

Growth and Crisis in Colonial Society

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IN 1736 ALEXANDER MACALLISTER LEFT THE HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND to settle in the backcountry of North Carolina, where he was soon joined by his wife and three sisters. Over the years MacAllister prospered as a landowner and mill proprietor and had only praise for his new home. Carolina was “the best poor man’s country I have heard in this age,” he wrote to his brother Hector, urging him to “advise all poor people . . . to take courage and come.” In North Carolina there were no landlords to keep “the face of the poor . . . to the grinding stone,” and so many Highlanders were arriving that “it will soon be a new Scotland.” Here, on the margin of the British empire, people could “breathe the air of liberty, and not want the necessarys of life.” Tens of thousands of European migrants—Highland Scots, English, Scots-Irish, Germans—heeded such advice, helping to swell the size of Britain’s North American settlements from 400,000 people in 1720 to almost 2 million by 1765.

◀ Young Dutch American Girl, 1730

This painting of four-year-old Susanna Truax of Albany, New York, was the work of the “Gansevoort Limner,” an unknown Dutch portrait painter. Following the artistic conventions of the time, the limner rendered Susanna as a mature young woman adding a lump of sugar to her tea. Born in 1726 (as noted in the upper left corner), Susanna never married; by the time she died in 1805, at age seventy-nine, Albany had lost much of its character as a “Dutch” city.

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; gift of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch.

The rapid and continuous increase in the number of settlers—and slaves—transformed the character of life in every region of British America. Long-settled towns in New England became densely settled and then overcrowded.

Antagonistic ethnic and religious communities jostled uneasily with one another in the Middle Atlantic region, and the influx of the MacAllisters and thousands of other settlers into the southern backcountry altered the traditional dynamics of politics and social conflict in that region as well. Moreover, in every colony the growing influence of a European spiritual movement called Pietism changed the tone of religious life. Finally, and perhaps most important, as the new immigrants and the landless children of long-settled families moved inland, they sparked warfare with the native peoples and with the other European powers contesting for dominance of North America—France and Spain. A generation of growth produced a decade of crisis.

Freehold Society in New England

In the 1630s the Puritans had migrated from a country where a handful of nobles and gentry owned 75 percent of the arable land and farmed it by using servants, leaseholding tenants, and wage laborers. In their new home the Puritans consciously created a yeoman society composed primarily of independent farm families who owned their lands as **freeholders**—without feudal dues or leases. By 1750, however, the rapidly growing population outstripped the supply of easily farmed land, posing a severe challenge to the freehold ideal.

Farm Families: Women's Place

The Puritans' commitment to individual autonomy did not extend to gender relations, and by law and custom men dominated their families. As the Reverend Benjamin Wadsworth of Boston advised women in *The Well-Ordered Family* (1712), being richer, more intelligent, or of higher social status than their husbands mattered little: "Since he is thy Husband, God has made him the head and set him above thee." Therefore, Wadsworth concluded, it was a woman's duty "to love and reverence him." Puritan ideology celebrated the husband as head of the household, according him nearly complete control over his dependents.

Throughout their lives women saw firsthand that their role was a subordinate one. Small girls watched their mothers defer to their fathers. As young women they saw the courts prosecute few men and many women for the crime of fornication, especially those who bore an illegitimate child. And they learned that their marriage portions would be inferior in kind and size to those of their brothers; usually daughters received not highly prized land but rather livestock or household goods. Thus, Ebenezer Chittendon of Guilford, Connecticut, left all his land to his sons, decreeing that "Each Daughter have half so much as Each Son, one half in money and the other half in Cattle." Thanks to

the English Statute of Wills of 1540, which eliminated many customary restrictions over the disposition of wealth, fathers had nearly complete freedom to devise their property as they pleased.

In rural New England—indeed, throughout the colonies—women were raised to be dutiful helpmeets (helpmates) to their husbands. Farmwives spun thread and yarn from flax or wool and wove it into shirts and gowns. They knitted sweaters and stockings, made candles and soap, churned milk into butter and pressed curds into cheese, fermented malt for beer, preserved meats, and mastered dozens of other household tasks. The most exemplary or "notable" practitioners of these domestic arts won praise from the community, for their physical labor was crucial to the rural household economy.

Bearing and rearing children were equally central tasks. Most women married in their early twenties; by their early forties many had given birth to six or seven children, usually delivered with the assistance of midwives. A large family sapped the physical and emotional strength of even the most energetic wife, focusing her attention on domestic activities for about twenty of her most active years. A Massachusetts mother explained that she had less time than she would have liked for religious activities because "the care of my Babes takes up so large a portion of my time and attention." Yet more women than men became full members of the Puritan congregations of New England. As the revivalist Jonathan Edwards explained, they joined so "that their children may be baptized" in the church and because they feared the dangers of childbirth.

As the size of farms shrank in long-settled communities, many couples chose to have fewer children. After 1750 women in the typical farm village of Andover, Massachusetts, bore an average of only four children and thus gained the time and energy to pursue other tasks. Farm women made extra yarn, cloth, or cheese to exchange with neighbors or sell to shopkeepers, enhancing their families' standard of living. Or like Susan Huntington of Boston (the wife of a prosperous merchant), they spent more time in "the care & culture of children, and the perusal of necessary books, including the scriptures."

Yet women's lives remained tightly bound by a web of legal and cultural restrictions. While ministers often praised the piety of women, they excluded them from an equal role in the life of the church. When Hannah Heaton grew dissatisfied with her Congregationalist minister, thinking him unconverted and a "blind guide," she sought out Quaker and Baptist churches that welcomed questioning women and allowed them to become spiritual leaders. But by the 1760s even evangelical Baptist congregations were emphasizing traditional male prerogatives. "The government of Church and State must be . . . family government" controlled by its "king,"



The Character of Family Life: The Chenneys

Life in a large colonial-era family was very different from that in a small modern one. Mrs. Cheney's face shows the rigors of having borne many children, a task that has occupied her entire adult life (and may continue still, if the child she holds is her own). Her eldest daughter has married the man standing at the rear and holds two of her own children, who are not much younger than the last of her mother's brood. In such families, the lines between the generations were blurred.

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; gift of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garisch.

declared the Danbury (Connecticut) Baptist Association. Willingly or not, most New England women lived according to the conventional view that, as the essayist Timothy Dwight put it, they should be “employed only in and about the house and in the proper business of the sex.”

Farm Property: Inheritance

By contrast, men who migrated to the colonies escaped many traditional constraints of European society, including the curse of landlessness. “The hope of having land of their own & becoming independent of Landlords is what chiefly induces people into America,” an official noted in the 1730s. For men who had been peasants in Europe, owning property was a key element of their social identity, justifying their position as heads of the community’s households.

Indeed, property ownership and family authority were closely related, because most migrating Europeans wanted farms that were large enough to provide sustenance for the present generation and land for the next one.

Parents with small farms could not provide their children with a start in life and had to adopt a different strategy. Many indentured their sons and daughters as servants and laborers in more prosperous households, where they would have enough to eat. When the indentures ended at age eighteen or twenty-one, their propertyless sons faced the daunting challenge of a ten-to-twenty-year climb up the agricultural ladder, from laborer to tenant and finally to freeholder.

Luckier sons and daughters in successful farm families received a **marriage portion** when they reached the age of twenty-three to twenty-five. The marriage portion—land, livestock, or farm equipment—repaid children for their past labor and allowed parents to choose their children’s partners, which they did not hesitate to do. The family’s prosperity and the parents’ security during old age depended on a wise choice of a wife or husband. Normally, children had the right to refuse an unacceptable match, but they did not have the luxury of “falling in love” with whomever they pleased.

Marriage under English common law was hardly a contract between equals. A bride relinquished to her



Tavern Culture

By the eighteenth century, many taverns were run by women, such as this "Charming Patroness," who needed all her charm to deal with her raucous clientele. It was in taverns, declared puritanical John Adams, that "diseases, vicious habits, bastards, and legislators are frequently begotten."

Connecticut Historical Society.

husband the legal ownership of her land and personal property. After his death, she received her dower right—the right to use (but not to sell) a third of the family's estate. The widow's death or remarriage canceled this use-right, and her portion was divided among the children. In this way the widow's property rights were subordinated to those of the family "line," which stretched, through the children, across the generations.

It was the cultural duty of the father to provide inheritances for his children, and men who failed to do so lost status in the community. Some fathers willed the family farm to a single son, providing their other children with money, apprenticeship contracts, or uncleared land along the frontier or requiring the inheriting son to do so. Alternatively, yeomen moved their families to the New England frontier or to other unsettled regions, where life was hard but land for the children was cheap and abundant. "The Squire's House stands on the Bank

of the Susquehannah," the traveler Philip Fithian reported from the Pennsylvania backcountry in the early 1760s. "He tells me that he will be able to settle all his sons and his fair Daughter Betsy on the Fat of the Earth."

The historic accomplishment of these farmers was the creation of whole communities composed of independent property owners. A French visitor remarked on the sense of personal worth and dignity in this rural world, which contrasted sharply with European peasant life. Throughout the northern colonies, he wrote, he had found "men and women whose features are not marked by poverty, by lifelong deprivation of the necessities of life, or by a feeling that they are insignificant subjects and subservient members of society."

The Crisis of Freehold Society

How long would this happy circumstance last? Because of high rates of natural increase, the population of New England doubled with each generation, a rate of growth that raised the specter of landlessness and poverty. The Puritan colonies had about 100,000 people in 1700, nearly 200,000 in 1725, and almost 400,000 in 1750. In long-settled areas farms had been divided and subdivided and now often consisted of fifty acres or less. Many parents found themselves in a quandary because they could not provide an adequate inheritance. In the 1740s the Reverend Samuel Chandler of Andover, Massachusetts, was "much distressed for land for his children," seven of whom were male. A decade later in the neighboring town of Concord, about 60 percent of farmers owned less land than their fathers had.

Because parents had less to give their sons and daughters, they had less control over their children's lives. The system of arranged marriages broke down as young people engaged in premarital sex and used the urgency of pregnancy to win their fathers' permission to marry. Throughout New England the number of first-born children conceived before marriage rose spectacularly, from about 10 percent in the 1710s to 30 percent or more in the 1740s. Given another chance, young people "would do the same again," an Anglican minister observed, "because otherwise they could not obtain their parents' consent to marry."

New England families met the threat to the freeholder ideal through a variety of strategies. Many parents chose to have smaller families by using primitive methods of birth control. Others joined with neighbors to petition the provincial government for land grants, moving inland and hacking new farms out of the forests of central Massachusetts and western Connecticut—and eventually New Hampshire and the future Vermont. Still other farmers learned to use their small plots more productively, replacing the traditional English crops of wheat and barley with high-yielding potatoes and Indian corn. Corn offered a hearty food for humans,

and its leaves furnished feed for cattle and pigs, which in turn provided milk and meat. New England developed a livestock economy, becoming the major supplier of salted and pickled meat to the slave plantations of the West Indies.

Finally, New England farmers made do on their smaller farms by exchanging goods and labor, developing the full potential of what historian Michael Merrill has called the “**household mode of production**.” Men lent each other tools, draft animals, and grazing land. Women and children joined other families in spinning yarn, sewing quilts, and shucking corn. Farmers plowed fields owned by artisans and shopkeepers, who repaid them with shoes, furniture, or store credit. Typically, no money changed hands; instead farmers, artisans, and shopkeepers recorded their debts and credits in personal account books and every few years “balanced” the books by transferring small amounts of cash to one another. The system of community exchange allowed households—and the entire economy—to achieve maximum output, thereby preserving the freehold ideal.

The Middle Atlantic: Toward a New Society, 1720–1765

Unlike New England, which was settled mostly by English Puritans, the Middle Atlantic colonies of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania became home to peoples of differing origins, languages, and religions. These settlers—Scots-Irish Presbyterians, English and Welsh Quakers, German Lutherans, Dutch Reformed Protestants, and others—created ethnic and religious communities that coexisted uneasily with one another. New York was particularly unsettled as a result of a fairly sizable African populace—in 1756 slaves constituted more than 15 percent of its population.

Economic Growth and Social Inequality

Ample fertile land and a long growing season attracted migrants to the Middle Atlantic colonies of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, and profits from wheat financed their rapid settlement. Between 1720 and 1770 a population explosion in Western Europe doubled the price of wheat; American farmers profited from the growing demand by increasing their exports of wheat, corn, flour, and bread. This boom in exports helped the population of the Middle Atlantic region to surge from 50,000 in 1700 to 120,000 in 1720 and 450,000 in 1765 (Figure 4.1).

Tenancy in New York. As the population rose, so did the demand for land. Nonetheless, many migrants

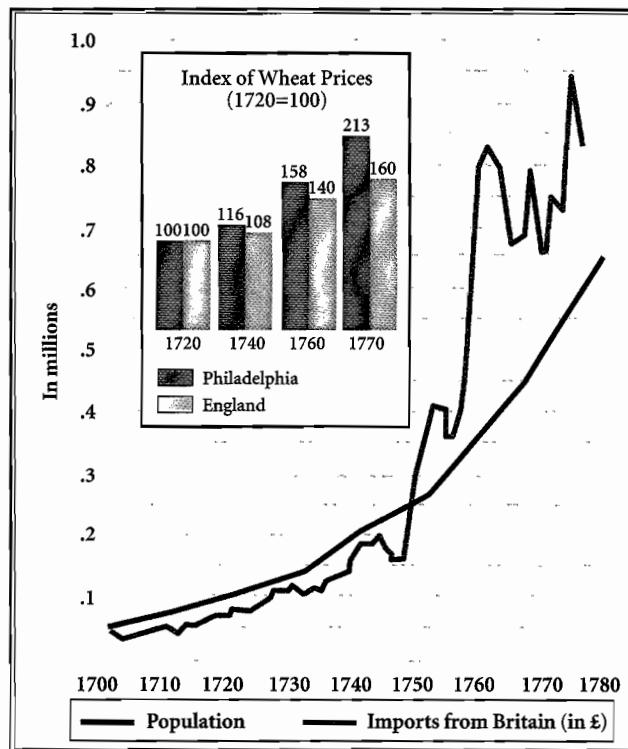
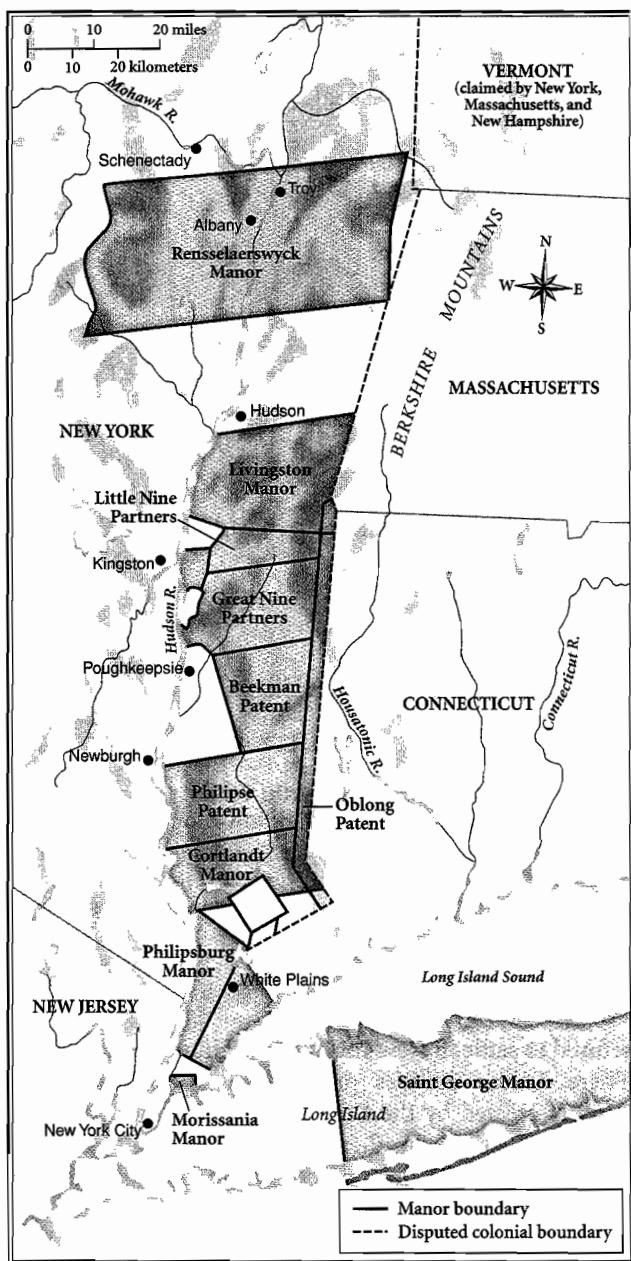


