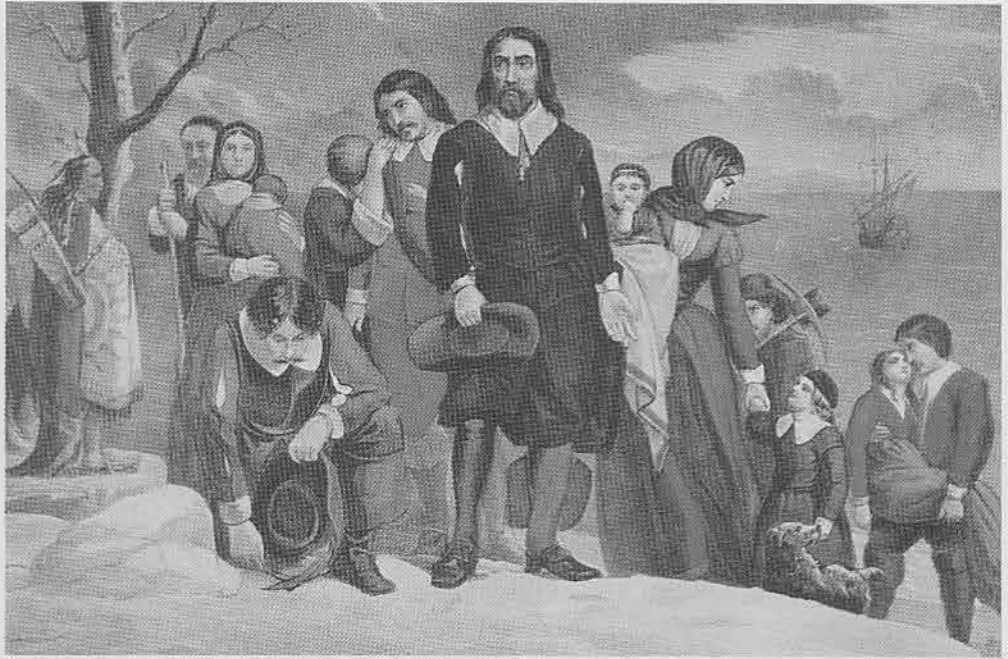
When James I became King of England in 1603 he warned the Puritans that he would drive them from the land if they did not accept his ideas on religion. His bishops began fining the Puritans and putting them in prison. To escape this persecution, a small group of them left England and went to Holland. Holland was the only country in Europe whose government allowed religious freedom at this time.

The people of Holland welcomed the little group of exiles. But the Puritans never felt at home there. After much thought and much prayer they decided to move again. Some of them – the Pilgrims – decided to go to America.

First they returned briefly to England. Here they persuaded the Virginia Company to allow them to settle in the northern part of its American lands. On September 16, 1620, the Pilgrims left the English

The Mayflower Compact

When the Pilgrims arrived off the coast of America they faced many dangers and difficulties. They did not want to put themselves in further danger by quarreling with one another. Before landing at Plymouth, therefore, they wrote out an agreement. In this document they agreed to work together for the good of all. The agreement was signed by all forty-one men on board the *Mayflower*. It became known as the Mayflower Compact. In the Compact the Plymouth settlers agreed to set up a government – a “civil body politic” – to make “just and equal laws” for their new settlement. All of them, Pilgrims and Strangers alike, promised that they would obey these laws. In the difficult years which followed, the Mayflower Compact served the colonists well. It is remembered today as one of the first important documents in the history of democratic government in America.



The Pilgrim Fathers landing in America.

port of Plymouth and headed for America. They were accompanied by a number of other emigrants they called “Strangers.”

The Pilgrims’ ship was an old trading vessel, the *Mayflower*. For years the *Mayflower* had carried wine across the narrow seas between France and England. Now it faced a much more dangerous voyage. For sixty-five days the *Mayflower* battled through the rolling waves of the north Atlantic Ocean. At last, on November 9, 1620, it reached Cape Cod, a sandy hook of land in what is now the state of Massachusetts.

