



ABOUT COLONIAL AMERICA

The story of the United States of America starts with the story of how very different people from several European nations, many African homelands, and hundreds of native tribes became thirteen American colonies.

Thousands of people lived in North America long before Europeans came. They were made of up many individual tribes, each with its own culture and language, but they are often referred to as a collective group. That group has many names: *Indians*, *American Indians*, *Native Americans*, *indigenous people*, and *Amerindians* are some of these names.

Many people from all over Europe came to the East Coast of North America. They all had their reasons. Some came for opportunities of owning their own land and businesses. Others came for the chance to live and worship as they chose, because they had experienced religious persecution back in Europe. The idea of self-government was very appealing to many. The Europeans had also heard that this vast new land had abundant natural resources.

Not all colonists came to the New World voluntarily. The slave trade brought people from Africa against their will to work as indentured servants and as slaves. Their contribution to the economy of the colonies was invaluable.

People settled in the northern or New England colonies, consisting of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. Others made their homes in the middle colonies, which were Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. They also settled in the southern colonies of Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia.

Each colony was different. They spoke different languages, practiced different religions, and had different customs. The one thing that united them was their loyalty to England. The colonists traded with England, and England protected them from other countries. This cooperation continued until the colonies grew tired of paying taxes to England. The colonists decided they wanted to govern themselves, so they united to defeat the British Empire in the American Revolutionary War. By 1776 the thirteen colonies were called the United States of America.





ABOUT THE FIRST SETTLEMENTS

England attempted to settle colonies in America as early as the 1500s. John White led a group of colonists to settle near the Chesapeake Bay. The small group of about 120 people was forced to land on Roanoke Island instead. The island was harsh, and White returned to England for supplies. It took him three years to return to Roanoke Island. When he landed, White discovered that all the colonists had disappeared. This settlement became known as the Lost Colony.

Jamestown and Plymouth were the first two permanent English settlements in North America. They were the start of Virginia and Massachusetts, the first two of the original thirteen colonies.

In 1607 settlers arrived in Jamestown, in Chesapeake Bay. Many were wealthy and only planned to stay long enough to find gold. In 1620 Pilgrims arrived in Plymouth, near Cape Cod, seeking freedom to worship.

The Virginians came with a royal charter, meaning they had the permission of the British king to colonize. The Pilgrims had no official charter. Jamestown colonists named their settlement for England's King James I. Plymouth colonists named theirs for a port in England. They did not want to honor any British monarch!

The first Jamestown settlers were all male. Pilgrims were male and female. Neither of

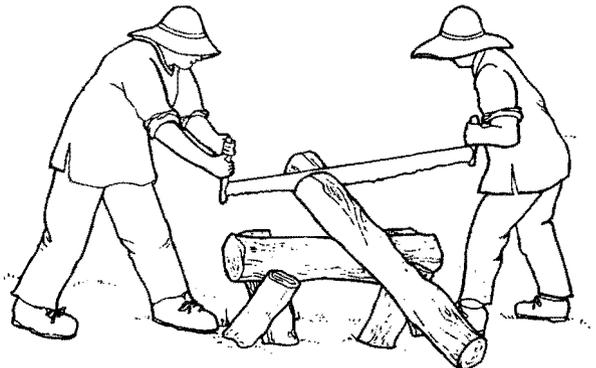
these groups knew how to farm or hunt. They both learned from the nearby Native Americans.

Both Jamestown and Plymouth suffered greatly in their first few years in North America. Winters were brutal and many settlers died.

In 1612 Jamestown colonists began growing tobacco. They sold a lot of it and prospered. In 1619 the first Africans arrived in Virginia as indentured servants. Soon Virginian tobacco growers stopped using indentured servants and began using African slaves.

Plymouth also grew. In 1630 many more Puritans came to the Massachusetts Bay. Boston was founded that year. Massachusetts settlers began settlements nearby in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire.

These early settlers made some mistakes. However, they were all very brave to move thousands of miles and try to make a life in the New World.





ABOUT THE NATIVE AMERICANS

To Europeans, North America was the "New World." To the Native Americans, it had been home for centuries. The two worlds of the Europeans and the Native Americans met when the explorers, and then the settlers, came to North America.

An estimated 10 million Native Americans lived throughout North America when Europeans began settling there. They lived in many different confederations, or tribes. They had different languages, customs, and territories.

