

GIVE

ME

**AN
AMERICAN
HISTORY**

**ERIC
FONER**

**KATHLEEN
DuVAL**

**LISA
McGIRR**

SEAGULL

7E / VOL. 1



LIBERTY!

PHYSICAL/POLITICAL MAP OF THE UNITED STATES



POLITICAL MAP OF THE WORLD



GIVE ME LIBERTY!

AN AMERICAN HISTORY

Seagull Seventh Edition

VOLUME 1: TO 1877



ERIC FONER
KATHLEEN DUVAL
LISA MCGIRR



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PREFACE

Give Me Liberty! An American History is a survey of American history from the earliest interactions of Indigenous peoples, Europeans, and Africans to the first decades of the twenty-first century. It offers students a clear, concise narrative whose central theme is the changing contours of American freedom.

We are extremely gratified by the response to the first six editions of *Give Me Liberty!*, which have been used in survey courses at many hundreds of two- and four-year colleges and universities throughout the country. The comments we have received from instructors and students encourage us to think that *Give Me Liberty!* has worked well in their classrooms. Their comments have also included many valuable suggestions for revisions, which we greatly appreciate. These have ranged from corrections of typographical and factual errors to thoughts about subjects that needed more extensive treatment. In making revisions for this Seventh Edition, we have tried to take these suggestions into account. We have also incorporated the findings and insights of new scholarship that has appeared since the original edition was written.

The most significant change in this edition, immediately visible on the book's cover and title page, is the addition of two new co-authors, Professor Kathleen DuVal of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Professor Lisa McGirr of Harvard University. Both are accomplished scholars with national and international reputations. For further details about their careers, see [About the Authors](#) above.

For the initial edition of *Give Me Liberty!*, which appeared in 2005, and the five subsequent revised editions, Eric Foner was solely responsible for all the writing as well as the choice of images and document excerpts in each chapter. This required, among other tasks, keeping up with the enormous outpouring of significant books covering every aspect of American history. As time went on, this became increasingly difficult for one individual. Professors DuVal and McGirr have now joined the process of revision. For this Seventh Edition, the former is responsible for changes to [Chapters 1](#) to [10](#), the latter [Chapters 18](#) to [28](#). Foner took charge of [Chapters 11](#) to [17](#).

The most important changes in this Seventh Edition involve heightened attention to Native American history and, in keeping with the overall theme of the book, Native Americans' ideas about freedom. This reflects both the recent burgeoning of this long-neglected field, which has produced outstanding works that change our understanding of key moments and processes in American history, and the expertise of our new co-authors.

As the original inhabitants of the lands that would become the United States, Native Americans have had a unique relationship to other Americans and with the federal government. The Constitution recognizes them as inhabitants of their own tribal sovereignties, not members of the national body politic. And sovereignty—control over ancestral lands and the ability to govern their own affairs—has been central to Native definitions of freedom. Over the centuries of American history, Indian sovereignty has eroded considerably, but it has not disappeared. Over time, it was severely challenged by European colonialism and American

nationhood. Wars and forced agreements dispossessed Native Americans of much of their land but although treaties were frequently violated, they recognized Native control over the remainder. The quest to exercise authority over their own lives and to maintain traditional languages and forms of governance and social organization has been a central theme of Native American history, as has the effort of outsiders to impose their own ideas about freedom, political power, and cultural life on the Indigenous population. Throughout U.S. history, Native understanding of freedom via sovereignty has clashed with settlers' ambitions for their own freedom.

Since 1924, all Native Americans have been citizens of the United States. Even today, however, many continue to identify as citizens of Native nations as well (or instead of) as American citizens. And many tribes are recognized by U.S. courts as entities distinct from the federal and state governments, even though tribal self-government is constrained by the power of Congress and the Department of the Interior. The changing nature of Native sovereignty and its relationship to concepts of freedom within both Native American tribes and the larger society is a central theme of this Seventh Edition. Building upon past editions' inclusion of Native history and Native voices, this edition narrates the history of American Indians in three stages: a long period in which diverse Indian nations ruled most of the continent; the decline of Native power and self-government from the mid-nineteenth through early twentieth centuries, and the Native revival in the late twentieth century continuing to today.

The major revisions that illuminate the history of these themes are as follows:

[Chapters 1 to 4](#) have been reorganized to give greater emphasis to Native American history. [Chapter 1](#) contains more coverage of the nature of Native American societies before contact with Europeans and, in addition, an expanded discussion of West Africa on the eve of the Atlantic slave trade. [Chapter 2](#) contains enhanced coverage of armed conflict between British settlers in Virginia and New England and the Native inhabitants, as well as new material on the early Atlantic slave trade, including the role of the Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch, and the origins of slavery in the British colonies. [Chapters 3 and 4](#) contain an expanded discussion of Native-colonial relations in the eighteenth century and the growth of pan-Indian coalitions that sought to halt settler intrusions.

In [Chapter 5](#), there is greater emphasis on how the American Revolution was also a Native struggle for independence and how Native Americans fought on both sides of the conflict in pursuit of that goal. [Chapter 7](#) contains a new section on Native nations in the West and their relations with the early American republic, which most did not wish to join. [Chapters 9 and 10](#) deal in more detail with Indian removal in the 1830s, including how this policy was linked to the expansion of cotton production and slavery in the South, and how Native nations responded to being forced from their ancestral lands.

[Chapter 14](#) expands the discussion of the Civil War in Indian Territory and contains a new subsection on the Dakota War, which led to the largest mass execution in American history. [Chapters 15 and 16](#) contain new subsections on Reconstruction in Indian Territory and President Grant's attempted peace policy. In [Chapter 18](#), there is an expanded discussion of Native American Progressivism set against the background of the continuing dispossession of Indian lands and efforts to forcibly assimilate Indian children via federally controlled boarding schools. Native American participation in World War I and debates over whether military

service would lead to greater citizenship rights are discussed in [Chapter 19](#). The subject of the Indian New Deal and its impact on Native Americans receives an expanded discussion in [Chapter 21](#) in the context of Indigenous understandings of freedom and sovereignty, as does the role of Native Americans in World War II in [Chapter 22](#). [Chapter 23](#) discusses the intensified campaign, known as “termination,” to abolish tribal sovereignty during the Cold War, and [Chapter 24](#) includes a discussion of the Indian Bureau’s program to move Native Americans from reservations to cities.

[Chapter 25](#) considers “Red Power” and the American Indian Movement alongside other examples of youth-led activism in the 1960s. [Chapter 26](#) shows how this intensified activism led to tribal revitalization, including a renaissance of Native American identity and cultural expression. In [Chapter 27](#), readers will see how Native peoples have continued to press for self-determination in the new millennium, seeking financial restitution for past wrongs and leading grassroots movements, such as the NoDAPL movement for environmental justice.

Other revisions, not directly tied to the theme of Native American freedom but based on significant recent scholarship, include a new subsection in [Chapter 12](#) highlighting the role of Black women in the abolitionist movement and the struggle for women’s rights and in [Chapter 13](#) an expanded discussion of John Brown’s raid of 1859 with attention to the influence of Black radicals on Brown’s thinking. [Chapter 19](#) now contains material on the 1918 influenza epidemic and in [Chapter 20](#) there is a new discussion of the Lost Generation—the writers and artists, disillusioned with American culture of the 1920s—who found a home in Europe. [Chapter 25](#) includes new material on Black urban uprisings in the 1960s and after, especially in relation to grievances against police behavior in minority neighborhoods. The final chapter has been substantially updated to cover the administration of Donald Trump and the election of 2020. Throughout the book there are also new selections for the Voices of Freedom and Who Is an American? document features. And this edition contains many new images—paintings, photographs, broadsides, and so on—all selected by the authors.

A NOTE ON NAMING

Readers will have noticed that in the discussion above, we have used more than one group name when discussing the people descended from the continent’s original inhabitants. The proper way to identify them, as well as other groups of Americans, can be controversial. Offensive terms have recently been removed from sports arenas and geographical place names, although not without resistance. Generally speaking, we believe, people have the right to choose the words that identify them. But such preferences change over time in response to changing social and political imperatives. Often, disagreement exists within groups about their proper designation. In this edition, we have updated our terminology, recognizing that some names once widely familiar are now viewed as inappropriate or even insulting by the people to whom they are applied, while bearing in mind that changed language can seem unfamiliar and confusing to those used to an older vocabulary.

To navigate this complex question we have consulted prominent scholars who write about various groups of Americans. Most advised us to cast a wide net, using interchangeably terms that are in widespread circulation today while being wary of overusing new language that has not gained a significant foothold either among the groups themselves or in society at large. Thus, readers will find Indian, Native American, Native, and Indigenous all used to identify the

people once universally called Indians. (The name Indian, as is well known, derives from Christopher Columbus's mistaken belief that his voyage to the Americas in 1492 had brought him to the East Indies rather than to a hemisphere previously unknown to Europeans.) For a time, Native peoples rejected Indian as conjuring up images of savagery. More recently it has come into wider use again, partly because of its very familiarity and partly to suggest a sense of shared identity that transcends individual tribes. Because the word Indian, despite its limitations, is so widely understood, a major organization demanding change in the 1960s intentionally chose to make the word part of its title: the American Indian Movement. This is not the only example of people turning a term considered insulting into an expression of pride.

A related question concerns the names of individual Native nations. Some groups, but by no means all, have abandoned designations that originated among white persons in favor of older Indigenous ones. While we believe, as noted above, that the group itself should decide what it wishes to be called, we realize that some changes may be confusing for many readers. In such cases we have added the previous name in parentheses, for example, Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and Muscogee (Creek).

The heightened sensitivity to racial inequality in the aftermath of the 2020 murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer sparked a similar discussion of the proper way to designate Americans of African descent. This debate has a long history. In the revolutionary era, Black institutions often included the word African in their titles (for example, the African Methodist Episcopal Church) as a sign of a unique identity. But in response to the rise of the American Colonization Society, which claimed that Blacks, free and slave, were not truly American and should return to Africa, a wholesale reevaluation of such names took place. Meetings of Black people demanding recognition as equal members of the body politic called themselves Conventions of Colored Citizens. One of the earliest Black newspapers was titled the *Colored American*. After the end of slavery, when persons of African descent were recognized as American citizens entitled to equality of political and civil rights, Negro, from the Spanish word for the color black and for dark-skinned people, was widely used. So was Afro-American and African-American. There was debate over whether to use hyphens, and whether Negro should begin with a capital or lowercase letter. In the 1920s, when the *New York Times*, one of the nation's leading newspapers, decided to capitalize the first letter of Negro, this was hailed as an important sign of respect. More recently, the Associated Press, which informally sets journalistic standards, recommended that Black, a label that has gained wide currency since the 1960s (Black Power was one of the era's familiar slogans) should be capitalized, as an indication of the shared history and culture of persons of African descent rooted in the unique historical experience of dislocation, slavery, racial inequality, and resistance. Today, Negro and Colored are rarely used except when discussing historical situations. African American and Black are now the most common designations. The widespread elimination of the hyphen in African American has influenced how other groups are described, such as, for example, Irish Americans and Asian Americans. Again, no unanimity exists on these questions of usage. In this edition, we have used Black and African American interchangeably, while retaining Negro and Colored when quoting historical documents or using historical titles, such as the U. S. Colored Troops in the Civil War.

Then there are the Americans variously labeled Hispanic or Latino. Both designations are widely used, although neither has much historical clarity. The dictionary defines Latino as a person with roots in Latin America, a category that covers persons of every religion and race,

with origins in more than a dozen countries. Hispanic refers primarily to language, meaning persons who speak Spanish (thereby excluding those Americans whose origins lie in Portuguese-speaking Brazil). It is only recently that these terms for what is now the country's largest minority group came into widespread use. The census did not include a Hispanic category until 1980. For many decades people descended from the Mexican inhabitants of lands in the Southwest acquired during the Mexican-American War viewed "Mexican" as a term of abuse and avoided it by using state-specific terms such as Tejano and Californio. The first organization of Mexican American activists purposely did not use Mexican in its title, calling itself the League of United Latin American Citizens. Later, younger radicals in California adopted Chicano, an old term of abuse, as a positive statement of identity.

There is also the problem of gendered language. In English, nouns do not have a gender as they do in Spanish. But because Latino is a masculine word, where does this leave people who do not identify as masculine? Some writers, scholars, and activists have begun using Latino/a or the gender-neutral neologism Latinx. This last term is still unfamiliar, including among most of the people it is describing. Depending on the historical context, we have decided to use Mexican American, Hispanic, Chicano, and Latino, or Chicana and Latina when specifically referencing women.

One thing is certain: language has changed over time and will continue to do so in the future. It will not be surprising if future editions of *Give Me Liberty!* employ wording that is unfamiliar or even unknown today. All this terminology is the product of our nation's ever evolving history. There is nothing unusual or pernicious in this, simply the recognition that as American society changes, the vocabulary we use to describe it changes as well.

THE FREEDOM THEME

Americans have always had a divided attitude toward history. On the one hand, they tend to be remarkably future-oriented, dismissing events of even the recent past as "ancient history" and sometimes seeing history as a burden to be overcome, a prison from which to escape. On the other hand, like many other peoples, Americans have always looked to history for a sense of personal or group identity and of national cohesiveness. This is why so many Americans devote time and energy to tracing their family trees and why they visit historical museums and National Park Service historical sites in ever-increasing numbers. Our hope is that this book will convince readers with all degrees of interest that history does matter to them.

The novelist and essayist James Baldwin once observed that history "does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, . . . [that] history is literally present in all that we do." As Baldwin recognized, the force of history is evident in our own world. Especially in a political democracy like the United States, whose government is designed to rest on the consent of informed citizens, knowledge of the past is essential—not only for those of us whose profession is the teaching and writing of history, but for everyone. History, to be sure, does not offer simple lessons or immediate answers to current questions. Knowing the history of immigration to the United States, and all of the tensions, turmoil, and aspirations associated with it, for example, does not tell us what current immigration policy ought to be. But without that knowledge, we have no way of understanding which approaches have worked and which have not—essential information for the formulation of future public policy.

History, it has been said, is what the present chooses to remember about the past. Rather than a fixed collection of facts, or a group of interpretations that cannot be challenged, our understanding of history is constantly changing. There is nothing unusual in the fact that each generation rewrites history to meet its own needs, or that scholars disagree among themselves on basic questions like the causes of the Civil War or the reasons for the Great Depression. Precisely because each generation asks different questions of the past, each generation formulates different answers. The past thirty years have witnessed a remarkable expansion of the scope of historical study. The experiences of groups neglected by earlier scholars, including women, African Americans, working people, and others, have received unprecedented attention from historians. New subfields—social history, cultural history, and family history among them—have taken their place alongside traditional political and diplomatic history.

Give Me Liberty! draws on this voluminous historical literature to present an up-to-date and inclusive account of the American past, paying due attention to the experience of diverse groups of Americans while in no way neglecting the events and processes Americans have experienced in common. It devotes serious attention to political, social, cultural, and economic history, and to their interconnections. The narrative brings together major events and prominent leaders with the many groups of ordinary people who make up American society. *Give Me Liberty!* has a rich cast of characters, from Thomas Jefferson to campaigners for woman suffrage, from Franklin D. Roosevelt to former slaves seeking to breathe meaning into emancipation during and after the Civil War.

Aimed at an audience of undergraduate students with little or no detailed knowledge of American history, *Give Me Liberty!* guides readers through the complexities of the subject without overwhelming them with excessive detail. The unifying theme of freedom that runs through the text gives shape to the narrative and integrates the numerous strands that make up the American experience. This approach builds on that of Foner's earlier book, *The Story of American Freedom* (1998), although *Give Me Liberty!* places events and personalities in the foreground and is more geared to the structure of the introductory survey course.

No idea is more fundamental to Americans' sense of themselves as individuals and as a nation than freedom. The central term in our political language, freedom—or liberty, with which it is almost always used interchangeably—is deeply embedded in the record of our history and the language of everyday life. The Declaration of Independence lists liberty among mankind's inalienable rights; the Constitution announces its purpose as securing liberty's blessings. The United States fought the Civil War to bring about a new birth of freedom, World War II for the Four Freedoms, and the Cold War to defend the Free World. Americans' love of liberty has been represented by liberty poles, liberty caps, and statues of liberty, and acted out by burning stamps and burning draft cards, by running away from slavery, and by demonstrating for the right to vote. "Every man in the street, white, black, red, or yellow," wrote the educator and statesman Ralph Bunche in 1940, "knows that this is 'the land of the free' . . . 'the cradle of liberty.'"

The very universality of the idea of freedom, however, can be misleading. Freedom is not a fixed, timeless category with a single unchanging definition. Indeed, the history of the United States is, in part, a story of debates, disagreements, and struggles over freedom. Crises like the American Revolution, the Civil War, and the Cold War have permanently transformed the idea

of freedom. So too have demands by various groups of Americans to enjoy greater freedom. The meaning of freedom has been constructed not only in congressional debates and political treatises but also on plantations and picket lines, in parlors and even bedrooms.

Over the course of our history, American freedom has been both a reality and a mythic ideal—a living truth for millions of Americans, a cruel mockery for others. For some, freedom has been what some scholars call a “habit of the heart,” an ideal so taken for granted that it is lived out but rarely analyzed. For others, freedom is not a birthright but a distant goal that has inspired great sacrifice.

Give Me Liberty! draws attention to three dimensions of freedom that have been critical in American history: (1) the *meanings* of freedom; (2) the *social conditions* that make freedom possible; and (3) the *boundaries* of freedom that determine who is entitled to enjoy freedom and who is not. All have changed over time.

In the era of the American Revolution, for example, freedom was primarily a set of rights enjoyed in public activity—the right of a community to be governed by laws to which its representatives had consented and of individuals to engage in religious worship without governmental interference. In the nineteenth century, freedom came to be closely identified with each person’s opportunity to develop to the fullest his or her innate talents. In the twentieth, the “ability to choose,” in both public and private life, became perhaps the dominant understanding of freedom. This development was encouraged by the explosive growth of the consumer marketplace (a development that receives considerable attention in *Give Me Liberty!*), which offered Americans an unprecedented array of goods to satisfy their needs and desires. During the 1960s, a crucial chapter in the history of American freedom, the idea of personal freedom was extended into virtually every realm, from attire and “lifestyle” to relations between the sexes. Thus, over time, more and more areas of life have been drawn into Americans’ debates about the meaning of freedom.

A second important dimension of freedom focuses on the social conditions necessary to allow freedom to flourish. What kinds of economic institutions and relationships best encourage individual freedom? In the colonial era and for more than a century after independence, the answer centered on economic autonomy, enshrined in the glorification of the independent small producer—the farmer, skilled craftsman, or shopkeeper—who did not have to depend on another person for his livelihood. As the industrial economy matured, new conceptions of economic freedom came to the fore: “liberty of contract” in the Gilded Age, “industrial freedom” (a say in corporate decision making) in the Progressive era, economic security during the New Deal, and, more recently, the ability to enjoy mass consumption within a market economy.

The boundaries of freedom, the third dimension of this theme, have inspired some of the most intense struggles in American history. Although founded on the premise that liberty is an entitlement of all humanity, the United States for much of its history deprived many of its own people of freedom. Non-whites have rarely enjoyed the same access to freedom as white Americans. The belief in equal opportunity as the birthright of all Americans has coexisted with persistent efforts to limit freedom by race, gender, and class and in other ways.

Less obvious, perhaps, is the fact that one person's freedom has frequently been linked to another's servitude. In the colonial era and nineteenth century, expanding freedom for many Americans rested on the lack of freedom—slavery, indentured servitude, the subordinate position of women—for others. By the same token, it has been through battles at the boundaries—the efforts of racial minorities, women, and others to secure greater freedom—that the meaning and experience of freedom have been deepened and the concept extended into new realms.

Time and again in American history, freedom has been transformed by the demands of excluded groups for inclusion. The idea of freedom as a universal birthright owes much both to abolitionists who sought to extend the blessings of liberty to Blacks and to immigrant groups who insisted on full recognition as American citizens. The principle of equal protection of the law without regard to race, which became a central element of American freedom, arose from the antislavery struggle and the Civil War and was reinvigorated by the civil rights revolution of the 1960s, which called itself the “freedom movement.” The battle for the right of free speech by labor radicals and birth-control advocates in the first part of the twentieth century helped to make civil liberties an essential element of freedom for all Americans.

Although concentrating on events within the United States, *Give Me Liberty!* also situates American history in the context of developments in other parts of the world. Many of the forces that shaped American history, including the international migration of peoples, the development of slavery, the spread of democracy, and the expansion of capitalism, were worldwide processes not confined to the United States. Today, American ideas, culture, and economic and military power exert unprecedented influence throughout the world. But beginning with the earliest days of settlement, when European empires competed to colonize North America and enrich themselves from its trade, American history cannot be understood in isolation from its global setting.

Freedom is the oldest of clichés and the most modern of aspirations. At various times in our history, it has served as the rallying cry of the powerless and as a justification of the status quo. Freedom helps to bind our culture together and exposes the contradictions between what America claims to be and what it sometimes has been. American history is not a narrative of continual progress toward greater and greater freedom. As the abolitionist Thomas Wentworth Higginson noted after the Civil War, “revolutions may go backward.” Though freedom can be achieved, it may also be taken away. This happened, for example, when the equal rights granted to former slaves immediately after the Civil War were essentially nullified during the era of segregation. As was said in the eighteenth century, the price of freedom is eternal vigilance.

In the early twenty-first century, freedom continues to play a central role in American political and social life and thought. It is invoked by individuals and groups of all kinds, from critics of economic globalization to those who seek to secure American freedom at home and export it abroad. We hope that *Give Me Liberty!* will offer beginning students a clear account of the course of American history, and of its central theme, freedom, which today remains as varied, contentious, and ever-changing as America itself. And we hope that it also enables students to understand the connections between past and current events, the historical context and antecedents of the social, political, cultural, and economic issues that the American people confront today.

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Eric Foner

Kathleen DuVal

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★ CHAPTER 1 ★

OLD WORLDS AND NEW

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- [What were the major patterns of Native American life in North America before Europeans arrived?](#)
 - [How did Native American and European ideas of freedom differ on the eve of contact?](#)
 - [What impelled European explorers to look west across the Atlantic?](#)
 - [What happened when the peoples of the Americas came in contact with Europeans?](#)
 - [What were the chief features of the Spanish empire in the Americas?](#)
 - [What were the chief features of the French and Dutch empires in North America?](#)
-

In 1534, Mi'kmaq Indians rowed a fleet of more than forty canoes out into the Gulf of St. Lawrence to meet Frenchman Jacques Cartier's ship. Cartier was frightened until he realized that the pointed sticks the Mi'kmaqs were waving at his men had animal skins attached to them. They were signaling that they wanted to trade. Six years later and over 1,000 miles to the south, the Cacica (female leader) of Cofitachequi, a Native province in what is now South Carolina, heard that an army of foreigners had entered her country. She gathered other leaders and went out to meet them with gifts: tanned leather hides, blankets, salt, and food. She placed a necklace of pearls on the army's commander, Spaniard Hernando de Soto. Everywhere in the Americas that Europeans went, Native people met them with their own diplomatic rituals and invitations to make trading and military alliances. Although Europeans sometimes called the Americas a "new world" that Christopher Columbus "discovered," the nations and peoples of the Americas composed a world just as fully developed as those in the "old world." Fortunately for Europeans, trade with these newcomers was exactly what many of them wanted.

Human communities have always interacted. For centuries before the conquest of the Americas, Europeans had intersected with Muslim populations in North Africa and Eurasia; indeed, the very idea of Europe as a distinct community arose out of such encounters. But since the voyages of Columbus, the interconnection of cultures and peoples has taken place on a global scale. Crops new to each hemisphere crossed the Atlantic and Pacific, reshaping diets and transforming the natural environment. Building on long-standing trade with North Africa and beyond, West Africans traded with Europeans who came to their Atlantic coasts. But in Africa, Europeans built a slave trade that gave them a supply of unfree labor with which they exploited the fertile lands of the Western Hemisphere. Indeed, of approximately 10 million men, women, and children who crossed to the Americas between 1492 and 1820, the vast majority, about 7.7 million, were enslaved Africans.

Long before Columbus sailed, Europeans had dreamed of a land of abundance, riches, and ease beyond the western horizon. Once this “discovery” had taken place, they invented an America of the imagination, projecting onto it their hopes for a better life. Here, many believed, would arise unparalleled opportunities for riches, or at least liberation from poverty. Europeans envisioned America as a religious refuge, a society of equals, a source of power and glory. They searched for golden cities and fountains of eternal youth. Some sought to establish ideal communities based on the lives of the early Christian saints or other blueprints for social justice.

Some of these dreams of riches and opportunity would indeed be fulfilled. To many European settlers, America offered a far greater chance to own land and worship as they pleased than existed in Europe, with its rigid, unequal social order and official churches. Yet the conditions that enabled millions of settlers to take control of their own destinies were made possible by the debasement of millions of others. The Americas became the site of many forms of unfree labor, including indentured servitude, forced labor, and one of the most brutal and unjust systems ever devised, plantation slavery. The conquest and settlement of the Western Hemisphere opened new chapters in the long histories of both freedom and slavery.

There was a vast human diversity among the peoples thrown into contact with one another in the Americas. Exploration and settlement took place in an era of almost constant warfare among European nations, each racked by internal religious, political, and regional conflicts. Native Americans and Africans consisted of numerous nations and other polities with their own languages and cultures. They were as likely to fight one another as to unite against the European newcomers. All these peoples were changed by their integration into the new Atlantic economy. The complex interactions of these old worlds—Western Europe, North America, and West Africa—would make a new world that would change them all.

• CHRONOLOGY •

- 7000 BCE** Agriculture develops in Mexico and Andes
- ca. 900 CE** Ancestral Puebloans and Huhugam begin to build planned towns
- ca. 1000–1400** Height of the Huhugam
- 1050–1200** Height of Cahokia
- ca. 1200** Rise of Mali and Benin
- ca. 1400** Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) League established
- 1434** Portuguese explore sub-Saharan African Coast
- 1492** *Reconquista* of Spain
- Spain expels Muslims and Jews

Columbus's first voyage to the Americas

- 1502** First African slaves transported to Caribbean islands
 - 1517** Martin Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses*
 - 1519** Hernán Cortés arrives in Mexico
 - 1528** Las Casas writes the first volume of his *History of the Indies*
 - 1530s** Pizarro's conquest of Peru
 - 1542** Spain proclaims the New Laws abolishing Indian slavery
 - 1608** Champlain establishes Quebec
 - 1609** Hudson claims New Netherland
 - 1610** Santa Fe established
 - 1680** Pueblo Revolt
-

AN OLD WORLD: NORTH AMERICA

The most striking feature of Native American society at the time Europeans arrived was its sheer diversity. Each group had its own political system and set of religious beliefs, and North America was home to hundreds of mutually unintelligible languages. Indians did not define “America” as a continent or hemisphere. They did not think of themselves as a single people, and Native Americans still today identify primarily as separate nations. Identity centered on the immediate social group—a family, clan, town, nation, or confederacy. When Europeans first arrived, many Indians saw them as simply one group among many. Their first thought was how to use the newcomers to enhance their standing in relation to other Native peoples rather than to unite against them. The sharp dichotomy between “Indians” and “white” persons did not emerge until later in the colonial era.

The Settling of the Americas

During the Ice Age tens of thousands of years ago, bands of hunters and fishers crossed the Bering Strait via a land bridge. Others arrived by sea from Asia or Pacific islands earlier or later than the Bering migrants (exact dates are very difficult to measure). Around 14,000 years ago, when glaciers began to melt at the end of the last Ice Age, the Bering land link became submerged under water, separating the Western Hemisphere from Asia. Some Native American creation stories tell of migrations, but others describe creations within their homelands, of ancestors who fell from the sky or came into the world from a hollow log.

THE ATLANTIC WORLD, ca. 1300



The Americas, Western Europe, and West Africa on the eve of colonization. There were countless human settlements on all four continents. People lived on farms, in villages and towns, and in cities, including the cities marked on the map.

