Chapter 5

Colonial Society on the Eve of Revolution 1700–1775
I. Conquest by the Cradle

- A distinguishing characteristic shared by the rebellious colonies was population growth:
  - 1700: There were fewer than 300,000 souls, about 20,000 of whom were black.
  - 1775: 2.5 million inhabited the thirteen colonies, of whom half a million were black.
  - White immigrants were nearly 400,000; black “forced immigrants” were about the same.
I. Conquest by the Cradle (cont.)

- The colonists were doubling their numbers every twenty-five years.
- 1775: The average age was about sixteen.
- 1700: There were twenty English subjects for each American colonist.
- 1775: The English advantage had fallen to three to one.
- The balance of power was shifting.
I. Conquest by the Cradle (cont.)

• The most populous colonies in 1775 were Virginia, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Maryland—in that order.
• Only four cities were of any size: Philadelphia with 34,000, trailed by New York, Boston, and Charleston.
• About 90% of colonists lived in rural areas.
II. A Mingling of the Races

- America was a melting pot from beginning, with numerous foreign groups (see Map 5.1).
- Germans were about 6% or 150,000 by 1775:
  - They fled religious persecution, economic oppression, and war in the 1700s and settled chiefly in Pennsylvania.
  - They were primarily Lutherans.
  - Known Pennsylvania Dutch, they were 1/3 of the colony’s population, living in the backcountry.
II. A Mingling of the Races

- Scots-Irish numbered around 175,000, or 7% of the population, by 1775:
  - Although non-English, they spoke English.
  - Over centuries they had been transplanted to northern Ireland.
  - Their economic life had been hampered.
  - In the early 1700s ten of thousands came to America.
  - They became the first settlers of the West.
II. A Mingling of the Races (cont.)

- Scots-Irish (cont.):
  - When they came up against the Allegheny Mountains, they moved southward to Maryland and down Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley.
  - They built flimsy log cabins.
  - They proved to be superb frontiersmen.
  - By the 1800s, they had settled along the eastern Appalachian foothills.
II. A Mingling of the Races (cont.)

• Scots-Irish (cont.):
  – Pugnacious, lawless, and individualistic, they brought the Scottish secret of whiskey distilling.
  – They cherished no love for the British government, or any other government.
  – 1764: The **Paxton Boys** marched on Philadelphia.
  – A few years later, they spearheaded the **Regulator movement** in North Carolina.
II. A Mingling of the Races (cont.)

- About 5% were other European groups:  
  - French Huguenots, Welsh, Dutch, Swedes, Jews, Irish, Swiss, and Scots Highlanders
- 49% of population = Anglo-Saxon (Figure 5.1)
- Africans were the largest non-English group:  
  - They were 20% of the colonial population in 1775.  
  - The South held 90% of slaves.
- New England had the least ethnic diversity.
II. A Mingling of the Races (cont.)

- The middle colonies, especially Pennsylvania, received the bulk of later white immigrants.
- Outside of New England about one-half were non-English in 1775.
- Of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, 18 were non-English and 8 were not born in the colonies.
II. A Mingling of the Races (cont.)

- These immigrants laid the foundations for a new multicultural American national identity as different groups intermingled.
- Likewise, the African American community was quite variegated in its cultural origins.
- In New England “praying towns” and in Great Lakes villages, different groups of displaced Native Americans intermingled.
III. Africans in America

• In the deepest South, slave life was severe:
  – The climate was hostile to health.
  – The labor was life-draining.
  – The rice and indigo plantations were a lonely life.

• Blacks in the tobacco-growing Chesapeake region had a somewhat easier lot:
  – Tobacco plantations were larger and closer to one another than rice plantations.
III. Africans in America (cont.)

• Blacks in Chesapeake region (cont.):
  – The size and proximity of plantations permitted slaves more visits with friends and relatives.
  – As the population of female slaves rose by 1720, family life was possible.
  – Growth was then mainly by natural increase, while the deeper South still depended on importation of slaves.

• Number of slaves in the North grew as well.
III. Africans in America (cont.)

• The language *Gullah* evolved among South Carolina blacks.

• Slaves helped build country with their labor:
  – Some artisans: carpenters, bricklayers, tanners.
  – Mostly manual laborers: cleared swamps, etc.