FIGURE 4.1 Population Growth, Wheat Prices, and Imports from Britain in the Middle Colonies

Wheat prices soared in Philadelphia because of demand in the West Indies and Europe. Exports of grain and flour paid for British manufactures, which were imported in large quantities after 1750.

refused to settle in New York’s fertile Hudson River Valley. There, Dutch families presided over long-established manors created by the Dutch West India Company and wealthy British families, such as the Clarke and Livingston clans, dominated vast tracts granted by English governors between 1700 and 1714 (Map 4.1). Like the slave-owning planters in the Chesapeake, these landlords tried to live like European gentry, but few migrants wanted to labor as poor and dependent peasants. However, as freehold land became scarce in eastern New York, manorial lords were able to attract tenants, but only by granting them long leases and the right to sell their improvements—their houses and barns—to the next tenant. The number of tenants on the vast Rensselaer estate, for example, rose from 82 in 1714 to 345 in 1752 to nearly 700 by 1765.

Most tenant families hoped that with hard work and luck they could sell enough wheat to buy freehold farmsteads. However, preindustrial technology limited their output, especially during the crucial harvest season. As the wheat ripened, it had to be harvested quickly; any ripe uncut grain promptly sprouted and became useless. Yet a worker with a hand sickle could reap only half an acre a day, limiting the number of acres a family could



MAP 4.1 The Hudson River Manors

Dutch and English manorial lords dominated the fertile eastern shores of the Hudson River Valley, leasing small farms to German tenant families and refusing to sell land to freehold-seeking migrants from overcrowded New England. This powerful elite produced Patriot leaders, such as Gouverneur Morris (see *American Lives*, p. 206), and leading American families, such as the Roosevelts.

plant. The **cradle scythe**, an agricultural tool introduced during the 1750s, doubled or tripled the amount of grain a worker could cut. Even so, a family with two adult workers could not reap more than about twelve acres of grain each harvest season, a yield of perhaps 150 to 180 bushels of wheat and rye. After family needs were met, the remaining grain might be worth £15—enough to

buy salt and sugar, tools, and cloth but little else. The road to land ownership was not an easy one.

Quaker Pennsylvania. Unlike New York, rural Pennsylvania and New Jersey were initially marked by relative economic equality because the original Quaker migrants arrived with approximately equal resources (Figure 4.2). The first settlers lived simply in small houses with one or two rooms, a sleeping loft, a few benches or stools, some wooden trenchers (platters), and a few wooden noggins (cups). Only the wealthiest families ate off pewter or ceramic plates imported from England or Holland. However, the rise of the wheat trade and an influx of poor settlers introduced marked social divisions. By the 1760s some farmers in eastern Pennsylvania had grown wealthy by buying slaves and hiring propertyless laborers to raise large quantities of wheat for market sale. Others had bought up land and subdivided it into small farms, which they let out on lease. Still others had become successful commercial entrepreneurs, providing newly arrived settlers with farming equipment, sugar and rum from the West Indies, and financial services. Gradually a new class of wealthy agricultural capitalists—large-scale farmers, rural landlords, speculators, storekeepers, and gristmill operators—accumulated substantial estates that included mahogany tables, four-poster beds, couches, table linen, and imported Dutch dinnerware.

By 1760 there were also many people at the bottom of the Middle Atlantic social order, for half of all white men were propertyless. Some landless men were the sons of property owners and would eventually inherit at least part of the family estate, but just as many were Scots-Irish **inmates**—single men or families “such as live in small cottages and have no taxable property, except a cow.” In the predominantly German settlement of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, a merchant noted an “abundance of Poor people” who “maintain their Families with great difficulty by day Labour.” Although Scots-Irish and German migrants hoped to become tenants and eventually landowners, sharply rising land prices prevented many from realizing their dreams.

Merchants and artisans took advantage of the ample supply of labor by organizing an outwork system. They bought wool or flax from farmers and paid propertyless workers and land-poor farm families to spin it into yarn or weave it into cloth. In the 1760s an English traveler reported that hundreds of Pennsylvanians had turned “to manufacture, and live upon a small farm, as in many parts of England.” Indeed, eastern areas of the Middle Atlantic colonies had become as crowded and socially divided as rural England, and many farm families feared a return to the lowly status of the European peasant. Although some wealthy men heaped abuse on “shitten farmers,” a letter to the *Pennsylvania Gazette* celebrated the old Quaker ideal of social equality: it was simply

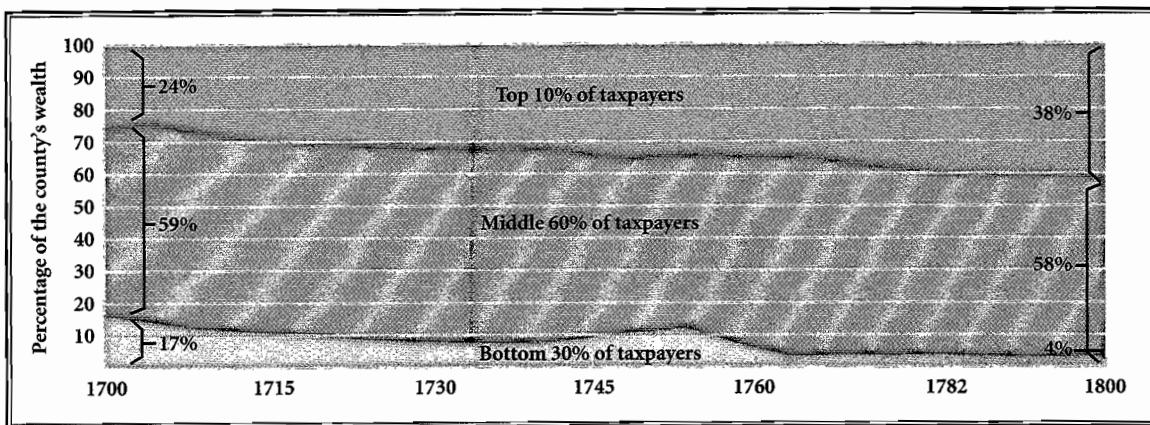


FIGURE 4.2 Increasing Social Inequality in Chester County, Pennsylvania

By renting land and selling goods to a growing population, the county's landed and commercial elite grew rich. Eventually the top 10 percent of taxpayers commanded nearly 40 percent of the wealth, far above the paltry 4 percent owned by the poorest 30 percent.

"impudence to tell another animal like myself that I came into the world his superior; none is born with the right to control another."

Cultural Diversity

The middle colonies were not a melting pot in which European cultures blended into a homogeneous "American" society; rather, they were a patchwork of ethnically and religiously diverse communities (Table 4.1). A traveler in Philadelphia in 1748 found no fewer than twelve religious denominations, including Anglicans, Quakers, Swedish and German Lutherans, Scots-Irish Presbyterians, and even Roman Catholics.

Migrants usually tried to preserve their cultural identities, marrying within their own ethnic groups or

maintaining the customs of their native lands. The major exception was the Huguenots—Protestant Calvinists who were expelled from Catholic France. They settled in New York and various seacoast cities and gradually lost their French ethnic identity by intermarrying with other Protestants. More typical were the Welsh Quakers. Seventy percent of the children of the original Welsh migrants to Chester County, Pennsylvania, married other Welsh Quakers, as did 60 percent of the third generation.

Members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) became the dominant social group in Pennsylvania, at first because of their numbers and later because of their wealth and influence. Quakers controlled Pennsylvania's representative assembly until the 1750s and exercised considerable power in New Jersey as well. Because

Period	Germany	Northern Ireland	Southern Ireland	Scotland	England	Wales	Other	Total
1700–1719	4,000	2,000	2,500	700	1,700	1,200	300	12,400
1720–1739	17,900	6,900	10,400	2,800	7,100	4,700	1,000	50,800
1740–1759	52,700	25,400	18,200	6,800	16,300	10,700	2,300	132,400
1760–1779	23,700	36,200	13,400	25,000	19,000	12,400	2,300	132,000
TOTAL	98,300	70,500	44,500	35,300	44,100	29,000	5,900	327,600

After 1720, European migration to British America increased dramatically, reaching its climax between 1740 and 1780, when over 264,000 settlers arrived in the mainland colonies. Immigration from Germany peaked in the mid-1750s, while that from Ireland, Scotland, England, and Wales continued to increase during the 1760s and early 1770s. Most migrants were Protestants, including those from southern Ireland.

Source: Adapted from Aaron S. Fogelman, "Migrations to the Thirteen British North American Colonies, 1700–1775: New Estimates," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 22 (1992).



Quaker Meeting for Worship

Quakers dressed plainly and met in unadorned buildings, sitting in silence until inspired to speak by the “inner light.” Women spoke with near-equality to men, a tradition that prepared Quaker women to take a leading part in the nineteenth-century women’s rights movement. In this English work, entitled Quaker Meeting, an elder (his hat on a peg above his head) conveys his thoughts to the congregation. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Quakers were pacifists, they dealt peaceably with Native Americans, negotiating treaties and buying land rather than seizing it by force. These conciliatory policies enabled Pennsylvania to avoid a major war with the Indian peoples until the 1750s. Some Quakers extended the egalitarian values emphasized by their faith to their relations with blacks. After 1750 many Quaker meetings condemned the institution of slavery, and some expelled members who continued to keep slaves.

The Quaker vision of a “peaceable kingdom” attracted many German settlers who were fleeing their homelands because of war, religious persecution, and poverty. First to arrive, in 1683, was a group of religious

dissenters—the Mennonites—attracted by a pamphlet promising religious freedom. In the 1720s religious upheaval and population growth in southwestern Germany and Switzerland stimulated another wave of migrants. “Wages were far better” in Pennsylvania, Heinrich Schneebeli reported to his friends in Zurich after an exploratory trip, and “one also enjoyed there a free unhindered exercise of religion.” Beginning in 1749 thousands of Germans and Swiss fled their overcrowded societies; by 1756, nearly 37,000 of these migrants had landed in Philadelphia. Some of these newcomers were redemptioners—a type of indentured servant—but many more were propertied farmers and artisans who

Gottlieb Mittelberger

The Perils of Migration

Gottlieb Mittelberger was a Lutheran minister who migrated to Pennsylvania with thousands of other Germans in the 1740s. Dismayed by the lax religious behavior of the colonial population and the lack of state support for religious authority, he returned to his homeland after a few years. In a book published in Germany in 1750, Mittelberger viewed America with a critical eye, warning his readers of the difficulties of migration and of life in a harsh, competitive society.

[The journey from Germany to Pennsylvania via Holland and England] lasts from the beginning of May to the end of October, fully half a year, amid such hardships as no one is able to describe adequately with their misery. Both in Rotterdam and in Amsterdam the people are packed densely, like herrings so to say, in the large sea-vessels. One person receives a place of scarcely 2 feet width and 6 feet length in the bedstead, while many a ship carries four to six hundred souls. . . .

During the journey the ship is full of pitiful signs of distress—smells, fumes, horrors, vomiting, various kinds of sea sickness, fever, dysentery, headaches, heat, constipation, boils, scurvy, cancer, mouth-rot, and similar afflictions, all of them caused by the age and the highly-salted state of the food, especially of the meat, as well as by the very bad and filthy water, which brings about the miserable destruction and death of many. . . .

migrated to secure ample land for their children (American Voices, “Gottlieb Mittelberger: The Perils of Migration,” above).

German settlements soon dominated certain districts of eastern Pennsylvania, and thousands of Germans moved down the Shenandoah Valley into the western parts of Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas (Map 4.2). The migrants carefully guarded their language and cultural heritage, encouraging their American-born children to marry within the community. A minister in North Carolina admonished his

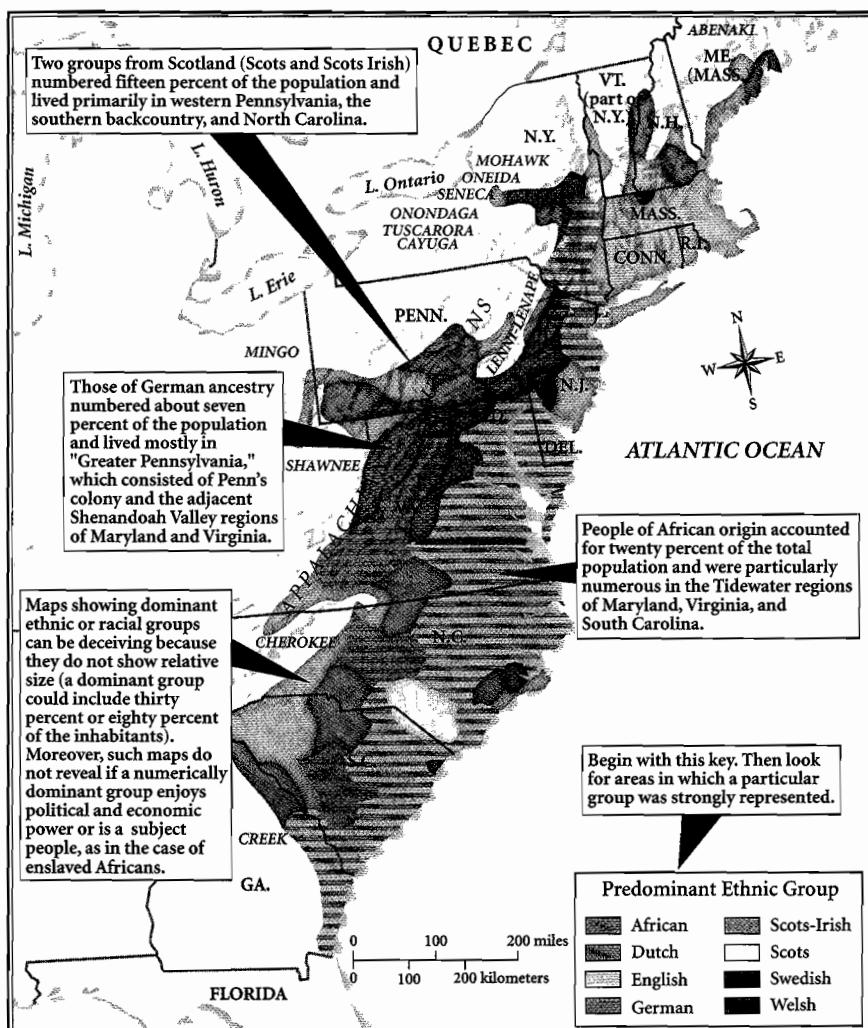
Children between the ages of one and seven seldom survive the sea voyage; and parents must often watch their offspring suffer miserably, die, and be thrown into the ocean, from want, hunger, thirst, and the like. I myself, alas, saw such a pitiful fate overtake thirty-two children on board our vessel, all of whom were finally thrown into the sea. Their parents grieve all the more, since their children do not find repose in the earth, but are devoured by the predatory fish of the ocean. . . .