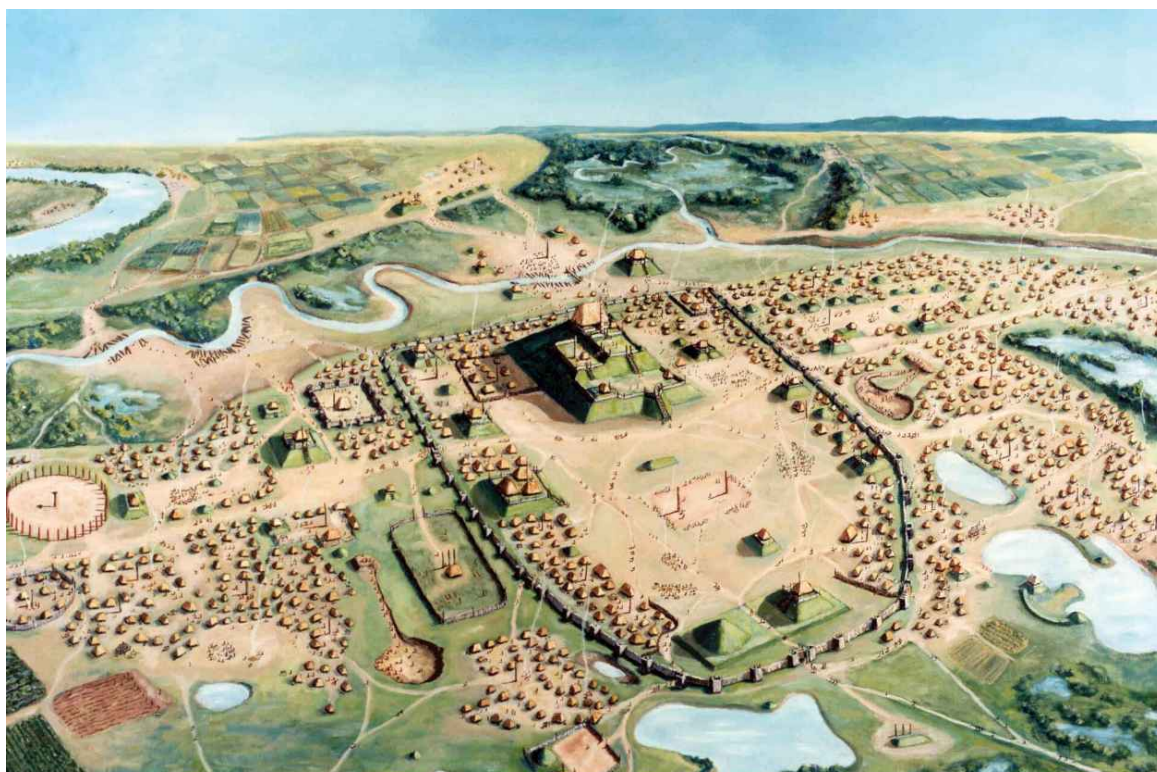
However people got there originally, the Americas were an ancient homeland to Native Americans by the time Europeans arrived. The hemisphere had witnessed many changes during its human history. First, the early inhabitants and their descendants spread across the two continents. Around 9,000 years ago, at the same time that agriculture was being developed in Mesopotamia, it also emerged in modern-day Mexico and the Andes and then spread to other parts of the Americas. Throughout the hemisphere, maize (corn), squash, and beans formed the basis of agriculture.

Politics and Power in Native North America

The Medieval Warm Period that began around the year 950 allowed the expansion of agriculture and the rise of cities in North America, much as it did in Europe and West Africa. The longer growing seasons and more predictable weather of the era were ideal for farming, and large-scale farming made urban living possible. The largest city north of Mexico was Cahokia, across the Mississippi River from what is now St. Louis. In the year 1200, Cahokia's central city was home to some 12,000 people, plus a large population in outlying dependent cities, towns, and farms. Cahokia was a major manufacturing and trading center, whose prominence influenced other people throughout the Mississippi Valley to build their own cities and dependent provinces—what archaeologists call “Mississippian civilizations.” Mississippian leaders ruled their realm from the large houses, halls, temples, and council chambers built on top of a central mound. Native people built scores of cities and

thousands of mounds during the Mississippian era. Most of them have been destroyed, but Cahokia's central mound is still ten stories tall, even after centuries of erosion.

Ancestors of Native peoples of the arid Southwest, including the Ancestral Puebloans and the Huhugam, constructed elaborate irrigation systems in order to farm in the desert. They built great planned towns with large multi-family dwellings and conducted trade with groups as far away as central Mexico and the Mississippi Valley. Pueblo Bonito, in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, stood five stories high and had more than 600 rooms. Like Mississippians, an elite class of leaders arose in large southwestern civilizations.



A modern visualization of Cahokia in the Mississippi River Valley, the largest Native American urban center in what is now the United States.

The Medieval Warm Period ended around 1250, and a colder and less predictable era called the Little Ice Age began. Large-scale agriculture became more difficult, and large centralized societies and urban populations became harder to sustain. Leaders' positions may have become more tenuous during droughts and the shorter growing seasons. It is hard to know exactly what happened, but oral histories and archaeological evidence indicate a period of growing distrust in powerful leaders and centralized political systems. People moved out of Mississippian and southwestern cities into smaller-scale, more ecologically sustainable towns and surrounding farms. When Spanish explorers came to the Southwest, they called some people the Pueblo Indians because they lived in towns, or *pueblos*. Spanish explorers in the sixteenth-century Southeast saw Mississippian cities, but the largest of them had already fallen. Mississippian descendants built smaller-scale, kin-based communities that mixed agriculture, hunting, and trade. Across North America, most Native people created a relatively egalitarian politics that emphasized consensus.

Towns confederated with related towns but resisted powerful leaders. In some places, larger confederacies formed to bring order to local regions or to fight together against a common enemy. In present-day New York and Pennsylvania, five nations—namely, the Mohawks, Oneidas, Cayugas, Senecas, and Onondagas—formed a [Great League of Peace](#). They called their league the Haudenosaunee, “the people of the longhouse.” (Their enemies called them the Iroquois, which probably meant something like “snakes.”) Each year the Haudenosaunee Great Council, with male representatives chosen by the women of the five nations, met to coordinate dealings with outsiders. In the Southeast, the Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Muscogee (Creek), and Catawba nations each eventually united dozens of towns in loose alliances.

Economics and Trade in Native North America

By the 1500s, Native leaders generally led through persuasion and reciprocity. A successful leader needed to have connections to outsiders and the ability to trade and make alliances with foreign peoples, thus bringing in valuable goods and ideas.

Exchange networks crossed North America, carrying local goods such as food, plant dyes and medicines, pottery, and quarried rock of various kinds. Trade networks also distributed goods from far away, including shell beads from the coasts, copper from the Great Lakes region, and mica from the Appalachians.

Although trading networks spanned the continent, Native Americans remained diverse. In eastern North America, hundreds of peoples inhabited towns and villages scattered from the Gulf of Mexico to present-day Canada. They lived on corn, squash, and beans, supplemented by fishing and hunting deer, turkeys, and other animals. On the densely populated Pacific coast, hundreds of distinct groups resided in independent villages and lived primarily by fishing, hunting sea mammals, and gathering wild plants and nuts. As many as 25 million salmon swam up the Columbia River each year, providing them with abundant food. On the Great Plains, with its herds of buffalo, many groups were hunters (who tracked animals on foot before the arrival of horses with the Spanish) part of the year while living in agricultural communities in the river valleys when they were not on the hunt.

Numerous land systems existed among Native Americans. Generally, however, specific families or towns had the right to farm on certain lands, and nations or confederacies claimed specific areas for hunting, fishing, and gathering. Indians saw land as a resource that particular people had the right to use but not as an economic commodity that could be bought and sold. In the nineteenth century, the Sauk leader Black Hawk explained: “The Great Spirit gave it to his children to live upon, and cultivate as far as necessary for their subsistence; and so long as they occupy and cultivate it, they have a right to the soil.” Few if any Native societies believed a piece of land could be fenced off and allotted forever to a single individual or family.

NORTH AMERICA, ca. 1500



The Native population of North America at the time of first contact with Europeans consisted of numerous peoples and nations with their own languages, religious beliefs, and economic and social structures. This map gives a sense of the large numbers of nations. By necessity, it leaves many out and includes some names that people did not call themselves in 1500.

Nor were Native Americans devoted to the accumulation of wealth and material goods. However, status certainly mattered. Leaders tended to come from certain families or clans, and they often controlled access to resources. But their reputation and influence rested on their ability to distribute goods with their followers rather than hoarding them for themselves. Generosity was among the most valued social qualities, and gift giving was essential. Trade, for example, meant more than a commercial transaction—it was accompanied by elaborate ceremonies of gift exchange. Under normal circumstances no one in Native societies went hungry or experienced the extreme inequalities of Europe. “There are no beggars among them,” reported the English colonial leader Roger Williams of Indians around New England.



The Village of Secoton, a drawing by John White. A central street links houses surrounded by fields of corn. In the lower part, dancers take part in a religious ceremony.

Native societies were highly gendered but much more equal than the system of gender relations in Europe. In most Native communities, women had responsibility for farming and running the households, including literally building the houses. Although diplomatic leaders were usually men, women generally made the decisions about food cultivation, storage, and preparation. They

participated in councils, especially when matters within the realm of women were being considered, including going to war and making peace because of women's roles in life-giving and in providing food for battle and diplomacy. Many North American societies were matrilineal—that is, tracing descent through the mother's line and making children members of the mother's family or clan, not the father's. Women generally had some power over their own sexuality and marriage, including divorce.

Religion in Native North America

For the diverse Native societies of North America, as for people all around the world in the medieval and early modern eras, religion was not simply a matter of spiritual doctrines and practices, but also systems of belief that permeated every aspect of people's lives. Their lives were steeped in religious ceremonies often directly related to farming and hunting. Spiritual power, they believed, suffused the world, and sacred spirits could be found in all kinds of living and inanimate things—animals, plants, trees, water, and wind. Through religious ceremonies, they aimed to harness the aid of powerful supernatural forces to serve human interests. Religious ceremonies sought to engage the spiritual power of nature to secure abundant crops or fend off dangerous spirits. Towns or clans also held elaborate religious rites, participation in which helped to define the boundaries of community membership. Those who seemed to possess special abilities to invoke supernatural powers—namely, shamans, medicine men, and other religious leaders—held positions of respect and authority. They did not make a sharp distinction between the natural and the supernatural, or secular and religious activities.

A major difference with Christianity, as well as with Judaism and Islam, was that Native North American religions were inclusivist. In theory at least, Christians were supposed to be exclusively Christian, rejecting all other religions' beliefs and practices as idolatry and blasphemy. Inclusivist religions, in contrast, allowed adherents to incorporate new religious beliefs and practices as part of a larger effort to make sense of the world. This fundamental difference between inclusivist and exclusivist ways of seeing religion would lead to grave misunderstandings when Christian missionaries tried to convert Native Americans.

Slavery and Freedom in Native North America

And what of liberty as the Native inhabitants of North America understood it? Many Europeans saw Indians as embodying freedom. The Haudenosaunee, wrote one colonial official, held “such absolute notions of liberty that they allow of no kind of superiority of one over another, and banish all servitude from their territories.” But most colonizers quickly concluded that the notion of “freedom” was alien to Indian societies. Early English and French dictionaries of Indian languages contained no entry for “freedom” or *liberté*. Nor, wrote one early trader, did Indians have “words to express despotic power, arbitrary kings, oppressed or obedient subjects.” Of course, Native Americans whose ancestors had been part of Mississippian or other hierarchical societies in previous generations did know about the dangers of excessive power. Unlike Europeans, they had rejected that way of life to develop societies with the kind of freedom that they valued.

Europeans considered Indians barbaric in part because they did not appear to live under established governments or fixed laws or have the proper respect for authority. “They are born, live, and die in a liberty without restraint,” wrote one religious missionary. In a sense, they seemed *too* free, lacking the order and discipline that Europeans considered the hallmarks of civilization. When Giovanni da

Verrazano described the Indians as living in “absolute freedom,” he did not intend this as a compliment.

The familiar modern understanding of freedom as personal independence, often based on ownership of private property, had little meaning in Native societies. But Indians certainly had their own ideas of freedom. Although individuals were expected to think for themselves and did not always have to go along with collective decision making, men and women judged one another according to their ability to live up to widely understood ideas of appropriate behavior. Far more important than individual autonomy were kinship ties, the ability to follow one’s spiritual values, and the well-being and security of one’s community. Group autonomy and self-determination, and the mutual obligations that came with a sense of belonging and connectedness, took precedence over individual freedom. Indeed, the emphasis on consensus-building (rather than dictatorial decision making or majority rule) at times required someone with a dissenting point of view simply to leave a council meeting or diplomatic negotiation rather than continue to argue. The Haudenosaunee League held its leaders and representatives to a high standard: “Their hearts shall be full of peace and good will and their minds filled with a yearning for the welfare of the people. . . . Neither anger nor fury shall find lodgment in their minds and all their words and actions shall be marked by calm deliberation.”

Like medieval and early modern people around the globe, many Native North American societies practiced small-scale slavery, mostly enslavement of war captives. Captives had none of the rights or privileges of members of a society. Ripped from their own societies and families, they could be forced to labor or traded away. But slavery was not inheritable, and captives could become full members of the society that adopted them.

Glossary

[Great League of Peace](#)

An alliance of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) nations, originally formed at least 400 years ago. Each year the Haudenosaunee Great Council, with male representatives chosen by the women of the five (and later six) nations, met to coordinate dealings with outsiders. The League was a major force in the 1600s and 1700s.

AN OLD WORLD: WEST AFRICA

Politics and Power in West Africa

Like Native Americans and Europeans, West Africans did not consider themselves all one people. West Africans spoke dozens of different languages and hundreds of dialects. They lived under a variety of different political systems. In the late medieval and early modern eras, most West Africans lived in towns centered on kinship and run by elders. As in Native America, women in many parts of West Africa were responsible for farming and land management.

Some parts of West Africa were ruled by large empires. Gaining power in the thirteenth century, the Mali empire became the largest in West Africa, with major cities at Jenne, Gao, and Timbuktu. To the south was the smaller kingdom of Benin, in what is now Nigeria. Its capital, Edo, was an imposing city whose craftspeople produced bronze sculptures that still inspire admiration for their artistic beauty and superb casting techniques.

Economics and Trade in West Africa

The wealth of West African empires was built on trans-Saharan trade. Starting around the year 1000, Muslim traders from North Africa and the Middle East crossed the Sahara to trade with West Africa. Camel caravans carried spices, silks, and cotton south to exchange for West African products, including textiles, gold, copper, grains, nuts, and art. From North Africa, West African products reached markets in the Middle East, Asia, and Western Europe, inspiring interest among the Portuguese in establishing direct trade by sailing to West Africa.

Although connected to trading networks and regional politics, most West Africans farmed, herded, and fished locally for their living. The rice, millet, peas, okra, melons, and yams that they cultivated would spread around the world in the coming centuries, along with the products of the Americas, Europe, and Asia.

Religion in West Africa

North African traders also brought Islam to West Africa. The native religions of West Africa were well established and, like those in North America, inclusivist. Over time, many West Africans converted to Islam, in many cases blending older beliefs, practices, and rituals of planting and harvesting with Islamic doctrine. Leaders who converted to Islam built grand mosques in cities like Jenne.

Slavery and Freedom in West Africa

In addition to such products as textiles and gold, trans-Saharan trade also included enslaved people, usually war captives, criminals, or debtors. Slaves in West Africa generally worked within the households of their owners or on public works projects. They had well-defined rights, such as owning property and marrying free persons. It was not uncommon for African slaves to acquire their freedom. As in most parts of the world, slavery was one of several forms of labor, not the basis of the economy as it would become in large parts of the Americas under colonization.

Many of West Africa's rulers were converts to Islam, which forbade enslaving fellow Muslims. It allowed the enslavement of non-Muslims taken in war, as long as the owner provided religious instruction to the slave. Thus slavery was war-based and religion-based, but not race-based and not necessarily inherited.

AN OLD WORLD: WESTERN EUROPE

Politics and Power in Western Europe

Europe had been devastated by the ending of the Medieval Warm Period, famine, and the Black Death. It lost perhaps as much as half its population over the course of the fourteenth century. Whereas North Americans generally decentralized their societies and rejected authoritarian leaders in response to the crises of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, European monarchies grew in power and size.

Wars and strategic marriages created expansive states, including Portugal, Spain, France, England, and the Holy Roman Empire. They were ruled by dynasties that passed the crown through patrilineal lines of succession. Early modern European societies were extremely hierarchical, with marked gradations of social status ranging from the king and hereditary aristocracy down to the urban and rural poor. Inequality was built into virtually every social relationship. The king claimed to rule by the authority of God. Persons of high rank demanded deference from those below them.

Within families, men exercised authority over their wives and children. In England, the legal doctrine known as “coverture” required that when a woman married she surrendered her legal identity, which became “covered” by that of her husband. She could not own property or sign contracts in her own name, control her wages if she worked, write a separate will, or, except in the rarest of circumstances, go to court seeking a divorce. The husband conducted business and testified in court for the entire family. He had the exclusive right to his wife’s “company,” including domestic labor and sexual relations.

Everywhere in Europe, family life assumed male dominance and female submission. Indeed, political writers of the sixteenth century explicitly compared the king’s authority over his subjects with the husband’s authority over his family. Both were ordained by God. To justify this argument, they referred to a passage in the New Testament: “As the man is the head of the woman, so is Christ the head of the Church.” Neither kind of authority could be challenged without threatening the fabric of social order. In Europe, women’s freedoms were dramatically more restricted than in North America or West Africa.

Economics and Trade in Western Europe

As in North America and West Africa, most Western Europeans were farmers. The Medieval Warm Period had allowed them to expand agriculture into previously marginal areas, but the Little Ice Age again contracted farming. When European populations rose after the ravages of the Black Death, the fertile lands of the Americas seemed ideal for feeding the excess population.

Western Europe had only recently connected to the centuries-old trade route that stretched from the Mediterranean, Africa, and the Middle East to South Asia and China. The European conquest of the Americas would begin as an offshoot of the quest for a sea route to West Africa, India, China, and the islands of the East Indies, the sources of gold, silk, tea, sugar, spices, porcelain, and other luxury goods that Europeans had come to value.

Religion in Western Europe

States in Western Europe had converted to Christianity by the early Middle Ages and were officially Catholic until the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation created Protestantism. As in North America and West Africa, religion was intertwined with daily life. Cathedrals were the center of towns, and calendars for schools, governments, and courts were set by the cycle of church festivals and fast days. Yet, as with Islam in West Africa, older religious traditions survived and blended with Christianity, despite its official theology of exclusivism. Many Europeans continued to believe in witches, demons, and magic.

Commercial and religious motives—namely, the desire to eliminate Islamic intermediaries and win control of the lucrative trade for Christian Western Europe—combined to inspire the quest for a direct route to West Africa and Asia. The marriage of King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile in 1469 united their warring kingdoms. In 1492, they completed the *reconquista*—that is, the “reconquest” of Spain from the Moors, African Muslims who had occupied part of the Iberian Peninsula for centuries. To ensure Spain’s religious unification, Ferdinand and Isabella ordered all Muslims and Jews to convert to Catholicism or leave the country. They hoped that ocean trade would circumvent Muslim merchants and perhaps even convert Asians to Christianity, who might help the Christian monarchs seize Jerusalem from Muslim control.

Slavery and Freedom in Western Europe

On the eve of colonization, Europeans held numerous ideas of freedom. Some were as old as the city-states of ancient Greece, while others arose during the political struggles of the early modern era. Some laid the foundations for modern conceptions of freedom, whereas others are quite unfamiliar today. Freedom was not a single idea but a collection of distinct rights and privileges, many enjoyed by only a small portion of the population.

One conception common throughout Europe was that freedom was less a political or social status than a moral or spiritual condition. Freedom meant abandoning the life of sin to embrace the teachings of Christ. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is,” declares the New Testament, “there is liberty.” In this definition, servitude and freedom were mutually reinforcing, not contradictory states, since those who accepted the teachings of Christ simultaneously became “free from sin” and “servants to God.”

“Christian liberty” had no connection to later ideas of religious toleration, a notion that scarcely existed on the eve of colonization. Because religious systems of belief permeated

every aspect of people's lives, religion was closely tied to a person's economic, political, and social position and ability to enjoy basic rights.

Every nation in Europe had an established church that decreed what forms of religious worship and belief were acceptable. Dissenters faced persecution by the state as well as condemnation by church authorities. Religious uniformity was thought to be essential to public order; the modern idea that a person's religious beliefs and practices are a matter of private choice, not legal obligation, was almost unknown. The religious wars that racked Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries centered on which religion would predominate in a kingdom or region, not the right of individuals to choose a church in which to worship.

The equating of liberty with devotion to a higher authority suggested that freedom meant obedience to law. Aristotle had described the law as liberty's "salvation," not its enemy. The identification of freedom with the rule of law did not, however, mean that all subjects of the crown enjoyed the same degree of freedom. In hierarchical European societies, liberty came from knowing one's social place and fulfilling the duties appropriate to one's rank. Most men lacked the freedom that came with economic independence. Even in places where some officials were elected, property qualifications and other restrictions limited the electorate to a minuscule part of the adult male population. The law required strict obedience of employees, and breaches of labor contracts carried criminal penalties.

European ideas of freedom still bore the imprint of the Middle Ages, when "liberties" meant formal, specific privileges such as self-government, exemption from taxation, or the right to practice a particular trade, granted to individuals or groups by contract, royal decree, or purchase. One legal dictionary defined a liberty as "a privilege . . . by which men may enjoy some benefit beyond the ordinary subject." Only those who enjoyed the "freedom of the city," for example, could engage in certain economic activities. Numerous modern civil liberties did not exist. The law decreed acceptable forms of religious worship. The government regularly suppressed publications it did not like, and criticism of authority could lead to imprisonment. Personal independence was reserved for a small part of the population, and this was one reason why authorities found "masterless men"—those without regular jobs or otherwise outside the control of their social superiors—so threatening. Nonetheless, every European country that colonized the Americas claimed to be spreading freedom—for its own population and for Native Americans.

Slavery was central to the societies of ancient Greece and Rome, and it survived for centuries in northern Europe after the collapse of the Roman empire. Germans, Vikings, and Anglo-Saxons all held slaves. In the Mediterranean world, trade in Slavic peoples survived into the fifteenth century. (The English word "slavery" derives from "Slav.") The Spanish and Portuguese took Muslim war captives during their *reconquista* and bought slaves from North African traders. As Europeans began to colonize in the Atlantic, they would look to slavery more and more for labor.

Glossary

[reconquista](#)

The “reconquest” of Spain from the Moors completed by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in 1492.

CONTACT

Chinese and Portuguese Navigation

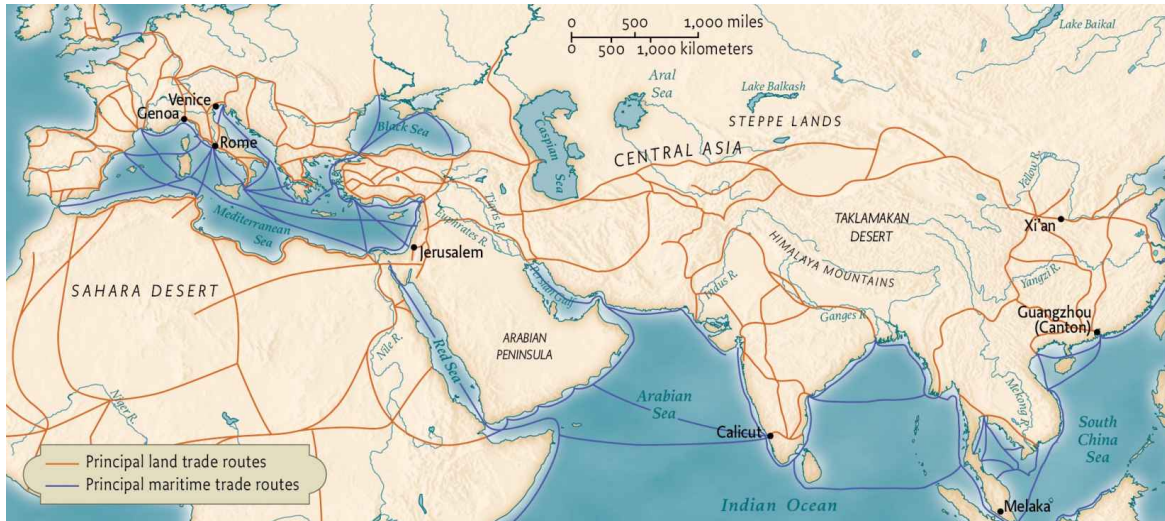
At the beginning of the fifteenth century, one might have predicted that China would establish the world's first global empire. Between 1405 and 1433, Admiral Zheng He led seven large naval expeditions in the Indian Ocean. The first convoy consisted of 62 ships that were larger than those of any European nation, along with 225 support vessels and more than 25,000 men. On his sixth voyage, Zheng explored the coast of East Africa. China was already the world's most important trading economy, with trade routes dotting the Indian Ocean. Zheng's purpose was not discovery, but to impress other peoples with China's might. Had his ships continued westward, they could easily have reached North and South America. But as a wealthy land-based empire, China did not feel the need for overseas expansion, and after 1433 the government ended support for long-distance maritime expeditions. It fell to Portugal, situated on the western corner of the Iberian Peninsula, far removed from the overland route to Asia, to take advantage of new techniques of sailing and navigation to begin exploring the Atlantic.

The development of the [caravel](#), a ship capable of long-distance travel, and of the compass and quadrant, devices that enabled sailors to determine their location and direction with greater accuracy than in the past, made it possible to sail down the coast of Africa and return to Portugal.

Portugal and West Africa

Until 1434, no European sailor had seen the coast of Africa below the Sahara. But in that year, a Portuguese ship brought a sprig of rosemary from West Africa, proof that one could sail beyond the desert and return. Little by little, Portuguese ships moved farther down the coast, in 1485 reaching Benin. The Portuguese and their African trading partners established fortified trading posts on the western coast of Africa. The profits reaped by these Portuguese "factories"—so named because merchants were known as "factors"—inspired other European powers to follow in their footsteps.

TRADE ROUTES STRETCHING FROM EUROPE AND AFRICA TO ASIA, 1400s



Europeans longed to trade with Asia and Africa without having to pass through the Italian city-states and Middle Eastern empires that controlled the overland route.

Portugal also began to colonize Madeira, the Azores, and the Canary and Cape Verde Islands, which lie in the Atlantic off the African coast. Sugar plantations worked by Muslim captives and slaves from Slavic areas of Eastern Europe had flourished in the Middle Ages on Mediterranean islands like Cyprus, Malta, and Crete. Now, the Portuguese established plantations on the Atlantic islands, eventually replacing the Native populations with thousands of enslaved men and women from Africa, setting an ominous precedent. Soon, the center of sugar production would shift again, to the Western Hemisphere.

The coming of the Portuguese, soon followed by traders from other European nations, accelerated the buying and selling of captives within West Africa. At least 100,000 Africans were transported to Spain and Portugal between 1450 and 1500. In 1502, the first Africans were shipped to islands in the Caribbean. The transatlantic slave trade, and its impact on Africa, will be discussed in [Chapter 4](#).

Having reached West Africa, Portuguese mariners pushed their explorations ever southward along the coast. Bartholomeu Dias reached the Cape of Good Hope at the continent's southern tip in 1487. In 1498, Vasco da Gama sailed around it to India, demonstrating the feasibility of a sea route to the East. With a population of under 1 million, Portugal established a vast trading empire, with bases in India, southern China, and Indonesia. It replaced the Italian city-states as the major European commercial partner of the East. But six years before da Gama's voyage, Christopher Columbus had, he believed, discovered a new route to China and India by sailing west.

The Voyages of Columbus

On October 12, 1492, the Taíno (Arawak) people on one of the islands that today are called the Bahamas saw a strange sight. They were island people who were accustomed to vessels approaching from far away, but these ships were built in an unusual shape and had sails to catch the wind. The men wore armor made of metal and, after rowing to shore in smaller boats, raised a flag and spoke loudly in an unfamiliar language. These strangers did seem at least to know how to trade, and their needles and other pieces of metal seemed interesting and useful.

The expedition's leader, Christopher Columbus, was a seasoned mariner and fearless explorer from Genoa, a major port in northern Italy. Columbus had for years sailed the Mediterranean and North Atlantic, studying ocean currents and wind patterns. Like nearly all navigators of the time, Columbus knew the earth was round. But he drastically underestimated its size. He believed that by sailing westward he could relatively quickly cross the Atlantic and reach Asia. No one in Europe knew that two giant continents lay 3,000 miles to the west. The Vikings, to be sure, had sailed from Greenland to Newfoundland around the year 1000 and established a settlement, Vinland, at a site now known as L'Anse aux Meadows. But this outpost was abandoned after a few years and had been forgotten, except in Norse legends.

Columbus relied on a number of sources for his estimate of the size of the globe, including Marco Polo's account of his visit by land to China in the thirteenth century and, as a devout Catholic, the Bible. Most of Columbus's contemporaries, however, knew that he considerably underestimated the earth's size, which helps to explain why he had trouble gaining backers for his expedition. Eventually, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain agreed to become sponsors, along with bankers and merchants of Spain and the Italian city-states, who desperately desired to circumvent the Muslim stranglehold on eastern trade. Columbus set sail with royal letters of introduction to Asian rulers, authorizing him to negotiate trade agreements.

