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Self-work

“History of USA”

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History of the United States

Many peoples have contributed to the development of the United States of America, a vast nation that arose from a scattering of British colonial outposts in the New World. The first humans to inhabit the North American continent were migrants from northeast Asia who established settlements in North America as early as 8000 BC and possibly much earlier (see NORTH AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY). By about AD 1500 the native peoples of the areas north of the Rio Grande had developed a variety of different cultures (see INDIANS, AMERICAN). The vast region stretching eastward from the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean was relatively sparsely populated by tribes whose economies were generally based on hunting and gathering, fishing, and farming.

VIKINGS explored the North American mainland in the 10th and 11th centuries and settled there briefly (see VINLAND). Of more lasting importance, however, was the first voyage (1492-93) of Christopher COLUMBUS, which inaugurated an age of great European EXPLORATION of the Western Hemisphere. Various European states (including Spain, France, England, the Netherlands, and Portugal) and their trading companies sent out expeditions to explore the New World during the century and a half that followed.

The Spanish claimed vast areas, including Florida, Mexico, and the region west of the Mississippi River, although they concentrated their settlement south of the Rio Grande. The French explored much of the area that became Canada and established several settlements there. Of most significance, however, for the subsequent development of the United States, was the English colonization of the region along the Atlantic coast.

BRITISH COLONIES IN NORTH AMERICA

At the end of the period of turmoil associated with the Protestant Reformation in England, the English people became free to turn their attention to some other matters and to seek new opportunities outside their tiny island. Internal stability under Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603) and an expanding economy combined with a bold intellectual ferment to produce a soaring self-confidence. Ireland experienced the first impact: by the beginning of the 17th century it had been wholly subjugated by the English. Scottish and English Protestants were dispatched to "colonize" where the savage Irish, as they were called, had been expelled, especially in the northern provinces. Then, entrepreneurs began to look to North America, claimed by England on the basis of the voyages of discovery of John CABOT (1497-99).

The Chesapeake Colonies

The English had failed in their attempts in the 1580s to found a colony at ROANOKE on the Virginia coast. In 1606, however, the LONDON COMPANY, established to exploit North American resources, sent settlers to what in 1607 became JAMESTOWN, the first permanent English colony in the New World. The colonists suffered extreme hardships, and by 1622, of the more than 10,000 who had immigrated, only 2,000 remained alive. In 1624 control of the failing company passed to the crown, making Virginia a royal colony. Soon the tobacco trade was flourishing, the death rate had fallen, and with a legislature (the House of Burgesses, established in 1619) and an abundance of land, the colony entered a period of prosperity. Individual farms, available at low cost, were worked primarily by white indentured servants (laborers who were bound to work for a number of years to pay for their passage before receiving full freedom). The Chesapeake Bay area became a land of opportunity for poor English people.

In 1632, Maryland was granted to the CALVERT family as a personal possession, to serve as a refuge for Roman Catholics. Protestants, as well, flooded into the colony, and in 1649 the Toleration Act was issued, guaranteeing freedom of worship in Maryland to all Trinitarian Christians.

The New England Colonies

In 1620, Puritan Separatists, later called PILGRIMS, sailed on the MAYFLOWER to New England, establishing PLYMOUTH COLONY, the first permanent settlement there. They were followed in 1629 by other Puritans (see PURITANISM), under the auspices of the MASSACHUSETTS BAY COMPANY, who settled the area around Boston. During the Great Puritan Migration that followed (1629-42), about 16,000 settlers arrived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The Puritans set out to build a "city on a hill" intended to provide a model of godly living for the world. Strict Calvinists, strongly communal, and living in closely bound villages, they envisioned a God angered at human transgressions, who chose, purely according to his inscrutable will, a mere "righteous fragment" for salvation. Dissidents of a Baptist orientation founded Rhode Island (chartered 1644). In 1639, Puritans on what was then the frontier established the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, the first written constitution in North America; the colony was chartered in 1662. The settlements in New Hampshire that sprang up in the 1620s were finally proclaimed a separate royal colony in 1679. Plymouth later became (1691) part of the royal colony of Massachusetts.