Algonquian-speaking groups such as the Massachuset and Wampanoag tribes lived in the northern colonial region. The Algonquin people were farmers. They grew corn, beans, and squash. Many Native Americans in this region taught European settlers how to hunt, fish, and farm.

The middle colonial region near the coast was home to such groups as the Delaware and the Iroquois. They initially welcomed settlers. They helped the first settlers hunt, fish, and build shelters. The Iroquois nation that lived inland was divided into the Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, and Seneca tribes. These tribes united to form the League of Five Nations.

The lands that made up the southern colonial region were home to tribes such as the Cherokee, the Creek, and the Powhatan. The Cherokee lived in the Carolinas, and

the Creek lived in the area of present-day Georgia. The Powhatan lived by the coast of Virginia and Maryland. All these groups were excellent farmers and hunters.

When Europeans first set up communities near the Native Americans in the New World, neither group knew what to expect. Native American tribes helped the new settlers learn how to hunt, fish, and to farm the land. Sometimes the two groups fought, much of the time over land. The settlers had invaded environments that the Native Americans had lived in for hundreds of years. Native Americans did not believe humans could own land, but Europeans did.

Ultimately, Native American populations dropped significantly during this period in history, as English settlements grew and diseases brought from Europe killed numerous native peoples. The impact of European settlement during the colonial period was devastating to the Native Americans.





ABOUT HOMES AND VILLAGES

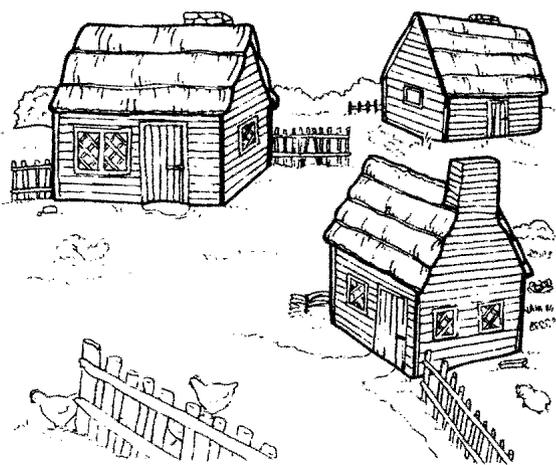
When the first colonists arrived in the New World, they had to find or make temporary shelters until permanent homes could be built. They made tents, lived in caves, or even stayed aboard the ship while they built their homes and villages. Each section of the colonies developed its own style of houses, depending on the climate and the natural resources available.

In the New England colonies, simple wood-plank houses were built. The roofs were either thatched or had wood shingles. The house was usually one long room with a large fireplace at one end. The room was a kitchen, bedroom, and living room all in one. The house had dirt floors, and small windows kept it dark even in the daytime. The beams supported a loft, where supplies were stored.

In the middle colonies, many colonists built log cabins because the forests provided so much wood. Tables, chairs, and stools were all made of log slabs held together with wooden pegs. The Dutch introduced another type of fancier home in the middle colonies. The houses were one-and-a-half stories high and had a small porch in front. The front door was divided into halves that opened separately. Another unique feature was that the beds were hidden in walls and opened like cupboards.

The majority of people living in the southern colonies lived in small wooden houses with wood shingles. However, what most people remember about the southern colonies is the plantation mansion. A typical plantation home was two-stories high and had eight rooms. The main house had imported furniture and carpets. The kitchen, laundry, and other buildings stood nearby. There were also small, one-room houses for the servants and slaves. Each plantation was run like an independent village. There were shops, offices, and a school. However, unlike villages in other parts of the colonies, these cotton and tobacco plantations used forced slave labor.

Colonists up and down the eastern seaboard cleared more and more land to build their villages. As time went on, these small villages grew into towns. By the 1700s towns grew into cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, Providence, and Williamsburg.





ABOUT DAILY LIFE

The daily life of the colonists centered around the home. Men, women, and children worked hard from early morning until late at night. Most everything in the home had to be made by hand.

Clothing

Colonial clothing varied from region to region. The style of clothing also depended on religious beliefs, social class, and occupations. Most colonists wore simple, plain clothing made of linen, wool, and leather. Roots, berries, and leaves were used as dyes for the clothes. The usual colors for the clothes were tan, brown, and a yellowish-brown or reddish-brown. Both boys and girls dressed exactly like their parents. Wealthier colonists imitated the styles of Europe. Their clothing was made from fine linen, cotton, silk, satin, and velvet.

