

1701

Yale College founded in  
New Haven, Connecticut

1732

Benjamin Franklin  
begins publishing *Poor  
Richard's Almanac*

1734

John Peter Zenger  
arrested for libel

1700

1710

1720

1730

1740

## 2 Life in Colonial America

### SECTION PREVIEW

#### Objectives

- 1 Describe the structure of colonial American society and its distribution of wealth.
- 2 List contributions that tradespeople and women made to colonial society.
- 3 Describe the working lives of the average colonists and the colonial education system.
- 4 **Key Terms** Define: gentry; apprentice; almanac; indigo; self-sufficient.

#### Main Idea

The social groups that made up colonial society had different roles and ways of living.

#### Reading Strategy

**Outlining Information** Skim the section and use the heads and subheads to create an outline. As you read, fill in supporting evidence under each head.

It is common to speak of what “the American colonists” said or thought or did. Yet colonial society, like any society, consisted of a variety of groups with widely varying lives. A person’s wealth or gender or race went a long way toward determining his or her place in society.

### Colonial Society

American colonists brought many ideas and customs from Europe. Among these was the belief that people are not equal. Most colonists accepted the notion that the wealthy were superior to the poor, that men were superior to women, and that whites were superior to blacks. They accepted too the idea that society was made up of different ranks or levels, with some groups having more wealth and power than others. In the words of one New Englander, “ranks and degrees” were as much a part of this world as “Mountains and Plains, Hills and Vallies.”

The differences between social ranks could easily be seen in colonial clothes, houses, and manners. **Gentry**, or men and women wealthy enough to hire others to work for them, set themselves apart by their clothing;

wigs, silk stockings, lace cuffs, and the latest fashions in suits, dresses, and hats. Ordinary people wore plain breeches and shirts or dresses. Wigs were an unmistakable sign of status, power, and wealth.

“Gentle folk,” a colonial term for the gentry class, were the most important members of colonial society. To be considered “gentle,” one had to be wealthy.

### Wealth in Land

For English colonists the foundation of real wealth was land. Land was plentiful and most white men owned some land. Although adult, single women and free African Americans could legally own land, very few did. The majority of landowners were white men. In each colony a small group of elite, landowning men dominated politics. Lawyers, planters, and merchants held most of the seats in the colonial assemblies, or lawmaking bodies.



A white wig—or hair powdered to look like one—was the hallmark of a gentleman in colonial society.

## Main Idea CONNECTIONS

Describe the lives of the gentry in the British colonies.

In the early 1700s gentry devoted much of their time to displaying their status. The gentry socialized most with people of a similar class, especially in the Southern Colonies. In many cases they were related to one another by blood or marriage. To impress others, they had mansions and townhouses built for themselves. To refine their manners, the gentry eagerly read newspapers and books from England. They sent their sons to expensive schools and taught their daughters how to manage a household. They supervised, but they did not actually perform physical labor.

We know from *The Diary, and Life, of William Byrd II of Virginia, 1674–1744* that gentlemen tried to live their lives according to a refined, well-mannered routine. William Byrd owned several plantations in the colony of Virginia. In his diary, Byrd relates that every day he read Greek or Latin, said his prayers, and “danced his dance” (performed a series of exercises) in the garden of his home.

Byrd rarely varied from these regular habits. Although he did have to keep an eye on his plantations, such labor was not the focus of his life. Like many other colonial gentlemen, Byrd wished to demonstrate to the world his refinement and self-control and to prove that he deserved the respect of others.

## Trades and Occupations

Everyone recognized, however, that the colonies needed people from all walks of life, not just gentlemen. Those who were not gentry had the opportunity to develop specialized skills and trades.

**Artisans** At a very early age, boys from most families became **apprentices**, or persons placed under a legal contract to work for another person in exchange for learning a trade. Silversmith Paul Revere and artisans like him prospered by creating some of the items that the gentry desired. Cabinetmakers, such as John Goddard of Newport, Rhode Island, produced high-quality furniture with a distinctive colonial style. Other tradespeople provided equally important goods, such as tinware, pottery, and glassware.

**Printers** Colonial printers, who were respected members of colonial society, gathered and circulated local news and information. Printers, however, had to be cautious when deciding which stories to report. In 1734, authorities arrested John Peter Zenger, printer and publisher of the *New York Weekly Journal*, for printing libelous (false) stories critical of the governor of New York. Zenger’s lawyer argued that if the stories were true then they could not be considered libel. Zenger won his case, a landmark victory for freedom of the press in America.

