


Brinkley, Chapter 3 Notes PDF

Brinkley

Chapter 3



Society & Culture in Provincial America

The Colonial Population

Immigration, for a long time, remained the most important factor in the increase of the colonial population. But, the most important long-range factor in the increase was the population's ability to reproduce itself.

| The New England Population | The Chesapeake Population |
|--|---|
| More than quadrupled through reproduction alone in the second half of the 17th century. Life expectancy was unexpectedly high. | High death rates did not decline until the mid-18th cent. Throughout the 17th century, the average life expectancy was 40 years, and less for women. |
| Women in New England | Women in the Chesapeake |
| Family structure was more stable and remain intact. (Due to religion) The sex ratio was more balanced, so most men expected to marry. Women married young, bore children early, and well into their 30s. Children were more likely to survive. Fewer women became widows, and those who did generally lost their husbands later in life. | The average woman married for the first time at 20-21. Women anticipated a life consumed with child bearing. The average wife experienced pregnancies every 2 years. Those who lived long enough bore up to 8 children and typically lost 5 in infancy or early childhood. |

Patriarchal Puritanism

The longer lifespan in New England meant that parents continued to control their children longer than did parents in the South.

Few sons and daughters could choose a spouse entirely independently of their parents' wishes. Men tended to rely on their fathers to cultivate.

Women needed dowries from their parents if they were to attract desirable husbands. Stricter parental supervision of children meant, too, that fewer women became pregnant before marriage than was the case in the South.

Puritanism placed a high value on the family, and the position of wife and mother was highly valued in Puritan culture.

At the same time, however, Puritanism served to reinforce the idea of nearly absolute male authority. A wife was expected to devote herself almost entirely to serving the needs of her husband and the family economy.


The Southern Economy

The Chesapeake (VA & MD): Tobacco = 1st Plantations
SC & GA: Rice

Rice cultivation was so difficult and unhealthy that white laborers generally refused to perform it.

Slave labor was in high demand. African workers were adept at rice cultivation, in part because some of them had come from rice-producing regions of west Africa and accustomed to the hot, humid climate than Europeans and had a greater immunity to malaria.

Dependence on large-scale cash crops produced an economy that was very agricultural based and little industry. Trading in tobacco & rice was handled largely by merchants based in London and, later, in the northern colonies.



Northern Economic & Technological Life

Agriculture dominated the North as in the South but it was more diverse. Colder weather and hard, rocky soil made it difficult for colonists to develop large-scale farming.


NY, PA, and CT grew wheat and were the chief suppliers to the rest of the colonies. A substantial commercial economy emerged alongside the agricultural one.

Almost every colonist engaged in a certain amount of industry at home. Occasionally these home industries provided families with surplus goods they could trade or sell.

Beyond these domestic efforts, craftsmen and artisans established themselves in colonial towns as cobblers, blacksmiths, riflemakers, cabinetmakers, silversmiths, and printers.

In some areas, entrepreneurs harnessed water power to run small mills for grinding grain, processing cloth, or milling lumber. And in several places, large-scale shipbuilding operations began to flourish.

Colonial Artisans and Entrepreneurs




The first effort to establish a significant metals industry in the colonies was an ironworks established in Raynham and Saugus, MA in the 1640s.

Metalworks gradually became an important part of the colonial economy. That said, they did not become as explosive as the growth in Great Britain because of English parliamentary regulations such as the Iron Act of 1750 that limited the manufacture of woolen, hats, and other goods.

Other reasons the colonies saw limited manufacturing growth was because of a lack of labor supply, a small domestic market, and inadequate transportation facilities and energy supplies.

Other industries emerged due to the large quantities of natural resources in North America: lumber, fur trade, mining, fishing, and ship building.



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The Extent and Limits of Technology

Despite the technological progress that was occurring much of colonial society was conspicuously lacking in even very basic technological capacities. Up to 1/2 of the farmers were so primitively equipped that they did not even own a plow.

Substantial numbers of households owned no pots or kettles for cooking. And only about half the households in the colonies owned guns or rifles. Most Americans were too poor to own them.

Many households had few if any candles because they were unable to afford candle molds. Very few farmers owned wagons. The most commonly owned tool in America was the axe.

Few colonists were self-sufficient in the late 17th century. Few families owned spinning wheels or looms, which suggests that most people purchased whatever yarn and cloth they needed.

Most farmers who grew grain took it to centralized facilities for processing. The ability of people to acquire manufactured implements lagged far behind the economy's capacity to produce them.