• Slaves resisted their oppression:
  – 1712: *New York* slave revolt
  – 1739: *South Carolina* slave revolt on *Stono River*
UNITED STATES SLAVE TRADE.
1830.
THE
Carolina
Gazette.
August 27, 1753.
[No. 1062.]

ON LONDON, May 24.

The New Packet-ship, named the "Surveyor," bound to the West Indies, with a cargo of merce-
"taneous goods," was detained at the port of Liverpool, due to the dissension between the ship's
master and the crew. The vessel had been ready to sail, but the master refused to leave without
the crew's consent. The authorities intervened, and the ship was allowed to proceed after a
compromise was reached.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

ON Wednesday the 3rd of September next,
Will be Sold,
An excellent Fine Corgo of 300
Healthy NEGROES,
all imported in the Ship "Emperor" Captn. Charles Cooper, directly from Senegal.
AT 50, on the same
Day, at the same place, will be sold,
A Cargo of excellent and Healthy SLAVES,
all imported in the Plantations of the West Indies, on Credit of the Governor and the

LEASES.

TO BE SOLD,
On Thursday the 9th inst., a choice Cargo of Negroes, including 100

NEW MILLS.

Just arrived, at the Mills of the Millwright, 500

SALTED MEAT.

For Sale at the Ship "Hope," Capt. John Smith, from Barbados.

DOMESTIC ADS.

For Sale, a fine House, in the Center of the Town, with all necessary appurtenances.

MARRIAGE.

Notice is given, that Mrs. Jane, daughter of Mr. John, and Mrs. William, daughter of Mr. John
Smith, will be married on the 10th inst., by the Rev. Mr. Williams, in the Church of St. Paul.

CHARLES TOWN, Aug. 27.

A full account of the recent earthquake in the South Atlantic will be published in the next issue.

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IV. The Structure of Colonial Society (cont.)

• America seemed a shining land of equality and opportunity, except for slavery.
• But on the eve of revolution, America was showing signs of stratification and barriers to mobility:
  – Wars enriched merchant princes in New England and the middle colonies.
  – Wars created a class of widows and orphans.
IV. The Structure of Colonial Society (cont.)

• In New England, with open land less available, descendants faced limited prospects:
  – Farms got smaller.
  – Younger children were hired out as wage laborers.
  – Boston’s homeless poor increased.

• In the South, large plantations continued their disproportionate ownership of slaves:
  – The largest slaveowners increased their wealth.
  – Poor whites increasingly became tenant farmers.
IV. The Structure of Colonial Society (cont.)

• Lower classes further swelled by the stream of indentured servants:
  – Many ultimately achieved prosperity.
  – Two signed the Declaration of Independence.
• Less fortunate were 50,000 paupers and convicts (“jayle birds”) involuntarily shipped to America.
IV. The Structure of Colonial Society (cont.)

• Least fortunate of all were the black slaves:
  – They enjoyed no equality with whites.
  – They were oppressed and downtrodden.
  – Some white colonists worried about the growing number of slaves in colonies.
  – British authorities, however, resisted any attempt to limit the transatlantic slave trade.
TO BE SOLD on board the
Ship Bance-Yland, on Tuesday the 6th
of May next, at Ashley-Ferry; a choice
cargo of about 250 fine healthy
NEGROES,
just arrived from the
Windward & Rice Coast.
—The utmost care has
already been taken, and
shall be continued, to keep them free from
the least danger of being infected with the
SMALL-POX, no boat having been on
board, and all other communication with
people from Charles-Town prevented.
Austen, Laurens, & Appleby.

N.B. Full one Half of the above Negroes have had the
SMALL-POX in their own Country.
V. Clerics, Physicians, and Jurists

• Colonial professions:
  – Most honored was the Christian ministry, but by 1775 ministers had less influence than earlier.
  – Most physicians were poorly trained.
  – First medical school was established in 1765.
  – Aspiring young doctors served as apprentices.
  – At first, lawyers were not favorably regarded.
VI. Workaday America

• Agriculture was the leading occupation, employing 90% of people (see Map 5.2):
  – Tobacco the main crop of Maryland and Virginia.
  – Middle (“bread”) colonies produced much grain.
  – Overall, Americans enjoyed a higher standard of living than the masses of any country.
  – Fishing ranked far below agriculture, yet was rewarding, with a bustling commerce.
  – Commercial ventures were another path to wealth.
VI. Workaday America (cont.)