The Restoration Colonies

A long era (1642-60) of turmoil in England, which included the Civil War, Oliver Cromwell's republican Commonwealth, and the Protectorate, ended with the restoration of the Stuarts in the person of Charles II. An amazing period ensued, during which colonies were founded and other acquisitions were made. In 1663,

Carolina was chartered; settlement began in 1670, and from the start the colony flourished. The territory later came under royal control as South Carolina (1721) and North Carolina (1729).

In 1664 an English fleet arrived to claim by right of prior discovery the land along the Hudson and Delaware rivers that had been settled and occupied by the Dutch since 1624. Most of NEW NETHERLAND now became New York colony and its principal settlement, New Amsterdam, became the city of New York. New York colony, already multiethnic and strongly commercial in spirit, came under control of the crown in 1685. New Jersey, sparsely settled by the Dutch, Swedes, and others, was also part of this English claim. Its proprietors divided it into East and West Jersey in 1676, but the colony was reunited as a royal province in 1702.

In 1681, Pennsylvania, and in 1682, what eventually became (1776) Delaware, were granted to William PENN, who founded a great Quaker settlement in and around Philadelphia. Quaker theology differed widely from that of the New England Puritans. Believing in a loving God who speaks directly to each penitent soul and offers salvation freely, Quakers found elaborate church organizations and ordained clerics unnecessary.

Indian Wars

In 1675 disease-ridden and poverty-stricken Indians in New England set off against the whites. Almost every Massachusetts town experienced the horror of Indian warfare; thousands on both sides were slaughtered before King Philip, the Wampanoag chief, was killed in 1676 and the war ended. Virginians, appalled at this event, in 1676 began attacking the Occaneechees despite the disapproval of the royal governor, Sir William BERKELEY. Then, under Nathaniel Bacon, dissatisfied and angry colonists expelled Berkeley from Jamestown and proclaimed Bacon's Laws, which gave the right to vote to all freedmen. Royal troops soon arrived to put down the uprising, known as.

Along the Mohawk River in New York, the Five Nations of the IROQUOIS LEAGUE maintained their powerful confederacy with its sophisticated governing structure and strong religious faith. Allies of the English against the French along the Saint Lawrence River, they dominated a vast region westward to Lake Superior with their powerful and well-organized armies. The FRENCH AND INDIAN WARS, a series of great wars between the two European powers and their Indian allies, ended in 1763 when French rule was eradicated from North America and Canada was placed under the British crown.

18th-Century Social and Economic Developments

In the 1700s the British colonies grew rapidly in population and wealth. A formerly crude society acquired a polished and numerous elite. Trade and cities

flourished. The 250,000 settlers who had lived in the mainland colonies to the south of Canada in 1700 became 2,250,000 by 1775 and would grow to 5,300,000 by 1800. Settlement expanded widely from the coastal beachheads of the 17th century into back-country regions with profoundly divergent ways of life.

Several non-English ethnic groups migrated to the British colonies in large numbers during the 18th century. By 1775, Germans, who settled primarily in the Middle Colonies but also in the back-country South, numbered about 250,000. They were members of the Lutheran and German Reformed (Calvinist) churches or of pietist sects (Moravians, Mennonites, Amish, and the like); the pietists, in particular, tended to live separately, avoiding English-speaking peoples. From the 1730s waves of Scots-Irish immigrants, numbering perhaps 250,000 by the time of the Revolution, swelled the ranks of the non-English group. Forming dense settlements in Pennsylvania, as well as in New York's Hudson Valley and in the back-country South, they brought with them the Presbyterian church, which was to become widely prominent in American life. Many of these immigrants were indentured servants; a small percentage were criminals, transported from the jails of England, where they had been imprisoned for debt or for more serious crimes. The colony of Georgia was granted in 1732 to reformers, led by James OGLETHORPE, who envisioned it as an asylum for English debtors, as well as a buffer against Spanish Florida. Georgia, too, was colonized by many non-English people.

The Growth of Slavery

Slaves from Africa were used in small numbers in the colonies from about 1619 (see BLACK AMERICANS; SLAVERY). After British merchants joined the Dutch in the slave trade later in the 17th century, prices tumbled and increasing numbers of black people were transported into the southern colonies to be used for plantation labor. Slaves were also used in the northern colonies, but in far fewer numbers. The survival rates as well as birthrates tended to be high for slaves brought to the North American mainland colonies--in contrast to those transported to the West Indies or to South America.