Cape Cod is far to the north of the land granted to the Pilgrims by the Virginia Company. But the Pilgrims did not have enough food and water, and many were sick. They decided to land at the best place they could find. On December 21, 1620, they rowed ashore and set up camp at a place they named Plymouth.

“The season it was winter,” wrote one of their leaders, “and those who know the winters of that country know them to be sharp and violent with cruel and fierce storms.” The Pilgrims’ chances of surviving were not high. The frozen ground and the deep snow made it difficult for them to build houses. They had very little food. Before spring came, half of the little group of a hundred settlers were dead.

But the Pilgrims were determined to succeed. The fifty survivors built better houses. They learned how to fish and hunt. Friendly Amerindians gave them seed corn and showed them how to plant it. It was not the end of their hardships, but when a ship arrived in Plymouth in 1622 and offered to take passengers back to England, not one of the Pilgrims accepted.

Other English Puritans followed the Pilgrims to America. Ten years later a much larger group of almost a thousand colonists settled nearby in what became the Boston area. These people left England to escape the rule of a new king, Charles I. Charles was even less tolerant than his father James had been of people who disagreed with his policies in religion and government.

The Boston settlement prospered from the start. Its population grew quickly as more and more Puritans left England to escape persecution. Many years later, in 1691, it combined with the Plymouth colony under the name of Massachusetts.

The ideas of the Massachusetts Puritans had a lasting influence on American society. One of their first leaders, John Winthrop, said that they should build an ideal community for the rest of mankind to learn from. “We shall be like a city on a hill,” said

Winthrop. "The eyes of all people are upon us." To this day many Americans continue to see their country in this way, as a model for other nations to copy.

The Puritans of Massachusetts believed that governments had a duty to make people obey God's will. They passed laws to force people to attend church and laws to punish drunks and adulterers. Even men who let their hair grow long could be in trouble.

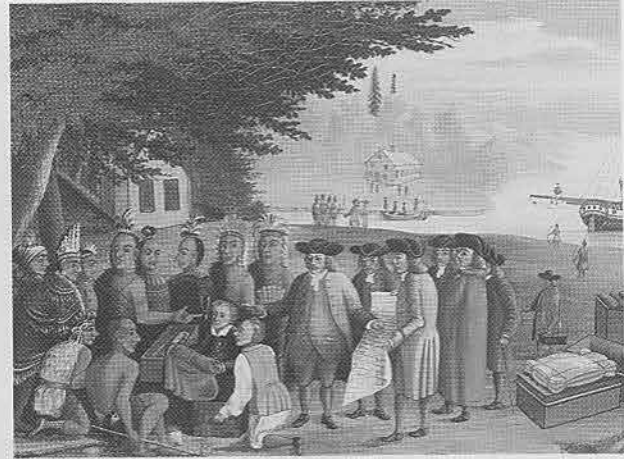
Roger Williams, a Puritan minister in a settlement called Salem, believed that it was wrong to run the affairs of Massachusetts in this way. He objected particularly to the fact that the same men controlled both the church and the government. Williams believed that church and state should be separate and that neither should interfere with the other.

Williams' repeated criticisms made the Massachusetts leaders angry. In 1535 they sent men to arrest him. But Williams escaped and went south, where he was joined by other discontented people from Massachusetts. On the shores of Narragansett Bay Williams and his followers set up a new colony called Rhode Island. Rhode Island promised its citizens complete religious freedom and separation of church and state. To this day these ideas are still very important to Americans.

The leaders of Massachusetts could not forgive the people of Rhode Island for thinking so differently from themselves. They called the breakaway colony "the land of the opposite-minded."



Plymouth Puritans going to church.



William Penn signing a treaty with the Amerindians.

By the end of the seventeenth century a string of English colonies stretched along the east coast of North America. More or less in the middle was Pennsylvania. This was founded in 1681 by William Penn. Under a charter from the English king, Charles II, Penn was the proprietor, or owner, of Pennsylvania.