One of America’s most famous printers from the 1700s was Benjamin Franklin. Among his best known works is *Poor Richard’s Almanac*, which was printed annually from 1732 to 1757. An **almanac** is a book containing information such as calendars, weather predictions, proverbs, and advice. Franklin also published several newspapers and magazines. After his successful career as a printer, Franklin retired when he was only in his early forties. In retirement, Franklin dabbled in science and politics and spent much of his time in Europe. He is perhaps most famous for his experiments and inventions. Through his scientific work, Franklin invented the lightning rod, the Franklin stove, and bifocal eyeglasses. He also wrote his *Autobiography*, which set forth a number of rules for controlling oneself and behaving in a respectable manner.

**Farmers and Fishermen** Farms in the colonies varied in size from large cash-crop plantations in the Southern Colonies to small subsistence farms in the New England and



Benjamin Franklin was so interested in electricity that he sold his businesses in order to have more time to study it. In 1752 he flew a kite in a thunderstorm in a famous experiment proving the electrical nature of lightning.

**Science and Technology** How did people like Benjamin Franklin help the development of the colonies?



Prudence Punderson, a Connecticut housewife, created in needlework this symbolic view of the life of a colonial woman. The symbols, from right to left, indicate birth, work, and death. **Economics** How does this needlework reflect the role of women in the colonial economy?

Middle Colonies. New England farmers who worked the thin, rocky soil gained a reputation for being tough, thrifty, and conservative.

Many coastal settlers turned their backs on the poor soil and earned their living from the sea. North America's shores abounded with haddock, bass, clams, mussels, and crabs. Colonists ate some of the bounty, but most was dried, salted, and shipped out from busy harbor cities. Fishing quickly became a main industry and promoted growth in the related industry of shipbuilding.

**Indentured Servants** Many immigrants, both male and female, came to the colonies as indentured servants. Indentured servants agreed to work for a master for a set amount of time, up to seven years. In exchange the master agreed to pay for travel costs to the colonies. Masters had total authority over indentured servants and sometimes treated them as if they were slaves. Those servants who served out their time were granted their freedom and in some cases a piece of land.