After exploring the islands of the Bahamas, Hispaniola (today the site of Haiti and the Dominican Republic), and Cuba in 1492, Columbus returned the following year with seventeen ships and more than 1,000 men to establish a Spanish outpost. Before he died in 1506, Columbus made two more voyages to the Americas, in 1498 and 1502. He went to his grave believing that he had discovered a westward route to Asia. The explorations of another Italian, Amerigo Vespucci, along the coast of South America between 1499 and 1502 made plain that a continent entirely unknown to Europeans had been encountered. These lands would come to bear not Columbus's name but one based on Vespucci's—America. Vespucci also realized that the Native inhabitants were not residents of the East Indies as Columbus had believed, although the name "Indians," applied to them by Columbus, has endured to this day.



Columbus's Landfall, an engraving from *La lettera dell'isole* (Letter from the Islands). This 1493 pamphlet reproduced, in the form of a poem, Columbus's first letter describing his voyage of the previous year. Under the watchful eye of King Ferdinand of Spain, Columbus and his men land on a Caribbean island, while local Taínos flee.

Exploration and Conquest

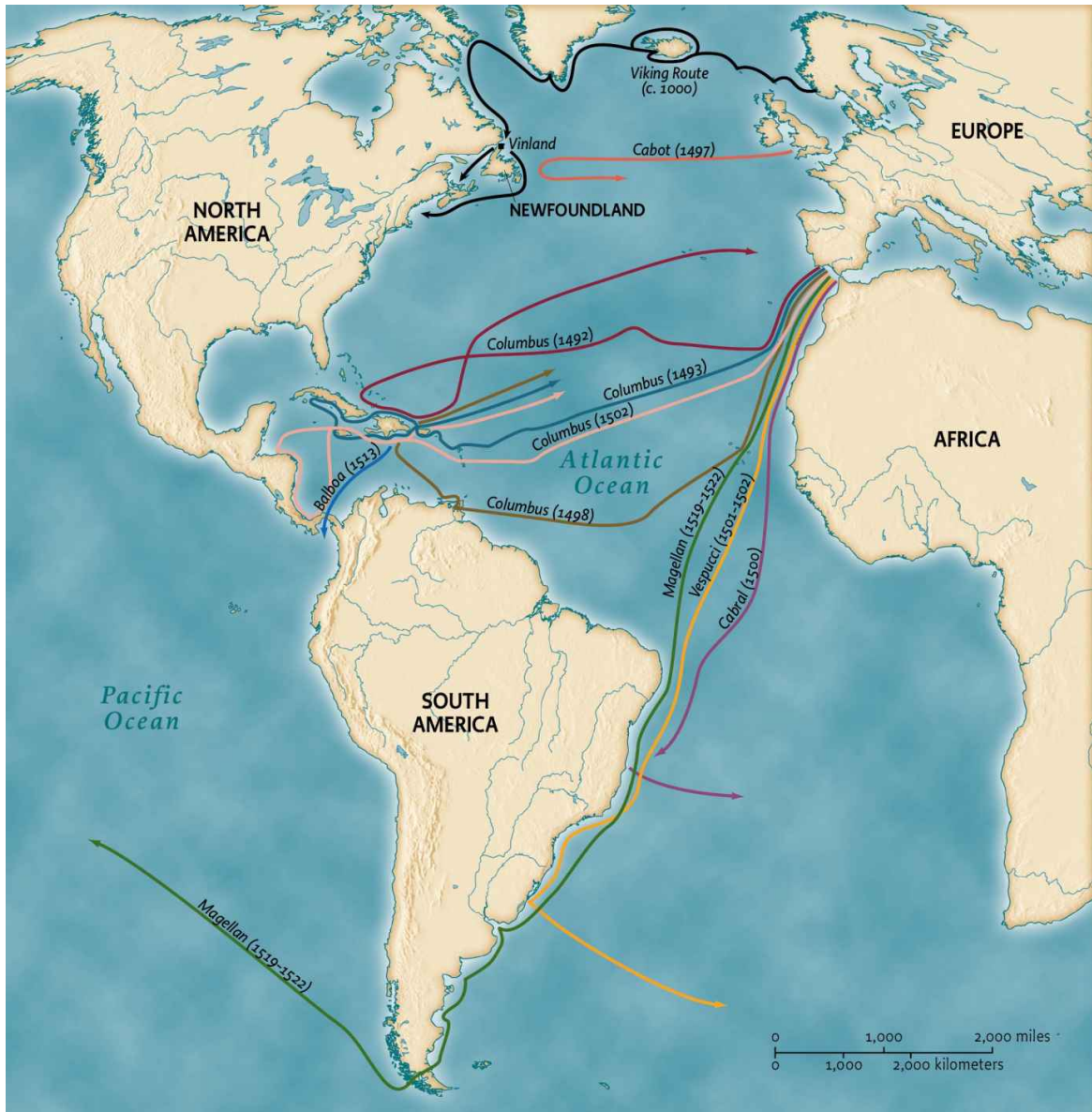
The technique of printing with movable type, invented in the 1450s by the German craftsman Johannes Gutenberg, made possible the rapid spread of information in Europe, at least among the educated minority. News of Columbus's achievement traveled quickly. One writer hailed him as "a hero such as the ancients made gods of." Others were inspired to follow in his wake. John Cabot, a Genoese merchant who had settled in England, reached Newfoundland in 1497. Soon, scores of

fishing boats from France, Spain, and England were active in the region. Pedro Cabral claimed Brazil for Portugal in 1500.

But the Spanish took the lead in exploration and conquest. Inspired by a search for wealth, national glory, and the desire to spread Catholicism, Spanish *conquistadores*, often accompanied by religious missionaries and carrying flags emblazoned with the sign of the cross, radiated outward from Hispaniola. In 1513, Vasco Núñez de Balboa trekked across the isthmus of Panama and became the first European to gaze upon the Pacific Ocean from the Americas. Between 1519 and 1522, Ferdinand Magellan led the first expedition to sail around the world, encountering Pacific islands and peoples previously unknown to Europe. Magellan was killed in the Philippines, but his fleet completed the journey, correcting once and for all Columbus's erroneous assessment of the earth's size.

In 1519, Hernán Cortés landed on the coast of mainland Mexico and, at the urging of people he met there, decided to march on the great city of [Tenochtitlán](#), the capital of the [Aztec](#) (Mexica) empire, whose wealth and power rested on domination of numerous subordinate peoples nearby. The Aztecs were violent warriors who engaged in the ritual sacrifice of captives. This practice thoroughly alienated their neighbors who were delighted to have the Spaniards as allies.

EARLY EUROPEAN VOYAGES



Christopher Columbus's first Atlantic crossing, in 1492, was soon followed by voyages of exploration by English, Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian explorers.

Their thousands of warriors joined forces with the several hundred heavily armed Spaniards, plus horses, giant mastiff dogs, and smallpox, which spread from the Spaniards into the crowded city of Tenochtitlán. A few years later, Francisco Pizarro conquered the great Inca kingdom centered in modern-day Peru, similarly using brute force and taking advantage of rivalries within the kingdom. Soon, treasure fleets carrying cargoes of gold and silver from the mines of Mexico and Peru were traversing the Atlantic to enrich the Spanish crown.

The Columbian Exchange

The transatlantic flow of goods and people, sometimes called the [Columbian Exchange](#), altered millions of years of evolution. Plants, animals, and cultures that had evolved independently on separate continents were now thrown together. Products introduced to Europe, Africa, and Asia from the Americas included corn, tomatoes, potatoes, peanuts, tobacco, and chili peppers, while people brought to the Americas wheat, rice, sugarcane, peaches, watermelons, horses, cattle, pigs, and sheep.

Europeans also carried germs previously unknown in the Americas. It is impossible to know how much damage European diseases did in the Americas. Smallpox helped Hernán Cortés take Tenochtitlán, and diseases certainly assisted Europeans in their conquests of North America. But trying to determine the pre-1492 population of the Americas—or even the population in the following two centuries—yields wildly different estimates. Some scholars have applied death rates in Tenochtitlán and Hispaniola across the entirety of both continents, deducing with no direct evidence that the population of the Americas declined by as much as 90 percent in the 150 years after 1492. One problem with assuming massive death rates—besides the lack of evidence—is that focusing on the indirect harm caused by disease can deflect attention from the direct violence that accompanied colonialism. Disease hit the hardest when colonizers were simultaneously cutting off access to food and water, driving people from their homes, or forcing people into slavery or missions.

Importantly, Native people actively responded to illness and attempted to curb its spread. Many instituted quarantines for sick individuals, isolated themselves from colonial settlements, and treated patients with basic nursing—remedies that were as effective as anything Europeans had at their disposal in the same era.

Glossary

[caravel](#)

A fifteenth-century European ship capable of long-distance travel.

[conquistadores](#)

Spanish term for “conquerors,” applied to Spanish and Portuguese soldiers who conquered lands held by Indigenous peoples in central and southern America as well as the current states of Florida, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

[Tenochtitlán](#)

The capital city of the Aztec empire; the city was built on marshy islands on the western side of Lake Tetzaco, which is the site of present-day Mexico City.

[Aztec](#)

The Mesoamerican empire ruled by the Mexica people that was defeated by the Spanish under Hernán Cortés and his Native allies, 1519–1528.

[Columbian Exchange](#)

The transatlantic flow of goods and people that began with Columbus’s voyages in 1492.

THE SPANISH EMPIRE

By the middle of the sixteenth century, Spain had established an immense empire that reached from Europe to the Americas and Asia. The Atlantic and Pacific oceans, once barriers separating different parts of the world, now became highways for the exchange of goods and the movement of people. Spanish galleons carried gold and silver from Mexico and Peru eastward to Spain and westward to Manila in the Philippines and on to China.



Sixteenth-century Native Americans in Florida practice several healing techniques, including smoking tobacco.

The Spanish empire included the most populous parts of the Americas and the regions richest in natural resources. Stretching from the Andes Mountains of South America through present-day Mexico and the Caribbean and into Florida and the southwestern United States, Spain's empire exceeded in size the Roman empire of the ancient world. Its center in North America was Mexico City, a magnificent capital built on the ruins of the Aztec city of Tenochtitlán that boasted churches, hospitals, monasteries, government buildings, and the Americas' first university. Unlike the English and French empires, Spanish America was essentially an urban civilization, an "empire of towns." For centuries, its great cities, notably Mexico City, Quito, and Lima, far outshone any urban centers in other colonies and most of those in Europe.

Governing Spanish America

To rule this vast empire, the Spanish crown established a system of government headed by lawyers and bureaucrats. Authority originated with the king and flowed downward through the Council of the Indies—the main body in Spain for colonial administration—and then to viceroys in Mexico and Peru and other local

officials in America. The Catholic Church also played a significant role in the administration of Spanish colonies, frequently exerting its authority on matters of faith, morals, and treatment of the Indians.

Successive kings kept elected assemblies out of Spain's empire. Royal officials were generally appointees from Spain, rather than *criollos*, or [creoles](#), as persons born in the colonies of European ancestry were called. The imperial state was a real and continuous presence in Spanish America. But given the vastness of the empire, local municipal councils, universities, merchant organizations, and craft guilds enjoyed considerable independence.

Colonists in Spanish America

"The maxim of the conqueror must be to settle," said one Spanish official. The government barred non-Spaniards from emigrating to its American domains, as well as non-Christian Spaniards, including Jews and Moors. But the opportunity for social advancement drew numerous colonists from Spain—225,000 in the sixteenth century and a total of 750,000 in the three centuries of Spain's colonial rule. Some came as laborers, craftsmen, and soldiers. Others came as government officials, priests, professionals, and minor aristocrats, all ready to direct the manual work of Indians, since living without having to labor was a sign of noble status. The most successful of these colonists enjoyed lives of luxury similar to those of the upper classes at home.



Young Woman with a Harpsichord, a colorful painting from Mexico in the early 1700s, depicts an upper-class woman. Her dress, jewelry, fan, the cross around her neck, and the musical instrument all emphasize that while she lives in the colonies, she embodies the latest in European fashion and culture.

Although persons of European birth, called *peninsulares*, stood atop the social hierarchy, they never constituted more than a tiny proportion of the population of Spanish America. Unlike in the later British empire, Native inhabitants always outnumbered European colonists and their descendants in Spanish America. The Spanish forced tens of thousands of Indians to work in gold and silver mines, which supplied the empire's wealth, and on large-scale farms, or *haciendas*, controlled by Spanish landlords. Although the Spanish introduced livestock, wheat, and sugar, the main agricultural crops were the same ones grown before colonization—namely, corn, beans, and squash. Large areas remained under Native control. Like the French empire and unlike the English, Spanish authorities granted Indians certain rights within colonial society and hoped for their eventual assimilation.

In contrast, Spaniards seldom questioned the enslavement of Africans. From the early 1500s, the Spanish demand for enslaved labor fueled the Atlantic slave trade. The Spanish crown ordered wives of colonists to join them in America and demanded that single men marry. But with the population of Spanish women low at first, many single Spanish men married and had children with Native women. As early as 1514, the Spanish government formally approved of such marriages, partly as a way of bringing Christianity to the Native population. By 1600, *mestizos* (persons of mixed origin) made up a large part of the urban population of Spanish America. Over time, Spanish America evolved into a hybrid culture, part Spanish, part Native, and in some areas part African, but with a single official faith, language, and governmental system (although Native languages survived). In 1531, a Nahuatl Indian, Juan Diego, reported seeing a vision of the Virgin Mary, speaking the Nahuatl language and looking like an Indian, near a Mexican village. Miracles began to be reported, and a shrine was built in her honor. The Virgin of Guadalupe would come to be revered by millions as a symbol of the mixing of Native and Spanish cultures, and later of the modern nation of Mexico.

Christianity and Conquest

What allowed one nation, the seventeenth-century Dutch legal thinker Hugo Grotius wondered, to claim possession of lands that “belonged to someone else”? This question rarely occurred to most of the Europeans who crossed the Atlantic in the wake of Columbus's voyage, or their monarchs. Following the exclusivist mandate of Christianity, they expected the people they encountered in America to abandon their own beliefs and traditions and embrace those of the newcomers. Failure to do so reinforced the conviction that these people were uncivilized “heathens” (non-Christians).

Europeans brought with them not only a long history of using violence to subdue their internal and external foes but also missionary zeal to spread the benefits of their own civilization to others, while reaping the rewards of empire. Spain was no exception. The establishment of its empire in America took place in the wake of Spain's own territorial unification, the rise of a powerful royal government, and the expulsion of Muslims and Jews in 1492. To further legitimize Spain's claim to rule the Americas, a year after Columbus's first voyage Pope Alexander VI divided the non-Christian world between Spain and Portugal, declaring that most of the Americas belonged to Spain and most of Africa belonged to Portugal. Of course, the people who lived in those places did not agree. The pope justified this pronouncement by requiring Spain and Portugal to spread Catholicism.

European Christians became religious rivals in the sixteenth century, when the Protestant Reformation divided the Catholic Church. In 1517, Martin Luther, a German priest, posted his *Ninety-Five Theses*, which accused the church of worldliness and corruption. Luther wanted to cleanse the church of abuses such as the sale of indulgences (official dispensations forgiving sins). He insisted that all believers should read the Bible for themselves, rather than relying on priests to interpret it for them. His call for reform led to the rise of new Protestant churches independent of Rome and plunged Europe into more than a century of religious and political strife.

Spain, the most powerful bastion of orthodox Catholicism, redoubled its efforts to convert Indians to the “true faith.” National glory and religious mission went hand in hand. Convinced of the superiority of

Catholicism to all other religions, Spain insisted that the primary goal of colonization was to save Indians from heathenism and prevent them from falling under the sway of Protestantism. The aim was neither to exterminate nor to remove Indians, but to transform them into obedient, Christian subjects of the crown. Indeed, lacking the later concept of “race” as an unchanging, inborn set of qualities and abilities, many Spanish writers insisted that Indians could in time be “brought up” to the level of European civilization. To them, this transition would require not only the destruction of Native political structures but also a transformation of their economic and spiritual lives. Religious orders established missions throughout the empire, and over time millions converted to Catholicism.

Native Rights and Freedoms in the Spanish Empire

Spaniards agreed that Indians should become Catholics, but they argued over the balance between conversion and profits. The *conquistadores* often used brutal violence to force Native men and women to submit to them, violence that many Christians found inconsistent with the mandate to convert and “civilize” Indians.

As early as 1537, Pope Paul III, who hoped to see Indians become devout subjects of Catholic monarchs, outlawed their enslavement (an edict never extended to apply to Africans). His decree declared Indians to be “truly men,” who must not be “treated as dumb beasts.” Starting in the 1520s, the Dominican priest [Bartolomé de Las Casas](#) wrote accounts of brutal Spanish atrocities toward the Native people of the Caribbean islands. Las Casas’s father had sailed on Columbus’s second voyage, and he himself had participated in the conquest of Cuba. But in 1514 Las Casas freed his own Indian slaves and began to preach against the injustices of Spanish rule.

Las Casas’s writings denounced Spain for causing the death of millions of innocent people. He narrated in shocking detail the “strange cruelties” carried out by “the Christians,” including the burning alive of men, women, and children and the imposition of forced labor. The Indians, he wrote, had been “totally deprived of their freedom and were put in the harshest, fiercest, most terrible servitude and captivity.” Las Casas insisted that Spain had no grounds on which to deprive them of their lands and liberty. “The entire human race is one,” he proclaimed, and while he continued to believe that Spain had a right to rule in America, largely on religious grounds, he called for Indians to enjoy “all guarantees of liberty and justice” from the moment they became subjects of Spain. “Nothing is certainly more precious in human affairs, nothing more esteemed,” he wrote, “than freedom.” Yet Las Casas also suggested that importing slaves from Africa would help to protect the Indians from exploitation.









Four Racial Groups, taken from a series of paintings by the eighteenth-century Mexican artist Andrés de Islas, illustrates the racial mixing that took place in the Spanish empire and some of the new vocabulary invented to describe it. *First*: The offspring of a Spaniard and Indian is a *mestizo*. *Second*: A Spaniard and a *mestiza* produce a *castizo*. *Third*: The child of an Indian and a *mestiza* is a *coyote*. *Fourth*: The child of an Indian man and African woman is a *chino*.

Largely because of Las Casas's efforts, Spain in 1542 issued a proclamation that became known as the New Laws, commanding that Indians no longer be enslaved. And the government established the [repartimiento system](#), whereby Native towns were required to provide a fixed amount of labor each year on Spanish mines or farms. As tributary towns, they were ruled by Native leaders and lived according to their own laws and customs, as long as they paid their annual tribute.

Las Casas's writings, translated into several European languages, contributed to the spread of the [Black Legend](#)—the image of Spain as a uniquely brutal and exploitative colonizer. In reality all empires were highly exploitative. But the Black Legend would provide a potent justification for other European powers to challenge Spain's predominance in the Americas. Influenced by Las Casas, the eighteenth-century French historian Guillaume Thomas Raynal would write of Columbus's arrival in the Americas, "Tell me, reader, whether these were civilized people landing among savages, or savages among civilized people?"

Exploring North of Mexico

While the Spanish empire centered on Mexico, Peru, and the West Indies, the hope of finding a new kingdom of gold soon led Spanish explorers into new territory. In 1508, Spain established the first permanent colony in what is now the United States. That first colony was not, as many people believe, at Jamestown, Virginia, or St. Augustine, Florida, but on the island of Puerto Rico, now a U.S. "commonwealth." Unlike many other places Europeans explored north of Mexico, Puerto Rico had gold; Juan Ponce de León, who led the colony, sent a considerable amount to Spain, while keeping some for himself. In 1513, Ponce de León embarked for Florida, in search of wealth, slaves, and a fountain of eternal youth, only to be repelled by Calusa Indians. In 1528, another Spanish expedition seeking plunder landed in Florida, but the men became separated from their ships, and only four of them made it back to Mexico. For seven years, the four survivors wandered through the lands of Native peoples from Florida to the desert of the Southwest and northern Mexico. One, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, wrote an account of his adventures, including tales told by Native inhabitants of the seven golden cities of Cibola, somewhere over the horizon.



In this engraving, sixteenth-century Timucuas, Native people of northern Florida, are transporting food they have grown to the public storehouse.

One of the four survivors was an enslaved African named Esteban. After walking all the way to Mexico with Cabeza de Vaca in 1536, Esteban returned north, leading the expedition of Friar Marcos de Niza. Esteban went farther north than Niza, becoming the first African and first non-Indian to explore parts of northern Mexico and Arizona and the Pueblos of New Mexico.

In the late 1530s and 1540s, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo explored the Pacific coast as far north as present-day Oregon, and expeditions led by Hernando de Soto, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado, and others marched through the Gulf region and the Southwest, fruitlessly searching for another Mexico or Peru. Coronado followed Esteban's path to the interior of the continent, reaching as far north as the Great Plains, and became the first European to encounter the immense herds of bison that roamed the West. The Coronado and de Soto expeditions, really mobile communities with hundreds of adventurers, priests, slaves, and livestock, spread devastation among Native communities. But they were unsuccessful in their quest for riches, and most of them—including de Soto—did not make it out alive.

Florida and the Spanish

The Indigenous peoples of Florida were the first to face Spanish colonization in what is now the continental United States. Spain hoped to establish a military base in present-day Florida to combat pirates who threatened the treasure fleet that each year sailed from Havana for Europe loaded with gold and silver from Mexico and Peru. Spain also wanted to forestall French incursions in the area. In 1565, Philip II of Spain authorized the nobleman Pedro Menéndez de Avilés to lead a colonizing expedition to Florida. Menéndez destroyed a small outpost at Fort Caroline, which a group of Huguenots (French Protestants) had established in 1562 near present-day Jacksonville. Menéndez and his men massacred the French colonists and went on to establish Spanish forts on St. Simons Island, Georgia, and at St. Augustine, Florida. The latter remains the

oldest site in the continental United States continuously inhabited by European settlers and their descendants.

EARLY SPANISH CONQUESTS AND EXPLORATIONS IN THE AMERICAS



By around 1600, New Spain had become a vast empire stretching from the modern-day American Southwest through Mexico and Central America and into the former Inca kingdom in South America. This map shows early Spanish exploration, especially in the present-day United States.

The Spanish did not fulfill their ambitions for Florida. After destroying the French Fort Caroline, they established forts from present-day Miami into South Carolina, as well as a Jesuit mission on Chesapeake Bay. Yet by 1574, Native people had destroyed all of these attempts besides St. Augustine and Santa Elena, near modern-day Port Royal, South Carolina. Frustrated at large expenses and no profits, in 1587 the government in Spain ordered Santa Elena abandoned and the inhabitants resettled (over their vocal protests) at St. Augustine. Having found no gold and little to attract Spanish settlers, the crown invited Franciscan missionaries to establish missions, including among the Guales north of St. Augustine in what is now Georgia, the Timucuas in central Florida, and the Apalachees in the Florida panhandle. Many Native communities were interested in the missionaries, who brought useful goods and had compelling spiritual ideas that the inclusivist nature of Indigenous religions allowed them to incorporate. Some Native leaders or communities were able to increase their power in the region by establishing permanent connections to Spanish trade. But people who lived in or near missions also found they were subjected to violence and to European diseases that wreaked havoc on the crowded mission communities.

In some places, they reached compromises that allowed the Spanish missionaries to stay. In others, the Native people threw them out. Beginning in 1597, Guale Indians planned and launched an attack on missions in their province. One Guale explained the attacks by noting that the missionaries had sought to eliminate “our dances, banquets, feasts, celebrations, and wars. . . . They persecute our old people by calling them witches.” Guales and their allies ransacked missions and killed missionaries. Spanish troops and neighboring Native enemies of the Guales fought against them until the Guales agreed to peace. In general, Florida remained a Native-dominated place with an isolated post and few missions. As late as 1763, Spanish Florida had only 4,000 inhabitants of European descent.

The Southwest and the Spanish

Coronado’s exploration of the Southwest was a disaster for everyone involved. Its violence repelled possible Native allies in the Southwest, and the failure to find riches decreased Spanish interest in the north. Half a century later, the Spanish returned to the Pueblos on the Rio Grande to attempt a permanent colony called New Mexico. In 1598, Juan de Oñate led a group from Mexico of several hundred soldiers, Franciscan missionaries, and colonists, many of whom were the descendants of the early Spanish *conquistadores* and Native women from central Mexico.

Rather than establishing their own town and farms on the Rio Grande, Oñate and his followers violently moved into the Pueblos. They demanded that Native people feed and work for them, killing and raping those who did not comply. Fighting back was difficult because the Pueblos were not one people but instead inhabited over eighty independent towns and spoke six different languages.

Finally, the people of the pueblo of Acoma had enough, and they killed a Spanish patrol that included Oñate’s nephew. In the ensuing battle, Oñate’s forces killed an estimated 800 of Acoma’s men, women, and children and captured over 500 more to keep as slaves, cutting off one foot of the adult men.

In response to protests from the missionaries and Native leaders of the Pueblos, authorities in Mexico City in 1606 deposed and punished Oñate. In 1609, they ordered the New Mexican colonists to establish a separate town and grow their own food. In the future, only married soldiers were to be stationed in New Mexico to reduce the likelihood of sexual violence. The Franciscan missionaries stayed, but most of the colonists left. Founded around 1610, the colonial town of Santa Fe would be the first permanent European settlement in the Southwest, but it remained a small settlement, surrounded by Native peoples.

The Pueblo Revolt

Some Native people left their Pueblos to build new towns farther from the Spanish. Others saw benefits in Spanish alliance, including new tools and crops and the protection of Spanish forces against their Apache and Navajo enemies. Many also found Catholicism appealing and welcomed the missionaries as a counterbalance to the depredations of soldiers and settlers. Many accepted baptism, even as they continued to practice their old religion, adding Jesus, Mary, and the Catholic saints to their already rich spiritual pantheon. But as the Inquisition—the persecution of non-Catholics—became more and more intense in Spain, so did the friars’ efforts to stamp out traditional religious ceremonies in New Mexico. By burning Native sacred objects and threatening Native religious leaders, the missionaries alienated far more Indians than they converted. A prolonged drought that began around 1660 and the authorities’ inability to protect the villages and missions from attacks by Navajos and Apaches added to local discontent.

The Pueblo peoples came together under the inspiring leadership of a man named Popé. A religious leader born around 1630 in San Juan Pueblo, Popé was one of forty-seven Indians arrested in 1675 for “sorcery”—that is, practicing their traditional religion. Four of the prisoners were hanged, and the rest, including Popé, were brought to Santa Fe to be publicly whipped. After this humiliation, Popé returned home and began holding secret meetings in Pueblo communities.

VOICES OF FREEDOM

From BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS, HISTORY OF THE INDIES (1528)

Las Casas was the Dominican priest who condemned the treatment of Indians in the Spanish empire. His widely disseminated writings helped to establish the Black Legend of Spanish cruelty.

The [Indians \[of Hispaniola\]](#) were totally deprived of their freedom and were put in the harshest, fiercest, most horrible servitude and captivity which no one who has not seen it can understand. Even beasts enjoy more freedom when they are allowed to graze in the fields. But our Spaniards gave no such opportunity to Indians and truly considered them perpetual slaves, since the Indians had not the free will to dispose of their persons but instead were disposed of according to Spanish greed and cruelty, not as men in captivity but as beasts tied to a rope to prevent free movement. When they were allowed to go home, they often found it deserted and had no other recourse than to go out into the woods to find food and to die. When they fell ill, which was very frequently because they are a delicate people unaccustomed to [such work](#), the Spaniards did not believe them and pitilessly called them lazy dogs and kicked and beat them; and when illness was apparent they sent them home as useless. . . . They would go then, falling into the first stream and dying there in desperation; others would hold on longer but very few ever made it home. I sometimes came upon dead bodies on my way, and upon others who were gasping and moaning in their death agony, repeating “Hungry, hungry.” And this was the freedom, the good treatment and the Christianity the Indians received.

About eight years passed under [Spanish rule] and this disorder had time to grow; no one gave it a thought and the multitude of people who originally lived on the island . . . was consumed at such a rate that in these eight years 90 per cent had perished. From here [this sweeping plague](#) went to San Juan, Jamaica, Cuba and the continent, spreading destruction over the whole hemisphere.