Penn belonged to a religious group, the Society of Friends, commonly called Quakers. Quakers refused to swear oaths or to take part in wars. These customs had helped to make them very unpopular with English governments. When Penn promised his fellow Quakers that in Pennsylvania they would be free to follow their own ways, many of them emigrated there.

Penn's promise of religious freedom, together with his reputation for dealing fairly with people, brought settlers from other European countries to Pennsylvania. From Ireland came settlers who made new farms in the western forests of the colony. Many Germans came also. Most were members of small religious groups who had left Germany to escape persecution. They were known as the Pennsylvania Dutch. This was because English people at this time called most north Europeans "Dutch."

New York had previously been called New Amsterdam. It had first been settled in 1626. In 1664 the English captured it from the Dutch and re-named it New York. A few years later, in 1670, the English founded the new colonies of North and South Carolina. The last English colony to be founded in North America was Georgia, settled in 1733.

Thanksgiving

Every year on the fourth Thursday in November Americans celebrate a holiday called Thanksgiving. The first people to celebrate this day were the Pilgrims. In November, 1621, they sat down to eat together and to give thanks to God for enabling them to survive the hardships of their first year in America.

The first Thanksgiving.



The Pilgrims were joined at their feast by local Amerindians. The Wampanoag and Pequamid people of the nearby forests had shared corn with the Pilgrims and shown them the best places to catch fish. Later the Amerindians had given seed corn to the English settlers and shown them how to plant crops that would grow well in the American soil. Without them there would have been no Thanksgiving.

Minuit buys Manhattan

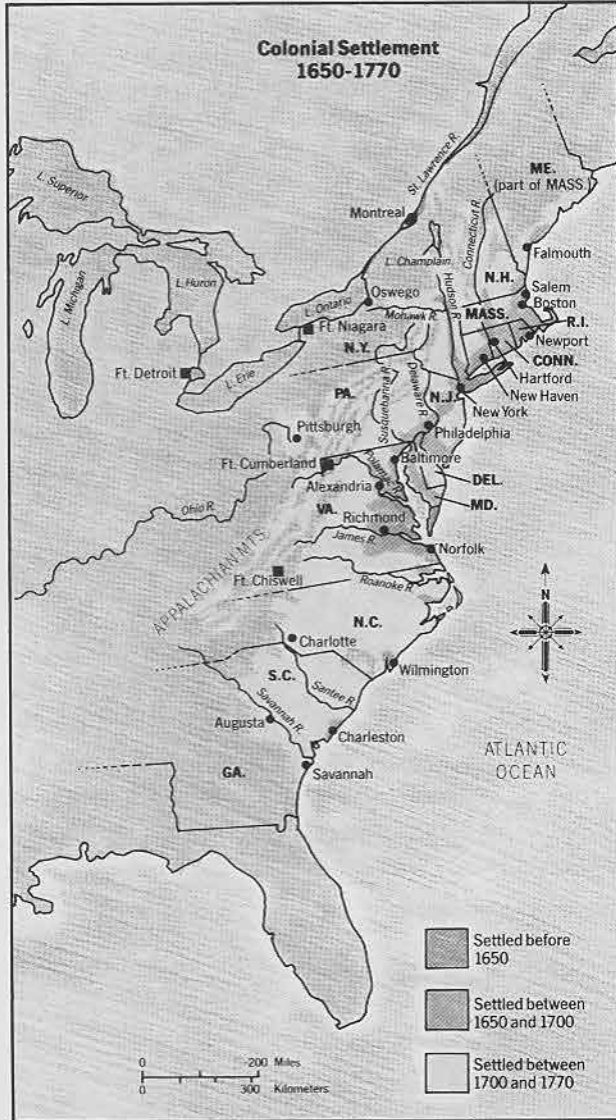
In the 1620s settlers from Holland founded a colony they called New Netherlands along the banks of the Hudson River. At the mouth of the Hudson lies Manhattan Island, the present site of New York City. An Amerindian people called the Shinnecock used the island for hunting and fishing, although they did not live on it.

