

CHAPTER 3

The British Empire in America 1660–1750

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BETWEEN 1660 AND 1750 BRITAIN CREATED A DYNAMIC COMMERCIAL EMPIRE IN AMERICA. When Charles II came to the throne in 1660 England was a second-class trading country, picking up the crumbs left by Dutch merchants who dominated the Atlantic. “What we want is more of the trade the Dutch now have,” declared the duke of Albemarle. To win commercial power the English government passed the Acts of Trade and Navigation, which excluded Dutch merchants from its growing American colonies, and then went to war first against the Dutch and then against the French to enforce the new legislation. By the 1720s the newly unified kingdom of Great Britain (comprising England and Scotland) controlled the North Atlantic trade. “We have within ourselves and in our colonies in America,” a British pamphleteer boasted, “an inexhaustible fund to supply ourselves, and perhaps Europe.” A generation later British officials celebrated the American trade as a leading source of the nation’s prosperity. As the ardent imperialist Malachy Postlethwayt proclaimed in 1745, the British empire “was a magnificent superstructure of American commerce and naval power on an African foundation.”

◀ Power and Race in the Chesapeake

Lord Baltimore holds a map of his proprietary colony, Maryland, in this 1670 painting by Gerard Soest. The colony will soon belong to his grandson Cecil Calvert, who points to his magnificent inheritance. The presence of an African servant foreshadows the importance of slave labor in the post-1700 Chesapeake economy.
Enoch Pratt Free Library of Baltimore.

As Postlethwayt observed, the wealth of the empire stemmed primarily from the predatory trade in African slaves and the profits generated by slave labor, mainly on the sugar plantations of the West Indies. To protect Britain’s increasingly valuable sugar colonies from European rivals—the Dutch in New Netherland, the French in Quebec and the

West Indies, and the Spanish in Florida—British officials expanded the navy and repeatedly went to war. Increasingly, economic power came from the barrels of its naval guns and calculated diplomatic policies. Boasted one English pamphleteer, “We are, of any nation, the best situated for trade, . . . capable of giving maritime laws to the world.”

To solidify these commercial gains, the British government extended financial and political control over its American settlements. Beginning in the 1660s it successfully controlled the course of colonial commerce through the Navigation Acts and, with less success, tried to subordinate colonial political institutions to imperial direction. These initiatives made Britain a dominant power in Europe and the Western Hemisphere, bringing modest prosperity to most of the white colonists on the North American mainland while condemning thousands of enslaved Africans to brutal work and early death.

The Politics of Empire, 1660–1713

In the first decades of settlement England governed its Chesapeake and New England colonies in a haphazard fashion. Taking advantage of this laxity and the upheaval produced by religious conflict and civil war in England, local oligarchies of Puritan magistrates and

tobacco-growing planters ran their societies as they wished. However, with the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 royal bureaucrats imposed order on the unruly settlements and, with the aid of Indian allies, went to war against rival European powers.

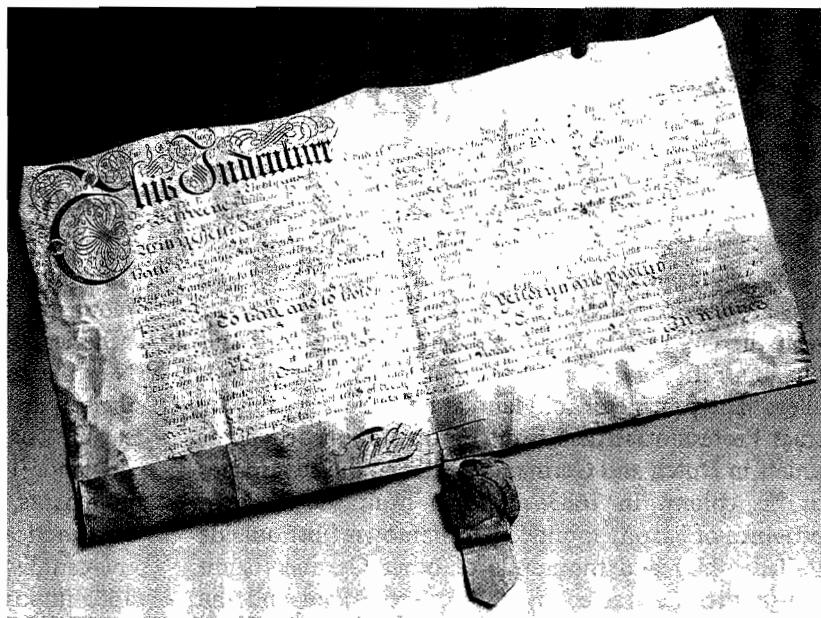
The Restoration Colonies

In 1660 Charles II ascended the English throne and promptly gave away millions of acres of American land. A generous but extravagant man who was always in debt, Charles rewarded eight aristocrats who had supported his return to power with a gift of the Carolinas, an area long claimed by Spain and populated by thousands of Indians. Then in 1664 he granted all the territory between the Delaware and Connecticut Rivers to his brother James, the duke of York. That same year James took possession of the conquered Dutch province of New Netherland, renaming it New York, and conveyed the ownership of the adjacent province of New Jersey to two of the Carolina proprietors (Table 3.1).

In one of the great land grabs in history, a few English aristocrats had taken title to vast provinces. Like Lord Baltimore’s Maryland, their new colonies were proprietorships; the aristocrats owned all the land and could rule as they wished as long as the laws conformed broadly to those of England. Most proprietors envisioned a traditional social order presided over by a

TABLE 3.1 English Colonies Created in North America, 1660–1750

	Date	Type	Religion	Status in 1775	Chief Export or Economic Activity
Carolinas	1663	Proprietary	Church of England	Royal	
North	1691				Mixed farming; naval stores
South	1691				Rice; indigo
New Jersey	1664	Proprietary	Church of England	Royal	Wheat
New York	1664	Proprietary	Church of England	Royal	Wheat
Pennsylvania	1681	Proprietary	No established church	Proprietary	Wheat
Georgia	1732	Trustees	Church of England	Royal	Rice
New Hampshire (separated from Massachusetts)	1739	Royal	Congregationalist	Royal	Mixed farming; lumber; naval stores
Nova Scotia	1749	Royal	Church of England	Royal	Fishing; mixed farming; naval stores



William Penn, Quaker Proprietor

As a member of the Society of Friends, Penn dressed in a plain and simple style, as this portrait shows. However, because of his proprietorship, the young Quaker was a wealthy man, the sole owner of millions of acres of land. This 1685 indenture, or contract, authorized the sale of five hundred acres of land along the Delaware River to John Dwight, a "Gentleman" of Fulham in England. Historical Society of Pennsylvania / Jonathan Horne.

gentry class and a legally established Church of England. Thus, the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina (1669) prescribed a manorial system with a powerful nobility and a mass of serfs.

The Carolinas. This aristocratic scheme proved to be a pure fantasy. The first settlers in North Carolina, poor families from Virginia, refused to work on large manors and chose to live on modest family farms, raising grain and tobacco. Indeed, farmers in Albemarle County, inspired by Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia and angered by taxes on tobacco exports, rebelled in 1677. They deposed the governor and forced the proprietors to abandon most of their financial claims.

The colonists of South Carolina refused to accept the Fundamental Constitutions and created their own version of the hierarchical social order of Europe. White settlers, many of them migrants from the overcrowded sugar-producing island of Barbados, imported enslaved African workers and used them to raise cattle and food crops for export to the West Indies. They also opened a lucrative trade with Native Americans, exchanging English manufactured goods for furs and Indian slaves. Because of the Carolinians' growing reliance on Indian slaves, they encouraged their native allies to take captives from Indian settlements in Florida, raising the threat of war with Spain. In 1715 these slave raids prompted a brutal war with the Yamasee people, which took the lives

of four hundred settlers. Until the 1720s South Carolina remained an ill-governed, violence-ridden frontier settlement.

William Penn and Pennsylvania. In dramatic contrast to the Carolinas, the new proprietary colony of Pennsylvania (which included present-day Delaware) pursued a pacifistic policy toward Native Americans and quickly became prosperous. In 1681 Charles II bestowed the colony on William Penn in payment of a large debt owed to Penn's father. Born to wealth and seemingly destined for courtly pursuits, the younger Penn had converted to the Society of Friends (Quakers), a radical Protestant sect, and used his wealth and prestige to spread its influence. He designed Pennsylvania as a refuge for Quakers, who were persecuted in England because they refused to serve in the army and would not pay taxes to support the Church of England.

Like the Puritans, the Quakers wanted to restore the simplicity and spirituality of early Christianity. However, the Quakers rejected the pessimistic religious doctrines of Puritans or other Calvinists, who restricted salvation to a small elect. Rather, Quakers followed the teachings of the English visionaries George Fox and Margaret Fell, who argued that all men and women had been imbued by God with an inner "light" of grace or understanding that opened salvation to everyone. Quakers did not have ministers, and when they met for

worship there were no sermons; members sat in silence until moved to speak by the inner light.

Penn's Frame of Government (1681) extended Quaker radicalism into politics. In a world dominated by established churches, Penn's constitution guaranteed religious freedom to Christians of all denominations and allowed all property-owning men to vote and hold office. Thousands of Quakers, primarily from the ranks of middling farmers in northwestern England, flocked to Pennsylvania, settling along the Delaware River in or near the city of Philadelphia, which Penn himself laid out in a rational grid pattern of main streets and back alleys. The proprietor sold land at low prices and, to attract Protestant settlers from Europe, published pamphlets in Dutch and German advertising the advantages of his colony. In 1683 migrants from the German province of Saxony founded Germantown (just outside Philadelphia) and thousands of other Germans soon joined them, attracted by cheap, fertile land and the prospect of freedom from religious warfare and persecution. Ethnic diversity, pacifism, and freedom of conscience made Pennsylvania the most open and democratic of the Restoration colonies.

From Mercantilism to Dominion

Since the 1560s, Elizabeth I and her successors had used government subsidies and charters to stimulate English manufacturing and foreign trade. Beginning in the 1650s, the English government extended these policies—known as **mercantilism**—to its American colonies, where they created a generation of political controversy.

The Navigation Acts. The new mercantilist policies regulated colonial commerce and manufacturing. According to mercantilist theory, the American colonies were to produce agricultural goods and raw materials, which English merchants would carry to the home country, where they would be reexported or manufactured into finished products. Consequently, the Navigation Act of 1651 prohibited Dutch merchants from the colonial trade and gave English traders a monopoly by requiring that goods imported into England or its American settlements be carried on English-owned ships. New parliamentary acts in 1660 and 1663 strengthened the ban on foreign merchants and stipulated that colonial sugar, tobacco, and indigo could be shipped only to England. To provide even more business for English merchants, the acts also required that European exports to America pass through England. To enforce these mercantilist laws and raise money, the Revenue Act of 1673 imposed a “plantation duty” on sugar and tobacco exports and created a staff of customs officials to collect the duty (Table 3.2).

The English government backed its mercantilist policy with the force of arms. In three commercial wars between 1652 and 1674 the English navy drove the Dutch from New Netherland and ended Dutch supremacy in the West African slave trade. Meanwhile, English merchants expanded their fleets and dominated Atlantic commerce.

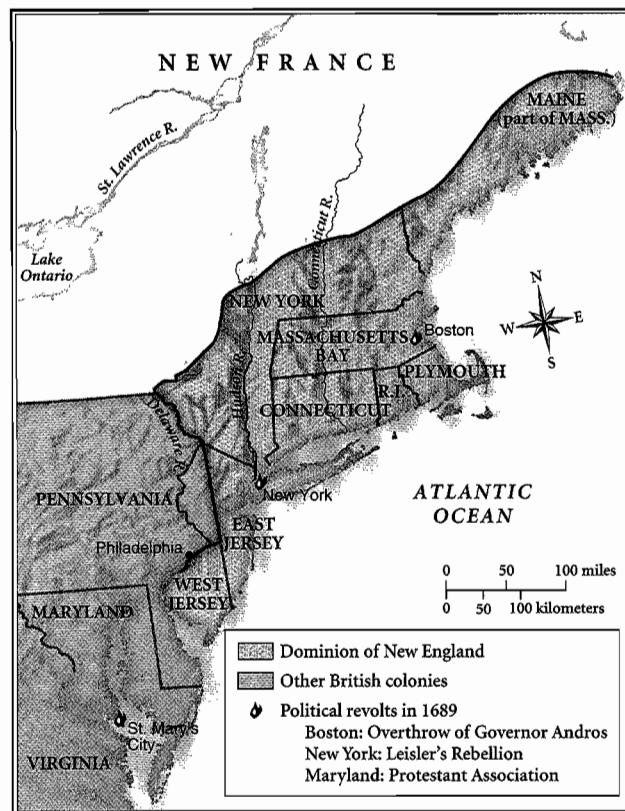
Many Americans resisted these mercantilist laws as burdensome and intrusive. Edward Randolph, an English customs official in Massachusetts, reported that the colony's Puritan-dominated government took

Table 3.2 The Navigation Acts			
	Date	Purpose	Result
Act of 1651	1651	Cut Dutch trade	Mostly ignored
Act of 1660	1660	Ban foreign shipping; enumerated goods only to England	Partially obeyed
Act of 1663	1663	Require European imports to pass only through England	Partially obeyed
Staple Act	1663	Require enumerated goods to pass through England	Mostly obeyed
Revenue Act	1673	Impose “plantation duty”; create customs system	Mostly obeyed
Act of 1696	1696	Prevent frauds; create Vice-Admiralty Courts	Mostly obeyed
Woolen Act	1699	Prevent export or intercolonial sale of textiles	Partially obeyed
Hat Act	1732	Prevent export or intercolonial sale of hats	Partially obeyed
Molasses Act	1733	Cut American imports of molasses from French West Indies	Extensively violated
Iron Act	1750	Prevent manufacture of finished iron products	Extensively violated
Currency Act	1751	End use of paper currency as legal tender in New England	Mostly obeyed

"no notice of the laws of trade," welcoming Dutch merchants, importing goods from the French sugar islands, and claiming that its royal charter exempted it from most of the new regulations. Outraged, Randolph called for English troops to "reduce Massachusetts to obedience." Instead of using force, the Lords of Trade—the administrative body charged with colonial affairs—pursued a punitive legal strategy. In 1679 they denied the claim of Massachusetts Bay to the adjoining province of New Hampshire and created a separate colony there with a royal governor. To bring the Puritans in Massachusetts Bay directly under their control, in 1684 English officials persuaded the English Court of Chancery to annul the colony's charter on the grounds that the Puritan government had violated the Navigation Acts and virtually outlawed the Church of England.

