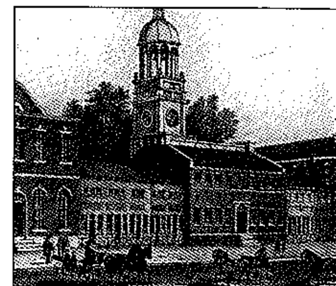
CHAPTER 3

Growth, Slavery, and Conflict

Colonial America, 1710–1763



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> "In 1740, I don't remember [seeing] such a thing as a [Turkish] carpet in the country.... Now nothing are so common as [Turkish] or [English] Carpets, the whole furniture of the Roomes Elegant & every appearance of opulence."
>
> JOHN WAYLES, future father-in-law of Thomas Jefferson, 1766

Life in the seventeenth-century American colonies, even for the wealthiest, was crude and primitive. Beginning in the eighteenth century, a more cosmopolitan and refined culture began to emerge. Prosperous colonists sought out the latest British and European consumer goods, such as finely woven Turkish or English carpets, tea sets, and imported pattern books with English architectural and furniture styles.

Captain Archibald Macpheadris, a fur trader living in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, built an elegant new home in 1716, complete with a series of beautifully executed wall murals, signifying his wealth and refinement. One of the most striking murals depicted two Mohawk Indian chiefs. The unknown muralist copied these images from an engraving of a group of Indians who traveled to London to meet with Queen Anne. The engraver and the muralist included the tomahawk and war club wielded by the two leaders, yet the image of the Indians also reflected the conventions of European painting: The position of the "Indian King's" hands resembled a common aristocratic pose found in English portraits from this period. The engraving of the "Indian Kings" that inspired Macpheadris's murals was part of the wide array of goods that traveled across the Atlantic.

Books, newspapers, and letters all were part of this commerce, and they facilitated a lively exchange of ideas on a wide array of subjects, including architecture, fashion, politics, religion, science, and philosophy. One highly influential set of ideas was associated with the Enlightenment and its ideals of reason and social progress. These ideas fostered new social experiments, such as the founding of the colony of Georgia.

The English evangelical minister George Whitefield traveled to the colonies, crisscrossing them from New Hampshire to Georgia. His tour helped spread the ideas of the religious revival movement known as the Great Awakening. Enlightenment ideals of liberty, human dignity, and progress and new religious ideas even led some Americans to begin questioning the institution of slavery, which had become vital to the prosperity of the colonial economy. The stark contrast between the wealthy planters and wretchedly housed slaves was not the only divide in American life. As the overall wealth of the colonies increased, so did the disparity between the wealthy and the poor.

Land itself became scarce by the mid-eighteenth century. Expansion westward was hampered by the Appalachian Mountains, and the rich lands of what is now America's Midwest were controlled by the French and a host of different Indian tribes. Ultimately the balance of power in North America was decided by the French and Indian War (1755–1763).

What do the Macphaedris House murals tell us about colonial culture?

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Culture and Society in the Eighteenth Century

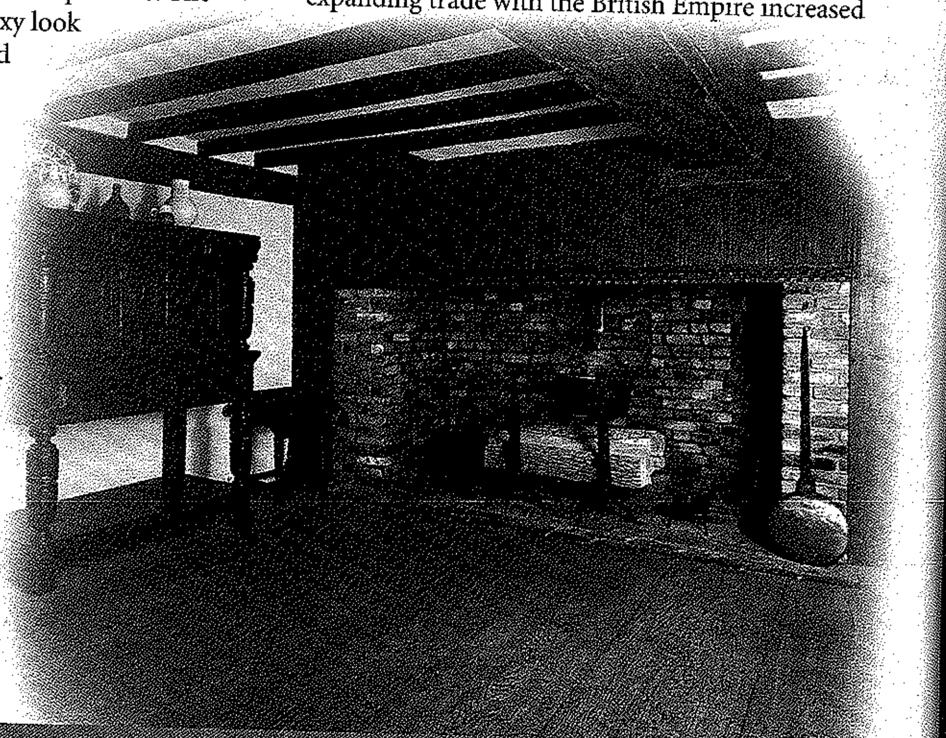
As trade expanded between the colonies and Britain, colonists strove to emulate the culture and sophistication of the mother country. New and grander homes, filled with the latest European-style furnishings, testified to the growing sophistication of the colonies. Yet while the colonies were striving to become more British, they were also developing their own distinctly American political culture and institutions. A native-born elite emerged, an American gentry class whose wealth, confidence, and education inspired them to become leaders in the various colonial assemblies. A distinctive American style of politics had begun to take shape.

The Refinement of America

At the end of the seventeenth century, even the homes of the most prosperous families in colonial America had few imported luxury goods. The sparse furnishing of the Hart Room (**3.1**), now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, capture the primitive nature of late seventeenth-century American homes. Thomas Hart, a landowner in Ipswich, Massachusetts, built his house in 1639 and furnished it in the ensuing decades. This parlor room, the best room in the house, usually served as both a bedroom and a communal living space. Information obtained from probates, a list of goods assembled as part of a will, suggests that homeowners furnished even the best parlor rooms sparsely, with simple tables and cupboards. The furniture's simplicity and boxy look reflected prevailing styles and the scarcity of skilled craftsmen in the colonies at the time. The walls were generally whitewashed, with no ornamentation; the post and beams used to support the walls and the roof were clearly visible.

Colonial culture began to change with the expansion of commerce at the start of the eighteenth century. America became more fully integrated into the Atlantic economy, a huge triangle that stretched from Scotland to Africa to the interior of the British mainland colonies (**3.2**). Trade in the Atlantic world involved a staggering array of goods. Scottish merchants purchased Virginia tobacco, which was sold throughout Europe. Another side of the triangle tied New England merchants to West Indian sugar planters. West Indian sugar was distilled into rum by New Englanders. Some of this alcohol was traded to Indians in the lucrative beaver trade in upstate New York. These beaver furs were often used in hats and sometimes ended up in London or on the European continent.

By the early decades of the eighteenth century, expanding trade with the British Empire increased



3.1 The Hart Room, Metropolitan Museum of Art
The simple whitewashed walls and exposed beams in this prosperous seventeenth-century room and the simple boxy style of its furniture were typical of the lack of ornamentation in this era. [*Source:* Room from the Hart House, Ipswich, Massachusetts, American, 17th Century. Oak beams, pine panels and white plaster walls. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Munsey Fund, 1936 (36.127). Photograph ©1995 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.]

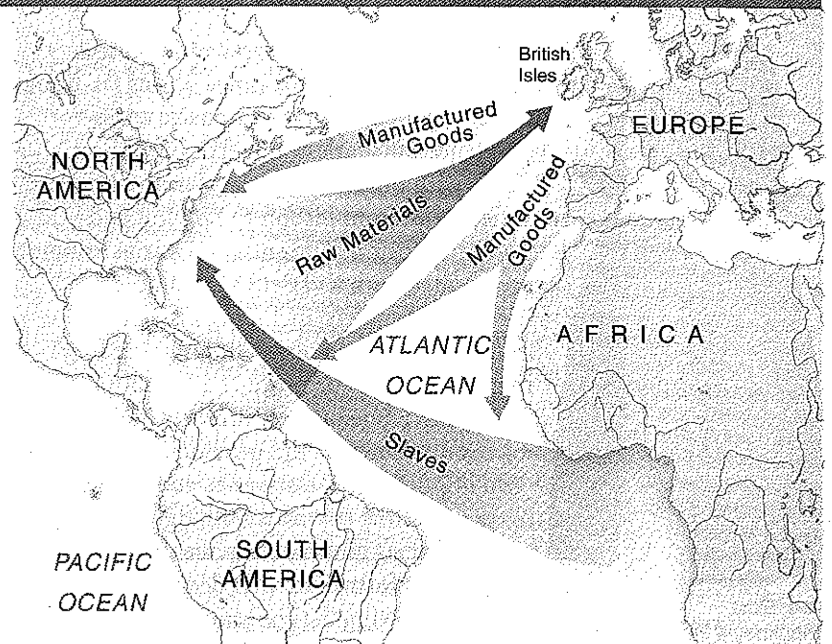
Define Anglicization and give an example of an aspect of colonial life transformed by this process?

the number of wealthy colonists and brought a flood of new luxury goods into affluent American homes. Acquiring such goods allowed individuals and families to demonstrate that they were not simple provincials; they were part of a wider cosmopolitan world. Rather than eat with simple earthenware ceramics, as their forebears had, the wealthiest Americans now aspired to dine on fine porcelain imported from England or Holland. Refined taste was proof of gentility, a term that became synonymous with the attributes associated with wealth and sophistication. American society underwent a process of **Anglicization** as colonists emulated English society, including its tastes in furniture, foods, clothing, and customs.

Nothing better captured the rise of gentility and the increasing Anglicization of colonial America than the rage for imported tea. As the consumption of tea increased dramatically between the end of the seventeenth century and the dawn of the eighteenth, the rituals of serving tea became more refined and complicated. Serving tea to one's guests became an essential ritual. Although tea drinking started as a custom among the wealthy, it gradually spread to all levels of American society. By the middle of the eighteenth century, tea drinking had evolved from a luxury to a necessity, so much so that inmates in the Philadelphia poorhouse demanded that their meager rations include tea.

The Verplank Room (**3.3**) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art contains furniture from the New York City townhouse of Samuel Verplank and the country house of Cadwallader Colden Jr. in Orange, New York. In contrast to the simple whitewashed walls of the seventeenth-century Hart Room, the Verplank Room has painted wood paneling. The elegant card table in the Verplank Room is one of many specialized pieces of furniture likely to have adorned a prosperous home in the middle of the eighteenth century. The Verplanks, Coldens, and other genteel families would each have owned an imported china set and tea table as well.

Changes in furnishing provide insights into deeper changes in colonial society. The rising popularity of writing desks and drop-leaf bookcases with writing surfaces (see detail in 3.3) reflected the expansion of trade networks in the British Empire. Merchants needed to keep better track of a variety of written documents as they broadened the range of



3.2 The Triangle Trade The Atlantic economy can be visualized as a triangle. Goods from Europe were sold or traded in America or Africa. Raw materials from the Americas were sold in Europe. European goods were sold or traded for African slaves who were then shipped to the Americas.

3.3 The Verplank Room, Metropolitan Museum of Art The highly specialized furniture reflected the growing wealth of many colonists and the Anglicization of colonial culture. In the inset image of a secretary bookcase, notice the drop-leaf writing surface and cubbyholes that made this piece of furniture well adapted to the needs of merchants. [*Sources:* Woodwork of a Room from the Colden House, Coldenham, New York, American, ca. 1767, Pine, 252" × 213" × 113" (640.1 × 541 × 287 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, The Sylmaris Collection, Gift of George Coe Graves, by exchange, 1940 (40.127). Photograph ©1995 The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (Detail) Detail, Desk and Bookcase, English, 1700–1720; Oak, pine, 81 1/8 × 43 7/8 × 23 1/2 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of James DeLancey Verplanck and John Bayard Rodgers Verplanck, 1929 [39.184.1a,b]. Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art]

Why did new pieces of furniture like drop-leaf bookcases become popular in the eighteenth century?

3.4 Eliza Pinckney's Dress Silk produced on Pinckney's plantation was sent to England so that it could be spun into fine fabric, dyed, and sewn into a dress that reflected the latest London fashions.

their correspondence on business and political matters. An insight into the range of this far-flung commerce comes from the extensive correspondence of Charleston merchant Robert Pringle with business associates throughout the Atlantic world, from Lisbon to London and Barbados to Boston. The entrepreneurial Pringle experimented with a variety of desirable agricultural imports, including pistachios, Seville oranges, and olives, hoping that they might eventually be produced in the Carolinas. None of these imports took hold, but South Carolina did provide Europe with two important products, rice and indigo.

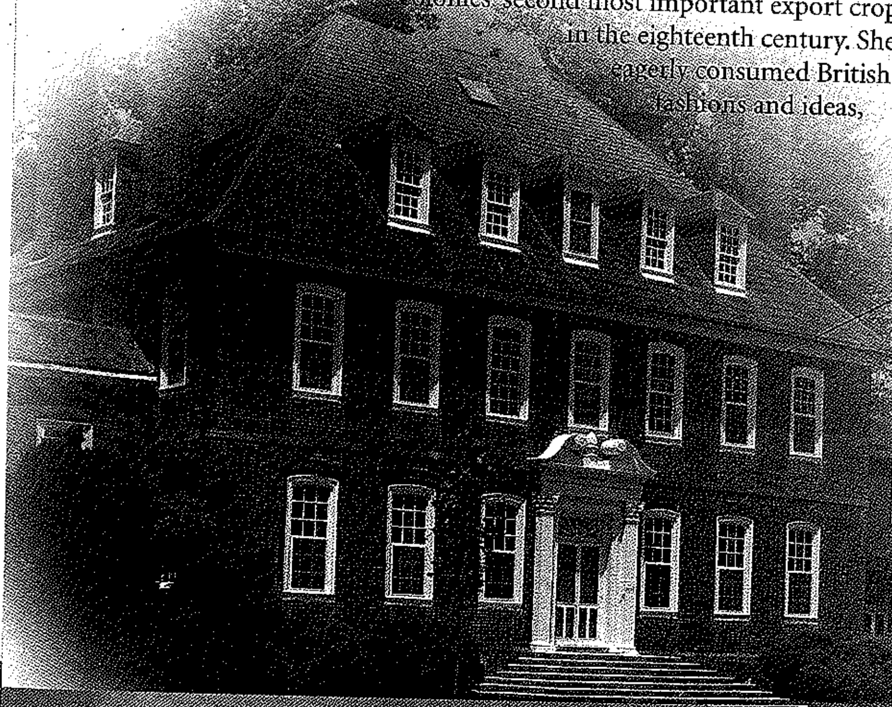
For wealthy colonists nothing was more effective at communicating one's riches and gentility than a formal portrait done in the latest English style. Following the conventions of European portraits, men and women struck standard aristocratic poses; elegant ladies dressed in flowing gowns, mimicking the style of their monarch, Queen Anne. Men and even young boys were painted wearing elegant outfits that reflected their wealth, status, and power. The portrait of the young Henry Darnall III, one of the earliest done in the American South, testifies to the growing wealth and refinement of the colonial elite (see *Images as History: A Portrait of Colonial Aspirations*).