In 1626 Peter Minuit, the first Dutch governor of the New Netherlands, "bought" Manhattan from the Shinnecock. He paid them about twenty-four dollars' worth of cloth, beads and other trade

goods. Like all Amerindians, the Shinnecock believed that land belonged to all men. They thought that what they were selling to the Dutch was the right to share Manhattan with themselves. But the Dutch, like other Europeans, believed that buying land made it theirs alone.

These different beliefs about land ownership were to be a major cause of conflict between Europeans and Amerindians for many years to come. And the bargain price that Peter Minuit paid for Manhattan Island became part of American folklore.

COLONIAL LIFE IN AMERICA



The settlement of eastern North America by the English.

Abbreviations:

ME.	Maine	N.J.	New Jersey
N.H.	New Hampshire	DEL.	Delaware
MASS.	Massachusetts	MD.	Maryland
R.I.	Rhode Island	VA.	Virginia
N.Y.	New York	N.C.	North Carolina
CONN.	Connecticut	S.C.	South Carolina
PA.	Pennsylvania	GA.	Georgia

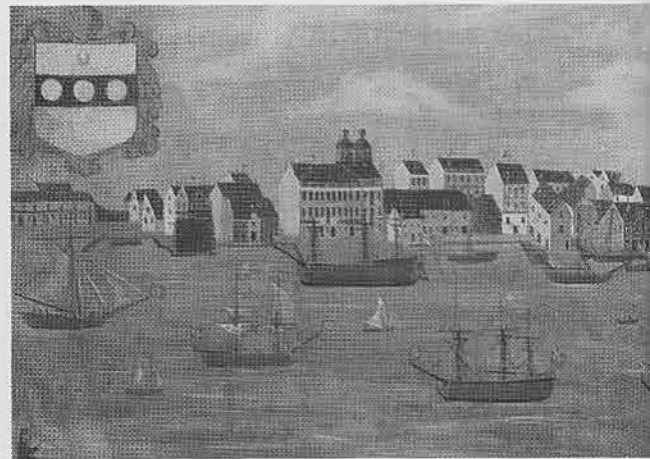
By the year 1733 the English owned thirteen separate colonies along the Atlantic coast of North America. The colonies stretched from New Hampshire in the north to Georgia in the south. Most people divided them into three main groups. Each group had its own way of life and character.

In the far north was the New England group, centered on Massachusetts. Since the time of the Pilgrims the people of New England had spread inland and along the coast. Most were small farmers or craftsmen, working the stony soil and governing themselves in small towns and villages.

Other New Englanders depended on the sea for a living. They felled the trees of the region's forests to build ships. In these they sailed to catch cod or to trade with England and the West Indies. Boston and other coastal towns grew into busy ports. Their prosperity depended on trade.

The nearest colonies to the south of New England were called the Middle Colonies. The biggest were New York and Pennsylvania. As in New England, most of their people lived by farming. But in the cities of New York and Philadelphia there were growing numbers of craftsmen and merchants. Philadelphia was the capital of Pennsylvania. By 1770 it was the largest city in America, with 28,000 inhabitants.

Philadelphia in 1720, a contemporary painting by Peter Cooper.



Cities and trade

In 1760 most Americans were farmers. But important towns had grown up whose people earned their living by trade and manufacturing. Philadelphia, with its 28,000 inhabitants, was the largest. An English visitor marveled at the speed with which it had grown. "It is not an hundred years since the first tree was cut where the city now stands," he wrote, "and now it has more than three thousand six hundred houses."

The size of Philadelphia was not the only thing that impressed visitors. Long before most English cities, its streets were paved with brick and street lamps were lit every night. The only exception to this was when the moon was shining, for the citizens of Philadelphia did not believe in wasting money!