The Dominion of New England. The accession to the throne of James II (r. 1685–1688), who had grown up in France during the reign of Oliver Cromwell, brought new demands for imperial reform. An admirer of France's authoritarian Louis XIV and of "divine-right" monarchy, James instructed the Lords of Trade to create a centralized imperial system in America. Backed by the king, in 1686 they revoked the corporate charters of Connecticut and Rhode Island and merged them with the Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth colonies to form a new royal province, the Dominion of New England. Two years later the home government added New York and New Jersey to the Dominion, creating a single colony that stretched from the Delaware River to Maine (Map 3.1).

This administrative innovation went far beyond mercantilism, which had respected the political autonomy of the various colonies while regulating their trade, and extended to America the authoritarian model of colonial rule imposed on Catholic Ireland. When James II had taken control of New York in 1674, he had refused to allow an elective assembly and ruled by decree. Now he extended absolutist rule to the entire Dominion, appointing Sir Edmund Andros, a former military officer, as governor and empowering him to abolish the existing colonial legislative assemblies. In Massachusetts, Andros immediately banned town meetings, angering villagers who prized local self-rule, and advocated public worship in the Church of England, offending Puritan Congregationalists. Even worse from the colonists' perspective, the governor imposed new taxes and challenged all land titles granted under the original Massachusetts charter. Andros offered to provide new deeds but only if the colonists would agree to pay an annual fee (or quit-rent). The Puritans protested to the king, but James was determined to impose absolutist rule and refused to restore the old charter.



MAP 3.1 The Dominion of New England, 1686–1689

The Dominion created a vast new royal colony stretching nearly five hundred miles along the Atlantic coast. After the Glorious Revolution in England, revolts led or instigated by local politicians and ministers in Boston and New York City ousted royal officials, effectively ending the Dominion. In Maryland, a Protestant association mounted a third revolt, deposing the Catholic proprietary governor. The new governments instituted by King William III balanced the power held by imperial authorities and local political institutions.

The Glorious Revolution of 1688

Fortunately for the colonists, James II angered English political leaders as much as Andros alienated the Americans. The king revoked the charters of many English towns, rejected the advice of Parliament, and aroused popular opposition by openly practicing Roman Catholicism. Then in 1688 James's foreign-born Catholic wife gave birth to a son, raising the prospect of a Catholic heir to the throne. Fearing political persecution similar to that inflicted by King Louis XIV on French Protestants (the Huguenots) in France in 1685, English parliamentary leaders supported the quick and bloodless coup known as the Glorious Revolution. Backed by popular protests and the army, they forced James into exile and enthroned Mary, his Protestant daughter by his first wife, and her Protestant Dutch husband, William of Orange. Queen Mary II and King William III agreed to rule as constitutional monarchs, accepting a bill of rights that limited



A Prosperous Dutch Farmstead

Many Dutch farmers in the Hudson River Valley prospered because of easy access to market and their exploitation of black slaves, which they owned in much greater numbers than their neighbors of English ancestry did. To record his good fortune, Martin Van Bergen of Leeds, New York, had this mural painted over his mantelpiece.

New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, NY.

royal prerogatives and increased personal liberties and parliamentary powers.

To justify their coup, parliamentary leaders relied on the political philosopher John Locke. In his *Two Treatises on Government* (1690) Locke rejected divine-right theories of monarchical rule; he argued that the legitimacy of government rests on the consent of the governed and that individuals have inalienable natural rights to life, liberty, and property. Locke's celebration of individual rights and representative government had a lasting influence in America, where many political leaders wanted to expand the powers of the colonial assemblies.

More immediately, the Glorious Revolution sparked rebellions by colonists in Massachusetts, Maryland, and New York in 1689. When the news of the coup reached Boston in April 1689, Puritan leaders seized Governor Andros and shipped him back to England. Responding to American protests, the new monarchs broke up the

Dominion of New England. However, they refused to restore the old Puritan-dominated government, creating instead a new royal colony of Massachusetts (which included Plymouth and Maine). According to the new charter of 1692, the king would appoint the governor (as well as naval officers who were charged with enforcing customs regulations), and members of the Church of England would enjoy religious freedom. The charter restored the Massachusetts assembly but stipulated that it be elected by all male property owners (not just Puritan church members).

The uprising in Maryland had both economic and religious causes. Since 1660 tobacco prices had been falling, threatening the livelihoods of small holders, tenant farmers, and former indentured servants, most of whom were Protestants. They resented the rising taxes and the high fees imposed by wealthy proprietary officials, who were primarily Catholics. When Parliament ousted James II, a Protestant association in Maryland

quickly removed the Catholic officials appointed by Lord Baltimore. The Lords of Trade suspended Baltimore's proprietorship, imposed royal government, and established the Church of England as the colony's official church. This arrangement lasted until 1715, when Benedict Calvert, the fourth Lord Baltimore, renounced Catholicism and converted to the Anglican faith, prompting the crown to restore the proprietorship to the Calvert family.

In New York the rebellion against the Dominion of New England began a decade of violence and political conflict. New England settlers on Long Island, angered by James's prohibition of representative institutions, began the uprising, and they quickly won the support of Dutch Protestant artisans in New York City, who welcomed the succession of Queen Mary and her Dutch husband. The Dutch militia ousted Lieutenant Governor Nicholson, an Andros appointee and an alleged Catholic sympathizer, and rallied behind a new government led by Jacob Leisler, a militant Protestant merchant and former army officer who had married into a prominent New York Dutch family. Leisler hoped to win the support of all classes and ethnic groups, but his outbursts of religious rage, as he denounced his political rivals as "popish dogs" and "Roages, Rascalls, and Devills," alienated many New Yorkers. When Leisler imprisoned his opponents, imposed new taxes, and championed the interests of Dutch artisans, the wealthy merchants who had traditionally controlled the city government condemned his rule. In 1691 the merchants won the support of a newly appointed royal governor, who instituted a representative assembly and supported a merchant-dominated Board of Aldermen that lowered artisans' wages. The governor had Leisler indicted for treason. He was convicted by a jury, hanged, and then decapitated, an act of political violence that corrupted New York politics for a generation.

In both America and England the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and 1689 began a new phase in imperial history. The uprisings in Boston and New York toppled the authoritarian Dominion of New England and, because William I wanted colonial support for a war against France, won the restoration of internal self-government. In England, the new constitutional monarchs promoted an empire based on commerce, launching a period of "salutary neglect" that gave free rein to enterprising merchants and financiers who developed the American colonies as a source of trade. Although Parliament created a new Board of Trade (1696) to supervise the American settlements, it had little success. Settlers and proprietors resisted the board's attempt to install royal governments in every colony, as did many English political leaders, who feared an increase in monarchical power. Consequently, the empire remained diverse. Colonies that were of minor economic and political importance retained their corporate governments (Connecticut and Rhode Island) or proprietary institutions (Pennsylvania, Maryland, and the Carolinas) while royal governors ruled the lucrative staple-producing settlements in the West Indies and Virginia.

Imperial Wars and Native Peoples

Between 1689 and 1815 Britain vied with France for dominance in western Europe. Prompted by this series of wars, British political leaders created a powerful state that devoted three-quarters of its revenue to military expenses. As these wars spread to the Western Hemisphere, they involved increasing numbers of Native American warriors, who were now armed with European guns and steel knives and hatchets (Table 3.3). By this time many Indian peoples were familiar enough with European goals and diplomacy to turn the fighting to their own advantage.

	Date	Purpose	Result
Anglo-Dutch	1652–1654	Develop commercial markets	Stalemate
Anglo-Dutch	1664	Acquire markets—conquest	England conquers New Netherland
Anglo-Dutch	1673	Develop commercial markets	England makes maritime gains
King William's (War of the League of Augsburg)	1689–1697	Maintain European balance of power	Stalemate in North America
Queen Anne's (War of the Spanish Succession)	1702–1713	Maintain European balance of power	British acquire Hudson Bay, Nova Scotia, and strategic sites in Europe
Jenkins' Ear	1739	Expand markets in Spanish America	Stalemate
King George's (War of Austrian Succession)	1740–1748	Maintain European balance of power	British capture and return Louisbourg (on Cape Breton Island)

The first significant fighting in North America occurred during the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713), which pitted Britain against France and Spain. Taking advantage of this European conflict, English settlers in the Carolinas tried to protect their growing settlements by launching an attack against Spanish Florida. Seeking military allies, the Carolinians armed the Creeks, a 15,000-member agrarian people who lived in matrilineal clans on the fertile lands along the present-day Georgia-Alabama border. A joint English-Creek expedition burned the Spanish town of St. Augustine but failed to capture the nearby fort. Fearing that future Carolinian-backed Indian raids would endanger its colony of Florida and pose a threat to Havana in nearby Cuba, the Spanish reinforced St. Augustine and launched unsuccessful attacks against Charleston, South Carolina.

The Creeks had their own quarrels to settle with the pro-French Choctaws to the west and the Spanish-allied Apalachees to the south, and they took this opportunity to become the dominant tribe in the region. Beginning in 1704 a force of Creek and Yamasee warriors destroyed the remaining Franciscan missions in northern Florida, attacked the Spanish settlement at Pensacola, and massacred the Apalachees, selling 1,000 Apalachee prisoners to South Carolinian traders, who carried most of them to slavery in the West Indies. “In all these extensive dominions and provinces,” a Spanish official lamented, “the law of God and the preaching of the Holy Gospel have now ceased.” Simultaneously, a Carolina-supplied and Creek-led army attacked the Iroquois-speaking Tuscarora people of North Carolina, killing hundreds, executing 160 male captives, and sending 400 women and children into slavery. The Tuscaroras who survived migrated to the north and joined the New York Iroquois, who now became the Six Nations. Having ruled by the guns and hatchets of their Indian allies, the Carolinians now died by them. In 1715, when traders demanded the payment of debts, the Yamasee and Creek revolted, killing 400 colonists before being overwhelmed by the Carolinians and their new Cherokee allies.

Native Americans also played a central role in the fighting in the Northeast, where French Catholics from Canada confronted English Puritans from New England. Aided by the French, Abenaki and Mohawk warriors took revenge on their Puritan enemies. They destroyed English settlements along the coast of Maine and in 1704 attacked the western Massachusetts town of Deerfield, where they killed 48 residents and carried 112 into captivity. New England responded to these raids by launching attacks against French settlements, joining with British naval forces and troops in 1710 to seize Port Royal in French Acadia (Nova Scotia). However, in the following year a major British-American expedition against the French stronghold at Quebec failed miserably.

The New York frontier remained quiet because France and England did not want to disrupt the lucrative fur trade and because most of the Iroquois Nations had adopted a new policy of “aggressive neutrality.” In 1701, after a decade of heavy losses, the Iroquois concluded a peace with France and its Indian allies. Simultaneously, they reinterpreted their “covenant chain” of military alliances with the English governors of New York and the Algonquian tribes of New England. For the next half-century the Iroquois exploited their central geographic location by trading with the English and the French but refusing to fight for either side. The Delaware leader Teedyuscung explained this strategy by showing his people a pictorial message from the Iroquois: “You see a Square in the Middle, meaning the Lands of the Indians; and at one End, the Figure of a Man, indicating the English; and at the other End, another, meaning the French. Let us join together to defend our land against both.”

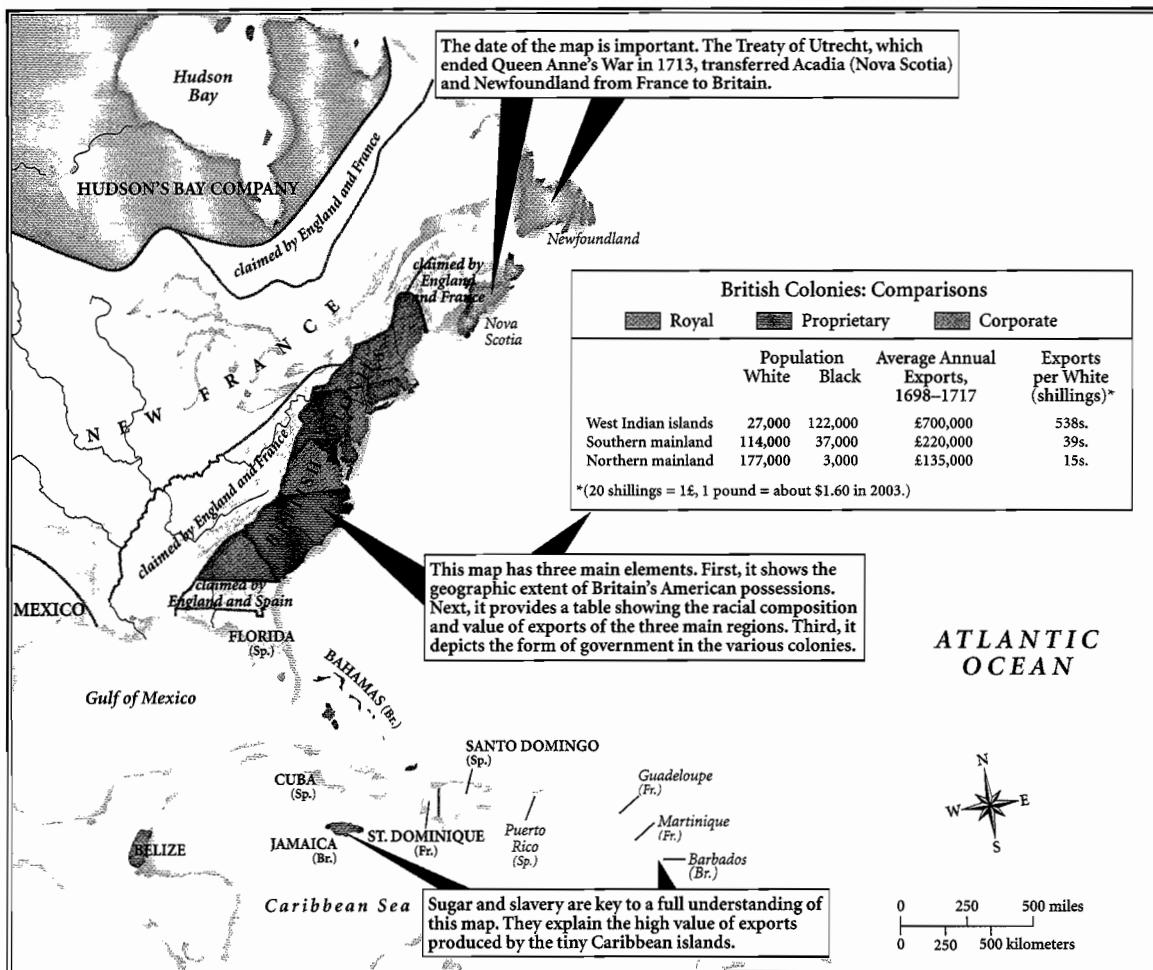
Despite the military stalemate in the colonies, Britain used victories in Europe to win major territorial and commercial concessions in the Americas in the Treaty of Utrecht (1713). From France, Britain obtained Newfoundland, Acadia, the Hudson Bay region of northern Canada, and access to the western Indian trade. From Spain, Britain acquired the strategic fortress of Gibraltar at the entrance to the Mediterranean and a thirty-year contract to supply slaves to Spanish America. These gains solidified Britain’s commercial supremacy and brought peace to eastern North America for a generation (Map 3.2).

