

THE LIMITS OF LIBERTY

AMERICAN HISTORY

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2. Provincial Expansion, 1700–1763

Population and Immigration

Between 1700 and 1763 an unprecedented surge of expansion transformed the English colonies. The settled area doubled, the population increased eightfold to reach two million—about a third of the population of England and Wales. Meantime the character of immigration changed and with it the ethnic composition of the population. Expansion brought new problems and challenges but by the end of the Seven Years' War a self-assured and distinctive colonial society had emerged and the colonial economy had developed into one of the richest and most productive in the world.

The astonishing growth of population, much greater than that of contemporary Europe, was due mainly to a significantly lower death-rate. That in turn was attributable to the relative youthfulness of the population, the absence of famine, epidemics, and similar demographic crises, and the better diet made possible by the high productivity of American agriculture. Once the early 'starving times' were over the mortality-rate, especially of infants, fell dramatically—though more slowly in the hot, humid, and malaria-ridden environment of the Chesapeake colonies than in New England—and life expectancy soared. At Andover, Massachusetts, for example, the average age at death of the first male settlers was 71.8 years—higher, that is to say, than that of men in the United States today.

A steady influx of immigrants helped further to swell the population. Up to about 1700 the great majority were English. By then, though, the mercantilist view that people were a species of wealth, an indispensable resource to be husbanded at home rather than dispersed abroad, had won official favor. Thus emigration was discouraged, though it was never prohibited, except in the case of skilled artisans. The authorities only remained anxious to speed the departure of undesirables, shipping out vagrants, paupers, and political and military prisoners like those captured after the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745, as well as convicted malefactors. The practice began early in the seventeenth century but reached its height only after 1717, when Parliament created the new legal punishment of transportation. Despite colonial protests at least thirty thousand felons were transported to America during the eighteenth century, most of them to Virginia and Maryland.

Toward the end of the seventeenth century the colonies began to receive significant numbers of non-English immigrants. Thus began what was to become a persistent and indeed distinguishing theme in American development: the contacts and conflicts of people of different ethnic groups and races. Among the first were the French Huguenots, forced to flee when Louis XIV deprived them of freedom of worship by revoking the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Mostly craftsmen, merchants, and professional people, they tended to settle in seaport towns like Charleston, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. Much larger numbers came from Germany and from the German cantons of Switzerland. A few belonged to pietist sects—Mennonites, Moravians, Dunkers, Schwenckfelders, and Amish—seeking refuge from religious persecution, but most to Lutheran or German Reformed (Calvinist) communities, driven out by economic pressure, more particularly the devastation of the Palatinate during the wars of Louis XIV. Germans settled variously in North Carolina, Georgia, and upstate New York, but their favorite colony was Pennsylvania. By 1766 economic opportunity, a generous land policy, and religious freedom had attracted so many of them that, according to Benjamin Franklin, they constituted one-third of Pennsylvania's population. They had a well-deserved reputation as stolid, pacific, and deeply pious folk, and were widely admired for their neatly kept farms and careful farming methods. The 'Pennsylvania Dutch', as they were generally known, clung to their own language and customs while the sectarians among them, especially the Amish, led an austere, isolated existence which their descendants preserve even today.

The largest group of eighteenth-century immigrants were the Scotch-Irish, descendants of Scottish Presbyterians who had settled in Ulster at the beginning of the seventeenth century. By 1776, a total of 250,000 Scotch-Irishmen had emigrated to the colonies. Their main reasons for leaving Ulster were economic—discontent with the land system, recurrent bad harvests, and the decline of the linen trade—though religious and political disabilities provided an additional impetus. The Scotch-Irish first made for New England but, meeting with an unfriendly reception, turned instead to Pennsylvania. There they were encouraged by the provincial authorities to settle on the frontier as a barrier against Indian attack. They poured into the Cumberland Valley and the trans-Allegheny region beyond the German settlements and then moved southward into western Maryland, the Valley of Virginia, and the Carolina back country. By the 1750s there was a continuous chain of Scotch-Irish frontier settlements all the way from Pennsylvania to Georgia. Intensely religious and fiercely intolerant, the Scotch-Irish deserve the major credit for establishing Presbyterianism in America. They were, however, notoriously undisciplined, turbulent, and restless. Unlike their German neighbors, with whom they were frequently at odds, they were careless farmers, partly, it would seem,

from a psychological repugnance to commit themselves permanently to a particular locality.

