

Chapter 5 (14th)

Colonial Society on the Eve of Revolution

1. Conquest by the Cradle
 1. In 1775, there were 32 British colonies in North America.
 1. Only 13 of these colonies revolted in the "American Revolution."
 2. Canada and Jamaica were wealthier than the "original 13."
 3. All of the colonies were growing like weeds.
 2. In 1775, there were 2.5 million people in the 13 colonies.
 3. Their average age was about 16 (due mainly to having several children).
 4. The vast majority (95%) of the Americans were crammed east of the Allegheny Mountains. By 1775, a few had settled in Tennessee and Kentucky.
 5. 90% of the Americans lived in rural areas and were therefore mostly farmers.
2. A Mingling of the Races
 1. Colonial America was mostly English by origin, but other ethnicities were also present.
 2. **Germans** made up 6% of the population (150,000 in number by 1775).
 1. The Germans were mostly Protestant (usually Lutheran).
 2. They were called "Pennsylvania Dutch"...a perversion of "Deutsch" or "German."
 3. **Scots-Irish** made up 7% of the population (175,000 in number).
 1. Back across the ocean, these strong-willed folks had been transplanted into Northern Ireland. But, they banged heads with the Catholic Irish there and never felt at home. So, they emigrated to America.
3. They typically moved inland in America up to the Appalachian foothills. They squatted on the land and bickered with Indians and whites over ownership.
4. The "**Paxton Boys**" led a march/revolt in 1764. Like Nathaniel Bacon of 100 years prior, they were frustrated over not being able to get land.
 1. The Scots-Irish were a hot-headed, but hardy people.
 2. When the War for Independence began, many became revolutionaries.
 3. 5% were from various European ethnicities: French Huguenots, Welsh, Dutch, Swedes, Jews, Irish, the Swiss, or Scots-Highlanders.
5. Even early on, the Americans were taking on a mosaic of races and ethnicities. Therefore, other nations had a hard time pinning down exactly what it meant to be "an American."
6. The Structure of the Colonial Society
 1. Unlike Europe, where the classes were locked, America was a land of opportunity.
 2. Hard work might see anyone rise from "rags to riches."
 3. Despite *opportunity* in America, class differences did emerge with wealthy planter-farmers, clergymen, government officials, and merchants wielding most of the authority.
 4. Wars brought more riches to merchants.
 5. As well as creating riches, these wars created widows and orphans who eventually turned to charity for support.
 6. In the South, a firm social pyramid emerged containing...
 1. The immensely rich plantation owners ("planters") had many slaves (though these were few).
 2. "Yeoman" farmers, or small farmers, owned their land and, maybe, a few slaves.
 3. Landless whites who owned no land and either worked for a landowner or rented land to farm.
 4. Indentured servants of America were the paupers and the criminals sent to the New World. Some of them were actually unfortunate victims of Britain's unfair laws and did become respectable citizens. This group was dwindling though by the 1700s, thanks to Bacon's Rebellion and the move away from indentured servant labor and toward slavery.
 5. Black slaves were at the bottom of the social ladder with no rights or hopes up moving up or even gaining freedom. Slavery became a divisive issue because some colonies didn't want slaves while others needed them, and therefore vetoed any bill banning the importation of slaves.
7. Clerics, Physicians, and Jurists

The clergy (or priests) were the most respected group in colonial days. They had less power in 1775 than in earlier days, but still held high esteem.

Physicians (or doctors) were usually not looked upon with much respect. Many were little more than “witch-doctors” as the science of the day was little or nothing.

1. A favorite treatment was bleeding—thought to let out the “bad blood.”
2. Plagues were common and deadly.

Smallpox struck 1 in 5 people (including George Washington) even though a basic inoculation had been formed in 1721.

The clergy and doctors sometimes chose to not intervene with smallpox treatment—to do so would be to intervene in God’s will.

Lawyers were looked upon with scorn—as being hucksters or scoundrels.

3. Criminals often would represent themselves in court rather than get a lawyer.
4. As the revolution neared, the usefulness of lawyers to get things done started to become apparent.

8. Workaday America

1. Agriculture was the dominant industry, by far, in colonial America.
 1. In the Chesapeake of Maryland and Virginia, tobacco was the staple.
 2. In the Middle Colonies (“bread colonies”), wheat was the staple. New York exported 80,000 barrels of flour annually.
2. Fishing (and whaling) was prosperous, especially in New England. The Grand Banks off Newfoundland had immense numbers of cod.
3. Trade began to flourish.
 1. Yankee merchants were active and known as hard dealers.