From FRIAR MARCOS DE NIZA’S ACCOUNT OF HIS VOYAGE WITH ESTEBAN (1539)

In the 1520s and 1530s, after the conquest of Mexico City, Spanish conquistadores raided Native lands to the north for captives to sell as slaves. In part due to Bartolomé de Las Casas, the Spanish monarchs outlawed Indian slavery in their empire. In 1539, Friar Marcos de Niza traveled north from

Mexico City to spread the news that the slave raids would stop and priests would come instead. His guide was Esteban, an African man who had been enslaved by the Spanish. Esteban had journeyed from Florida through Texas to northern Mexico with the man who owned him under Spanish law, Andrés Dorantes, as well as Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca. Still technically enslaved to Dorantes, Esteban now set off to lead Niza through northern Mexico to Arizona and New Mexico. Niza begins his account by explaining that two different Native groups will accompany him, Esteban, and another priest, Father Onoratto. The first are northern Indians, whom the Spanish had previously captured in the north and held in bondage near Mexico City. The Viceroy of Mexico has freed them to return home. The second group is Opatas of northwestern Mexico who came to offer to accompany Niza and Esteban as they returned the formerly enslaved people to their homes.

I took with me, as my colleague, Father Onoratto, and Dorantes' [Negro Esteban](#) and certain Indians whom [the lord Viceroy](#) freed and bought for this purpose and whom the governor of New Galicia, Francisco Vasques de Coronado turned over to me, as well as many Indians [who] came to the valley of Culiacán expressing great joy, because the freed Indians assured them that the governor sent us ahead to let them know about their freedom and that people would not be enslaving them or making war on them or mistreating them, and that this was the wish and the order of his Majesty.

With this company I made my journey . . . and on the way I found much welcome and many offerings of things to eat . . . and they made houses of straw mats and branches for me along the way where no people were living. I stayed in Petatlan for three days because my colleague Father Onoratto had fallen ill. I had to leave him there and, as I had been instructed, continue my journey, led by the Holy Spirit through no merit of my own and accompanied by the above-mentioned Esteban, Dorantes' Negro, and some of the freed Indians and many people of the region, who received me with welcome and rejoicing and triumphal arches and who gave me of their food, which wasn't much, because, they said, they had had no rain for three years and because the Indians of that region were [more intent on hiding than on sowing](#), for fear of the Christians, who up until then had been making war on them and enslaving them. . . .

QUESTIONS

1. *Why does Las Casas, after describing the ill treatment of Indians, write, "And this was the freedom, the good treatment and the Christianity the Indians received"?*
2. *Why did the Native peoples greet Niza and Esteban with "welcome and rejoicing"?*
3. *What ideas of freedom are apparent in the two documents?*

Under Popé's leadership, Indians of the Pueblos joined in a coordinated uprising. Some 2,000 warriors destroyed isolated farms and missions, killing 400 colonists, including 21 Franciscan missionaries. They then surrounded Santa Fe. The Spanish had no choice but to abandon the town. Most of the Spanish survivors, accompanied by several hundred Christian Indians, made their way south out of New Mexico. Within a few weeks, a century of colonization in the area had been destroyed. The Pueblo Indians had reestablished the freedom lost through Spanish conquest.

The [Pueblo Revolt](#) was a complete victory over the Spanish. The victors turned with a vengeance on all symbols of European culture, uprooting fruit trees, destroying cattle, burning churches and images of Christ and the Virgin Mary, and wading into rivers to wash away their Catholic baptisms. They rebuilt their places of worship, called "kivas," and resumed sacred dances the friars had banned. "The God of the Spaniards," they shouted, "is dead."

The Pueblo Revolt helped to inspire revolts across northern Mexico. Other Native towns that had experienced similar troubles with the Spanish struck back in attempts to regain their independence. Apache bands took advantage of the fighting to expand their raids across the region. While the Spanish never gave up their ambitions to colonize northern Mexico, their hold on it was always tenuous.

Yet at the same time, cooperation among the Rio Grande Pueblos evaporated. By the end of the 1680s, warfare had broken out among several Pueblos, even as Apache and Navajo raids continued. Popé died

around 1690. In 1692, the Spanish launched an invasion that eventually reestablished the colony of New Mexico. Some communities welcomed them back as a source of military protection. And Spain had learned a lesson. In the eighteenth century, colonial authorities adopted a more tolerant attitude toward traditional religious practices and made fewer demands on Indian labor.

Glossary

[creoles](#)

Persons born in the Americas of European ancestry.

[hacienda](#)

Large-scale farm in the Spanish empire worked by Native American laborers.

[mestizos](#)

Spanish word for persons of mixed Native American and European ancestry.

[Las Casas, Bartolomé de](#)

A Catholic missionary who renounced the Spanish practice of coercively converting Indians and advocated their better treatment. In 1552, he wrote *A Brief Relation of the Destruction of the Indies*, which described the cruel treatment of the Indians by the Spanish.

[repartimiento system](#)

Spanish labor system under which Indians were legally free and able to earn wages but were also required to perform a fixed amount of labor yearly; replaced the *encomienda* system.

[Black Legend](#)

Idea that the Spanish empire was more oppressive toward Indians than other European empires; used as a justification for English imperial expansion.

[Pueblo Revolt](#)

Uprising in 1680 by allied Pueblo led by Popé that temporarily drove Spanish colonists out of New Mexico.

[Ninety-Five Theses](#)

The list of moral grievances against the Catholic Church by Martin Luther, a German priest, in 1517.

[Indians \[of Hispaniola\]](#)

The author is referring to the Indigenous peoples of the island of Hispaniola. Hispaniola or “little Spain” was the name given to the island that encompasses present-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The island was divided in the late seventeenth century following conflicts between the French and Spanish.

[such work](#)

The Taíno enjoyed a complex and thriving community before the arrival of the Spaniards. However, the Spaniards forced the Taíno to work in gold mines, preventing them from planting the crops that they relied on for generations. The grueling forced labor, coupled with the diseases such as smallpox that the Spanish brought with them, drastically cut their populations by as much as 90 percent.

[this sweeping plague](#)

Here Las Casas is referring to Spanish rule and the mistreatment of Native peoples throughout the region as Spain gained control of more islands in the Caribbean.

[Negro Esteban](#)

Although he had recently completed a long journey after surviving a shipwreck off the coast of present-day Florida, Esteban, a man of African (Moorish) descent, led the expedition, despite still being enslaved by another member of the expedition, Andrés Dorantes.

[the lord Viceroy](#)

Don Antonio de Mendoza served as the viceroy, or governor, of New Spain. It was Mendoza who organized De Niza’s voyage northward seeking riches and reassuring the Native peoples that they would no longer be kidnapped and sold into slavery.

[more intent on hiding than on sowing](#)

It was this treatment that Las Casas described in his *History of the Indies* (1528) that resulted in the starvation of countless Native peoples.

THE FRENCH AND DUTCH EMPIRES

If the Black Legend inspired a sense of superiority among Spain's European rivals, the precious metals that poured from the Americas into the Spanish treasury aroused the desire to try to match Spain's success. The establishment of Spain's American empire transformed the balance of power in the world economy. The Atlantic replaced the overland route to Asia as the major axis of global trade. During the seventeenth century, the French, Dutch, and English established colonies in North America. England's mainland colonies, to be discussed in the next chapter, consisted of agricultural settlements with growing populations whose hunger for land produced incessant conflict with Native peoples. New France and New Netherland were primarily commercial ventures that, like Spanish Florida and New Mexico, never attracted large numbers of colonists. Because French and Dutch settlements were more dependent than the English on Indians as trading partners and military allies, Native Americans exercised more power and enjoyed more freedom in their relations with these settlements.

French Colonization

The first of Spain's major European rivals to embark on New World explorations was France. The French initially aimed to find gold and to locate a Northwest Passage—a sea route connecting the Atlantic to the Pacific. But early French explorers were soon disappointed, and North America came to seem little more than a barrier to be crossed, not a promising site for settlement or exploitation. For most of the sixteenth century, only explorers, fishermen, pirates preying on Spanish shipping farther south, and, as time went on, fur traders visited the eastern coast of North America. French efforts to establish settlements in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia failed, beset by Native resistance and inadequate planning and financing. Not until the seventeenth century would France, as well as England and the Netherlands, establish permanent settlements in North America.

The explorer Samuel de Champlain, sponsored by a French fur-trading company, founded Quebec in 1608. In 1673, the Jesuit priest Jacques Marquette and the fur trader Louis Joliet located the Mississippi River, and by 1681 René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, had descended to the Gulf of Mexico, claiming the entire Mississippi River valley for France. On European maps, New France eventually formed a giant arc along the St. Lawrence and Mississippi rivers. But the colonial population would remain small and dependent on Native alliances.

By 1700, the number of white inhabitants of New France had risen to only 19,000. With a far larger population than England, France sent many fewer emigrants to the Western Hemisphere. The government at home feared that significant emigration would undermine France's role as a European great power and might compromise its effort to establish trade and good relations with Native Americans. Unfavorable reports about America circulated widely in France. Canada was widely depicted as an icebox, a land of "savage" Indians, a dumping ground for criminals. Most French who left their homes during these years preferred to settle in the Netherlands, Spain, or the West Indies. The revocation in 1685 of the Edict of Nantes, which had extended religious toleration to French Protestants, led well over 100,000 Huguenots to flee their country. But they were not welcome in New France, which the crown desired to remain an outpost of Catholicism.

The Fur Trade

The viability of New France, with its small white population and emphasis on the fur trade rather than agricultural settlement, depended on friendly relations with Native nations. The French prided themselves on adopting a more humane policy than their imperial rivals. “Only our nation,” declared one French writer, “knows the secret of winning the Indians’ affection.” Lacking the need for Indian labor of the Spanish and the voracious appetite for land of the English colonies, and relying on Indians to supply furs to trading posts, the French and their Native allies worked out a complex series of military, commercial, and diplomatic connections, the most enduring alliances between Indians and Europeans in colonial North America. The Jesuits, a missionary religious order, did seek, with some success, to convert Indians to Catholicism. Unlike Spanish missionaries in early New Mexico, they allowed Christian Indians to retain a high degree of independence and much of their traditional social structure, and they did not seek to suppress all traditional religious practices. Indians who converted to Catholicism were promised full membership in French colonial society. In fact, however, it was far rarer for Natives to adopt French ways than for French settlers to become attracted to the “free” life of the Indians.

Native Americans required French traders to follow their rules. The first French trading partners along the St. Lawrence River were Innus (Montagnais), Algonquins, and Wendats (Hurons), who recruited French trade and demanded good prices for furs. (Algonquins were a nation within the large linguistic grouping known as Algonquian.) When the French established Quebec, it was on Algonquin land and because Algonquin leaders invited them. As Champlain recognized, “my enterprises and discoveries . . . seem to be possible only through their means.” These allies of the French also insisted that the French join their military alliance against their enemy: the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) League, discussed previously. Thus Innus, Algonquins, and Wendats drew the French into a major war that they did not want.

It is no surprise that Native Americans wanted European trade. They incorporated European goods into their existing ways of life, using copper kettles as well as ceramic pots, adding wool blankets to animal skins and furs, and using guns for some tasks and bows and arrows (sometimes tipped with brass) for others. Some Native women married the single French men who came to New France and incorporated them and their children into Native communities.

The Dutch Empire

In 1609, Henry Hudson, an Englishman employed by the Dutch East India Company, sailed into New York Harbor searching for a Northwest Passage to Asia. Hudson and his crew became the first Europeans to sail up the river that now bears his name. Hudson did not find a route to Asia, but he did encounter Lenapes, Munsees, and Mahicans more than willing to trade furs for European goods. He claimed the area for the Netherlands, and his voyage planted the seeds for what would eventually become a great metropolis, New York City. When the powerful Mohawks of the Haudenosaunee League learned about the Dutch, they and their Mahican allies persuaded them that the most lucrative fur trade would be on the Hudson River near present-day Albany. By 1614, Dutch traders had established an outpost there at Fort Orange. Ten years later, the Dutch West India Company, which had been awarded a monopoly of Dutch trade with America, settled colonists on Manhattan Island.

These ventures formed one small part in the rise of the Dutch overseas empire. In the early seventeenth century, the Netherlands dominated international commerce, and Amsterdam was Europe’s foremost shipping and banking center. The small nation had entered a golden age of rapidly accumulating wealth and stunning achievements in painting, philosophy, and the sciences. The Dutch invented the joint stock company, a way of pooling financial resources and sharing the risk of maritime voyages, which proved central to the development of modern capitalism. With a population

of only 2 million, the Netherlands established a far-flung empire that reached from Indonesia to South Africa and the Caribbean and temporarily wrested control of Brazil from Portugal.

Dutch Freedom

The Dutch prided themselves on their devotion to liberty. Indeed, in the early seventeenth century they enjoyed two freedoms not recognized elsewhere in Europe—freedom of the press and of private religious practice. Even though there was an established church, the Dutch Reformed, individuals could hold whatever religious beliefs they wished. Amsterdam became a haven for persecuted Protestants from all over Europe, including French Huguenots, German Calvinists, and those, like the Pilgrims, who desired to separate from the Church of England. Jews, especially those fleeing from Spain, also found refuge there. Other emigrants came to the Netherlands in the hope of sharing in the country's prosperity. During the seventeenth century, the nation attracted about half a million migrants from elsewhere in Europe. Many of these newcomers helped to populate the Dutch overseas empire.

Freedom in New Netherland

Despite the Dutch reputation for cherishing freedom, New Netherland was hardly governed democratically. New Amsterdam, the main population center, was essentially a fortified military outpost controlled by appointees of the Dutch West India Company. Although the governor called on prominent citizens for advice from time to time, neither an elected assembly nor a town council, the basic unit of government at home, was established. In other ways, however, the colonists enjoyed more liberty, especially in religious matters, than their counterparts elsewhere in North America.

Dutch women enjoyed far more independence than in other colonies. Unlike in England and its colonies, under Dutch law, married women retained their separate legal identity. They could go to court, borrow money, and own property. Men were used to sharing property with their wives. Their wills generally left their possessions to their widows and daughters as well as sons. Margaret Hardenbroeck, the widow of a New Amsterdam merchant, expanded her husband's business and became one of the town's richest residents after his death in 1661.

Enslaved men and women in New Netherland were able to establish some rights for themselves as well. The Dutch dominated the Atlantic slave trade in the early seventeenth century, and they introduced slaves into New Netherland as a matter of course. By 1650, the colony's 500 slaves outnumbered those in the Chesapeake. But in the 1640s a petition by a group of enslaved Africans persuaded the Dutch West India Company to institute a system of "half-freedom"—that is, they were required to pay an annual fee to the company and work for it when called upon, but they were given land to support their families. Enslaved people worked on family farms or for household or craft labor, not on large plantations as in the West Indies.

The Dutch and Religious Toleration

New Netherland attracted a remarkably diverse population. As early as the 1630s, at least eighteen languages were said to be spoken in New Amsterdam, whose residents included not only Dutch settlers but also Africans, Belgians, English, French, Germans, Irish, and Scandinavians. Of course, these settlers adhered to a wide variety of religions.

NEW FRANCE AND NEW NETHERLAND, ca. 1650



On European maps, New France and New Netherland were large land claims, but in reality they were a few trading posts and small settlements surrounded by Native nations.

The Dutch long prided themselves on being uniquely tolerant in religious matters compared to other European nations and their empires. It would be wrong, however, to attribute modern ideas of religious freedom to either the Dutch government and company at home or the rulers of New Netherland. Both Holland and New Netherland had an official religion, the Dutch Reformed Church, one of the Protestant national churches to emerge from the Reformation. The Dutch commitment to freedom of conscience extended to religious devotion exercised in private, not public worship in nonestablished churches. It did not reflect a willing acceptance of religious diversity.



Coastal Native Americans were adept mariners. This detail from the earliest known engraving of New Amsterdam (1627) depicts Dutch and Lenape Indian boats in the harbor.

The West India Company's officials in the colony, particularly Governor Petrus Stuyvesant, were expected to be staunch defenders of the Dutch Reformed Church. When Jews, Quakers, Lutherans, and others demanded the right to practice their religion openly, Stuyvesant adamantly refused, seeing such diversity as a threat to a godly, prosperous order. Under Stuyvesant, the colony was more restrictive in its religious policies than the Dutch government at home. Twenty-three Jews arrived in New Amsterdam in 1654 from Brazil and the Caribbean. Referring to them as "members of a deceitful race," Stuyvesant ordered the newcomers to leave. But the company overruled him, noting that Jews at home had invested "a large amount of capital" in its shares.

As a result of Stuyvesant's policies, challenges arose to the limits on religious toleration. One, known as the Flushing Remonstrance, was a 1657 petition by a group of English settlers protesting the governor's order barring Quakers from living in the town of Flushing, on Long Island. Although later seen as a landmark of religious liberty, the Remonstrance had little impact at the time. Stuyvesant ordered several signers arrested for defying his authority.

Nonetheless, it is true that the Dutch dealt with religious pluralism in ways quite different from the practices common in other European empires. Religious dissent was tolerated—often grudgingly, as in the case of Catholics—as long as it did not involve open and public worship. No one in New Netherland was forced to attend the official church, nor was anyone executed for holding the wrong religious beliefs (as would happen in Puritan New England around the time of the Flushing Remonstrance).

New Netherland and the Haudenosaunee

The Dutch came to North America to trade, and they prided themselves on getting along well with Native peoples. Mindful of the Black Legend of Spanish cruelty, the Dutch determined to treat the Native inhabitants more humanely. Having won their own independence from Spain after the longest and bloodiest war of sixteenth-century Europe, many Dutch identified with American Indians as fellow victims of Spanish oppression. From the beginning, Dutch authorities recognized Native sovereignty over the land and forbade settlement in any area unless it had been purchased.



A map of the Americas from an illuminated manuscript produced in Le Havre, France, in 1613, depicting the French ambition to dominate North America. The precision of the coastline is unusual for maps of this era, although it reflects in large part the imagination of the cartographer.

By the 1640s, Dutch traders were exporting tens of thousands of furs each year, most of them traded from the Mohawks, one of the five nations of the Haudenosaunee League. The Mohawks dominated trade at Fort Orange (later Albany). They used their market power in furs to set prices. Colonists

repeatedly complained that bakers used all of the colony's white flour to sell "sweet cake, white bread, cookies, and pretzels" to the Indians, leaving "largely bran" to sell to the colonists. The Dutch repeatedly outlawed the sale of white bread and cake, as well as liquor and guns, to Indians, but Native customers always got around the restrictions.

Some of the furs that the Mohawks sold were hunted by themselves and by other Haudenosaunee nations, but others were stolen from their enemies. Mohawks seized canoes descending the St. Lawrence River to the French posts of Montreal and Quebec. In the early decades of the 1600s, the Haudenosaunee expanded their domain far beyond their homelands, driving off or forcibly incorporating Native nations from the St. Lawrence River to the Carolinas and from the Atlantic to the Great Lakes. Although European maps labeled vast regions as New France, New Netherland, and New England, everyone knew that the Haudenosaunee were the most powerful people in the Northeast.

A Trading Colony

The Dutch were good allies to the Mohawks because they had to be, but where they attempted settlements rather than trade, they created conflict with Native neighbors. The Dutch West India Company decided that a settlement at the mouth of the Hudson River would protect Dutch trade from French and English pirates and produce grain and cattle for Fort Orange and the sugar plantations that the Dutch were establishing on Caribbean islands and the coast of South America. They gained permission to establish New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island through negotiations with Delaware (Lenape) diplomats.

In an attempt to attract settlers to North America, the Dutch West India Company promised colonists not only the right to practice their religion freely (in private) but also cheap livestock and free land after six years of labor. Eventually, it even surrendered its monopoly of the fur trade, opening this profitable commerce to all. Many settlers, Stuyvesant complained, had been lured by "an imaginary liberty" and did not display much respect for the company's authority. In 1629, the company adopted a plan of "Freedoms and Exemptions," offering large estates to *patroons*—shareholders who agreed to transport tenants for agricultural labor and purchased the land from Indians in a treaty approved by both sides. In return, the patroon was to have "freedoms" like those of a medieval lord, including the right to 10 percent of his tenants' annual income and complete authority over law enforcement within his domain. Mahicans granted land for both Fort Orange and a patroonship for Kiliaen van Rensselaer in return for benefits and payments, but no other patroonships succeeded.

The Dutch desire to attract colonists put New Amsterdam and its surrounding farms in conflict with Delawares (Lenapes and Munsees). The Dutch took more land than the Delawares had agreed to, and Dutch pigs and cattle damaged Delaware women's crops. Delawares in turn killed and ate the invasive livestock. New Netherland Governor Willem Kieft in 1639 demanded that Delawares start paying yearly tribute in corn. A group of Delawares noted that Kieft "must be a very mean fellow to come to live in this country without being invited by them, and now wish to compel them to give him their corn for nothing." A three-year conflict known as Kieft's War followed that resulted in the death of an estimated 1,000 Delawares and their allies and more than 200 colonists. Many Dutch settlers fled the colony, and the war dissuaded new settlers. Over the course of the seventeenth century, the Netherlands sent 1 million people overseas (many of them recent immigrants who were not in fact Dutch) to populate and govern their far-flung colonies. Very few, however, made North America their destination. By the mid-1660s, the European population of New Netherland numbered only 9,000. New Netherland remained a tiny backwater in the Dutch empire.

Borderlands and Empire in Early America

A [borderland](#), according to one historian, is “a meeting place of peoples where geographical and cultural borders are not clearly defined.” Numerous such places came into existence during the era of European conquest and settlement, including the contested region bordered by New Netherland, the Haudenosaunee League, New France, and France’s Algonquian and Wendat allies. In this turbulent era, boundaries between empires and between colonists and Native peoples and between Native nations shifted constantly, overlapping claims to authority abounded, and hybrid cultures developed. In a few areas, Europeans consolidated their control and the power of nearby Native peoples weakened. But at the edges of empire, power was always unstable, and overlapping cultural interactions at the local level defied any single pattern. And beyond those edges, across most of North America, Native nations still held all of the power. European conquest was not a simple story of expanding domination over either empty space or powerless peoples but of a continual struggle to establish authority. The Spanish, French, Dutch, and English empires fought one another for dominance in various parts of the continent, and Indians wielded both economic and political power, pitting European empires against each other. Despite laws restricting commerce between empires, traders challenged boundaries, traversing lands claimed by both Europeans and Indians. People of European and Native descent married and exchanged cultural attributes.

Despite their differences, European empires shared certain features. All brought Christianity, new forms of technology and learning, new legal systems and family relations, and new forms of economic enterprise and wealth creation. They also brought savage warfare and disease. These empires were aware of one another’s existence. They studied and borrowed from one another, each lauding itself as superior to the others. From the outset, dreams of freedom—for Native peoples, for settlers, for the entire world through the spread of Christianity—inspired and justified colonization. And Native peoples acted on their own dreams of freedom to fight colonialism in some times and places and, in others, to forge economic and diplomatic relationships with Europeans that they hoped would advance their own people’s sovereignty and prosperity.

Glossary

[borderland](#)

A place between or near recognized borders where no group of people has complete political control or cultural dominance.

CHAPTER REVIEW

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. *In the age of exploration, when different areas of the world were brought into sustained contact, how did local economies change?*
2. *One of the most striking features of Native societies at the time of the encounter with Europeans was their diversity. Support this statement with several examples.*
3. *Compare and contrast Western European, Native North American, and West African values and ways of life. Consider addressing religion, views about ownership of land, gender relations, and notions of freedom.*
4. *What were the main factors fueling European exploration and conquest?*
5. *Compare the political, economic, and religious motivations behind the French and Dutch empires with those of New Spain.*
6. *Describe how the idea of the “Black Legend” affected subsequent policies and practices of Spain as well as those of the Netherlands and France.*
7. *How would European settlers justify to Native Americans both the conquest of Native lands and terminating their freedom?*
8. *How would Native Americans explain to Europeans their own views of freedom and desires for their relationships with Europeans?*
9. *Why did Native Americans exercise more power in their relations with the Dutch and French than with the English?*

KEY TERMS

[Great League of Peace](#) (p. 6)

[reconquista](#) (p. 13)

[caravel](#) (p. 15)

[conquistadores](#) (p. 18)

[Tenochtitlán](#) (p. 18)

[Aztec](#) (p. 18)

[Columbian Exchange](#) (p. 20)

[creoles](#) (p. 21)

[hacienda](#) (p. 22)

[mestizos](#) (p. 22)

[Ninety-Five Theses](#) (p. 23)

[Bartolomé de Las Casas](#) (p. 24)

[repartimiento system](#) (p. 25)

[Black Legend](#) (p. 25)

[Pueblo Revolt](#) (p. 32)

[borderland](#) (p. 40)



To see what you know—and learn what you’ve missed—with personalized feedback along the way.

Glossary

[Great League of Peace](#)

An alliance of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) nations, originally formed at least 400 years ago. Each year the Haudenosaunee Great Council, with male representatives chosen by the women of the five (and later six) nations, met to coordinate dealings with outsiders. The League was a major force in the 1600s and 1700s.

[reconquista](#)

The “reconquest” of Spain from the Moors completed by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in 1492.

[caravel](#)

A fifteenth-century European ship capable of long-distance travel.

[conquistadores](#)

Spanish term for “conquerors,” applied to Spanish and Portuguese soldiers who conquered lands held by Indigenous peoples in central and southern America as well as the current states of Florida, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

[Tenochtitlán](#)

The capital city of the Aztec empire; the city was built on marshy islands on the western side of Lake Tetzoco, which is the site of present-day Mexico City.

[Aztec](#)

The Mesoamerican empire ruled by the Mexica people that was defeated by the Spanish under Hernán Cortés and his Native allies, 1519–1528.

[Columbian Exchange](#)

The transatlantic flow of goods and people that began with Columbus’s voyages in 1492.

[creoles](#)

Persons born in the Americas of European ancestry.

[hacienda](#)

Large-scale farm in the Spanish empire worked by Native American laborers.

mestizos

Spanish word for persons of mixed Native American and European ancestry.

Ninety-Five Theses

The list of moral grievances against the Catholic Church by Martin Luther, a German priest, in 1517.

Las Casas, Bartolomé de

A Catholic missionary who renounced the Spanish practice of coercively converting Indians and advocated their better treatment. In 1552, he wrote *A Brief Relation of the Destruction of the Indies*, which described the cruel treatment of the Indians by the Spanish.

repartimiento system

Spanish labor system under which Indians were legally free and able to earn wages but were also required to perform a fixed amount of labor yearly; replaced the *encomienda* system.

Black Legend

Idea that the Spanish empire was more oppressive toward Indians than other European empires; used as a justification for English imperial expansion.

Pueblo Revolt

Uprising in 1680 by allied Pueblo led by Popé that temporarily drove Spanish colonists out of New Mexico.

borderland

A place between or near recognized borders where no group of people has complete political control or cultural dominance.

★ CHAPTER 2 ★

EUROPEAN COLONIES AND NATIVE NATIONS 1600–1660

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- [What were the main contours of English colonization in the seventeenth century?](#)
 - [What drew English settlers to North America, and how did Native peoples respond to incoming colonists?](#)
 - [What was the significance of the Anglo-Powhatan Wars?](#)
 - [How was slavery established in the western Atlantic world?](#)
 - [What made the English settlement of New England distinctive?](#)
 - [What were the main sources of discord in early New England?](#)
 - [How did the English Civil War affect the colonies in America?](#)
-

In 1584, two explorers visited London. Their names were Manteo and Wanchese, and they came from what today is North Carolina's Outer Banks, a place they called Ossomocomuck. After a typically miserable two-month voyage across the Atlantic, they met with members of Parliament and Queen Elizabeth's court. As they walked around London, they could see the Tower of London and London Bridge, where the heads of traitors mounted on stakes revealed a much more hierarchical society than their own. London's population had rebounded from the Black Death, and now 150,000 people lived within its medieval city walls and the crowded suburbs right outside, starkly contrasting with the spread-out towns interspersed with farms to which Manteo and Wanchese were accustomed. They stayed in Sir Walter Raleigh's mansion on the Thames River, where they had long conversations with scholar Thomas Harriot. He asked them about profitable resources in North America while they learned about goods England could export to their people, including metal weapons. Manteo and Wanchese taught Harriot some of their Algonquian language and learned English in return. Less than a year after leaving, Manteo and Wanchese returned home on another English ship, bearing gifts from the queen and lots of news for their people.

In the era of exploration after 1492, Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans were curious about new peoples and places. Manteo and Wanchese were two of hundreds of Native Americans from the late fifteenth through nineteenth centuries who traveled to see Europe for themselves and formalize their people's alliances with Europeans.

The journey of Manteo and Wanchese and Raleigh's attempt to found an English colony at Roanoke took place at a time of heightened European involvement in North America. Interest

in colonization was spurred by national and religious rivalries and the growth of a merchant class eager to invest in overseas expansion and to seize for itself a greater share of world trade. Although the Roanoke colony failed, it would be followed in the early seventeenth century by a permanent English colony at Jamestown and, as noted in [Chapter 1](#), the founding of Quebec by France in 1608. In 1609, Henry Hudson explored the river that today bears his name, leading to the founding of the Dutch colony of New Netherland. In 1610, the Spanish established Santa Fe as the capital of New Mexico. More than a century after the voyages of Columbus, the European penetration of North America had finally begun in earnest. It occurred from many directions at once—from east to west from the Atlantic coast, north to south along the St. Lawrence and Mississippi rivers, and south to north in what is now the American Southwest. Only the English Atlantic coast efforts would draw large numbers of colonists.