Eliza Lucas Pinckney, an affluent South Carolina woman, exemplified the new ideal of refined female gentility. Born into a prosperous family of rice planters, Eliza introduced the profitable dye, indigo, into South Carolina (1738–1744), which became the colonies' second most important export crop in the eighteenth century. She eagerly consumed British fashions and ideas, and aspired to create a persona and a lifestyle that a visitor from London would have easily recognized. She studied French, was conversant in the ideas of the English philosopher John Locke, and actively participated in the management of her family's plantation. Her social life was equally busy. She regularly attended teas, dances, and concerts. Eliza's beautiful gold silk dress (**3.4**) was woven from silk produced on her own plantation. After the silk was harvested, she sent it to England to be dyed and woven into a fabric suitable for a gown that might be worn to the most elegant party in either London or Charleston.

For women the new customs of gentility were a mixed blessing. A wealthy woman might have servants or slaves to help her entertain in a suitable style, but it took additional time and effort to supervise these activities. Most women did not enjoy the luxury of additional help and had to handle these new responsibilities themselves.

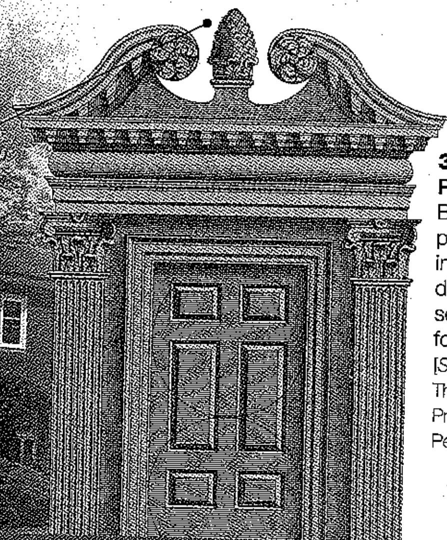
More English, Yet More American

The exteriors of American homes also underwent a process of Anglicization. English-style manor houses such as William Byrd's home, Westover (1730–1734) (**3.5**), borrowed ideas from English pattern books (architectural guidebooks of the latest styles) (**3.6**). The main entrance of this elegant red brick mansion took guests through an impressive doorway that Byrd imported from England. The model for the door and its frame came from a London design. The classical columns and the swan-shaped broken pediment at the top of the doorframe includes a carved pineapple. If one thing best represented the ideal of refinement in the eighteenth century, it was the rage for pineapples. The exotic West Indian fruit created a sensation



3.5 Westover Plantation The doorway of Byrd's mansion was crafted in England and included the latest architectural details. Notice the carved pineapple above the door.

How does Westover Plantation illustrate the growing wealth of the colonies?



3.6 English Pattern Book Byrd used this picture from an influential London design book when selecting a style for his doorway. [*Source:* Courtesy, The Winterthur Library: Printed Book and Periodical Collection]

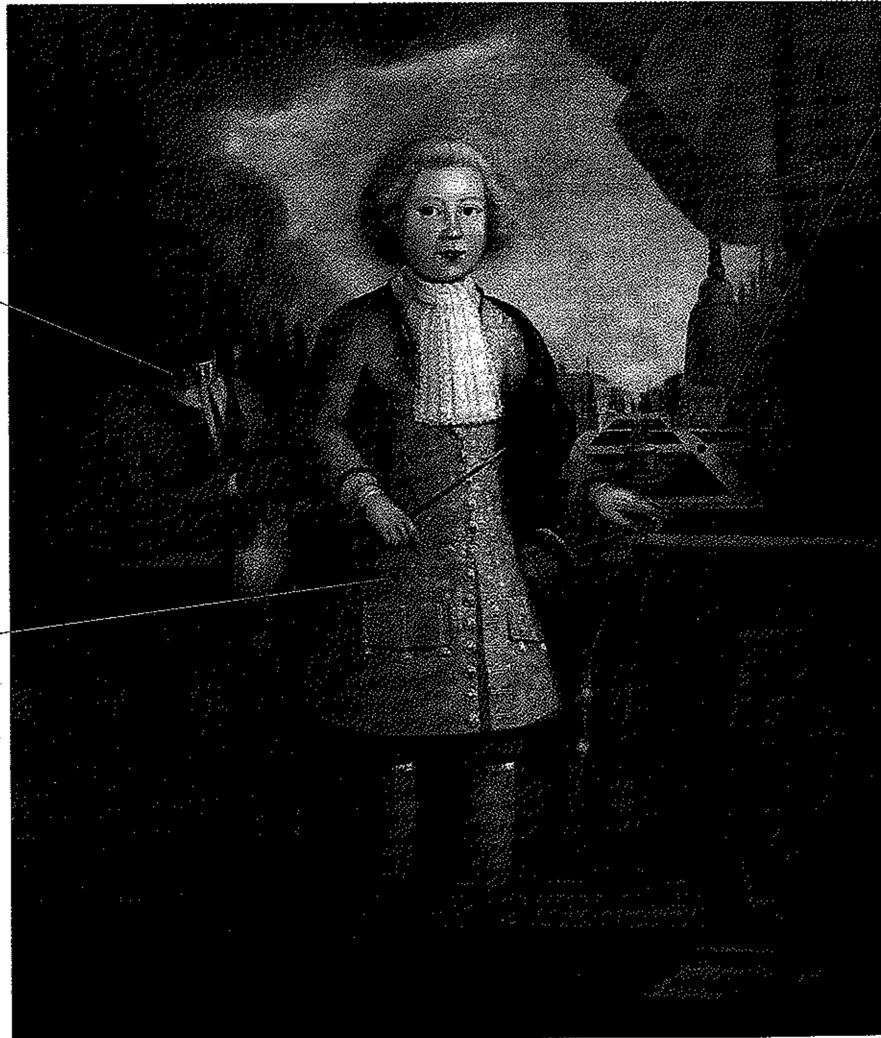
Images as History

A PORTRAIT OF COLONIAL ASPIRATIONS

Justus Engelhardt Kühn's portrait of the young Henry Darnall III (1710) reveals how the aspirations of colonists continued to exceed the bounds of the possible. Although the Darnalls lived a life of luxury compared with most colonists, surrounding themselves with goods that earlier generations of colonists would have envied, they did not quite live up to the standards of the typical British aristocrat.

The scene behind Darnall is pure fantasy. An elegant stone balustrade overlooking an elaborate formal garden projects an image of wealth, refinement, and power. Yet neither the fancy garden nor the stone balcony would have existed anywhere in the colonies in the first decade of the eighteenth century. Kühn's decision to include these imaginary elements in the background reflected the aspirations rather than the realities of life in the colonies. The picture symbolized the wealth, power, and gentility that the Darnalls sought to achieve, not their actual condition.

The work is also the first known painting of an African American in the colonies. Darnall's slave wears a silver collar around his neck, a symbol of his inferior status. Although much younger, Darnall towers over his slave.



The imaginary garden in the background represents the Darnalls' desires, but this level of grandeur was not yet attainable in the colonies.

The slave, silver shackle around his neck, is situated below his master and looks up at him adoringly. The image of the docile slave clearly reflected the slave owner's point of view, not the slave's.

Darnall's elegant suit testifies to his family's wealth and cosmopolitan taste.

***Henry Darnall III as a Child* by Justus Engelhardt Kühn**

How is slavery represented in this portrait?

among the wealthy on both sides of the Atlantic, as both a culinary delicacy and as a symbol of affluent hospitality. The pineapple soon became a common architectural motif in the mansions of wealthy Americans.

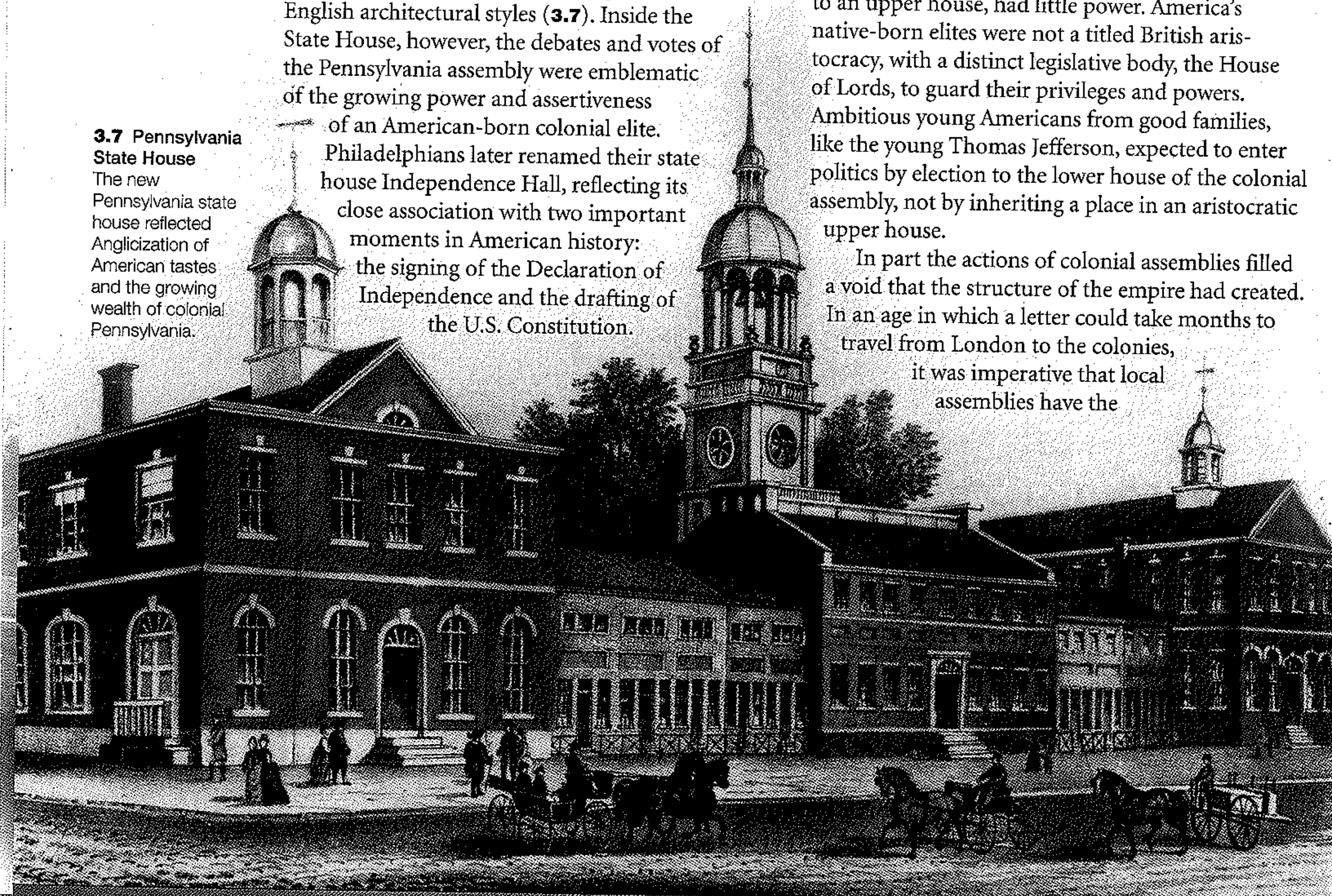
Anglicization transformed churches and public architecture as well. Some of the grandest buildings erected in the colonies during the first half of the eighteenth century were public structures such as the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia, where Pennsylvania's assembly met. Constructed between 1732 and 1756, the State House's two-and-half-story red brick structure dominated the Philadelphia skyline. Built in the Palladian style (also known as Georgian, in honor of the British monarch, King George I), the Pennsylvania State House captured two seemingly opposing trends in the evolution of American society in the eighteenth century. On the outside its architecture testified to the powerful influence of Anglicization on American society. With its beautiful windows and impressive red brick exterior, the State House visibly symbolized the colonists' esteem for and knowledge of the latest English architectural styles (**3.7**). Inside the State House, however, the debates and votes of the Pennsylvania assembly were emblematic of the growing power and assertiveness of an American-born colonial elite. Philadelphians later renamed their state house Independence Hall, reflecting its close association with two important moments in American history: the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the drafting of the U.S. Constitution.

Strong Assemblies and Weak Governors

The impressive Pennsylvania State House was a potent visual reminder of the power of the colonial assembly. The assemblies had become the preeminent political institutions in the colonies. American ideas about legislative power drew support from seventeenth-century English Whig ideas that triumphed during England's Glorious Revolution (1688) (see Chapter 2).

Several developments in American colonial history helped reinforce the growth of legislative power. Although voting in America remained restricted to adult white male land holders, the percentage of such individuals in the colonies was larger than it was in Britain. The larger size of the voting population meant that a higher percentage of Americans were politically active than Britons. Additionally none of the colonies had anything like an upper house comparable to Parliament's House of Lords. The governors' councils, the closest thing to an upper house, had little power. America's native-born elites were not a titled British aristocracy, with a distinct legislative body, the House of Lords, to guard their privileges and powers. Ambitious young Americans from good families, like the young Thomas Jefferson, expected to enter politics by election to the lower house of the colonial assembly, not by inheriting a place in an aristocratic upper house.

In part the actions of colonial assemblies filled a void that the structure of the empire had created. In an age in which a letter could take months to travel from London to the colonies, it was imperative that local assemblies have the



3.7 Pennsylvania State House The new Pennsylvania state house reflected Anglicization of American tastes and the growing wealth of colonial Pennsylvania.

How did the Pennsylvania State House reflect the Anglicization of the colonies?

authority to deal with a host of governmental responsibilities, from organizing the militia to providing for the poor. Although colonists had gained the right to legislate on local matters, they were also part of the larger British Empire. Most colonies had agents who represented their interests in London and lobbied Parliament. Apart from these agents the colonies had no actual representation in Parliament: No member of Parliament was elected from the colonies or watched over their interests. In this regard the American colonies were no worse off than were other British colonies, including Barbados and Jamaica. Even within Britain newer cities such as Manchester and Birmingham had no representation in Parliament, and at least one town, Dunwich, continued to send two members to Parliament even though the town had literally crumbled into the North Sea. To cast their votes "legal residents" of Dunwich had to row out to the location of the former town hall, which was submerged.

The underlying theory of representation that justified this situation was **virtual representation.** According to traditional Whig political theory, members of Parliament were expected to represent the whole nation, not any particular locality. Rather than speak for any local interest, representatives were supposed to act in the larger public good. All Britons, then, including the colonists, had virtual representation in Parliament, even if they had no actual representatives to guard their interests. As long as Parliament did not meddle much in colonial affairs, engaging in a policy of "salutary neglect," this theory of virtual representation caused few problems. When Parliament began to take a more active role in managing the empire and collecting greater revenues in the 1760s, the colonial theory of *actual* representation and the traditional British theory of *virtual* representation would come into direct conflict.