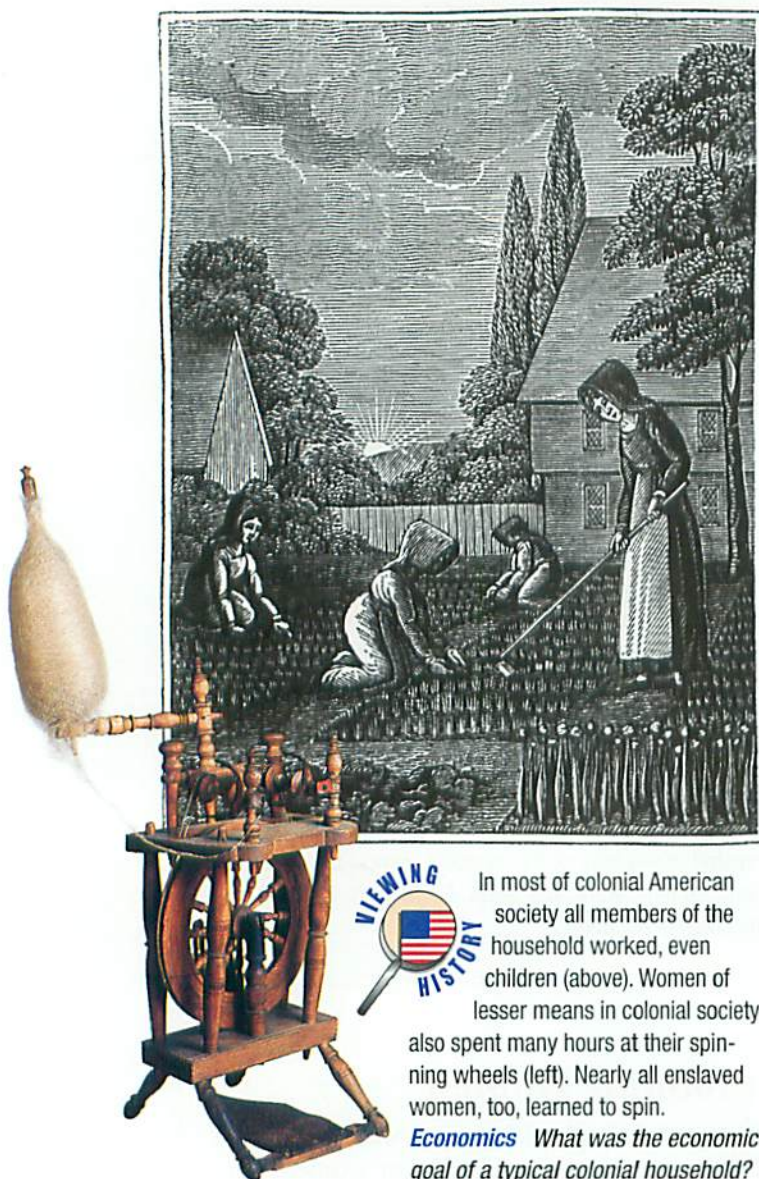
## Colonial Women

The status of colonial women was determined by the men in their lives. Most women were legally the dependents of men and had no legal or political standing. They could not own property. Laws prevented women from voting or holding office or serving on a jury. Even a widowed woman did not have any political rights, although she could inherit her husband's property and conduct business.

**Women and the Law** Under English common law, a woman was under her husband's control. According to the English writer William Blackstone in his influential *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, published in the 1760s:

“By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law; that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband.”

—William Blackstone



In most of colonial American society all members of the household worked, even children (above). Women of lesser means in colonial society also spent many hours at their spinning wheels (left). Nearly all enslaved women, too, learned to spin.

**Economics** What was the economic goal of a typical colonial household?

Men held nearly unlimited power in colonial households. English law, for example, allowed husbands to beat their wives without fear of prosecution. Divorces, although legal, were rare. Surprisingly, the easiest place to obtain a divorce was Puritan New England. The Puritans were so concerned about order and stability that they preferred to allow a bad marriage to end rather than let it continue to create disorder among them.

**Women's Duties** In practice, however, men and women depended heavily on one another. In colonial America, women juggled a number of duties that contributed to the well-being of the household and also of the community. Women managed the tasks that kept a household operating, such as cooking, gardening,

washing, cleaning, weaving cloth, and sewing. They supported one another by helping in childbirth and sharing equipment and tools. They also trained their daughters in the traditional duties of women.

Women sometimes took on many tasks before marriage. One example is Eliza Lucas Pinckney of South Carolina, who as a teenager managed her father's plantations in the late 1730s and early 1740s. This duty fell to Pinckney because, as she wrote to a friend, "Mama's bad state of health prevents her going thro' any fatigue," and her father, the governor of the Caribbean island of Antigua, was usually absent. As she wrote to her friend:



"I have the business of 3 plantations to transact, which requires much writing and more business and fatigue of other sorts than you can imagine, but lest you should imagine it too burdensome to a girl at my early time of life, give me leave to assure you I think myself happy that I can be useful to so good a father."

—Eliza Lucas Pinckney

Pinckney was more than just a stand-in for her father. She was one of the people responsible for promoting the growing of **indigo**, a type of plant used in making a blue dye for cloth. Indigo became a major staple crop in South Carolina.

In spite of their hard work and dedication, women remained legally inferior to men. They might argue with their fathers or husbands, but women almost never directly challenged the basic structure of colonial society.

## The Nature of Work

By the mid-1700s, life was better for most white colonists than it would have been in Europe. They ate better, lived longer, and had more children to help them with their work. They also had many more opportunities to advance in wealth and status than average Europeans did. Still, whether they were skilled artisans in cities or small farmers in the countryside, colonists had to labor very hard to keep themselves and their families alive.

Everyone in a household, including children and servants, worked to maintain the household by producing food and goods. In fact, the basic goal of the household was to be **self-sufficient**, or able to make everything needed to maintain itself.

While men grew crops or made goods such as shoes, guns, or candles, the rest of the household was equally busy. Wives often assisted in whatever work their husbands did, from planting crops to managing the business affairs of the family. Children helped both parents from an early age. Almost all work was performed in or around the home. Even artisans worked out of shops in the front of their houses.

## Colonial Education

During the colonial period, attendance at school was not required by law, and most children received very little formal education. The New England Colonies, however, became early leaders in the development of public education. The main reason was that the Protestant settlers believed everyone should be able to read the Bible. As a result, literacy rates were higher in New England than anywhere else in British North America.

In 1647, Massachusetts passed a law requiring every town with at least 50 families to hire a schoolmaster to teach basic reading, writing, and arithmetic. Towns with 100 or more families were expected to establish a grammar school that offered instruction in Greek and Latin. Boys attended the grammar school to prepare for college. Girls did not go to school. They were expected to learn everything they needed to know from their mothers at home.