The Imperial Slave Economy

Britain’s increasing administrative and military interest in American affairs reflected the growing importance of its Atlantic trade in slaves and staple crops. European merchants had created a new agricultural and commercial order—the South Atlantic system, as historians call it—that produced sugar, tobacco, rice, and other subtropical products. At the core of the new productive regime stood plantations staffed by enslaved labor from Africa (Table 3.4).

The South Atlantic System

The South Atlantic system had three major components: fertile lands seized from Indians, enslaved laborers purchased from Africans, and capital and ships provided by Europeans. In Brazil and the West Indies—the core of the South Atlantic system—European adventurers and settlers used Indian lands to produce sugar. Before 1500 Europeans had few sweeteners—mostly honey and apple juice—and quickly developed a craving for the



MAP 3.2 Britain's American Empire, 1713

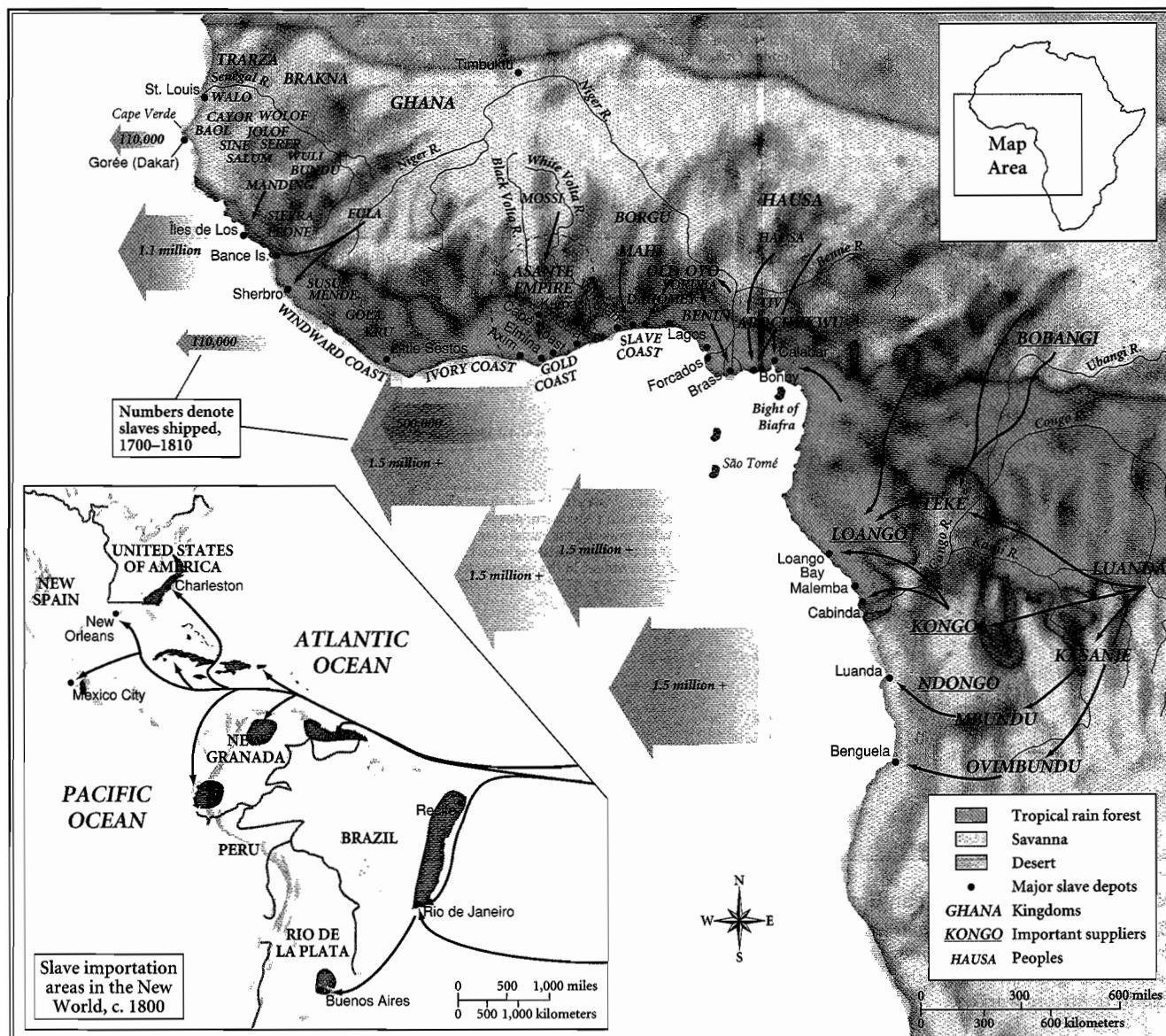
Britain's West Indian possessions were small—mere dots on the Caribbean Sea. However, in 1713 they were by far the most valuable parts of the empire. Their sugar crops brought wealth to English merchants, trade to the northern colonies, and a brutal life (and early death) to African workers.

TABLE 3.4 Slave Imports to the Americas, 1520–1810

Destination	Number of Africans Arriving
South America	
Brazil	3,650,000
Dutch America	500,000
West Indies	
British	1,660,000
French	1,660,000
Central America	
Spanish	1,500,000
North America	
British colonies	500,000
Europe	175,000
TOTAL	9,645,000

potent new sweetener. Demand for sugar soared, outrunning supply for decades and guaranteeing high profits to producers.

A new agricultural economy quickly sprang into existence in the semitropical lands of the Western Hemisphere. European merchants and investors provided the organizational skill, ships, and money needed to grow and process sugarcane, carry the refined sugar to market, and supply the plantations with European tools and equipment. To provide labor for the sugar plantations, the merchants relied primarily on slaves from Africa. Between 1550 and 1700 Portuguese and Dutch traders annually transported about 10,000 Africans across the Atlantic. Subsequently, British and French merchants took over this commerce, developing African-run slave-catching systems that extended far into the interior of Africa and funneled captives to the slave ports of Elmina, Whydah, Loango, and Cabinda. Between 1700 and 1810 they



MAP 3.3 Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1700–1810

The tropical rainforest region of West Africa was home to scores of peoples and dozens of kingdoms. Some kingdoms, such as Dahomey, became aggressive slavers, taking tens of thousands of war captives and funneling them to the seacoast, where they were sold to European traders. About 15 percent of the Africans died on the transatlantic voyage, the grueling Middle Passage, between enslavement in Africa and slavery in the Americas. Most of the survivors labored on sugar plantations in Brazil and the British and French West Indies (see Table 3.4).

For more help analyzing this map, see the **ONLINE STUDY GUIDE** at bedfordstmartins.com/henretta.

carried about 7 million Africans—800,000 in the 1780s alone—to toil in the Americas (Map 3.3).

Portuguese and Dutch planters developed sugar plantations in Brazil and, beginning in the 1620s, English and French merchants carried the new industry to the subtropical islands of the West Indies. In the 1650s

the island of Barbados had a white population of 30,000, consisting of planters and their indentured servants, who exported tobacco and livestock hides to England. Then came the “sugar revolution,” financed initially by Dutch merchants, which quickly converted Barbados into an island of slaves. By 1660 Africans formed a



Shipping Sugar from Antigua

Sugar was a valuable commodity but also a heavy one that was shipped to European markets in giant barrels. Because it was difficult and expensive to build wharves that could accommodate large transports, the barrels were conveyed in small boats to the oceangoing ships, which used winches and pulleys to lift them on board.

National Maritime Museum, London.

majority of the population, and English settlers were departing for the Carolinas. By 1700 English sugar planters were investing heavily in the Leeward Islands and Jamaica, which soon had populations that were 85 to 90 percent African. In 1750, Jamaica—the largest island in the British West Indies—had seven hundred large sugar plantations worked by more than 105,000 slaves, who labored for ten hours a day, slept in flimsy huts, lived on a starchy diet of corn, yams, and dried fish, and were subject to brutal discipline.

Sugar production required fertile land, many laborers to plant and cut the cane, and heavy equipment to process cane into raw sugar and molasses. Because only wealthy merchants or landowners had the capital to outfit a plantation, a planter-merchant elite financed the sugar industry and drew annual profits of more than 10 percent on investments. As the Scottish economist Adam Smith declared in his famous treatise *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), sugar was the most profitable crop in Europe and America.

The South Atlantic system brought wealth to the entire European economy. To take England as an example, the owners of most of the plantations in the British West Indies lived as absentees in England, spending their profits there. Moreover, the British Navigation Acts required that American sugar be sold to English consumers or sent through England to continental markets, thus raising the level of trade. By 1750 reexports of sugar and tobacco from America accounted for half of all British exports. Substantial profits also came from the slave trade, for the Royal African Company and other English traders sold male slaves in the West Indies for three to five times what they paid for them in Africa. Finally, the trade in American sugar and tobacco stimulated manufacturing. To transport slaves (and machinery and settlers) to America, English shipyards

built hundreds of vessels. Thousands of English and Scottish men and women worked in related industries: building port facilities and warehouses, refining sugar and tobacco, distilling rum from molasses (a by-product of sugar), and manufacturing textiles and iron products for the growing markets in Africa and America. Commercial expansion also provided a supply of experienced sailors, helping to make the Royal Navy the most powerful fleet in Europe.

As the South Atlantic system enhanced prosperity in Europe, it brought economic decline, political change, and human tragedy to West Africa and the parts of East Africa, such as Madagascar, where slavers were also active. Between 1550 and 1870 the Atlantic slave trade uprooted about 15 million Africans, diminishing the population and wealth of the continent. Overall, the guns, iron, tinware, rum, cloth, and other European products that entered the African economy in exchange for slaves were worth from one-tenth (in the 1680s) to one-third (by the 1780s) as much as the goods those slaves subsequently produced in America.

Equally important, the slave trade changed the nature of West African society by promoting centralized states and military conquest. In 1739 an observer noted that “whenever the King of Barsally wants Goods or Brandy . . . the King goes and ransacks some of his enemies’ towns, seizing the people and selling them.” War and slaving became a way of life in Dahomey, where the royal house made the sale of slaves a state monopoly and used the resulting access to European guns to create a regime of military despotism. Dahomey’s army, which included a contingent of 5,000 women, systematically raided the interior for captives, and exported thousands of slaves each year (Map 3.3). The Asante kings also used the firearms and wealth acquired through the Atlantic trade to create a bureaucratic empire of 3 million



Olaudah Equiano

This 1780 portrait by an unknown artist in England shows the freed slave and journal writer Olaudah Equiano. Equiano was among the first Africans to develop a consciousness of an African identity that transcended traditional ethnic and national boundaries. Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, England.

to 5 million people. Yet slaving remained a choice for Africans, not a necessity. The old and still powerful kingdom of Benin, famous for its cast bronzes and carved ivory, resolutely opposed the slave trade, prohibiting the export of male slaves for over a century.

The trade in humans produced untold misery—taking tens of thousands of lives and subjecting millions to slavery. In many African societies class divisions hardened as people of noble birth enslaved and sold those of lesser status. Gender relations shifted as well. Men constituted two-thirds of the slaves sent across the Atlantic both because European planters paid more for “men and stout men boys,” “none to exceed the years of 25 or under 10,” and because African traders directed women captives into local slave markets for sale as agricultural workers and house servants. The resulting imbalance between the sexes in Africa allowed some men to take several wives, changing the nature of marriage. Moreover, the Atlantic trade prompted harsher forms of slavery in Africa, eroding the dignity of human life there as well as in the Western Hemisphere.

But those Africans sold into the heart of the South Atlantic system had the bleakest fate. Torn from their village

homes, captives were marched in chains to coastal ports such as Elmina on the Gold Coast. From there they made the perilous **Middle Passage** to the New World in hideously overcrowded ships. There was little to eat and drink, and the stench of excrement was nearly unbearable. Some captives jumped overboard, choosing to drown rather than endure more suffering (see Voices from Abroad, “Olaudah Equiano: The Brutal ‘Middle Passage,’” p. 81). Nearly a million (15 percent of the 8 million who crossed the Atlantic between 1700 and 1810) died on the journey, mostly from dysentery, smallpox, or scurvy.

For the survivors of the Middle Passage, life only got worse on arrival in northwest Brazil or the West Indies because sugar plantations were based on relentless exploitation and systematic violence. Planting and harvesting sugarcane required intense labor under a tropical sun, with a pace set by the overseer’s whip. With sugar prices high and the cost of slaves low, many planters worked slaves to death and then imported more. For example, between 1708 and 1735 about 85,000 Africans were brought into Barbados, but the island’s black population increased only from 42,000 to 46,000 during these decades.

Slavery in the Chesapeake and South Carolina

As the British slave trade increased after 1700, planters in Virginia and Maryland imported thousands of Africans into the Chesapeake. In what historian Ira Berlin has termed a “tobacco revolution,” leading planters created a slave-based economy and a new plantation regime, buying as many black workers as they could afford and sending them to toil under the direction of overseers on far-flung “quarters.” By 1720 Africans numbered 20 percent of the Chesapeake population, and slavery had become a defining principle of the social order, not just one of several forms of labor. Equally important, slavery was increasingly defined in racial terms. A Virginia law of 1692 prohibited sexual intercourse between English and Africans, and in 1705 another statute explicitly defined virtually all resident Africans as slaves: “All servants imported or brought into this country by sea or land who were not Christians in their native country shall be accounted and be slaves” (see American Lives, “From a Piece of Property to a Man of Property: The Odyssey of Robert Pearle,” p. 82).