Royal governors repeatedly complained that the colonial assemblies had exercised authority that did not belong to them and frustrated their plans at every turn. The royal governors' dependence on the assembly for their salaries weakened their position with regard to the legislature. By controlling the power of the purse, colonial assemblies were able to frustrate the plans of the most ambitious royal governors: If they wished to collect their salaries, the governors dared not anger the assemblies. Colonial assemblies came to act like and think of themselves as mini-parliaments, with full legislative power over local matters.

Colonial politics could be quite nasty, and most royal governors lacked the power to tame their legislatures. No governor was more ineffective and despised than Lord Cornbury, Royal Governor of New York and New Jersey (the two colonies shared the same royal governor until 1738). Enemies of Cornbury accused him of parading around the ramparts of New York's forts in women's clothing. Cornbury's opponents used these rumors to undermine his authority, a strategy that was extremely effective. Sir Danvers Osborne, another New York governor, was so despondent over dealings with the colonial assembly that he hanged himself. To avoid the fate of Cornbury or Osborne, savvy royal governors understood the necessity of making strategic alliances with members of the assembly. The give-and-take between the governors and the assembly defined colonial politics for much of the eighteenth century.

> "My Lord Cornbury has and dos still make use of an unfortunate Custom of dressing himself in Womens Cloaths and of exposing himself in that Garb upon the Ramparts to the view of the public; in that dress he draws a World of Spectators about him and consequently as many Censures."
>
> Letter spreading rumors of Lord Cornbury's cross-dressing, 1709

Why were colonial governors so weak?

Enlightenment and Awakenings

In 1733–1734 the great English poet and essayist Alexander Pope wrote his "Essay on Man." Pope advised his readers, "know then thyself, presume not God to scan.'; The proper study of Mankind is Man." The suggestion that man, not God, was the proper focus for human inquiry was the essence of the **Enlightenment**. This broad philosophical movement extolled the virtues of reason and the methods of science and applied these insights to politics and social reform. Rejecting traditional Christian teaching that man was tainted by Adam's "original sin," Enlightenment thinkers favored the English philosopher John Locke's theory that humans were born with a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate upon which society could inscribe its moral lessons. If humans began life as virtual blank slates, they could be molded by education and environment. Crime itself could be eliminated if one understood human nature and created a proper environment to rehabilitate criminals. Not surprisingly a variety of social experiments, including prison reform, attracted considerable interest among supporters of the Enlightenment.

While some Americans were embracing the Enlightenment's commitment to science and reason, others were swept up in the evangelical fervor of the **Great Awakening**. This religious revival movement attacked traditional styles of worship and replaced them with a more emotional style of religious devotion. Communities across America were divided into those in favor of the new style of religion and those opposed to it.

3.8 ***The Goals Committee of the House of Commons*** In William Hogarth's painting, members of Parliament involved in prison reform, including James Oglethorpe (second from the left), examine a prisoner. His tattered clothes and shackles reveal the inhumanity of Britain's prison system.

How did Georgia reflect Enlightenment ideals?

Georgia's Utopian Experiment

One of the most ambitious Enlightenment endeavors was the colony of Georgia, founded as an experiment to reform criminals and the poor by transplanting them from England to a more wholesome environment in America. James Oglethorpe, a spokesman in Parliament for humanitarian causes, secured parliamentary support for his plan to use colonization as an alternative to imprisonment. The new colony of Georgia, named for King George, was strategically located between the Carolinas and Spanish Florida, where it could provide a buffer against the Spanish.

Life in British prisons in the eighteenth century was harsh. At least half of those languishing in prison were debtors, whose crime was failing to pay their bills. Oglethorpe became a leading champion for prison reform and was appointed to a committee charged with investigating the nation's jails. The committee's work attracted the interest of artist and social critic William Hogarth. In this painting of Oglethorpe's committee, Hogarth presents a stark contrast between the elegantly dressed members of Parliament and a prisoner in rags who was "clamped in irons," a painful form of physical restraint commonly used in British prisons (**3.8**).

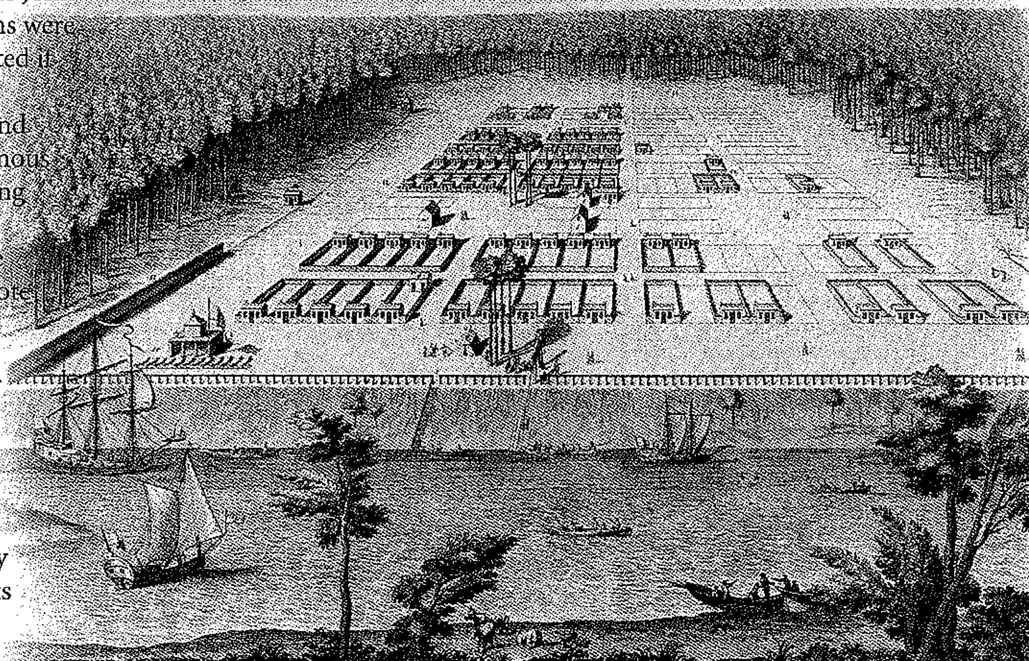
For Oglethorpe, removing prisoners from debtors' prison and sending them to a colony in America meshed perfectly with his vision for dealing with crime and poverty in Britain. In America the poor would have a fresh opportunity to earn a living and avoid the impoverishment they faced in England. Oglethorpe's vision for Georgia reflected the views of Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke, who rejected the notion that humans were born depraved and could not be rehabilitated if placed in a healthier environment.

The 1732 charter granted Oglethorpe and the trustees of the colony of Georgia enormous power. To prevent the colony from becoming just another slave society in which a few enjoyed great wealth and the majority were poor, the trustees banned slavery. To promote sobriety the trustees also prohibited the importation of rum. Oglethorpe and the trustees soon confronted the same types of problems that earlier proprietary colonies had experienced (see Chapter 2). Settlers demanded a greater say in their affairs, including the right to import slaves (see *Competing Visions: Slavery and Georgia*). By 1738 the colony had abandoned much of its original vision, including its ban on importing both slaves and rum. Having begun as something of a utopian experiment, Georgia became another slave society in the lower South.

Although Enlightenment ideals helped shape the early history of Georgia, defense was never far from Oglethorpe's mind. His plan for the city of Savannah drew on the ideals of Renaissance city planning that had inspired the design of many other towns in the Americas (see Chapter 1), which Oglethorpe adapted to the colony's site on the frontier of Spanish America. His rectilinear plan drew on a tradition of designing military encampments stretching back to ancient Rome (**3.9**). Oglethorpe had dreamed of using Georgia as the launching point for the conquest of Spanish America, but his attack on the Spanish town of St. Augustine in Florida in 1740 failed. Two years later when the Spanish retaliated, Oglethorpe successfully repelled them. Georgia did not become a staging ground to root out the Spanish, but it was an effective barrier, protecting the colonies from Spanish attack.

American Champions of the Enlightenment

The Enlightenment championed the work of Sir Isaac Newton, the great English scientist and mathematician who invented calculus and explored the laws of motion, optics, and gravity. The Newtonian universe was radically different than the world that had produced the Salem Witchcraft accusations (see Chapter 2). Rather than look



3.9 Savannah, Georgia The layout of Savannah resembled a Roman military garrison, reflecting its strategic importance as a frontier outpost protecting the American colonies from Spanish America. *[Source: Courtesy of the Georgia Historical Society]*

What military function did Georgia serve?

Competing Visions
SLAVERY AND GEORGIA

James Oglethorpe viewed Georgia as an Enlightenment experiment that would demonstrate that the poor and debt-ridden could be rehabilitated if provided with the right environment. The desire of some colonists to import slaves threatened this vision. If Georgia turned to slave labor, it would become more like Carolina and Virginia. The profit motive would lead to the creation of the same types of inequalities that had led to the impoverishment of the debtors who had been the colony's first settlers. Why were some Georgians so eager to import slaves? What advantages did slave labor have over free labor in their view?

The Earl of Egmont, one of the leading trustees of the colony, made the following observations in his diary about the debate over introducing slavery into Georgia. In this first selection Egmont recounts the desires of colonists to import slaves into the colony.

Diary of the Earl of Egmont, 1735

Wednesday, 3 [September 1735]. The Scots settled at Joseph's Town having applied for the liberty of making use of negro slaves, we acquainted one of their number, who came over to solicit this and other requests made by them to us; that it could not be allowed, the King having passed an Act against it, of which we read part to him....

Monday, 17 [November 1735]. A letter was read from Mr. Samuel Eveleigh that he had quitted his purpose of settling in Georgia, and was returned to Carolina, because we allow not the use of negro slaves, without which he pretends our Colony will never prove considerable by reason the heat of the climate will not permit white men to labour as the negroes do, especially in raising rice, nor can they endure the wet season when rice is to be gathered in....

In this second extract from Egmont's diary, he details Oglethorpe's response to the demand that slavery be introduced into the colony.

Diary of the Earl of Egmont, 1739

Col. Oglethorpe wrote again to the Trustees, to show further inconveniences arising from the allowing the use of Negroes, viz. 1. That it is against the principles by which the Trustees associated together, which was to relieve the distressed, whereas we should occasion the misery of thousands in Africa, by setting Men upon using arts to buy and bring into perpetual slavery the poor people, who now live free there. 2. Instead of strengthening, we should weaken the Frontiers of America. 3. Give away to the Owners of slaves that land which was design'd as a Refuge to persecuted Protestants. 4. Prevent all improvements of silk and wine. 5. And glut the Markets with more of the American Commodities, which do already but too much interfere with the English produce.

TO BE SOLD on board the Ship *Bance-Yland*, on tuesday the 6th of *May* next, at *Ashley-Ferry*; a choice cargo of about 250 fine healthy

NEGROES,

just arrived from the Windward & Rice Coast. —The utmost care has already been taken, and

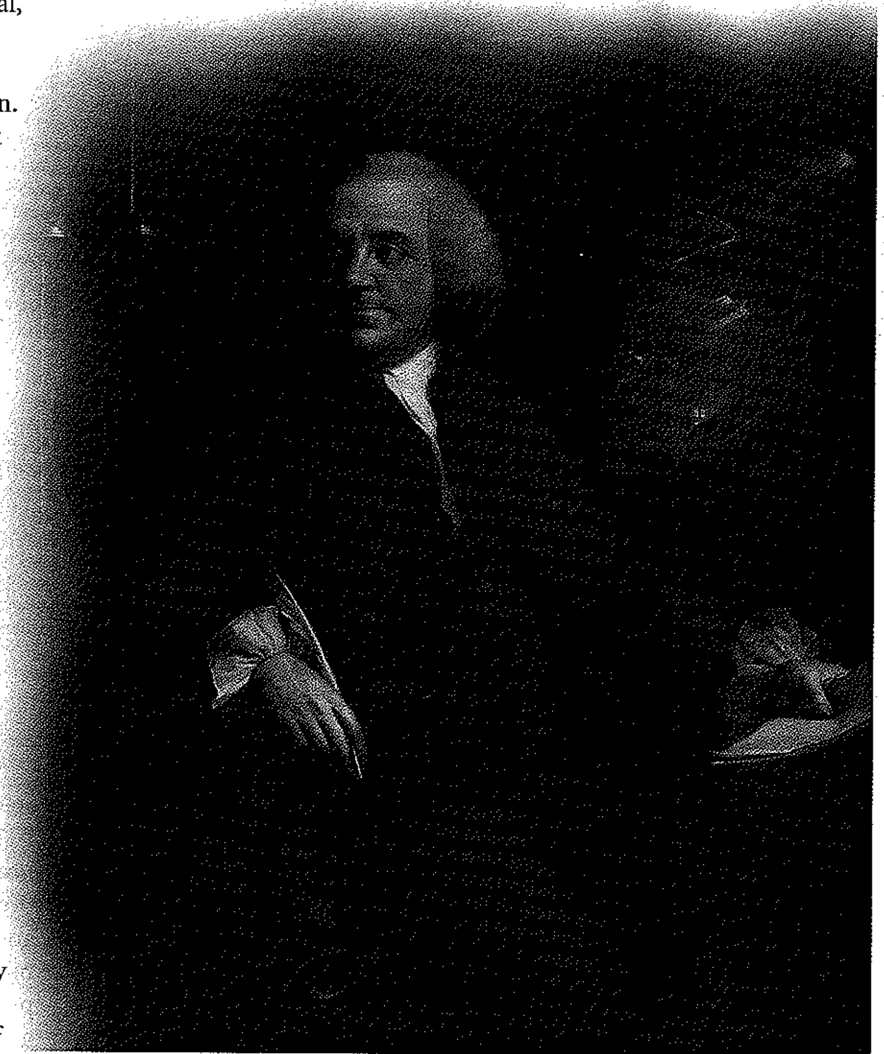
Slave Auction notice

Why did Georgia's trustees wish to retain a ban on slavery?

primarily to the invisible world of the supernatural, Newtonianism focused on the visible world of nature, which functioned according to the rules discerned by observation and interpreted by reason. Newtonianism was not antithetical to religion, but the god of the Newtonian universe was somewhat different from the traditional Christian notion of God as a patriarch or king. In the Newtonian vision God was the great clockmaker who fashioned the universe to run according to predictable natural laws.

In contrast to Newton's grand theorizing, the Enlightenment in America took a distinctly practical approach. No figure in America more closely approximated this ideal than Benjamin Franklin. Printer, scientist, reformer, and statesman, Franklin became a symbol of the American Enlightenment on both sides of the Atlantic. His international fame derived from his scientific experiments with lightning and electricity, which he published in 1751. Franklin coined the terms positive and negative to describe the nature of electrical current and theorized the possibility of creating a battery to store an electrical charge. Franklin also demonstrated that lightning was a form of electrical discharge. This insight led the practical-minded Franklin to develop the lightning rod. The device was designed to attract lightning and then conduct the current safely away from a building. American homes were generally built of wood, a plentiful material in most parts of the colonies that was extremely susceptible to damage by lightning. In a tribute to Franklin, John Adams wrote, "Nothing, perhaps, that ever occurred upon this earth was so well calculated to give any man an extensive and universal celebrity as the discovery of ... lightning rods." Franklin's close association with electricity in general and the lightning rod in particular was captured in this 1763 painting (**3.10**), which depicts Franklin at his desk with a lightning storm raging in the background and a lightning rod prominently positioned on a building visible through a window.

