**Colonial Era 1.2**

**SSUSH2 Describe the early English colonial society and investigate the development of its governance.**

**a. Describe European cultural diversity including the contributions of different ethnic and religious groups.**

**European Cultural Diversity**

Various European cultures came to be represented in England’s American colonies. Beginning with the first permanent settlement at Jamestown in 1607, approximately 250,000 Europeans migrated to the colonies by 1700. By the outbreak of the American Revolution, the population of England’s colonies in North America was approaching 2.5 million. Most immigrants to the colonies were from England during the early period, but over time immigrants began coming to America from other European countries.

The European ethnic groups living in America during the colonial period included immigrants from Scotland, Ireland, and Germany. Various “push factors” led immigrants from these countries to seek opportunity in England’s American colonies. Scottish immigrants had easier access to the colonies after the political union of Scotland and England was formalized in 1707. Most of the Scottish and Irish immigrants to America settled in the mountainous backcountry frontier located west of established colonial settlements. The unique speech patterns and folks songs characteristic of the United States’ Appalachian region can be traced to the Scottish and Irish colonial immigrants who settled there in the decades prior to the Revolutionary War.

The Mid-Atlantic colonies came into English possession as already ethnically diverse places. The cultures represented in these colonies included Dutch, Swedish, Finnish, German, Scottish, and French. Because the diversity beyond English culture was so great, the various groups had to work together and tolerate the differences between them. Elements of these various European cultures, from language, style, food, and architecture, came together to eventually create a basis for a uniquely American culture.

Various religious groups also made their way to England’s American colonies seeking opportunity for the free practice of their faiths. Puritans firmly established their religious values in the New England colonies of Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Although the **Puritans** immigrated to the colonies to escape religious persecution, they did not tolerate other religious practices in their own colonies. Maryland was originally established as a colony for Catholics to worship freely and legislated their religious protection through the passage of the colony’s **Acts of Toleration in 1649**. Rhode Island was accepting of all religions including followers of Protestant sects, Catholicism, Judaism, and Quakerism. The **Quakers**, however, settled primarily in Pennsylvania and were also very tolerant of other faiths.

The diversity of religions, particularly in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, meant that no one faith held a majority in those colonies. Therefore, no one religion became the established religion in those colonies. The American tradition of separating church and state was born from this religious diversity in the colonies. The foundation for cultural and religious diversity in the United States was set during the early colonial period with the planting of English colonies that became home to a wide array of immigrants from various countries and religious backgrounds.

**b. Describe the Middle Passage, the growth of the African population, and contributions including but not limited to architecture, agriculture, and foodways.**

**Document Analysis 2**

 **Document A Document B**

 

**Middle Passage**

Beginning in the fifteenth century, Portugal established what would become the **Atlantic slave trade**. It involved Europeans shipping slaves from Africa to the Americas. Although relatively small at first, this trade grew drastically from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, finally ending in the 1800s. When the Portuguese first arrived in Africa in the 1400s, they discovered an abundant slave trade already in existence. When African kingdoms fought one another, they often sold prisoners of war; into slavery. Sometimes the conquerors sold their slaves to other Africans. At other times, they sold them to foreign traders (often in the Mediterranean). The Portuguese tapped into this system and quickly adopted it to ship slaves all the way to the Americas. Soon, the Dutch, British, Spanish, and French participated in the slave trade as well. Thanks to American colonization and the demand for plantation labor it produced, the Atlantic slave trade became extremely profitable both for European and African slave traders. As a result, slave ships carried millions of African slaves to the Americas. By the 1700s, black slaves actually outnumbered white settlers in Latin American colonies and in the British colony of South Carolina. These slaves normally arrived by way of the **Middle Passage** (the route taken by ships carrying slaves from Africa to North America). The trip was called the "Middle Passage" because it was the middle leg of the "triangular trade route" (trade between 3 points: Europe, Africa, and the Americas). Africans were forced to live in cramped quarters aboard slave ships and often suffered inhumane treatment during their voyage. Due mostly to poor sanitation and disease, many of them died before ever reaching the Americas.

**Growth of African Population**

**Document Analysis**

**“To prosper, we must have a stock of slaves to do all our business.”
Bostonian Emanuel Dowling, 1642**

Slavery is a system in which people are "owned" like property. Although it existed in Virginia prior to colonial rebellions, it became more essential to the colony's economy as indentured servitude decreased. Eventually, English colonists, like other Europeans, viewed Africa as their most efficient source for slaves. The first African Americans in the English colonies arrived in 1619 at Jamestown. Originally, most did not come as slaves but rather as indentured servants. As such, they attained their freedom after a set number of years, owned land, and some even became masters of indentured servants and/or slaves themselves. In time, however, economic concerns, racism, and rationalizations on the part of white European settlers led to the institution of African American slavery in North America. Although they served in a variety of roles, most Virginia slaves worked to harvest crops like tobacco. As a result, the institution of slavery helped to firmly establish the plantation system in Virginia and throughout the southern colonies. Plantations were huge farms owned by wealthy landowners who raised cash crops (crops grown for trade and profit). Because these plantations required lots of manual labor, slavery became an important part of the southern economy. By the late 1600s, slavery was firmly rooted throughout the colonies.

**African American Culture**

Today, we often think of the African slaves who came to America as coming from a common culture and being very similar to one another. In reality, however, they came from many different cultures within Africa. As a result, the slave population on any particular plantation or within a community usually consisted of Africans from a variety of backgrounds. They often spoke different languages, had different religious beliefs, and were familiar with different traditions. Still, because of the burden of slavery that they shared, African slaves developed tight-knit communities over time. Slaves quickly began to adopt the English language in British North America because it was the common language of their masters and, therefore, the one language that they were all exposed to regardless of their backgrounds (many African slaves spoke Portuguese, Spanish, or French instead of English because of the slaveholding colonies that these nations possessed). Slaves also adopted aspects of American, Christian religion. However they often mixed it with their own African religious traditions.