When the ships finally arrive in Philadelphia after the long voyage only those are let off who can pay their sea freight or can give good security. The others, who lack the money to pay, have to remain on board until they are purchased and until their purchasers can thus pry them loose from the ship. In this whole process the sick are the worst off, for the healthy are preferred and are more readily paid for. . . . Every day Englishmen, Dutchmen and High-German people select among the healthy persons; . . . adult persons bind themselves in writing to serve 3, 4, 5, or six years for the amount due to them. . . . Many parents must sell and trade away their children like so many head of cattle; for if their children take the debt upon themselves, the parents can leave the ship free and unrestrained. It often happens that whole families, husband, wife, and children, are separated by being sold to different purchasers, especially when they have not paid any part of their passage money. . . .

Thus let him who wants to earn his piece of bread honestly and in a Christian manner and who can only do this by manual labor in his native country stay there rather than come to America.

Source: Gottlieb Mittelberger, *Journey to Pennsylvania* (1756), ed. and trans. Oscar Handlin and John Clive (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 11–21.

congregation “not to contract any marriages with the English or Irish,” explaining that “we owe it to our native country to do our part that German blood and the German language be preserved in America.” Well beyond 1800 these settlers spoke German, read German-language newspapers, conducted church services in German, and preserved German agricultural practices, which included women taking an active part in plowing and harvesting. English travelers remarked that German women were “always in the fields, meadows, stables, etc. and do not dislike any work whatsoever.” Most German



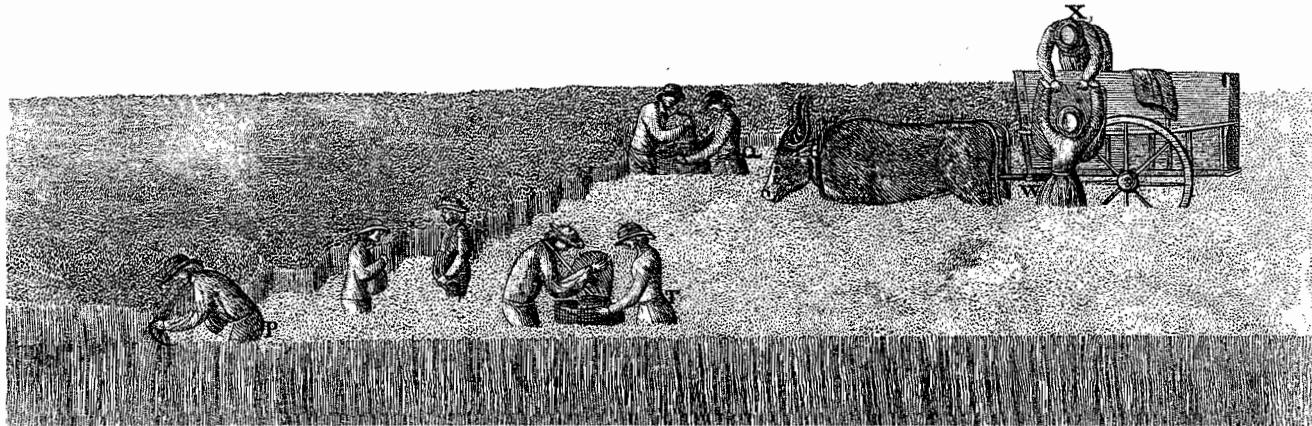
migrants felt at ease living in a British-controlled colony, for few of them came from the politically active classes and many rejected political involvement on religious grounds. They engaged in politics only to protect their churches and cultural practices—insisting, for example, that as in Germany, married women should have the right to hold property and write wills.

Migrants from Ireland formed the largest group of incoming Europeans, about 150,000 in number. Some were Catholic but most were the descendants of the Presbyterian Scots who had been sent to Ireland between 1608 and 1650 to bolster English control of its Catholic population. In Ireland the Scots faced discrimination and economic regulation from the dominant English. The Irish Test Act of 1704 excluded Scottish Presbyterians as well as Irish Catholics from holding public office; English mercantilist regulations placed heavy import duties on the woolens made by Scots-Irish weavers; and Scots-Irish farmers faced heavy taxes. "Read this letter, Rev. Baptist Boyd," a migrant to New York wrote back to his minister, "and tell all the

poor folk of ye place that God has opened a door for their deliverance . . . all that a man works for is his own; there are no revenue hounds [tax collectors] to take it from us here." Lured by such reports, thousands of Scots-Irish sailed for Philadelphia beginning in the 1720s and then moved to central Pennsylvania and southward down the Shenandoah Valley into the backcountry of Maryland and Virginia. Like the Germans, the Scots-Irish vowed to keep their culture, holding firm to their Presbyterian faith and promoting marriage within the church.

Religious Identity and Political Conflict

In Western Europe the leaders of church and state condemned religious diversity, and some German ministers in Pennsylvania carried these sentiments to America, criticizing the separation of church and state in the colony. "The preachers do not have the power to punish anyone, or to force anyone to go to church," complained



German Farm in Western Maryland

Beginning in the 1730s, wheat became a major export crop in Maryland and Virginia. This engraving probably depicts a German farm, because the harvesters are using oxen, not horses, and women are working in the field alongside men. Using “a new method of reaping” that is possibly of German origin, the harvester cuts only the grain-bearing tip and leaves the wheat stalks in the fields, to be eaten by livestock. Library of Congress.

For more help analyzing this image, see the [ONLINE STUDY GUIDE](#) at bedfordstmartins.com/henretta.

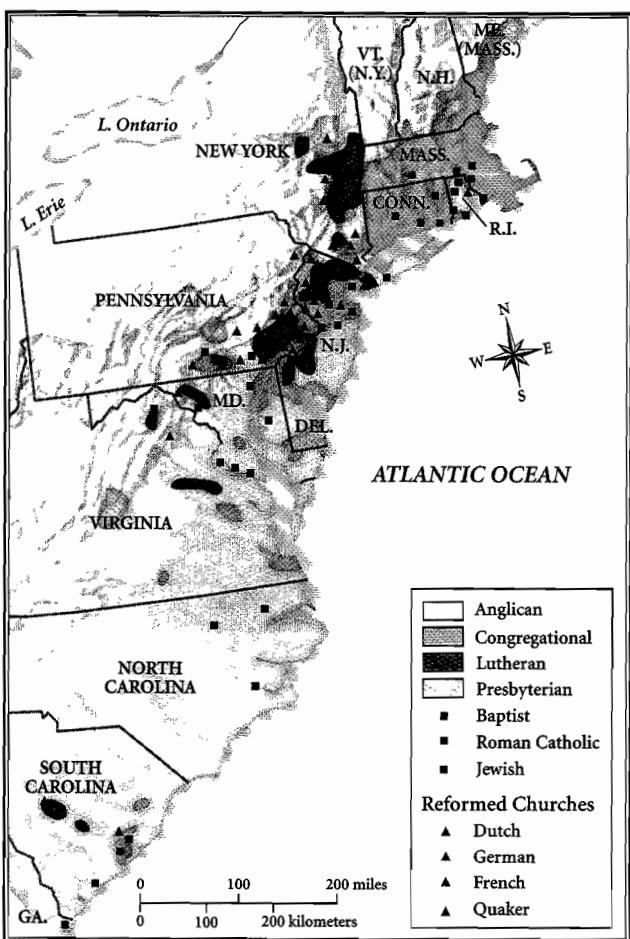
the minister Gottlieb Mittelberger. As a result, “Sunday is very badly kept. Many people plough, reap, thresh, hew or split wood and the like.” Thus, Mittelberger concluded, “Liberty in Pennsylvania does more harm than good to many people, both in soul and body.”

Mittelberger ignored the fact that religious sects in Pennsylvania enforced moral behavior among their members through communal self-discipline. For example, each Quaker family attended a weekly worship meeting and a monthly discipline meeting. Four times a year a committee met with each family to make certain the children were receiving proper religious instruction, a reminder that fathers heeded. “If thou refuse to be obedient to God’s teachings,” Walter Faucit of Chester admonished his son, “thou will be a fool and a vagabond.” The committee also supervised the moral behavior of adults; a Chester County meeting disciplined one of its members “to reclaim him from drinking to excess and keeping vain company.” More important, Quaker meetings regulated marriages, granting permission only to couples with land and livestock sufficient to support a family. As a result, the children of well-to-do friends usually married within the sect, while poor Quakers remained unmarried, wed at later ages, or married without permission—in which case they were usually barred

from Quaker meetings. These communal sanctions effectively sustained a self-contained and prosperous Quaker community.

However, in the 1750s Quaker dominance in Pennsylvania came under attack. Scots-Irish Presbyterians living in frontier settlements west of the Susquehanna River challenged the pacifism of the Quaker-dominated assembly by urging a more aggressive Indian policy. Many of the newer German migrants also opposed the Quakers, demanding laws that respected their inheritance customs and fair representation in the provincial assembly. As a European visitor noted, Scots-Irish Presbyterians, German Baptists, and German Lutherans had begun to form “a general confederacy” against the Quakers, but they found it difficult to unite because of “a mutual jealousy, for religious zeal is secretly burning” (Map 4.3).

These ethnic passions embittered the politics of the Middle Atlantic region. In Pennsylvania Benjamin Franklin disparaged the “boorish” character and “swarthy complexion” of German migrants, while in New York a Dutchman declared that he “Valued no English Law no more than a Turd.” The Quaker-inspired experiment in cultural and religious diversity prefigured the passionate ethnic and social conflicts that would characterize much of American society in the centuries to come.



MAP 4.3 Religious Diversity in 1750

By 1750 religious diversity among European Colonists was on the rise and not only in the ethnically disparate Middle Atlantic colonies. Baptists had increased their numbers in New England, long the stronghold of Congregationalism, and would soon be important in Virginia. Already there were good-sized pockets of Presbyterians, Lutherans, and German Reformed in the South, where the Church of England (Anglicanism) was the established religion.

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

The Enlightenment and the Great Awakening, 1740–1765

Two great European cultural movements reached America between the 1720s and the 1760s: the Enlightenment and Pietism. The Enlightenment, which emphasized the power of human reason to understand and shape the world, appealed especially to well-educated men and women from merchant or planter families and to urban artisans. **Pietism**, an emotional, evangelical religious movement that stressed a Christian's personal relation to God, attracted many adherents, especially among farmers and urban laborers. The two move-

ments promoted independent thinking in different ways; together they transformed American intellectual and cultural life.

The Enlightenment in America

Most early Americans relied on religious teachings or folk wisdom to explain the workings of the natural world. Thus, Swedish settlers in Pennsylvania attributed medicinal powers to the great white mullein, a common wildflower, tying the leaves around their feet and arms when they had a fever. Even highly educated people believed that events occurred for reasons that today would be considered magical. When a measles epidemic struck Boston in the 1710s, the Puritan minister Cotton Mather thought that only God could end it. Like most Christians of his time, Mather believed that the earth stood at the center of the universe and that God intervened directly in human affairs.

The European Enlightenment. Early Americans held to these beliefs despite the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which had challenged both traditional Christian and folk worldviews. As early as the 1530s the astronomer Copernicus had observed that the earth traveled around the sun rather than vice versa, implying a more modest place for humans in the universe than had previously been assumed. Other scholars had conducted experiments using empirical methods—actual observed experience—to learn about the natural world. Eventually the English scientist Isaac Newton, in his *Principia Mathematica* (1687), used mathematics to explain the movement of the planets around the sun. Newton's laws of motion and concept of gravity described how the universe could operate without the constant intervention of a supernatural being, undermining traditional Christian explanations of the cosmos.

In the century between the publication of Newton's book and the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, the philosophers of the European Enlightenment applied scientific reasoning to all aspects of life, including social institutions and human behavior. Enlightenment thinkers believed that men and women could observe, analyze, and improve their world. They advanced four fundamental principles: the lawlike order of the natural world, the power of human reason, the natural rights of individuals (including the right to self-government), and the progressive improvement of society.

In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), the English philosopher John Locke emphasized the impact of environment, experience, and reason on human behavior, proposing that the character of individuals and societies was not fixed by God's will but could be changed through education and purposeful



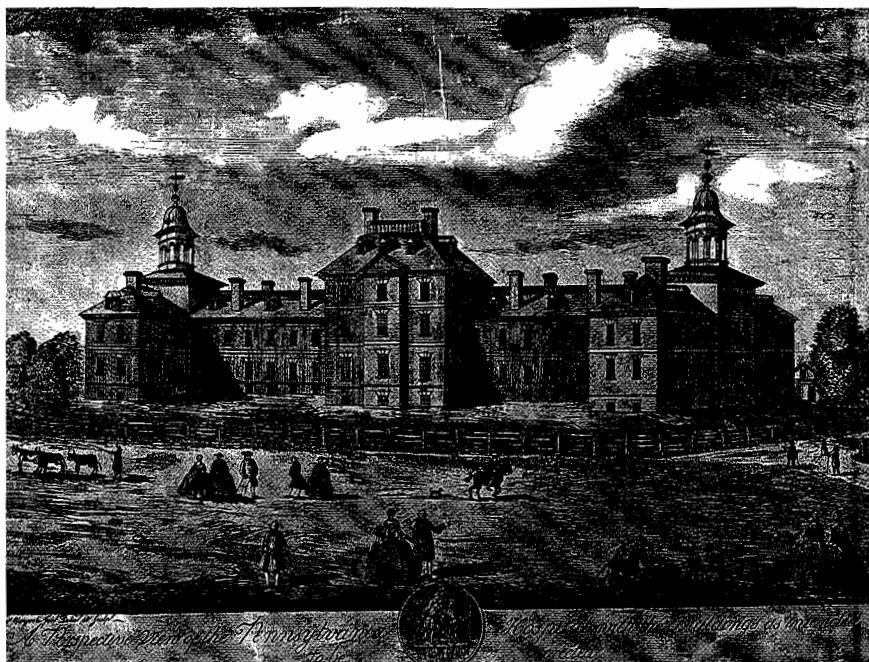
Franklin's Influence

Benjamin Franklin's work as a scientist and inventor captivated subsequent generations of Americans. This painted panel (c. 1830) from a fire engine of the Franklin Volunteer Fire Company of Philadelphia depicts Franklin's experiment in 1752 that demonstrated the presence of electricity in lightning. Cigna Museum and Art Collection / Photo by Joseph Painter.

action. Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* (1690) advanced the revolutionary theory that political authority was not given by God to monarchs (as kings such as James II had insisted) but was derived from social compacts that people made to preserve their "natural rights" to life, liberty, and property. In Locke's view, the people should have the right to change government policies—or even their form of government—through the decision of a majority.

