

CHAPTER
3

Summary

TELESCOPING THE TIMES

The Colonies Come of Age

CHAPTER OVERVIEW As British colonies in North America grow, their economies and societies develop sectional differences. After the British push the French out of the region, relations between the colonists and the British become more tense.

1 England and Its Colonies

KEY IDEA England and its North American colonies prosper under a beneficial trade relationship, but slight tensions with the colonies emerge.

European nations wanted colonies in the New World so they could pursue an economic system called mercantilism. In this system, England benefited from its North American colonies in two ways. The colonies supplied England with raw materials—lumber, furs, grain, and tobacco. In turn, colonists bought furniture, iron utensils, books, and china made in England.

To control colonial trade, the English Parliament passed the Navigation Acts. These laws barred the colonies from sending some goods to other nations. They also required that all colonial trade had to travel on English or colonial ships and first be unloaded at English ports.

Some colonial merchants continued to smuggle—trade illegally—with other countries. In 1684 the English king tried to force merchants of Massachusetts to obey the laws. When they refused, the king revoked the colony's charter and appointed a new royal governor, Sir Edmund Andros. Andros angered colonists by outlawing local government and imposing new taxes.

Relations improved soon thereafter, when Parliament chose a new king and queen to rule England in 1688. The new English government restored the colony's charter but passed tough trade laws. These laws moved smuggling trials to English-controlled courts and created a Board of Trade. The new English government did not enforce these laws aggressively, however.

In the new system, royal governors headed each colony. Colonial legislative assemblies had substantial power, however. The governor could veto the laws they passed, but the assemblies had the power to raise taxes—and thus controlled the governor's salary. As a result, the colonies were able to practice a degree of self-government.

2 The Agricultural South

KEY IDEA The Southern colonies develop a labor-intensive plantation economy, leading to a mostly rural and slavery-based society.

Colonists from Maryland to Georgia specialized in raising a single cash crop—a farm product raised for sale rather than for the farmer's own use. Cash crops included tobacco, rice, and indigo. These planters raised their crops on large farms, called plantations, along the region's rivers. Southern society was mostly rural. Charles Town (later called Charleston), in South Carolina, was the only major city of the South.

Small farmers were in the majority in the South, but the planters dominated economic and political life. Southern women could not vote, attend school, or own property. They worked long hours on farm and household duties.

The South's many indentured servants had few rights during their service. Once the term was done, they struggled to survive. By the late 1600s, few indentured servants came to the colonies.

To supply the labor they needed, the planters imported and enslaved hundreds of thousands of Africans. The slave trade was brutal. Africans were branded with red-hot irons, crammed into the holds of ships, and transported across the Atlantic Ocean. About 20 percent died from cruel treatment or disease in transit.

Those who survived became slaves. Up to 90 percent worked in the fields. Most of the rest worked in planters' houses. Some learned skills such as carpentry or blacksmithing. Children began working at age 12. The Africans developed their own way of life. This culture drew on the crafts, stories, and music of their African homes.

Slaves resisted, sometimes by pretending to be ill or by working slowly. In the Stono Rebellion of 1739, a group of slaves fought for freedom, but all were killed. Some ran away, sometimes finding a new home in Native American tribes.

3 The Commercial North

KEY IDEA *The Northern colonies develop an economy fueled by commerce and trade that leads to a more diverse, urban society.*

The economies of the New England and Middle Colonies were more diverse. Farming was important, especially in the fertile wheat- and corn-growing regions of Pennsylvania and New York. Other industries included grinding wheat, fishing, and shipbuilding. By the 1770s, the colonists built a third of all British ships and made more iron than Great Britain. Boston and New York grew to be thriving cities. Philadelphia was the second largest port in the British Empire.

The Northern colonies had diverse populations. Pennsylvania became home to large numbers of Germans fleeing poverty or seeking religious freedom. Another large group was the Scots-Irish, Scottish Protestants who had settled in Ireland in earlier years. Other groups included the Dutch, Scandinavians, and Jews. These colonies had African slaves, but fewer than in the South. They, too, suffered harsh treatment.

Women in the colonial period had few rights. As in the South, they worked hard in household and farm labor. The frustrations of their status contributed in part to an outbreak of witch-hunting in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692. Several innocent people were tried and executed for being witches until the panic passed.

The Enlightenment, an intellectual movement of Europe, affected the colonies. Enlightenment thinkers valued reason and science. Benjamin Franklin demonstrated this way of thinking in an experiment showing that lightning was a form of electricity. Enlightenment ideas spread through the colonies in part because a high proportion of males could now read.

While the Enlightenment championed science, the Great Awakening prompted a religious revival in the 1730s and 1740s. Among its leaders was Jonathan Edwards, who helped challenge the authority of established churches. Both the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening led colonists to question authority.

4 The French and Indian War

KEY IDEA *The British and their colonists defeat the French in North America, enlarging Great Britain's New World empire and causing new British-colonial friction.*

Challenging the British in North America, as in Europe, were the French. The French claimed control of the entire Mississippi River valley, but they had few settlers compared to the British. They were interested in the fur trade and developed friendly relations with many Native American groups as a result.

The two sides ended their rivalry in North America in the French and Indian War, fought between 1754 and 1763. The war began when Virginia troops led by George Washington marched to the Ohio River to drive out the French. The French and their Native American allies easily defeated both this force and a British army that came the next year. Then, in a great victory, the British defeated the French at Quebec in 1759. France was forced to give Canada to the British and New Orleans to Spain.

Although the victor, Britain still had trouble. Native Americans were angered by colonists moving west. Pontiac's uprising captured eight British forts. After defeating Pontiac, the British banned settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains—which angered the colonists.

The French and Indian War produced other trouble. The British left 10,000 troops in the colonies to keep the peace. Colonists feared they could be used to suppress their rights. The British and colonists also clashed over British efforts to raise money to pay for the war. When the royal governor of Massachusetts issued search warrants to find smugglers, colonists protested. A new British law, the Sugar Act of 1764, put duties on some previously untaxed imports and changed the rules for trying smuggling cases. Colonists argued that the new law violated their rights.