The next biggest cities after Philadelphia were New York and Boston, with about 25,000 people each. All three towns owed much of their prosperity to the profits of the transatlantic trade that they carried on with England. Their ships exported furs, timber, tobacco, and cotton, and brought back fashionable clothes, fine furniture, and other manufactured goods. Their merchants also traded with one another.

This inter-American trade helped to produce a feeling between the cities that they all belonged to the same American nation.

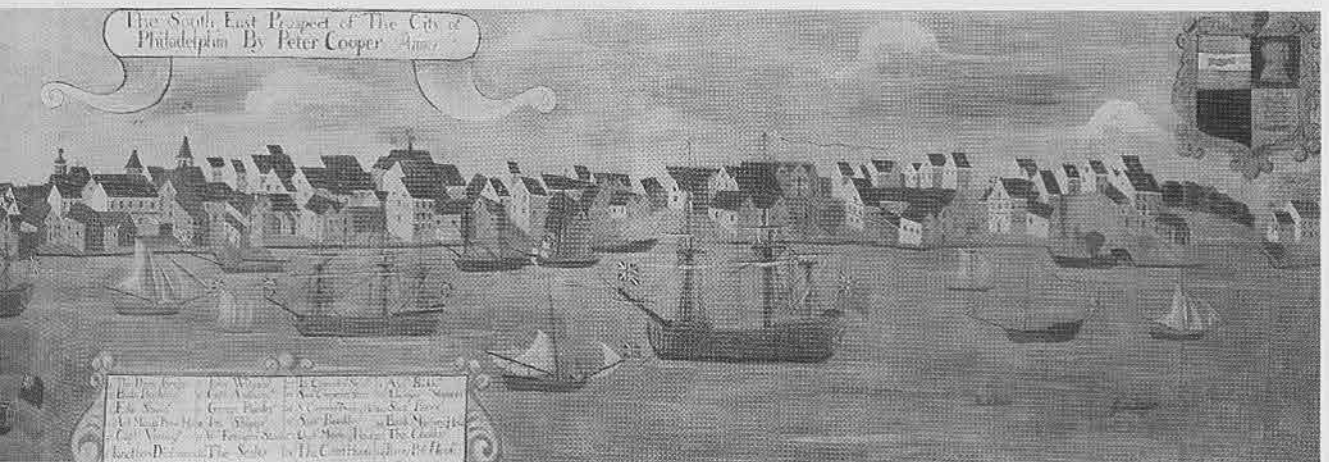
The people of the Middle Colonies were usually more tolerant of religious and other differences than the New Englanders. Many of them also had German, Dutch or Swedish ancestors rather than English ones.

The Southern Colonies of Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia formed the third group. In their hot and fertile river valleys wealthy landowners farmed large plantations. They lived in fine houses, with wide, cool verandahs from which they could look out over their fields of tobacco or cotton. Most of the work in the fields was done by black slaves. Slavery was rare in the other American colonies. But the prosperity of the plantation-owning southerners was already beginning to depend upon it.

The houses of the southern plantation owners had expensive furniture, much of it imported from Europe. Close by stood groups of smaller, more simple buildings—stables, washhouses, blacksmiths' shops and the little huts in which the black slaves lived. And almost always a river flowed nearby, with a wharf where sea-going ships could be loaded to carry the plantation's crops to England.

In all three groups of colonies most people still lived less than fifty miles from the coast. This was called "the tidewater" period of settlement. Those people furthest inland had traveled up tidal rivers like the James and the Hudson, clearing the trees and setting up farms along their banks.

During the fifty years after 1733 settlers moved deeper into the continent. They traveled west into



central Pennsylvania, cutting down forests of oak trees to make hilly farms. They spread westward along the river valleys in Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia. They moved north along the fertile valley of the Mohawk River of New York.