- **Triangular trade** (Map 5.3) was very profitable.
- Manufacturing was of secondary importance.
- Household manufacturing (spinning and weaving by women) added impressive output.
- Skilled craftspeople few and highly prized.
- Lumbering was the most important manufacturing activity.
- Colonial naval stores were also highly valued.
VI. Workaday America (cont.)

• But an imbalance of trade developed by 1730s.
• 1733: British passed **Molasses Act** to squelch North American trade w/ French West Indies.
• Americans responded with smuggling.
• This foreshadowed the impending imperial crisis:
  – Headstrong Americans would rather revolt than submit to dictates of a far-off Parliament that seemed bent on destroying their livelihood.
VII. Horsepower and Sailpower

• America, with a scarcity of money and workers, suffered oppressive transportation problems:
  – Roads did not connect to major cities until 1700s.
  – Roads were often clouds of dust in summer and quagmires of mud in winter.
  – Dangers included tree-strewn roads, rickety bridges, carriage overturns, and runaway horses.
  – Population clustered along banks of navigable rivers.
VII. Horsepower and Sailpower (cont.)

• Taverns sprang up along main routes.
• Gossips also gathered at taverns.
• Taverns helped crystallize public opinion and proved to be hotbeds of agitation as the revolutionary movement gathered momentum.
• Mid-1700s: Intercolonial postal system started.
VIII. Dominant Denominations

- 1775: Anglican and Congregational the tax-supported “established” churches: Table 5.1.
- Most people did not worship in any church.
- In colonies that had established churches, only a minority belonged (see Table 5.2).
- The Church of England:
  - Members were called Anglicans.
  - Official faith in Georgia, North and South Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, part of New York.
TABLE 5.1 Established (Tax-Supported) Churches in the Colonies, 1775*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colonies</th>
<th>Churches</th>
<th>Year Diseasted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts (incl. Maine)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>Congregational</td>
<td>1818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td></td>
<td>1819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Anglican (in New York City and three neighboring counties)</td>
<td>1777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td></td>
<td>1777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td></td>
<td>1786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>1776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td></td>
<td>1778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td></td>
<td>1777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note the persistence of the Congregational establishment in New England.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Chief Locale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congregationalists</td>
<td>575,000</td>
<td>New England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglicans</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>N.Y., South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterians</td>
<td>410,000</td>
<td>Frontier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German churches (incl. Lutheran)</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>Pa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch Reformed</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>N.Y., N.J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quakers</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>Pa., N.J., Del.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptists</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>R.I., Pa., N.J., Del.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholics</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>Md., Pa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodists</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>Scattered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>N.Y., R.I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EST. TOTAL MEMBERSHIP</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,857,000</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EST. TOTAL POPULATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,493,000</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERCENTAGE CHURCH MEMBERS</strong></td>
<td><strong>74%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VIII. Dominant Denominations (cont.)

• Church of England (cont.):
  – In England, it was a major prop of kingly authority.
  – In America, the Anglican Church fell short of its promise.
  – It was less fierce and more worldly than the religion of Puritanical New England.
  – Sermons were shorter.
  – 1693: The college of William and Mary (Virginia) was established to train a better class of clergy.
VIII. Dominant Denominations (cont.)

• Congregational Church:
  – It grew out of the Puritan Church.
  – It was formally established in New England (except Rhode Island).
  – At first it was supported by taxing all residents.
  – Congregational and Presbyterian ministers grappled with political questions.
  – Anglican ministers hesitated to resist the crown.

• For the time, religious toleration in colonies.
IX. The Great Awakening

• Spiritual conditions of the colonies:
  – In all colonial churches, religion was less fervid in early eighteenth century than before.
  – The Puritan churches in particular sagged under the weight of two burdens:
    • Their elaborate theological doctrines
    • Their compromising efforts to liberalize membership requirements
IX. The Great Awakening (cont.)

- Clerical intellectualism sapped the spiritual vitality from many denominations.
- **Arminianism**—Jacobus Arminius challenged the Calvinist doctrine of predestination:
  - He claimed that *all* humans, not just the “elect,” could be saved if they accepted God’s grace.
  - This doctrine was considered a “heresy.”
IX. The Great Awakening (cont.)