English North America in the seventeenth century was a place where entrepreneurs like Walter Raleigh sought to make fortunes, religious minorities hoped to worship without governmental interference and to create societies based on biblical teachings, and aristocrats dreamed of re-creating a vanished world of feudalism. Those who drew up blueprints for settlement expected to reproduce the social structure with which they were familiar, with all its hierarchy and inequality. Women and the lower orders of men would occupy the same less-than-fully-free status as in England, subject to laws regulating their labor and depriving them of a role in politics. But for ordinary men, emigration offered an escape from lives of deprivation and inequality. “No man,” wrote [John Smith](#), an early leader of Jamestown, “will go from [England] to have less freedom” in America. The charter of the [Virginia Company](#), granted by James I in 1606, promised that colonists would enjoy “all liberties” of those residing in “our realm of England.” The male settlers of English America came to enjoy greater rights than colonists of other empires, including the power to choose members of elected assemblies, protections of the common law such as the right to trial by jury, and access to land, the key to economic independence. In some colonies, though by no means all, colonists enjoyed considerably more religious freedom than existed in Europe. Women enjoyed few of these freedoms. Women in English colonies had fewer legal rights than women in Spanish, French, or Dutch colonies. Unlike Native American societies, European women had no direct political power and unequal economic opportunities.

Many degrees of freedom coexisted in seventeenth-century North America, from enslaved men and women, stripped completely of liberty, to the independent landowner, who enjoyed a full range of rights. During a lifetime, a person might well occupy more than one place on this spectrum. The settlers’ success, however, often rested on taking Native American land and, in some colonies, on importing large numbers of Africans as enslaved laborers. Freedom and lack of freedom expanded together in seventeenth-century America.

• CHRONOLOGY •

1215 Magna Carta

1584 Hakluyt’s *A Discourse Concerning Western Planting*

- 1584–1590** English attempt to colonize Roanoke Island
- 1607** Jamestown established
- 1610–1614** First Anglo-Powhatan War
- 1619** First Africans arrive in Virginia
- House of Burgesses convenes
- 1620** Pilgrims found Plymouth
- 1622–1626** Second Anglo-Powhatan War
- 1624** Virginia becomes first royal colony
- 1630s** Great Migration to New England
- 1630** Massachusetts Bay Colony founded
- 1632** Maryland founded
- 1636** Roger Williams banished from Massachusetts to Rhode Island
- 1636–1637** Pequot War
- 1637** Anne Hutchinson placed on trial in Massachusetts
- 1642–1651** English Civil War
- 1644–1646** Third Anglo-Powhatan War
- 1649** Maryland adopts an Act Concerning Religion
- 1662** Puritans' Half-Way Covenant
-

Glossary

[Smith, John](#)

An English soldier and explorer who became one of the leaders of the Jamestown colony and helped to establish relations with the Powhatans. His narratives describe the early history of Jamestown as well as his explorations of what became New England.

[Virginia Company](#)

A joint-stock enterprise that King James I chartered in 1606; the company was to spread Christianity in the Americas as well as find ways to make a profit in it.

ENGLAND AND THE AMERICAS

Unifying the English Nation

Although John Cabot, sailing from England in 1497, had been the first European since the Vikings to encounter the North American continent, English exploration and colonization would wait for many years. As the case of Spain suggests, early empire building was, in large part, an extension of the consolidation of national power in Europe. But during the sixteenth century, England was a second-rate power racked by internal disunity. Henry VII, who assumed the throne in 1485, had to unify the kingdom after a long period of civil war. His son and successor, Henry VIII, launched the Reformation in England. When the pope refused to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, Henry severed the nation from the Catholic Church. In its place he established the Church of England, or [Anglican Church](#), with himself at the head. Decades of religious strife followed. Under Henry's son Edward VI, who became king at the age of ten in 1547, the regents who governed the country persecuted Catholics. When Edward died in 1553, his half sister Mary became queen. Mary temporarily restored Catholicism as the state religion and executed a number of Protestants. Her rule was so unpopular that reconciliation with Rome became impossible. Mary's successor, Elizabeth I (reigned 1558–1603), restored the Anglican ascendancy and executed more than 100 Catholic priests.

England and Ireland

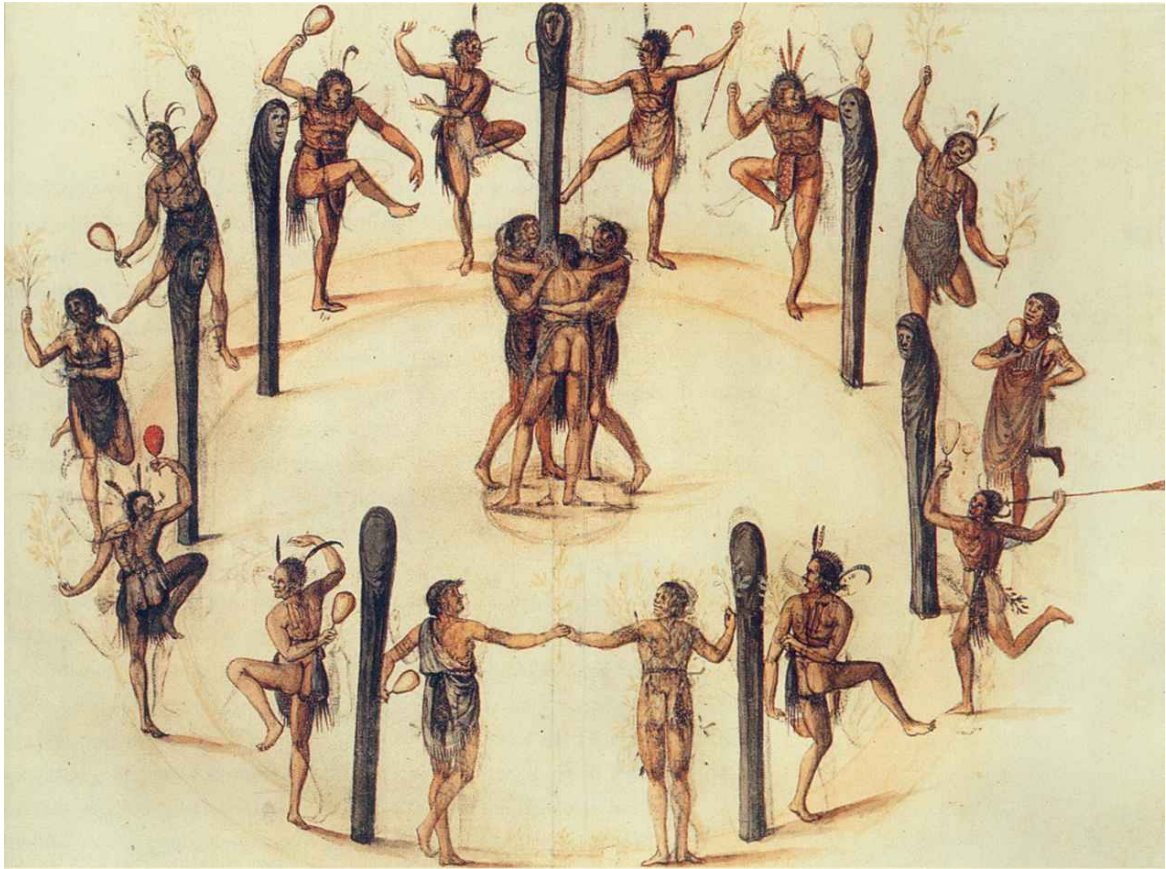
England's long struggle to conquer and pacify Ireland, which lasted well into the seventeenth century, absorbed money and energy that might have been directed toward the Americas. In subduing Ireland, whose Catholic population was deemed a threat to the stability of Protestant rule in England, the government employed a variety of approaches, including military conquest, the slaughter of civilians, the seizure of land and introduction of English economic practices, and the dispatch of large numbers of settlers. Rather than seeking to absorb the Irish into English society, the English excluded the native population from a territory of settlement known as the Pale, where the colonists created their own social order.

Just as the “reconquest” of Spain from the Moors established patterns that would be repeated in Spanish colonization, the methods used in Ireland anticipated policies England would undertake in America. Some sixteenth-century English writers directly compared the allegedly barbaric “wild Irish” with American Indians. Like the Indians, the Irish supposedly confused liberty and license. They refused to respect English authority and resisted conversion to English Protestantism. The early English colonies in North America and the West Indies were known as “plantations” (that is, communities “planted” from abroad among an alien population); the same term was originally used to describe Protestant settlements in Ireland.

England and North America

Not until the reign of Elizabeth I did the English turn their attention to North America, although sailors and adventurers still showed more interest in raiding Spanish towns and treasure fleets in the Caribbean than establishing settlements. The government granted charters (grants of exclusive rights

and privileges) to Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Walter Raleigh, authorizing them to establish colonies in North America at their own expense.



A drawing by the artist John White shows men and women of Ossomocomuck (the North Carolina coast) dancing around a circle of posts in a religious ritual. White was a careful observer of their clothing and body markings and the objects used in the ceremony.

Both ventures failed. Gilbert, who had earned a reputation for brutality in the Irish wars by murdering civilians and burning their crops, established a short-lived settlement on Newfoundland in 1582. Three years later, Raleigh dispatched a fleet of five ships carrying Manteo, Wanchese, and some 100 colonists (many of them his personal servants) to set up a base on Roanoke Island, where the people of Ossomocomuck had a fishing village. To the English, it seemed a good location for raiding Spanish shipping and searching for resources, including gold. But the colonists, mostly young Englishmen, repeatedly angered local Native communities with unexpected violence. By the spring of 1586, the Native people of Ossomocomuck had trapped them on Roanoke Island, where they were dangerously short on food. When Sir Francis Drake sailed by to check on them, the English abandoned the colony. A second group of 100 settlers, composed of families that hoped to establish a permanent colony, was dispatched that year. Their fate remains a mystery. When a ship bearing supplies arrived in 1590, the sailors found the [Roanoke colony](#) abandoned, with the inhabitants evidently having moved to live among Manteo's people. The name of his people, "Croatoan," had been carved on a tree. Raleigh, by now nearly bankrupt, lost his enthusiasm for colonization. To establish a successful colony, it seemed clear, would require more planning and economic resources than any individual could provide.

Spreading Protestantism

As in the case of Spain, national glory, profit, and religious mission merged in early English thinking about the Americas. The Reformation heightened the English government's sense of Catholic Spain as its mortal enemy (a belief reinforced in 1588 when a Spanish naval armada unsuccessfully attempted to invade the British Isles). Just as Spain justified its empire in part by claiming to convert Indians to Catholicism, England expressed its imperial ambitions in terms of an obligation to liberate the Americas from the tyranny of the pope. The very first justification James I offered for the English settlement of Virginia was "propagating of the Christian religion [by which he meant Protestantism] to such people as yet live in darkness and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God." By the late sixteenth century, anti-Catholicism had become deeply ingrained in English popular culture. English translations of Bartolomé de Las Casas's writings appeared during Elizabeth's reign. One, using a common Protestant term for the Catholic Church, bore the title, "Popery Truly Displayed."

Although atrocities were hardly confined to any one nation—as England's own conduct in Ireland and Roanoke demonstrated—the idea that the empire of Catholic Spain was uniquely murderous and tyrannical enabled the English to describe their own imperial ambitions in the language of freedom. In *A Discourse Concerning Western Planting*, written in 1584 at the request of Sir Walter Raleigh, the Protestant minister and scholar Richard Hakluyt listed twenty-three reasons why Queen Elizabeth I should support the establishment of colonies. Among them was the idea that English settlements would strike a blow against Spain's empire and therefore form part of a divine mission to rescue the Americas and its inhabitants from the influence of Catholicism and tyranny. "Tied as slaves" under Spanish rule, he wrote, the Indians of the Americas were "crying out to us . . . to come and help." They would welcome English settlers and "revolt clean from the Spaniard," crying "with one voice, Liberta, Liberta, as desirous of liberty and freedom." England would repeat much of Spain's behavior in the Americas. But the English always believed that, in their case, empire and freedom would go hand in hand.

But bringing freedom to Indians was hardly the only argument Hakluyt marshaled as England prepared to step onto the world stage. National power and glory were never far from the minds of the era's propagandists of empire. Through colonization, Hakluyt and other writers argued, England, a relatively minor power in Europe at the end of the sixteenth century, could come to rival the wealth and standing of great nations like Spain and France.



The Armada Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I commemorates the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 and appears to link it with English colonization of the Americas. England's victorious navy is visible through the window, while the queen's hand rests on a globe, with her fingers pointing to the coast of North America.

The Social Crisis

Equally important, America could be a refuge for England's "surplus" population, benefiting home country and emigrants alike. The late sixteenth century was a time of social crisis in England, with economic growth unable to keep pace with the needs of a population that grew from 3 million in 1550 to about 4 million in 1600. For many years, English peasants had enjoyed a secure hold on their plots of land. But in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, landlords sought profits by raising sheep for the expanding trade in wool and introducing more productive farming practices such as crop rotation. They evicted small farmers and fenced off "commons" previously open to all.

While many landlords, farmers, and town merchants benefited from the [enclosure movement](#), as this process was called, thousands of persons were uprooted from the land. Many flooded into England's cities, where wages fell dramatically. Others, denounced by authorities as rogues, vagabonds, and vagrants, wandered the roads in search of work. Their situation grew worse as prices throughout Europe rose, buoyed by the influx of gold and silver from the mines of Latin America into Spain. A pioneering study of English society conducted at the end of the seventeenth century estimated that half

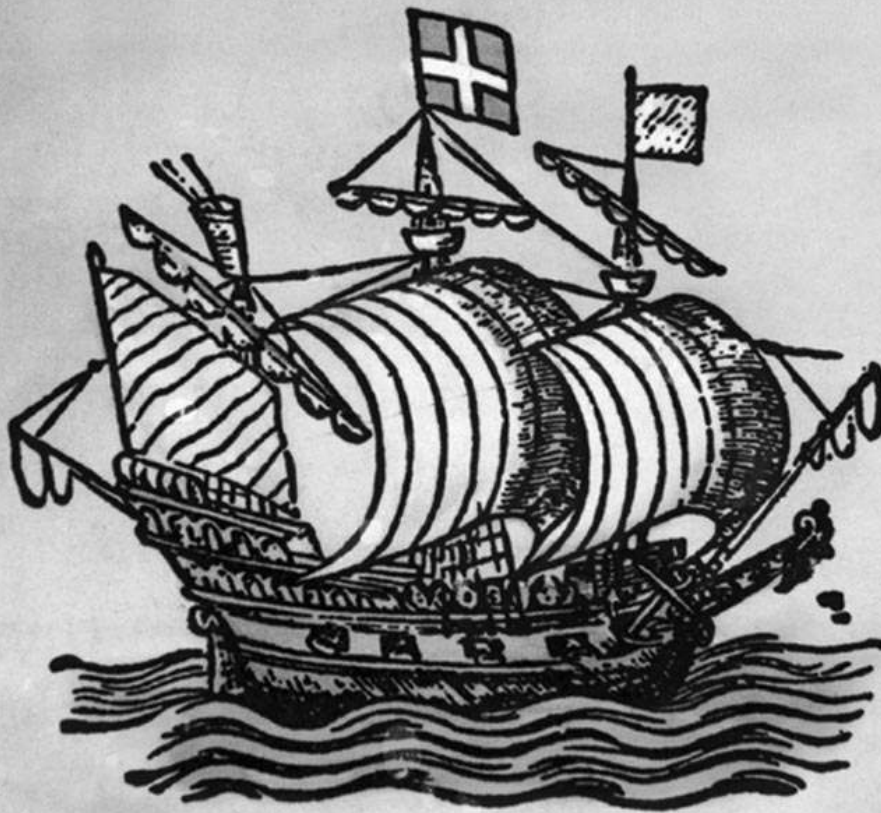
the population lived at or below the poverty line. The cost of poor relief fell mainly on local communities. "All our towns," wrote the Puritan leader John Winthrop in 1629, shortly before leaving England for Massachusetts, "complain of the burden of poor people and strive by all means to rid any such as they have." England, he added somberly, "grows weary of her inhabitants."

The government struggled to deal with this social crisis. Under Henry VIII, those without jobs could be whipped, branded, forced into the army, or hanged. During Elizabeth's reign, a law authorized justices of the peace to regulate hours and wages and put the unemployed to work. "Vagrants" were required to accept any job offered to them and could be punished if they sought to change employment. Another solution was to encourage the unruly poor to leave for the Americas. Richard Hakluyt wrote of the advantages of settling in America "such needy people of our country who now trouble the commonwealth and . . . commit outrageous offenses." As colonists, they could become productive citizens, contributing to the nation's wealth.

**NOVA BRITANNIA,
OFFERING MOST**

**Excellent fruites by Planting in
VIRGINIA.**

**Exciting all such as be well affected
to further the same.**



LONDON
Printed for SAMUEL MACHAM, and are to be sold at
his Shop in Pauls Church-yard, at the
Signe of the Bul-head.

1609.

A pamphlet published in 1609 promoting emigration to Virginia.

Masterless Men

As early as 1516, when Thomas More published *Utopia*, a fictional account of an imaginary island in the Western Hemisphere, the image of America as a place where settlers could escape from the economic inequalities of Europe had been circulating in England. This ideal coincided with the goals of ordinary Englishmen. Although authorities saw wandering or unemployed “masterless men” as a danger to society and tried to force them to accept jobs, popular attitudes viewed economic dependence as lack of freedom. Only those who controlled their own labor could be regarded as truly free. Indeed, popular tales and ballads romanticized the very vagabonds, highwaymen, and even beggars denounced by the propertied and powerful, since despite their poverty they at least enjoyed freedom from wage work.

The image of the Americas as a unique place of opportunity, where the English laboring men could regain economic independence by acquiring land and where even criminals would enjoy a second chance, was deeply rooted from the earliest days of settlement. John Smith had scarcely landed in Virginia in 1607 when he wrote that in America “every man may be the master and owner of his own labor and land.” In 1623, the royal letter approving the recruitment of emigrants to New England promised that any settler could easily become “lord of 200 acres of land”—an amount far beyond the reach of most Englishmen. The main lure for emigrants from England to the Americas was not so much riches in gold and silver as the promise of independence that followed from owning land. Economic freedom and the possibility of passing it on to one’s children attracted the largest number of English colonists.

Glossary

[Anglican Church](#)

The established state church of England, formed by Henry VIII after the pope refused to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon.

[enclosure movement](#)

A legal process that divided large farm fields in England that were previously collectively owned by groups of peasants into smaller, individually owned plots. The enclosure movement took place over several centuries and resulted in eviction for many peasants.

[Roanoke colony](#)

Failed English attempt to establish a colony on Roanoke Island in the Outer Banks; the colony disappeared sometime between 1587 and 1590.

EARLY ENGLISH EXPLORATION AND COLONIZATION

English Emigrants

Seventeenth-century North America was an unstable and dangerous environment. Warfare, disease, and starvation killed so many colonists that, without sustained immigration, most settlements would have collapsed. With a population of between 4 million and 5 million, or about half that of Spain and a quarter of that of France, England produced a far larger number of men, women, and children willing to brave the dangers of emigration to the Americas. In large part, this was because economic conditions in England were so bad. Between 1600 and 1700, more than half a million people left England to seek opportunities in Ireland, the sugar plantations of the West Indies, and England's mainland American colonies. Many had already moved from place to place in England. Colonial settlement was in many ways an extension of the migration at home of an increasingly mobile English population.

Indentured Servants

Settlers who could pay for their own passage—government officials, clergymen, merchants, artisans, landowning farmers, members of the lesser nobility, and the families of these men—arrived in America as free persons. Most of the men quickly acquired land. In the seventeenth century, however, nearly two-thirds of English settlers came as indentured servants, who voluntarily surrendered their freedom for a specified time (usually five to seven years) in exchange for passage to America.



This 1681 painting portrays Robin Cassacinamon, an influential Pequot leader and friend of John Winthrop II, a governor of colonial Connecticut, who originally owned the painting. Cassacinamon's portrait shows how Indians incorporated European goods, such as the loincloth's fabric, into their own styles of dress. Note the wampum beads around his neck and in his headdress. The importation of European-manufactured beads and iron drills for making shell beads greatly increased the availability of wampum throughout the Northeast.

Like slaves, servants could be bought and sold, could not marry without the permission of their owner, were subject to physical punishment, and saw their obligation to labor enforced by the courts. To ensure uninterrupted work by female servants, the law lengthened the term of their indenture if they became pregnant. "Many Negroes are better used," complained Elizabeth Sprigs, an indentured

servant in Maryland who described being forced to work “day and night . . . then tied up and whipped.” But, unlike slaves, servants could look forward to a release from bondage. Assuming they survived their period of labor, servants would receive a payment known as “freedom dues” and become free members of society.

For most of the seventeenth century, however, indentured servitude was not a guaranteed route to economic autonomy. Given the high death rate, many servants did not live to the end of their terms. Freedom dues were sometimes so meager that they did not enable recipients to acquire land. Many servants found the reality of life in the Americas less appealing than they had anticipated. Employers constantly complained of servants running away, not working diligently, or being unruly, all manifestations of what one commentator called their “fondness for freedom.”

Land and Liberty

Land, English settlers believed, was the basis of liberty. Owning land gave men control over their own labor and, in most colonies, the right to vote. The promise of immediate access to land lured free settlers, and freedom dues that included land persuaded potential immigrants to sign contracts as indentured servants. Land in America also became a way for the king to reward relatives and allies. Each colony was launched with a huge grant of land from the crown, either to a company or to a private individual known as a proprietor. Some grants, if taken literally, stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific.

Land was a source of wealth and power for colonial officials and their favorites, who acquired enormous estates. Without labor, however, land would have little value. Since immigrants did not come to America intending to work the land of others (except temporarily in the case of indentured servants), the very abundance of “free” land eventually led many property owners to turn to an enslaved workforce.

The Native Atlantic Coast

Land in North America, of course, was already occupied. The large number of English settlers in the Chesapeake and New England placed far greater pressure on their Native neighbors than the lightly populated colonies of New France, New Mexico, and Florida. The English were chiefly interested in displacing the Indians and settling on their land, not intermarrying with them, trading with them, or making them subjects of the crown. Yet trading with the English appealed to many Native Americans. Native men and women quickly integrated items like woolen cloth, metal kettles, iron axes, fishhooks, hoes, and guns into their daily lives. European manufacturers began to make products specifically for the Indian market, such as glass beads (called wampum in the Algonquian language of the people of Long Island) and light flintlock muskets easy to carry during hunting and raiding.

Native people who lived near English settlements sought trade and alliance with them. Some traders from English colonies also traveled out into the realm of Native nations, where, as with French and Dutch traders, Native men and women incorporated them into their family networks and economic systems.

But the combination of a growing population and promises of land for freed servants and new settlers meant that the English colonies were a dangerous neighbor. Settlers fenced in more and more land and let their pigs and cattle roam freely, trampling Native women’s cornfields. Colonists’ need for wood to build and heat homes and export to England depleted forests in eastern North America, as had

happened in Europe in previous generations. “Since you are here strangers, and come into our country,” a Native diplomat told early settlers in the Chesapeake, “you should rather conform yourselves to the customs of our country, than impose yours on us.” The seventeenth century was marked by recurrent warfare between colonists and Indians. Over time the English displaced the original inhabitants more thoroughly than any other European empire.

THE CHESAPEAKE

The Jamestown Colony

On April 26, 1607, three small ships carrying colonists from England sailed out of the morning mist at what is now called Cape Henry into the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. After exploring the area for a little over two weeks, they chose a site sixty miles inland on the James River for their settlement, hoping to protect themselves from marauding Spanish warships. Here they established Jamestown (named for the king of England) as the capital of the colony of Virginia (named for his predecessor, Elizabeth I, the “virgin queen”). The voyage was sponsored by the Virginia Company, a private business organization whose shareholders included merchants, aristocrats, and members of Parliament, and to which the queen had given her blessing before her death in 1603. When the three ships returned home, 104 settlers remained in Virginia. All were men, for the Virginia Company had more interest in searching for gold and in other ways of exploiting the area’s natural resources than in establishing a functioning society. Nevertheless, Jamestown became the first permanent English settlement in the area that is now the United States.

THE CHESAPEAKE, ca. 1640



Most of the Native nations shown in this map were under Powhatan's rule. By 1640, English settlement in the Chesapeake had spread well beyond the initial colony at Jamestown, as tobacco planters sought fertile land near navigable waterways.

The early history of Jamestown was, to say the least, not promising. The colony's leadership changed repeatedly, its inhabitants suffered an extraordinarily high death rate, and, with the company seeking a quick profit, supplies from England proved inadequate. The hopes of locating riches such as the Spanish had found in Mexico were quickly dashed. "Silver and gold they have none," one Spanish observer commented, their local resources were "not much to be regarded," and they had "no commerce with any nation." The first settlers were "a quarrelsome band of gentlemen and servants." They included few farmers and laborers and numerous sons of English gentry and high-status craftsmen (jewelers, stonecutters, and the like), who preferred to prospect for gold rather than farm. They "would rather starve than work," declared John Smith, one of the colony's first leaders.

Jamestown lay beside a swamp containing malaria-carrying mosquitoes, and the garbage settlers dumped into the local river bred germs that caused dysentery and typhoid fever. Disease and lack of food took a heavy toll. By the end of the first year, the original population of 104 had fallen by half. New arrivals (including the first two women, who landed in 1608) brought the numbers up to 400 in 1609, but by 1610, after a winter long remembered as the "starving time," only 65 settlers remained alive. At one point, the survivors abandoned Jamestown and sailed for England, only to be intercepted and persuaded to return to Virginia by ships carrying a new governor, 250 colonists, and supplies. By 1616, about 80 percent of the immigrants who had arrived in the first decade were dead.

Only rigorous military discipline held the colony together. John Smith was a forceful man whose career before coming to America included a period fighting the Turks in Hungary, where he was captured and for a time enslaved. He imposed a regime of forced labor on company lands. "He that will not work, shall not eat," Smith declared. Smith's autocratic mode of governing alienated many of the colonists. After being injured in an accidental gunpowder explosion in 1609, he was forced to return to England. But his immediate successors continued his iron rule.

From Company to Society

The Virginia Company slowly realized that for the colony to survive it would have to abandon the search for gold, grow its own food, and find a marketable commodity. It would also have to attract more settlers. With this end in view, it announced new policies in 1618 that powerfully shaped Virginia's development as a functioning society rather than an outpost of London-based investors. Instead of retaining all the land for itself, the company introduced the [headright system](#), awarding fifty acres of land to any colonist who paid for his own or another's passage. Thus, anyone who brought in a sizable number of servants would immediately acquire a large estate. In place of the governor's militaristic regime, a "charter of grants and liberties" was issued, including the establishment of a [House of Burgesses](#). When it convened in 1619, this became the first elected assembly in colonial America.

The House of Burgesses was hardly a model of democracy—only freemen could vote, and the company and its appointed governor retained the right to nullify any measure the body adopted. But its creation established a political precedent that all English colonies would eventually follow. Also in 1619, the first enslaved Africans arrived in Virginia. The full significance of these two events would not be apparent until years later. But they laid the foundation for a society that would one day be dominated economically and politically by slaveowning planters.

Powhatan and Pocahontas

When the English arrived at Jamestown, they landed in an area inhabited by some 15,000 to 25,000 Algonquian-speaking people living in numerous agricultural towns. Most acknowledged the rule of Wahunsonacock, a shrewd and forceful leader from a town near present-day Richmond. Usually referred to by his title Powhatan, he had recently consolidated his authority over the region and collected tribute from over 100 subordinate towns, collectively known as the Powhatans. Like Native leaders throughout the Americas, Powhatan quickly realized the advantages of trade with the newcomers. For its part, mindful of Las Casas's condemnation of Spanish behavior and the failures at Roanoke, the Virginia Company instructed its colonists to treat the Powhatans fairly and to try to convert them to Christianity. Realizing that the colonists depended on the Native women's farming for food, John Smith tried to stop settlers from seizing produce from nearby villages, lest Powhatan cut off all trade.



The only portrait of Pocahontas during her lifetime was engraved by Simon van de Passe in England in 1616. This is a later copy. After converting to Christianity, she took the name Rebecca.