Nonetheless, living conditions for Africans in Maryland and Virginia were much less severe than in the West Indies, and slaves lived relatively long lives. In terms of labor to produce a harvest, tobacco was not as physically demanding a crop as sugar. Slaves planted the young tobacco seedlings in the spring, hoed and weeded the crop throughout the summer, and in the fall picked and hung up the leaves to cure over the winter. Epidemic diseases did not spread easily in the Chesapeake because the plantation quarters were small and dispersed. Also,

Olaudah Equiano

The Brutal “Middle Passage”

Olaudah Equiano, known during his life in London as Gustavus Vassa, claimed to have been born in the ancient kingdom of Benin (in present-day southern Nigeria). However, in separate scholarly articles, two researchers have recently suggested that Equiano was actually born into slavery in America and used information from conversations with African-born slaves to create a fictitious history of an idyllic childhood, kidnapping and enslavement at the age of eleven, and a traumatic Middle Passage across the Atlantic. Whatever the truth of this controversial interpretation, Equiano apparently endured plantation slavery in Barbados and Virginia, where he was purchased by an English sea captain. Buying his freedom in 1766, Equiano lived in London and became an antislavery activist; twenty years later he published the memoir from which this selection has been taken.

My father, besides many slaves, had a numerous family of which seven lived to grow up, including myself and a sister who was the only daughter. . . . I was trained up from my earliest years in the art of war, my daily exercise was shooting and throwing javelins, and my mother adorned me with emblems after the manner of our greatest warriors. One day, when all our people were gone out to their works as usual and only I and my dear sister were left to mind the house, two men and a woman got over our walls, and in a moment seized us both, and without giving us time to cry out or make resistance they stopped our mouths and ran off with us into the nearest wood. . . .

At length, after many days' travelling, during which I had often changed masters, I got into the hands of a chieftain in a very pleasant country. This man had two wives and some children, and they all used me extremely well and did all they could to comfort me, particularly the first wife, who was something like my mother.

Although I was a great many days' journey from my father's house, yet these people spoke exactly the same language with us. This first master of mine, as I may call him, was a smith, and my principal employment was working his bellows.

I was again sold and carried through a number of places till . . . at the end of six or seven months after I had been kidnapped I arrived at the sea coast.

The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slave ship which was then riding at anchor and waiting for its cargo. I now saw myself deprived of all chance of returning to my native country . . . ; and I even wished for my former slavery in preference to my present situation, which was filled with horrors of every kind. . . . I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life; so that with the loathsomeness of the stench and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste any thing. I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me; but soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables, and on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands and laid me across I think the windlass, and tied my feet while the other flogged me severely. I had never experienced anything of this kind before, and although, not being used to the water, I naturally feared that element the first time I saw it, yet nevertheless could I have got over the nettings, I would have jumped over the side, but I could not. . . . One day, when we had a smooth sea and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made it through the nettings and jumped into the sea.

At last we came in sight of the island of Barbados; the white people got some old slaves from the land to pacify us. They told us we were not to be eaten but to work, and were soon to go on land where we should see many of our country people. This report eased us much; and sure enough soon after we were landed there came to us Africans of all languages.

Source: *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (London, 1789), 15, 22–23, 28–29.

From a Piece of Property to a Man of Property: The Odyssey of Robert Pearle

When Robert Pearle died in 1765 at the age of seventy-five, he owned an extensive estate that included fourteen slaves, whom he divided among his three sons. The father's financial skills apparently rubbed off on his son James. When James Pearle died in 1774, he owned nine slaves, nine thousand pounds of tobacco, and personal goods worth £782, an estate that placed him among the top tenth of all Maryland property owners. Unlike these other wealthy men, the Pearles were not solely European by ancestry. Robert Pearle was a mulatto, "born of a negroe slave" (as a court report put it) and a slave himself until the age of thirty-five. His son James was born free, the son of Nanny Pearle, who was also a mulatto and a former slave.

According to law, Robert Pearle was the product of an illegal union. By 1700 Maryland law strictly prohibited miscegenation, sexual relations between those of European and African descent, labeling such unions "Unnatural and Inordinate Copulations." However, planters handled their human property pretty much as they pleased. For decades planters had flogged the young English indentured servants who worked their lands and had forced themselves on servant women—callously adding a year to the woman's time of service if she became pregnant. The coming of racial slavery only increased this physical and sexual exploitation, as scores of English planters fathered children by enslaved African women. A Maryland census of 1755 listed 42,000 enslaved blacks (28 percent of the total population) and 3,592 mulattos (2 percent), a majority of whom were slaves.

Whatever the brutality of forced interracial sex, it opened the door to freedom. Robert Pearle was undoubtedly the son of his owner, Richard Marsham, a wealthy Catholic planter in Prince George's County who, at his death in 1713, owned thirty-six slaves. Pearle's mother was probably the "Negro woman Sarah" who received special treatment in Marsham's will. Sarah obtained her freedom and the right to receive "good sufficient Dyt and apparill . . . and every year

In the Name of God Amen I Robert Pearl of Frederick County Maryland being sick and weak of body and of sound Minde & memory do make this my last Will & Testament looking and making this all other Wills hereof made by me to my Manner following My Testemt I give and bequeath to my Son Daniel Pearl, Negro Peter, Rachel, Nan, Elfrong to him and his Heirs forever Item, I give and bequeath to my Son James Pearl Negro, Lucy, Anna, Jenny, So & Elizias, to him and his Heirs forever Item giving to my Son Daniel Pearl Negro Peter, Rachel, Nan, Elfrong to him & his Heirs forever to my Son Daniel Pearl, my Dwelling House & my now Lodging House and furniture, I leave to Elizabeth Lewis, Mrs. wife of Indian Corn Wine Marcell of Wheat & one Crag Begotland Tolson, to begin to her by my Executors hereafter named each Year to two Shillings, Likewise one Bed and furniture that is in the Chamber and one duck bed for a two hours Weight of Pork for two years paid as aforesaid. I leave all the remainder of my cattle & hogs to be equally divided between my three Sons Daniel Pearl, James Pearl & Basill Pearl Likewise my land on the Ground Side to be equally divided amongst my said three Sons before named, they letting the same stay to finish it. I leave my now dwelling plantation to my Son Basill Pearl, I leave my Son Charles Pearl five Shillings to begin by my Executors hereafter named, I leave my Son Thomas Pearl five Shillings to begin in like Manner, I leave my Daughter Ann Marshall five Shillings I leave my Daughter Catharine Rose Five Shillings to be paid in like Manner to begin in like Manner All the remainder part of my Estate after discharging

Just Debts &c. My Will is that it be equally divided between my two Sons, Major Pearl and Basill Pearl. I appoint and declare my two Sons, Major Pearl & Basill Pearl my whole and entire Executrix of this my last Will and Testament In witness whereof I have hereunto affixed my hand and seal this 8 Day of October 1765

Robert Pearl
in presence of
William Bodkin, John Bennett, John Johnson & Thomas Johnson the four Subscribing Testators
John Johnson refers to the aforesaid Will and made on the 10th instant of
John Johnson Clercugly test that they did see the Testator Robert Pearl sign and
Thomas Johnson Clercugly test that they did see the Testator Robert Pearl sign and
that the said will and seal him faciliatly perceived and knew the same
to be his last will and testement, and that at the time of his so doing he was
in his last will and testement, and that at the time of his so doing he was
the best & clear apprehension of a sound mind discerning Mente et Memorem, videlicet
that they veracly subscribed their Names and Seals to the said will in the
presence of the said Testator in the presence of each other
Testator Robert Pearl
Testator William Johnson
Testator John Johnson
Testator Thomas Johnson

Robert Pearle's Will, 1765

"In the Name of God Amen." Apart from this ritualistic phrase, Robert Pearle's last Testament—unlike other colonial wills—is completely devoid of religious sentiments, suggesting that he may not have imbibed the Catholic faith of his father and his patrons. In businesslike fashion, the will divides his most valuable property—fourteen slaves—among his sons Daniel, James, and Basill, and provides a token sum of money, a mere five shillings, to each of Pearle's other children—two sons and two daughters.

Maryland Historical Society.

during her natural Life the Sum of two Pounds Sterling." Marsham's will also granted the prospect of freedom to Sarah's mulatto offspring. Robert and his mulatto wife Nanny—perhaps another of Marsham's children—along with their two-year-old son Daniel—were "to be fully discharged and set free" in 1720, provided they remained "vigilant and faithful" to his executors, members of the influential Waring family. In the sins of the white father lay the salvation of the mulatto son and daughter.

Robert Pearle used his freedom wisely. Initially propertyless, he employed his skills as a carpenter to make his way in the world. In 1726 he won a legal suit for a debt against innkeeper Edward Bradshaw, receiving a judgment of 3,200 pounds of tobacco, and collected similar debts from many others: despite Pearle's background, the justices of the Prince George's County court enforced his contractual agreements. On the one occasion when they denied his right to sue, "Considering the Circumstances of the Plaintiff who is a Molatto (born of a Negro slave)," Pearle successfully petitioned the Maryland Assembly for the right "to Recover his Just Debts," eventually winning a substantial judgment of £45.

Something—his carpentry skills, solid character and ambition, or ties to the Marshams and Warings—smoothed Pearle's way through the white world. By 1724 he had acquired 100 acres of land; three years later he owned a white servant; and two years after that he held title to African slaves, mortgaging "negro man Harry" and "negro woman Lucy" to sheriff Richard Lee for 8,400 pounds of tobacco. For the next decade Pearle lived quietly, enjoying his property and raising his children.

Then interracial sex, the source of Robert Pearle's freedom, threatened his family with legal disaster. In 1742 a grand jury indicted William Marshall, a white planter, for marrying a mulatto: Ann Pearle, Robert's daughter. Just as this case was coming to trial, the county court charged Elizabeth Graves, a white woman, with the crime of marrying Daniel Pearle, Robert's mulatto son. For some reason—perhaps a personal vendetta, perhaps increasing racial tension—the Pearles and their spouses found themselves facing severe legal penalties. The justices tried William Marshall, found him guilty of miscegenation, and sentenced him to "Become a Servant for Seven Years"—the fate that awaited Elizabeth Graves as well. If convicted of interracial marriage, the two Pearle children faced a much harsher prospect: to "become a Slave during Life."

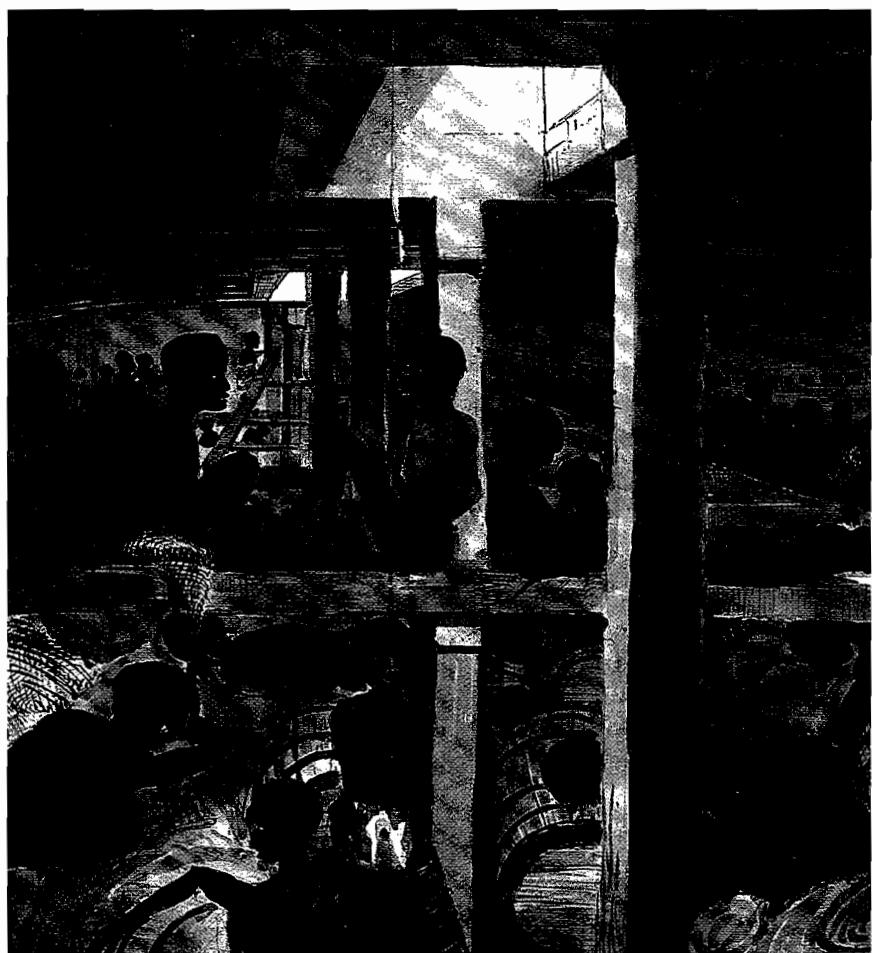
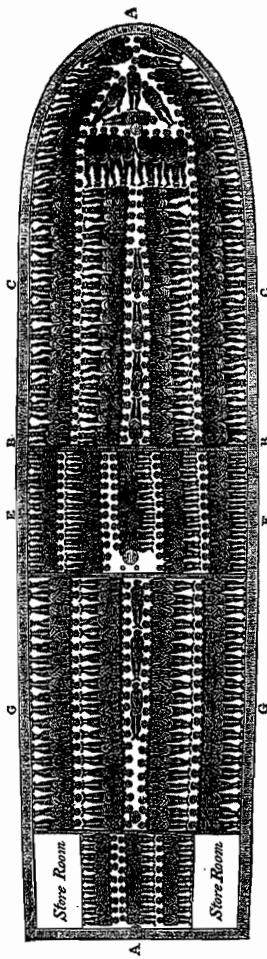
Mysteriously, none of these sentences was ever imposed. Marshall successfully appealed his conviction to the Provincial Court, while "by order of [the] Attorney General," the case against Elizabeth Graves was never

prosecuted. The young Pearles—Ann and Daniel—were never even indicted. Apparently Robert Pearle's influential white friends had intervened to protect his family. As Pearle's biographer, Mary Jeske, has suggested, their success demonstrated that race relations in the small and intimate world of plantation society were much more fluid and complex than the statutes dictated.