While foreign immigration drastically altered the ethnic composition of most of the colonies, New England was an exception. Discouraging strangers lest they jeopardize the success of the Puritan experiment, it remained as ethnically homogeneous as its name implied. But elsewhere the population was in varying degrees cosmopolitan. In addition to the Scotch-Irish, the Germans, and the French Huguenots, there were scatterings of Scots, Welshmen, Irish Catholics, Dutchmen, and Sephardic Jews. But except in the towns there was little intermingling. Each ethnic group tended to cluster in separate areas and its members did not marry outside it. Not without reason has the population map of colonial America been likened to a mosaic.

Indentured Servitude and Negro Slavery

Few immigrants to the colonies crossed the Atlantic under their own resources. They tended to travel in groups, either as part of colonization schemes or, more frequently, under a system of temporary servitude designed to meet the chronic labor shortage. The system enabled the less well off to obtain free passage by entering into a contract or indenture pledging their labor for a specified term of years, usually four. During the colonial period between half and two-thirds of all white immigrants—except to New England—are believed to have done so in this fashion. By the early eighteenth century the traffic in indentured servants had become systematized and largely concentrated in the north of Ireland and in Holland. Merchants and ship captains would make regular recruiting tours of the hinterland, employing a variety of unscrupulous methods. On arrival in the colonies servants were publicly offered for sale in much the same way as Negro slaves. Closely related to the servant trade was the redemption system under which poor people were given free passage on the understanding that friends or relatives would 'redeem' them on arrival in America. If not redeemed, they were sold off into servitude. So, too, were the motley group—kidnaped vagrants and children, transported convicts—who left England involuntarily. Convicts were, however, in a special category: their period of servitude generally lasted fourteen years.

Most indentured servants went to work either in the Middle Colonies, especially Pennsylvania, or, until about 1700, when they began to be replaced by Negro slaves, in the Southern colonies. Their lot was generally harsh. The work was often difficult and exhausting, the penalties for carelessness or wrongdoing severe. Servants could not marry without their masters' consent, nor even stay out late at night. Yet they retained all their political and legal rights save those explicitly denied by the terms of their indentures. They had, for example, the right of recourse to the courts.

And when their terms expired they were free to choose their own occupations and were entitled by custom or statute to certain 'freedom dues'—clothing, and, in most cases, tools, seeds, and provisions. But since land was not normally included, only a small proportion became independent farmers. A few of them rose to fame and fortune. But the majority either became wage-laborers on farms and plantations, or drifted to the towns or the frontier. Some even returned to Europe.

None of these options was open, however, to black slaves. The first Negroes to reach the mainland colonies arrived in Virginia as early as 1619. Their numbers at first grew very slowly: even in the 1670s Virginia's Negro population did not exceed 2,000. Nor at first were blacks geographically concentrated: New York City in the 1690s had proportionately as many as Virginia. Initially the legal status of Negroes was indeterminate, though from an early date custom probably assigned them a special and inferior position. After about 1660 legislation began to define their status more precisely, in particular differentiating them from white servants. Virginia and Maryland passed laws declaring Negroes to be slaves for life and that the children of Negroes and mulattos were likewise slaves. Later laws expanded and added to these distinctions. Thus blacks were forbidden to possess weapons, sexual relations between them and whites were discouraged or prohibited, and slave manumission was made more difficult.

About 1700 the importation of slaves rose rapidly and slavery took firmer root, especially in the Chesapeake colonies. Soil exhaustion, increasing competition, and dwindling profit margins were compelling tobacco planters to search for a more stable, more disciplined, and more economical labor force. Masters had never found indentured servitude wholly satisfactory. It was expensive since the term of service was relatively short; servants frequently absconded and were not easy to trace. Negroes possessed neither of these disadvantages, being permanently enslaved and easily identifiable by color. And although the initial investment in slaves was high, they were self-producing and when employed in gangs constituted an efficient and economical work-force. A further attraction was a fall in slave prices after 1697, when the Royal African Company lost its monopoly of the African slave-trade and English and colonial merchants joined in. The slave-trade now entered its heyday. The Negro population of the colonies soared from under 20,000 in 1700 to about 350,000 in 1763. Negro slaves were to be found in every colony, though over four-fifths of them were in the Southern plantation colonies. In Virginia in 1756 blacks made up 40 percent of the population (120,000 out of 293,000), while in South Carolina in 1751 they outnumbered whites by almost two to one (40,000 blacks to 25,000 whites). Despite their servile status they were a potent influence in the South, their presence reflected in many ways from

the Africanisms in Southern speech to the uniquely restrictive features of Southern legal codes.