The ideas of Locke and other Enlightenment thinkers came to America through books, travelers, and educated migrants and quickly affected the beliefs of influential colonists about religion, science, and politics. As early as the 1710s the Reverend John Wise of Ipswich, Massachusetts, used Locke's political principles to defend the Puritans' decision to vest power in the ordinary members of their churches. Wise argued that just as the social compact formed the basis of political society, the religious covenant made the congregation—not the bishops of the Church of England or even the ministers—the proper interpreter of religious truth. And when a smallpox epidemic threatened Boston in the 1720s, the Puritan minister Cotton Mather sought a scientific rather than a religious remedy, joining with a prominent Boston physician to support the new technique of inoculation.

Franklin in Philadelphia. Benjamin Franklin was the epitome of the American Enlightenment. Born in Boston in 1706 to a devout Calvinist family and apprenticed to a printer as a youth, Franklin was a self-taught, self-made man. While working as a tradesman, printer, and journalist in Philadelphia he formed "a club of mutual improvement" that met weekly to discuss "Morals, Politics, or Natural Philosophy." These discussions and Enlightenment literature, rather than the Bible, shaped Franklin's imagination. As Franklin explained in his *Autobiography*, written in 1771, "from the different books I read, I began to doubt of Revelation [God-revealed truth] itself." Like many urban artisans, wealthy Virginia planters, and affluent seaport merchants, Franklin became a **deist**. Influenced by Enlightenment science, deists believed that God had created the world but allowed it to operate in accordance with the laws of nature. The deists' God was a rational being, a divine "watchmaker" who did not intervene directly in history or in people's lives. Rejecting the authority of the Bible, deists relied on people's "natural reason" to define a moral code. Adherence to the code, they believed, would be rewarded in life and after death. A sometime slave owner himself, Franklin used natural ethics to question the moral legitimacy of racial bondage, eventually repudiating the institution as he became a defender of



Enlightenment Philanthropy: The Philadelphia Hospital

This imposing structure, built in 1753 with public funds and private donations, embodied two Enlightenment principles—that purposeful action could improve society and that the world should express reason and order (exhibited here in the symmetrical facade). Etchings such as this one, drawn about 1761, circulated widely, bolstering Philadelphia's reputation as the center of the American Enlightenment.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

American freedom from the threat of British political “slavery.”

Franklin popularized this practical-minded outlook of the Enlightenment in *Poor Richard’s Almanack* (1732–1757), an annual publication read by thousands. In 1743 he helped found the American Philosophical Society, an institution devoted to “the promotion of useful knowledge,” and proceeded to invent bifocal lenses for eyeglasses, the Franklin stove, and the lightning rod. Franklin’s book on electricity, first published in England in 1751, won praise from the English scientist Joseph Priestley as the greatest contribution to science since Newton. Following in Franklin’s footsteps, other ambitious printers in Philadelphia and other American cities published newspapers and gentleman’s magazines, the first significant nonreligious publications to appear in the colonies. Thus, the European Enlightenment added a secular dimension to colonial intellectual life, preparing the way for the great American contributions to republican political theory by John Adams, James Madison, and other Patriots during the Revolutionary era.

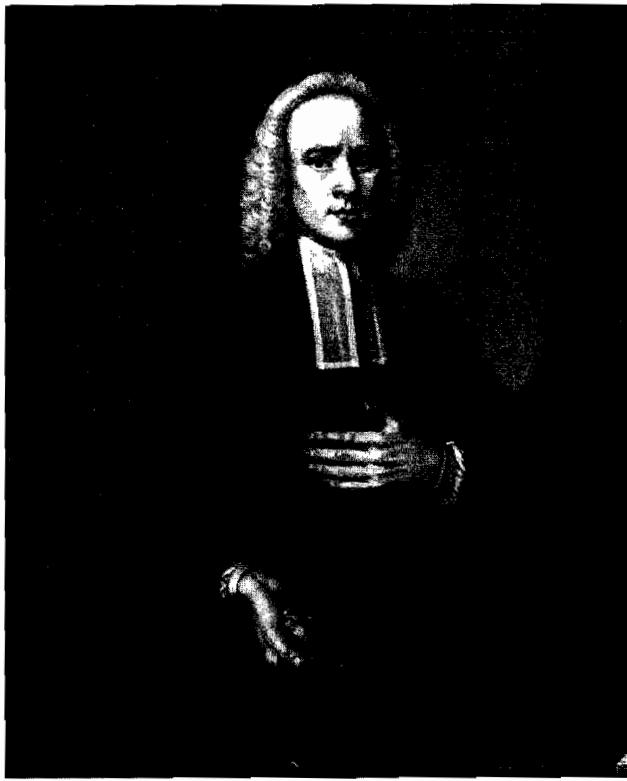
American Pietism and the Great Awakening

As some influential Americans—merchants and wealthy Virginia planters—and various urban artisans turned to deism, many other colonists embraced the European devotional movement known as Pietism. Pietists emphasized devout, or “pious,” behavior, emotional church services, and a striving for a mystical union with God—appealing to the hearts, rather than the minds, of their

congregations. Their teachings came to America with German migrants in the 1720s and sparked a religious revival among many farmers, artisans, and laborers. In Pennsylvania and New Jersey the Dutch minister Theodore Jacob Frelinghuysen moved from church to church, preaching rousing, emotional sermons to German settlers. In private prayer meetings he encouraged lay members to carry a message of spiritual urgency to growing congregations. A decade later William Tennent and his son Gilbert, Presbyterian clergymen who copied Frelinghuysen’s approach, led revivals among Scots-Irish migrants throughout the Middle Atlantic region.

Simultaneously, a native-born Pietistic movement appeared in Puritan New England. Puritanism had taken root in England as part of a Pietistic upsurge, and the first migrants to America had sustained that intensity. However, over the decades many New England congregations had lost their religious zeal. In the 1730s the minister Jonathan Edwards restored spiritual enthusiasm to the Congregational churches in the Connecticut River Valley. An accomplished philosopher as well as an effective preacher, Edwards urged his hearers—especially young men and women—to commit themselves to a life of piety and prayer (see American Lives, “Jonathan Edwards: Preacher, Philosopher, Pastor,” p. 116).

George Whitefield, a young English revivalist with what one historian has called a “flamboyant, highly sexualized style,” transformed the local revivals into a “Great Awakening” that spanned the mainland settlements. Whitefield had experienced conversion after reading German Pietistic tracts and became a follower of John Wesley, the founder of English Methodism, who



George Whitefield, c. 1742

No painting captured Whitefield's magical appeal, although this image conveys his open demeanor and religious intensity. When Whitefield spoke to a crowd near Philadelphia, an observer noted, his words were "sharper than a two-edged sword. . . . Some of the people were pale as death; others were wringing their hands . . . and most lifting their eyes to heaven and crying to God for mercy." Courtesy, Trustees of the Boston Public Library.

combined enthusiastic sermons with disciplined "methods" of worship. In 1739 Whitefield carried Wesley's preaching style to America and over the next two years attracted huge crowds of "enthusiasts" from Georgia to Massachusetts. "Religion is become the Subject of most Conversations," the *Pennsylvania Gazette* reported. "No books are in Request but those of Piety and Devotion." The usually skeptical and restrained Benjamin Franklin was so impressed by Whitefield's oratory that when the preacher asked for contributions, Franklin emptied the coins in his pockets "wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all." By the time the evangelist reached Boston, the Reverend Benjamin Colman reported, the people were "ready to receive him as an angel of God."

Whitefield owed his appeal partly to his compelling personal presence. "He looked almost angelical; a young, slim, slender youth . . . cloathed with authority from the Great God," wrote a Connecticut farmer (see American Voices, "Nathan Cole: The Power of a Preacher," p. 118). Like most evangelical preachers, Whitefield did not read his sermons but spoke from memory as if inspired, raising his voice for dramatic effect, gesturing eloquently,

making striking use of biblical metaphors, and even at times assuming a female persona—as a woman in labor struggling to deliver the word of God. The young preacher evoked a deep emotional response, telling his listeners they had all sinned and must seek salvation. Hundreds of men and women suddenly felt the "new light" of God's grace within them. As "the power of god come down," Hannah Heaton recalled, "my knees smote together . . . it seemed to me I was a sinking down into hell . . . but then I resigned my distress and was perfectly easy quiet and calm . . . it seemed as if I had a new soul & body both." Strengthened and self-confident, these "New Lights" were prepared to follow in Whitefield's footsteps.

Religious Upheaval in the North

Like all cultural explosions, the Great Awakening was controversial. Conservative (or "Old Light") ministers such as Charles Chauncy of Boston condemned the "cryings out, faintings and convulsions" produced by emotional preachers. Chauncy denounced the willingness of the New Lights to allow women to speak in public as "a plain breach of that *commandment of the LORD*, where it is said, *Let your WOMEN keep silence in the churches.*" In Connecticut the Old Lights persuaded the legislative assembly to prohibit evangelists from speaking to established congregations without the ministers' permission. When Whitefield returned to Connecticut in 1744, he found many pulpits closed to him. But the New Lights resisted attempts by civil officials to silence them. Dozens of farmers, women, and artisans roamed the countryside, condemning the Old Lights as "unconverted" sinners and willingly accepting imprisonment: "I shall bring glory to God in my bonds," a dissident preacher wrote from jail.

As the Awakening proceeded, it undermined support for traditional churches and challenged the authority of governments to impose taxes that supported them. In New England many New Lights left the established Congregational Church. By 1754 they had founded 125 "separatist" churches, supporting their ministers through voluntary contributions. Other religious dissidents joined Baptist congregations, which favored a greater separation of church and state (see Figure 4.3). According to the Baptist preacher Isaac Backus, "God never allowed any civil state upon earth to impose religious taxes." In New York and New Jersey the Dutch Reformed Church split in two, as New Lights resisted conservative church authorities in the Netherlands.

The Awakening also challenged the authority of ministers, whose education and biblical knowledge had traditionally commanded respect. In an influential pamphlet, *The Dangers of an Unconverted Ministry* (1740), Gilbert Tennent maintained that the minister's authority came not from theological training but through the conversion experience. Reasserting Martin

Jonathan Edwards: Preacher, Philosopher, Pastor

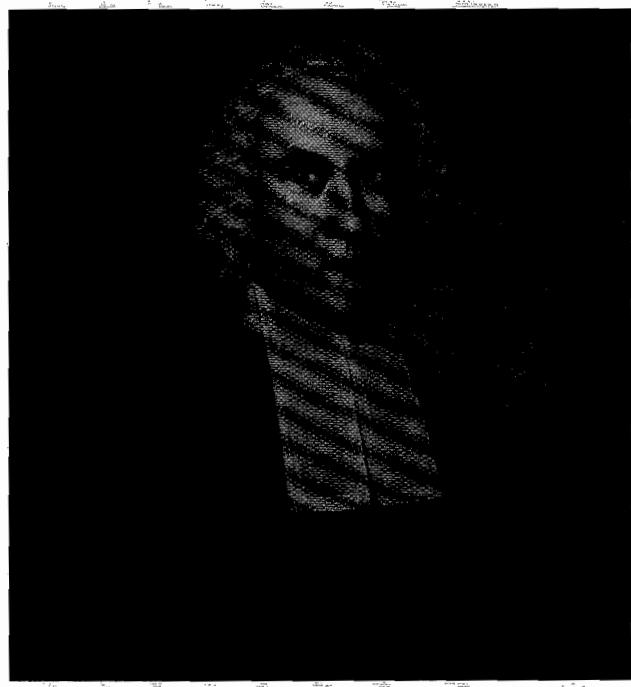
Jonathan Edwards did not mince words. Echoing the harsh theology of John Calvin, Edwards preached that men and women were helpless creatures completely dependent on God: "There is Hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor any thing to take hold of: there is nothing between you and Hell but the air; 'tis only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up."

Edwards spoke "without much noise of external emotion" and without a single gesture, a listener noted, but his intense "inner fervor" underlined the torments that awaited those who fell into the eternal flames:

How dismal will it be . . . to know assuredly that you never, never shall be delivered from them; . . . after you shall have endured these torments millions of ages . . . your bodies, which shall have been burning and roasting all this while in these glowing flames, yet shall not have been consumed, but will remain to roast through an eternity yet.

Such was the terrible—and inevitable—fate that Edwards the preacher promised to complacent Christians in his most famous sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (1742). But Edwards the pastor preached a more hopeful message of personal repentance and spiritual rebirth, telling congregations that this fate awaited only those who "never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the spirit of God upon your souls; all that were never born again, and made new creatures."

Blending passionate warnings with compassionate forgiveness, Edwards inspired a religious revival in the Connecticut River Valley in the mid-1730s and helped George Whitefield stir up an even greater one in the 1740s. This Connecticut minister, one of the leading revivalists of his age, was also a profound and original philosopher, perhaps the most intellectually brilliant colonial American.



Jonathan Edwards, 1720

This portrait, painted by Joseph Badger when Edwards was seventeen, shows that even as a young man the great preacher and philosopher was grave and dignified.

Yale University Art Gallery, Bequest of Eugene Philips Edwards.

Jonathan Edwards was born in 1703 in East Windsor, Connecticut, the fifth child and only son among the eleven children of Timothy and Esther Stoddard Edwards. His father came from a wealthy family but ended up a poorly paid rural minister who fought constantly with his congregation over his salary and authority, battles that Jonathan would later fight with his own church. His mother was the daughter of Solomon Stoddard, a famous Connecticut preacher and revivalist—a family legacy that would both help and haunt Jonathan Edwards throughout his life.