Public schools did not develop as quickly outside New England. If there were no schools in the area, parents taught their children at home. In the Southern Colonies, plantation owners often hired private instructors to teach their children.



Harvard College, now Harvard University, was the nation's first institution of higher learning. It was founded in 1636 by Massachusetts Bay Colony with the help of John Harvard, a minister who left the college his library and a portion of his estate upon his death in 1638. **Culture** How does the establishment of Harvard reflect colonial Massachusetts society?

Colonial colleges were primarily training grounds for ministers and lawyers and generally only the very wealthy attended. Up until the 1740s there were only three colleges in the colonies, Harvard, in Massachusetts (established in 1636), William and Mary in Virginia (1693), and Yale in Connecticut (1701). By 1769, five more colleges had been founded in the Middle and New England colonies.

## SECTION 2 REVIEW

### Comprehension

- Key Terms** Define: (a) gentry; (b) apprentice; (c) almanac; (d) indigo; (e) self-sufficient.
- Summarizing Main Ideas** How did the legal status of women differ from their actual importance in colonial society?
- Organizing Information** Create a chart that organizes information about the structure of colonial society.

### Critical Thinking

- Analyzing Time Lines** Review the time line at the start of the section. Pick an entry and

explain how it continues to impact society today.

- Identifying Central Issues** Why did everyone in the average colonial household have to work?

### Writing Activity

- Writing an Expository Essay** Use information from the section to write a one-page essay comparing the lives of the gentry with the lives of artisans and tradespeople.

# GEOGRAPHY HISTORY

## Two Settlement Patterns in the Colonies

*The geographic theme of place explores how physical and human characteristics make one environment different from another. In the American colonies, New England and Pennsylvania reflected the diversity of the American settlers. In what ways were these two places different?*



*Corn husk doll*

By 1750, several distinct settlements had emerged in colonial North America. New England and Pennsylvania, for example, had vastly different physical and human landscapes. As you will see, the religion and culture of the people who settle in a place also help to shape its features.

### **Puritan Values Shape New England**

The Puritan settlers of 1620 influenced the character of the New England Colonies. Puritans valued both family and church. Their close-knit settlements were rooted in community and in faith.

Despite the fact that they had come to America to escape religious persecution, the Puritans were intolerant of others. They excluded all those who believed in a different form of worship from their communities.

### **A Close-knit Settlement**

Typically, an immigrating Puritan group was granted a town by the colonial legislature. A town was a piece of land about 6 square miles in size, usually divided into 36 lots. The group would establish a village near the

town center. There, the meetinghouse or church, the public school, and other public buildings were built. Each family in the group received a house lot in the village and some acres to farm in the town lands nearby.

They also had the right to use any of the town's common land.

Puritan settlements were first established in the area around Boston, Massachusetts, and the Connecticut River valley. The map of Sudbury shows the typical settlement characteristics of New England by 1750: a homogeneous population, one in which nearly all members had a common origin; clusters of closely linked towns with small family farms;

and village centers built around a piece of public, or common, land and dominated by a single church.

### **Quaker Values Shape Pennsylvania**

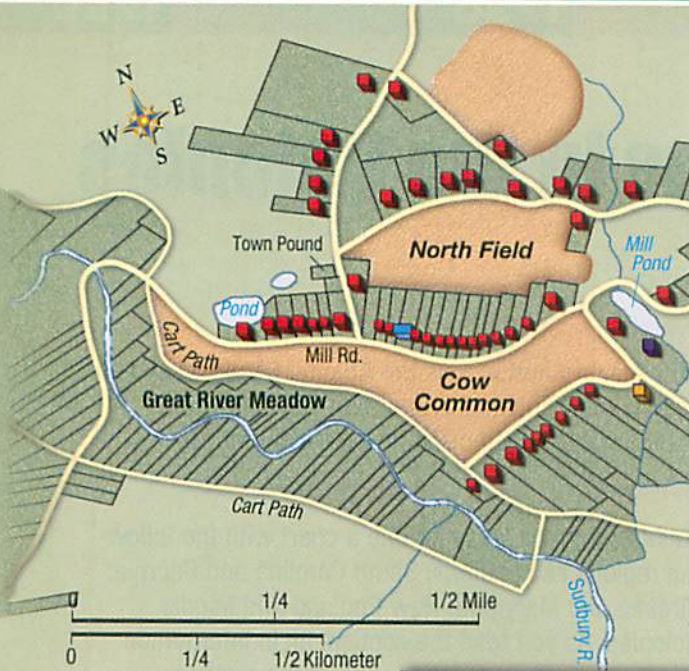
The Quakers were a religious group who fled persecution in England, as had the Puritans before them. Unlike the Puritans, however, the Quakers valued individuality. They practiced tolerance for others.