In the first two years of Jamestown's existence, relations were mostly peaceful. At one point, Smith was captured and threatened with execution by Powhatan, only to be rescued by Pocahontas, reputedly the favorite among his many children by dozens of wives. The incident has come down in legend and film as an example of a rebellious, love-struck teenager defying her father. In fact, it was probably part

of an elaborate ceremony designed by Powhatan to demonstrate his power over the colonists and incorporate them into his realm. To Powhatan, Jamestown was one of the many towns under his rule. Pocahontas subsequently became an intermediary between the two peoples.

But after Pocahontas married a fellow Powhatan and stopped coming to Jamestown and John Smith returned to England, tension grew between the two groups. The First [Anglo-Powhatan War](#) broke out in 1610, with Powhatans killing settlers who stole corn and the English indiscriminately killing Powhatans and destroying towns to try to scare them into feeding the colony. Pocahontas herself was captured and held as a hostage by the settlers in 1613. As part of the restoration of peace, she converted to Christianity and in 1614 married the English colonist John Rolfe. Two years later, she accompanied him to England, where she caused a sensation in the court of James I as a symbol of Anglo-Indian harmony and missionary success. In England, she became sick and died in 1617. Her father died the following year.

The Second and Third Anglo-Powhatan Wars

Once it became clear that the English were interested in establishing a constantly expanding colony, not a trading post, conflict with the Powhatans was inevitable. The peace that began in 1614 ended abruptly in 1622 when Powhatan's brother and successor, Opechancanough, led a brilliantly planned surprise attack that in a single day wiped out a quarter of Virginia's settler population of 1,200. Opechancanough hoped the English would abandon Virginia or submit to his rule, but instead the surviving 900 colonists organized themselves into military bands, which then massacred scores of Powhatans and devastated their towns. By going to war, declared Governor Francis Wyatt, the Powhatans had forfeited any claim to the land. Virginia's policy, he continued, must now be nothing less than the "expulsion of the savages to gain the free range of the country."

Native Americans remained a significant presence in Virginia and on its western border, but the English victory in the Second Anglo-Powhatan War began to shift the balance of power. Although most of the settlers whom the Virginia Company had sent had died from war, starvation, or disease, more kept coming. The Third Anglo-Powhatan War, which began in 1644, caused the deaths of some 500 colonists. But by then, colonists outnumbered Powhatans, whose population was reduced due to war, disease, and flight. After the war ended in 1646 with Opechancanough's death, Virginia forced a treaty on the peoples who had been part of Powhatan's realm. The treaty acknowledged their subordination to the government at Jamestown and required them to move to reservations and not enter areas of European settlement without permission. This policy of separation followed the precedent already established in Ireland. Settlers spreading inland continued to seize Native lands.

The destruction caused by the First and Second Anglo-Powhatan Wars had already doomed the Virginia Company. Investors had never turned a profit. In 1624, the company surrendered its charter and Virginia became the first royal colony, its governor now appointed by the crown. The government in London for years was preoccupied with affairs at home and paid little attention to Virginia. Henceforth, the local elite controlled the colony's development. And that elite was growing rapidly in wealth and power thanks to the cultivation of a crop introduced from the West Indies by John Rolfe—tobacco.

A Tobacco Colony

King James I considered tobacco "harmful to the brain and dangerous to the lungs" and issued a spirited warning against its use. But increasing numbers of Europeans enjoyed smoking and believed

the tobacco plant had medicinal benefits. As a commodity with an ever-expanding mass market in Europe, tobacco became Virginia's substitute for gold. It enriched an emerging class of tobacco planters, as well as members of the colonial government who assigned good land to themselves. The crown profited from customs duties (taxes on tobacco that entered or left the kingdom). By 1624, more than 200,000 pounds were being grown, producing startling profits for landowners. Forty years later, the crop totaled 15 million pounds, and it doubled again by the 1680s. The spread of tobacco farming produced a dispersed society with few towns and little social unity. It inspired a get-rich-quick attitude and a frenzied scramble for land and labor. By the middle of the seventeenth century, a new influx of immigrants with ample financial resources—sons of merchants and English gentlemen—had taken advantage of the headright system and governmental connections to acquire large estates along navigable rivers. They established themselves as the colony's social and political elite.

The expansion of tobacco cultivation also led to an increased demand for field labor, met for most of the seventeenth century by young, male indentured servants. Despite harsh conditions of work in the tobacco fields, a persistently high death rate, and laws mandating punishments from whipping to an extension of service for those who ran away or were unruly, the abundance of land continued to attract migrants. Of the 120,000 English immigrants who entered the Chesapeake region during the seventeenth century, three-quarters came as servants.

Glossary

[headright system](#)

A land-grant policy that promised fifty acres to any colonist who could afford passage to Virginia, as well as fifty more for any accompanying servants. The headright policy was eventually expanded to include any colonists and was also adopted in other colonies.

[House of Burgesses](#)

The first elected assembly in colonial America established in 1619 in Virginia. Only wealthy landowners could vote in its elections.

[Anglo-Powhatan Wars](#)

Three wars fought between the Powhatans and the Jamestown colonists in 1610–1614, 1622–1626, and 1644–1646.

ORIGINS OF AMERICAN SLAVERY

No European nation embarked on the colonization of the Americas with the intention of relying on enslaved Africans for the bulk of its labor force. But the incessant demand for workers spurred by the spread of tobacco cultivation eventually led Chesapeake planters to turn to the transatlantic trade in slaves. Compared with employing indentured servants, planters saw many advantages to enslaved labor. Africans could not claim the protections of English common law. Slaves' terms of service never expired, and they therefore did not become a population of unruly landless men. Their children could be enslaved, and their skin color made it more difficult for them to escape into the surrounding society. African men and women, moreover, unlike Native American men, were accustomed to agricultural labor, and they had encountered many diseases known in Europe and developed resistance to them so were less likely to succumb to epidemics.

Englishmen and Africans

The English had long viewed alien peoples with disdain, including the Irish, Native Americans, and Africans. They described these strangers in remarkably similar language as savage, pagan, and uncivilized, often comparing them to animals. “Race”—the idea that humanity is divided into well-defined groups associated with skin color—is a concept that had not fully developed in the seventeenth century. Nor had “racism”—an ideology based on the belief that some races are inherently superior to others and entitled to rule over them. The main lines of division within humanity were thought to be civilization versus barbarism or Christianity versus heathenism, not color or race.

Nonetheless, anti-Black stereotypes flourished in seventeenth-century England. Africans were seen as so alien—in color, religion, and social practices—that they were “enslavable” in a way that poor English people were not. Most English also deemed Indians to be uncivilized, and some were sold into slavery in the Caribbean. But it is difficult to enslave a people on or near their native soil. Slaves are almost always outsiders, transported from elsewhere to their place of forced labor.

Slavery in History

Slavery has existed for nearly the entire span of human history, as we have seen (see [Chapter 1](#)). In the Mediterranean world, trade in Slavic peoples survived into the fifteenth century. (The English word “slavery” derives from “Slav.”) Pirates from the Barbary Coast of North Africa regularly seized Christians from ships and enslaved them. In West Africa, as noted in [Chapter 1](#), slavery and a slave trade predated the coming of Europeans, and captive-based slavery existed among Native Americans. But slavery in nearly all these instances differed greatly from the institution that developed in American colonies.

In the Americas, slavery was based on the [plantation](#), an agricultural enterprise that brought together large numbers of workers under the control of a single owner. This imbalance magnified the possibility of slave resistance, and so enslavers policed the system rigidly. It encouraged the creation of a sharp boundary between slavery and freedom. Labor on slave plantations was far more demanding than in small-scale slavery, and the death rate among slaves was much higher. In the Americas, slavery would come to be associated with race, a concept that drew a permanent line

between whites and Blacks. Unlike in earlier systems of slavery, in which enslavement was often a temporary social position and not the result of long-distance forced migration, enslaved Africans in the Americas who became free always carried with them in their skin color the mark of prior bondage.

Slavery in the West Indies

Europeans' belief that Africans were alien and inferior enabled American slavery but did not alone create and expand it. For this institution to take root, planters and government authorities had to be convinced that importing enslaved Africans was the best way to solve their persistent shortage of labor. During the seventeenth century, the shipping of slaves from Africa to the Americas became a major international business. But only a relative handful was brought to England's mainland colonies. By the time plantation slavery became a major feature of life in English North America, it was already well entrenched elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere. By 1600, huge sugar plantations worked by enslaved Africans had made their appearance in Brazil, a colony of Portugal. In the seventeenth century, England, Holland, Denmark, and France joined Spain in colonizing West Indian islands. In 1650, the English population of the West Indies exceeded that in all of North America. Generally, the first settlers established mixed economies with small farms worked by white indentured servants. But as sugar planters engrossed the best land, they forced white farmers off island after island. White indentured servants proved as discontented as elsewhere. In 1629, when a Spanish expedition attacked the British island of Nevis, servants in the local militia joined them shouting, "Liberty, joyful liberty!"

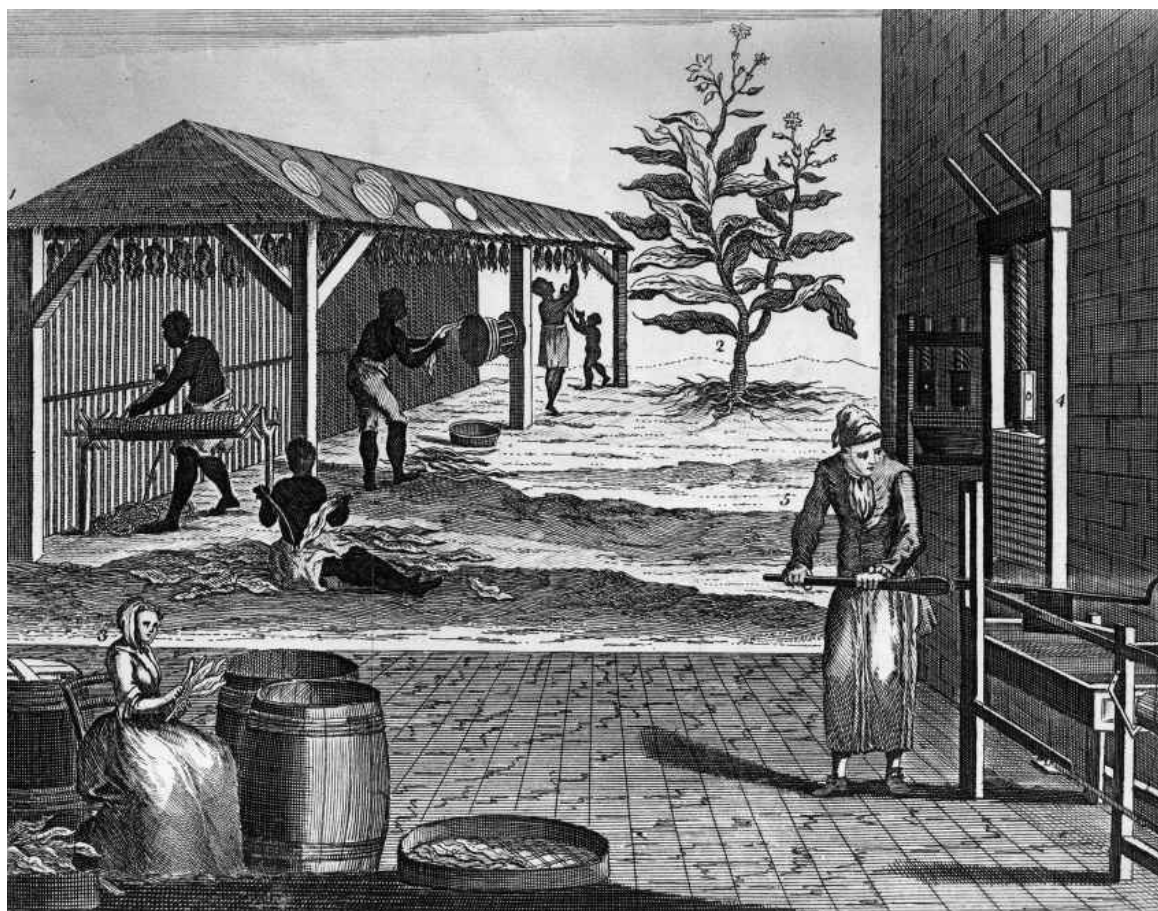
For the back-breaking, monotonous work of sugar cultivation, the massive importation of enslaved Africans began. In 1645, for example, Barbados, a tiny island owned by England, was home to around 11,000 white farmers and indentured servants and 5,000 slaves. As sugar cultivation intensified, planters turned increasingly to slave labor. By 1660, the island's population had grown to 40,000, half European and half African. Ten years later, the slave population had risen to 82,000, concentrated on some 750 sugar plantations. Meanwhile, the white population stagnated. By the end of the seventeenth century, huge sugar plantations with hundreds of slaves dominated the West Indian economy, and on most of the islands the African population far outnumbered that of European origin.

Sugar was the first crop to be mass-marketed to consumers in Europe. Before its emergence, international trade consisted largely of precious metals like gold and silver and luxury goods aimed at an elite market, like the spices and silks imported from Asia. Sugar was by far the most important product of the British, French, and Portuguese empires, and sugar plantations in the Americas produced immense profits for planters, merchants, and imperial governments. Saint Domingue, modern-day Haiti, was the jewel of the French empire. In 1660, Barbados generated more trade than all the other English colonies combined.

1619

In August 1619, white Virginians bought enslaved Africans for the first time. British pirates sailing under the Dutch flag had seized these men and women from a Portuguese ship that had taken them from Angola, on the southwestern coast of Africa. They were farmers and herders who spoke a Bantu language and had been captured and forced to march over 100 miles from their homes and then packed into slave ships for a frightening and horrific journey across the Atlantic. The English at Jamestown bought between twenty and thirty men and women from the pirates and sent them to work on tobacco plantations and farms and in colonial households. It is rare to know much about enslaved women in the early seventeenth century, but we know that one of the Africans sold in Virginia in 1619 was a woman called Angela, who later worked in the household of a wealthy planter.

Compared to its rapid introduction in Brazil and the West Indies, slavery developed slowly in North America. Slaves cost more than indentured servants, and the high death rate among tobacco workers made it economically disadvantageous to pay for a lifetime of labor. As late as 1680, there were only 4,500 Blacks in the Chesapeake, a little more than 5 percent of the region's population. The most important social distinction in the seventeenth-century Chesapeake was not between Black and white but between the white plantation owners who dominated politics and society and everybody else—namely, the small farmers, indentured servants, and slaves. But the arrival of enslaved African men and women in 1619 would shape the future of Virginia and the United States for centuries to come.



Processing tobacco was as labor-intensive as caring for the plant in the fields. Here slaves and indentured servants work with the crop after it has been harvested.

Women and the Family

Virginia's white society increasingly came to resemble that of England, with a wealthy landed gentry at the top; a group of small farmers, mostly former indentured servants who had managed to acquire land, in the middle; and an army of poor laborers—servants and landless former indentured servants—at the bottom. By 1700, the region's white population had grown to nearly 90,000. Virginia, however, lacked one essential element of English society—stable family life.

The colony avidly promoted the immigration of women, including several dozen “tobacco brides” who arrived in 1620 and 1621 for arranged marriages. But given the demand for male servants to work in the tobacco fields, men in the Chesapeake outnumbered women for most of the seventeenth century by four or five to one. The vast majority of women who immigrated to the region came as indentured servants. Since they usually had to complete their terms of service before marrying, they did not begin to form families until their mid-twenties. The high death rate, unequal ratio between the sexes, and late age of marriage for those who found partners produced a society with large numbers of single men, widows, and orphans. Although patriarchal ideals remained intact in Virginia, in practice the traditional authority of husbands and fathers was weakened. Because of their own low life expectancy, fathers found it difficult to supervise the careers and marriages of their children.

In the English colonies as in England, a married woman possessed certain rights before the law, including a claim to [dower rights](#) of one-third of her husband’s property in the event that he died before she did. Because of coverture, however, when the widow died, the property passed to the husband’s male heirs. (Because Spanish, French, and Dutch law did not include coverture, in those colonies a woman could hold independently any property inherited from her parents, and a man and wife owned jointly all the wealth accumulated during a marriage.)

Social conditions in the colonies, however, opened the door even in English colonies to roles women rarely assumed in Europe. Widows and the few women who never married took advantage of their legal status as *feme sole* (a “woman alone,” who enjoyed an independent legal identity denied to married women) to make contracts and conduct business. Margaret Brent, who arrived in the Chesapeake in 1638, acquired land, managed her own plantation, and acted as a lawyer in court. Some widows were chosen to administer their husbands’ estates or were willed their husbands’ property outright, rather than receiving only the one-third “dower rights.” But because most women came to Virginia as indentured servants, they could look forward only to a life of hard labor in the tobacco fields and early death. Servants were frequently subjected to sexual abuse by their masters. Those who married often found themselves in poverty when their husbands died.

The Maryland Experiment

Although it began under very different sponsorship and remained much smaller than Virginia during the seventeenth century, the second Chesapeake colony, Maryland, followed a similar course of development. As in Virginia, tobacco came to dominate the economy and tobacco planters the society. But in other ways, Maryland’s history was strikingly different.

Maryland was established in 1632 as a proprietary colony, that is, a grant of land and governmental authority to a single individual. This was Cecil Calvert, Lord Baltimore, the son of a recently deceased favorite of King Charles I. The charter made Lord Baltimore proprietor of the colony and granted him “full, free, and absolute power,” including control of trade and the right to initiate all legislation, with an elected assembly confined to approving or disapproving his proposals. Lord Baltimore imagined Maryland as a feudal domain. Land would be laid out in manors with the owners paying “quitrents” to the proprietor. Lord Baltimore disliked representative institutions and believed ordinary people should not meddle in governmental affairs. On the other hand, the charter also guaranteed to colonists “all privileges, franchises, and liberties” of Englishmen. While these were not spelled out, they undoubtedly included the idea of a government limited by the law. Here was a recipe for conflict, and Maryland had more than its share during the seventeenth century.

Religion in Maryland

Further aggravating instability in the colony was the fact that Lord Baltimore, a Catholic, envisioned Maryland as a refuge for his persecuted coreligionists, especially the younger sons of Catholic gentry who had few economic or political prospects in England. In Maryland, he hoped, Protestants and Catholics could live in a harmony unknown in Europe. The first group of 130 colonists included a number of Catholic gentlemen and two priests. Most appointed officials were also Catholic, including relatives of the proprietor, as were those to whom he awarded the choicest land grants. But Protestants always formed a majority of the settlers. Most, as in Virginia, came as indentured servants, but others took advantage of Maryland's generous headright system to acquire land by transporting workers to the colony.

As in Virginia, the death rate remained very high. In one county, half the marriages during the seventeenth century lasted fewer than eight years before one partner died. Almost 70 percent of male settlers in Maryland died before reaching the age of fifty, and half the children born in the colony did not live to adulthood. But at least initially, Maryland seems to have offered servants greater opportunity for landownership than Virginia. Unlike in the older colony, freedom dues in Maryland included fifty acres of land. As tobacco planters engrossed the best land later in the century, however, the prospects for landless men diminished.

Glossary

[dower rights](#)

In colonial America, the right of a widowed woman to inherit one-third of her deceased husband's property.

[plantation](#)

An early word for a colony, a settlement "planted" from abroad among an alien population in Ireland or the Americas; later, a large agricultural enterprise that used unfree labor to produce a crop for the world market.

THE NEW ENGLAND WAY

The Rise of Puritanism

As Virginia and Maryland evolved toward societies dominated by a small aristocracy ruling over numerous bound laborers, a very different social order emerged in seventeenth-century New England. The early history of that region is intimately connected to the religious movement known as “Puritanism,” which arose in England late in the sixteenth century. The term was initially coined by opponents to ridicule those not satisfied with the progress of the Protestant Reformation in England, who called themselves not Puritans but “godly” or “true Protestants.” Puritanism came to define a set of religious principles and a view of how society should be organized. [Puritans](#) differed among themselves on many issues. But all shared the conviction that the Church of England retained too many elements of Catholicism in its religious rituals and doctrines. Puritans saw elaborate church ceremonies, the rule that priests could not marry, and ornate church decorations as vestiges of “popery.” Many rejected the Catholic structure of religious authority descending from a pope or king to archbishops, bishops, and priests. Only independent local congregations, they believed, should choose clergymen and determine modes of worship. These Puritans were called “Congregationalists.” All Puritans shared many of the beliefs of the Church of England and the society as a whole, including a hatred of Catholicism and a pride in England’s greatness as a champion of liberty. But they believed that neither the church nor the nation was living up to its ideals.

Puritans considered religious belief a complex and demanding matter and urged believers to seek the truth by reading the Bible and listening to sermons by educated ministers, rather than devoting themselves to sacraments administered by priests and to what Puritans considered formulaic prayers. The sermon was the central rite of Puritan practice. In the course of a lifetime, according to one estimate, the average Puritan listened to some 7,000 sermons. In their religious beliefs, Puritans followed the ideas of the French-born Swiss theologian John Calvin. The world, Calvin taught, was divided between the elect and the damned. All persons sought salvation, but whether one was among the elect destined to be saved had already been determined by God. His will, ultimately, was unknowable, and nothing one did on earth—including prayers, good works, and offerings—would make any difference. But while there were no guarantees of salvation, worldly success—leading a good life, prospering economically—might well be indications of God’s grace. Idleness and immoral behavior were sure signs of damnation.

Moral Liberty

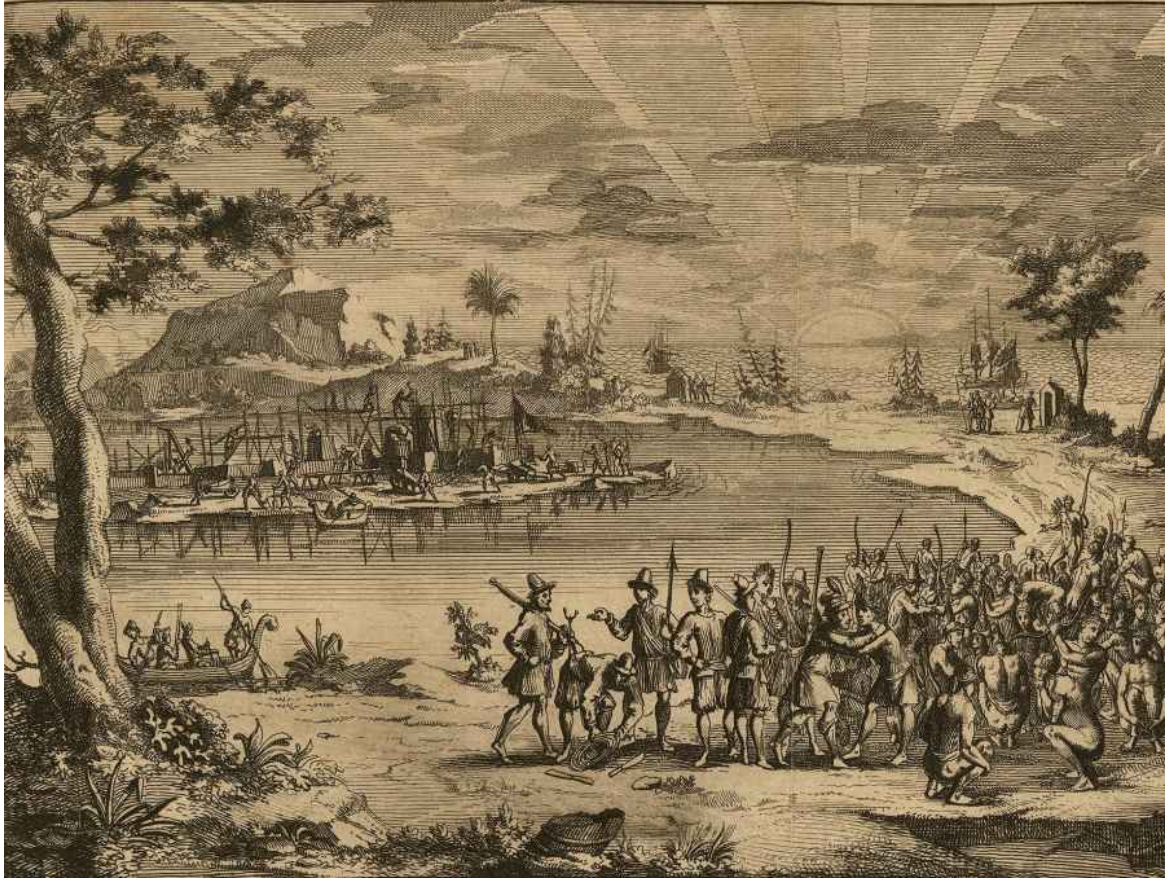
Puritanism, however, was not simply a set of ideas but a state of mind, a zealotry in pursuing the true faith that alienated many who held differing religious views. A minority of Puritans (such as those who settled in Plymouth Colony) became separatists, abandoning the Church of England entirely to form their own independent churches. Most, however, hoped to purify the church from within. But in the 1620s and 1630s, as Charles I seemed to be moving toward a restoration of Catholic ceremonies and the Church of England dismissed Puritan ministers and censored their writings, many Puritans decided to emigrate. They departed England not so much because of persecution, but because they feared that “Popish” practices had grown to such “an intolerable height,” as one minister complained, that “the consciences of God’s saints . . . could no longer bear them.” When Puritans emigrated to New England, they hoped to escape what they believed to be the religious and worldly corruptions of English society. They would establish a “city set upon a hill,” a Bible Commonwealth

whose influence would flow back across the Atlantic and rescue England from godlessness and social decay.

Like so many other immigrants to America, Puritans came in search of liberty, especially the right to worship and govern themselves in what they deemed a truly Christian manner. Freedom for Puritans was primarily a spiritual affair. It implied the opportunity and the responsibility to obey God's will through self-government and self-denial. It certainly did not mean unrestrained action, improper religious practices, or sinful behavior, of which, Puritans thought, there were far too many examples in England. In a 1645 speech to the Massachusetts legislature explaining the Puritan conception of freedom, [John Winthrop](#), the colony's governor, distinguished sharply between two kinds of liberty. "Natural" liberty, or acting without restraint, suggested "a liberty to do evil." This was the false idea of freedom supposedly adopted by the Irish, Indians, and bad Christians generally. Genuine "moral" liberty—the Christian liberty described in [Chapter 1](#)—meant "a liberty to that only which is good." It was quite compatible with severe restraints on speech, religion, and personal behavior. True freedom, Winthrop insisted, depended on "subjection to authority," both religious and secular; otherwise, anarchy was sure to follow. To Puritans, liberty meant that the elect had a right to establish churches and govern society, not that others could challenge their beliefs or authority.

The Pilgrims at Plymouth

The first Puritans to arrive in America were a group of separatists known as the [Pilgrims](#). They had already fled to the Netherlands in 1608, believing that Satan had begun "to sow errors, heresies and discords" in England. A decade later, fearing that their children were being corrupted by being drawn into the surrounding culture, they decided to emigrate to Virginia. The expedition was financed by a group of English investors who hoped to establish a base for profitable trade. In September 1620, the *Mayflower*, carrying 150 settlers and crew (among them many non-Puritans), embarked from England. Blown off course, they landed not in Virginia but hundreds of miles to the north, on Cape Cod. Here the 102 who survived the journey established the colony of Plymouth. Before landing, the Pilgrim leaders drew up the [Mayflower Compact](#), in which the forty-one adult men going ashore agreed to obey "just and equal laws" enacted by representatives of their own choosing. This was the first written frame of government in what is now the United States. Men not normally signatories to such documents—printers, carpenters, even indentured servants—were among those who affixed their names. (This was over 200 years before most working-class men were allowed to vote in Great Britain.)



An early-seventeenth-century engraving shows Algonquian-speaking Native Americans greeting the English explorer Bartholomew Gosnold. Gosnold landed at Cape Cod in 1602 and then established a small outpost on nearby Cuttyhunk Island. The region's Native peoples had much experience with Europeans before Pilgrims settled there.

A century earlier, when Giovanni da Verrazano explored the Atlantic coast of North America, he encountered thickly settled towns. By the time the Pilgrims landed, hundreds of European fishing vessels had operated off New England, landing to trade with Indians and bringing, as elsewhere, epidemics. The Pilgrims arrived in an area whose Native population had recently been devastated by smallpox. They established Plymouth on the site of an abandoned Patuxet Indian town whose fields had been cleared before the epidemic and were ready for cultivation. Nonetheless, the settlers arrived six weeks before winter without food or farm animals. Half died during the first winter. The colonists only survived through the help of local Indians, notably Squanto, a Patuxet man who had grown up in the town where the Pilgrims settled. With twenty other Indians, Squanto had been kidnapped and brought to Spain in 1614 by English sailors, who sold them as slaves. Squanto somehow made his way to London, where he learned English. He returned home in 1619 only to find his town abandoned. He taught the Pilgrims where to fish and how to plant corn and served as an interpreter between them and Massasoit, chief of the powerful Wampanoags. They agreed to an alliance, in which the Wampanoags would help to feed and defend Plymouth and the Pilgrims would help to fight the Wampanoags' enemies, including the Narragansetts. The celebration and renewal of this treaty one year later, in the autumn of 1621, later became known as the first Thanksgiving.