As a youth Jonathan embraced his grandfather Stoddard's theology, rejecting the Calvinist belief in God's omnipotence over people's lives and labeling it "a horrible doctrine." But at the age of seventeen Edwards became a committed Calvinist, explaining in his *Personal Narrative*, written later in life, that he had then experienced "a delightful conviction" of the Almighty's absolute sovereignty, of "sweetly conversing with Christ, and wrapt and swallowed up in God." In fact, Edwards's

autobiography distorted the truth, for he found his Calvinist God only after many years of personal torment and a series of physical and emotional collapses.

The Enlightenment came more easily to the intellectually minded Edwards. While studying for the ministry at Yale College, he read the works of Isaac Newton, John Locke, and other Enlightenment thinkers, beginning a lifetime of philosophical inquiry into the meaning of words and things. He accepted Locke's argument in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) that ideas are not innate at birth but are the product of experience as conveyed through the senses—our ability to see, hear, feel, and taste the world around us. A person who has never tasted a pineapple, said Locke, will never have “the true idea of the relish of that celebrated and delicious fruit.”

However, Locke's theory of knowledge was less successful in explaining abstract ideas—such as God, love, salvation—and here Edwards made an original contribution. Locke had suggested that abstract ideas resulted when the mind rationally analyzed various sense experiences. Edwards knew better. He had worked out his theological doctrines through intense personal torment and he knew they had an emotional component. “Love” (whether of God or a fellow human being) was “felt” and not merely understood. It followed that abstract ideas were emotional as well as rational, the product of the passions as well as the senses.

Edwards used his theory of knowledge to justify his style of preaching, arguing that vivid words promoted conversions. As he put it in *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746), “true religion, in great part, consists in holy affection.” He would save his congregation through powerful sermons: “to fright persons away from Hell.” In the end, the philosopher was at one with the preacher.

In 1729 Edwards put these ideas into practice as pastor of the Congregational church in Northampton, Massachusetts, taking over that ministry from his grandfather Solomon Stoddard and matching Stoddard's success as a revivalist. Beginning in 1734, Edwards reported, “the number of true saints multiplied . . . the town seemed to be full of the presence of God,” especially among young people. News of the Northampton revival stimulated religious fervor up and down the Connecticut River Valley “till there was a general awakening.”

Edwards interpreted his success as “a remarkable Testimony of God's Approbation of the Doctrine . . . that we are justified only by faith in Christ, and not by any

manner of virtue or goodness of our own.” He maintained that uncompromising Calvinist position during the widespread revivals of the 1740s. Also seeking to restore an older communal order, he took issue with those New Lights who asserted “the absolute Necessity for every Person to act singly . . . as if there was not another human Creature upon earth.” Repudiating that spirit of individualism, Edwards insisted that aspiring Saints should heed their pastors, who were “skilful guides,” and then make a “credible Relation of their inward Experience” to the congregation, thereby strengthening the covenant bonds that knit members together in a visible church. Edwards extended his critique of individualism to economic affairs, speaking out against “a narrow, private spirit” of greedy merchants and landlords, men who “are not ashamed to hit and bite others [and] grind the faces of the poor.”

Edwards's rigorous standards and assault on individualism deeply offended the wealthiest and most influential members of his congregation. In 1750 struggles over his salary and disciplinary authority culminated in a final battle, when Edwards repudiated Stoddard's practice of admitting almost all churchgoers to the sacrament of Communion; he would offer full church membership only to those whom God had chosen as Saints. By a vote of 200 to 20, the Northampton congregation dismissed the great preacher and philosopher from his pastorate. Impoverished and with a family of ten children to support, Edwards moved to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, a small frontier outpost. There he ministered, without great success, to the Housatonic Indians and wrote an impressive philosophical work, *Freedom of the Will* (1752).

In 1757, as Edwards was about to take up the presidency of the College of New Jersey (Princeton), he was inoculated against smallpox, had a severe reaction, and died. He left a pair of spectacles, two wigs, three black coats, and some three hundred books, including twenty-two written by himself—but not much else in the way of earthly goods.

As he lay dying, this turn of fate puzzled America's first great philosopher. Why had God called him to Princeton only to give him no time to undertake his duties? As a preacher and pastor Edwards had always responded to such questions by stressing God's arbitrary power and the “insufficiency of reason” to understand God's purpose. Now he himself had to accept that grim and unsatisfying answer, showing through his personal experience why Calvinism was such a hard faith by which to live . . . and die.

Nathan Cole

The Power of a Preacher

The evangelist George Whitefield transformed the lives of thousands of Americans, such as the Connecticut farmer Nathan Cole, by convincing them of their sinfulness. In his reflections on his life (a short unpublished manuscript now in the archives of the Connecticut Historical Society), Cole described the impact that Whitefield's preaching made on his life in 1741 and his months of agony as he prayed for a sign that he was worthy enough to merit God's grace.

Now it please God to Send Mr. Whitefield into this land; and my hearing of his preaching at Philadelphia, like one of the old apostles, . . . I felt the Spirit of God drawing me by conviction; I longed to see and hear him and wished he would come this way. . . . Then of a sudden, in the morning about 8 or 9 of the clock there came a messenger and said Mr. Whitefield . . . is to preach at Middletown this morning at ten of the clock. I was in my field at work. I dropped my tool that I had in my hand and ran home to my wife, telling her to make ready quickly. . . .

When I saw Mr. Whitefield come upon the scaffold, he looked almost angelical; a young, slim, slender youth

before some thousands of people with a bold undaunted countenance. And my hearing how God was with him everywhere as he came, it solemnized my mind and put me into a trembling fear before he began to preach; for he looked as if he was clothed with authority from the Great God, and a sweet solemnity sat upon his brow, and my hearing him preach gave me a heart wound. By God's blessing my old foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me.

Then I was convinced of the doctrine of Election: and went right to quarrelling with God about it; because that all I could do would not save me, and he had decreed from Eternity who should be saved and who not: I began to think I was not Elected, and that God had made some for heaven and me for hell. And I thought God was not Just in so doing. . . . Now this distress lasted Almost two years—Poor—Me—Miserable me. . . .

Hell fire was most always in my mind; and I have hundreds of times put my fingers into my pipe when I have been smoaking to feel how fire felt: And to see how my Body could bear to lye in Hell fire for ever and ever. . . .

And while these thoughts were in my mind God appeared unto me and made me Skringe [cringe]. . . . I seemed to hang in open Air before God, and he seemed to Speak to me in an angry and Sovereign way: What won't you trust your Soul with God? My heart answered Oh yes, yes, yes. I was set free, my distress was gone. . . . Then I began to pray and praise God.

Source: Richard Bushman, *The Great Awakening: Documents on the Revival of Religion, 1740–1745* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 67–71.

Luther's commitment to the priesthood of all believers, Tennent suggested that anyone who had experienced the saving grace of God could speak with ministerial authority. Not long afterward, Isaac Backus celebrated this spiritual democracy, noting that "the common people now claim as good a right to judge and act in matters of religion as civil rulers or the learned clergy."

Religious revivalism carried a social message, reaffirming the communal ethic of many farm families and questioning the growing competition and pursuit of wealth that accompanied the expansion of the American economy. "In any truly Christian society," Tennent explained, "mutual Love is the Band and Cement"—not the mercenary values of the marketplace. Suspicious of merchants and land speculators and dismayed by the erosion of traditional morality, Jonathan Edwards spoke

for many rural Americans when he charged that a "private niggardly [miserly] spirit" was more suitable "for wolves and other beasts of prey, than for human beings."

As religious enthusiasm spread, churches founded new colleges to educate their youth and train ministers. New Light Presbyterians established the College of New Jersey (Princeton) in 1746, and New York Anglicans founded King's College (Columbia) in 1754. Baptists set up the College of Rhode Island (Brown) and the Dutch Reformed Church subsidized Queen's College (Rutgers) in New Jersey (Table 4.2). The true intellectual legacy of the Awakening, however, was not education for the few but a new sense of religious—and ultimately political—authority among the many. As a European visitor to Philadelphia remarked in surprise, "the poorest day-laborer on the bank of the Delaware hold it his right

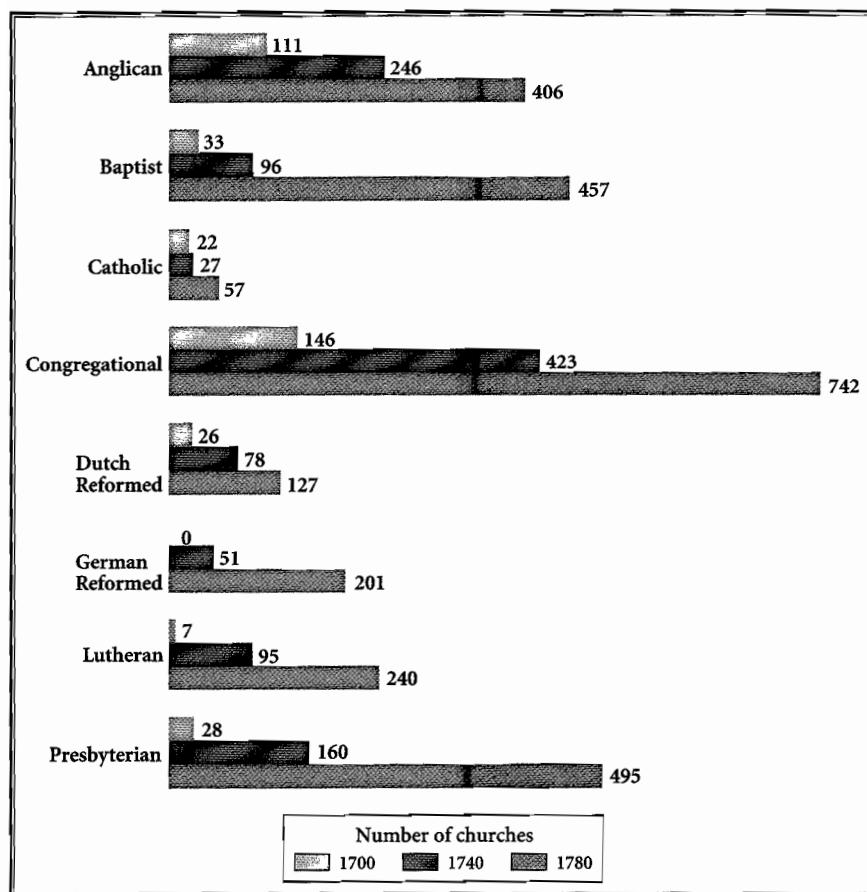


FIGURE 4.3 Church Growth by Denomination, 1700–1780

Some churches, such as the Anglican and Dutch Reformed, grew slowly as parents passed their faith down to their children. After 1740, the fastest-growing denominations were the immigrant churches—German Lutheran, German Reformed, and Scots-Irish Presbyterian—and those with an evangelical message, such as the Baptists.

to advance his opinion, in religious as well as political matters, with as much freedom as the gentleman.”

Social and Religious Conflict in the South

In the southern colonies religious enthusiasm also sparked social conflict. In Virginia the Church of England

was the legally established religion, supported by public taxes. However, Anglican ministers generally ignored the spiritual needs of African Americans (about 40 percent of the population), and landless whites (another 20 percent) attended irregularly. Middling white freeholders, who accounted for about 35 percent of the population, formed the core of most Anglican congregations. Prominent planters and their families (a mere 5 percent of the

College Name	Date of Founding	Colony	Religious Affiliation
Harvard	1636	Massachusetts	Puritan
William and Mary	1693	Virginia	Church of England
Yale	1701	Connecticut	Puritan
College of New Jersey (Princeton)	1746	New Jersey	Presbyterian
King's (Columbia)	1754	New York	Church of England
College of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania)	1755	Pennsylvania	None
College of Rhode Island (Brown)	1764	Rhode Island	Baptist
Queen's (Rutgers)	1766	New Jersey	Dutch Reformed
Dartmouth	1769	New Hampshire	Congregationalist



The Founding of Dartmouth College

In 1769, to bring Protestant Christianity to European settlers and Native Americans in the wilderness, Eleazar Wheelock moved his “Indian School” from Lebanon, Connecticut, to Hanover, New Hampshire. There it became Dartmouth College and, as this engraving shows, initially educated both Indians and whites.

Dartmouth College Library.

population) held real power in the church and used their control of parish finances to discipline Anglican ministers. One clergyman complained that dismissal awaited any minister who “had the courage to preach against any Vices taken into favor by the leading Men of his Parish.”

The Presbyterian Revival. The Great Awakening challenged both the Church of England and the power of the southern planter elite. In 1743 the bricklayer Samuel Morris, inspired by his reading of George Whitefield’s sermons, led a group of Virginia Anglicans out of the established Church. Seeking a more vital religious experience, Morris and his followers invited New Light Presbyterian ministers from Scots-Irish settlements along the Virginia frontier to lead their prayer meetings. Soon these Presbyterian revivals spread across the backcountry and into the Tidewater region along the Atlantic coast, threatening the social authority of the Virginia gentry. Planters and their well-dressed families were accustomed to arriving at Anglican services in elaborate carriages drawn by well-bred horses, and they often flaunted their power by marching in a body to their

seats in the front pews. These potent reminders of the gentry’s social superiority would vanish if freeholders attended New Light Presbyterian rather than Church of England services. Moreover, religious pluralism would threaten the government’s ability to tax the population to support the established church.

To prevent the spread of New Light doctrines, Virginia’s governor denounced them as “false teachings,” and Anglican justices of the peace closed down Presbyterian meetinghouses. This harassment kept most white yeomen families and poor tenants within the Church of England, as did the fact that most Presbyterian ministers were highly educated and sought converts mainly among skilled workers and propertied farmers.

The Baptist Insurgency. Baptists succeeded where Presbyterians failed. The evangelical Baptist preachers who came to Virginia in the 1760s drew their congregations primarily from poor farmers by offering them solace and hope in a troubled world. The Baptists’ central ritual was adult baptism, often involving complete immersion in water. Once men and women had

experienced the infusion of grace—had been “born again”—they were baptized in an emotional public ceremony that celebrated the Baptists’ shared fellowship. During the 1760s thousands of yeomen and tenant farm families in Virginia were drawn to revivalist meetings by the enthusiasm and democratic ways of Baptist preachers.

Even slaves were welcome at Baptist revivals. As early as 1740 George Whitefield had openly condemned the brutality of slaveholders and urged that blacks be brought into the Christian fold. In South Carolina and Georgia a handful of New Light planters took up Whitefield’s challenge, but the hostility of the white population and the commitment of many Africans to their ancestral religions kept the number of converts low. Virginia in the 1760s witnessed the first significant conversion of slaves to Christianity, as second- and third-generation African Americans who knew the English language and English ways responded positively to the Baptist message that all people were equal in God’s eyes.