The expansion of slavery was the most fateful event of the pre-Revolutionary years. Virginia had only about 16,000 slaves in 1700; by 1770 it held more than 187,000, or almost half the population of the colony. In low country South Carolina, with its rice and indigo plantations, only 25,000 out of a total population of 100,000 were white in 1775. Fearful whites mounted slave patrols and exacted savage penalties upon transgression in order to maintain black passivity.

Meanwhile, on the basis of abundant slave labor, the world of great plantations emerged, creating sharp distinctions in wealth among whites. Southern society was dominated by the aristocracy; however, whites of all classes were united in their fear of blacks. Miscegenation was common, especially where slaves were most

numerous, and mulattos were regarded as black, not white. An almost total absence of government in this sparsely settled, rural southern environment resulted in complete license on the part of owners in the treatment of their slaves. Paradoxically, the ideal of liberty--of freedom from all restraints--was powerful in the southern white mind.

Religious Trends

As transatlantic trade increased, communication between the colonies and England became closer, and English customs and institutions exerted a stronger influence on the Americans. The aristocracy aped London fashions, and colonials participated in British cultural movements. The Church of England, the established church in the southern colonies and in the four counties in and around New York City, grew in status and influence. At the same time, in both Britain and America, an increasingly rationalistic and scientific outlook, born in the science of Sir Isaac NEWTON and the philosophy of John LOCKE, made religious observance more logical and of this world. Deism and so-called natural religion scoffed at Christianity and the Bible as a collection of ancient superstitions.

Then from England came an upsurge of evangelical Protestantism, led by John Wesley (the eventual founder of the Methodist church; see WESLEY family) and George WHITEFIELD. It sought to combat the new rationalism and foster a revival of enthusiasm in Christian faith and worship. Beginning in 1738, with Whitefield's arrival in the colonies, a movement known as the GREAT AWAKENING swept the colonials, gaining strength from an earlier outbreak of revivalism in Massachusetts (1734-35) led by Jonathan EDWARDS. Intensely democratic in spirit, the Great Awakening was the first intercolonial cultural movement. It vastly reenergized a Puritanism that, since the mid-1600s, had lost its vigor. All churches were electrified by its power-- either in support or in opposition. The movement also revived the earlier Puritan notion that America was to be a "city on a hill," a special place of God's work, to stand in sharp contrast to what was regarded as corrupt and irreligious England.

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

By the middle of the 18th century the wave of American expansion was beginning to top the Appalachian rise and move into the valley of the Ohio. Colonial land companies looked covetously to that frontier. The French, foreseeing a serious threat to their fur trade with the Indians, acted decisively. In 1749 they sent an expedition to reinforce their claim to the Ohio Valley and subsequently established a string of forts there. The British and the colonists were forced to respond to the move or suffer the loss of the vast interior, long claimed by both British and French. The French and Indian War (1754-63) that resulted became a worldwide conflict, called the SEVEN YEARS' WAR in Europe. At its end, the British had taken over most of France's colonial empire as well as Spanish Florida and had

become dominant in North America except for Spain's possessions west of the Mississippi River.

Rising Tensions

A delirious pride over the victory swept the colonies and equaled that of the British at home. Outbursts of patriotic celebration and cries of loyalty to the crown infused the Americans. The tremendous cost of the war itself and the huge responsibility accompanying the new possessions, however, left Britain with an immense war debt and heavy administrative costs. At the same time the elimination of French rule in North America lifted the burden of fear of that power from the colonists, inducing them to be more independent-minded. The war effort itself had contributed to a new sense of pride and confidence in their own military prowess. In addition, the rapid growth rate of the mid-18th century had compelled colonial governments to become far more active than that of old, established England. Because most male colonists possessed property and the right to vote, the result was the emergence of a turbulent world of democratic politics.

London authorities attempted to meet the costs of imperial administration by levying a tax on the colonials; the STAMP ACT of 1765 required a tax on all public documents, newspapers, notes and bonds, and almost every other printed paper. A raging controversy that brought business practically to a standstill erupted in the colonies. A Stamp Act Congress, a gathering of representatives from nine colonies, met in New York in October 1765 to issue a solemn protest. It held that the colonials possessed the same rights and liberties as did the British at home, among which was the principle that "no taxes be imposed on them but with their own consent, given personally or by their representatives." In March 1766, Parliament repealed the Stamp Act; it passed the Declaratory Act, asserting its complete sovereignty over the colonies.

