CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER THEMES

Theme: The English hoped to follow Spain's example of finding great wealth in the New World, and that influenced the financing and founding of the early southern colonies. The focus on making the southern colonies profitable shaped colonial decisions, including choice of crops and the use of indentured and slave labor. This same focus also helped create economic and cultural ties between the early southern colonies and English settlements in the West Indies.

Theme: The early southern colonies' encounters with Indians and African slaves established the patterns of race relations that would shape the North American experience—in particular, warfare and reservations for the Indians and lifelong slave codes for African Americans.

Theme: After a late start, a proud, nationalistic England joined the colonial race and successfully established five colonies along the southeastern seacoast of North America. Although varying somewhat in origins and character, all these colonies exhibited plantation agriculture, indentured and slave labor, a tendency toward strong economic and social hierarchies, and a pattern of widely scattered, institutionally weak settlements.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The defeat of the Spanish Armada and the exuberant spirit of Elizabethan nationalism finally drew England into the colonial race. After some early failures, the first permanent English colony was established at Jamestown, Virginia. Initially it faced harsh conditions and Indian hostility, but tobacco cultivation finally brought prosperity and population growth. Its charter also guaranteed colonists the same rights as Englishmen and developed an early form of representative self-government.

The early encounters of English settlers with the Powhatans in Virginia established many of the patterns that characterized later Indian-white relations in North America. Indian societies underwent their own substantial changes as a result of warfare, disease, trade, and the mingling and migration of Indians from the Atlantic coast to inland areas.

Other colonies were established in Maryland and the Carolinas. South Carolina flourished by establishing close ties with the British sugar colonies in the West Indies. It also borrowed the West Indian pattern of harsh slave codes and large plantation agriculture. North Carolina developed somewhat differently, with fewer slaves and more white colonists who owned small farms. Latecomer Georgia served initially as a buffer against the Spanish and a haven for debtors.

Despite some differences, all the southern colonies depended on staple plantation agriculture for their survival and on the institutions of indentured servitude and enslaved Africans for their labor. With widely scattered rural settlements, they had relatively weak religious and social institutions and tended to develop hierarchical economic and social orders.

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER THEMES

Theme: Religious and political turmoil in England shaped settlement in New England and the middle colonies. Religious persecution in England pushed the Separatists into Plymouth and Quakers into Pennsylvania. England's Glorious Revolution also prompted changes in the colonies.

Theme: The Protestant Reformation, in its English Calvinist (Reformed) version, provided the major impetus and leadership for the settlement of New England. The New England colonies developed a fairly homogeneous social order based on religion and semicommunal family and town settlements.

Theme: Principles of American government developed in New England with the beginnings of written constitutions (Mayflower Compact and Massachusetts's royal charter) and with glimpses of self-rule seen in town hall meetings, the New England Confederation, and colonial opposition to the Dominion of New England.

Theme: The middle colonies of New Netherland (New York), Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware developed with far greater political, ethnic, religious, and social diversity, and they represented a more cosmopolitan middle ground between the tightly knit New England towns and the scattered, hierarchical plantation in the South.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The New England colonies were founded by English Puritans. While most Puritans sought to purify the Church of England from within, and not to break away from it, a small group of Separatists—the Pilgrims—founded the first small, pious Plymouth Colony in New England. More important was the larger group of nonseparating Puritans, led by John Winthrop, who founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony as part of the great migration of Puritans fleeing persecution in England in the 1630s.

A strong sense of common purpose among the first settlers shaped the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Because of the close alignment of religion and politics in the colony, those who challenged religious orthodoxy, among them Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams, were considered guilty of sedition and driven out of Massachusetts. The banished Williams founded Rhode Island, by far, the most religiously and politically tolerant of the colonies. Other New England settlements, all originating in Massachusetts Bay, were established in Connecticut, Maine, and New Hampshire. Although they shared a common way of life, the New England colonies developed with a substantial degree of independence.

The middle colonies took shape quite differently. New York, founded as New Netherland by the Dutch and later conquered by England, was economically and ethnically diverse, socially hierarchical, and politically quarrelsome. Pennsylvania, founded as a Quaker haven by William Penn, also attracted an economically ambitious and politically troublesome population of diverse ethnic groups.