The ruling planters reacted violently to the Baptists, viewing them as a threat to social authority and the gentry’s way of life. The Baptists emphasized spiritual equality by calling one another “brother” and “sister,” and their preachers condemned the customary pleasures of Chesapeake planters—gambling, drinking, whoring, and cockfighting. Hearing Baptist Dutton Lane condemn “the vileness and danger” of drunkenness, planter John Giles took the charge personally: “I know who you mean! and by God I’ll demolish you.” To maintain traditional practices and Anglican power, sheriffs and justices of the peace broke up Baptist services by force. In Caroline County, Virginia, an Anglican posse attacked a prayer meeting led by Brother John Waller, who, a fellow Baptist reported, “was violently jerked off the stage; they caught him by the back part of his neck, beat his head against the ground, and a gentleman gave him twenty lashes with his horsewhip.”

Despite such attacks, Baptist congregations continued to multiply. By 1775 about 20 percent of Virginia’s whites and hundreds of enslaved blacks had joined Baptist churches, bringing cultural as well as religious change. To signify their state of grace, some Baptist men “cut off their hair, like Cromwell’s round-headed chaplains.” Many others refused to attend “a horse race or other unnecessary, unprofitable, sinful assemblies.” Still others forged a new ethic of evangelical masculinity, “crying, weeping, lifting up the eyes, groaning” when touched by the Holy Spirit but defending themselves with vigor. “Not able to bear the insults” of heckler Robert Ashby, a group of Baptists “took Ashby by the neck and heels and threw him out of doors,” sparking a bloody fray. In the South as in the North, Protestant revivalism was on the way to becoming a powerful American religious movement.

However, the revival in the Chesapeake did not bring radical changes to the social order. Rejecting the

requests of evangelical women, Baptist men kept authority within the church in the hands of “free born male members.” Anglican slaveholders likewise retained power within the polity. Nonetheless, the Baptist insurgency gave spiritual meaning to the lives of the poor and powerless and influenced some yeomen and tenants to defend their economic interests. Moreover, as Baptist ministers spread Christianity among slaves, the cultural gulf between blacks and whites shrank, undermining one justification for slavery and giving blacks a new sense of religious identity. Within a generation African Americans would develop their own versions of Protestant Christianity.

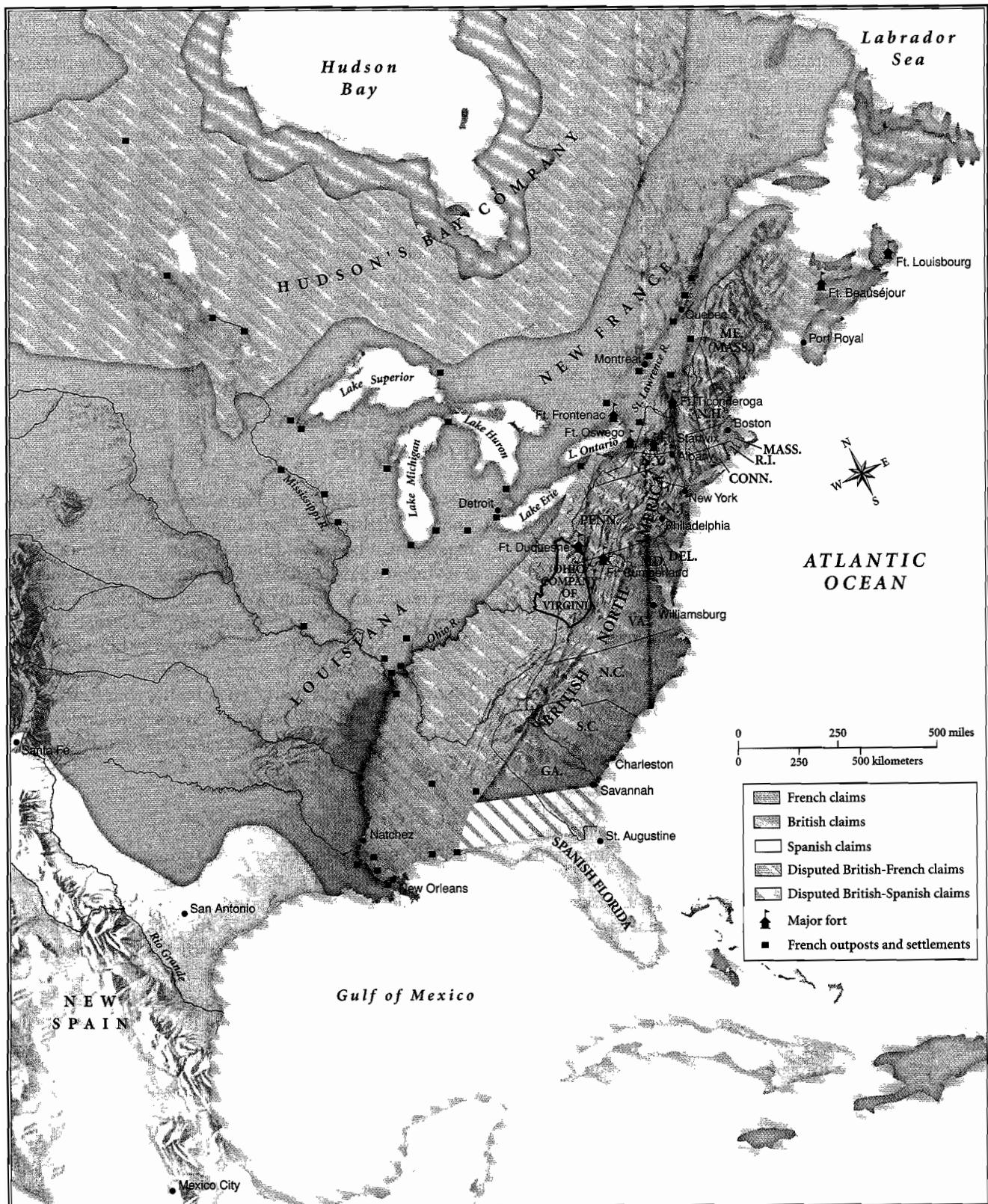
The Midcentury Challenge: War, Trade, and Social Conflict, 1750–1765

Between 1750 and 1765 colonial life was transformed not only by Pietism and the Enlightenment but also by a major war, a boom-and-bust economy, and brutal frontier violence. First, Britain embarked on a war in America, the French and Indian War, which became a worldwide conflict—the Great War for Empire. Second, a rapid surge in trade boosted colonial prosperity but put Americans deeply in debt to British creditors. Third, a great westward migration sparked new battles with Indian peoples, armed conflicts between settlers and landowners, and frontier rebellions against eastern governments.

The French and Indian War

In 1750 Indian peoples remained dominant throughout the interior regions of eastern North America—the great valleys of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Most Spanish colonists lived far to the west, along the Rio Grande in present-day New Mexico. French settlers lived along the St. Lawrence River, near the fur-trading centers of Montreal and Quebec (see Map 4.4). The more numerous residents of the British colonies inhabited the Atlantic coastal plain. Only a few pioneers had ventured across the Appalachian Mountains, both because there were few natural transportation routes and because of Indian resistance. For more than a generation the Iroquois and other Native Americans had firmly opposed the intrusion of white settlers, using their control of the fur trade to bargain for guns and subsidies from British and French officials.

The Failure of Diplomacy. However, the Iroquois strategy of playing off the French against the British was gradually breaking down as the European governments resisted the rising cost of “gifts” of arms and money.

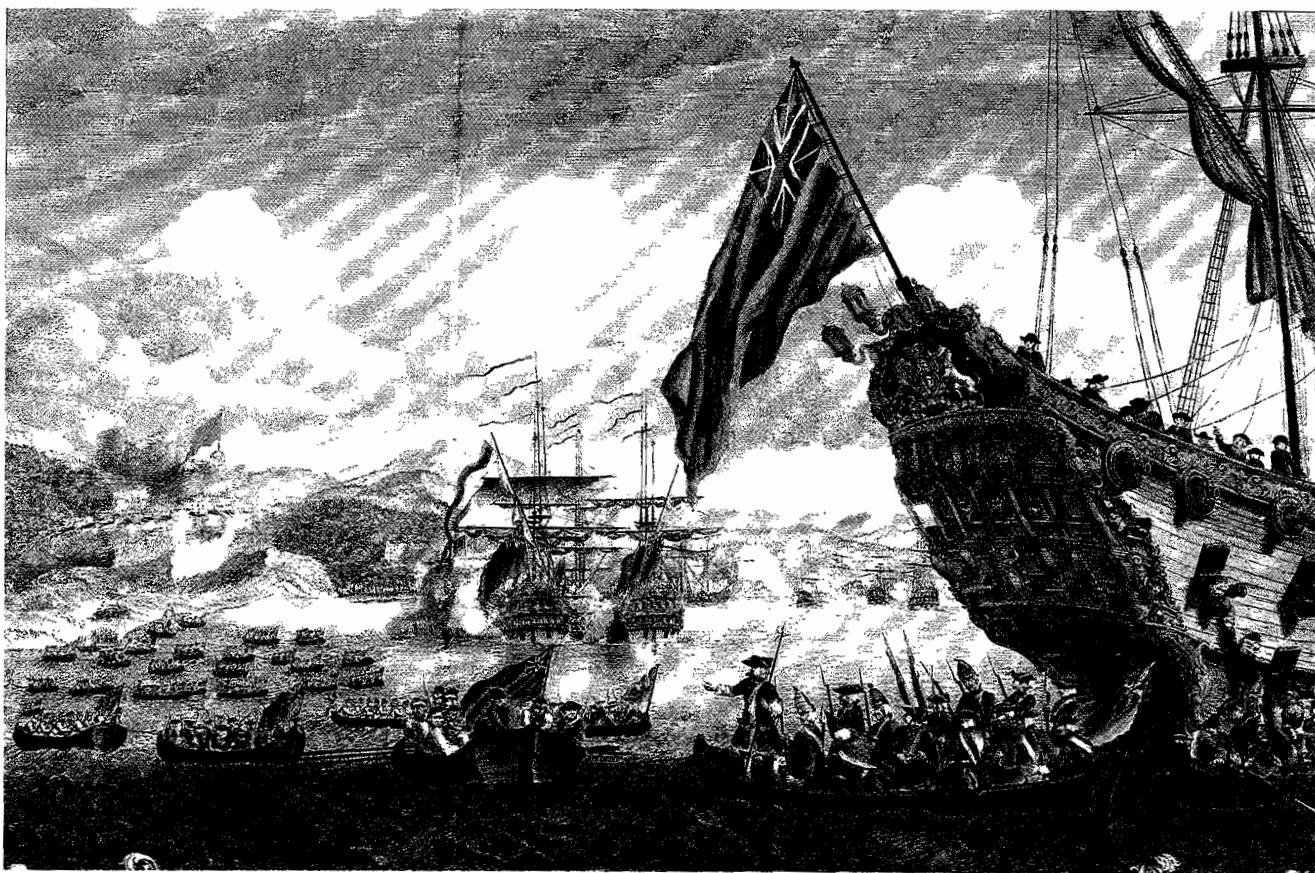
**MAP 4.4 European Spheres of Influence, 1754**

France and Spain laid claim to vast areas of North America and used their Indian allies to combat the numerical superiority of British settlers. For their part, Native Americans played off one European power against another. As a British official observed: "To preserve the Balance between us and the French is the great ruling Principle of Modern Indian Politics." By expelling the French from North America, the Great War for Empire disrupted this balance, leaving Indian peoples on their own to resist encroaching Anglo-American settlers.

Equally important, crucial Indian alliances began to crumble. Along the upper Ohio River the Delawares and Shawnees declared that they would no longer abide by Iroquois policies. In part, this Indian discontent stemmed from escalating Anglo-American demand for Indian lands from colonial speculators and recent European migrants. In the late 1740s the Mohawks rebuffed attempts by Sir William Johnson, a British Indian agent and land speculator, to settle Scottish migrants west of Albany. To the south, the Iroquois were infuriated when Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia and a group of prominent planters laid plans for “the Extension of His Majesties Dominions” into the upper Ohio River Valley, an area that they had traditionally controlled. Supported by influential London merchants, the Virginia speculators formed the Ohio Company in 1749 and obtained a royal grant of 200,000 acres along the upper Ohio River. “We don’t know what you Christians, English and French intend,” the outraged Iroquois complained, “we are so hemmed in by both, that we have hardly a hunting place left.”

To shore up the alliance with the Iroquois Nations, the British Board of Trade, the body charged with supervising American affairs, called for a great inter-colonial meeting with the Indians at Albany, New York, in June 1754. At the meeting the American delegates assured the Iroquois that they had no designs on their lands and asked for their assistance against the French. To bolster colonial defenses, Benjamin Franklin proposed a Plan of Union among the colonies with a continental assembly that would manage all western affairs: trade, Indian policy, and defense. But neither the Albany Plan nor a similar proposal by the Board of Trade for a political “union between ye Royal, Proprietary, & Charter Governments” ever materialized because both the provincial assemblies and the imperial government feared that a consolidated colonial government would undermine their authority.

Britain’s movement into the Ohio River Valley alarmed the French. They countered by constructing a series of forts, including Fort Duquesne at the point where the Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers join to



The Siege of Louisbourg, 1745

Assisted by British redcoats, blue-coated New England militiamen swarmed ashore on Cape Breton Island in May 1745 and laid siege to the formidable French citadel at Louisbourg. By late June the colonists’ artillery had silenced a strategic French battery, allowing British warships to enter the harbor. Faced with a combined assault from land and sea, the French surrendered. Yale University Art Gallery, Mabel Brady Garvan Collection.



Pipe of Peace

In 1760 the Ottawa chief Pontiac welcomed British troops to his territory, offering a pipe of peace to their commander, Major Robert Rogers. Three years later, Pontiac led a coordinated uprising against British troops, traders, and settlers, accusing them of cheating Native American peoples of their furs and lands. Library of Congress.

form the Ohio (present-day Pittsburgh). The confrontation escalated when Governor Dinwiddie dispatched an expedition led by Colonel George Washington, a young planter and Ohio Company stockholder, to support the company's claims. In July 1754 French troops seized Washington and his men and expelled them from the region, prompting expansionists in Virginia and Britain to demand war. The British prime minister, Henry Pelham, urged calm: "There is such a load of debt, and such heavy taxes already laid upon the people, that nothing but an absolute necessity can justifie our engag-ing in a new War."

Expansionism Triumphant. Pelham could not control the march of events. In Parliament William Pitt, a rising British statesman, and Lord Halifax, the new head of the Board of Trade, strongly advocated a policy of expansionism in the colonies. They persuaded Pelham to dispatch naval and military forces to America, where they joined with colonial militia in attacking French forts. In June 1755 British and New England troops captured Fort Beauséjour in Nova Scotia (Acadia). Equally significant, in a carefully planned military operation of dubious morality, troops from Puritan Massachusetts seized nearly 10,000 French Catholic Acadians, permanently deported them to various destinations—France, Louisiana, the West Indies, South Carolina—and settled English and Scottish Protestants on their farms.