Population growth was accompanied by—indeed, largely explained—the spread of settlement. In 1713, when the Treaty of Utrecht ended a long period of colonial warfare with France, the British settlements were still confined to a narrow coastal strip. Nowhere had the frontier advanced beyond the fall line of the rivers. In the next half-century, however, it was carried steadily westward, in places by as much as a hundred miles. With previously unsettled lands in older regions filling up as well, the occupied area more than doubled. In New England settlers advanced up the Connecticut River into New Hampshire and along the coast to Maine. In the interior of New York fingers of settlement reached out into the valleys of the Hudson, the Mohawk, and the Schoharie before being checked by Indian attack. Further south the frontier advanced more rapidly. In the Tidewater region of Virginia and Maryland enterprising planters abandoned worn-out tobacco lands and worked their way inland into the Piedmont, the region between the fall line and the Blue Ridge. Meanwhile the stream of migrants moving westward in Pennsylvania, mostly Germans and Scotch-Irish, had run up against the Appalachian barrier and then swung southward into the great interior valleys between the Appalachians and the Blue Ridge. Entering the Valley of Virginia in the 1730s, the Carolinas in the 1740s and 1750s, and Georgia in the 1760s, this southward thrust created an exposed, relatively primitive, back-country region different from and frequently at odds with the older settled east.

During the colonial period there were only five towns of any size, all of them seaports: Boston, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston. Their population increased, but more slowly than the population as a whole. Their combined population in 1720 of about 36,000 was about 7 percent of the total; in 1760 it was 73,000, only 3.5 percent of the total. Up to 1700 Boston was easily the largest American town but thereafter it was overtaken by Philadelphia and New York. By the time of the Revolution Philadelphia had 40,000 inhabitants and was the second largest city in the British Empire—although it hardly rivaled London with its population of 750,000.

Colonial Society and Culture

By the middle of the eighteenth century the colonies had attained a measure of maturity and a culture at once derivative and distinctive. English institutions, English ideas, the English tongue, people of English stock were everywhere in the ascendant. English forms still provided the model in law and education. No distinguishing American idiom had yet appeared in literature, art, or architecture. Yet not everything transplanted from

England had survived the ocean-crossing unchanged. The wilderness environment had created a society that was un-English in its ethnic and racial variety, its pluralistic religious structure, its fluidity and mobility. Americans were more self-reliant, adaptable, and enterprising than Englishmen, more severely practical, more conscious of their rights, less inclined to accept traditional moral and social values.

As to language, the process of Americanization was already under way. A few nouns like *toboggan*, *moccasin*, *canoe*, and *wigwam* had been borrowed from the Indians; the French had contributed *portage*, *prairie*, *chowder*, and so on; Dutch settlement had supplied other borrowings: *boss*, *cookie*, *waffle*, *Yankee*. A sprinkling of Americanisms had arisen through new combinations of familiar English words (*bullfrog*, *catbird*, *groundhog*, *snowplow*). A number of other English words had acquired new meanings: *bluff*, meaning cliff, *branch* and *creek* meaning stream, *neck* meaning isthmus. But although in 1756 the great lexicographer, Dr Samuel Johnson, felt justified in referring to an 'American dialect', most eighteenth-century visitors to the colonies noted not only the absence of regional dialects but the proper and grammatical English spoken by Americans of all classes.

In fact the inhabitants of the separate colonies had not yet begun to think of themselves as one people. The word 'American' was mainly a geographical expression. Most colonists considered themselves English. There was a good deal of intercolonial jealousy and constant intercolonial squabbles over boundaries and land claims. Within colonies, seaboard communities disputed with those in the back country. Yet a sense both of unity and of difference from England was all the while being fostered by a century and a half of isolation and change.

Although the structure and functions of the family were the same as in Europe, American conditions tended to loosen family ties and undermine parental authority. The easy availability of land encouraged young people to leave the parental roof in order to set up on their own and at the same time weakened the ability of fathers to influence marriage choices by withholding their sons' inheritance. These tendencies were reinforced in the South by a relatively high mortality-rate which made anyone over fifty a rarity. Another destabilizing influence was the distorted sex ratio resulting from the heavy preponderance of men among the first settlers. In 1700 there were still three men for every two women in Virginia: even in New England (where family migration had long been common) women were still in a minority at that date. The imbalance between the sexes explains why the average age of marriage for women was substantially lower than in Europe. According to some historians it also helped to raise the status of women. Whether in fact they enjoyed a higher status than in Europe seems doubtful. Irrespective of wealth or condition they were assigned a

subordinate role within the family and were denied the political and civil rights enjoyed by men.