In 1681 William Penn, a Quaker, received a huge land grant from King Charles II of England on the west

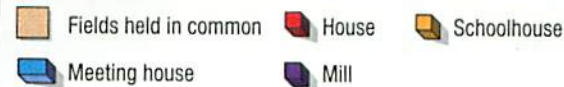
**The Puritan settlers of 1620 influenced the character of the New England Colonies.**

## Sudbury, Massachusetts, 1656

## Germantown, Pennsylvania, 1772



*New England towns were more close-knit than those of Pennsylvania.*



side of the lower Delaware River. Penn founded Pennsylvania, which he saw as a "Holy Experiment," a place of religious freedom and social equality. Penn negotiated land treaties with Native Americans and then brought over Quaker settlers from England.

### A Diverse Settlement

Pennsylvania drew Quakers from Wales, Germany, and other American colonies. Many moved to Philadelphia, the fast-growing city and the nucleus of the colony. Others came to farm the rich lands in the Great Valley to the west of Philadelphia.

The colony soon started recruiting non-Quakers interested in cheap land and religious tolerance. The German Lutherans, Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, and Swiss Mennonites tended to settle on farms some distance apart in the southeastern region of the colony. As the map of Germantown shows, the large villages and towns that dotted the region differed in one important way from New England towns—they featured churches or meetinghouses of several different Christian groups.

By 1750 Pennsylvania had developed a character marked by prosperity, individualism, and religious tolerance. It also reflected the cultural diversity of several ethnic groups. The colony differed greatly from Puritan New England, where the population was homogeneous, more rooted in the doctrines of a single church, and less tolerant of religious variation of any kind.



### GEOGRAPHIC CONNECTIONS

1. Explain how the Puritan settlers influenced the character of the New England Colonies.
2. What was the main difference between the New England and Pennsylvania colonies?

### Themes in Geography

3. **Place** Look at the settlement pattern on each map. How are the religious and cultural values of each region reflected in the location of people's houses?

**1680**

Virginia passes first slave code

**1735**

Slavery banned in Georgia

**1739**

Stono Rebellion

**1740**

South Carolina revises and strengthens slave laws

**1750**

Georgia ban on slavery lifted

**1680****1705****1730****1755**

## 3 African Americans in the Colonies

### SECTION PREVIEW

#### Objectives

- 1 Describe how slave traders brought Africans to the Americas.
- 2 Describe the lives of African Americans (free and enslaved) in the colonies.
- 3 Explain how slaves reacted to laws restricting their actions.
- 4 **Key Terms** Define: Middle Passage; mutiny; Stono Rebellion.

#### Main Idea

Africans, brought across the Atlantic Ocean as slaves, helped build England's American colonies while enduring harsh and often brutal treatment.

#### Reading Strategy

**Reinforcing Key Ideas** Create a chart with the following regions as headings: South Carolina and Georgia; Virginia and Maryland; New England and Middle Colonies. As you read the section, fill in information about the lives of slaves in each of the regions.

Not counting Native Americans, about one out of every five people living in British North America by the middle of the 1700s was of African descent. As in the case of all immigrants, the experiences of African Americans in the colonies varied depending on where they lived. Yet the stories of Africans, uprooted from their homeland and sold into slavery, had many elements in common. One African who later told his story was Olaudah Equiano.

### Olaudah Equiano

#### AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY

Olaudah Equiano was born around 1745 in the country of Benin. He wrote in his autobiography decades later that the land of his youth was "uncommonly rich and fruitful" and "a nation of dancers, musicians and poets." As a child, he learned "the art of war" and proudly wore "the emblems of a warrior" made by his mother.

When Equiano was ten, his world was shattered. Two men and a woman kidnapped him and one of his sisters while their parents

were working. Separated from his sister, Equiano was enslaved to a series of African masters. About six months after he was kidnapped, Equiano was sold and put aboard a British slave ship bound for the Americas. In his autobiography, he wrote:

"The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slave ship which was then riding at anchor and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror when I was carried on board."

—Equiano's Travels, 1789



Olaudah Equiano  
(1745?–1797)

During the **Middle Passage**, Equiano witnessed many scenes of brutality. (The Middle Passage was one leg of the triangular trade