Making a new settlement always began in the same way. The settlers cleared the land of trees, then cut the trees into logs and planks. They used these to build a house and a barn. They then ploughed between the tree stumps, sowed their seeds, and four months later harvested the crops of corn and wheat. If their soil was fertile the settlers lived well. But if the soil was rocky, or poor in plant foods, life could be hard and disappointing. Settlers with poor soil often left their farms and moved westward, to try again on more fertile land. As they traveled inland they passed fewer and fewer farms and villages. At last there were none at all. This area, where European settlement came to an end and the forest homelands of the Amerindians began, was called the frontier.

Fresh waves of settlers pushed the frontier steadily westwards in their search for fertile soil. They would often pass by land that seemed unsuitable for farming. Because of this, frontier farms and villages were often separated by miles of unsettled land. A family might be a day's journey from its nearest neighbors. For such reasons the people of frontier communities had to rely upon themselves for almost everything they needed. They grew their own food and built their own houses. They made the clothing they wore and the tools they used. They developed their own kinds of music, entertainment, art and forms of religious worship.

A special spirit, or attitude, grew out of this frontier way of life. People needed to be tough, independent and self-reliant. Yet they also needed to work together, helping each other with such tasks as clearing land and building houses and barns. The combination of these two ideas – a strong belief that individuals had to help themselves and a need for them to cooperate with one another – strengthened the feeling that people were equal and that nobody should have special rights and privileges.

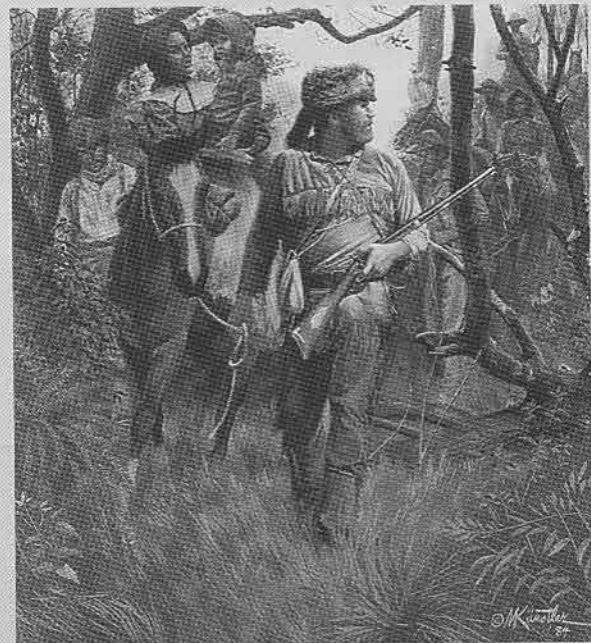
The frontier way of life helped democratic ideas to flourish in America. Today's Americans like to think that many of the best values and attitudes of the modern United States can be traced back to the frontier experiences of their pioneer ancestors.