At first glance colonial society resembled that of England. Distinctions of rank and status were universal and jealously preserved. Men of property and standing were addressed as "gentlemen" or "esquires", church pews were assigned according to social class, students listed according to their "dignities". In every colony by about 1700 a wealthy elite had emerged whose preeminence was evident in its homes, possessions, and lifestyles, and in its oligarchical control of politics. The great Virginia planters—Fitzhughs, Byrds, Carters, Lees, Randolphs—who made up the colony's upper class, had their counterparts in the Dutch and English landed families of the Hudson Valley—Van Rensselaers, Schuylers, Morris, Van Cortlandts, Phillipses. In the seaport towns the growth of trade had brought into being a mercantile aristocracy: Browns, Cabots, Hutchinsons, and Belchers in Boston, Quakers like Edward Shippen and Isaac Norris in Philadelphia. In New York City in 1703 the richest 10 percent of the population owned just under half the taxable property. Meanwhile indigence was becoming a chronic problem in the seaports, necessitating the building of almshouses, the founding of charitable societies, the adoption of a warning-out system. In the southern back country, too, especially at the rim of settlement, there were families living in degradation and squalor. The bottom of the social structure, of course, was permanently constituted by Negro slaves, nearly a quarter (23 percent) of the population by 1760.

Even so English America was, in Richard Hofstadter's phrase, 'a middle-class world'. The groups which formed, respectively, the apex and the base of the English social pyramid—the nobility and the destitute—were almost entirely unrepresented in America. The absence of such props of a privileged order as a Court, rotten boroughs, an officer caste, an entrenched Church, and exclusive universities helped further to undermine the attempt to transplant the English class structure. It was difficult, too, to maintain traditional social distinctions when the daily struggle to eke out an existence from agriculture compelled masters and servants to live and work cheek by jowl. The availability of land meant also that, unlike those in England, where farm tenancy was the rule, the great majority of colonial farmers—and hence of the male population—tilled their own acres. In the cities again, artisans capitalized on their scarcity value not only by demanding (and getting) high wages but by declining to accept a subordinate status. Pauperism, even in the towns, was never the dreadful evil it became in England. Beggars were rare and the numbers needing poor relief a tiny fraction of the population.

As for the colonial upper class, it was not really an aristocracy in the English sense: its origins were too recent, its status too insecure, its mem-

bership too wavering, its resources too limited, its connections with moneymaking too close, its opportunities for leisure too restricted for it to have been taken for—or acknowledged by—the genuine article. Nor could the colonial elite be distinguished by speech. In the colonies accent was not a badge of class, as it was—or became—in England. Spurred on by the illusion of Cavalier origins, though in fact most were descended from merchants and yeomen, the great Virginia planters consciously modeled themselves on the English landed gentry. They sat prominently in church, served as vestrymen and as justices of the peace, rode to hounds, and even sported family coats of arms. Yet they were hard-working capitalists, intensely and of necessity absorbed in land speculation and in the details of raising and marketing a commercial crop. Since their capital was largely tied up in land and slaves, their liquid assets were not all that impressive by European standards. Indeed, they were constantly and embarrassingly in debt. Largely for that reason no Virginia plantation home could compare with Chatsworth or Woburn Abbey, or even with an English country gentleman's manor-house. Such leading examples of Georgian architecture as Westover, the residence of the Byrds on the James River, were elegant and dignified but nonetheless modest edifices, notwithstanding their rich imported furnishings, while George Washington's Mount Vernon, on the Potomac, suggests nothing grander than a plain, solid, commodious farmhouse.

Claims that class lines were fluid, opportunities for social mobility unequalled, should nonetheless be kept in perspective. A handful of individuals did indeed rise from humble beginnings to wealth and power. Two of the wealthiest landowners in Maryland, Daniel Dulany and Charles Carroll, started from little or nothing; Benjamin Franklin's father was a tallow-chandler and soap-boiler; Sir William Phips, the first royal governor of Massachusetts, was born in poverty. Governor Phips owed his great fortune to luck: he married a wealthy widow and discovered a sunken treasure. Even so most of the colonial elite came from families of substance. In Maryland before 1660 indentured servants rose rapidly after being freed, but opportunities subsequently dwindled almost to vanishing point. Recent studies have demonstrated also that as communities emerged from the frontier stage, rates of upward mobility declined. Nonetheless,—and despite evidence that inequalities increased during the eighteenth century—colonial society was extraordinarily mobile by European standards.