The Pilgrims hoped to establish a society based on the lives of the early Christian saints. Their government rested on the principle of consent, and voting was not restricted to church members. All

land was held in common until 1627, when it was divided among the settlers. Plymouth survived as an independent colony until 1691, but it was soon overshadowed by Massachusetts Bay to its north.

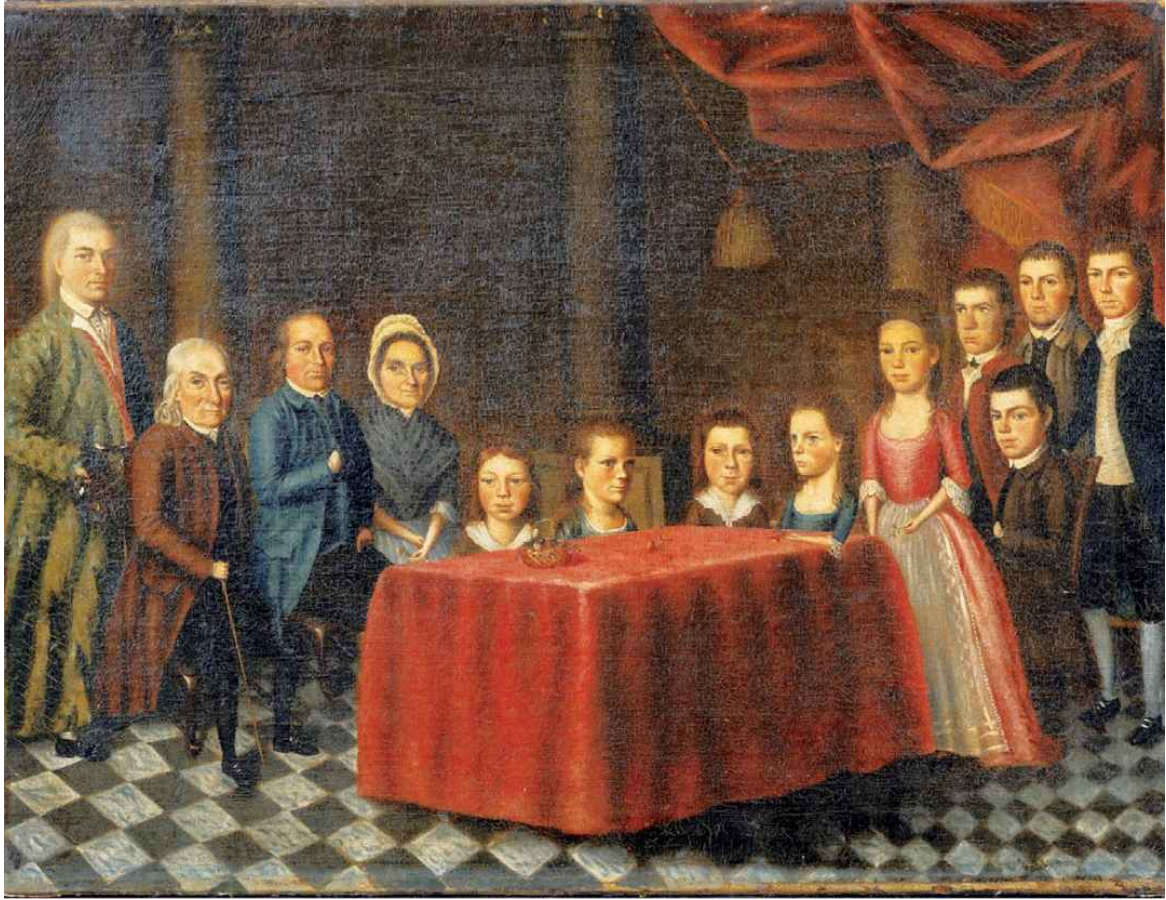
The Great Migration

Chartered in 1629, the Massachusetts Bay Company was founded by a group of London merchants who hoped to further the Puritan cause and turn a profit through trade with the Indians. The first ships sailed from England in 1630, and by 1642 some 21,000 Puritans had immigrated to Massachusetts. Long remembered as the [Great Migration](#), this flow of population represented less than one-third of English emigration in the 1630s. Far more English settlers arrived in Ireland, the Chesapeake, and the Caribbean. After 1640, migration to New England virtually ceased, and in some years more colonists left the region than arrived. Nonetheless, the Great Migration established the basis for a stable and thriving society.

In many ways, the settling of New England was unique. Although servants represented about one-quarter of the Great Migration, most settlers arrived in Massachusetts in families. They came for many reasons, including the desire to escape religious persecution, anxiety about the future of England, and the prospect of economic betterment. Compared with colonists in Virginia and Maryland, they were older and more prosperous, and the number of men and women more equally balanced. Because of the even sex ratio and New England's healthier climate, the population grew rapidly, doubling every twenty-seven years. Although the region received only a small fraction of the century's migration, by 1700 New England's white population of 91,000 outnumbered that of both the Chesapeake and the West Indies. Nearly all were descendants of those who crossed the Atlantic during the Great Migration.

The Puritan Family

While the imbalance between male and female migrants made it difficult for patriarchal family patterns fully to take root in the Chesapeake until the end of the seventeenth century, they emerged very quickly in New England. Whatever their differences with other Englishmen on religious matters, Puritans shared with the larger society a belief in male authority within the household as well as an adherence to coverture, the common-law tradition that severely limited married women's legal and economic rights. Puritans in America carefully emulated the family structure of England, insisting that the obedience of women, children, and servants to men's will was the foundation of social stability. They believed that the father's authority was vital in a farming society without large numbers of slaves or servants because control over the labor of one's family was essential to a man's economic success.



The Savage Family, a 1779 painting by the New England artist Edward Savage, depicts several generations of a typically numerous Puritan family.

To be sure, Puritans deemed women to be the spiritual equals of men, and women were allowed to become full church members. Although all ministers were men, the Puritan belief in the ability of believers to interpret the Bible opened the door for some women to claim positions of religious leadership. The ideal Puritan marriage was based on reciprocal affection and companionship, and divorce was legal. Yet within the household, the husband's authority was virtually absolute. Indeed, a man's position as head of his family was thought to replicate God's authority in spiritual matters and the authority of the government in the secular realm. Magistrates sometimes intervened to protect wives from physical abuse, but they also enforced the power of fathers over their children and husbands over their wives. Moderate physical "correction" was considered appropriate for women who violated their husbands' sense of proper behavior.

Their responsibilities as wives and mothers defined women's lives. In his 1645 speech on liberty, John Winthrop noted that a woman achieved genuine freedom by fulfilling her prescribed social role and embracing "subjection to her husband's authority." The family was the foundation of strong communities, and unmarried adults seemed a danger to the social fabric. An early law of Plymouth declared that "no single person be suffered to live of himself." The typical New England woman married at twenty-two, a younger age than her English counterparts, and gave birth seven times. Because New England was a far healthier environment than the Chesapeake, more children survived infancy. Thus, much of a woman's adult life was devoted to bearing and rearing children.

Government and Society in Massachusetts

In a sermon aboard the *Arabella*, on which he sailed for Massachusetts in 1630, John Winthrop spoke of the settlers binding themselves together “in the bond of brotherly affection” in order to promote the glory of God and their own “common good.” Puritans feared excessive individualism and lack of social unity. Unlike the dispersed plantation-centered society of the Chesapeake, the leaders of Massachusetts organized the colony in self-governing towns. Groups of settlers received a land grant from the colony’s government and then subdivided it, with residents awarded house lots in a central area and land on the outskirts for farming. Much land remained in commons, either for collective use or to be divided among later settlers or the sons of the town’s founders. Each town had its own Congregational Church. Each, according to a law of 1647, was required to establish a school, since the ability to read the Bible was central to Puritan belief. To train an educated ministry, Harvard College was established in 1636 (nearly a century after the Royal University of Mexico, founded in 1551), and two years later the first printing press in English America was established in Cambridge.

The government of Massachusetts reflected the Puritans’ religious and social vision. Wishing to rule the colony without outside interference and to prevent non-Puritans from influencing decision making, the shareholders of the Massachusetts Bay Company emigrated to America, taking the charter with them and transforming a commercial document into a form of government. At first, the eight shareholders chose the men who ruled the colony. In 1634, a group of deputies elected by freemen (landowning church members) was added to form a single ruling body, the General Court. Ten years later, company officers and elected deputies were divided into two legislative houses. Unlike Virginia, whose governors were appointed first by a faraway company and after 1624 by the crown, or Maryland, where authority rested with a single proprietor, the freemen of Massachusetts elected their governor.

The principle of consent was central to Puritanism. Church government was decentralized—each congregation, as one minister put it, had “complete liberty to stand alone.” Churches were formed by voluntary agreement among members, who elected the minister. No important church decision was made without the agreement of the male members. Towns governed themselves, and local officials, delegates to the General Court, and the colonial governor were all elected. Puritans, however, were hardly believers in equality. Church membership, a status that carried great prestige and power, was a restrictive category. Anyone could worship at a church, or, as the Puritans preferred to call it, meeting house, but to be a full member required demonstrating that one had experienced divine grace and could be considered a “visible saint,” usually by testifying about a conversion experience. Although male property holders generally chose local officials, voting in colony-wide elections was limited to men who had been accepted as full church members. As time went on, this meant that a smaller and smaller percentage of the population controlled the government. Puritan democracy was for those within the circle of church membership; those outside the boundary occupied a secondary place in the Bible Commonwealth.

Church and State in Puritan Massachusetts

Seventeenth-century New England was a hierarchical society in which socially prominent families were assigned the best land and the most desirable seats in church. “Some must be rich and some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity; others mean and in subjection,” declared John Winthrop. This was part of God’s plan, reinforced by man-made law and custom. The General Court forbade ordinary men and women from wearing “the garb of gentlemen.” Ordinary settlers were addressed as “goodman” and “goodwife,” while the better sort were called “gentleman” and “lady” or

“master” and “mistress.” When the General Court in 1641 issued a Body of Liberties outlining the rights and responsibilities of Massachusetts colonists, it adopted the traditional understanding of liberties as privileges that derived from one’s place in the social order. While some liberties applied to all inhabitants, there were separate lists of rights for freemen, women, children, and servants. The Body of Liberties also allowed for slavery. The first African slave appears in the records of Massachusetts Bay in 1640.

Massachusetts forbade ministers from holding office so as not to interfere with their spiritual responsibilities. But church and state were closely interconnected. The law required each town to establish a church and to levy a tax to support the minister. There were no separate church courts, but the state enforced religious devotion. The Body of Liberties affirmed the rights of free speech and assembly and equal protection of the law for all within the colony, but the laws of Massachusetts prescribed the death penalty for, among other things, worshipping “any god, but the lord god,” practicing witchcraft, or committing blasphemy.

Like many others in the seventeenth century, Puritans believed that religious uniformity was essential to social order. They did not believe in religious toleration—there was one truth, and their faith embodied it. Religious liberty meant the liberty to practice this truth. The purpose of the Puritan experiment was to complete the Reformation and, they hoped, spread it back to England. But they set their experiment up in the land of the Wampanoags, who had their own ideas about order, religion, and liberty.

Native Nations and New England

Massasoit and the Wampanoags sought alliance with the Pilgrims in order to change the balance of power in the region. The epidemic that destroyed Squanto’s town had also hit the Wampanoags, but it had not reached the Narragansetts, who used the devastation to force the Wampanoags to pay them tribute. After forging an alliance and trading partnership with the English, Massasoit was able to persuade the Narragansetts to back down. The Wampanoags became intermediaries between the English and other Native groups, profiting from the trade and increasing their regional power. Massasoit consolidated diverse Native communities that had been torn apart by disease, including Squanto’s Patuxets, into a strong and prosperous Wampanoag nation.

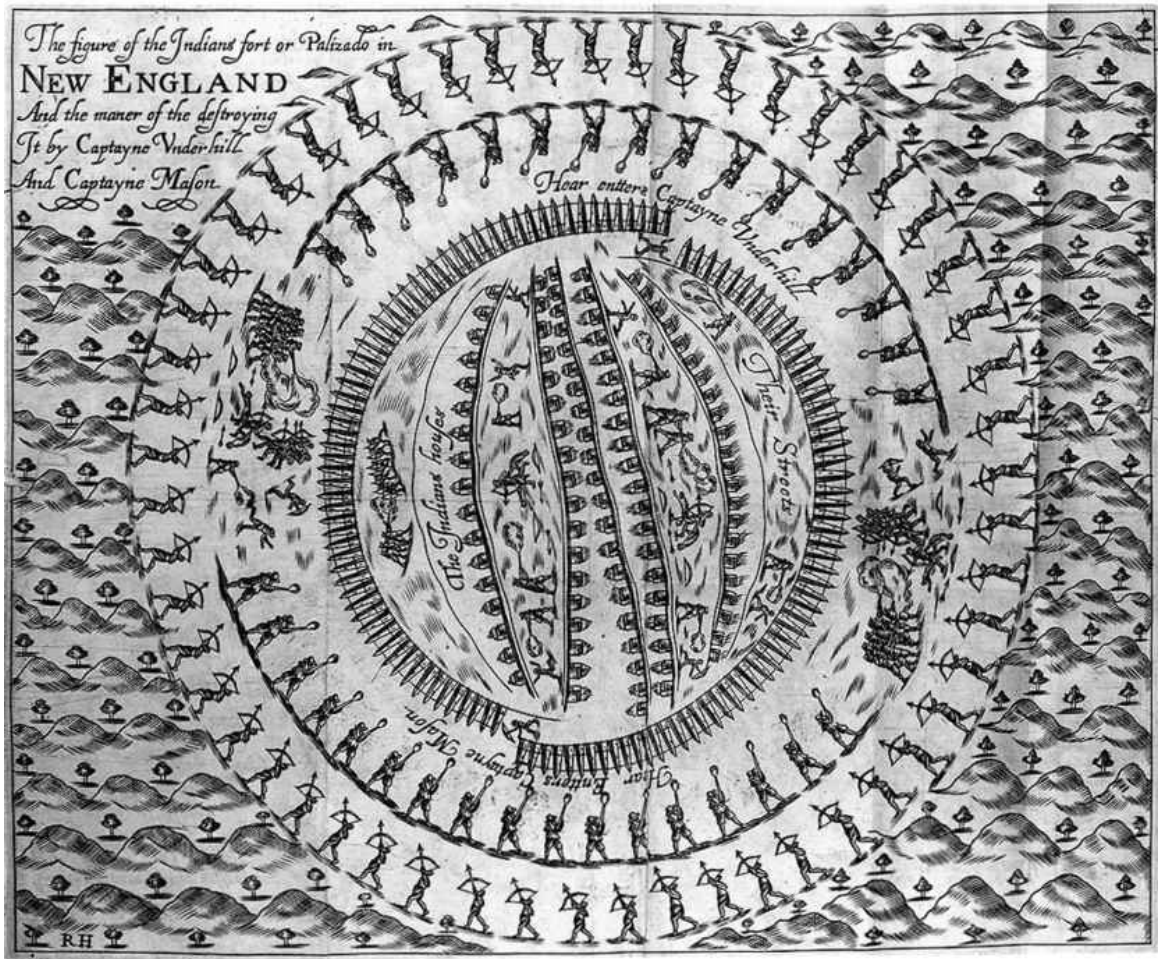
Like the Pilgrims, the English colonists who came to Massachusetts Bay established Boston and other settlements on formerly Native towns and fields and were recruited as allies and trading partners by local Indians. These included the Massachusetts Indians, on whose land they settled, and the Narragansetts, who had been shut out of Plymouth trade by the Wampanoags.

Although Puritans announced that they intended to bring Christian faith to the Indians, they made no sustained conversion efforts in the early two decades of settlement. Instead, always concerned that sinful persons might prefer a life of ease to hard work, New England’s leaders feared that Native Americans might convert colonists. To Puritans, Native people enjoyed freedom, but the wrong kind—what Winthrop condemned as undisciplined “natural liberty” rather than the “moral liberty” of the Christian. In 1642, the Connecticut General Court set a penalty of three years at hard labor for any colonist who abandoned “godly society” to live with Indians. To counteract the attraction of Native life, the leaders of New England also encouraged the publication of [captivity narratives](#) by those captured by Indians. The most popular was *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* by Mary Rowlandson, who had immigrated with her parents as a child in 1639 and was seized along with a group of other settlers and held for three months until ransomed in the 1670s. Rowlandson

acknowledged that she had been well treated and suffered “not the least abuse or unchastity,” but her book’s overriding theme was her determination to return to Christian society.

The Pequot War

Like the Wampanoags, the Pequots on the north shore of Long Island Sound and the lower Connecticut River valley became a regional power through European trade and alliance, in their case with the Dutch of New Netherland. The Pequots forced their neighbors the Mohegans and the Narragansetts to pay them tribute and conduct Dutch trade through them. But in the 1630s, the Narragansetts and their Mohegan allies used their alliance with the Massachusetts Bay Colony to fight the Pequots.



An engraving from John Underhill's *News from America*, published in London in 1638, shows the destruction of the Pequot town on the Mystic River in 1637. The colonial forces are firing guns, while the Narragansetts and Mohegans shoot bows and arrows.

In May 1637, a force of 500 Narragansetts, 70 Mohegans, and 90 English colonists from Massachusetts and newer settlements in the Connecticut River valley marched on the Pequots. The fighting was fiercest at a Pequot town on the Mystic River. The English commanders set the village ablaze, killing over 500 Pequot men, women, and children.

By the end of the [Pequot War](#) a few months later, around one-quarter of the Pequot population of 3,000 had been killed. Survivors were enslaved in the homes of New England colonists, sold into slavery in the West Indies or Bermuda, or absorbed into other Native communities. The treaty that restored peace decreed that their name be wiped from the historical record and that surviving Pequots no longer call themselves by that name (neither decree succeeded). Although the Narragansetts and Mohegans had won the war, they also learned that the English were more dangerous enemies than they had realized.

Glossary

[Puritans](#)

English religious group that sought to purify the Church of England; founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony under John Winthrop in 1630.

[Winthrop, John](#)

Puritan leader and governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony who resolved to use the colony as a refuge for persecuted Puritans and as an instrument of building a “wilderness Zion” in America.

[Pilgrims](#)

Puritan separatists who broke completely with the Church of England and sailed to the Americas aboard the *Mayflower*, founding Plymouth Colony on Cape Cod in 1620.

[Mayflower Compact](#)

Document signed in 1620 aboard the *Mayflower* before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth; the document committed the group to majority-rule government by its male colonists.

[Great Migration](#)

Large-scale migration of southern Blacks during and after World War I to the North, where jobs had become available during the labor shortage of the war years.

[captivity narratives](#)

Accounts written by colonists after their time in Indian captivity, often stressing the captive’s religious convictions.

[Pequot War](#)

An armed conflict in 1637 fought between the Pequot Indians and an alliance of Narragansett, Mohegan, and English. The Pequot loss led to most of them being killed, enslaved, or incorporated into other Native nations.

NEW ENGLANDERS DIVIDED

Colonists in New England also clashed among themselves. The Puritans exalted individual judgment—hence their insistence on reading the Bible, yet modern ideas of individualism, privacy, and personal freedom would have struck Puritans as quite strange. They considered too much emphasis on the “self” dangerous to social harmony and community stability. In the closely knit towns of New England, residents carefully monitored one another’s behavior and chastised or expelled those who violated communal norms. In the Puritan view, as one colonist put it, the main freedom possessed by dissenters was the “liberty to keep away from us.” Towns banished individuals for such offenses as criticizing the church or government, complaining about the colony in letters home to England, or, in the case of one individual, Abigail Gifford, for being “a very burdensome woman.” Tolerance of difference was not high on the list of Puritan values.

Rhode Island and Connecticut

Differences of opinion about how to organize a Bible Commonwealth, however, emerged almost from the founding of Massachusetts. With its emphasis on individual interpretation of the Bible, Puritanism contained the seeds of its own fragmentation. The first sustained criticism of the existing order came from the young minister Roger Williams, who arrived in Massachusetts in 1631 and soon began to insist that its congregations withdraw from the Church of England and that church and state be separated. “Soul liberty,” Williams believed, required that individuals be allowed to follow their consciences wherever they led. To most Puritans, the social fabric was held together by certain religious truths, which could not be questioned. To Williams, any law-abiding citizen should be allowed to practice whatever form of religion he chose. For the government to “molest any person, Jew or Gentile, for either professing doctrine or practicing worship” violated the principle that genuine religious faith is voluntary. Williams rejected the conviction that Puritans were an elect people on a divine mission to spread the true faith. He denied that God had singled out any group as special favorites.

Banished from Massachusetts in 1636, Williams and his followers moved south, where they established the colony of Rhode Island, which eventually received a charter from London. In a world in which the right of individuals to participate in religious activities without governmental interference barely existed, Rhode Island became a beacon of religious freedom. It had no established church, no religious qualifications for voting until the eighteenth century, and no requirement that citizens attend church. It became a haven for [Dissenters](#) (Protestants who belonged to denominations other than the established church) and Jews persecuted in other colonies. Rhode Island’s frame of government was also more democratic. The assembly was elected twice a year, the governor annually, and town meetings were held more frequently than elsewhere in New England.

Religious disagreements in Massachusetts generated other colonies as well. In 1636, the minister Thomas Hooker established a settlement at Hartford. Its system of government, embodied in the Fundamental Orders of 1639, was modeled on that of Massachusetts—with the significant exception that men did not have to be church members to vote. Quite different was the colony of New Haven, founded in 1638 by immigrants who wanted an even closer connection between church and state. In 1662, Hartford and New Haven received a royal charter that united them as the colony of Connecticut.

The Trial of Anne Hutchinson

More threatening to the Puritan establishment, both because of her gender and because she attracted a large and influential following, was Anne Hutchinson. A midwife and the daughter of a clergyman, Hutchinson, wrote John Winthrop, was “a woman of a ready wit and bold spirit.” She arrived in Massachusetts with her husband in 1634 to join their minister, John Cotton, who had been expelled from his pulpit in England by church authorities. Hutchinson began holding meetings in her home, where she led discussions of religious issues among men and women, including a number of prominent merchants and public officials. In Hutchinson’s view, salvation was God’s direct gift to the elect and could not be earned by good works, devotional practices, or other human effort. Most Puritans shared this belief. What set Hutchinson apart was her charge that nearly all the ministers in Massachusetts were guilty of faulty preaching for distinguishing “saints” from the damned on the basis of activities such as church attendance and moral behavior rather than an inner state of grace.

THE NORTHEAST, ca. 1640



By the mid-seventeenth century, English settlement in New England had spread inland and up and down the Atlantic coast.

In Massachusetts, where church and state reinforced each other, both ministers and magistrates were intent on suppressing any views that challenged their own leadership. Their critics denounced Cotton and Hutchinson for Antinomianism (a term for putting one’s own judgment or faith above both human law and the teachings of the church). In 1637, she was placed on trial before a civil court for sedition (expressing opinions dangerous to authority). Her position as a “public woman” made her defiance seem even more outrageous. Her meetings, said Governor Winthrop, were neither “comely in the sight of God nor fitting to your sex.” At her trial, Hutchinson ably debated interpretation of the Bible with

her university-educated accusers. But when she spoke of divine revelations, of God speaking to her directly rather than through ministers or the Bible, she violated Puritan doctrine and sealed her own fate. Such a claim, the colony's leaders felt, posed a threat to the very existence of organized churches — and, indeed, to all authority. Hutchinson and a number of her followers were banished. Her family made its way to Rhode Island and then to the religious refuge of New Netherland, where Hutchinson and most of her relatives perished during Kieft's War (see [Chapter 1](#)) between the Dutch and Delaware Indians.

Anne Hutchinson lived in New England for only eight years, but she left her mark on the region's religious culture. As in the case of Roger Williams, her career showed how the Puritan belief in each individual's ability to interpret the Bible could easily lead to criticism of the religious and political establishment. Although religious toleration became a value in New Netherland, Maryland, and to some extent Rhode Island, Massachusetts rejected it as a violation of "moral liberty" and social harmony.

VOICES OF FREEDOM

From "THE TRIAL OF ANNE HUTCHINSON" (1637)

A midwife and the daughter of a clergyman, Anne Hutchinson began holding religious meetings in her home in Massachusetts in 1634. She attracted followers who believed that most ministers were not adhering strictly enough to Puritan theology. In 1637 she was placed on trial for sedition. In her defense, she claimed to be inspired by a direct revelation from God, a violation of Puritan beliefs. The examination of Hutchinson by Governor John Winthrop and Deputy Governor Thomas Dudley is a classic example of the clash between established power and individual conscience.

GOV. JOHN WINTHROP: Mrs. Hutchinson, you are called here as one of those that have troubled the peace of the commonwealth and the churches here; you are known to be a woman that hath had a great share in the promoting and divulging of those opinions that are the cause of [this trouble](#), . . . and you have maintained a meeting and an assembly in your house that hath been condemned by the general assembly as a thing not tolerable nor comely in the sight of God nor fitting for your sex. . . .

MRS. ANNE HUTCHINSON: What have I said or done?

GOV. JOHN WINTHROP: [Y]ou did harbor and countenance those that are parties in this faction. . . .

MRS. ANNE HUTCHINSON: That's matter of conscience, Sir.

GOV. JOHN WINTHROP: Your conscience you must keep, or it must be kept for you.

★ ★ ★

GOV. JOHN WINTHROP: Your course is not to be suffered for. Besides we find such a course as this to be greatly prejudicial to the state. . . . And besides that it will not well stand with the commonwealth that families should be neglected for so many neighbors and dames and so much time spent. [We see no rule of God for this](#). We see not that any should have authority to set up any other exercises besides what authority hath already set up. . . .

MRS. ANNE HUTCHINSON: I bless the Lord, he hath let me see which was the clear ministry and which the wrong. . . . Now if you do condemn me for speaking what in my conscience I know to be truth I must commit myself unto the Lord.

MR. NOWEL (ASSISTANT TO THE COURT): How do you know that was the spirit?

MRS. ANNE HUTCHINSON: How did Abraham know that it was God that bid him [offer his son](#), being a breach of the sixth commandment?

DEP. GOV. THOMAS DUDLEY: By an immediate voice.

MRS. ANNE HUTCHINSON: So to me by an immediate revelation.

DEP. GOV. THOMAS DUDLEY: How! an immediate revelation.

★ ★ ★

GOV. JOHN WINTHROP: Mrs. Hutchinson, the sentence of the court you hear is that you are banished from out of our jurisdiction as being a woman not fit for our society, and are to be imprisoned till the court shall send you away.

***From* JOHN WINTHROP, SPEECH TO THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL COURT (JULY 3, 1645)**

John Winthrop, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, describes two very different definitions of liberty in this speech.

The great questions that have troubled the country, are about the authority of the magistrates and the liberty of the people. . . . Concerning liberty, I observe a great mistake in the country about that. There is a twofold liberty, natural (I mean as our nature is now corrupt) and civil or federal. The first is common to man with beasts and other creatures. By this, man, as he stands in relation to man simply, hath liberty to do what he lists; it is a liberty to do evil as well as to [do] good. [This liberty](#) is incompatible and inconsistent with authority, and cannot endure the least restraint of the most just authority. The exercise and maintaining of this liberty makes men grow more evil, and in time to be worse than brute beasts. . . . This is that great enemy of truth and peace, that wild beast, which all the ordinances of God are bent against, to restrain and subdue it.

The other kind of liberty I call civil or federal, it may also be termed moral. . . . [This liberty](#) is the proper end and object of authority, and cannot subsist without it; and it is a liberty to that only which is good, just, and honest. . . . This liberty is maintained and exercised in a way of subjection to authority; it is of the same kind of liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. The woman's own choice makes . . . a man her husband; yet being so chosen, he is her lord, and [she is to be subject to him](#), yet in a way of liberty, not of bondage; and a true wife accounts her subjection her honor and freedom, and would not think her condition safe and free, but in her subjection to her husband's authority. Such is the liberty of the church under the authority of Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. *To what extent does Hutchinson's being a woman play a part in the accusations against her?*
2. *Why does Winthrop consider "natural" liberty dangerous?*
3. *How do Hutchinson and Winthrop differ in their understanding of religious liberty?*

The New England Economy

The leaders of the New England colonies prided themselves on the idea that religion was the primary motivation for emigration. “We all came into these parts of America,” proclaimed an official document of the 1640s, “with one and the same end and aim, namely, to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and to enjoy the liberties of the Gospel in purity with peace.” But economic motives were hardly unimportant. One promotional pamphlet of the 1620s spoke of New England as a place “where religion and profit jump together.”