Daniel Boone and the Wilderness Road

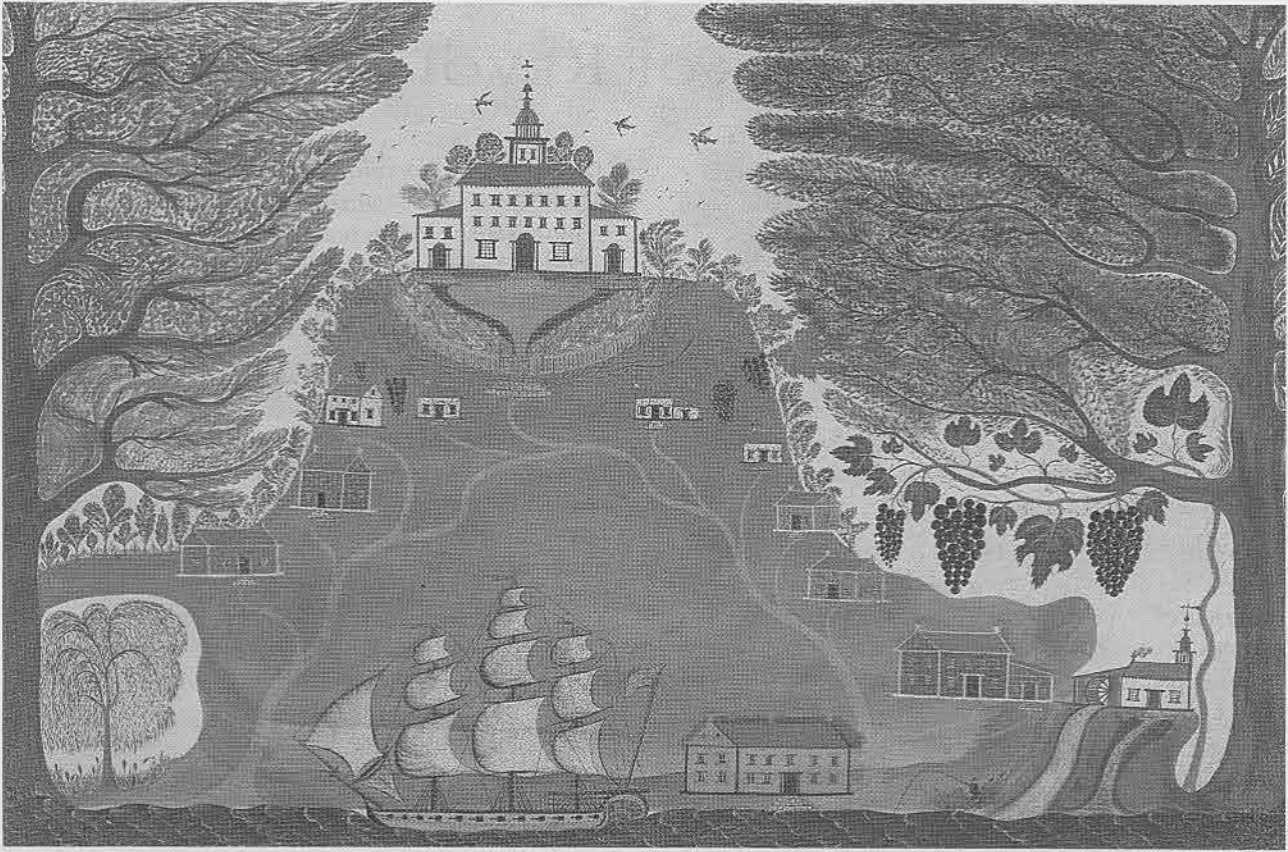
In the 1760s land-hungry American settlers moving westwards were stopped by a major obstacle, the Appalachian Mountains. This thickly forested mountain range runs roughly parallel to the Atlantic coast of North America and stretches for hundreds of miles.

When settlers reached the foothills of the Appalachians they found waterfalls and rapids blocking the rivers they had been following westwards. In 1775 a hunter and explorer named Daniel Boone led a party of settlers into the mountains. Boone is said to have claimed that he had been "ordained by God to settle the wilderness." With a party of thirty axmen he cut a track called the Wilderness Road through the forested Cumberland Gap, a natural pass in the Appalachians.

Beyond the Cumberland Gap lay rich, rolling grasslands. In the years which followed, Boone's Wilderness Road enabled thousands of settlers to move with horses, wagons, and cattle into these fertile lands. They now make up the American states of Kentucky and Tennessee.



Daniel Boone escorting settlers on the Wilderness Road.



A plantation port in Chesapeake Bay.

Governors and assemblies

All the English colonies in America shared a tradition of representative government. This means that in all of them people had a say in how they were governed. Each colony had its own government. At the head of this government was a governor, chosen in most cases by the English king. To rule effectively, these governors depended upon the cooperation of assemblies elected by the colonists.

In most of the colonies all white males who owned some land had the right to vote. Since so many colonists owned land, this meant that far more people had the vote in America than in England itself—or in any other European country at this time.