The “**Triangular Trade**” was in operation. In it, a ship would depart (1) New England with rum and go to the (2) west coast of Africa and trade the rum for African slaves. Then, it would go to (3) the West Indies and exchange the slaves for molasses (for rum), which it’d sell to New England once it returned there.

4. Manufacturing was not as important. There were a wide variety of small enterprises though.
 1. Good laborers were hard to find and prized once they were found.
 2. Lumbering was probably the top manufacturing industry.
 3. **Naval stores**, (or turpentine, pine tar, and pitch) were used to build and repair the British navy. The British crown sometimes reserved the best American trees to be used as British masts—even though there were countless other trees, this bothered the Americans.
9. The **Molasses Act**, 1733, a tax on West Indies molasses was a shock to Americans. This would’ve undercut the prosperity of the Triangular Trade (rum being made from molasses).
 1. Americans turned to bribes smuggling to work around the act. So, the Molasses Act wasn’t a big problem after all.
 2. However, it did foreshadow more taxes and more troubles to come, later in the 1760s.
10. Horsepower and Sailpower
 1. Roads were scarce and pitifully poor. Until the 1700s, they didn’t even connect major cities. Thus, travel was sluggish.
 1. Roads were dust bowls in the summer and mud bogs in the winter.
 2. For example, it took Ben Franklin 9 days to go from Boston to Philadelphia while traveling by sailboat, rowboat, and foot.
 2. Travel by water, either along the coast or via rivers, was common and useful.
 3. Taverns sprang up along roadways and any intersections. They served multiple uses: inns for a night’s sleep, places to hear news/gossip from out-of-town, and a place to get a refreshing beverage, of course.
 4. A crude mail system emerged. The mail traveled slowly, and sometimes was read by bored or curious letter carriers.

11. Dominant Denominations

In 1775, there were 2 “**established churches**” or churches that received tax money: the Anglican and the Congregational. Surprisingly, a large portion of Americans didn’t worship in a church, however.

1. The **Anglican Church** (the Church of England) became the official faith in Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, Maryland, and part of New York.
 1. The Anglican brand of religion was more worldly than Puritanical New England.
 2. Sermons were shorter and hellfire was less hot.
 3. The College of William and Mary was founded to train clergy in 1693.
 4. Anglicans did not have an American bishop to ordain the American clergymen. The idea of starting an American bishopric was violently opposed by non-Anglicans as the Revolution drew close.
2. The **Congregational Church** grew out of the Puritan church. It was established in each New England colony except Rhode Island.
 1. **Presbyterianism**, a kin of Congregationalism, was common but never an official religion.
 2. Religion, which used to be the burning issue in New England, was beginning to take a backseat to politics.

12. The Great Awakening

1. As religious passion began to decline and new, liberal ideas began to water down “old time religion,” many felt it was time for a revival—the **Great Awakening**. This was America’s 1st big religious movement. It tried to bring the people back to fundamental Christianity and save souls.
2. **Jonathan Edwards** was a leading preacher.
 1. He said salvation comes not through good works, but through God’s grace (what you don’t earn).
 2. He painted vivid pictures of hell. His most famous sermon was “*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*” and preached that hell was “paved with the skulls of unbaptized children.”
3. **George Whitefield** was another great preacher during the Awakening.
 1. Whitefield was an amazing speaker— he brought people to tears, cheers, convulsions, and to the offering plates.
 2. His style of preaching was to strike the emotions, to “hit ‘em in the heart, rather than in the head” so to speak.
 3. His goal was to strike at sinners, have them repent (ask forgiveness), and turn their faith to Christ.
4. These preachers were called the “New Lights.” The “Old Lights” (Anglicans, and traditional Congregationalists and Presbyterians) didn’t like the drama in this style.
 1. The **Baptist** faith grew in numbers, however, as they embraced the New Light style of preaching.
 2. New Light universities sprang up: Princeton, Brown, Rutgers, and Dartmouth.
 3. New Lights encouraged a new wave of missionary work amongst the Indians.
5. The Great Awakening was America’s first mass movement. It brought Americans together largely without regard to class and united them with a common history and experience.

13. Schools and Colleges

1. New England placed the most value on education. This was the case since colleges trained the clergymen.
 1. In the other colonies, time was spent farming and working, not wasted on schooling.
2. Still, there were fairly good elementary and secondary schools in all of the colonies. These schools were for the rich, and mostly for boys.
3. The topics of study: the classics (Greek and Latin) and religion. Reason was out, dogma was in.
4. The mood at school was serious and somber. Discipline was fast and harsh.
5. The influences of the church was considerable, but waning...
 1. In New England, the top priority of colleges was still to train men for the ministry.