However, the lines of racial caste were steadily hardening. When Robert Pearle won his freedom in 1720, slaves constituted about 20 percent of the population of Prince George's County; by 1740, the proportion was twice as great, and blacks formed the majority in many Tidewater districts. Fearing slave revolts, whites were no longer willing to tolerate free blacks and mulattos, especially those who threatened white supremacy by marrying across racial lines. Aware of this ominous change, in 1744 Robert Pearle, his son Daniel, and his son-in-law William Marshall moved their families west to the Monocacy Valley, a sparsely settled region in what would soon become Frederick County. There, each man took a seventeen-year lease on 100-acre farmsteads on the Carrollton Manor, a vast estate owned by Charles Carroll and populated primarily by German and English tenants. At one stroke the Pearles had escaped the racially charged atmosphere of the Tidewater region and secured a new powerful white Catholic ally. Following in the religious footsteps of his owner-father, Robert Pearle was a Catholic—as were the Warings and the Carrolls. The ties of religion, like those of kinship, counterbalanced the antagonisms of race.

Migration to Carrollton Manor offered the prospect of family cohesion and economic mobility. Land was plentiful, and eventually all of Robert Pearle's sons secured manorial leases. Taking advantage of low rents, high prices for tobacco and wheat, and slave labor, the Pearles attained substantial prosperity.

We can only wonder if the Pearles had any qualms about owning enslaved Africans. Having been raised in a "society with slaves" in which racial boundaries were blurred, the family may have identified with successful planters and regretted only that it did not own more slaves. As biographer Mary Jeske notes: "Had he been the legitimate son of his white father rather than a mulatto bastard, Pearle might well have joined the ranks of the Chesapeake elite." As it was, Robert Pearle had to scrape and struggle for decades, first for freedom, then for economic prosperity, and finally for family security. Racial slavery and the caste system exacted a high price even from those who attained their freedom.



Two Views of the Middle Passage

As the slave trade boomed during the eighteenth century, ship designers packed in more and more human cargo, treating enslaved Africans with no more respect than hogsheads of sugar or tobacco. By contrast, a watercolor of 1846, painted by a ship's officer on a voyage to Brazil, captures the humanity and dignity of the enslaved Africans.

Peabody & Essex Museum / Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, England / Bridgeman Art Library.

because tobacco profits were low, planters could not afford to buy new slaves and therefore treated those they had less harshly than West Indian planters did. Some tobacco planters attempted to increase their workforce through reproduction, purchasing a high proportion of female slaves and encouraging large families. In 1720 women made up about a third of the African population of Maryland, and the black population had begun to increase naturally. One absentee owner instructed his plantation agent “to be kind and indulgent to the breeding wenches, and not to force them when with child upon any service or hardship that will be injurious to them.” And, he added, “the children are to be well looked after.” By midcentury slaves made up 40 percent of some parts of the Chesapeake, and over three-quarters of them were American born.

Slaves in South Carolina labored under conditions that were much more oppressive. The colony had grown slowly until 1700, when Africans from rice-growing

societies, who knew how to plant, harvest, and process that nutritious grain, turned it into a profitable export crop (see New Technology, “Rice: Riches, Wretchedness, and Community,” p. 86). To expand production, white planters imported tens of thousands of slaves—and a “rice revolution” quickly brought an extraordinary change to the colony (Figure 3.1). By 1720 Africans made up a majority of the population of South Carolina as a whole and constituted 80 percent of the residents of the rice-growing areas, where they lived on plantations of fifty or more slaves. However, many workers met an early death. Growing rice in inland swamp areas required months of work in ankle-deep mud, weeding the crop amidst pools of putrid water. Mosquito-borne epidemic diseases swept through these lowlands, taking thousands of African lives. Overwork killed many more slaves because moving tons of dirt to build irrigation works was brutally hard labor. As a Scottish traveler noted, “the labour required for it is only fit for slaves, and I think the hardest work I have seen them

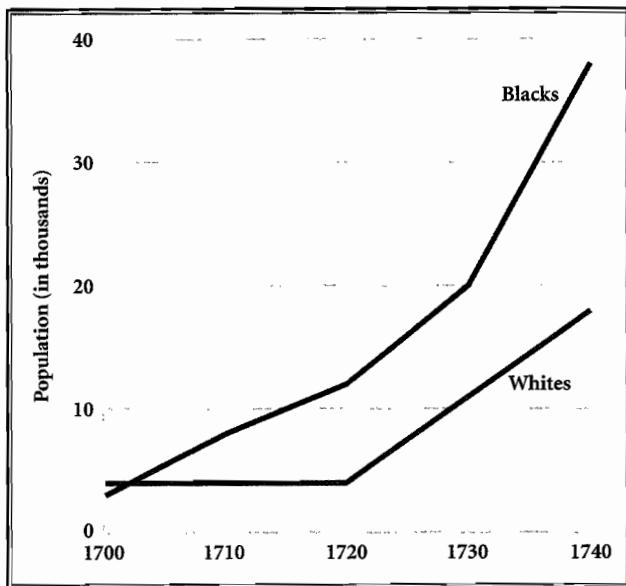


FIGURE 3.1 The Growth of Slavery in South Carolina
To grow more rice, white planters imported thousands of African slaves, giving South Carolina a black majority and prompting the development of an African-influenced language and culture.

engaged in.” As in the West Indies, there were many deaths and few births, and the importation of new slaves constantly “re-Africanized” the black population.

African American Community and Resistance

Slaves came from many regions of West Africa. South Carolina slave owners preferred laborers from the Gold

Coast and Gambia, who had a reputation as hard workers with farming experience (Map 3.3). However, as African sources of slaves shifted southward after 1730, more than 30 percent of the colony’s workforce came from the Congo and Angola. Because of such changes in the trade, no African people or language group formed a majority of the slaves in any American colony (Table 3.5). Moreover, many white planters consciously enhanced this cultural diversity to prevent slave revolts. “The safety of the Plantations,” declared a widely read English pamphlet, “depends upon having Negroes from all parts of Guiny, who do not understand each other’s languages and Customs and cannot agree to Rebel.”

The Emergence of an African American Culture. In fact, slaves initially did not regard each other as “Africans” or “blacks” but as members of a specific family, clan, or people—Mende, Hausa, Ibo, Yoruba—and they associated mostly with those who shared their language or culture. Gradually, however, enslaved peoples found it in their interest to transcend these cultural barriers. Especially in the West Indies and in the lowlands of South Carolina, the largely African-born population created new languages, such as the Gullah dialect in South Carolina, that combined English and African words in an African grammatical structure. “They have a language peculiar to themselves,” a missionary reported, “a wild confused medley of Negro and corrupt English, which makes them very unintelligible except to those who have conversed with them for many years.” In South Carolina, another missionary complained as late as 1754 that “our negros are so Ignorant of the English Language . . . it is a great while before you can get them to understand . . . the Meaning of

TABLE 3.5 African Slaves Imported into North America, by Ethnicity, 1700–1775

African Region of Departure	Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Senegambia	Mandinka, Fulbe, Serer, Jola, Wolof, and Bambara	47,300	17
Sierra Leone	Vai, Mende, Kpelle, and Kru	33,400	12
Gold Coast	Ashanti and Fanti	19,500	7
Bight of Benin, Bight of Biafra	Ibo and Ibibio	47,300	17
West-Central	Kongo, Tio, and Matamba	44,600	16
Southeast Africa	Unknown	2,800	1
Other or Unknown		83,500	30
TOTAL		278,400	100

The numbers are estimated from known voyages involving 195,000 Africans. Ethnic origins should be considered as very tentative because slaves from many regions left from the same port and because the ethnic and regional origins of 83,500 slaves (30 percent) are not known.

Source: Aaron S. Fogelman, “From Slaves, Convicts, and Servants to Free Passengers: The Transformation of Immigration in the Era of the American Revolution,” *Journal of American History* 85 (June 1998), Table A4.

Rice: Riches, Wretchedness, and Community

Two technological innovations—one African, one European—shaped the evolution of the South Carolina rice industry and black life during the eighteenth century. Because rice was an exotic crop to them, the first English settlers in the Carolinas failed in their attempts to grow the nutritious grain. As one planter recalled, “The people being unacquainted with the manner of cultivating rice, many difficulties attended to the first planting and preparing it, as a vendable commodity.”

West Africans soon provided the requisite knowledge. Along the semitropical western coast of Africa, a traveler noted, rice “forms the chief part of the African’s sustenance.” Eager to have ready access to a familiar food, enslaved blacks in South Carolina took up rice cultivation during the 1690s, teaching their English owners not only how to plant and tend the crop but how to process it. To separate the tough husk of the rice seed from the nutritious grain inside, English settlers had experimented with a “rice mill,” a “Pendulum Engine, which doeth much better, and in lesser time and labour, huske rice.” When these machines did not prove equal to the task, English planters turned to African women and their traditional husking technology. The women placed the grain in large wooden mortars hollowed from the trunks of pine or cypress trees and then pounded it with long wooden pestles, removing the husks and whitening the grains. Their labor was prodigious. By the 1770s slaves were annually process-

ing 75 million tons of rice for export and millions more for their own consumption.

African labor and technology brought both wealth and wretchedness to South Carolina. The planter-merchant aristocracy that controlled the rice industry became immensely wealthy, while the tens of thousands of enslaved Africans who grew the rice in putrid inland swamps lived hard and brutal lives that ended in early death. There were few marriages among blacks, few children, and a weak sense of community life as the surviving slaves clung to their diverse African ethnic identities.

Following the American Revolution, planters transformed rice production by introducing tidal irrigation. Moving their operations to coastal areas, the planters had their slave laborers build high dikes to keep salt water out of the rice fields and elaborate floodgates and irrigation ditches to admit fresh river water. As the well-irrigated rice grew taller, workers raised the level of the water until the crop had shoots with three leaves (about three weeks after planting). Then they drained the field, hoed away the weeds, and reflooded the fields until harvest time.

The new system was more expensive in terms of initial capital but much more productive. The average yield per acre on a prewar inland swamp plantation was about 800 pounds, while on a postwar tidal plantation it was around 1,300 pounds. Equally important, a worker could now cultivate five times as much rice, dramatically reducing day-to-day labor costs. Finally, planters devised mills that used the tidal flow to power the pestle-and-mortar machines, removing the heavy burden of hulling the rice from slave women.

The new tidal technology permitted the flowering of the task system of labor that was unique to the South Carolina slave economy. Exploiting the weight of their overwhelming numbers, enslaved laborers had gradually won control over their work lives and staged minor rebellions when it was challenged. “All my

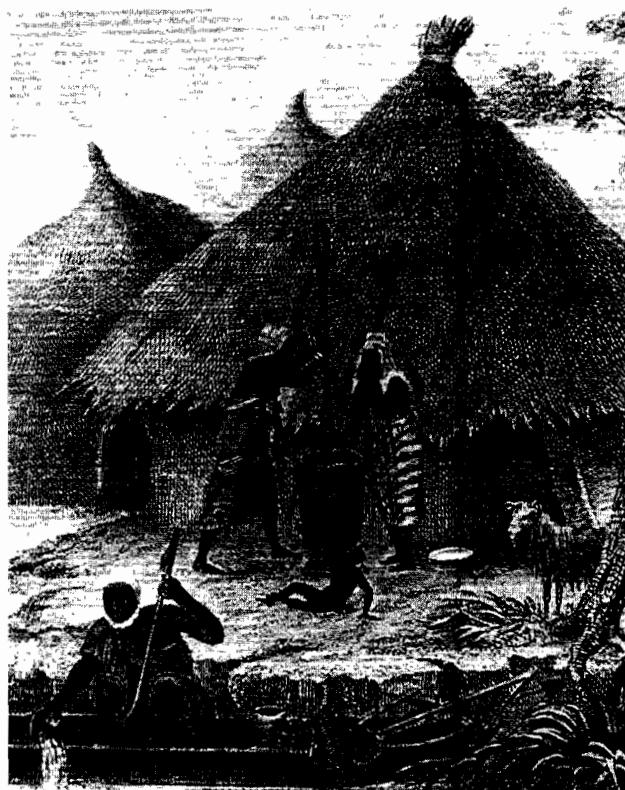
Words.” In the Chesapeake, where there were more American-born blacks (and in the northern colonies, which had small numbers of slaves), many Africans gradually gave up their native tongues for English. A European visitor to mid-eighteenth-century Virginia reported with surprise that “all the blacks spoke very good English.”

The acquisition of a common language, whether Gullah or English, was a prerequisite for the creation of an African American community. A more equal sex ratio,

which would encourage stable families, was another. In South Carolina a high death rate undermined ties of family and kinship, but after 1725 blacks in the Chesapeake colonies created strong nuclear families and extended kin relationships. For example, all but 30 of the 128 slaves on the home quarter of Charles Carroll’s estate in Maryland were members of two extended families. These “African Americans” had gradually developed a culture of their own, passing on family names, traditions, and knowledge to the next generation. As one observer noted, blacks had

working Negroes left me last Night," one planter complained in 1786. However, as the carefully laid-out irrigation system on tidal plantations gradually imposed an orderly grid on the landscape, slaves and masters found it easier to negotiate the tasks a worker would perform each day: hoeing a square of 105 feet, digging 75 trenches, harvesting a half-acre. As slaves settled in

to a regular work routine, they also lived longer and bore more children, primarily because tidal plantations were less disease-ridden than inland swamps. Even before the end of the Atlantic slave trade in 1808, they had begun to create a cohesive African American community. Technological change had affected the course of cultural life.



Rice Hulling in West Africa and Georgia

The eighteenth-century engraving shows West African women hulling rice using huge wooden mortars and pestles, the same technology employed in the photograph of early-twentieth-century African American women in Georgia.

Library of Congress / Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta.



For more help analyzing these images, see the ONLINE STUDY GUIDE at bedfordstmartins.com/henretta.

created a cultural world of their own, "a Nation within a Nation."