Most Puritans sought in New England not only religious liberty but also economic advancement—if not riches, then at least a “competency,” the economic independence that came with secure landownership or craft status. When one preacher proclaimed that the “main end” of settlement was to honor God, a man in the congregation cried out, “Sir, you are mistaken . . . our main end was to catch fish.” But to Puritans no contradiction existed between piety and profit so long as one did not forget the needs of the larger community. Success in one’s calling might be a sign of divine grace.

Lacking a marketable staple like sugar or tobacco, New Englanders turned to fishing and timber for exports. But the economy centered on family farms producing food for their own use and a small marketable surplus. Although the Body of Liberties of 1641, as noted above, made provision for slavery in the Bible Commonwealth, there were very few slaves in seventeenth-century New England. Nor were indentured servants as central to the economy as in the Chesapeake. Most households relied on the labor of their own members, including women in the home and children in the fields. Sons remained unmarried into their mid-twenties, when they could expect to receive land from their fathers, from local authorities, or by moving to a new town. Indeed, while religious divisions spawned new settlements, the desire for land among younger families and newcomers was the major motive for New England’s expansion. In Sudbury, Massachusetts, for example, one resident proposed in 1651 that every adult man be awarded an equal parcel of land. When a town meeting rejected the idea, a group of young men received a grant from the General Court to establish their own town farther west.

The Merchant Elite

Per capita wealth in New England lagged far behind that of the Chesapeake, but it was much more equally distributed. A majority of New England families achieved the goal of owning their own land, the foundation for a comfortable independence. Nonetheless, as in the Chesapeake, economic development produced a measure of social inequality. On completing their terms, indentured servants rarely achieved full church membership or received grants of land. Most became disenfranchised wage earners.

New England assumed a growing role within the British empire based on trade. As early as the 1640s, New England merchants shipped and marketed the staples of other colonies to markets in Europe and Africa. They engaged in a particularly profitable trade with the West Indies, whose growing slave plantations they supplied with fish, timber, and agricultural produce gathered at home. Thus, New England’s economy greatly profited from the Atlantic slave trade and plantation slavery. In Boston, a powerful class of merchants arose who challenged some key Puritan policies, including the subordination of economic activity to the common good. Indeed, merchants were among the most prominent backers of Anne Hutchinson’s challenge to colonial authority. Some left Boston to establish a new town at Portsmouth, in the region eventually chartered as the royal colony of New Hampshire. Although the Puritans never abandoned the idea that economic activity should serve the general

welfare, Boston merchants soon came to exercise a decisive influence in public affairs. Eventually, the Puritan experiment would evolve into a merchant-dominated colonial government.

The Half-Way Covenant

In the mid-seventeenth century, some Puritan leaders began to worry about their society's growing commercialization and declining piety, or "declension." By 1650, less than half the population of Boston had been admitted to full church membership. Massachusetts churches were forced to deal with a growing problem—the religious status of the third generation. Children of the elect could be baptized, but many never became full church members because they were unable to demonstrate the necessary religious commitment or testify to a conversion experience. What was the status of their children? New Englanders faced a difficult choice. They could uphold rigorous standards of church admission, which would limit the size and social influence of the Congregational Church. Or they could make admission easier, which would keep the church connected to a larger part of the population but would raise fears about a loss of religious purity.



Mrs. Elizabeth Freake and Baby Mary. Painted by an anonymous artist in the 1670s, this portrait depicts the wife and daughter of John Freake, a prominent Boston merchant and lawyer. To illustrate the family's wealth, Mrs. Freake wears a triple strand of pearls, a garnet bracelet, and a gold ring, and her child wears a yellow silk dress.

The [Half-Way Covenant](#) of 1662 tried to address this problem by allowing for the baptism and a kind of subordinate, or “half-way,” membership for grandchildren of those who arrived during the Great Migration. But church membership continued to stagnate.

By the 1660s and 1670s, ministers were regularly castigating the people for selfishness, manifestations of pride, violations of the Sabbath, and a “great back-sliding” from the colony’s original purposes. These warnings, called “jeremiads” after the ancient Hebrew prophet Jeremiah, interpreted crop failures, disease, and war as signs of divine disapproval and warned of further punishment to come if New Englanders did not mend their ways. Yet hard work and commercial success in one’s chosen calling had always been central Puritan values. In this sense, the commercialization of New England was as much a fulfillment of the Puritan mission in America as a betrayal.

Glossary

[Dissenters](#)

Protestants who belonged to denominations outside of the established Anglican Church.

[Half-Way Covenant](#)

A 1662 religious compromise that allowed baptism and partial church membership to colonial New Englanders whose parents were not among the Puritan elect.

[this trouble](#)

Winthrop’s mention of “this trouble” refers to the increasing popularity of Hutchinson’s in-home meetings. Puritans believed that religious uniformity was essential to social order. The growing attendance at these meetings, and Hutchinson’s public criticism of local ministers, represented a “trouble”—a threat to the status quo.

[We see no rule of God for this.](#)

The “we” in this sentence refers to Governor Winthrop, acting as both prosecutor and judge, and a collection of magistrates with the General Court of Massachusetts. Hutchinson was brought to trial before a civil court, but in Massachusetts, where church and state reinforced each other, religious and civil matters were equally intertwined before the Court.

[offer his son](#)

At her trial, Hutchinson debated interpretation of the Bible with her university-educated accusers. Here she references the biblical story in which God speaks directly to Abraham, commanding him to sacrifice his son.

[This liberty](#)

Puritans like Winthrop saw “natural” liberty as the freedom adopted by the Irish, Native people, and non-Puritan Christians generally.

[This liberty](#)

“Moral” liberty, as Winthrop sees it, refers specifically to the liberty of the Christian.

[she is to be subject to him](#)

Puritans in America carefully emulated the family structure of England, in which the husband’s authority was virtually absolute.

RELIGION, POLITICS, AND FREEDOM

The Rights of Englishmen

Even as English emigrants began the settlement of colonies in North America, England itself became enmeshed in political and religious conflict, in which ideas of liberty played a central role. The struggle over [English liberty](#) in the first half of the seventeenth century expanded the definition of freedom at home and spilled over into early English North America.

By 1600, the traditional definition of “liberties” as a set of privileges confined to one or another social group still persisted, but alongside it had arisen the idea that certain “rights of Englishmen” applied to all within the kingdom. This tradition rested on the Magna Carta (or Great Charter) of 1215. An agreement between King John and a group of barons—local lords whose private armies frequently fought against each other and the crown—the Magna Carta attempted to put an end to a chronic state of civil unrest. It listed a series of “liberties” granted by the king to “all the free men of our realm.” This was a restricted group at the time, since a large part of the English population still lived as serfs—peasants working land owned by feudal lords and legally bound to provide labor and other services. The liberties mentioned in the Magna Carta included protection against arbitrary imprisonment and the seizure of one’s property without due process of law.

The principal beneficiaries of the Magna Carta were the barons, who obtained the right to oversee the king’s conduct and even revolt if he violated their privileges. But over time, the document came to be seen as embodying the idea of “English liberty”—that the king was subject to the rule of law, and that all persons should enjoy security of person and property. These rights were embodied in the common law, whose provisions, such as habeas corpus (a protection against being imprisoned without a legal charge), the right to face one’s accuser, and trial by jury came to apply to all free subjects of the English crown. And as serfdom slowly disappeared, the number of Englishmen considered “freeborn,” and therefore entitled to these rights, expanded enormously, although women continued to be entirely excluded.

The English Civil War

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, when English immigrants began arriving in the Americas, “freedom” still played only a minor role in England’s political debates. But the political upheavals of that century elevated the notion of “English freedom” to a central place. The struggle for political supremacy between Parliament and the Stuart monarchs James I and Charles I culminated in the English Civil War of the 1640s and early 1650s. This long-running battle arose from religious disputes about how fully the Church of England should distance its doctrines and forms of worship from Catholicism. Conflict also developed over the respective powers of the king and Parliament, a debate that produced numerous invocations of the idea of the “freeborn Englishman” and led to a great expansion of the concept of English freedom. The belief in freedom as the common heritage of all Englishmen and the conception of the British empire as the world’s guardian of liberty helped to legitimize English colonization in the Western Hemisphere and to cast imperial wars against Catholic France and Spain as struggles between freedom and tyranny.

WHO IS AN AMERICAN?

From HENRY CARE, ENGLISH LIBERTIES, OR, THE FREE-BORN SUBJECT'S INHERITANCE (1680)

Before the United States existed as an independent nation, settlers in England's North American colonies shared a sense of identity linked with the idea that liberty was a unique possession of Englishmen. Care was an English journalist and writer on politics. His book was an influential example of how seventeenth-century identities rested, in part, on negative images of other nations. Well into the eighteenth century, it was widely reprinted in the colonies as well as the mother country.

The Constitution of our English government (the best in the world) is no arbitrary tyranny like the Turkish Grand Seignior's, or the French Kings, whose wills (or rather lusts) dispose of the lives and fortunes of their unhappy subjects; nor an Oligarchy where the great men (like fish in the ocean) prey upon, and live by devouring the lesser at their pleasure. Nor yet a Democracy or popular State, much less an Anarchy, where all confusedly are hail fellows well met, but a most excellently mixt or qualified Monarchy, where the King is vested with large prerogatives sufficient to support majesty; and restrained only from power of doing himself and his people harm, which would be contrary to the end of all government, . . . the nobility adorned with privileges to be a screen to majesty, and a refreshing shade to their inferiors, and the commonality, too, so guarded in their persons and properties by the fence of law, [which] renders them Freemen, not Slaves.

In France and other nations the mere will of the prince is law, his word takes off any . . . head, imposes taxes, or seizes any man's estate, when, how, and as often as he wishes. . . . But in England, the law is both the measure and the bond of every subject's duty and allegiance, each man having a fixed fundamental right born with him as to the freedom of his person and property in his estate, which he cannot be deprived of, but either by his consent, or some crime for which the law has imposed . . . a penalty. . . .

This original happy frame of government is truly and properly called an Englishman's liberty, a privilege not to [be] exempt from the law, but to be freed in person and estate, from arbitrary violence and oppression.

QUESTIONS

1. *Why does Care consider the English system of "balanced" government the best in the world?*
2. *How does his view of other countries affect his pride in being English?*

The leaders of the House of Commons (the elective body that, along with the hereditary aristocrats of the House of Lords, made up the English Parliament) accused the Stuart kings of endangering liberty by imposing taxes without parliamentary consent, imprisoning political foes, and leading the nation back toward Catholicism. Civil war broke out in 1642, resulting in a victory for the forces of Parliament. In 1649, Charles I was beheaded, the monarchy abolished, and England declared "a Commonwealth and Free State"—a nation governed by the will of the people. Oliver Cromwell, the head of the victorious Parliamentary army, ruled for almost a decade after the execution of the king. In 1660, the monarchy was restored and Charles II assumed the throne. But by then, the breakdown of

authority had stimulated intense discussions of liberty, authority, and what it meant to be a “freeborn Englishman.”

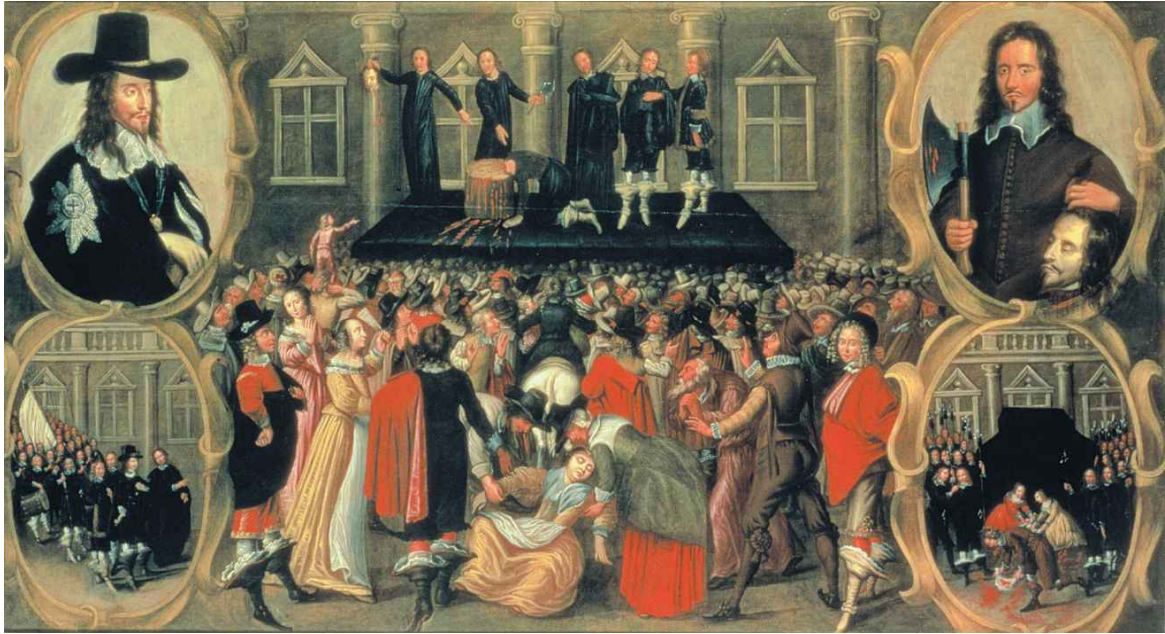
England’s Debate over Freedom

The idea of freedom suddenly took on new and expanded meanings between 1640 and 1660. The writer John Milton, who in 1649 called London “the mansion-house of liberty,” called for freedom of speech and of the press. New religious sects sprang up, demanding the end of public financing and special privileges for the Anglican Church and religious toleration for all Protestants. The Levellers, history’s first democratic political movement, proposed a written constitution, the Agreement of the People, which began by proclaiming “at how high a rate we value our just freedom,” and went on to list inalienable rights Parliament could not infringe upon. At a time when “democracy” was still widely seen as the equivalent of anarchy and disorder, the document proposed to abolish the monarchy and House of Lords and to greatly expand the right to vote. “The poorest he that lives in England hath a life to live as the greatest he,” declared the Leveller Thomas Rainsborough, and therefore “any man that is born in England . . . ought to have his voice in election.” Rainsborough even condemned slavery.

The Levellers offered a glimpse of the modern definition of freedom as a universal entitlement in a society based on equal rights, not a function of social class. Another new group, the Diggers, went even further, hoping to give freedom an economic underpinning through the common ownership of land. Previous discussion of freedom, declared Gerard Winstanley, the Diggers’ leader, had been misguided: “You are like men in a mist, seeking for freedom and know not what it is.” True freedom applied equally “to the poor as well as the rich”; all were entitled to “a comfortable livelihood in this their own land.” Even before the restoration of the monarchy, the Levellers, Diggers, and other radical movements spawned by the English Civil War had been crushed or driven underground. But some of the ideas of liberty that flourished during the 1640s and 1650s would be carried to America by English immigrants. Thomas Rainsborough, for example, was killed in the Civil War, but his brother William and other Levellers sailed for Massachusetts.

The Civil War and English America

These struggles, accompanied by vigorous discussions of the rights of freeborn Englishmen, inevitably reverberated in England’s colonies, dividing them from one another and internally. Most New Englanders sided with Parliament in the Civil War of the 1640s. Some returned to England to join the Parliamentary army or take up pulpits to help create a godly commonwealth at home. But Puritan leaders were increasingly uncomfortable as the idea of religious toleration for Protestants gained favor in England. It was the revolutionary Parliament that in 1644 granted Roger Williams his charter for the Rhode Island colony he had founded after being banished from Massachusetts.



The execution of Charles I in 1649, a central event of the English Civil War.

Meanwhile, a number of followers of Anne Hutchinson became Quakers, one of the sects that sprang up in England during the Civil War. Quakers held that the spirit of God dwelled within every individual, not just the elect, and that this “inner light,” rather than the Bible or teachings of the clergy, offered the surest guidance in spiritual matters. When Quakers appeared in Massachusetts, colonial officials had them whipped, fined, and banished. In 1659 and 1660, four Quakers who returned from exile were hanged, including Mary Dyer, a former disciple of Hutchinson. The treatment of Quakers gave Massachusetts a reputation in England as a hotbed of religious persecution. When Charles II, after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, reaffirmed the Massachusetts charter, he ordered the colony to recognize the “liberty of conscience” of all Protestants. But while hangings ceased, efforts to suppress the Quakers continued, as did attacks on Baptists, whose disdain for a learned ministry also seemed to threaten Puritan beliefs.

The Crisis in Maryland

Unlike the New England colonies, Virginia sided with Charles I. Its leaders even proclaimed Charles II king after his father’s execution in 1649, although Oliver Cromwell’s government in London soon brought the rebellious colony under control. In Maryland, the combination of the religious and political battles of the Civil War, homegrown conflict between Catholic and Protestant settlers, and anti-proprietary feeling produced a violent civil war within the colony, later recalled as the “plundering time.” Indeed, Maryland in the 1640s verged on total anarchy, with a pro-Parliament force assaulting those loyal to Charles I. The emerging Protestant planter class longed to seize power from the Catholic elite created by Lord Baltimore. The assembly’s Protestant majority rejected laws proposed by the proprietor and claimed the same power to legislate and levy taxes enjoyed by the House of Commons in England.

To stabilize the colony and attract more settlers, Lord Baltimore appointed a Protestant governor and offered refuge to Protestant Dissenters being persecuted in Virginia, where Anglicanism was the established religion and laws restricted the religious and political rights of others. In 1649, Maryland

adopted an [Act Concerning Religion \(or Maryland Toleration Act\)](#), which institutionalized the principle of toleration that had prevailed from the colony's beginning. All Christians were guaranteed the "free exercise" of religion. The act did not establish religious liberty in a modern sense, since it punished those who denied the divinity of Jesus Christ or the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Indeed, a Jewish physician was soon arrested under its provisions. Nonetheless, the law was a milestone in the history of religious freedom in colonial America.

Turmoil, however, continued. During the 1650s, the Commonwealth government in London placed Maryland under the control of a Protestant council, which repealed the Toleration Act and forbade Catholics from openly practicing their religion. In 1657, however, Lord Baltimore's authority was restored and with it Maryland's experiment in religious freedom.

Cromwell and the Empire

Oliver Cromwell, who ruled England from 1649 until his death in 1658, undertook an aggressive policy of colonial expansion, the promotion of Protestantism, and commercial empowerment in the British Isles and the Western Hemisphere. His army forcibly extended English control over Ireland, massacring civilians, banning the public practice of Catholicism, and seizing land owned by Catholics. In the Caribbean, England seized Jamaica, a valuable sugar island, from Spain. In 1651, as will be related in [Chapter 3](#), Parliament passed the first Navigation Act, which sought to challenge the Dutch hold on international commerce by forcing English colonies to trade with only English ships and ports.

Thus, by the middle of the seventeenth century, several English colonies existed along the Atlantic coast of North America along with New France, New Netherland, Spanish Florida, and hundreds of Native nations. Established as part of an ad hoc process rather than arising under any coherent national plan, the English colonies differed enormously in economic, political, and social structure. The seeds had been planted, in the Chesapeake, for the development of plantation societies based on unfree labor and, in New England, for settlements centered on small towns and family farms. Throughout the colonies, many residents enjoyed freedoms they had not possessed at home, especially access to land and the right to worship as they desired. Others found themselves confined to unfree labor for many years or an entire lifetime.

The next century would be a time of crisis and consolidation as the English colonial population expanded, England moved to exert greater control over its flourishing North American colonies, and conflicts erupted both within the English colonies and between them and their Native and European neighbors.

North America in 1660

As tensions about freedom simmered in England and in its North American colonies, in 1660, the vast majority of the continent was still controlled and solely inhabited by Native Americans. Besides Spain's substantial colony in central Mexico, European settlement was confined to the small Spanish posts at Santa Fe and St. Augustine, the French trading posts of Quebec and Montreal on the St. Lawrence River, Dutch New Amsterdam and Fort Orange (Albany), and the English settlements all within 100 miles of the Atlantic Ocean: on the James River, the shore of the Chesapeake Bay, the lower Connecticut River valley, Rhode Island, and eastern Massachusetts. A whole history was happening far from European colonies.

The power of the Haudenosaunee was more greatly feared in the 1660s than the power of the Europeans. Armed with Dutch weapons, they had launched a successful series of wars against their enemies north of the St. Lawrence River and in the eastern Great Lakes. One Frenchman described the Haudenosaunee ambition to make the whole region into “one people and one land.” To the west, on the northern plains, Lakotas and Dakotas (collectively known as Oceti Sakowin or Sioux) endured attacks from people to their east such as the Ottawas, who had acquired European firearms through trade with the French at Montreal.

Native North Americans developed methods of diplomacy as well as warfare. Many used the calumet (or peace pipe) ceremony to forge alliances with newcomers, neighbors, and former enemies. Probably originating among Caddoan peoples in the thirteenth century in what is now Texas, the calumet ceremony spread throughout the West as the most important diplomatic ritual between Native peoples and, eventually, in cross-cultural encounters with European travelers. Centered upon the ritual smoking of a calumet, this ceremony made strangers into fictive kin. Breaking the bonds created by the calumet ceremony was thus like betraying family.

Wampum strings and belts served a similar function in the Northeast, from eastern Canada, through present-day New York and New England, to the upper Chesapeake. Since at least the sixteenth century, the Haudenosaunee and other nations used them for opening and closing diplomatic and trade negotiations, to propose that allies join a battle, to make peace among enemies, and to console the bereaved both beyond and within their nations. Strings of beads helped an orator remember a complicated speech, and they embodied the pledges that people made to one another. Recipients who accepted the wampum were agreeing to the relationship and reciprocal responsibilities it conveyed. As Europeans began to venture deeper into the continent in the century to come, they would have to learn Native ways of peace and war.

Glossary

[English liberty](#)

The idea that English men were entitled to certain liberties, including trial by jury, habeas corpus, and the right to face one’s accuser in court. These rights meant that even the English king was subject to the rule of law.

[Act Concerning Religion \(or Maryland Toleration Act\)](#)

1649 law that granted free exercise of religion to all Christian denominations in colonial Maryland.

CHAPTER REVIEW

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. *Compare and contrast settlement patterns, religion, and relations with Native Americans of the Spanish and English in the Americas.*
2. *For English settlers, land was the basis of independence and liberty. Explain the reasoning behind that concept and how it differed from Native conceptions of land.*
3. *Describe the factors promoting and limiting religious freedom in the New England and Chesapeake colonies.*
4. *Describe who chose to emigrate to North America from England in the seventeenth century and explain their reasons.*
5. *In what ways did the economy, government, and household structure differ in New England and the Chesapeake colonies?*
6. *The English believed that, unlike the Spanish, their motives for colonization were pure, and that the growth of empire and freedom would always go hand in hand. How did the expansion of the English empire affect the freedoms of Native Americans, the Irish, and even many English citizens?*
7. *Considering politics, social tensions, and debates over the meaning of liberty, how do the events and aftermath of the English Civil War demonstrate that the English colonies in North America were part of a larger Atlantic community?*
8. *How did the tobacco economy draw the Chesapeake colonies into the greater Atlantic world?*
9. *How did the idea of freedom help legitimize English colonization?*

KEY TERMS

[John Smith](#) (p. 45)

[Virginia Company](#) (p. 45)

[Anglican Church](#) (p. 46)

[Roanoke colony](#) (p. 47)

[enclosure movement](#) (p. 49)

[headright system](#) (p. 55)

[House of Burgesses](#) (p. 55)

[Anglo-Powhatan Wars](#) (p. 56)

[plantation](#) (p. 59)

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[John Winthrop](#) (p. 65)

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[Act Concerning Religion \(or Maryland Toleration Act\)](#) (p. 85)

Go to  **INQUIZITIVE**

To see what you know—and learn what you’ve missed—with personalized feedback along the way.

Glossary

[Smith, John](#)

An English soldier and explorer who became one of the leaders of the Jamestown colony and helped to establish relations with the Powhatans. His narratives describe the early history of Jamestown as well as his explorations of what became New England.

[Virginia Company](#)

A joint-stock enterprise that King James I chartered in 1606; the company was to spread Christianity in the Americas as well as find ways to make a profit in it.

[Anglican Church](#)

The established state church of England, formed by Henry VIII after the pope refused to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon.

[Roanoke colony](#)

Failed English attempt to establish a colony on Roanoke Island in the Outer Banks; the colony disappeared sometime between 1587 and 1590.

[enclosure movement](#)

A legal process that divided large farm fields in England that were previously collectively owned by groups of peasants into smaller, individually owned plots. The enclosure movement took place over several centuries and resulted in eviction for many peasants.

headright system

A land-grant policy that promised fifty acres to any colonist who could afford passage to Virginia, as well as fifty more for any accompanying servants. The headright policy was eventually expanded to include any colonists and was also adopted in other colonies.

House of Burgesses

The first elected assembly in colonial America established in 1619 in Virginia. Only wealthy landowners could vote in its elections.

Anglo-Powhatan Wars

Three wars fought between the Powhatans and the Jamestown colonists in 1610–1614, 1622–1626, and 1644–1646.

plantation

An early word for a colony, a settlement “planted” from abroad among an alien population in Ireland or the Americas; later, a large agricultural enterprise that used unfree labor to produce a crop for the world market.

dower rights

In colonial America, the right of a widowed woman to inherit one-third of her deceased husband’s property.

Puritans

English religious group that sought to purify the Church of England; founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony under John Winthrop in 1630.

Winthrop, John

Puritan leader and governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony who resolved to use the colony as a refuge for persecuted Puritans and as an instrument of building a “wilderness Zion” in America.

Pilgrims

Puritan separatists who broke completely with the Church of England and sailed to the Americas aboard the *Mayflower*, founding Plymouth Colony on Cape Cod in 1620.

Mayflower Compact

Document signed in 1620 aboard the *Mayflower* before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth; the document committed the group to majority-rule government by its male colonists.

Great Migration

Large-scale migration of southern Blacks during and after World War I to the North, where jobs had become available during the labor shortage of the war years.

captivity narratives

Accounts written by colonists after their time in Indian captivity, often stressing the captive’s religious convictions.

Pequot War

An armed conflict in 1637 fought between the Pequot Indians and an alliance of Narragansett, Mohegan, and English. The Pequot loss led to most of them being killed, enslaved, or incorporated into other Native nations.

Dissenters

Protestants who belonged to denominations outside of the established Anglican Church.

Half-Way Covenant

A 1662 religious compromise that allowed baptism and partial church membership to colonial New Englanders whose parents were not among the Puritan elect.

English liberty.

The idea that English men were entitled to certain liberties, including trial by jury, habeas corpus, and the right to face one's accuser in court. These rights meant that even the English king was subject to the rule of law.

Act Concerning Religion (or Maryland Toleration Act).

1649 law that granted free exercise of religion to all Christian denominations in colonial Maryland.

★ CHAPTER 3 ★

CREATING ANGLO-AMERICA 1660–1750

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- [How did the English empire in America expand in the mid-seventeenth century?](#)
 - [How was slavery established in the Western Atlantic world?](#)
 - [What major social and political crises rocked the colonies in the late seventeenth century?](#)
 - [What were the directions of social and economic change in the eighteenth-century colonies?](#)
 - [How did patterns of class and gender roles change in eighteenth-century America?](#)
 - [What was the extent of Native power across the continent by the mid-eighteenth century?](#)
-

In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, a series of crises rocked the European colonies of North America. Social and political tensions boiled over in sometimes ruthless conflicts between rich and poor, free and slave, settler and Indian, and members of different religious groups. At the same time, struggles within and between European empires echoed in the colonies. Colonists and Native Americans got dragged into one another's wars. Aggrieved groups seized upon the language of freedom to advance their goals. Although each conflict had its own local causes, taken together they added up to a general crisis of colonial society in the area that would become the United States.

In 1675, a Native alliance launched attacks on New Englanders whose farms and settlements were encroaching on their lands. It was the most dramatic and violent warfare in the region in the entire seventeenth century. New Englanders called the conflict [King Philip's War](#), believing that the Wampanoag leader [Metacom](#) (known to the colonists as King Philip) was the war's mastermind. In fact it had many leaders, including a Wampanoag woman named Weetamoo. By this time, New England's colonial population considerably outnumbered the Wampanoags. But the fate of the New England colonies hung in the balance for several months. By 1676, Wampanoags and their allies had attacked nearly half of New England's ninety towns. Twelve in Massachusetts were destroyed. As English refugees fled eastward, the line of settlement was pushed back almost to the Atlantic coast. Some 1,000 settlers, out of a population of 52,000, perished in the fighting.