- 1730s–1740s: **Great Awakening** exploded:
  - Started by Jonathan Edwards in Massachusetts.
  - Sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”:
    - Warned that relying on “good works” was a folly
    - Said Christians must depend solely on God’s grace
    - Provided lurid detail on hell

- George Whitefield’s evangelical preaching revolutionized spiritual life in the colonies.
IX. The Great Awakening (cont.)

• Orthodox clergymen (old lights) were skeptical of the emotionalism and theatrical antics used by revivalists.

• **New lights** defended the Awakening for revitalizing American religion.

• Congregationalists and Presbyterians split over this issue, and many joined the Baptists or Methodists.
IX. The Great Awakening (cont.)

• The Awakening left many lasting effects:
  – The emphasis on direct, emotive spirituality seriously undermined the old clergy.
  – Many schisms increased the number and competitiveness of American churches.
  – It encouraged new waves of missionary work.
  – It led to the founding of colleges.
  – It was the first spontaneous mass movement.
  – It contributed to a growing sense of Americanism.
X. Schools and Colleges

• Education was first reserved for the aristocratic few:
  – Education should be for leadership, not citizenship, and primarily for males.
  – Puritans were more zealous in education.
  – The primary goal of the clergy was to make good Christians rather than good citizens.

• A more secular approach was evident by the 1800s.
X. Schools and Colleges (cont.)

• Educational trends:
  – Education for boys flourished.
  – New England established schools, but the quality and length of instruction varied widely.
  – The South, because of geography, was severely hampered in establishing effective school systems.
  – Wealthy southern families leaned heavily on private tutors.
X. Schools and Colleges (cont.)

• The general atmosphere in colonial schools and colleges was grim and gloomy:
  – They emphasized religion and classical languages (Latin and Greek).
  – They focused on doctrine and dogma, not reason and experiment.
  – Discipline was severe.
  – College education was geared toward preparing men for the ministry.
X. Schools and Colleges (cont.)

• Nine colleges were established during the colonial era (see Table 5.3):
  – Student enrollments were small, about 200.
  – Instruction was poor, with curriculum heavily loaded with theology and “dead languages.”
  – By 1750, there was a distinct trend toward “live” languages and modern subjects.
  – Ben Franklin helped launch the University of Pennsylvania, first college free from any church.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Original Name (if Different)</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Opened or Founded</th>
<th>Denomination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Harvard</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cambridge, Mass.</td>
<td>1636</td>
<td>Congregational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. William and Mary</td>
<td></td>
<td>Williamsburg, Va.</td>
<td>1693</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Yale</td>
<td></td>
<td>New Haven, Conn.</td>
<td>1701</td>
<td>Congregational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Princeton</td>
<td>College of New Jersey</td>
<td>Princeton, N.J.</td>
<td>1746</td>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Columbia</td>
<td>King's College</td>
<td>New York, N.Y.</td>
<td>1754</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Brown</td>
<td>Rhode Island College</td>
<td>Providence, R.J.</td>
<td>1764</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Rutgers</td>
<td>Queen's College</td>
<td>New Brunswick, N.J.</td>
<td>1766</td>
<td>Dutch Reformed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Dartmouth</td>
<td>(begun as an Indian missionary school)</td>
<td>Hanover, N.H.</td>
<td>1769</td>
<td>Congregational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
XI. A Provincial Culture

• Art and culture still had European tastes, especially British.

• Colonial contributions:
  – John Trumbull (1756–1843) was a painter.
  – Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827), known for his portrait of George Washington, ran a museum.
  – Benjamin West (1738–1820) and John Singleton Copley (1738–1815) were famous painters.
XI. A Provincial Culture (cont.)

• Other colonial contributions:
  – Architecture was largely imported and modified to meet peculiar conditions of the New World.
  – The log cabin was borrowed from Sweden.
  – 1720: Red-bricked Georgian style introduced.
  – Noteworthy literature was the poetry of enslaved Phillis Wheatley (ca. 1753–1784).
  – Benjamin Franklin wrote *Poor Richard’s Almanack*. 
 XI. A Provincial Culture (cont.)