As enslaved blacks forged an identity in an alien land, their lives became a mixture of old African forms and new American experiences. Many Africans arrived in the colonies with filed teeth and ritual scars that white planters called "country markings" or "negro markings." Because slaves could not re-create traditional ethnic-based communities, these marks of tribal or group identity fell into disuse. However, the African heritage took

tangible form in wood carvings inspired by traditional motifs, the large wooden mortars and pestles that slaves used to hull rice, and the design of shacks, which often had rooms arranged from front to back in a distinctive "I" pattern (not side by side, as was common in English houses). African values also persisted, as some slaves retained Muslim religious beliefs and many more relied on the spiritual powers of conjurers, who knew the ways of African gods. As an English missionary reported from Georgia in the 1750s, many slaves clung to "the old



African Culture in South Carolina

The dance and the musical instruments are of Yoruba origin, the contribution of Africans from the Niger River–Gold Coast region. This Yoruba-dominated area accounted for one-sixth of the slaves imported into South Carolina. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Superstition of a false Religion.” Other slaves adopted Protestant Christianity but reshaped its doctrines, ethics, and rituals to fit their needs and create a spiritually rich and long-lasting religious culture of their own.

Yet there were drastic limits on African American creativity because slaves were denied education and accumulated few material goods. A well-traveled European who visited a slave hut in Virginia in the late eighteenth century found it to be

more miserable than the most miserable of the cottages of our peasants. The husband and wife sleep on a mean pallet, the children on the ground; a very bad fireplace, some utensils for cooking. . . . They work all week, not having a single day for themselves except for holidays.

Oppression and Resistance. Slaves resisted the rigorous work routine at their peril. To punish slaves who disobeyed, refused to work, or ran away, planters resorted to the lash and the amputation of fingers, toes, and ears (see American Voices, “Philip Fithian: Sadism under Slavery,” p. 89). Declaring the chronic runaway Ballazore an “incorrigible rogue,” a Virginia planter ordered all his toes cut off: “nothing less than dismembering will reclaim him.” Thomas Jefferson, who witnessed such cruelty on his father’s plantation in mid-eighteenth-century

Virginia, noted that each generation of whites was “nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny,” for the relationship “between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submission on the other.”

The extent of violence by whites depended on the size and density of the slave population. Because their numbers were so small, blacks in rural areas of New York, Pennsylvania, and other northern colonies endured low status but little violence. Conversely, assertive slaves in the predominantly African-populated West Indian islands routinely suffered branding with hot irons. In the lowlands of South Carolina, where Africans outnumbered Europeans eight to one, planters prohibited their black workers from leaving the plantation without special passes and organized their poor white neighbors into armed patrols to police the countryside. Slaves dealt with their plight in a variety of ways. Some newly arrived Africans fled to the frontier, where they tried to establish African villages or, more often, married into Indian tribes. Blacks familiar with white ways, especially those fluent in English, fled to towns, where they tried to pass as free blacks. But the great majority of African Americans worked out their destinies as enslaved laborers on rural plantations, continually bargaining over the terms of their bondage. Some blacks agreed to do extra work in return for better food and clothes; at other times they seized a small privilege

Philip Fithian

Sadism under Slavery

Planters relied on various incentives to get work from their African slaves. A few used rewards, providing cooperative laborers with food, leisure, and relatively good treatment. Many more planters wanted to maximize their profits and relied on force, extracting work by whipping recalcitrant laborers. Some brutal owners and overseers were so determined to demonstrate their power that they went much further, as described by Philip Fithian, a young Princeton College graduate who was employed as a tutor by Robert Carter III, one of the wealthiest Virginia planters.

[1773] This Evening, after I had dismissed the Children, & was sitting in the School-Room cracking Nuts, [I asked] . . . Mr. Carters Clerk, a civil, inoffensive agreeable young Man . . . what their [the slaves' food] allowance is? He told me that, excepting some favourites around the table their weekly allowance is a peck of Corn, & a pound of Meat a Head!—And Mr. Carter is allowed by all . . . [to be] by far the most humane to his Slaves of any in these parts! Good God! are these Christians?

While I am on the Subject, I will relate further, what I heard George Lee's Overseer, one Morgan, say the

and dared the master to revoke it. By such means Sundays became a day free of labor—a right rather than a privilege. When bargaining failed to yield results, slaves protested silently by working slowly or stealing. Other blacks, provoked beyond endurance, attacked their owners or overseers, although such assaults were punishable by mutilation or death. And despite the fact that whites were armed and, outside of coastal South Carolina, more numerous than Africans, some blacks plotted rebellion.

Predictably, South Carolina became the setting for the largest slave uprising of the eighteenth century—the Stono Rebellion of 1739. The governor of the Spanish (and Catholic) colony of Florida helped to instigate the revolt by promising freedom and land to slaves who ran away from their English owners. By February 1739 at least sixty-nine slaves had escaped to St. Augustine, and rumors circulated “that a Conspiracy was formed by Negroes in Carolina to rise and make their way out of the province.”

other day that he himself had often done to Negroes, and found it useful. He said that whipping of any kind does them no good, for they will laugh at your greatest Severity; But he told us he had invented two things, and by several experiments had proved their success.

For Sullenness, Obstinacy, or Idleness, says he, Take a Negro, strip him, tie him fast to a post; take then a sharp Curry-Comb, and curry him severely till he is well scrap'd; and call a Boy with some dry Hay, and make the Boy rub him down for several Minutes, then salt him, & unlose him. He will attend to his Business (said the in-human Infidel) afterwards!

But savage Cruelty does not exceed His next diabolical Invention—To get a Secret from a Negro, says he, take the following Method—Lay upon your Floor a large thick plank, having a peg about eighteen inches long, of hard wood, & very Sharp, on the upper end, fixed fast in the plank—then strip the Negro, tie the Cord to a staple in the Ceiling, [and suspend the Negro from that cord] so that his foot may just rest on the sharpened Peg then turn him briskly around, and you would laugh (said our informer) at the Dexterity of the Negro, while he was relieving his Feet on the sharpen'd Peg!

I need say nothing of these seeing there is a righteous God, who will take vengeance on such Inventions.

Source: Philip Vickers Fithian, *Journals and Letters, 1773–1774*, ed. Hunter Dulsington Farish (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Press, 1943), 50–51.

When war between England and Spain broke out later in September, seventy-five Africans—some of them Portuguese-speaking Catholics from the African kingdom of Kongo—rose in revolt and killed a number of whites near the Stono River. Displaying their skills as former soldiers in the war-torn Kongo, the rebels took up arms and marched south toward Florida “with Colours displayed and two Drums beating.” Unrest swept the countryside, but the white militia killed many of the Stono rebels and dispersed the rest, preventing a general uprising. Frightened whites imported fewer new slaves and tightened plantation discipline. For Africans the price of active resistance was high.

The Southern Gentry

As the southern colonies became full-fledged slave societies, the character of life changed for whites as well as



"Virginian Luxuries"

This painting by an unknown artist (c. 1810) depicts the exploitation inherent in a slave society. On the right, an owner chastises a male slave by beating him with a cane; on the left, ignoring the cultural and legal rules prohibiting such affairs, a white master prepares to engage in sex with his black mistress.

Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection,
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

blacks. After 1675 settlement in the Chesapeake region moved inland, away from the disease-ridden swampy lowlands, allowing English migrants to live much longer lives and form stable families and communities. Similarly, many white planters in South Carolina improved their health by transferring their residence to Charleston during the hot, mosquito-ridden summer months. As their longevity increased, men reassumed their customary control of family property. When death rates had been high, many husbands had named their wives as executors of their estates and legal guardians of their children and had given their widows large inheritances. After 1700 most wealthy planters named male kin as executors and guardians and again gave priority of inheritance to male children, limiting a widow's portion to the traditional one-third share during her lifetime.

The reappearance of strict patriarchy within the family mirrored broader social developments. The planter and merchant elite now stood at the top of a social hierarchy somewhat like that of Europe, exercising authority over a yeoman class, a larger group of white tenant farmers, and a growing host of enslaved black laborers—the American equivalent of oppressed peasants and serfs. Wealthy planters used Africans to plant orchards and grow food as well as tobacco; build houses, wagons, and tobacco casks; and make shoes and clothes. By increasing the self-sufficiency of their plantations, the planter elite survived the depressed tobacco market between 1660 and 1720. Small-scale planters who used family labor to grow tobacco fared less well, falling deeper into debt to their creditors among the elite.

To prevent another rebellion like Bacon's uprising, which had brought a short military occupation by English troops, the Chesapeake gentry paid attention to the

concerns of middling and poor whites. They urged smallholders to invest in land and slaves. By 1770 no fewer than 60 percent of the English families in the Chesapeake owned at least one slave and therefore had a personal stake in this exploitative labor system. In addition, the gentry gradually reduced the taxes paid by poorer whites; in Virginia the annual poll tax paid by every free man fell from 45 pounds of tobacco in 1675 to 5 pounds in 1750. The political elite also allowed poor yeomen and some tenants to vote. The strategy of the leading families—the Carters, Lees, Randolphs, Robinsons—was to curry favor with these voters at election time, bribing them with rum, money, and the promise of favorable legislation and minor offices in county governments. In return, they expected yeomen and tenants to elect them to political office and defer to their authority. This “horse trading” solidified the social position of the planter elite, which used its control of the Virginia House of Burgesses to cut the political power of the royal governor—bargaining with him over patronage and land grants. Hundreds of yeoman farmers benefited as well, tasting political power and garnering substantial fees and salaries as deputy sheriffs, road surveyors, estate appraisers, and grand jurymen.

Even as the expansion of officeholding and slave ownership created new ties between rich planters and yeoman farmers, wealthy Chesapeake gentlemen consciously set themselves apart from their less affluent neighbors. Until the 1720s the ranks of the gentry were filled with boisterous, aggressive men who enjoyed many of the amusements of common folk—from hunting, hard drinking, and gambling on horse races to sharing tales of their manly prowess in seducing female servants and slaves. As time passed, however, affluent

Chesapeake landholders took on the trappings of wealth, modeling themselves after the English aristocracy. Beginning in the 1720s they replaced their modest wooden houses with mansions of brick and mortar. The plantation dwelling of Robert “King” Carter was over seventy-five feet long, forty-four feet wide, and forty feet high. Genteel planters entertained their neighbors in lavish style and sent their sons to London to be educated as lawyers and gentlemen. Most of the southern men who were educated in England returned to America, married well-to-do heiresses, and followed in their fathers’ footsteps, managing plantations, socializing with other members of the gentry class, and participating in politics.

Wealthy Chesapeake and South Carolina women also emulated the elegant and refined ways of the English gentry. They read English newspapers and fashionable magazines, wore English clothes, and dined in the English fashion, with an elaborate afternoon tea. To improve their daughters’ chances of finding a desirable marriage partner, they hired English tutors to teach them etiquette. Once married, affluent gentry women deferred to their husbands’ authority, reared pious children, and maintained elaborate social networks—gradually creating the new ideal of the southern genteel woman. Using the profits of the South Atlantic system, the planter elite formed an increasingly well-educated, refined, and stable ruling class.

The Northern Maritime Economy

The South Atlantic system had a broad geographic reach. As early as the 1640s, New England farmers provided bread, lumber, fish, and meat to the sugar islands. As a West Indian explained in 1647, planters in the islands “had rather buy food at very dear rates than produce it by labour, so infinite is the profit of sugar works.” By 1700 the economies of the West Indies and New England were tightly interwoven. After 1720 farmers and merchants in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania entered the West Indian trade, shipping wheat, corn, and bread to the sugar islands.

The South Atlantic system tied the whole British empire together economically. In return for the sugar they exported to England, West Indian planters received bills of exchange (credit slips) from London merchant houses. The planters used those bills to buy slaves from transatlantic slavers and to reimburse North American farmers and merchants for their provisions and shipping services. Farmers and merchants then exchanged the bills for British manufactures, primarily textiles and iron goods, thus completing the cycle.

Urban Development. The West Indian trade created the first American merchant fortunes and the first urban industries (Map 3.4). Merchants in Boston, Newport,

Providence, Philadelphia, and New York invested their profits from the West Indian trade in new ships and in factories that refined raw sugar into finished loaves (which previously had been imported from England) and distilled West Indian molasses into rum. By the 1740s Boston distillers were exporting more than half a million gallons of rum annually. In addition, merchants in smaller ports, such as Salem and Marblehead, built a major fishing industry, providing salted mackerel and cod to feed the slaves of the sugar islands and to export to southern Europe. Southern merchants transformed Baltimore into a major port by developing a bustling trade in wheat, while Charleston traders exported deerskins, indigo, and rice to European markets.

The expansion of Atlantic commerce in the eighteenth century fueled rapid growth in American port cities and coastal towns. By 1750 Newport, Rhode Island, and Charleston, South Carolina, had nearly 10,000 residents apiece, Boston had 15,000, and New York had almost 18,000. The largest port was Philadelphia, whose population by 1776 reached 30,000, the size of a large European provincial city. Smaller coastal towns emerged as centers of the shipbuilding and lumber industries. By the 1740s seventy sawmills dotted the Piscataqua River in New Hampshire, providing low-cost wood for homes, warehouses, and especially shipbuilding. Taking advantage of the Navigation Acts, which allowed colonists to build and own trading vessels, scores of shipwrights turned out oceangoing vessels, while hundreds of other artisans made ropes, sails, and metal fittings for the new fleet. Shipyards in Boston and Philadelphia launched about 15,000 tons of oceangoing vessels annually; eventually colonial-built ships made up about one-third of the British merchant fleet.

The impact of the South Atlantic system extended into the interior of North America. A small fleet of trading vessels sailed back and forth between Philadelphia and the villages along the Delaware Bay, exchanging cargoes of European goods for barrels of flour and wheat for sale in both the West Indies and Europe. By the 1750s hundreds of professional teamsters in Maryland moved 370,000 bushels of wheat and corn and 16,000 barrels of flour to market each year—over 10,000 wagon trips. To service this traffic, entrepreneurs and artisans set up taverns, horse stables, and barrel-making shops in small towns along the wagon roads, providing additional jobs. The prosperous interior town of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, boasted more than 200 artisans, both German and English. The South Atlantic system thus provided not only markets for farmers (by far the largest group of northern residents) but also opportunities for merchants, artisans, and workers in country towns and seaport cities.