2. By 1750, there was a movement from “dead” to “live” languages.
 3. Ben Franklin helped start the University of Pennsylvania, the first non-denominational university.
14. Provincial Culture
1. Work and worry (farming and fear of Indians) left little time for recreation. What little time was leftover, was spent on religion, not wasted on arts and literature.
 2. Painting was looked upon as a waste of time.
 1. **John Trumbull** was discouraged in painting by his father. He still went to Europe to be trained in art.
 3. **Charles Willson Peale** became best-known for portraits of George Washington. He also was curator of a museum, a taxidermist of birds, and a dentist.
 1. **Benjamin West** and **John Singleton Copley** traveled to Europe where artists were respected and could make a living (unlike in America).
 4. Architecture in America was (a) transplanted from Europe and (b) focused on the practical rather than stylish.
 1. The log cabin (from Sweden) was simple, frontier-friendly, cheap, and cozy.
 2. The Georgian style began around 1720 and became popular in towns with its red bricks—solid and well insulated.
 5. Colonial literature was sparse. Americans wasted little time writing and focused on working.
 1. **Phillis Wheatley’s** poetry was notable. She was a slave girl with no formal education. But, she did travel to England and get a book of poetry published. These accomplishments were amazing considering her many obstacles.
 2. **Ben Franklin’s** *Poor Richard’s Almanack* was immensely popular—read more than anything except the Bible. It tells something about Americans—they frowned on literature but loved the practical sayings and advice of an almanac.
 1. Franklin’s exploits with experiments (like the kite flying incident) and his acute observations helped further the budding sciences.
15. Pioneer Presses
1. Reading wasn’t common in colonial America—books were too expensive, thus, libraries were scarce.
 2. Pamphlets were more common. As the revolution drew near, printers hand-cranked pamphlets. These were popular ways to keep on top of current events.
 3. **John Peter Zenger** was a printer in New York.
 1. He printed unflattering things about the governor of New York. Zenger was arrested for seditious libel.
 2. But, his lawyer **Alexander Hamilton** argued, what he’d printed was true, and therefore, not libel.
 3. Zenger won, but more importantly, it was a landmark case for the freedom of the press.
16. The Great Game of Politics
1. By 1775, eight colonies had royal governors who’d been appointed by the king. Three colonies had governors selected by proprietors.
 2. Nearly each colony had a two-house legislature.
 1. The upper house was chosen by either royal officials or by the colony’s proprietor.
 2. The lower house was filled by election by the people.
 3. Most governors were effective.
- A few were corrupt. One Lord Cornbury, Queen Anne’s cousin, was named the New York and New Jersey governor. He was a drunkard, spendthrift, grafter, embezzler, religious bigot, and cross-dressing fool.
4. The right to vote was expanding.
 1. It was still limited to white males only, but to more white males.
 2. But, the land requirement was gone. Land was so plentiful that it didn’t really limit voters anyway.

17. Colonial Folkways

1. Life for most Americans was tough, with few comforts.
 1. Churches had no heat (no fireplace).
 2. Homes didn't have running water or indoor plumbing (wells and outhouses were used).
 3. There was no garbage disposal system.
2. Still, Americans weren't without amusements.
 1. Work and play mixed during house or barn-raising, quilting bees, husking bees, flaxing bees, apple parings, and the like.
 2. Southerners enjoyed stage plays, card playing, horse racing, cockfighting, and fox hunting.
 3. Lotteries were accepted, even by the clergy, because they were used to raise money for the church or colleges.
 4. Holidays were celebrated across the colonies. New Englanders frowned on Christmas, however, as being too aligned with the Pope.

18. Makers of America: The Scots-Irish

1. The Scots had a hard time back in Britain. They were poor but heavily taxed by the English. This added to a long list of reasons the Scots disliked the English.
2. Fed up, the Scots moved to Ulster, in Ireland. But, the Irish didn't want the Scots there either. So, the Scots packed up and moved to America.
3. As if they wanted to distance themselves from Britain as far as possible, the Scots moved into and spread along the Appalachian piedmont region.
 1. Pennsylvania was a hot spot since tolerance was high there.
4. The Scots-Irish were tough, independent, ruddy people—perfect for frontier life, blazing new lands, and building America out of the forests.
5. Though independent-minded, religion tied the Scots-Irish together. They were Protestant, usually of the Presbyterian denomination.
6. Their disdain for England also bonded them. This fact became of great use when the Revolution broke out. The Scots-Irish were passionately against England and for independence.