Food

Typically colonists ate mush (porridge) in the mornings, stews at noon, and stew leftovers with bread and cheese at night. Most meals were cooked in a large iron pot. One of the most important foods was corn, prepared in a variety of ways. They also had other vegetables such as beans, squash, and sweet potatoes. Cows provided the butter and cheese, and hogs provided the bacon and ham. Wild game such as deer, pheasant, and turkey was also common. In addition to meat, the Atlantic coast provided a variety of seafood such as eels, clams, crabs, and

oysters. Apples, peaches, and berries were abundant. Cider and beer were common drinks.

Recreation

Although lifestyles were hard and rules strict, colonists did like to have fun. However, the fun was usually associated with some kind of work. Quilting bees and huskings were popular. Women gathered to visit while they made quilts. Competitive cornhusking games made work more enjoyable. Music and dancing were common at weddings and other social events. Children played games such as hopscotch, leapfrog, marbles, and tag. They also enjoyed checkers and backgammon. Homemade cornhusk dolls, kites, and spinning tops were favorite toys. All colonists enjoyed fairs. Fairs provided farmers a chance to sell produce and to have fun at the same time. Participating in contests and seeing puppet shows, animal acts, and jugglers made going to the fair a fun family event.





ABOUT SCHOOL

In the earliest days of colonial America, parents taught children at home. To some families, it was more valuable for children to learn to farm rather than to read. Going to school only took able workers (the children) away from the fields! For other families, both school education and farm education were equally important.

Formal education was especially important in the New England colonies. Most Puritans were educated people, and they wanted their children to be too. Parents usually educated young boys and girls at home. Often, a woman in the village taught several young children in her home. These schools were called dame schools. The young children learned how to read and write.

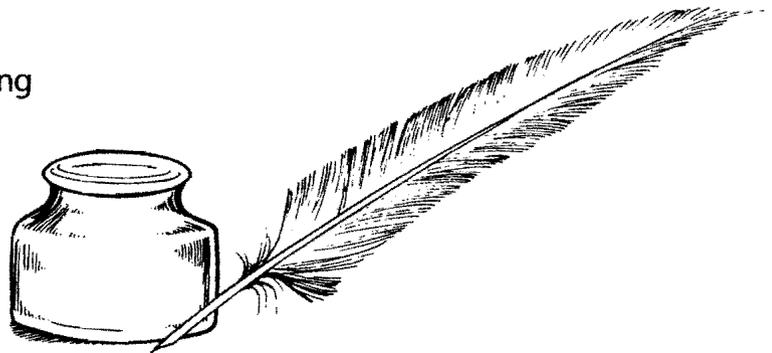
When children got a little older, some children attended schools taught by men called schoolmasters. A woman who taught in a school had to quit teaching when she married. The schoolmasters were very strict, and students were punished harshly for disobedience. Students were expected to have perfect manners.

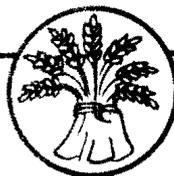
On a typical school day, children sat on long wooden benches completing lessons in math and grammar. Students studied a

book called *The New England Primer*, first published in 1690, which helped children learn the alphabet with a series of short rhymes. One other book that was part of a good education was the Bible.

After a few years of basic education, formal school ended for most children. Boys learned a trade from their families or through an apprenticeship. Sons of rich families attended colleges. Girls learned household skills from their mothers. Daughters of rich families were sent off to finishing schools, where they learned music, painting, and a foreign language.

Massachusetts passed a law in 1642 that parents had to teach their children to read. Another law was passed in 1647 that towns with 50 or more families had to have a schoolteacher whose salary was paid by the town inhabitants—even those who had no children. That was the start of the public school system in America, in which every child can be educated no matter how much money the family has.





ABOUT WORK

Most colonial Americans were farmers. Many had never farmed a day in their lives before coming to the New World. They came from European cities and had occupations such as merchant (seller), tailor, teacher, soldier, carpenter, or minister. Many were forced to learn agriculture to survive.

Northern crops included grains and vegetables. Crops in the middle colonies included corn and wheat. Southern crops included tobacco, rice, and indigo (a blue dye). Crops were sent to England and to other colonies.

