

Life in the English Colonies

Chapter 3 lesson 4

Colonial government

- Each colony had a governor. Most governors were helped by an advisory council.
- **In the royal colonies** the governor and the members of the council were appointed by the English King.
- **In the proprietary colonies** the proprietors chose the governor and the members of the council.
- **In few colonies such as Connecticut** the people elected the governor.
- In some colonies people elected representatives to help make laws. They served on assemblies that passed laws. To be discussed in the assemblies, laws had to be preapproved by the advisory council and the governor.

Virginia, New England, the Southern Colonies and the Middle Colonies

- **Virginia's** assembly was established in 1619. It was the first colonial legislature in North America. Initially was a single body, later was divided in two houses: the Council of State (its members were selected by the advisory council and the London Company) and the House of Burgesses (its members were elected by colonists).
- In **New England** people discussed local issues in town meetings.
- In the **southern colonies** many decisions were taken at county level because people lived far from each other.
- In the **middle colonies** county meetings and town meetings were used to make laws.

Political change in England

- 1685: James II became the new King of England.
- King James believed that the colonies were too independent and in 1686 united the northern colonies under one government called the Dominion of New England.
- King James appointed Sir Edmund Andros as royal governor of the Dominion. Andros was not liked by the colonists because he limited the powers of the town meetings.
- King James was overthrown during the **Glorious Revolution**, also called the **Revolution of 1688**, by a union of English Parliamentarians with the Dutch stadtholder(=viceroy or governor) William III of Orange-Nassau (William of Orange). William's successfully invaded England with a Dutch fleet and army, and became the new King as William III of England. His wife became Mary II of England.
- **English Bill of Rights**: passed by the English Parliament in 1689. It reduced the power of the king and gave more power to the Parliament.

Changes in the colonies

- Following the changes in England the colonies in the Dominion formed new assemblies and charters.
- Colonial courts: they controlled local affairs and reflected the beliefs of the local community. (In Massachusetts were established laws inspired by the Bible that reflected the beliefs of the Puritans)
- Colonial courts also protected individual freedom (Zenger Trial).

English Trade Laws

- England founded the colonies in America and wanted to control them for economic reasons: it wanted to earn money from the trade.
- Late 1600s: most European countries including England practice **mercantilism**, a system to create wealth through controlled trade. To gain wealth a country needed to import less and export more.
- Between 1650 and 1696: English Parliament passed a series of Navigation Acts to limit colonial trade. The act of 1660 prohibited the colonies to trade sugar and cotton to any country except England. Also, the goods had to be transported on English ships. Other Acts required all trade goods to pass to English ports where they would be taxed.
- Colonists wanted more freedom to buy or sell goods where they could get the best prices, but the trade restrictions continued in the 1700s.
- Some traders began smuggling sugar, molasses and rum into the colonies from non-English islands in the Caribbean. In 1733 the English Molasses Act placed duties on these items.
- Early 1700s: English merchants traded around the world. American merchants traded directly with Great Britain or the West Indies. Some American merchants became wealthy.

Triangular trade

- A system in which goods and slaves were traded among the Americas, Britain and Africa.
- It had several routes:
 - 1) Colonists exchanged goods like beef and flour with plantation owners in the West Indies for sugar some of which was shipped to Britain.
 - 2) The sugar was exchanged for manufactured products to be sold in the colonies.
 - 3) On another route rum was exchanged for slaves in West Africa. Some slaves were sold in the West Indies for molasses while others were sold in the mainland American colonies.

The slave trade brought millions of Africans across the Atlantic in a voyage called the Middle Passage. (See chapter 2 section 5)

Great Awakening

- The Great Awakening was a religious movement that swept through the colonies in the 1730s and the 1740s. In the 1730s ministers began holding revivals or gatherings where people listened to sermons.
- Jonathan Edwards, one of the most important leaders of the Great Awakening, shook people through his sermons about forgiveness of sins and eternal punishment in Hell.
- People of different religion, class and races were interested in the Great Awakening. Women, members of minority groups and poor people participated to the gatherings. Also, ministers from different colonies met and shared ideas.
- Some colonists, inspired by sermons that talked about equality of all people, began demanding more political equality. Political and social issues were often discussed during revivals. People that came from colonies with less freedom, learned about the more democratic systems used in other colonies.

Enlightenment

- Scientific Revolution of the 1600s: Scientists began to better understand the basic laws that govern nature.
- During the Scientific Revolution Isaac Newton developed his three laws of motion which are the basic principles of modern physics.
- Enlightenment of the 1700s: a movement that spread the idea that reason and logic could improve society.
- Idea of a social contract between government and citizens: individuals have consented, either explicitly or tacitly, to surrender some of their freedoms and submit to the authority of the ruler or magistrate (or to the decision of a majority), in exchange for protection of their remaining rights. John Locke believed that natural rights such as equality and liberty were inalienable, and that the rule of God therefore superseded government authority.
- These ideas influenced colonial leaders and Locke's idea of social contract was invoked in the United States Declaration of Independence.

Tensions and alliances

- 1670s: tension between New England colonists and the Wampanoag.
- A Wampanoag leader Metacomet, also known as King Philip, was against the colonists that were taking his people's land. A war, known as the King Philip's war, erupted in 1675 during which the colonial militia fought American Indians warriors. The two sides attacked each other's settlements. The war killed about 600 colonists and 300 Indians.
- Some Native Americans allied with the colonists because they wanted tools, weapons and other Europeans goods. In exchange colonists wanted furs to sell back in Europe.
- French colonists traded and allied with the Algonquian and Huron.
- English colonists traded and allied with the Iroquois League.
- Many American Indians trusted the French more than the English because the smaller French settlements were less threatening than the rapidly growing English colonies.

- The **French and Indian War** (1754–1763) was the North American theater of the worldwide Seven Years' War. The war was fought between the colonies of British America and New France, with both sides supported by military units from their parent countries of Great Britain and France, as well as Native American allies.
- British colonists wanted to settle in the Ohio Valley where they could take advantage of the valuable trade. The French believed that an English colony in the valley would hurt their fur trade profits.
- Fighting erupted in 1753 as the British moved to take over the valley. A young Virginian, George Washington, arrived in the valley with more soldiers but in 1754 was forced to surrender. The defeat started the French and Indian war.
- In 1759 a British general James Wolfe captured Quebec and four years later France and England signed the Treaty of Paris that ended the war.

Treaty of Paris

- Britain gained: Canada, French lands east of the Mississippi River excluding New Orleans. From Spain, which had allied with France in 1762, Britain received Florida.
- Spain received Louisiana in an earlier treaty.
- The Treaty of Paris changed the balance of power in North America.
- Slowly settlers and pioneers began moving west into Virginia and Carolina backcountry and in the Ohio River valley.
- Indian leaders opposed English settlements of these new lands and a Pontiac's Rebellion began in 1763.
- British leaders feared more fights and in 1763 King George III, with a Proclamation, banned British settlements west of the Appalachian Mountains and ordered settlers to leave the upper Ohio River valley.