The Rise of Colonial Commerce

Colonial merchants had no gold & had to rely on barter or money substitutes like beaver skins. Colonists lacked information about supply and demand and had no way of knowing of what was in foreign ports.

There was also an enormous number of small, fiercely competitive companies, which made the problem of rationalizing the system even more acute. Nevertheless, commerce in the colonies survived and grew.



There was elaborate trade within the triangular trade systems. Out of the trade emerged a group of adventurous entrepreneurs who by the mid 18th century were beginning to constitute a distinct merchant class.

The Navigation Acts protected them from foreign competition in the colonies. They had ready access to the market in England for such colonial products as furs, timber, and American built ships.

But they also developed markets illegally outside the British Empire - in the French, Spanish, and Dutch West Indies - where they could often get higher prices for their goods than in the British colonies.

The Rise of Consumerism

Growing prosperity & commercialism created new a growing preoccupation with consuming material goods and the quality of a person's home, possessions and clothing .

As the class gap widened, the wealthy became more intent on demonstrating their membership in the upper ranks of society.

The ability to purchase and display consumer goods was a way of flaunting wealth, particularly in cities that did not have large properties to boost their success. This was also in part due to the Industrial Revolution in England making products in America more affordable.



Agents of urban merchants - (traveling salesman) - fanned out through the countryside, to sell luxury goods now available.

Products once considered luxuries quickly came to be seen as necessities once readily available: tea, linens, glassware, manufactured cutlery, crockery, furniture, etc.

Masters and Slaves on the Plantation

17th century plantations were rough and small.

Most landowners lived in rough cabins or houses with their servants and slaves nearby. The plantation economy was precarious. Planters could not control their markets, so even the largest plantations were constantly at risk.

The plantation economy created many new wealthy landowners but also destroyed many. Enslaved Africans on smaller farms were more closely watched by the owner and unable to form close relationships with other slaves. Sometimes though, they were able to learn some skills from their owners.



Most slaves were imported to the North American colonies by the Royal African Company of London. Company started by establishing trade along the West Coast of Africa (Guinea).



By 1700, there were 25,000 slaves in the British North American colonies. In some areas, Africans outnumbered whites and there were more than twice the number of African men than women.

By 1760, there were 250,000 slaves in the colonies.

By 1680, they expanded to the slave trade, transporting 5,000 slaves a year across the Atlantic. From 1672-1689 they transported 90,000 - 100,000 slaves. In 1697, rival traders broke the RAC monopoly. Trade was now open to competition.

Masters and Slaves on the Plantation

Slaves on larger plantations (10+ slaves) were able to develop a society and culture of their own.

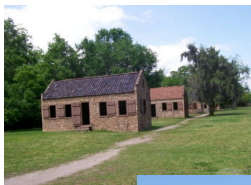
House slaves were isolated from their own community.

Although whites seldom encouraged formal marriages among slaves, blacks themselves developed a strong and elaborate family structure.

There was also a distinctive slave religion, which blended Christianity with African folklore and which became a central element in the emergence of an independent black culture.

Some slaves were influenced by the Great Awakening and converted to Christianity.

Black society was subject to constant intrusions from and interaction with white society.



Boone Hall Plantation and Slave Cabin in SC



Black women were subject to unwanted sexual advances from the owners and hence to bearing mulatto children who were rarely recognized by their white fathers.

Stono Rebellion

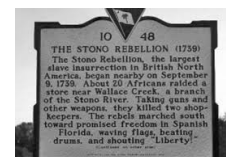
Slaves often resisted their masters, in large ways and small. The most serious example in the colonial period was the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina in 1739.

100 slaves rose up, seized weapons, killed about 2 whites, and attempted to escape south to Florida. The uprising was quickly crushed, and most participants were executed.



A more frequent form of resistance was simply running away, but that provided no real solution either. For most, there was nowhere to go.

Resistance more often took the form of subtle, and often undetected, defiance or evasion of their masters' wishes. A common way of subtly defying a master was breaking tools.



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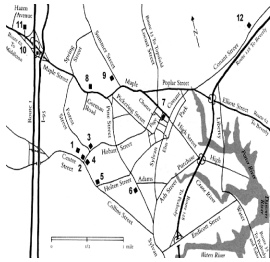
The Puritan Community

The characteristic social unit in New England was the city. Each new settlement drew up a "covenant" binding all residents tightly together both religiously and socially.

Colonists laid out a village, with houses and a meetinghouse arranged around a central pasture, or "common." Families generally lived with their neighbors close by.