Which part of the British colonies slaves lived in also determined their culture. In the South, where plantations dominated, most slaves tended to work on farms harvesting crops and processing agricultural products. In the North and in urban areas, it was not uncommon to find slaves living in cities, sometimes independent of their masters, and working as artisans. Sometimes they even earned their own money and bought their freedom. Slaves with special skills, such as blacksmiths, barrel makers, or carpenters tended to be more valued on large plantations and in cities, whereas healthy young slaves who could work hard were in high demand for field work. Over time, as racial divisions increased and laws became more restrictive, slaves in the British colonies became less and less mobile and their treatment more harsh. Southern slaves especially suffered as the South's entire economy came to rely on the institution of slavery.

It is worth noting that, while the majority of blacks in the British colonies were slaves, some were free as well. A few managed to buy their freedom or have it "awarded" to them by "benevolent" masters. Others were born free because their parents had been freed from slavery. Still others fled slavery and began maroon settlements (communities formed in frontier areas by escaped slaves). Interestingly, some free blacks became slave owners themselves. In general, however, even free blacks saw the few rights they had decline over time in colonial North America.

**c. Describe different methods of colonial self-governance in the period of Salutary Neglect.**

**Salutary Neglect**

The colonies re-established their local governments with the transition of English political power at the time of the **Glorious Revolution**. In 1721, **Robert Walpole** became the first Prime Minister in England. His approach to the colonies became known as **Salutary Neglect**. Walpole believed that the colonies would become more economically productive if they were not restricted by cumbersome policies that limited their ability to trade, such as the **Navigation Acts**. From the 1720s until after the **French and Indian War** in the 1760s, the colonies were less restricted in their ability to build up their own trade networks and govern themselves locally because of the policy of Salutary Neglect. As long as England was receiving the colonial resources they needed to maintain production under the mercantilist arrangement, there would be less oversight of the colonies by the English Crown.

The colonies had always been somewhat independent of English control due to distance limitations, structure of the colonial governments, and the greater proportion of eligible voters in the colonies. The methods of colonial self-government that existed during the period of Salutary Neglect firmly established the tradition of independence that would later lead to revolution between England and her colonies. The political structure of each colony by the time of the Revolutionary War consisted of a governor and an elected legislature. The earliest of the elected legislatures, the **House of Burgesses**, had been established shortly after Jamestown’s founding. Colonial legislatures, such as Virginia’s, had long traditions of making local policies and were made up of locally elected colonists. Taxes were levied by these colonial representatives and established the tradition of local taxation by locally elected representatives. Many New England colonies had town meetings that met regularly for people to vote directly on public issues.

Voting in the colonies was often restricted to only white males who owned at least some land. Even so, this criteria encompassed a much higher proportion of citizens than other countries - including England. Religious restrictions had even been removed from the New England colonies’ voter eligibility by the time of the American Revolution, which further expanded the tradition of local colonial participation in governing.

There was also an expectation that emerged in the colonies that the local legislatures would be responsible for looking out for the interests of all colonists and not just the wealthy. This concept played out dramatically with the events surrounding **Bacon’s Rebellion** in Jamestown in the late 1670s. Former indentured servants had worked off their debt but could not afford land in the township itself. Instead, they had to move farther into the frontier and often faced conflicts over land with the area’s American Indians. These poor citizens payed taxes and expected the House of Burgesses to provide protections for them, even though they lived further out from the wealthy **Jamestown** community. **Nathanael Bacon** led these poor citizens first against the American Indians and then against the Jamestown elite, including the Royal Governor **William Berkeley**. Bacon’ Rebellion, between the poor frontier colonists and Virginia’s colonial government, established an expectation in America that the government would work for the good of all citizens – not just the wealthy.

The tradition of English colonial self-government began early with the pledge of majority rule under the **Mayflower Compact** and the establishment of colonial legislatures. During the period of Salutary Neglect, the role of these local assemblies and town meetings expanded. It was during this time that the English government, following the Glorious Revolution, scaled back their political oversight of the colonies as long as the economic resources were being provided to England. Political autonomy and self-government in the colonies grew to be an expectation and formed an independent American identity that ultimately led to war between England and her colonies.

**d. Explain the role of the Great Awakening in creating unity in the colonies and challenging traditional authority.**

**The Great Awakening**

As mentioned earlier, many Europeans fled to North America in search of religious freedom. However, this did not necessarily mean that they were prepared to offer such freedom to those who believed differently from them (remember the Puritans in Massachusetts). Over time, as more and more people of different backgrounds arrived in the colonies, religious expression became increasingly diverse (although it remained predominantly Christian and Protestant).

Beginning in the 1730s, the colonies experienced what was known as the **First Great Awakening**. The "Great Awakening" was a religious movement that featured passionate preaching from evangelists like **Jonathan Edwards** and **George Whitefield**. These ministers believed that many in the colonies had forsaken God for "dead religion" and called people hack to "sincere Christian commitment." Often, Great Awakening preachers like Whitefield traveled from place to place, preaching passionately the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While many embraced their revivals (services where traveling preachers would speak), some traditional church leaders rejected such preaching as too emotional and offensive. The Great Awakening served to encourage colonists to think for themselves on religious matters. It also helped ensure that principles like freedom of religion and separation of church and state (the government not imposing a particular religion or church membership on its citizens, but rather allowing citizens to practice their own faith) became valued colonial principles. Ultimately, the Great Awakening led colonist to question traditional authority such as the King of England. The questioning of traditional authority leads colonist to rebel against the British government and inspires the American Revolution.