Franklin helped found the American Philosophical Society (1743), a learned society committed to the advancement of knowledge; the College of Philadelphia (1751) (later the University of Pennsylvania); and the Library Company, a private lending library. In addition to these institutions that reflected the Enlightenment's emphasis on education and the spread of knowledge, Franklin helped found a number of organizations dedicated to improving the lives of Philadelphians, including a fire company and the first public hospital in the colonies. Although Franklin owned slaves, as did many in Philadelphia, he eventually came to regard slavery as a great evil and vigorously opposed it later in his life.



3.10 Benjamin Franklin and Electricity
This contemporary painting of Franklin links him with his work on electricity. In the background, lightning destroys one building while another, to which Franklin's lightning rod is attached, survives a strike.
[*Source:* Mason Chamberlain (1727–1787), "Portrait of Benjamin Franklin". 1762. Oil on canvas, 50 3/8 × 40 3/4 inches (128 × 103.5 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Wharton Sinkler, 1956. Location: Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A./Art Resource, NY]

How does this portrait of Franklin reflect his reputation as a champion of the Enlightenment?

Awakening, Revivalism, and American Society

In the period between 1730 and 1770, the colonies experienced a series of religious revivals that historians group together as The Great Awakening. The resulting religious conflict divided families, split churches, and fragmented communities, forever altering the religious landscape of colonial America.

One of the early leaders of the revival movement, Gilbert Tennent, a New Jersey minister, attacked ministers for preaching an empty, "dead form of

religion." Only by accepting the reality of sin and opening one's heart to grace could one hope to achieve salvation. Tennent also took aim at America's expanding consumer society and the "covetousness" that society had encouraged.

The leading intellectual champion of the Awakening was New England minister Jonathan Edwards, who captured the spirit of this movement when he wrote that "Our people do not so much need to have their heads" filled, as much as "have their hearts touched." Edwards's fiery sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (1741), offered his parishioners a vision of the eternal fires of hell that awaited the unconverted. To shake his parishioners out of their complacency and remind them of the necessity of grace for salvation, Edwards compared their fate to that of a spider dangling above the pit of eternal damnation, with only God's mercy preventing them from falling in.

In 1757 Edwards became the president of the College of New Jersey (which became Princeton University), one of several new colleges founded by supporters of the Awakening to train a new generation of ministers. Princeton, allied to the Presbyterian Church, also had close ties to Scottish universities that were leading centers of Enlightenment thought. Rhode Island College (Brown University) was founded by the Baptists in 1764; Queens College (later Rutgers), by the Dutch Reformed Church in 1766. Dartmouth College was founded by the Congregationalist Eleazar Wheelock in 1769, originally as an Indian mission school.

> "The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire."
>
> JONATHAN EDWARDS, 1741

Edwards's account of his own Massachusetts revival inspired the English Anglican minister George Whitefield to take his evangelical crusade to the colonies. Whitefield's 1739–1740 tour was America's first genuinely inter-colonial event. The energetic English preacher traversed most of the eastern seaboard from New Hampshire to Georgia. His tour took advantage of improved roads and the expansion of inter-colonial shipping routes. He traveled the same routes as the merchants who hawked the latest English wares, and his gift for selling the gospel prompted one critic to describe him and other evangelical ministers as "Peddlers in Divinity." Whitefield attracted such large crowds that much of his preaching was done outdoors because few churches were big enough to hold his audience.

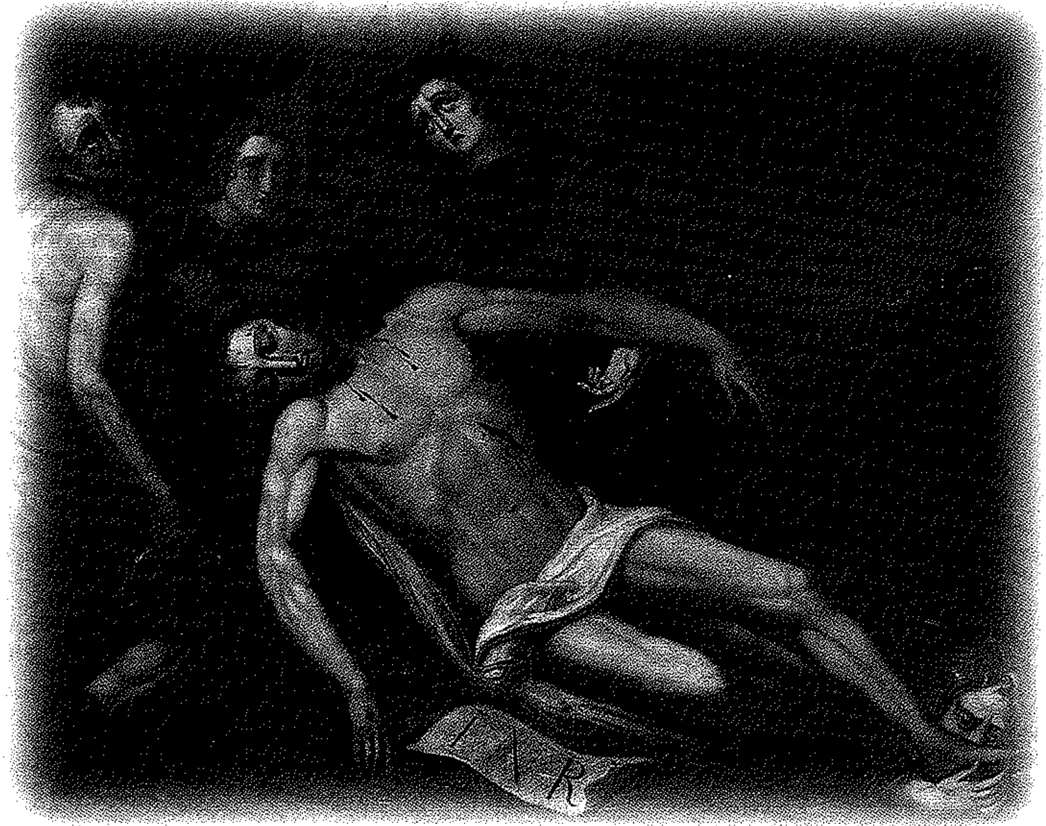
The Great Awakening changed American society. The evangelical methods employed by gifted preachers implicitly challenged the hierarchical assumptions of colonial society about gender, race, and social status. Individuals exercised greater choice, many chose to leave their own congregations and find one that better suited their spiritual needs. For some the Awakening provided opportunities to step forward as lay preachers. For the first time in American religious history, significant numbers of ordinary people were given a public voice. For those whose voices were seldom heard in public—women, blacks, artisans, or poor folk—the opportunity to testify, often to mixed crowds that included people like themselves or even their social betters, challenged traditional ideas about hierarchy. Mary Cooper, a resident of Long Island, noted in her diary that she heard an astonishing assortment of individuals preach, including a Quaker woman, a "Black man," and even two Indian preachers. By giving a voice to many groups previously excluded from traditional preaching, the Great Awakening contributed to the growth of a more democratic culture.

In a few cases women touched by the spirit began preaching, a decision that prompted their own ministers to denounce them for flouting the accepted roles assigned to women in colonial society. Testifying to one's religious experiences was one thing, but assuming the role of preacher, a role traditionally reserved for men, was simply too radical. After Bathsheba Kingsley stole a horse and rode from community to community preaching the gospel, Jonathan Edwards denounced her for perverting the spirit of revival. Edwards, wed to traditional ideas about women's roles, was horrified that Kingsley interpreted the Awakening's message as an invitation to become a gospel preacher.

Not all ministers approved of the ideas and methods of the revivalist preachers. Opponents of the revival, dubbed **Old Lights**, attacked the revivalists, or **New Lights**, for their excessive emotionalism. Old Light ministers ridiculed the revivalists for telling their congregants that "they were damned! damned! damned!" Rather than adopt the new, more emotional

What aspects of the Great Awakening encouraged democratization?

style, Old Lights continued to favor sermons based on learned explications of biblical texts. In response to this backlash against the Awakening, revivalist Reverend Gilbert Tennent accused his opponents of lacking "the Courage, or Honesty, to thrust the Nail of Terror into sleeping Souls." One New Light preacher, James Davenport, took the emphasis on emotionalism to an extreme, urging that books and sermons written by Old Light ministers be burned. As congregations divided between New Lights and Old Lights, many communities were pulled apart.



3.11
***Lamentation*, Moravian Painting of Christ**
This painting features the "blood of the savior." Jesus's physical pain and stoic endurance appealed strongly to American Indian men.

Indian Revivals

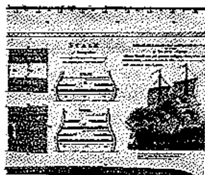
The Great Awakening also spilled over into Indian country. Indians won over by evangelical efforts often served as cultural mediators between their communities and the colonists. The Moravians, a German-speaking group of evangelical Protestants, were particularly effective at evangelizing among Indian tribes. In 1740 a large group of German Moravians migrated to Pennsylvania, where they settled in a town they named Bethlehem. Moravians also established communities in the Carolinas and Georgia.

Unlike the Calvinist faith of many English colonists, which shunned the use of images in their churches, the Moravians' Lutheran faith eagerly embraced the use of art as a means of promoting the gospels (see Chapters 1 and 2). In particular Moravians focused on the redemptive power of Christ's suffering as the foundation for religious salvation. Their most renowned artist in America, John Valentine Haidt, was well schooled in European styles of religious painting and used these techniques to translate the Moravians' Christian vision into visually rich images (**3.11**). The idea of Christ's suffering resonated with Indian converts, and the Moravians displayed images of the crucifixion to bring the gospel to the Indians. After viewing such pictures in the home of a Moravian missionary, two visiting Indians commented on "how many wounds he has, how much blood flows forth!" For American Indians Moravian religious imagery of Jesus suggested a brave spiritual warrior, an ideal that resonated in the minds of young male Indians, whose conception of masculinity was based on a martial ideal of physical strength, bravery, and the endurance of pain and suffering.

The Great Awakening touched a small but influential group of Indians; a different type of native religious renewal movement had an even larger impact on American Indians. As early as 1737 reports began filtering back from Indian country, the broad swath of territory from western Pennsylvania to French-controlled land in Illinois, that Indian religious leaders were preaching the need for a return to traditional ways and a complete separation from colonists. The alcohol that Europeans traded with Indians had contributed to rising levels of alcoholism among Indians. In the 1760s the Delaware Indian prophet Neolin championed the revival of traditional beliefs and the rejection of European influences. He urged his people to "learn to live without any Trade or Connections with White people." In place of dependency and trade, he counseled "Clothing and Supporting themselves as their forefathers did." Neolin and other prophets of Indian revitalization traveled as itinerants through Indian territory preaching their message. Indian revivalists attacked Indian involvement with and dependence on the world of trade and commerce with Europeans.

Why was Moravian art so helpful to missionaries interested in converting American Indians?

African Americans in the Colonial Era



By the dawn of the eighteenth century, racial slavery had become a central feature of the Atlantic world, with firm roots in parts of British North America. The greatest demand for slaves came from the sugar-producing regions of Brazil and the Caribbean. An additional 300,000 slaves arrived in the British mainland colonies, with the greatest demand for their labor in the plantation economies of the upper and lower South. The highest proportion of slaves lived in the lower South, where Africans actually outnumbered Europeans. Slavery in British North America was not an exclusively southern phenomenon. Slaves were an important part of urban life in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. Slavery also played a significant part in the economies of the mid-Atlantic and New England.

Slavery was a brutal and exploitative labor system, but the experience of individual slaves varied greatly from region to region. Regardless of where they were and under what circumstances they lived, slaves found a variety of ways to resist their masters' domination. Occasionally they turned to violent forms of resistance, but more often they used various kinds of economic sabotage—pretending sickness, destroying tools, or even running away—to undermine the profitability of slavery. Perhaps even more significant were the slaves' attempts to assert their humanity and create lives beyond the reach of the master's dominion. Establishing families in spite of the ever-present threat of being torn from one's loved ones and sold, building a viable community, and practicing their own religion gave slaves the cultural resources to survive and denied their masters complete control over important parts of their lives.

The Atlantic Slave Trade

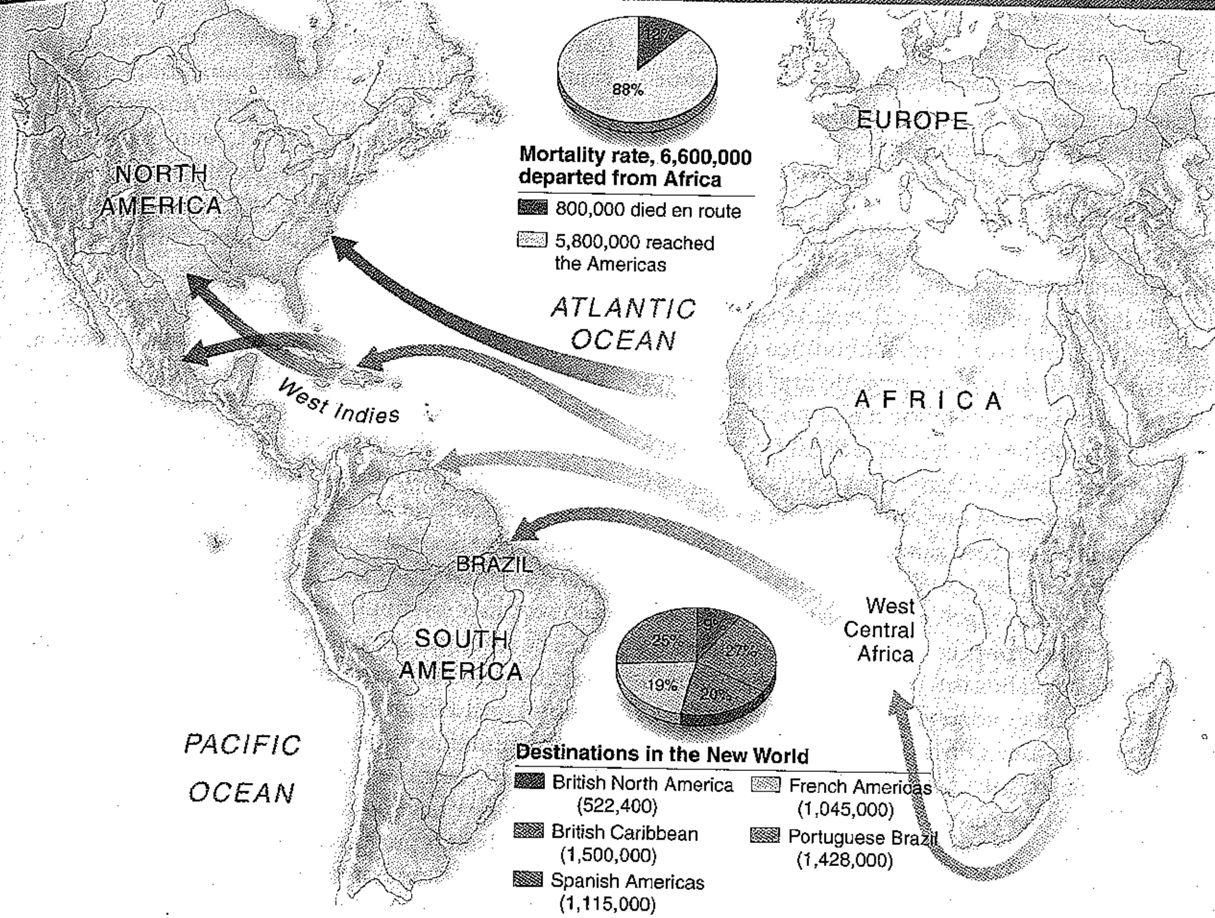
Slaves had been traded internally within Africa for centuries; indeed, it took several hundred years for the Atlantic slave trade to surpass the internal African slave trade. The demand for agricultural labor in the Atlantic world created a strong market for African slaves and led to a dramatic increase in the trans-Atlantic slave trade at the end of the seventeenth century. The leading participants in the international slave trade in the seventeenth century had been Spain, Portugal, and Holland, but by the eighteenth century, Britain had become the preeminent slave-trading nation in the Atlantic world.