Seaport Society. At the top of seaport society stood a small group of wealthy landowners and prosperous merchants. By 1750 about forty merchants controlled over



A View of Boston in 1738

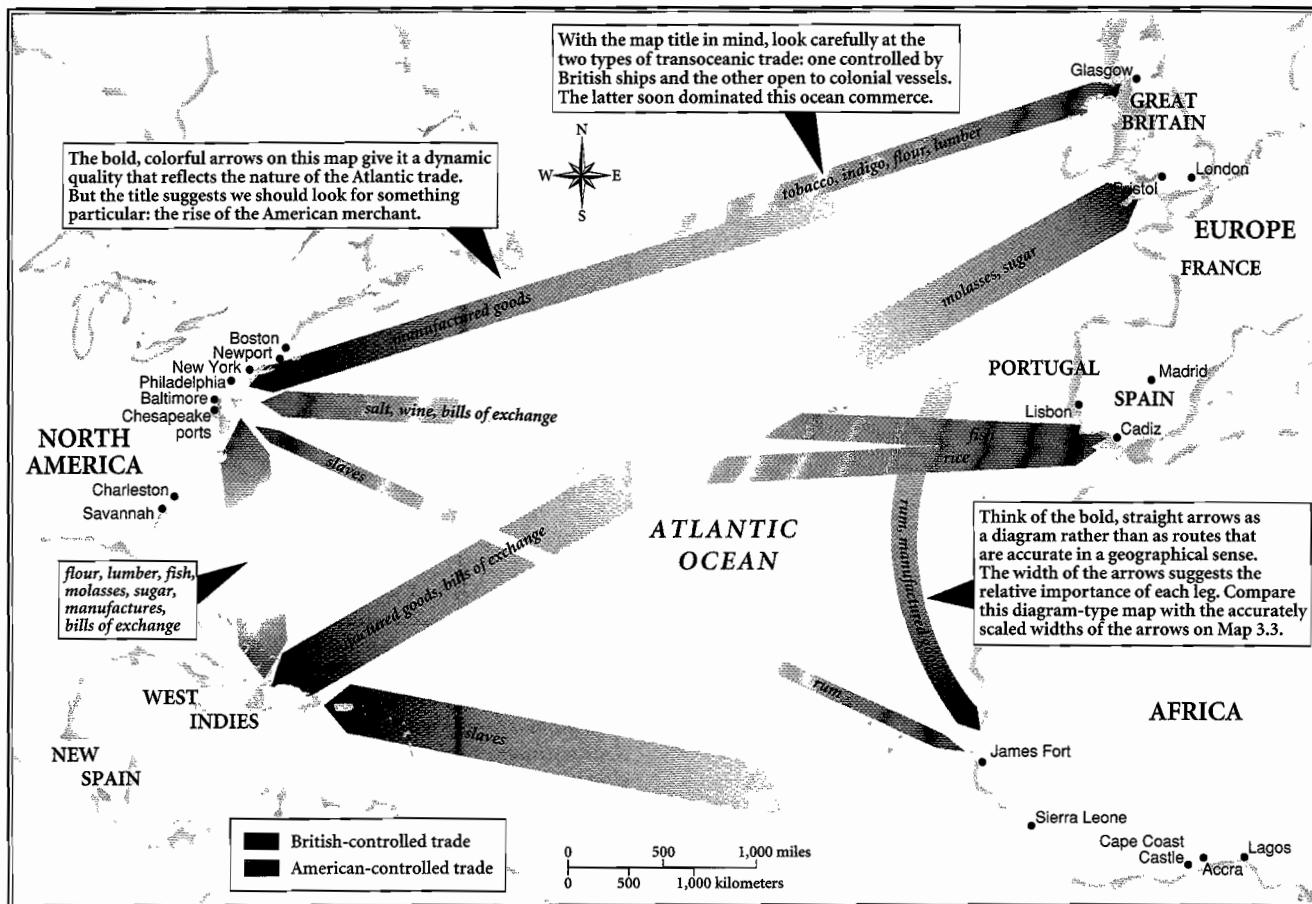
In this painting of Boston by John Smibert (1738), church spires dominate the skyline and long wharves extend far into the harbor, offering anchorage for oceangoing vessels. This mixture of religious piety and maritime prosperity gave Boston—and, to a lesser extent, Philadelphia—a distinctive tone, with greater moral discipline than the other large seaport cities of New York, Baltimore, and Charleston. Courtesy, Childs Gallery, Boston.

50 percent of Philadelphia's trade and had taxable assets averaging £10,000, a huge sum at the time (Figure 3.2). Like the Chesapeake gentry, these urban merchants imitated the British upper classes, importing design books from England and building Georgian-style mansions to showcase their wealth. Their wives created a genteel culture, decorating their houses with fine furniture and entertaining guests at elegant dinners.

Artisan and shopkeeper families formed the middle ranks of seaport society and numbered nearly half the population. Innkeepers, butchers, seamstresses, shoemakers, weavers, bakers, carpenters, masons, and dozens of other specialists socialized among themselves, formed mutual self-help societies, and worked to gain a competency—an income sufficient to maintain their families in modest comfort and dignity. Wives and husbands often worked as a team, teaching the "mysteries of the craft" to their children. Some artisans aspired to wealth and status, an entrepreneurial ethic that prompted them to hire apprentices and expand production, and the most prosperous owned their own houses and shops (sometimes run by widows continuing a family business). However, most

craft workers were not well-to-do, and many of them were quite poor. In his entire lifetime a tailor was lucky to accumulate £30 worth of property—far less than the £2,000 owned at death by an ordinary merchant or the £300 listed in the probate inventory of a successful blacksmith.

Laboring men and women formed the lowest ranks of urban society. Merchants needed hundreds of dockworkers to unload manufactured goods and molasses from inbound ships and reload the ships with barrels of wheat, fish, and rice for export. They often filled these demanding jobs with black slaves—who numbered 10 percent of the workforce in Philadelphia and New York City—or they hired unskilled men who worked for wages. Poor women—whether single, married, or widowed—could eke out a living by washing clothes, spinning wool, or working as servants or prostitutes. To make ends meet, most laboring families sent their children out to work at an early age. Indispensable to the economy yet without homes of their own, these urban laborers lived in crowded tenements in back alleys. In good times hard work brought family security or enough money to drink cheap New England rum in waterfront taverns.



MAP 3.4 The Rise of the American Merchant, 1750

In accordance with mercantilist doctrine, British merchants controlled most of the transatlantic trade in manufactures, sugar, tobacco, and slaves. However, merchants in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia seized control of the West Indian trade, while Newport traders imported some slaves from Africa, and Boston and Charleston merchants carried fish and rice to southern Europe.

Periods of stagnant commerce affected everyone, threatening merchants with bankruptcy and artisans with irregular work. For laborers and seamen, whose household budgets left no margin for sickness or unemployment, depressed trade meant hunger, dependence on charity handed out by town-appointed overseers of the poor, and—for the most desperate—a life of petty thievery. Involvement in the South Atlantic system between 1660 and 1750 brought economic uncertainty as well as jobs and opportunities to northern workers and farmers.

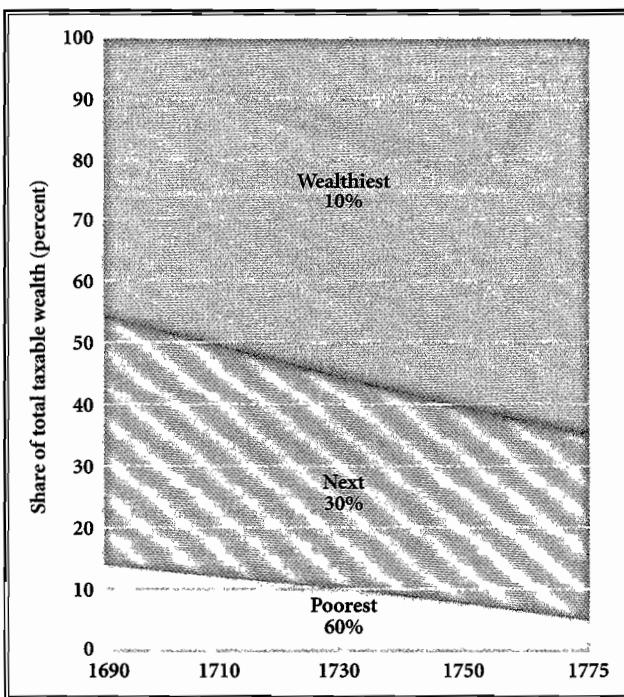
The New Politics of Empire, 1713–1750

The triumph of the South Atlantic system of production and trade changed the politics of empire. British ministers, pleased with the prosperous commerce in staple crops, were content to rule the colonies with a gentle hand. The colonists enjoyed a significant degree of self-government

and economic autonomy, which put them in a position to challenge the rules of the mercantilist system.

The Rise of Colonial Assemblies

Before 1689 the authority of the representative assemblies in most colonies was weak. Political power rested in the hands of proprietors, royal governors, and authoritarian elites, reflecting the traditional view that “Authority should Descend from Kings and Fathers to Sons and Servants,” as a royal-minded political philosopher put it. In the Glorious Revolution of 1688 the political faction known as the Whigs challenged that hierarchical outlook in England, winning the fight for a constitutional monarchy that limited the authority of the crown. English Whigs did not advocate democracy but did believe that the substantial property owners represented by the House of Commons should have some political power, especially over the levying of taxes. When Whig politicians forced William and Mary to accept a Declaration of Rights in

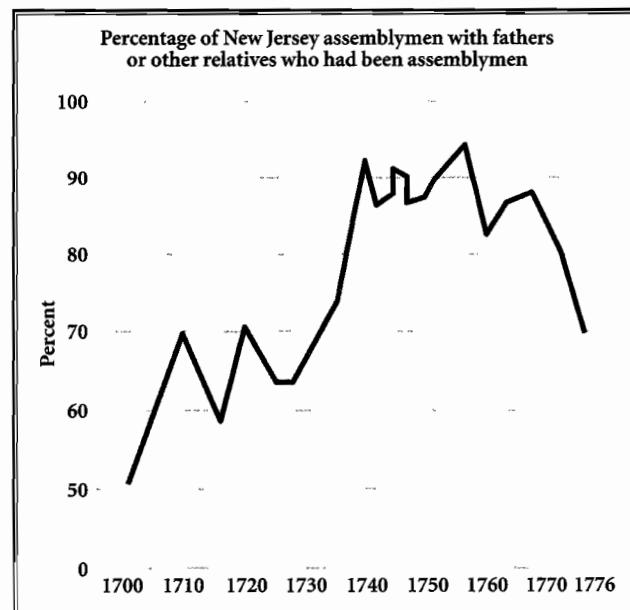
**FIGURE 3.2 Wealth Inequality in the Northern Cities**

As commerce expanded, the wealth of merchants grew much more rapidly than did that of artisans and laborers. By the 1770s the poorest 60 percent of the taxable inhabitants of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia owned less than 5 percent of the taxable wealth, whereas the top 10 percent—the merchant elite and its allies—controlled 65 percent.

1689, they strengthened the powers of the Commons at the expense of the crown.

American representative assemblies also wished to limit the powers of the crown and insisted on maintaining their authority over taxes, refusing to fund military projects and other programs advocated by royal governors. Gradually the colonial legislatures won partial control of the budget and the appointment of local officials, angering imperial bureaucrats and absentee proprietors. “The people in power in America,” complained the proprietor William Penn during a struggle with the Pennsylvania Assembly, “think nothing taller than themselves but the Trees.” In Massachusetts during the 1720s the assembly refused repeatedly to obey the king’s instructions to provide a permanent salary for the royal governor; subsequently legislatures in North Carolina, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania declined to pay their governors any salary for several years.

The rising power of the colonial assemblies created an elitist rather than a democratic political system. Although most property-owning white men had the right to vote after 1700, only men of considerable wealth and status stood for election (Figure 3.3). In Virginia in the 1750s seven members of the influential slave-owning Lee family sat in the House of Burgesses and, along with other powerful families, dominated its major commit-

**FIGURE 3.3 Family Connections and Political Power**

By the 1750s nearly every member of the New Jersey assembly came from a family with a history of political leadership. This is clear testimony to the emergence of an experienced governing elite in the colonies.

tees. In New England descendants of the original Puritans had intermarried and formed a core of political leaders. “Go into every village in New England,” John Adams said in 1765, “and you will find that the office of justice of the peace, and even the place of representative, have generally descended from generation to generation, in three or four families at most.”

However, neither elitist assemblies nor wealthy property owners could impose unpopular edicts on the people. The crowd actions that had overthrown the Dominion of New England in 1689 were a regular part of political life in America and were used to enforce community values. In New York mobs closed houses of prostitution, while in Salem, Massachusetts, they ran people with infectious diseases out of town. In Boston in 1710 crowds prevented merchants from exporting grain during a wartime shortage, and in New Jersey in the 1730s and 1740s angry mobs obstructed proprietors who were forcing tenants from disputed lands. When officials in Boston attempted to restrict the sale of farm produce to a designated public marketplace, a crowd destroyed the building and defied the authorities to arrest them. “If you touch One you shall touch All,” an anonymous letter warned the sheriff, “and we will show you a Hundred Men where you can show one.” Such expressions of popular power, combined with the growing power of the assemblies, undermined the old authoritarian system. By the 1750s most colonies had representative political institutions that were broadly responsive to popular pressure and increasingly immune to British control.

Salutary Neglect

British colonial policy during the reigns of George I (r. 1714–1727) and George II (r. 1727–1760) contributed significantly to the rise of American self-government. Royal bureaucrats relaxed their supervision of internal colonial affairs, focusing instead on defense and trade. Two generations later the British political philosopher Edmund Burke would praise this strategy as “*salutary [healthy] neglect*.”

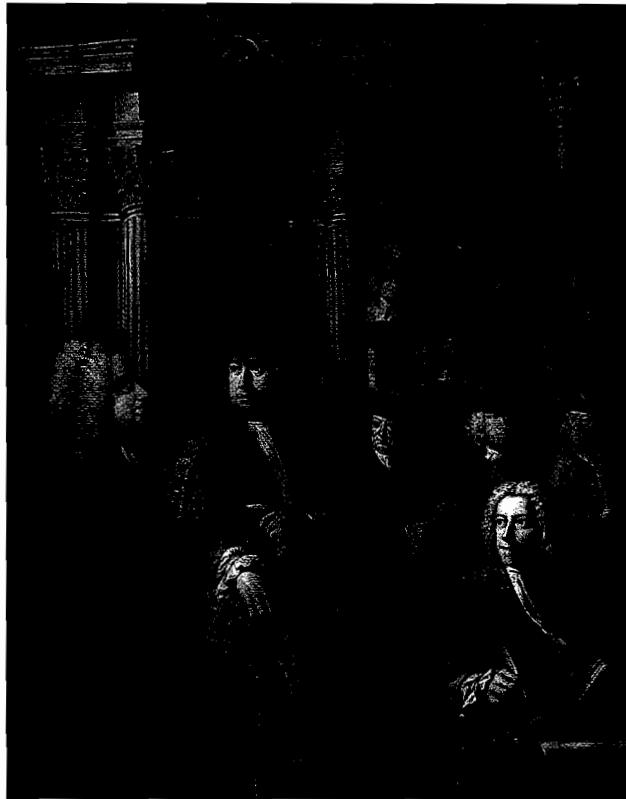
Salutary neglect was a by-product of the political system developed by Sir Robert Walpole, the leader of the British Whigs in the House of Commons and the king’s chief minister between 1720 and 1742. By strategically dispensing appointments and pensions in the name of the king, Walpole won parliamentary support for his policies. However, Walpole’s politically driven use of patronage weakened the imperial system by filling the Board of Trade and the royal governorships with men of little talent. When Governor Gabriel Johnson went to North Carolina in the 1730s, he vowed to curb the powers of the assembly and “make a mighty change in the face of affairs.” However, Johnson was soon discouraged by the lack of support from the Board of Trade. Forsaking reform, Johnson decided “to do nothing which can be reasonably blamed, and leave the rest to time, and a new set of inhabitants.”