Thereafter the transatlantic controversy was rarely quiet. The colonists regarded the standing army of about 6,000 troops maintained by London in the colonies after 1763 with great suspicion--such a peacetime force had never been present before. British authorities defended the force as necessary to preserve peace on the frontier, especially after PONTIAC'S REBELLION (1763-65), which had been launched by the brilliant Indian leader Pontiac to expel the British from the interior and restore French rule. In another attempt to quell Indian unrest, London established the Proclamation Line of 1763. Set along the crest of the Appalachians, the line represented a limit imposed on colonial movement west until a more effective Indian program could be developed. The colonists were much angered by the prohibition. Historical memories of the use of standing armies by European kings to override liberty caused widespread suspicion among the colonists that the soldiers stationed on the Line of 1763 were to be employed not against the Indians, but against the colonials themselves should they prove difficult to govern.

Indeed, for many years colonists had been reading the radical British press, which argued the existence of a Tory plot in England to crush liberty throughout the empire. Surviving from the English Civil War of the previous century was a profound distrust of monarchy among a small fringe of radical members of Britain's Whig party, primarily Scots and Irish and English Dissenters--that is, Protestants who were not members of the Church of England. As members of the minority out-groups in British life, they had suffered many political and economic disadvantages. Radical Whigs insisted that a corrupt network of Church of England bishops, great landlords, and financiers had combined with the royal government to exploit the community at large, and that--frightened of criticism--this Tory conspiracy sought to destroy liberty and freedom.

In the cultural politics of the British Empire, American colonists were also an out-group; they bitterly resented the disdain and derision shown them by the metropolitan English. Furthermore, most free colonists were either Dissenters (the Congregationalists in New England and the Presbyterians and Baptists in New York and the South); or non-English peoples with ancient reasons for hating the English (the Scots-Irish); or outsiders in a British-dominated society (Germans and Dutch); or slaveowners sharply conscious of the distaste with which they were regarded by the British at home.

A divisive controversy racked the colonies in the mid-18th century concerning the privileges of the Church of England. Many believed in the existence of an Anglican plot against religious liberty. In New England it was widely asserted that the colonial tie to immoral, affluent, Anglican-dominated Britain was endangering the soul of America. Many southerners also disapproved of the ostentatious plantation living that grew out of the tobacco trade--as well as the widespread bankruptcies resulting from dropping tobacco prices--and urged separation from Britain.

The current ideology among many colonists was that of republicanism. The radicalism of the 18th century, it called for grounding government in the people, giving them the vote, holding frequent elections, abolishing established churches, and separating the powers of government to guard against tyranny. Republicans also advocated that most offices be elective and that government be kept simple, limited, and respectful of the rights of citizens.

Deterioration of Imperial Ties

In this prickly atmosphere London's heavy-handedness caused angry reactions on the part of Americans. The Quartering Act of 1765 ordered colonial assemblies to house the standing army; to override the resulting protests in America, London suspended the New York assembly until it capitulated. In 1767 the TOWNSHEND ACTS levied tariffs on many articles imported into the colonies. These imports were designed to raise funds to pay wages to the army as well as to the royal

governors and judges, who had formerly been dependent on colonial assemblies for their salaries. Nonimportation associations immediately sprang up in the colonies to boycott British goods. When mob attacks prevented commissioners from enforcing the revenue laws, part of the army was placed (1768) in Boston to protect the commissioners. This action confirmed the colonists' suspicion that the troops were maintained in the colonies to deprive them of their liberty. In March 1770 a group of soldiers fired into a crowd that was harassing them, killing five persons; news of the BOSTON MASSACRE spread through the colonies.

The chastened ministry in London now repealed all the Townshend duties except for that on tea. Nonetheless, the economic centralization long reflected in the NAVIGATION ACTS--which compelled much of the colonial trade to pass through Britain on its way to the European continent--served to remind colonials of the heavy price exacted from them for membership in the empire. The Sugar Act of 1764, latest in a long line of such restrictive measures, produced by its taxes a huge revenue for the crown. By 1776 it drained from the colonies about 600,000 pounds sterling, an enormous sum. The colonial balance of trade with England was always unfavorable for the Americans, who found it difficult to retain enough cash to purchase necessary goods.