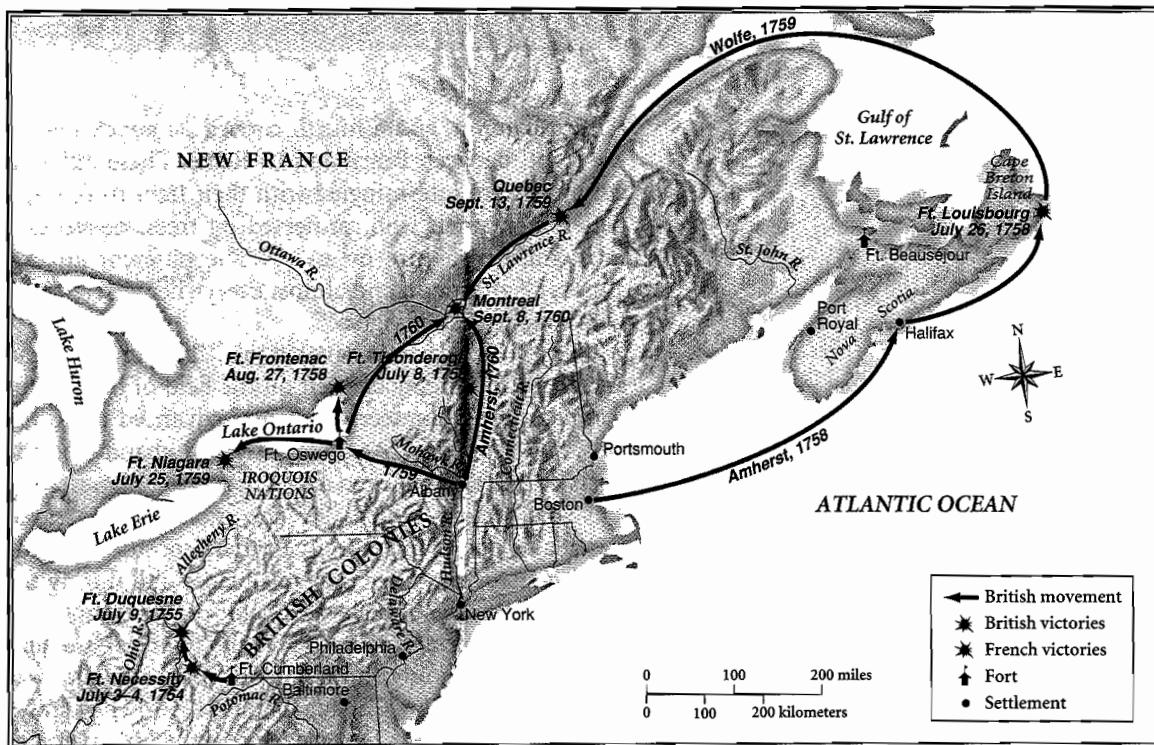
This Anglo-American triumph was quickly offset by a stunning defeat. As 1,400 British regulars and Virginia militiamen advanced on Fort Duquesne in July 1755, they came under attack by a small force of French and a larger group of Delawares and Shawnees, who had

decided to side with the French. In the ensuing battle the British commander, General Edward Braddock, lost his life and nearly two-thirds of his troops. "We have been beaten, most shamefully beaten, by a handfull of Men," Washington complained bitterly as he led the militiamen back to Virginia.

The Great War for Empire

By 1756 the fighting in America had spread to Europe, where the conflict aligned Britain and Prussia against France and Austria and was known as the Seven Years' War. When Britain decided to mount major offensives in India and West Africa as well as in North America and the West Indies, the conflict became a "great war for empire." Since 1700 Britain had reaped unprecedented profits from its overseas trading empire and was determined to crush France, the main obstacle to further expansion.

William Pitt, who was appointed secretary of state in 1757, was the grandson of the East Indies merchant "Diamond" Pitt and a committed expansionist. A haughty man, Pitt was constantly at odds with his colleagues. "I know that I can save this country and that I alone can," he declared. Indeed, Pitt was a master of strategy, both commercial and military, and planned to cripple France by attacking its colonies. In designing the critical campaign against New France, Pitt exploited a demographic advantage: on the North American mainland, King George II's 2 million subjects outnumbered the French by 14 to 1. To mobilize the colonists, Pitt agreed to pay half the cost of their troops and supply them with arms and equipment, an expenditure in America of nearly £1 million a year. He then committed



MAP 4.5 The Anglo-American Conquest of New France, 1754–1760

After full-scale war broke out in 1756, it took three years for the British ministry to equip colonial forces and dispatch a British army to America. Then British and colonial troops attacked the heartland of New France, capturing Quebec in 1759 and Montreal in 1760. The conquest both united and divided the allies. Colonists celebrated the great victory—“The Illuminations and Fireworks exceeded any that had been exhibited before,” reported the South Carolina Gazette—but British officers viewed provincial soldiers with disdain: “the dirtiest, most contemptible, cowardly dogs you can conceive.”

a major British fleet and 30,000 British regulars to the American conflict, appointing three young officers—James Wolfe, Jeffrey Amherst, and William Howe—as the top commanders (Map 4.5).

Beginning in 1758 the British moved from one triumph to the next. They forced the French to abandon Fort Duquesne (which they renamed Fort Pitt) and then captured the major fortress of Louisbourg at the mouth of the St. Lawrence (see Voices from Abroad, “Louis Antonine De Bougainville: The Defense of Canada,” p. 126). The following year Wolfe sailed down the St. Lawrence to attack Quebec, the heart of France’s American empire. After several failed attacks, 4,000 British troops scaled the high cliffs protecting the city and defeated the French. Quebec’s fall was the turning point of the war. The Royal Navy prevented French reinforcements from crossing the Atlantic, and when British forces captured Montreal in 1760, the conquest of Canada was complete.

Elsewhere the British also went from success to success. Fulfilling Pitt’s dream, the East India Company captured French commercial outposts and took control of trade in large sections of India. British forces seized French

Senegal in West Africa, the French sugar islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe, and the Spanish colonies of Cuba and the Philippine Islands. The Treaty of Paris of 1763 confirmed this triumph, granting Britain sovereignty over half the continent of North America, including French Canada, all French territory east of the Mississippi River, and Spanish Florida. Spain received Louisiana west of the Mississippi, along with the restoration of Cuba and the Philippines. The French empire in North America was reduced to a handful of sugar islands in the West Indies and two rocky islands off the coast of Newfoundland.

As British armies and traders occupied French forts, Indian peoples from New York to Michigan grew increasingly concerned. Fearing an influx of Anglo-American settlers, the Ottawa chief Pontiac hoped for a return of the French, declaring, “I am French, and I want to die French.” Neolin, a Delaware prophet, went further, teaching that the suffering of the Indian peoples stemmed from their dependence on the Europeans and their goods, guns, and rum. He called for the expulsion of all Europeans. Inspired by Neolin’s vision and his own anti-British sentiments, in 1763 Pontiac led a group of loosely confederated tribes in a major uprising,

Louis Antonine De Bougainville

The Defense of Canada

*F*ollowing the outbreak of the Seven Years' War in Europe in 1756, the resident French governor in New France mobilized local troops to defend the colony. As Britain poured 11,000 regular troops into the conflict in America, the French government dispatched the marquis de Montcalm and a few thousand soldiers to Quebec. In July 1758 they met an invading British army at Fort Carrillon on Lake Champlain. In his journal Louis Antonine De Bougainville, Montcalm's chief of staff, recorded the following account of the battle. Like most European officers, British as well as French, Bougainville had nothing but contempt for the colonists and their leaders.

July 1, 1758. The Marquis de Montcalm went this morning . . . to reconnoiter the surroundings of Fort Carrillon in order to select a battlefield and the place for an entrenched camp. We lack manpower, and perhaps time is also lacking. Our situation is critical. Action and audacity are our sole resources. . . .

July 2. It has been decided to occupy the heights which dominate Carillon with an entrenched camp, with redoubts and abatis [a defensive line of felled trees and sharpened posts]. . . . But to carry out these works strong arms are needed, as well as the arrival of the colony troops, and time granted us by the enemy. . . .

July 8. Half an hour after noon the English army advanced on us. . . . The left was first attacked by two columns, one of which tried to outflank the defenses and found itself under fire of La Sarre, the other directed its efforts on a salient between [the battalions from] Languedoc and Berry. The center, where Royal Roussillon was, was attacked at almost the same time by

a third column, and a fourth carried its attack toward the right between Bearn and La Reine. These different columns were intermingled with their light troops and better marksmen who, protected by trees, delivered a most murderous fire on us. . . . The different attacks, almost all afternoon and almost everywhere, were made with the greatest of vigor. . . .

July 9. The day was devoted to . . . burying our dead and those the enemy had left on the field of battle. Our companies of volunteers went out, advanced up to the falls, and reported that the enemy had abandoned the posts at the falls and even at the portage.

This victory which, for the moment, has saved Canada, is due to the sagacity of the dispositions, to the good maneuvers of our generals before and during the action, and to the unbelievable valor of our troops. . . .

July 29: Certain people [French colonists] are talking a lot of going home. They never made war [European-style] in Canada before 1755. They never had gone into camp. To leave Montreal with a party, to go through the woods, to take a few scalps, to return at full speed once the blow was struck, that is what they called war, a campaign, a success, victory. . . .

Now war is established here on the European basis. Projects for the campaign, for armies, for artillery, for sieges, for battles. It no longer is a matter of making a raid, but of conquering or being conquered. What a revolution! What a change! One would believe that the people of this country, at the novelty of these objects, would ask some time to accustom themselves to it, some more time to reflect on what they have seen. . . . On the contrary, townsmen, bankers, merchants, officers, bishops, parish priests, Jesuits, all plan this [war against English troops], speak of it, discuss it, pronounce on it.

Great misfortune for this country: it will perish, victim of its prejudices, the stupidity or of the roguery of its chiefs.

Source: Adventure in the Wilderness: The American Journals of Louis Antonine De Bougainville, trans. and ed. Edward P. Hamilton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964).

capturing nearly every British garrison west of Fort Niagara, besieging the fort at Detroit, and killing or capturing over 2,000 frontier settlers. But the Indian alliance gradually weakened, and British military expeditions defeated the Delawares near Fort Pitt and broke the siege of Detroit. In the peace settlement that followed, Pontiac and his allies accepted the British as their

new political "fathers." In return, the British addressed some of the Indians' concerns, temporarily barring Anglo-Americans from settling west of the Appalachians by establishing the Proclamation Line of 1763. Thus, in the aftermath of the Great War for Empire, the British crown took control of Canada and decided not to provide land for the expansion-minded American colonists.

British Economic Growth and the Consumer Revolution

Britain owed its military and diplomatic success in large part to its unprecedented economic resources. Since 1700, when it had wrested control of many oceanic trade routes from the Dutch, Britain had been the dominant commercial power in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. By 1750 it was becoming the first country to undergo industrialization. Its new technology and work discipline made Britain the first—and for over a century the most powerful—industrial nation in the world.

The new machines and new business practices of the Industrial Revolution allowed Britain to produce more wool and linens, more iron tools, paper, chinaware, and glass than ever before—and to sell those goods at lower prices. British artisans had designed and built water- and steam-driven machines that powered lathes for shaping wood, jennies and looms for spinning and weaving textiles, and hammers for forging iron. The new machines produced goods far more rapidly than human hands could. Furthermore, the entrepreneurs who ran the new factories drove their employees hard, forcing them to keep pace with the machines and work long hours. To market the resulting products, English and Scottish merchants launched aggressive campaigns in the rapidly growing mainland colonies, extending a full year's credit to American traders instead of the traditional six months.

This first “consumer revolution” raised the living standard of many Americans, who soon were purchasing 20 percent of all British exports and paying for them by increasing their exports of wheat, rice, and tobacco (Figure 4.4). For example, Scottish merchants

financed the settlement of the Virginia Piedmont, a region of plains and rolling hills just inland from the Tidewater counties. They granted planters and Scots-Irish migrants ample credit to purchase land, slaves, and equipment and took their tobacco crop in payment, exporting it to expanding markets in France and central Europe. In South Carolina planters supported their luxurious lifestyle by using British government subsidies to develop indigo plantations. By the 1760s they were exporting large quantities of the deep blue dye to English textile factories as well as exporting about 65 million pounds of rice a year to Holland and southern Europe. Simultaneously, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia became the breadbasket of the Atlantic world, supplying Europe's exploding population with wheat at ever-increasing profits. In Philadelphia wheat prices jumped almost 50 percent between 1740 and 1765.

This first American spending binge, like most subsequent splurges, landed many consumers in debt. Even during the boom times of the 1750s and early 1760s exports paid for only 80 percent of imported British goods. The remaining 20 percent—millions of pounds—was financed by Britain, both by the extension of mercantile credit and by Pitt's military expenditures in the colonies. As the war wound down, the loss of military supply contracts and cash subsidies made it more difficult for Americans to purchase British goods. Colonial merchants looked anxiously at their overstocked warehouses and feared bankruptcy. “I think we have a gloomy prospect before us,” a Philadelphia trader noted in 1765, “as there are of late some Persons failed, who were in no way suspected.” The increase in transatlantic trade had

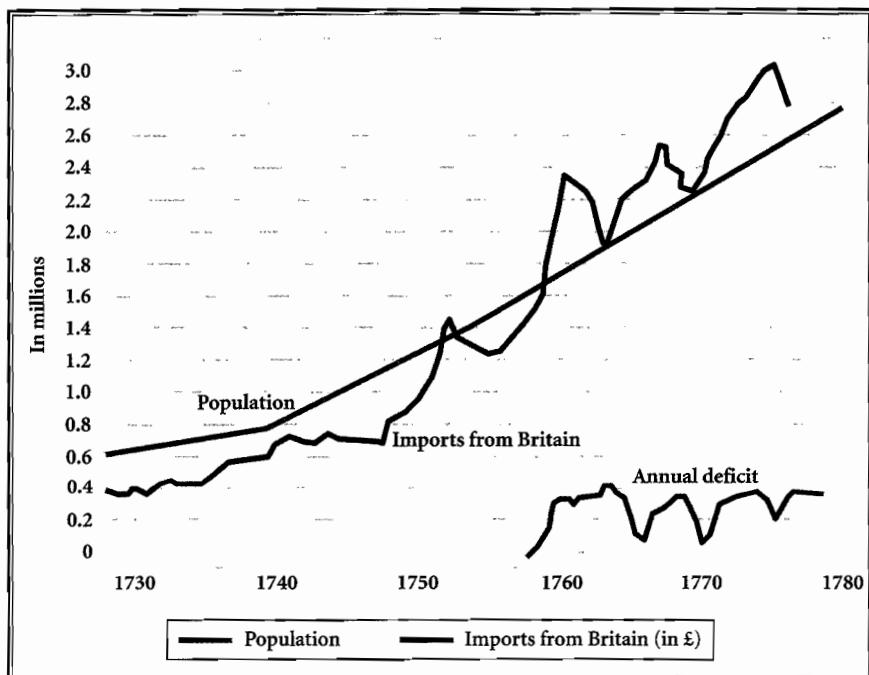


FIGURE 4.4 Colonial Population, Imports from Britain, and the American Trade Deficit

Around 1750 the rate of growth of imports from Britain into the American colonies outpaced the settlers' rate of population growth, indicating that consumption per capita was increasing. The colonists then went into debt to pay for these goods, running an annual deficit with their British suppliers.