They divided the outlying fields and woodlands among the residents. Size and location of a family's field depended on the family's numbers, wealth, and social status. Once a town was established, residents held a yearly "town meeting" to decide important questions and to choose a group of "selectmen," (often clergy) who ran the town's affairs.

Participation in the meeting was generally restricted to adult males who were members of the church. Only those who could give evidence of being among the elect assured of salvation ("visible saints") were admitted to full church membership even though all residents were required to attend church services.



The Puritan Community

New Englanders did not adopt primogeniture. A father divided up his land among all his sons. His control of this inheritance gave him great power over the family.

Often a son would reach his late 20s before his father would allow him to move into his own household and work his own land. Even then, sons would usually continue to live in close proximity to their fathers.

The early Puritan community was tightly knit. Yet as the years passed and communities grew, strains and tensions began to affect the communal structure. This was partly because of the increasing commercialization of New England society. It was also partly because of population growth.

As towns grew larger, residents tended to cultivate lands farther and farther from the community center and, by necessity, to live at increasing distances from the church. In the first generations, fathers generally controlled enough land to satisfy the needs of all their sons.

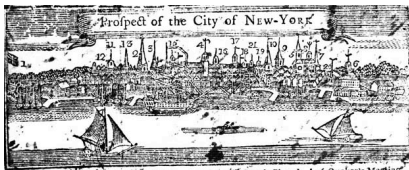
After several generations, there was often too little room to expand outward and many younger residents broke off and moved elsewhere to form towns of their own.

Cities

In the 1770s the two largest cities in the colonies were New York City and Philadelphia.

Cities were trading centers for farmers of their regions and as ports for international commerce. Their leaders were generally merchants who had acquired substantial wealth.

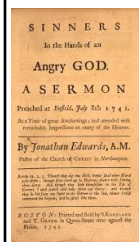
Social distinctions were real and visible. Cities were the centers of what industry existed in the colonies. They had the most advanced schools, sophisticated cultural activities and shops where imported goods could be bought.



Cities were the places where new ideas could circulate and be discussed. There were newspapers, books, and other publications from abroad, and hence new intellectual influences.

The taverns and coffee houses of cities provided forums in which people could gather and debate the issues of the day.

The Great Awakening



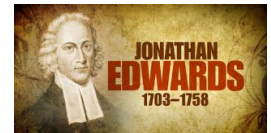
By the beginning of the 18th century, some Americans were growing troubled by the apparent decline in religious piety in their society.

The movement of the population westward and the wide scattering of settlements caused many communities to lose touch with organized in urban areas.

Progress of science and free thought caused some colonists to doubt traditional religious beliefs. Concerns about weakening piety surfaced as early as the 1660s in New England, where the Puritan oligarchy warned of a decline in the power of the church.

Ministers preached sermons of despair - jeremiads - deploring the signs of waning piety. By the standards of other societies or other eras, the Puritan faith remained remarkably strong.

To New Englanders, the decline of religious piety was a serious problem.

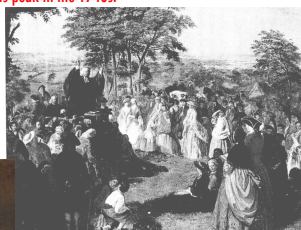


The Great Awakening

By the early 18th century, similar concerns were emerging elsewhere in the colonies. The result was the First Great Awakening which began in 1730 and reached its peak in the 1740s.

The revival had particular appeal to women (who constituted the majority of converts) and to younger sons of the 3rd or 4th generation of settlers - those who stood to inherit the least land and who faced the most uncertain futures.

The rhetoric of the revival emphasized the potential for every person to break away from the constraints of the past and start anew in his or her relationship with God.



Powerful evangelists from England helped spread the revival. John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism, visited GA and other colonies in the 1730s.

The Great Awakening

George Whitefield, a powerful open-air preacher from England, made several evangelizing tours through the colonies and drew tremendous crowds.

The outstanding preacher of the First Great Awakening was the New England Congregationalist Jonathan Edwards. Edwards attacked the new doctrines of easy salvation for all. He preached anew the traditional Puritan ideas of the absolute sovereignty of God, predestination, and salvation by God's grace alone. His vivid descriptions of hell could terrify his listeners.



His Great Awakening led to the division of existing congregations "Old Lights" and "New Light" revivalists. Some of the revivalists denounced book learning as a hindrance to salvation.

Other evangelists saw education as a means of furthering religion, and they founded or led schools for the training of New Light ministers.

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The Enlightenment

The Great Awakening caused one great upheaval in the colonies. The Enlightenment caused another, very different one.

