

# Session 2: Exploration and Colonization - THE BRITISH SOUTHERN COLONIES

## The Southern Colonies

- Made up of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia (and sometimes Maryland)
- The first established British colonies in North America
- Founded for purely economic reasons

## The Southern Colonists

### The English Cavalier

- Economic Status: Wealthy landowning nobility
- Ethnic Background: English
- Where they Settled: Coastal lowlands in the east with the best land for large plantation farming

### The Frontier Settler

- Economic Status: Poor former indentured servants
- Ethnic Background: Scotch-Irish, and poor English
- Where they settled: Small subsistence farms in the west near the Appalachians

## The Jamestown Colony: 1607

- First successful English colony in North America
- Originally founded by the Virginia Company, a British joint-stock corporation
- Colonists were led by John Smith, a former soldier and adventurer
- Established as an economic venture, eventually became a royal colony controlled directly by the British Crown
- Jamestown almost failed due to disease and starvation, but ultimately succeeded due to John Smith's leadership and tobacco's profitability
- Joint-stock companies funded and maintained the first English colonies through private investment and with charters from the English government
- Virginia Company founded Jamestown in 1607

## Successes

- New settlers arrived at the perfect time
- Introduction of tobacco by John Rolfe in 1612
- Headright System solved labor issues, leading to significant immigration expansion

## Problems

- Everyone looking for gold and profit
- Disease from bad water
- Starvation due to lack of crop planting
- Tense relations with the Powhatan Indians
- "Starving Time" during the winter of 1609-1610

## Early Forms of Government

- The Royal Colonies of the South (VA, NC, SC, GA) were governed by wealthy, land-owning aristocrats under the supervision of the King of England and Parliament
- The Virginia House of Burgesses, established in 1619, was the first elected colonial legislature in the Americas and still exists today as the Virginia Assembly

## European Treatment of Natives

- The Spanish: Raised natives up into social and political life, taught them agriculture and many other arts
- The French: Exceeded in industry, economy, and the arts of conciliating the affections of mankind, managed Indians well
- The English: Intended to change the natives' ways, teach them about the true god and salvation, and bring them under the king's rule

## The Settlers Clash with Native Americans

- Relations with American Indians worsened over time
- No intermarriage like the Spanish
- Colonists wanted more land for tobacco, native americans resisted
- 1622 - Opechancanough's revolt wiped out 1/3 of VA settlers, King James revoked the company's charter
- 1624 - VA became a royal colony

## Economy of the South

- Geographic Condition: Low coastal plain in the east and foothills and mountains in the west
- Charleston, SC became one of the major trade ports in the South
- Cash Crops: Tobacco, Rice, and Indigo (no cotton yet)
- Labor Force: Indentured servants and later slaves
- Class Division: The wealthy owned plantations, the poor hunted and relied on subsistence farming and trade with the natives

## The Indentured Servant

- Most indentured servants came over via the "headright system"
- Had to labor for 4-7 years before being freed and gaining ownership of their own land
- Ethnic Make-up: Poor English, Scot-Irish, and African

## African Slavery

- Slaves arrived in the 17th century from Africa via the "middle passage"
- Slaves had a life term
- Ethnic Make-Up: African

## Impact of the Slave Trade

- Disease killing native populations made them an unstable work force
- African slavery became an alternative for labor
- Demand for slaves grew quickly, leading to the growth of the trans-Atlantic slave trade

## Economic Differences Split Virginia

- Wealthy "cavalier" planters in Eastern VA represented by Governor Berkeley
- Former indentured servants in Western VA and frontier represented by Nathaniel Bacon

## Bacon's Rebellion

- Poor whites in the west, including former indentured servants, revolted against the VA government because they resented the lack of protection from Native Americans and representation in the House of Burgesses
- Revolted and marched on and burned Jamestown
- Led to more planters choosing African slaves over indentured servants due to the decreased likelihood of revolt

## Social and Religious

- Social Structure: Dominated by family status and land ownership
- Land Ownership: The wealthy owned plantations with slaves, the poor lived on the frontier
- Political Structure: The aristocracy (wealthy elites) controlled the government
- Religious Affiliation: Anglican (Church of England)