Walpole’s tactics also weakened the empire by undermining faith in the integrity of the political system. Radical-minded English Whigs were the first to raise the alarm. They argued that Walpole had betrayed the constitutional monarchy established by the Glorious Revolution by using patronage and bribery to create a strong **Court (or Crown) Party**. A Country Party of landed gentlemen likewise warned that Walpole’s policies of high taxes and a bloated royal bureaucracy threatened the liberties of the British people. Politically minded colonists adopted these arguments as their own, maintaining that royal governors likewise abused their patronage powers. To preserve American liberty, they tried to enhance the powers of the provincial representative assemblies, thus preparing the way for later demands for political equality within the British empire.

Protecting the Mercantile System of Trade

During the years of salutary neglect Walpole’s main preoccupation was to protect British commercial interests in America from the military threats posed by the Spanish and French colonies and from the economic dangers posed by the unwillingness of the American colonists to abide by the acts of Trade and Navigation.

Georgia and War with Spain. Initially, Walpole pursued a cautious foreign policy to allow Britain to



Sir Robert Walpole, the King’s Minister

All eyes are on Walpole (left) as he offers advice to the Speaker of the House of Commons. A brilliant politician, Walpole used patronage to command a majority in the Commons and to win the support of George I and George II—the German-speaking monarchs from the duchy of Hanover. Walpole’s personal motto, “Let sleeping dogs lie,” helps to explain his colonial policy of salutary neglect. © National Trust Photographic Library / John Hammond.

recover from the huge expense of the long wars against Louis XIV of France that finally ended in 1713. However, in 1732 he agreed to provide a subsidy for the new colony of Georgia, a settlement designed by social reformers as a refuge for Britain’s poor. Envisioning a society of small farms worked by independent landowners and white indentured servants, the trustees of Georgia limited most land grants to 500 acres and initially outlawed slavery.

Walpole arranged for Parliament to subsidize Georgia because he wanted to protect the valuable rice colony of South Carolina. Spain had long resented the British presence in Carolina and was outraged by the expansion into Georgia, where Spanish Franciscans had Indian missions. In addition, English merchants had steadily increased their trade in slaves and manufactured goods to Spain’s colonies in Mesoamerica, eventually controlling two-thirds of that trade. To resist Britain’s commercial and geographic expansion, in 1739 Spanish naval forces sparked the so-called War of Jenkins’ Ear by mutilating Robert Jenkins, an English

Captain Fayerer Hall

The Impact of the Molasses Act

Before Parliament enacted the Molasses Act of 1733, it conducted a long investigation about its possible effects. One of those testifying was Captain Fayerer Hall, who for many years carried grain, lumber, and horses from the mainland colonies to the West Indies and returned with cargoes of sugar and molasses. Despite considerable evidence that the act would harm the mainland economy and the British export trade, Parliament bowed to the demands of the West Indian Interest—the politically powerful sugar planters and merchants—and passed the legislation.

Capt. Fayerer Hall, you will acquaint the Committee whether you know the Trade between the West-Indies and Northern Colonies?

I have lived in and traded for twenty Years past to the West-Indies, and the Northern Colonies. . . .

What Quantities of Lumber do the French take off from the northern colonies?

Martineco, Gardaloupa, Grand-terre, Marigalant & Granada, these Islands all together, I believe, may take off as much, or more than the British-owned islands do. . . .

Is there a sufficient Quantity of Molasses made at our [British] Sugar Islands to supply the Northern Colonies?

No, they have a Demand for a much greater Quantity than they can make, for they take all that is made at our own [British] islands, and, if I am rightly informed, as much or more from the foreign Settlements; . . . and the Demand is so much increased,

that the Northern People could use and vend more, if they knew where to get more, even notwithstanding what they have from the French. . . .

Have our [British] Sugar Islands a demand for all their northern colonial Lumber & Horses?

It is impossible; I have known many losing Voyages from the northern colonies by sending of Lumber and Horses, and they the [British] Islanders have [sent the unsold portions of the goods] to other Islands. The Northern Colonies are capable of selling and sending a thousand Times as much [as the British islands can buy]; the District of Land is Larger than all Europe.

Supposing they were confined only to sell their Lumber and Horses to our [British] Islands?

It would destroy the Employment of three hundred sail of Ships and Vessels; we have three sail to one of any other Nation's. It is not long ago that the Dutch . . . had ten to our one, but the Act of Navigation put an end to that; we are now what the Dutch were at that Time, we have three sail to one, we are the Carriers as they used to be; but if this [Molasses] Act passes, the French will have the far greater Number of Ships, as we have now.

How is the Balance [of payments] in regard to the Northern Colonies? Do they take more Goods [from English merchants] than they send us [from the colonies]?

Yes, they have no other way of paying [English merchants] but by the Remittance of Money which they have from the Dutch & French [trade in the West Indies].

Supposing the Northern Colonies are not suffered to take their Molasses, will not that put a Stop to the Trade of their Lumber and Horses?

Yes. . . . We receive Money from [the French] now, and we never got so much from any of our own [British] Islands; besides, they produce more Sugar, Rum, and Molasses lately, then they used to do. . . .

Source: *New York Gazette*, 17-31 July 1732.

sea captain who was trading illegally with the Spanish West Indies.

Yielding to Parliamentary pressure Walpole used this provocation to launch a predatory war against Spain's increasingly vulnerable American empire. In 1740 British regulars commanded by Governor Oglethorpe of Georgia attacked St. Augustine without success, in part

because South Carolina whites—still shaken by the Stono revolt—refused to commit militia units to the expedition. In 1741 the governors of the other mainland colonies raised 2,500 volunteers, who joined a British naval force in an assault on the prosperous Spanish seaport of Cartagena (in present-day Colombia). The attack failed and, instead of enriching themselves with Spanish



Bristol Docks and Quay

The triangular trade with Africa, the West Indies, and the mainland colonies made Bristol, in southwest England, into a bustling and prosperous seaport. In this detail from an eighteenth-century painting, horses draw large hogsheads of West Indian sugar to local factories and workers prepare smaller barrels of rum and other goods for export to Africa.

City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery.

booty, hundreds of colonial troops died of tropical diseases.

The War of Jenkins' Ear quickly became part of a general European conflict, the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1749), bringing a new threat from France. Massive French armies battled German forces subsidized by Britain in Europe, and French naval forces roamed the West Indies, seeking without success to conquer a British sugar island. However, there were only minor Indian raids along the long frontier between the Anglo-American colonies and French Canada until 1745, when 3,000 New England militiamen, supported by a British naval squadron, captured the powerful French naval fortress of Louisbourg at the entrance to the St. Lawrence River. To the dismay of New England

Puritans, the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748) returned Louisbourg to France, but it also secured the territorial integrity of Georgia by reaffirming British military superiority over Spain.

The Politics of Mercantilism. At the same time, Walpole and other British officials confronted an unexpected American threat to British economic ascendancy. According to the mercantilist Navigation Acts, the colonies were expected to produce agricultural goods and other raw materials that British merchants would carry to England and Scotland, where they would be consumed, exported to Europe, or turned into manufactured goods. To enforce the monopoly enjoyed by British manufacturers, Parliament passed a

series of acts that prohibited Americans from selling colonial-made textiles (1699), hats (1732), and iron products such as plows, axes, and skillets (1750).

However, the Navigation Acts had a major loophole because they allowed Americans to own ships and transport goods. Colonial merchants exploited those provisions, securing 95 percent of the commerce between the mainland and the West Indies and 75 percent of the trade in manufactures shipped from London and Bristol. Quite unintentionally, the Atlantic trade had created a dynamic community of colonial merchants (see Map 3.4).

Moreover, by the 1720s the British sugar islands could not use all of the flour, fish, and meat produced by the rapidly growing mainland colonies, and so colonial merchants sold them in the French West Indies. These supplies helped French planters produce low-cost sugar, enabling them to capture control of the European sugar market. When American rum distillers began to buy cheap French molasses rather than molasses from the British sugar islands, planters petitioned Parliament for help. The resulting Molasses Act of 1733 permitted the mainland colonies to export fish and farm products to the French islands but—to enhance the competitiveness of British molasses—placed a high tariff on imports of French molasses (see American Voices, “Captain Fayrer Hall: The Impact of the Molasses Act,” p. 96).

American merchants and public officials protested that the act would cut farm exports and cripple their distilling industry, making it more difficult for colonists to purchase British goods. When Parliament ignored their petitions, American merchants turned to smuggling, importing French molasses and bribing customs officials to ignore the new tax. Luckily for the Americans, sugar prices rose sharply in the late 1730s, enriching planters in the British West Indies, so the act was not enforced.

The lack of adequate currency in the colonies led to another confrontation. American merchants sent most of the gold and silver coins and **bills of exchange** they earned in the West Indian trade to Britain to pay for manufactured goods, draining the domestic money supply. To remedy this problem, the assemblies of ten colonies established land banks that lent paper money to farmers, taking their land as collateral. Farmers used the paper money to buy tools or livestock or to pay their creditors, thereby stimulating trade. However, some assemblies, such as that of Rhode Island, issued large

amounts of currency, causing it to fall in value, and required merchants to accept it as legal tender. Creditors, especially English merchants, rightly complained that they were being forced to accept worthless currency. In 1751 Parliament passed the Currency Act, which prevented all the New England colonies from establishing new land banks and prohibited the use of public currency to pay private debts.

These economic conflicts and the growing assertiveness of the colonial assemblies angered a new generation of British political leaders, who believed that the colonies already had too much autonomy. In 1749 Charles Townshend of the Board of Trade charged that American assemblies had assumed many of the “ancient and established prerogatives wisely preserved in the Crown.” Townshend and other officials were determined to replace salutary neglect with a more rigorous system of imperial control.

The wheel of empire had come full circle. In the 1650s England set out to build a centralized colonial empire and, over the course of a century, achieved the economic part of that goal through the use of sweeping mercantilist legislation, warfare against the Dutch, French, and Spanish, and the forced labor of more than a million African slaves. However, as a result of the Glorious Revolution and the era of salutary neglect that followed, the empire unexpectedly devolved into a group of politically self-governing colonies linked together primarily by trade. And so in the 1740s British officials vowed once again to create a politically centralized colonial system.

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

- ▶ For definitions of key terms boldfaced in this chapter, see the glossary at the end of the book.
- ▶ To assess your mastery of the material covered in this chapter, see the Online Study Guide at bedfordstmartins.com/henretta.
- ▶ For suggested references, including Web sites, see page SR-3 at the end of the book.
- ▶ For map resources and primary documents, see bedfordstmartins.com/henretta.

Upon becoming king of England in 1660, Charles II pursued contradictory colonial policies. On the one hand, he diminished imperial authority by relinquishing control of Carolina to eight aristocrats, New York to his brother James, and Pennsylvania to William Penn. On the other hand, Charles pursued mercantilist policies, securing the enactment of Navigation Acts that regulated colonial exports and imports. In 1685 his absolutist-minded successor, James II, imposed tighter political controls, abolishing the existing charters of the northern mainland colonies and creating the absolutist Dominion of New England. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 cost James his throne, and revolts in Maryland, Massachusetts, and New York secured the restoration of colonial self-government.

The Navigation Acts ensured that Britain would secure its share of the profits of the South Atlantic system and its valuable commerce in sugar, rice, indigo, and tobacco. To work the sugar plantations of the British West Indies and rice and indigo plantations of South Carolina, planters imported 1.5 million African slaves and brutally exploited their labor. In the Chesapeake colonies, where Africans raised tobacco and grains, the black population grew dramatically through natural increase, resulting in the creation of an African American community. By providing markets for farm products, the South Atlantic system also brought prosperity to farmers and merchants in the northern mainland colonies.

Beginning in the 1690s, the unofficial British policy of salutary neglect allowed American political leaders to strengthen the power of the provincial assemblies. These institutions were dominated by wealthy men but were responsive to the views of ordinary people, who wanted paper money and increased trade with the West Indies. These goals conflicted with British interests and policies and prompted greater imperial scrutiny of American affairs. In 1733, alarmed by the decline of the British sugar industry because of colonial trade with the French West Indies, the British Parliament passed the Molasses Act, which tightened mercantilist controls. By 1750, Parliament had also restricted American manufacturing and regulated the colonists' issue of paper currency. This legislation signaled that the era of salutary neglect was rapidly ending.

1651	First Navigation Act
1660s	Virginia moves toward slave system
1663	Charles II grants Carolina proprietorship
1664	English capture New Netherland, rename it New York
1681	William Penn founds Pennsylvania
1686–1689	Dominion of New England
1688–1689	Glorious Revolution in England; William and Mary ascend throne Revolts in Massachusetts, Maryland, and New York
1689–1713	England, France, and Spain at war
1696	Parliament creates Board of Trade
1705	Virginia enacts slavery legislation
1714–1750	British follow policy of "salutary neglect" American assemblies gain power
1720–1742	Sir Robert Walpole serves as chief minister
1720–1750	African American community forms Rice exports from Carolina soar Planter aristocracy emerges Seaport cities expand
1732	Parliament charters Georgia, challenging Spain Hat Act
1733	Molasses Act
1739	Stono Rebellion in South Carolina War with Spain in the Caribbean
1740	Veto of Massachusetts land bank
1750	Iron Act
1751	Currency Act