> "The stench of the hold ... became pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us."
>
> OLAUDAH EQUIANO, *The Life of Olaudah Equiano* (London, 1789)

As the map (**3.12**) shows, the vast majority of slaves in the Atlantic trade ended up in one of the sugar colonies. Portuguese sugar production was centered in Brazil, while Dutch, French, and British sugar production was centered in the Caribbean. Only about 4 percent of the slaves imported from Africa were transported to the American colonies, but the significance of slavery to the British mainland American colonies was enormous.

Travel across the Atlantic was harrowing under the best of circumstances; in the case of the slave trade, the ordeal was horrendous. The brutality of slavery began far from the Atlantic coast of Africa in the inland regions, where slave catchers acquired most slaves. The captive slaves were then bound by ropes or wooden yokes and forcibly marched to the coast, where they were housed in pens. To prevent communication among captives and reduce the

Which regions of the Atlantic world imported the most slaves?

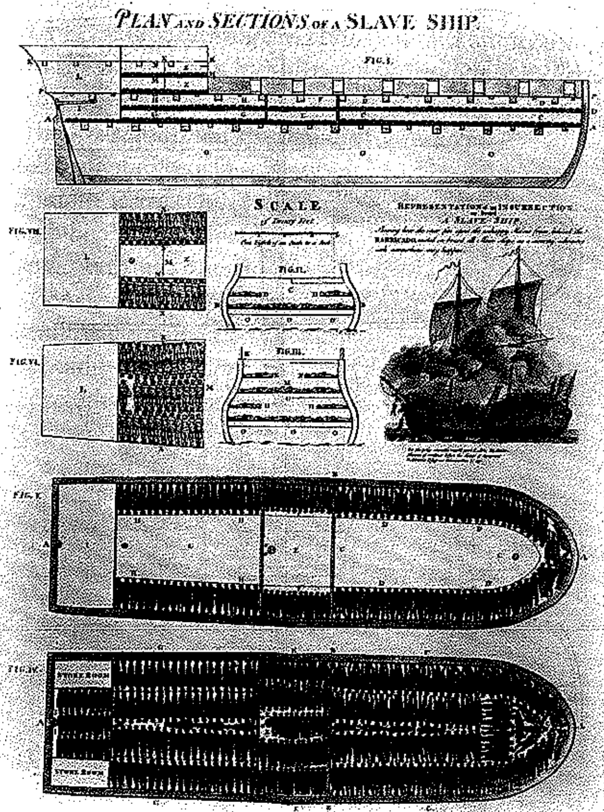


3.12 The Atlantic Slave Trade This map and the corresponding pie charts show the involvement of various nations in the slave trade in the eighteenth century. British slave traders transported the largest share of slaves, selling most to the sugar plantation owners on the islands of the British Caribbean and Brazil. Slave imports to the British American mainland were about a third of the number destined for the sugar islands of the Caribbean.

chances of slaves organizing themselves to escape or challenge their captors, the slave catchers often separated individuals from the same ethnic or language groups. They also routinely separated family members from one another. Slaves might remain housed in these deplorable and inhumane conditions for months before being boarded on slave ships bound for the Americas.

The voyage across the Atlantic from Africa to the Americas, known as the **middle passage**, was horrific. The cramped conditions on these voyages depicted in this antislavery petition barely convey the ordeal of this journey (**3.13**). Typically their captors forced the slaves to remain in shackles during the voyage. Slaves endured meager rations and unsanitary conditions, a situation that led some who preferred "death to such a life of misery" to drown themselves. Of those transported, a little over 10 percent died en route to the British colonies.

In the seventeenth century most slaves bound for the British mainland colonies in America came first to the Caribbean, where they were "seasoned," a process of physical and psychological adjustment to the rigors of plantation slavery. Afterward they would make the final leg of the voyage to the



3.13 Tight Packing This abolitionist depiction of tight packing shows the cramped conditions on slave ships, which maximized the number of bodies carried with no concern for the health of the slaves transported. [*Source:* The Art Archive/Picture Desk, Inc./Kobal Collection]

What was tight packing?

American mainland. This pattern changed in the eighteenth century when the demand for slave labor increased dramatically, and many traders chose to bypass the seasoning process. Thus the vast majority of slaves arriving in British North America in the eighteenth century were "saltwater slaves," coming directly from Africa. Most slaves arrived at Sullivan's Island in Charleston harbor, leading some scholars to describe it as Black America's Ellis Island (page 506).

After being unloaded and quarantined on Sullivan's Island, slaves were typically transported for sale in the slave markets of the major port towns and cities. This was often the last time family members would see each other. After being subjected to a humiliating process of inspection, similar to that used by livestock buyers, slaves were auctioned off to their new masters. Even if family members had managed to remain together to this point, they now faced the prospect of permanent separation from their loved ones. Thus the experience of the auction block further traumatized slaves who had already suffered a multitude of horrors on their perilous journey from Africa to America.

3.14 Slave Quarters, Mulberry Plantation, South Carolina
The conical design of these slave cabins, including their thatched roofs, drew on West African architectural influences.

Southern Slavery

The two regional subcultures in the colonial South—the lower and the upper South—had distinctive slave labor systems and cultures. Slavery in the lower South (parts of the Carolina and Georgia low country) had evolved as the region moved from a frontier settlement to an integrated part of the Atlantic slave economy. In the upper South slavery had gradually replaced indentured servitude (p. 83) as the main source of labor by the end of the seventeenth century.

The lower South began as a colony of a colony. Carolina was first conceived as a base for supplying food to the Caribbean sugar islands. The colony also traded captured Indian slaves and deer hides. In the 1690s rice was introduced into this region and soon became its most profitable export. Many slaves had learned to cultivate rice in Africa, and their knowledge contributed to the increase in rice production from a mere 12,000 pounds in 1698 to 18 million pounds in 1730.

In the 1740s another important cash crop—indigo, a bluish dye—was introduced into the region. By the 1730s, when the Carolinas were divided into North and South Carolina, two-thirds of the region's population was composed of African slaves. The vast majority of blacks worked under a task system that gave them considerable autonomy over their work. Once their tasks were completed, slaves might use the time to hunt, fish, or tend their own gardens, which allowed them to supplement their meager diets.

The swampy regions of the Carolina low country were fertile breeding grounds for a variety of tropical diseases, including malaria. Africans had developed partial immunity to this disease, but whites of European descent were extremely susceptible. Given the unhealthy environment of the coastal lowlands, wealthy planters preferred to spend much of the year at their Charleston homes. The large number of white absentees and the continuous influx of slaves from Africa helped blacks living in this region to preserve aspects of their African heritage despite the deprivations of slave life. The conical-shaped, thatched-roofed huts in the slave quarters on Mulberry plantation (**3.14**), South Carolina, reflect the influence of African architectural styles on this region.

Slavery in the upper South, the Chesapeake region, differed markedly from its practice in the low country Carolinas. While the task system worked for rice cultivation, growing tobacco, the dominant crop in the Chesapeake region, demanded much more oversight. The plants were easily damaged if not properly tended, so planters preferred to organize their slaves into gangs that worked together under the watchful eye of a white overseer or a black slave driver chosen by the master.

Slaves in the Chesapeake were a minority, and they lived on plantations typically smaller than those found in the lower South. Although slaves in this region preserved some elements

What were the main differences between the task system and the gang system of labor?

of traditional African culture, their smaller numbers and wider distribution made their African cultural heritage more difficult to preserve.

Northern Slavery and Free Blacks

Although slavery was less vital to the colonial economy outside of the South, it did play an important role in some areas and regions. For example, in parts of New York and New Jersey, the slave population might be 15 percent in some places and as high as 30 percent in others. Typically slaves in the rural North worked as field hands on small family farms. Northern slavery also included a sizeable urban population, where slaves generally worked as domestics in wealthier homes. In seaport towns and cities, slaves worked in a variety of maritime occupations. In Pennsylvania slaves were so essential to iron manufacturing that their masters petitioned the assembly to lower tariffs on slave imports so that they could continue to produce iron.

A small community of free blacks emerged and settled in northern cities such as Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. Slaves gained their freedom by several means. Some were freed by masters who recognized the evil of slavery. One of the earliest groups to condemn slavery was the Quakers. Other slaves, particularly those who had learned a skill such as carpentry, might be able to strike a bargain with their owners and gain the right to work for themselves part time, eventually saving enough money to buy their own freedom. While a small percentage of freed slaves became farmers, many ended up in one of the thriving seaport towns and cities where economic opportunities were greater.

Urban settings also provided African Americans in the North with more cultural opportunities. In both New York City and Albany, the African American communities adapted the Dutch religious holiday of "Pentecost" and turned it into a carnival-like festival they named "Pinkster." The holiday was presided over by an African American figure, "King Charles," who acted as the political leader of his community during the holiday. During Pinkster African Americans participated in music, dancing, and festive meals; they also paraded as part of their African "different nations," an explicit demonstration of their African roots.

The Great Awakening helped spread Christianity to slaves across America and also made inroads among free blacks in the North. The German evangelical sect, the Moravians, was particularly aggressive in preaching the gospel to slaves in North Carolina. Jonathan Edwards, himself a slave owner, reported that several slaves in his own community had embraced the revival. Some evangelical groups such as the Methodists encouraged free blacks to attend their revival meetings. The new more emotional style favored by so many Awakening preachers appealed to African Americans because it more closely resembled traditional African styles of religious practice.

Slave Resistance and Rebellion

The growth of slavery at the end of the seventeenth century led colonial governments to take legal steps to ensure that African slaves remained subservient to their white masters (see Chapters 2). The slave codes adopted at the end of the seventeenth century gave masters almost unlimited authority over their slaves. The codes also legally defined as slaves children born to slave mothers, even when fathered by free whites.

Although deprived of any legal means to protect themselves, slaves developed a range of strategies for coping with the horrors of slavery and escaping the domination of their masters. Stealing, shirking responsibility, feigning illness, or breaking tools: all of these actions deliberately slowed the pace of their work and provided some temporary relief. Some slaves chose to run away. Sometimes runaways simply hid in the woods or sought refuge with a family on nearby plantations, hiding out in slave quarters. Avoiding the white slave patrols that were always on the lookout for runaways made this a risky option. In those parts of the South closer to Indian country or Spanish territory, including parts of the Carolinas and Georgia, slaves might try to find refuge in territory beyond the control of the English colonists.

Slaves who took part in South Carolina's Stono Rebellion of 1739 took advantage of the colonies' close proximity to Spanish Florida. The rebels broke into a storehouse and seized arms, murdered whites, and torched the homes of slave owners. The rebels hoped that other slaves would rally to their standard, and some slaves from the surrounding countryside did join the rebellion, whose numbers rose to around 150. The slave rebels hoped to find refuge in Spanish Florida. The Carolina militia intercepted the rebels before they could reach Spanish Florida, and the better-organized and armed militia routed the Stono rebels, slaughtering them by the dozens and subsequently executing those who survived. In response to the Stono Rebellion, South Carolina passed harsher slave codes and temporarily blocked importation of slaves into the

How did slaves resist the authority of their masters?

"Many of the white people in these provinces take little or no care of Negro marriages ... they often part men from their wives by selling them far asunder."

JOHN WOOLMAN, Journal, 1774

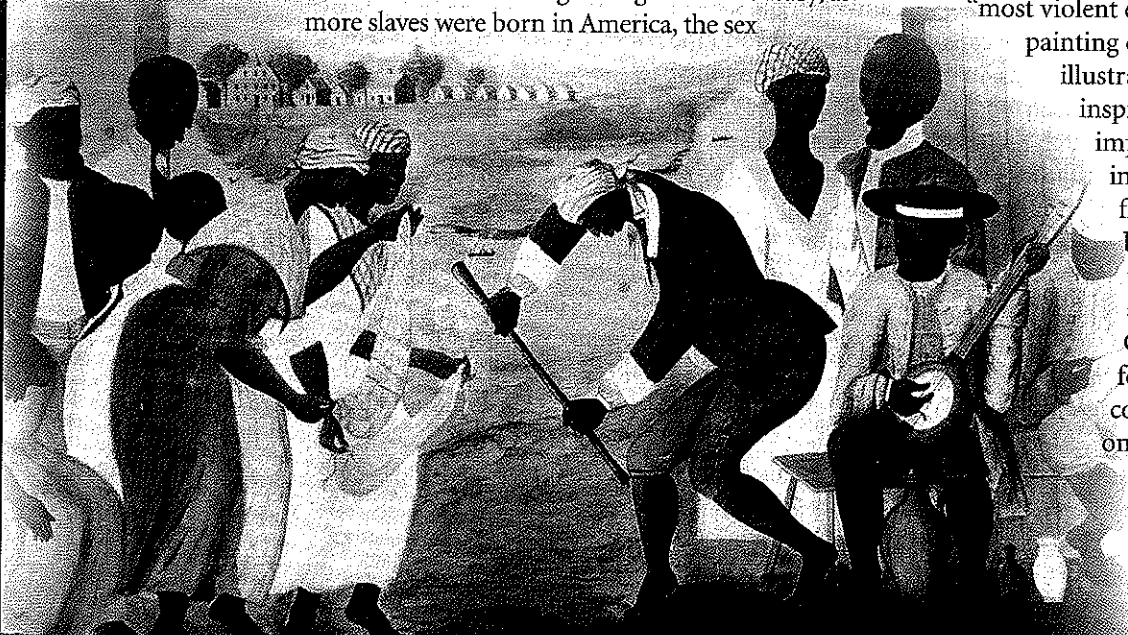
region, a ban that was soon lifted because of the economic importance of slave labor. The Stono Rebellion was the largest African American uprising in the colonial era, but it would not be the last in the history of American slavery.