In the northern colonies, industries included fishing, whaling, and shipbuilding. In the middle colonies, industries included dairy farming and raising animals for meat. Lumber production and mining became large industries in many colonies.

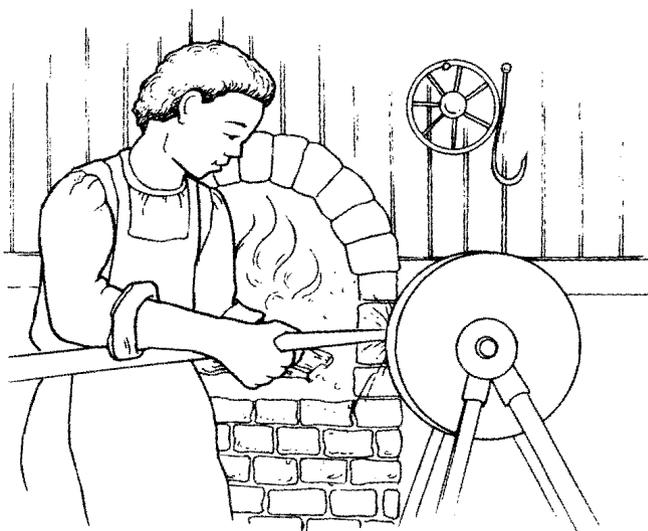
The wealthiest people were often public officials, farm or plantation owners, merchants, doctors, lawyers, or ministers. Middle-class men were often shoemakers or cabinetmakers. Middle-class women made candles, soap, and clothes for their families and also to sell to others. Men and some women ran shops. Poorer people had the hardest jobs. Many were laborers, sailors, or servants.

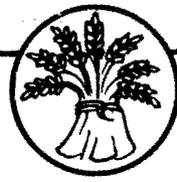
Indentured servants were people who wanted to come to the New World but could not afford the ocean voyage. A southern

plantation owner would pay their fare and provide food and housing for them. They agreed to plant, trim, and dry tobacco for four to seven years. After that, indentured servants would be free.

African slaves were forced to come to the colonies to work, and they would most likely be slaves for the rest of their lives. Slavery quickly replaced indentured servitude.

Children often had to learn a trade (job) at an early age. Sometimes they left home to become apprentices (helpers) of master workers. The master workers provided food and shelter for the children, and in exchange, the children would assist in the labor. They learned skills that would allow them to work on their own one day.





ABOUT MEMORABLE PEOPLE

Many memorable people helped establish the thirteen colonies. They all had the same qualities: leadership skills, bravery, creativity, patience, and intelligence.

John Smith was a young leader of Jamestown. He guided Jamestown through its difficult first few years. He established relations with the Powhatan tribe, who taught the colonists how to live off the land.

Pocahontas was a Powhatan Indian who lived in what is now Virginia. Jamestown's leader, John Smith, wrote in his journal that in 1608, Pocahontas saved his life. A group of Powhatan had allegedly captured John Smith and were about to kill him when Pocahontas asked her father to spare the white settler's life. Pocahontas helped the colonists and Native Americans cooperate.

Squanto was a Patuxet Indian who lived in the area that is now Massachusetts and Rhode Island. He spoke English well. Squanto joined the Wampanoag tribe and helped the Pilgrims to survive by teaching them how to plant corn and fish. Squanto was an interpreter for Governor William Bradford and Wampanoag Chief Massasoit when they agreed to a peace treaty in 1621.

William Bradford was a Pilgrim who came over on the *Mayflower* and helped found Plymouth. He was governor for 30 years and

helped build up the colony. He wrote *History of Plimoth Plantation, 1620–1647*, the Pilgrims' story. Bradford was also one of the signers of the Mayflower Compact in 1620, and an organizer of the first harvest feast in 1621.

Roger Williams was a Massachusetts Puritan minister who had ideas that other Puritans disliked. He said the Indians should be paid for their land and that no one should be forced to believe in a certain religion. In 1636 Williams founded Providence, Rhode Island, as a haven for religious freedom and tolerance.

William Penn was a Quaker who founded Pennsylvania. The Quakers disagreed with the Church of England. Penn, like Roger Williams, said his colony was open to people of any faith. Quakers believed all people were equal—including women, blacks, and Native Americans. That was a very controversial idea at the time.

All these leaders of the colonies will be remembered for their achievements.