• Science was slowly making progress:
  – A few botanists, mathematicians, and astronomers won repute.
  – Benjamin Franklin was considered the only first-rank scientist produced in the American colonies.
XII. Pioneer Presses

• Americans were generally too poor to buy books and too busy to read:
  – Byrd family of Virginia had largest collection, about 4,000 volumes.
  – Benjamin Franklin established in Philadelphia the first privately supported circulating library.
  – By 1776 there were about 50 public libraries and collections supported by subscription.
XII. Pioneer Presses (cont.)

• Printing presses:
  – They first printed pamphlets, leaflets, and journals.
  – 40 newspapers existed on eve of the Revolution.
  – Newspapers were a powerful agency for airing colonial grievances and rallying opposition.
XII. Pioneer Presses (cont.)

• **Zenger trial** (1734–1735): John Peter Zenger assailed the corrupt royal governor.

• The Zenger decision helped establish the doctrine that true statements about public officials could not be prosecuted as libel:
  – It was a banner achievement for freedom of the press and for the health of democracy.
  – It pointed the way for the open discussion required by the diverse society.
XIII. The Great Game of Politics

- There were three kinds of colonial governors:
  - By 1775, eight colonies had royal governors appointed by the king.
  - Three had governors selected by proprietors (Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware)
  - Connecticut and Rhode Island elected their own governors under self-governing charters.
XIII. The Great Game of Politics (cont.)

• Each colony had a two-house legislature:
  – Upper house was appointed by the crown in 8 royal colonies and by the proprietor in 3 proprietary colonies. It was chosen by voters in 2 self-governing colonies.
  – Lower house was the popular branch, elected by the people (property-owners).
    • In some colonies the backcountry areas were seriously underrepresented and resented the colonial elite.
XIII. The Great Game of Politics (cont.)

- Self-taxation through representation was a privilege Americans cherished above most others.
- London generally left colonial governors to the mercies of the legislatures.
- Colonial assemblies asserted authority over governors by withholding their salary.
XIII. The Great Game of Politics (cont.)

• Administration at the local level varied:
  – County governments remained the rule in the South.
  – Town meetings predominated in New England.
  – The middle colonies used a mixture of the two forms.

• Town meetings, with open discussion and open voting, were a cradle of self-government.
The ballot was by no means a birthright:
   – Upper classes, fearful of democratic excesses, were unwilling to grant the ballot to everyone.
   – 1775: Still religious and property qualifications.
   – About half of adult white males disfranchised.

But right to vote was not impossible to attain because it was easy to acquire land.

Yet, eligible voters often did not exercise this privilege; instead they deferred to the elite.
XIII. The Great Game of Politics (cont.)

- By 1775 America was not a true democracy socially, economically, or politically.
- But colonies were far more democratic than Europe.
- Democratic seeds were planted, later bringing forth a lush harvest.
XIV. Colonial Folkways

• Everyday life was drab and tedious:
  – Food was plentiful, but the diet was coarse and monotonous.
  – Basic comforts were lacking.
  – Amusement was eagerly pursued where time and custom permitted.
XIV. Colonial Folkways (cont.)

• By 1775, British North America looked like a patchwork quilt:
  – Each colony was slightly different, but all were stitched together by common origins, common ways of life, and common beliefs in toleration, economic development, and self-rule.
  – All were physically separated from the seat of imperial authority.
  – These facts set the stage for the struggle to unite.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1693</td>
<td>College of William and Mary founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1701</td>
<td>Yale College founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1712</td>
<td>New York Slave Revolt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1721</td>
<td>Smallpox inoculation introduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1732</td>
<td>First edition of Franklin's <em>Poor Richard's Almanack</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1734</td>
<td>Jonathan Edwards begins Great Awakening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1734-1735</td>
<td>Zenger free-press trial in New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1738</td>
<td>George Whitefield spreads Great Awakening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1739</td>
<td>South Carolina slave revolt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1746</td>
<td>Princeton College founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1760</td>
<td>Britain vetoes South Carolina anti-slave trade measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1764</td>
<td>Paxton Boys march on Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1765</td>
<td>Brown College founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1766</td>
<td>Rutgers College founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1768-1771</td>
<td>Regulator protests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1769</td>
<td>Dartmouth College founded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>