An African American Culture Emerges under Slavery

Most slaves did not adopt rebellion as their primary strategy for challenging the authority of their masters. Simply establishing families, building an African American community, and practicing their own religion were more realistic goals for most slaves—but all were extremely difficult to achieve given the constraints imposed by slavery. Forming a family under slavery was not easily accomplished. For one thing, the sex ratio among slaves during much of the colonial period was sharply skewed, with many more males than females. During the early years of the slave trade, slave owners preferred males for the backbreaking work required in the tobacco or sugarcane fields, so most slaves imported into the Americas were male; the odds of a male slave finding a wife were slim. During the eighteenth century, as more slaves were born in America, the sex ratio became more balanced because roughly comparable numbers of boys and girls were born. But even if the chances of a man finding a mate increased, slavery made family formation difficult at best. Slave marriages had no legal standing, so slaves faced the constant threat of separation from their spouses. The decision to break up slave families rested entirely with the master, and many children were sold off from the rest of their family. On relatively small plantations slaves usually sought a spouse on a neighboring plantation, which left couples at the mercy of masters who could easily withhold visiting privileges and prevent husbands and wives from seeing one another. Nevertheless many slaves did manage to find partners and create stable families.

One of the many aspects of traditional African culture preserved by slaves was naming practices. As was customary in many parts of West Africa, slave parents might name their children after the day of the week on which they were born. Plantation records commonly show West African names like Cudjo (Monday) for boys or Cuba (Wednesday) for girls, evidence that slaves continued to honor their ancestral practices.

Slaves also drew on African traditions in shaping distinctive music and dance forms, which provided an outlet for cultural expression. Using African techniques they constructed musical instruments, including a variety of drums and stringed instruments. Masters typically found African styles of dancing and singing exotic and alien to their European sensibilities. One British visitor to Maryland noted that on Sundays, the one day that masters generally allowed slaves to rest, blacks met "to amuse themselves with Dancing," which was a "most violent exercise." This rare colonial-era painting of slaves dancing not only illustrates the intensity of African-inspired dance but also shows the importance of an African-style instrument that would become a fixture in American music—the banjo (**3.15**). Music could serve ulterior purposes as well. Shortly after the Stono Rebellion, South Carolina banned drumming, fearing that slaves could drum and communicate secret messages from one plantation to another.



3.15 Slaves Dancing and Playing Banjo This image of slaves dancing in the slave quarters prominently features a banjo. The instrument was modeled on an instrument that was well-known in Africa.

What evidence exists for the persistence of African cultural traits among American slaves?

Immigration, Regional Economies, and Inequality

Although distinctions of wealth emerged almost immediately in American society, especially in the cities, the relative abundance of land in the seventeenth century allowed many rural colonists to own their own land, a goal almost unattainable in Europe, where most land was owned by the aristocracy. Even in cities those without a farmstead generally earned higher wages than they would have in Europe because labor commanded a higher price in the colonies, where skilled craftsmen were rarer. Although all of these facts contributed to the prosperity of the colonists, population growth (natural increase and immigration) and the dwindling availability of land became serious problems by the middle of the eighteenth century. In the colonies' expanding cities, the gulf between the rich and poor widened, and in rural areas young people faced the prospect that they might not be able to obtain land for their own farms.

Immigration to the Colonies

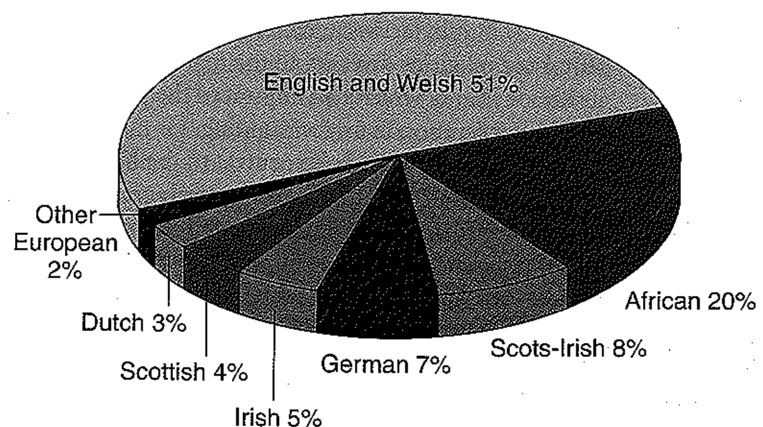
The population of British North America expanded rapidly in the eighteenth century. Between 1700 and 1750 the white population of the colonies rose from around 250,000 to more than a million. In contrast to America's first predominantly English colonists who arrived at the start of the seventeenth century, eighteenth-century immigrants varied in national origin and ethnic identity. As chart **3.16** illustrates, the colonies attracted settlers from elsewhere in Britain, including Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. Immigration from the European continent also included large numbers of Dutch and Germans.

The decision to immigrate to America was a momentous one. The financial and personal costs of immigration could demand heavy sacrifices. The trans-Atlantic crossing, which could take as long as four months, meant enduring cramped conditions on a ship with few amenities. Additionally, the cost of the trans-Atlantic passage was well beyond the yearly wages of the average Englishman and even more expensive for those traveling from the European continent. To finance their passage many immigrants, men and women alike, contracted to work as **indentured servants**. In exchange for having their passage paid, indentured servants agreed to work for a specified period of years, usually seven. In some cases the indenture system separated family members, with husband and wife indenturing themselves to different families.

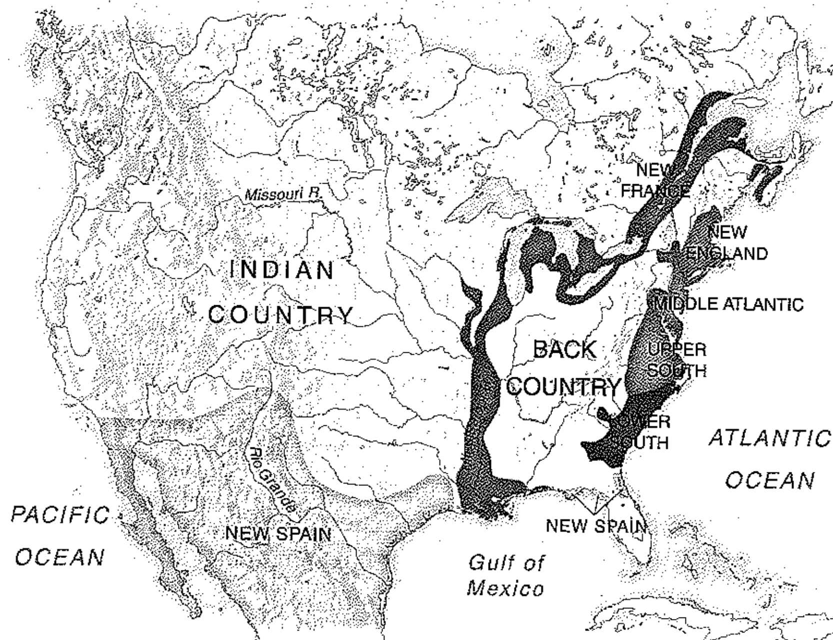
Regional Economies

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the British had settled the eastern seaboard, from the southern colony of Georgia to the northern New England colony of New Hampshire. Although each of the thirteen colonies functioned as its own separate political unit, historians have grouped the colonies into five regions—New England, the mid-Atlantic, the upper South, the lower South, and the back country—reflecting their unique histories,

3.16 **Eighteenth-Century Immigration to the Colonies**
During the eighteenth century, the number of non-English immigrants increased. Immigrants from other parts of the British Empire, including Scotland and Ireland, rose as well. Another major source of immigration was continental Europe, especially Germany and Holland. One-fifth of this population of immigrants were enslaved Africans.



How did the ethnic composition of eighteenth-century America change?



3.17 Map of Colonial Regions
By the middle of the eighteenth century, colonial America had evolved into a number of distinctive regions: New England, mid-Atlantic, upper South, lower South, back country.

distinctive patterns of settlement, and diverse economies (**3.17**). Race, ethnicity, and religious composition also lent a distinctive quality to each of the major regions of colonial America.

New England

New England (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island) was the most ethnically homogenous region in colonial British America (see 3.17). Overwhelmingly white and English, the Congregational Church, the heir of the Puritan tradition, was the dominant religion in New England. In addition New England included several other Protestant churches—Anglicans (Church of England), Presbyterians, Quakers, and Baptists. This lent some religious diversity to the region, particularly in Rhode Island, which had embraced the principle of religious toleration from its founding.

The sea had always been central to the New England economy, but in the eighteenth century the region's maritime economy expanded dramatically. New England continued to supply fish to a variety of domestic and foreign markets, it became a major center of shipbuilding, and its merchants carried on a lively trade in a variety of commodities. Yankee trade in spirits—including the amber-colored dessert wine of Madeira, an island group in the eastern Atlantic, and rum, distilled from molasses procured in the Caribbean—was vital to New England's commercial economy.

The ministerial elite continued to play an active role in shaping the affairs of the region, but the rising merchant class became increasingly powerful over the course of the eighteenth century. Many of the region's leaders were educated at Harvard (1636), the oldest college in the colonies, or Yale (1701).

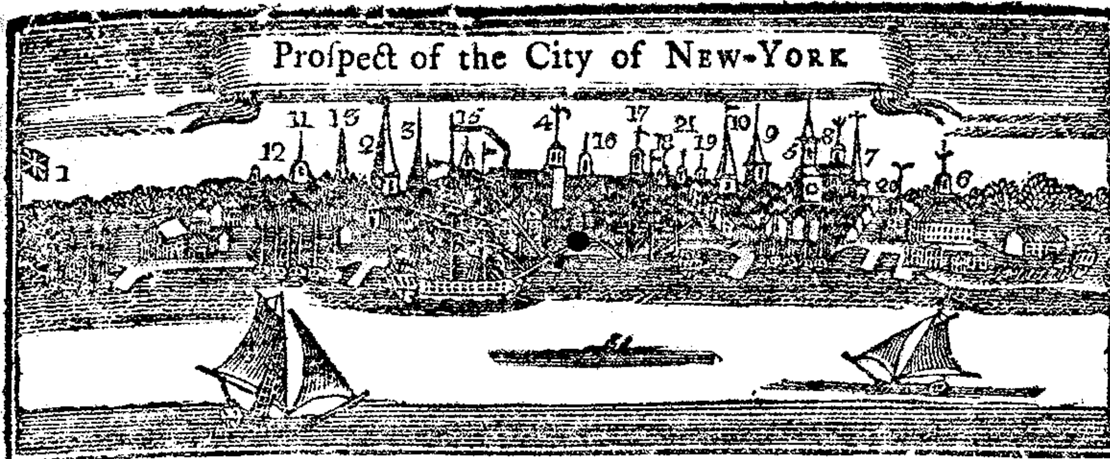
The Mid-Atlantic

The mid-Atlantic (New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware) was the most ethnically diverse region in the colonies, and its hubs, New York and Philadelphia, were home to a wide range of ethnic and religious groups (see 3.17). Indeed as this engraving (**3.18**) of the eighteenth-century New York skyline illustrates, the spires and bell towers of the city's churches and lone synagogue proclaimed its religious diversity for miles around.

Philadelphia and New York became centers of commerce and finance. Each city boasted a thriving port, facilitating trade with Europe and coastal trade with other ports in the Atlantic world. Agricultural products from rural Pennsylvania and Delaware were sold in the markets of Philadelphia. New York's Hudson River carried agricultural products from upriver farms and furs from northern New York. The mid-Atlantic region had a variety of small manufacturing enterprises as well, including flour milling, lumbering, mining, and metal foundries. The region depended on indentured servants for much of its labor. In the period between 1700 and 1775, about 100,000 servants came from the British Isles and another 35,000 from German-speaking regions on the European continent.

Although Quakers were a powerful force in Pennsylvania politics, the region's merchant class was even more influential. The mid-Atlantic region was somewhat slower to create colleges than either Massachusetts or Virginia, but by the middle of the eighteenth century, Pennsylvania was home to the College of Philadelphia, 1755 (University of Pennsylvania), George III had chartered Kings College, 1754 (Columbia), in New York, and the College of New Jersey, 1746 (Princeton), and Queens College, 1766 (Rutgers), had been established in New Jersey.

Which region of colonial America was the most culturally diverse?



1 Fort George
2 Trinity Church
3 Presbyter. Meeting
4 North D. Church
5 St. George's Chapel
6 The Prifon.
7 New Brick Meeting
8 King's College
9 St. Paul's Church
10 N.Dutch Cal.Church
11 Old Dutch Church
12 Jew's Synagogue
13 Lutherian Church
14 The French Church
15 New Scot's Meeting
16 Quaker's Meeting
17 Calvinift Church
18 Anabaptift Meeting
19 Moravian Meeting
20 N. Lutheran Church
21 Methodift Meeting

3.18 Engraving of New York Skyline
This engraving of New York's skyline lists a score of churches and synagogues whose spires dominated the skyline of the colonial town.

The Upper and Lower South

The South was most closely tied to slave labor. Actually it was two distinct regions: the upper South, or Chesapeake Region, and the lower South, including parts of South Carolina and the Georgia lowcountry (see 3.17). Each produced different cash crops and employed slave labor in slightly different ways. Immigration into the two regions and the ethnic composition of the upper and lower South was also different.

Although somewhat more ethnically diverse than New England, the upper South, those areas of Virginia and Maryland tied to the Chesapeake, drew immigrants largely from England and Scotland. The powerful planter elite who dominated this region built great fortunes from tobacco grown on plantations with slave labor. Many of the area's wealthiest citizens were educated at the College of William and Mary (1693), the nation's second-oldest college.

The lower South was settled later than the Chesapeake, and so the region benefited from the growth of immigration to America. As a result of its later settlement, the region was also more religiously diverse than the upper South. In addition to Anglicans the region included Presbyterians, German Moravians, Baptists, and Quakers.

The damp, hot climate of the lowcountry regions bred diseases such as malaria. To avoid these conditions the wealthiest planters spent only part of the year on their plantations in the unhealthy lowcountry. Many preferred their second homes in Charleston, which became a major cultural and economic center of the region. Nevertheless Charleston lacked an educational institution comparable to William and Mary, so the wealthiest Carolinians typically headed to England for their education.

The Back Country

In the early days of settlement during the seventeenth century, colonists had hugged the coastline. By the eighteenth century they began pushing westward to areas such as the interior of the Carolinas, western Pennsylvania, and Virginia (see 3.17). Many new immigrants headed directly for the back country. The Scots-Irish were particularly attracted to the back country of Pennsylvania and the Carolinas, where they settled in large numbers.

The back country region lacked many of the refinements that the older, more settled regions of the colonies possessed, leading travelers to compare back country colonists with Indians. In the comparison both were described as savages.

Whatever their similarities to Indians might have been, relations between them were generally strained. Rather than seek to trade with Indians and learn their ways, the Scots-Irish wanted to create farmsteads, which required displacing Indians. The simmering tensions between residents of the back country region and the local Indians would occasionally erupt into violence throughout the eighteenth century.