With their economic variety, ethnic diversity, and political factionalism, the middle colonies were the most typically American of England's thirteen Atlantic seaboard colonies.

CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER THEMES

Theme: In the Chesapeake region, seventeenth-century colonial society was characterized by disease-shortened lives, weak family life, and a social hierarchy that included hardworking planters at the top and restless poor whites and enslaved Africans at the bottom. Despite the substantial disruption of their traditional culture and the mingling of African peoples, slaves in the Chesapeake developed a culture that mixed African and new-world elements, and developed one of the few slave societies that grew through natural reproduction.

Theme: By contrast, early New England life was characterized by healthy, extended life spans, strong family life, closely knit towns and churches, and a demanding economic and moral environment.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Life was hard in the seventeenth-century southern colonies. Disease drastically shortened life spans in the Chesapeake region, even for the young single men who made up the majority of settlers. Families were few and fragile, with men greatly outnumbering women, who were much in demand and seldom remained single for long.

The tobacco economy first thrived on the labor of white indentured servants, who hoped to work their way up to become landowners and perhaps even become wealthy. But by the late seventeenth century, this hope was increasingly frustrated and the discontents of the poor whites exploded in Bacon's Rebellion.

With white labor increasingly troublesome, slaves (earlier a small fraction of the workforce) began to be imported from West Africa by the tens of thousands in the 1680s and soon became essential to the colonial economy. Slaves in the Deep South died rapidly of disease and overwork, but those in the Chesapeake tobacco region survived longer. Their numbers eventually increased by natural reproduction and they developed a distinctive African American way of life that combined African elements with features developed in the New World.

By contrast with the South, New England's clean water and cool air contributed to a healthy way of life, which added ten years to the average English life span. The New England way of life centered on strong families and tightly knit towns and churches, which were relatively democratic and equal by seventeenth-century standards. By the late seventeenth century, however, social and religious tensions developed in these narrow communities, as the Salem witch hysteria dramatically illustrates.

Rocky soil forced many New Englanders to turn to fishing and merchant shipping for their livelihoods. Their difficult lives and stern religion made New Englanders tough, idealistic, purposeful, and resourceful. In later years they spread these same values across much of American society.

Seventeenth-century American society was still almost entirely simple and agrarian. Would-be aristocrats who tried to recreate the social hierarchies of Europe were generally frustrated.

CHAPTER 5

CHAPTER THEMES

Theme: Compared with its seventeenth-century counterpart, eighteenth-century colonial society became more complex and hierarchical, more ethnically and religiously diverse, and more economically and politically developed.

Theme: Colonial culture, while still limited, took on distinct American qualities in such areas as evangelical religion, education, press freedom, and self-government.

Theme: England's Atlantic sea-board colonies, with their population growth and substantial agricultural exports, grew and developed in importance to the English Empire. Thus, the relationship between England and these colonies was shifting economically, politically, and culturally. Colonists sold their agricultural abundance not only to England, but also to France and the West Indies. Royal authority was checked by colonial legislatures that sometimes refused to pay governors' salaries and the famous Zenger case. Schools and colleges emerged, and the cultural reliance on England began to fade.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

By 1775, the thirteen American colonies east of the Appalachians were inhabited by a burgeoning population of two million whites and half a million blacks. The white population was increasingly a melting pot of diverse ethnic groups, including Germans and the Scots-Irish.

Compared with Europe, America was a land of equality and opportunity (for whites), but relative to the seventeenth-century colonies, there was a rising economic hierarchy and increasing social complexity. Ninety percent of Americans remained agriculturalists. But a growing class of wealthy planters and merchants appeared at the top of the social pyramid, in contrast with slaves and “jayle birds” from England, who formed a visible lower class.

By the early eighteenth century, the established New England Congregational Church was losing religious fervor. The Great Awakening, sparked by fiery preachers such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, spread a new style of emotional worship that revived religious zeal. Colonial education and culture were generally undistinguished, although science and journalism displayed some vigor. Politics was everywhere an important activity, as representative colonial assemblies battled on equal terms with politically appointed governors from England.