New York Manor

The Philipse Manor stretched over ninety thousand acres and included mills and warehouses as well as a grand manor house. In this unattributed painting, the artist garbs the women in the foreground in classical costumes, thereby linking the Philipses to the noble families of the Roman republic. To preserve their aristocratic lifestyle and the quasi-feudal leasehold system of agriculture, the Philipses joined other Hudson River manorial lords in suppressing the tenant uprisings of the 1760s.

Historic Hudson Valley, Tarrytown, New York.

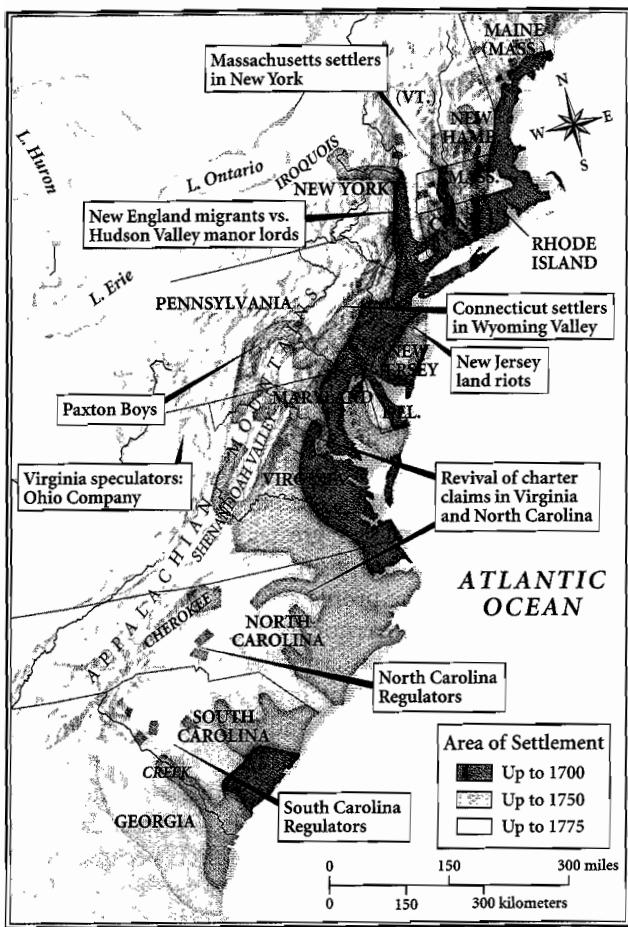
raised living standards but also had made Americans more dependent on overseas creditors and international economic conditions.

Land Conflicts

In good times and bad the colonial population continued to grow, causing increased conflicts over land rights. The families who founded the town of Kent, Connecticut, in 1738 had lived in the colony for a century. Each generation sons and daughters had moved westward to establish new farms, but now they lived at the generally accepted western boundary of the colony. To provide for the next generation, Kent families joined other Connecticut farmers in 1749 to form the Susquehanna Company, a land-speculating venture. Hoping to settle the Wyoming Valley in northeastern Pennsylvania, the company petitioned the legislature to assert jurisdiction

over that region on the basis of Connecticut's "sea-to-sea" royal charter of 1662. But King Charles II had subsequently granted these lands to William Penn, whose family invoked its proprietary rights and issued its own land grants. Soon settlers from Connecticut and Pennsylvania were burning down one another's houses. To avert further violence the two governments referred the dispute to the authorities in London, where it remained undecided at the time of independence (Map 4.6).

Simultaneously, three different land disputes broke out in the Hudson River Valley. First, groups of settlers from Massachusetts moved across the imprecise border with New York and claimed freehold estates on manor lands controlled by the Van Rensselaer and Livingston families. Second, the Wappinger Indians asserted legal claims to their traditional lands, which had been granted by English governors to various manorial lords. Finally, Dutch and German tenants asserted ownership



MAP 4.6 Westward Expansion and Land Conflicts, 1750–1775

Between 1750 and 1775 the mainland population doubled—from 1.2 million to 2.5 million—sparking westward migration and legal battles over land, which had become increasingly valuable. Violence broke out in many areas, as tenant farmers and smallholders contested landlord titles in eastern areas and backcountry settlers fought with Indians, rival claimants, and eastern-dominated governments.

rights to farms they had long held by lease and, when the landlords ignored their claims, refused to pay rent. By 1766 the tenants in Westchester, Dutchess, and Albany Counties were in open rebellion against their landlords and used mob violence to close the courts. At the behest of the royal governor, General Thomas Gage and two British regiments joined local sheriffs and manorial bailiffs to suppress the tenant uprising, intimidate the Wappinger Indians, and evict the Massachusetts squatters.

Other land disputes erupted in New Jersey and the southern colonies, where resident landowners and English aristocrats successfully asserted legal claims based on long-dormant seventeenth-century charters. For example, one court decision upheld the right of Lord Granville, an heir of one of the original Carolina

proprietors of 1660, to collect an annual tax on land in North Carolina; another decision awarded ownership of the entire northern neck of Virginia (along the Potomac River) to Lord Fairfax.

This revival of proprietary power underscored the growing strength of the landed gentry and the increasing resemblance between rural societies in Europe and America. High-quality land on the Atlantic coastal plain was getting more expensive, and English aristocrats, manorial landlords, and wealthy speculators had control of much of it. Tenants and even yeomen farmers feared they soon might be reduced to the status of European peasants and searched for cheap freehold land in western regions near the Appalachian Mountains.

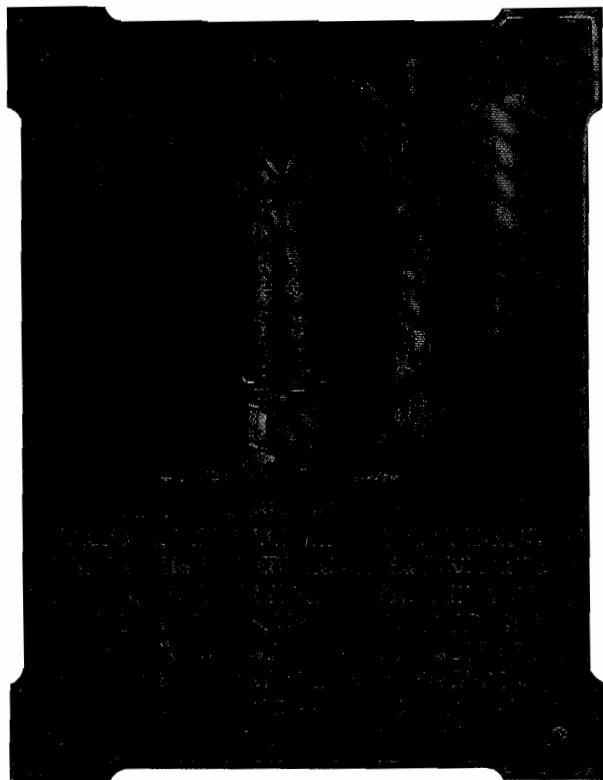
Western Uprisings

Movement to the western frontier created new disputes over Indian policy, political representation, and debts. During the war with France, Delaware and Shawnee warriors had attacked farms throughout central and western Pennsylvania, destroying property and killing and capturing hundreds of residents. Subsequently, the Scots-Irish who lived along the frontier wanted to push the Indians out of the colony, but pacifistic Quakers prevented such military action. In 1763 a band of Scots-Irish farmers known as the Paxton Boys took matters into their own hands and massacred twenty members of the peaceful Conestoga tribe. When Governor John Penn tried to bring the murderers to justice, about 250 armed Scots-Irish advanced on Philadelphia, prompting mobilization of the militia. Benjamin Franklin intercepted the angry mob at Lancaster and arranged a truce, narrowly averting a pitched battle. Prosecution of the accused men failed for lack of witnesses. Although the Scots-Irish dropped their demand for the expulsion of the Indians, the episode left a legacy of racial hatred and political resentment.

The South Carolina Regulators. Violence also broke out in the backcountry of South Carolina, where land-hungry Scottish and Anglo-American settlers had clashed repeatedly with Cherokees during the war with France. After the war ended in 1763, a group of landowning vigilantes, the Regulators, tried to suppress outlaw bands of whites that were roaming the countryside and stealing cattle and other property. The Regulators also wanted greater political rights for their region and demanded that the eastern-controlled government provide them with more local courts, fairer taxes, and greater local representation in the provincial assembly. The South Carolina government, which was dominated by lowland rice planters, decided to compromise with the Regulators because it feared slave revolts if the militia was away in the backcountry. In 1767 the assembly agreed to create locally controlled courts in the western counties of the colony

and reduce the fees for legal documents. However, it refused to reapportion the assembly or lower western taxes. Eventually a rival backcountry group, the Moderators, raised an armed force of its own and forced the Regulators to accept the authority of the colonial government. Like the Paxton Boys in Pennsylvania, the South Carolina Regulators attracted attention to western needs but ultimately failed to wrest power from the eastern elite.

Civil Strife in North Carolina. In 1766 another Regulator movement arose in the newly settled backcountry of North Carolina. After the Great War for Empire tobacco prices plummeted, and many debt-ridden farmers were forced into court. Eastern judges directed sheriffs to seize the property of bankrupt farmers and auction it off to pay creditors and court costs. Backcountry farmers—many of them migrants from Germany—resented merchants' lawsuits, not just because they generated high fees for lawyers and court officials but also because they violated rural custom. In both the Old



History and Memory

This visually striking highway marker, erected by a government agency in North Carolina, offers an official—and only partially correct—view of the past. Rather than assail the Regulators as extralegal vigilantes or outright lawbreakers (as many observers did at the time), the marker shrouds them in patriotism, as innocent victims of a vengeful British governor.

Alamance Battle Field, photo by Mike Mayse.

and New Worlds, smallholding farmers made loans among neighbors on trust and often allowed the loans to remain unpaid for years.

To save their farms from grasping creditors and tax-hungry local officials, North Carolina debtors joined together in a Regulator movement. Disciplined mobs of farmers intimidated judges, closed down courts, and broke into jails to free their comrades. Their leader, Herman Husband, focused his attention on misbehavior of local officials, urging his followers not to vote for "any Clerk, Lawyer, or Scotch merchant. We must make these men subject to the laws or they will enslave the whole community." But the North Carolina Regulators also proposed a coherent program of reforms, demanding passage of a law allowing them to pay their taxes in the "produce of the country" rather than in cash. They insisted on lower legal fees, greater legislative representation, and fairer taxes, proposing that each person be taxed "in proportion to the profits arising from his estate." In May 1771 Royal Governor William Tryon mobilized British troops and the eastern militia and defeated a large Regulator force at the Alamance River; at the end of the fighting thirty men lay dead and seven insurgent leaders were summarily executed. Not since Leisler's revolt in New York in 1689 (see Chapter 3) had a domestic political conflict caused so much bloodshed in America.

In 1770 as in 1689, colonial conflicts became intertwined with imperial politics. In Connecticut the Reverend Ezra Stiles defended the North Carolina Regulators. "What shall an injured & oppressed people do," he asked, when faced with "Oppression and tyranny (under the name of Government)?" Stiles's remarks reflected growing resistance to British imperial control, a result of the profound changes that had occurred in the mainland colonies between 1720 and 1765. America was still a dependent society closely tied to Britain by trade, culture, and politics, but it was also an increasingly complex society with the potential for an independent existence. British policies would determine the direction the maturing colonies would take.

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-4 at the end of the book.
- ▶ For map resources and primary documents, see bedfordstmartins.com/henretta.

Between 1700 and 1760 Britain's mainland colonies grew dramatically in numbers and wealth. A free-holding yeoman society flourished in New England. Men exercised firm authority within families, controlling their wives' property and providing inheritances for their children. As population growth threatened the freehold ideal, New England farmers averted a crisis by planting higher-yielding crops, sharing their labor and goods with one another, or moving to new frontier settlements.

In the Middle Atlantic colonies, farmers prospered because of the rising European demand for wheat. A great influx of Germans and Scots-Irish created an ethnically and religiously diverse society and led to sharp conflicts with the Quakers over Indian policy and access to political power. Economic inequality increased as gentlemen farmers and entrepreneurs grew wealthy and a substantial group of landless workers appeared at the bottom of the social order.

As the American colonies developed closer ties with Europe, they partook of its intellectual life. The rationalism of the European Enlightenment prompted educated Americans such as Benjamin Franklin to become deists and social reformers, while pietistic religion from Germany and England reinvigorated colonial churches. In the 1740s, the preaching of George Whitefield prompted a Great Awakening that brought spiritual renewal and cultural conflict. In the northern colonies enthusiastic New Lights condemned traditional Old Lights, while in Virginia evangelical Baptists converted white tenant farmers and enslaved blacks, challenging the dominance of the Anglican elite.

At midcentury a variety of conflicts disrupted American life. Rival claims to the trans-Appalachian west sparked a major war between Britain and France that ended with the British conquest of Canada. The peace treaty excluded the French from North America, destroying the "playoff system" of the Iroquois and other native American peoples. Within the British colonies, landed proprietors battled with dissident tenants in New York and used the courts to uphold their land claims in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the Carolinas. In the backcountry of Pennsylvania and the Carolinas yeomen farmers fought with Indians and formed Regulator movements to challenge eastern-controlled governments. Britain's North American settlements had become mature, conflict-ridden provinces.

1700–1714	New Hudson River manors created
1710s–1730s	Enlightenment ideas spread from Europe to America Deists rely on "natural reason" to define a moral code
1720s	Germans and Scots-Irish settle in the Middle Atlantic colonies Theodore Jacob Frelinghuysen preaches Pietism to German migrants
1730s	William and Gilbert Tennent lead Presbyterian revivals among Scots-Irish Jonathan Edwards preaches in New England
1739	George Whitefield sparks the Great Awakening
1740s–1760s	Growing shortage of farmland in New England Religious and ethnic pluralism in the Middle Atlantic colonies Rising grain and tobacco prices Increasing rural inequality
1740s	Great Awakening sparks conflict between Old Lights and New Lights Colleges established by religious denominations
1743	Benjamin Franklin founds the American Philosophical Society
1749	Virginia speculators create the Ohio Company Connecticut farmers form the Susquehanna Company
1750s	Industrial Revolution begins in England Consumer revolution increases American imports and debt to Britain
1754	French and Indian War begins Meeting of Iroquois and Americans at Albany; Plan of Union
1756	Britain begins the Great War for Empire
1759	Britain captures Quebec
1760s	Land conflict along the border between New York and New England Regulator movements in the Carolinas suppress outlaw bands and seek power Baptist revivals in Virginia
1763	Pontiac's uprising leads to the Proclamation of 1763 Treaty of Paris ends the Great War for Empire Scots-Irish Paxton Boys massacre Indians in Pennsylvania

