

COLONIAL LIFE NOTES

Courtship and Gender

- Marriages were often more like a business partnership where people worried about money, land and property
- Girls would marry as early as 13. Being single by 25 was disgraceful
- Girls were trained to handle household chores
- Men were expected to provide for the family

Literacy and Education

- More likely to get education if lived in a town
- In south nearest school might be 10 miles away and plantations would share a tutor
- Few resources in class. Wrote on tree bark and copied problems from one book
- In north 90% of men literate while only 55% in south. 40% of women in North, 25% in south

Death and Funerals

- Life expectancy for men 34, 36 for women
- Funerals were a social event as well as solemn. A time for feasting and drinking.
- Graves often were placed on family land

Families

- Families tended to be large partly so they could help with the work
- Children were expected to behave and contribute by doing chores
- Homes were crowded

Enslaved People and Their Treatment

- Slave population grew large in the south as cash crops were in demand
- Slaves were considered property so they could be bought or sold
- In fields slaves worked 12-14 hr days, in north they would more likely be a house slave
- If they resisted they would face drastic punishment

Life on a Small Farm

- Most colonists depended on farming for survival. Had to grow everything you needed
- Tools were very basic and a farmer had to be able to do all kinds of jobs
- Farmers were pretty wasteful by mining, chopping down trees... Land would often wear out within 30 years

Religious Rituals

- Every family had its own bible which was read regularly
- On Sundays you could not jump, fish, ride or dance
- New York had a cage to hold boys who misbehaved on Sunday

Life on the Frontier

- Many immigrants moved to the frontier for the freedom and everyone being on the same level
- The gun was the settler's most important tool.
- Life was simple without luxuries.

Native Americans and Colonists Conflict Over The Land

- Natives could not understand how colonists could buy land.
- Many natives became upset when they saw colonists abuses land by chopping down trees and killing animals
- Natives who resisted colonists' expansion would be destroyed

Native American Teaching and Helping Colonists

- Natives taught colonists about new crops and methods for growing them
- Also taught them how to traps fish and about their trails

Colonial Trade

- Trade started slowly since there were no roads
- As roads improved cash crops from south went north, and food from the middle colonies fed the others.

Importance of Church

- Church was often mandatory (required).
- People would be separated by gender, race, social class
- Church would be an opportunity to meet socially as well
- Some services would last for 3 or more hours

Leisure

- Most leisure activities included fun on work such as barn raising, or husking bees.
- Wealthy people would have a ball (formal dance), while many would enjoy a fair
- 2 popular events would be roster fighting and horse racing

Food

- Food was difficult to prepare and not very interesting. Eat same food for days.
- Most people were lean and scrawny
- Wealthy families had servants make food, while poorer families the women were in charge
- Many preferred drinking beer or ale to the water
- Stew was a common meal for the average person

Quilting Bees

- Women would come together as a party to quilt

Class differences

- Most were middle class. Wealth in America did not mean as much as it did in Europe
- You could work your way up the social ladder through business or politics
- People on the frontier and natives were looked down upon
- In the south a small number owned most land and became the elite

Communities

- People created the first communities because of similar backgrounds or religions
- Living in a community meant working together, pooling resources, sharing schools, and defense against attack.

Marriage

- Very few divorces would occur
- Due to deaths, it was not uncommon to have been married 4 or 5 times

- The husband was the master of the household in charge of ALL the property, and he could “discipline” his wife if she misbehaved
- Women would often runaway to get out of a bad marriage.