Back country settlers farmed, hunted, and raised livestock for their own consumption and for local trade and were less well connected to the burgeoning Atlantic economy. The economic realities of life in the

What were the main cash crops produced by slave labor in the South?

"They were as rude in their Manners as the Common Savages, and hardly a degree removed from them. Their Dresses almost as loose and Naked as the Indians, and differing in Nothing save Complexion."

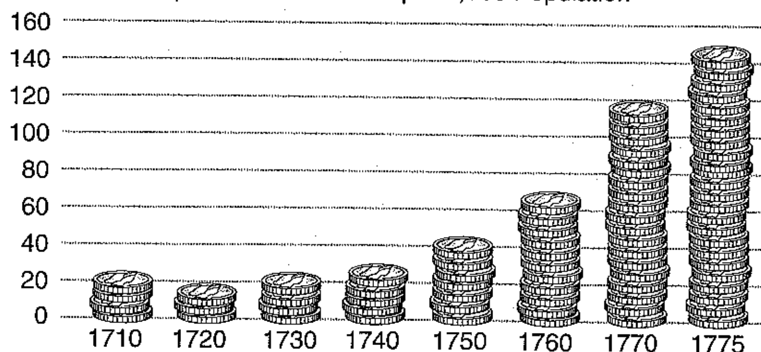
Minister CHARLES WOODMASON, observations on the back country, 1766

back country encouraged both independence and a strongly egalitarian culture. Courts were rare and so were tax officials or other representatives of either the colonial or the British government. A visitor to this region would also have noticed a lack of churches, primary schools, and institutions of higher education.

Cities: Growth and Inequality

Although the vast majority of Americans lived in the countryside during the eighteenth century, cities were growing. Philadelphia boasted 23,000 residents by 1760, making it the largest city in the colonies. Still America was far less urban than either Europe or even the Spanish colonies to the south. Compared to London, with more than 700,000 people, Philadelphia was tiny. Britain's mainland American colonies were also far less urbanized than Spain's empire in the Americas. There were a half dozen cities in Spanish America larger than Philadelphia. Mexico City, for example, had more than 100,000 inhabitants by the middle of the eighteenth century.

Although small in size, the growth rates of the cities of colonial British America were impressive.



3.19 Poor Relief, Boston Poverty increased in colonial Boston in the late eighteenth century, as did the poor relief needed to deal with this problem.

Boston, for example, doubled in size between 1700 and 1760. Larger towns, including Albany (New York), Newport (Rhode Island), and Baltimore (Maryland), became regional centers.

Throughout these urban areas eighteenth-century society became polarized along economic lines. The percentage of wealth owned by the richest Americans increased, and the number of poor people rose as well. In Boston and Philadelphia 5 percent of the population had amassed almost half of their city's wealth by the last quarter of the eighteenth century. At the same time the number of the urban poor rose dramatically in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. The graph (**3.19**) illustrates the dramatic climb in the amount of money Boston devoted to poor relief from the middle of the century onward. During this same period many trades and crafts established their own mutual benefit societies to help the poor. The stark inequality between the lives of the destitute and those of Boston's wealthiest merchants, who lived in fine new mansions and traveled around the city in elegant coaches, grew more pronounced, especially by the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

Rural America: Land Becomes Scarce

By the middle of the eighteenth century, many Americans living in the countryside or in small towns in most of the settled regions of the colonies confronted a growing scarcity of land. The problem Connecticut's colonists faced illustrates the interconnected issues of population growth and land scarcity. Between 1720 and 1760 Connecticut's population more than doubled, from 59,000 to 142,000. Beginning in the 1740s children faced the prospect that their parents would not have enough land to help them establish their own farm when they became adults.

Many sons and daughters delayed marriage until they could acquire a farmstead and establish their own independent household. Others moved to nearby towns. Many of Connecticut's young adults went as far as northern New Hampshire, and others left New England altogether, heading to the most western parts of New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, or the Carolinas. Finally, some families simply postponed their dreams of independence, working as tenants on another farmer's land as they struggled to save enough money to purchase their own farm.

Why was American society becoming more unequal toward the end of the eighteenth century?

War and the Contest Over Empire

By the middle of the century, nearly 1.2 million people lived in the British mainland colonies, making it a far more densely populated region than New France, which numbered well under 100,000. Britain and France had been almost constantly at war since the late seventeenth century. Although these wars were generally fought over conflicts that originated in Europe, control of North America became increasingly important to both nations. The British were keen to eliminate French influence in Canada and the Great Lakes region. Eliminating France also appealed to American colonists, who viewed the rich agricultural lands controlled by France as a means of alleviating the land shortage they faced. The struggle between the British and the French for control of North America would dramatically alter the map of North America.

The relatively small population of New France was spread across a vast territory, from Quebec in the north to New Orleans in the south, and as far west as Illinois (see map 3.20). In the Great Lakes region, French traders lived and worked among the Indians, often marrying Indian women. Unlike the British, who sought to displace the tribes and resettle the land with small farmers, the French developed a complex multiracial society that included Indians.

The Rise and Fall of the Middle Ground

When the seventeenth century began, more than two million Indians lived in communities east of the Mississippi River. Lacking immunity to diseases brought by the Europeans, Indian populations who came into contact with Europeans were extremely vulnerable to infection. Tribes east of the Mississippi were repeatedly devastated by epidemics that reduced their numbers to less than a quarter million by the end of the eighteenth century. One response to this dramatic decrease in population was the rise of "mourning wars," in which rival tribes raided each other's villages and took prisoners to bolster their own populations. In these wars men were often tortured and executed, but women and children were typically adopted into the conquering tribes.

Indians were also increasingly drawn into the trans-Atlantic economy, exchanging furs for a variety of European goods, including beads, fabric, alcohol, metal tools, and even firearms. The growing European demand for furs, and increased Indian desires for European goods, led to conflict among different tribes for access to prime hunting and trapping grounds. The nature of intertribal warfare changed as limited mourning wars evolved into "beaver wars," in which Indian tribes fought one another for control of territory.

Further west in the Great Lakes region, France, not Britain, was the dominant power. In this region the French and Indians created a **middle ground**, a cultural and geographical region in which Indians and the French negotiated with each other for goods and neither side could impose its will on the other side by force. Indians traded furs for guns, metal tools, and cloth.

While the French colonial government had hoped to regulate and tax this lucrative trade by establishing a series of forts, or outposts, a group of young, fiercely independent French traders, known as *coureurs des bois* ("runners of the woods"), established their own trading networks beyond the direct control of the French government. Many married Indian women, producing children who became a distinctive group called *métis*, or people of mixed French and Indian descent. Familiar with both Indian and French customs, and fluent in both Indian languages and French, the *métis* became critical intermediaries between Indian and French cultures, even when the gulf was sometimes difficult to bridge. Like other European societies, French culture was patriarchal: Inheritance passed from father to son, a practice that gave fathers enormous power over their sons. Thus it was quite natural for the French to cast themselves as fathers to their Indian children in the Great Lakes region. Indians accepted the notion of the French as fathers, but they

What made the middle ground a distinctive region of colonial America?

understood the concept of fatherhood in radically different terms than Europeans did. In the Indian cultures of the middle ground region, fathers were not powerful patriarchs. Indeed one chief tried in vain to explain to one French colonial official the different views of paternal authority in their respective cultures: "When you command, all the French obey and go to war. But I shall not be heeded and obeyed by my nation in such a manner." Although a significant gulf continued to exist between the two cultures, intermarriage between French traders and Indian women nevertheless promoted cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

> "Go and see the forts our [French] Father has created, and you will see that the land beneath their walls is still hunting ground ... whilst the English, on the contrary, no sooner get possession of a country than the game is forced to leave; the trees fall down before them, the earth becomes bare."
>
> Contemporary Indian account of the French and English settlement, late eighteenth century

The expansion of British settlement beyond the Appalachian Mountains threatened the middle ground created in the Great Lakes region. Rather than seek to preserve a middle ground, the British hoped to incorporate this region into their colonial empire. As had been true for so much British colonization, the idea was to eliminate indigenous populations, transplant British agricultural practices, and establish permanent settlements.

The Struggle for North America

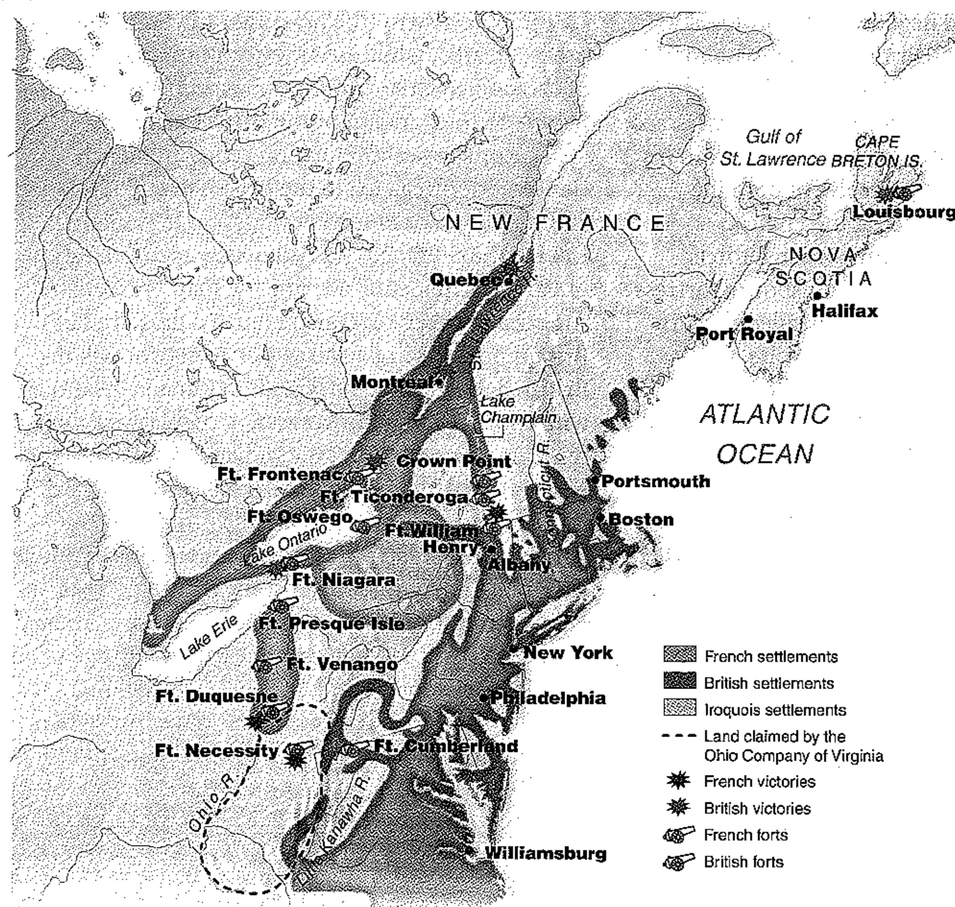
The great military powers of Europe—Britain, France, and Spain—remained locked in a struggle for political supremacy in Europe. In 1739 European conflicts once more spilled over into North America when Britain again went to war, this time with Spain. British ships smuggled goods into Spanish America depriving Spain of valuable trade and tax revenues. Spain responded by capturing British ships, seizing their crews and cargos. British outrage over Spanish policy reached a critical moment when Captain Robert Jenkins testified before Parliament that after capturing his ship, the Spanish placed him in custody and cut off his ear as punishment for his alleged smuggling. Jenkins presented his ear in a pickle jar to an outraged Parliament. The resulting conflict between Britain and Spain was dubbed the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739–1748).

Although war with Spain dragged on until 1748, King George's War (1744–1748), a conflict in which France joined with Spain against Britain and the American colonies, soon overshadowed the War of Jenkins' Ear. The most important military victory from the colonists' point of view occurred at Louisbourg. New England's militias achieved a stunning triumph over the French and seized the mighty fortress of Louisbourg, which guarded Atlantic access to the Gulf of St. Lawrence and French Canada. Although the fortress was returned to the French by the British as part of the peace treaty ending the conflict, the victory, which relied heavily on New England's militia, became a source of colonial pride.

The conflict between France and Britain occurred during a period when colonists were particularly eager to settle in the Ohio Valley, a region controlled by the French. The formation of the Ohio Company of Virginia in 1747 greatly facilitated the exploration and settlement of this region, a development that prompted the French to solidify their hold on the region by establishing a string of forts (**3.20**). The most important of these was Fort Duquesne, erected at a fork in the Ohio River in what is now Pittsburgh. Eager to dislodge the French from Duquesne, in 1755 the royal governor of Virginia dispatched a force of militiamen under the command of an ambitious young officer, George Washington, to seize the strategic fort. Overwhelmed by a force of French and Indian warriors, Washington was forced to surrender.

Washington's defeat proved to be only the first skirmish in a protracted battle to control the Ohio territory. The British dispatched General Edward Braddock with a larger force, comprising British regular troops and colonial volunteers, to take Fort Duquesne. The French and their Indian allies routed Braddock's forces. Washington had escaped, but Braddock was killed in battle and his troops suffered

Why did British expansion threaten the middle ground?



3.20 British Conquest of New France
The British and French battled one another across a huge arc of territory, fighting pivotal battles at Louisbourg, Quebec, and Montreal.

a staggering 70 percent casualty rate. It was a shocking and ignominious defeat for the British and their colonial allies.

It would be two years before the British developed an effective military strategy in response to Braddock's humiliating defeat. Meanwhile, relations between American colonists and the Indian peoples along the frontier continued to deteriorate. Many tribes were emboldened by the French victory to settle old scores with American colonists. In particular, angry Delaware and Shawnee tribes, who resented western expansion into their hunting grounds, confronted Scots-Irish settlers on the frontier of Pennsylvania. Armed conflict along the frontier disrupted the lives of colonists and Indians, resulting in death and injury for both communities.

In England William Pitt, the ambitious prime minister appointed by George II, believed that the future balance of power in Europe hinged on control of America. In 1757 the British embarked on a bold new policy: to root out the French and make a direct assault on the French strongholds of Quebec City and Montreal. Pitt promoted a number of young, talented officers including Jeffery Amherst and James Wolfe to lead the campaign against Canada. An army of ten thousand regulars and a sizeable fleet was dispatched to Canada. Defeating the French meant taking on their Indian allies as well, and so the conflict was known as the French and Indian War.

The British suffered an early setback when the French general Montcalm seized the British Fort William Henry on Lake George in northern New York.