The Enlightenment was the product of some of the great scientific and intellectual discoveries in Europe in the 17th century - discoveries that revealed the "natural laws" that regulated the workings of nature.

The new scientific knowledge encouraged many thinkers to begin celebrating the power of human reason and to argue rational thought, not just religious faith, could create progress and advance knowledge in the world.

The Enlightenment encouraged people to look at themselves and their own intellect - not just to God - for guidance as to how to live their lives and shape their societies. It helped produce growing interest in education and a heightened concern with politics and government.

In the early 17th century, Enlightenment ideas in America were largely borrowed from Europe - from such great thinkers as Francis Bacon, John Locke, and Rene Descartes. Americans such as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison made their own important contributions to Enlightenment thought.

Literacy and Technology

White male Americans achieved a high degree of literacy in the 18th century. By 1776, well over 1/2 of all white men could read and write. The literacy rate for women lagged until the 19th century.



The large number of colonists who could read created a market for the first widely circulated publications in America other than the Bible: almanacs. By 1700, there were dozens, perhaps hundreds, of almanacs circulating throughout the colonies and even in the sparsely settled lands to the west. Most families had at least one.

Almanacs provided medical advice, navigational and agricultural information, practical wisdom, humor, and predictions about the weather. The most famous almanac produced was *Poor Richard's Almanac*, published by Benjamin Franklin.

The availability of reading material by the 18th century was a result of the spread of the printing press which began operating in the colonies in 1639. As literacy rates rose, demand for printed material and more presses rose.



The first newspaper in the colonies, *Publick Occurrences* was published in Boston in 1690. It was the first step toward what would eventually become a large newspaper industry.



Education and Medicine

Colonists placed a high value on formal education. Some families tried to educate their children but the burden of work in most agricultural households limited the time available for schooling.

In MA, a 1647 law required that every town support a school - a network of public schools emerged as a result.

The Quakers and others operated church schools, and in some communities women operated "dame schools."

African Americans had virtually no access to education.

The first universities: Harvard, William and Mary, Yale, and Princeton were founded to teach the ministry. Columbia and Penn were secular. Penn will later establish the 1st medical school.

Medicine in the Colonies

Physicians had little or no understanding of infection and sterilization. Many died from infections contracted during childbirth or surgery.

Many communities were plagued with infectious diseases transmitted by garbage or unclear water. Most people practiced medicine with no knowledge.

Women established themselves as midwives. Physicians and midwives practiced medicine on the works of Roman physician, Galen.

Galen argued the human body was governed by four "humors" that were in the body: yellow bile, black bile, blood, and phlegm. These existed in balance.

Illness represented an imbalance of the humors and as a result, bleeding a patient was the only remedy.

The Spread of Science

The clearest indication of the spreading influence of the Enlightenment in America was an increasing interest in scientific knowledge.

The high value that influential Americans were beginning to place on the scientific knowledge was clearly demonstrated by the most daring and controversial scientific experiment of the 18th century: inoculation against smallpox.



The Puritan theologian Cotton Mather learned of experiments in England where people had been deliberately infected with mild cases of smallpox in order to immunize them against the deadly disease.

Despite strong opposition, he urged inoculation on his fellow Bostonians during an epidemic in the 1720s. The results confirmed the effectiveness of the technique.



Concepts of Law and Politics

Although the American legal system adopted most elements of the English system, including the right to trial by jury, significant differences developed in court procedures, punishments, and the definition of crimes.

In England, a printed attack on a public official, whether true or false, was considered libelous.

German Immigrant John Peter Zenger published the New York Weekly Journal. The anonymous authors published editorials accusing the royal governor of NY William S. Cosby, of rigging elections, allowing the French to explore the NY Harbor, and went so far as to call him an "idiot." Zenger was arrested and charged with libel. He refused to give up the authors' names.

At his trial in 1734-1735 the courts ruled that criticisms of the government were not libelous if factually true - a verdict that removed some colonial restrictions on the freedom of press. A prized freedom seen in the 1st Amendment.



Concepts of Law and Politics

More significant for the future relationship between the colonies and England were differences emerging between the American and British political systems.

Because the royal government was so far away, Americans created a group of institutions of their own that gave them a large measure of self-government.

In most colonies, local communities grew accustomed to running their own affairs with minimal interference from higher authorities.

The result was that the provincial governments in the colonies became accustomed to acting more or less independently of Parliament and a set of assumptions and expectations about the rights of the colonists took hold in America that was not shared by policymakers in England.