In 1772 the crown, having earlier declared its right to dismiss colonial judges at its pleasure, stated its intention to pay directly the salaries of governors and judges in Massachusetts. Samuel ADAMS, for many years a passionate republican, immediately created the intercolonial Committee of Correspondence. Revolutionary sentiment mounted. In December 1773 swarms of colonials disguised as Mohawks boarded recently arrived tea ships in Boston harbor, flinging their cargo into the water. The furious royal government responded to this BOSTON TEA PARTY by the so-called INTOLERABLE ACTS of 1774, practically eliminating self-government in Massachusetts and closing Boston's port.

Virginia moved to support Massachusetts by convening the First CONTINENTAL CONGRESS in Philadelphia in the fall of 1774. It drew up declarations of rights and grievances and called for nonimportation of British goods. Colonial militia began drilling in the Massachusetts countryside. New Englanders were convinced that they were soon to have their churches placed under the jurisdiction of Anglican bishops. They believed, as well, that the landowning British aristocracy was determined, through the levying of ruinous taxes, to reduce the freeholding yeomanry of New England to the status of tenants. The word "slavery" was constantly on their lips.

The War for Independence

In April 1775, Gen. Thomas GAGE in Boston was instructed to take the offensive against the Massachusetts troublemakers, now declared traitors to the crown.

Charged with bringing an end to the training of militia and gathering up all arms and ammunition in colonial hands, on April 19, Gage sent a body of 800 soldiers to Concord to commandeer arms. On that day, the Battles of LEXINGTON AND CONCORD took place, royal troops fled back to Boston, and American campfires began burning around the city. The war of the AMERICAN REVOLUTION had begun.

It soon became a world war, with England's European enemies gladly joining in opposing England in order to gain revenge for past humiliations. British forces were engaged in battle from the Caribbean and the American colonies to the coasts of India. Furthermore, the United Colonies, as the Continental Congress called the rebelling 13 colonies, were widely scattered in a huge wilderness and were occupied by a people most of whom were in arms. The dispersion of the American population meant that the small (by modern standards) cities of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia could be taken and held for long periods without affecting the outcome.

LOYALISTS numbered about 60,000, living predominantly along the coast where people of English ethnic background and anglicized culture were most numerous, but they were widely separated and weak. Pennsylvania's Quakers had looked to the crown as their protector against the Scots-Irish and other militant groups in Pennsylvania. The Quakers were appalled at the rebellion, aggressively led in the Middle Colonies by the Presbyterian Scots-Irish, and refused to lend it support. London deluded itself, however, with the belief that the Loyalists represented a majority that would soon resume control and end the conflict.

Within a brief period after the Battle of Concord, practically all royal authority disappeared from the 13 colonies. Rebel governments were established in each colony, and the Continental Congress in Philadelphia provided a rudimentary national government. The task now before the British was to fight their way back onto the continent, reestablish royal governments in each colony, and defeat the colonial army. By March 1776 the British evacuated Boston, moving to take and hold New York City. Within days of the British arrival in New York, however, the Congress in Philadelphia issued (July 4) the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. In December 1776, Gen. George WASHINGTON reversed the early trend of American defeats by a stunning victory at Trenton, N.J. (see TRENTON, BATTLE OF). Thereafter, as the fighting wore on and the cause survived, Washington became in America and abroad a symbol of strength and great bravery.

In February 1778 the French joined the conflict by signing an alliance with the Continental Congress. With the aid of the French fleet the British army in the north was reduced to a bridgehead at New York City. Shifting its efforts to the south, the royal army campaigned through Georgia and the Carolinas between 1778 and 1780, marching to the James Peninsula, in Virginia, in 1781. Here, in the

YORKTOWN CAMPAIGN, by the combined efforts of Washington's troops and the French army and navy, Lord CORNWALLIS was forced to surrender on Oct. 19, 1781. The fighting, effectively, was over. In September 1783 the Treaty of Paris secured American independence on generous terms. The new nation was given an immense domain that ran westward to the Mississippi River (except for Britain's Canadian colonies and East and West Florida, which reverted to Spanish rule).