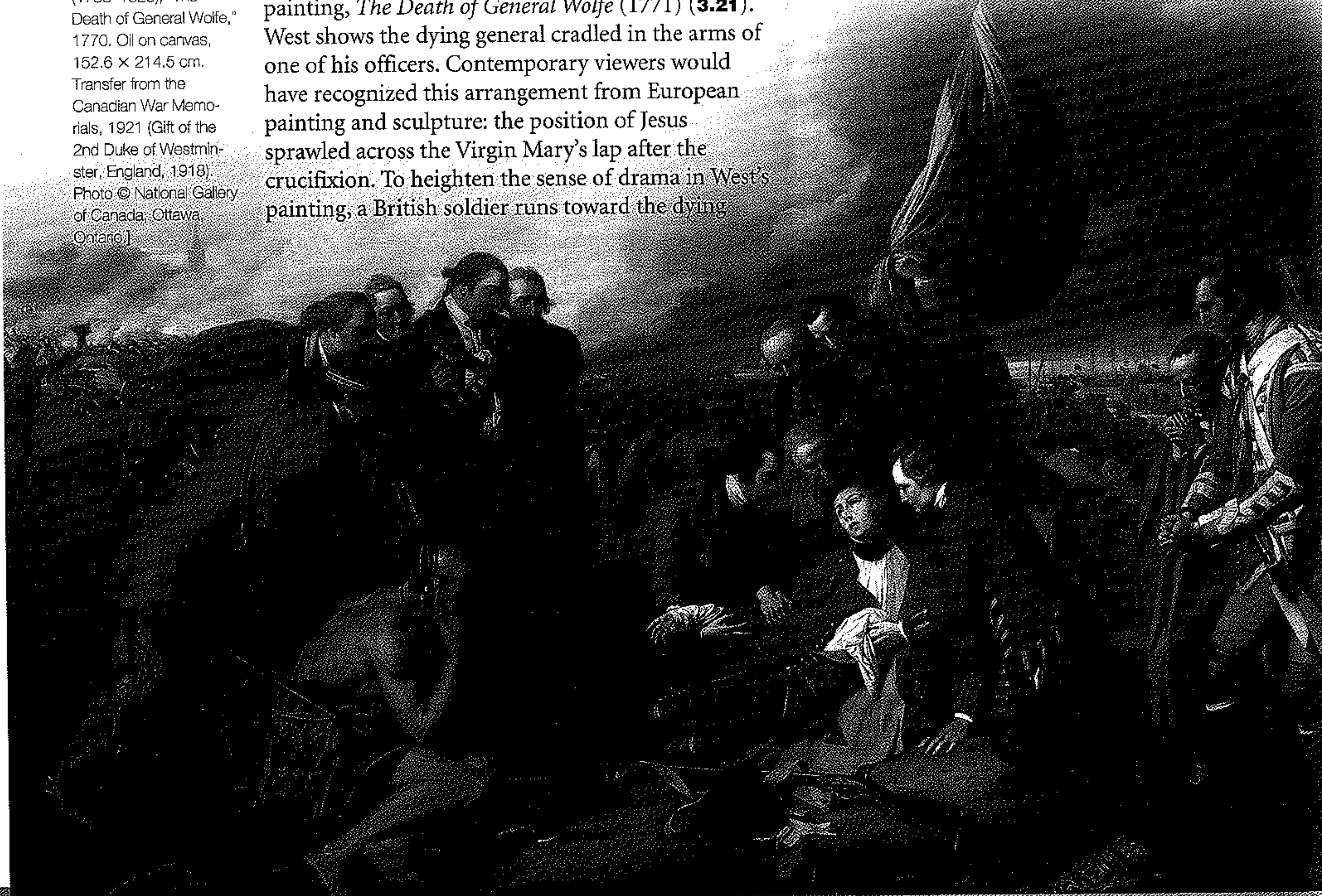
What was William Pitt's new policy for North America?

Although Montcalm had negotiated a traditional surrender that allowed the British to retreat honorably, his Indian allies refused to accept these terms and sought scalps and other trophies of war. "The Massacre of Fort William Henry" alienated Montcalm from his Indian allies and stiffened the resolve of both the British and the colonists to defeat the French.

British fortunes began to turn when a force under Jeffery Amherst captured Louisbourg fortress in 1758. A year later British forces assailed the city of Quebec and captured it. General Wolfe, the commander of British forces, searched for a weakness in the city's formidable defenses and finally settled on a daring assault strategy. Wolfe and his men approached the city from its poorly guarded rear flank. Rather than risk a frontal assault on the heavily fortified city, Wolfe's men scaled the heights behind the city and overpowered the small detachment of troops guarding the cliffs. In the battle that followed, Wolfe and his French counterpart General Montcalm were both killed.

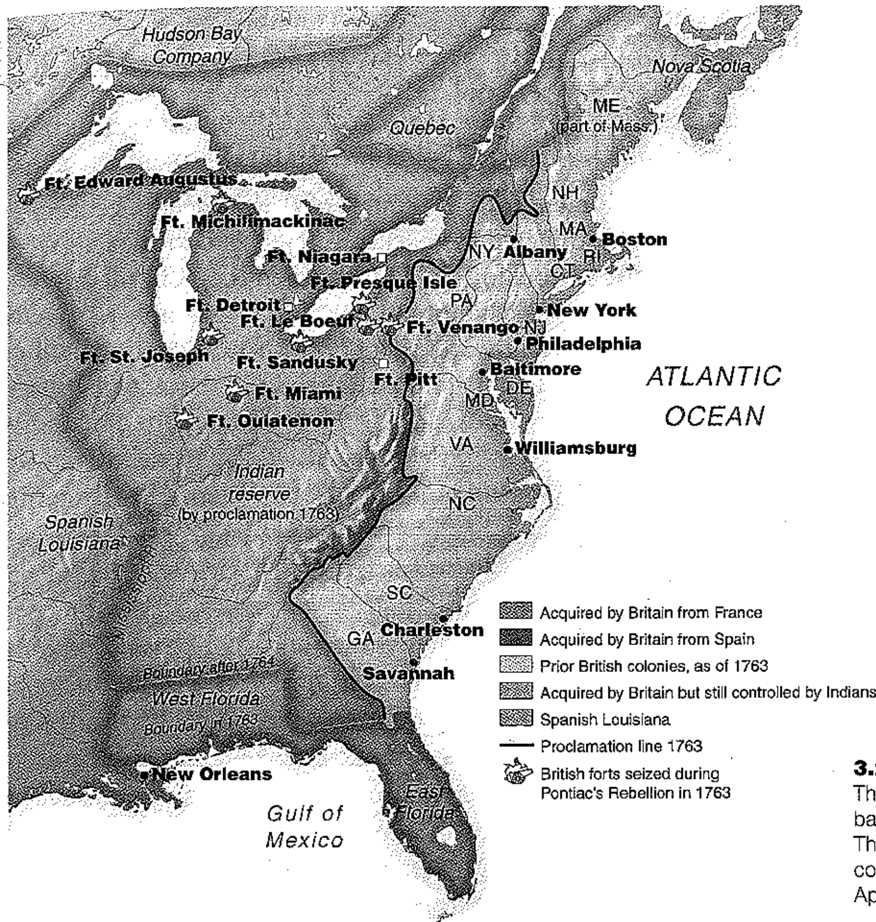
Pennsylvania painter Benjamin West commemorated the assault on Quebec in his painting, *The Death of General Wolfe* (1771) (**3.21**). West shows the dying general cradled in the arms of one of his officers. Contemporary viewers would have recognized this arrangement from European painting and sculpture: the position of Jesus sprawled across the Virgin Mary's lap after the crucifixion. To heighten the sense of drama in West's painting, a British soldier runs toward the dying General Wolfe with the news that the French have been defeated, while an American Indian, a symbol of the noble warrior, looks on respectfully, a further tribute to the heroism of the British general.

The other great population center in French Canada, Montreal, fell to the British in late 1760, ending the era of French domination in Canada. In early 1763 France and Britain signed the Treaty of Paris, permanently altering the map of North America. Quebec remained French culturally, but Britain now controlled all of Canada. Although the British had defeated the French in Canada, relations with Indians along the frontier, particularly in Ohio, remained tense. In 1762 the Indian revivalist prophet Neolin's pan-Indian movement rallied the tribes of the Midwest against further British colonial expansion. A year later the Ottawa Indian chief, Pontiac, led a pan-Indian force against the British garrison at Fort Detroit. Inspired by Pontiac's leadership, Indian peoples across the Midwest attacked weakly defended frontier garrisons in what is now Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio and even launched attacks against settler communities in western Pennsylvania, in what the



3.21 ***The Death of General Wolfe*** West cast the dying Wolfe in the same pose artists used to depict Jesus after the crucifixion. The messenger arriving with the news of victory enters the scene from the light-filled area of the painting, symbolizing the bright future of North America after the British victory. [*Source:* Benjamin West (1738–1820), "The Death of General Wolfe," 1770. Oil on canvas, 152.6 × 214.5 cm. Transfer from the Canadian War Memorials, 1921 (Gift of the 2nd Duke of Westminster, England, 1918). Photo © National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario.]

What role does the Indian figure play in West's painting?



3.22 Proclamation of 1763
The French and Indian War shifted the balance of power in North America. The Proclamation of 1763 banned colonial settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains.

colonists called Pontiac's Rebellion. Anger over the failure of the colonial governments to protect frontier settlers led to protests by western residents. The most dramatic protest occurred in Pennsylvania, where settlers from the frontier settlement of Paxton sought revenge by attacking friendly Indians and marching against the city of Philadelphia demanding the creation of a militia to fight Indians. The march of the "Paxton Boys" might have plunged Pennsylvania into widespread bloodshed, but violence was averted after a group of leading Philadelphia citizens met with the protestors and agreed to present their list of grievances to the colonial assembly. (See *Choices and Consequences: Quakers, Pacifism, and the Paxton Uprising*, page 92.)

Before the defeat of the French in Canada, western Indians could count on a reliable supply of arms and ammunition from Britain's traditional rival, France. Without this vital support the pan-Indian alliance eventually collapsed. Still Pontiac's Rebellion persuaded the British to be conciliatory toward the more powerful tribes along the frontier. The peace treaty that was signed to end hostilities with Indians not only included favorable terms for trade but also placed severe restrictions on westward expansion by colonists. The Proclamation of 1763 (**3.22**) established a fixed line beyond which colonial expansion westward was prohibited, effectively restricting colonists to territory east of the Appalachian Mountains.

How did the Proclamation of 1763 serve British interests?

Choices and Consequences

QUAKERS, PACIFISM, AND THE PAXTON UPRISING

Relations between Pennsylvanians and Indians had steadily deteriorated over the course of the eighteenth century as the population grew. Newcomers, such as the Scots-Irish who dominated the backcountry, began to challenge the Quakers' political power. The violence associated with Pontiac's Rebellion only exacerbated these simmering tensions. Western settlers, including the Paxton Boys, petitioned the Quaker-dominated colonial assembly to pass a mandatory militia law and provide arms for western settlers. Quakers, however, were pacifists who continued to believe that it was possible to maintain peaceful relations with their Indian neighbors. Quakers in the assembly faced a difficult decision.

Choices

1 Support a mandatory militia law and create a well-regulated militia, properly trained and armed.

2 Continue to oppose the creation of a well-regulated militia and continue to seek peaceful non-violent solutions to Indian–settler conflicts.

3 Resign from elected office so that their pacifism would not prevent the assembly from voting to create a militia.

Decision

The legislature chose to continue its pacifist policies.

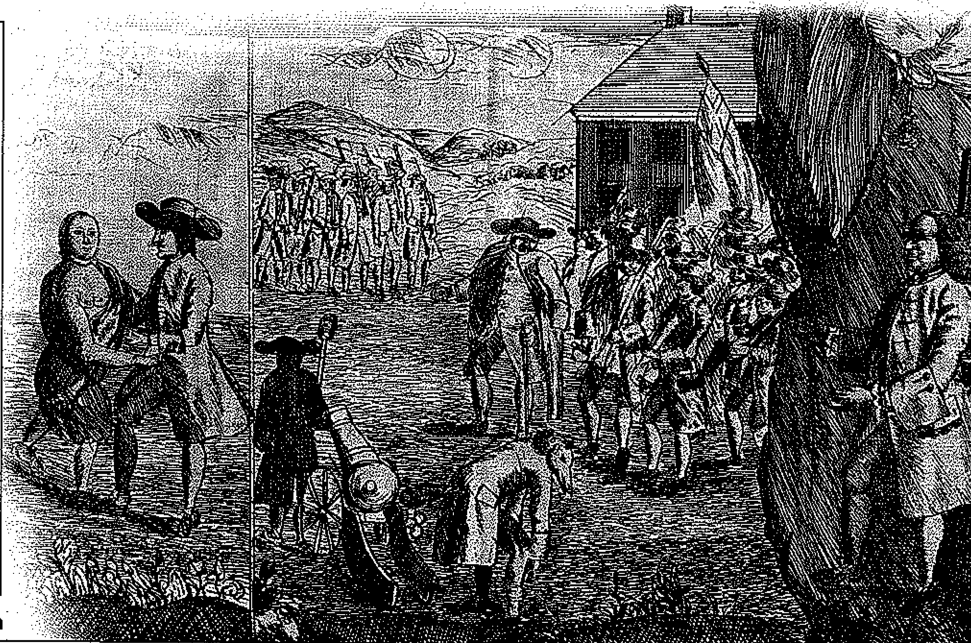
Consequences

Pennsylvania was the only colony without a militia law. This issue continued to spark controversy until the American Revolution. The 1776 Pennsylvania Constitution and Declaration of Rights not only created a militia but also it became the first state to expressly protect a right to bear arms.

Continuing Controversies

Why were Quakers so obstinately against creating a well regulated militia?

Scholars sympathetic to the plight of the Paxton supporters view their challenge to the Quaker government as an expression of the rising tide of democratic sentiment that helped bring about the American Revolution. For those more sympathetic to the Indians, the Quaker government's policies were as exceptional as they were praiseworthy.



Paxton Uprising cartoon

Why did Paxtonians demand that the Quakers create a militia?

Conclusion

The transformation of the American colonies from a crude provincial backwater to a more refined, prosperous hub of the British Empire occurred slowly over the course of the eighteenth century. A British traveler to Philadelphia, then the largest city in America, would have been impressed by the fine houses, elegant coaches, and other signs of America's refinement and gentility. The visitor would also have been struck by the signs of Enlightenment in the city: a fine lending library, the American Philosophical Society, and a new university. The city hosted scientists of international renown, such as Benjamin Franklin, the man who had tamed lightning. A visitor to the colonies might also have encountered the great evangelist George Whitefield, on one of his tours. Even if one missed hearing the "peddler in divinity," one could read about his exploits in the expanding press.

Not everyone shared equally in the growing prosperity and refinement of America. African slaves toiled under harsh conditions in rice fields or tended tobacco in the South, while slavery solidified in urban areas and seaport towns in the mid-Atlantic and New England. Many ordinary laborers in towns and cities and the farmers in the countryside faced fewer opportunities to improve their economic conditions as the century progressed. The enormous growth in the population of the British colonies meant that land was becoming scarce. Colonists looked at the fertile lands of the Ohio country as a possible source to alleviate this problem. The French and their Indian allies, however, were eager to prevent further expansion by English colonists. The French and Indian War settled the future of this important region. The decisive defeat of the French removed the main threat to American colonists and a major competitor for the potential wealth of Indian country, including trade opportunities and land.

Although colonists may have viewed the defeat of the French as opening up vast new territory for settlement, the British government in London wanted to maintain peaceful relations with the powerful Indian nations that inhabited these regions. The need to pay off the war debt and the conflict over the future of western lands would put colonists and their rulers in London on a collision course.