Colonial Religion

In contrast to England and other countries of western Europe there was no dominant religious denomination in the colonies. The tendency towards schism, particularly marked in New England, together with the immi-

gration of sectarians from several different countries produced a multiplicity of denominations, none sufficiently numerous to dominate the rest. This made toleration a practical necessity, even where the law enjoined religious conformity. Except in Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey, where there was no connection between Church and State and where a large measure of religious freedom existed from the start, Established Churches were the rule—the Church of England in all the southern colonies and in four New York counties, the Congregational Church in New England outside Rhode Island. In New England, however, Puritan control began to break down by the end of the seventeenth century. Witchcraft hysteria in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692 led to hundreds of arrests and nineteen executions, but this proved to be the last spasm of persecution. The revised Massachusetts charter of 1691 had undermined religious exclusiveness by making property qualifications rather than church membership the test for voting. By 1700 or so both Massachusetts and Connecticut had granted Anglicans, Baptists, and Quakers the right of open public worship and in the 1720s allowed them to earmark for the support of their own churches what they paid in church-rates. As for the colonies where the Church of England was legally established, Anglicans were nearly everywhere too few to make establishment a reality. Only in Virginia was establishment effective enough to impose serious obstacles to dissent, and even there freedom of worship could not be denied once Scotch-Irish and German sectarians had taken possession of the Virginia back country. However, formal religious liberty would not be achieved in Virginia, or, indeed, in the rest of the colonies, until the Revolution.

The history of Virginian Anglicanism illustrates how traditional institutions either did not work or were subtly and unintentionally transformed in the New World. The failure of the Church of England to appoint a bishop for the colonies meant not only that churches could not be consecrated or parishioners confirmed but also that clerical discipline could not be enforced. Moreover the absence of central ecclesiastical authority opened the way for a kind of Anglican congregationalism. Parish affairs came to be controlled by lay vestrymen who, among other things, appointed and dismissed the clergy in a manner reminiscent of New England Puritanism. Low salaries made it difficult to attract parsons of the right caliber: many clergymen were ill-prepared and neglectful. But the sheer extent of Virginia's parishes, a reflection of its plantation economy, militated against proper pastoral care. The isolation of churches also meant that marriages and funerals were generally performed at home, while the dead were interred in gardens or orchards rather than in churchyards.

By the late seventeenth century the religious ardor of the early settlements was on the wane. That, indeed, was partly why toleration gained ground. With the advance of settlement, the growth of material prosperity,

the spread of Enlightenment ideas, a more secular and rationalistic outlook came to prevail. In New England especially the harsh rigidities of Puritanism were progressively softened. The process began with the Half-Way Covenant of 1662, when a Massachusetts ministers' synod decided to grant partial church membership to members' children who had not themselves experienced conversion. The Salem Witchcraft Trials were followed by a revulsion against ecclesiastical authority and in 1699 came the first definite departure from orthodoxy, the founding in Boston of the Brattle Street church which dispensed with the requirement that only God's elect could qualify for membership. By the middle of the eighteenth century some of the New England clergy had even abandoned the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and were preaching salvation to all who accepted Christ's teaching. In the Middle Colonies a more humanistic view of religion likewise gained ground in denominations as varied as the Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Dutch Reformed churches, as well as among the Quakers. In the Southern Colonies, too, religion had lost much of its inner spirit, the prevailing temper being latitudinarian and worldly.

Suddenly, however, Calvinism was revitalized by a wave of religious revivals, emotional and evangelical in tone, known as the Great Awakening. It began in the Middle Colonies in the 1720s with the preaching of Theodore J. Frelinghuysen, a German-born minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, and of William Tennent, a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian clergyman who in 1736 was to found a celebrated 'Log College' in frontier Pennsylvania to train ministers. Their message, emphasizing the individual's personal relation with God and the necessity of salvation through conversion, was taken up with great success in the South by the Presbyterian Samuel Davies and by an army of Methodist and Baptist preachers. Religious ferment was further stimulated by the arrival in 1739 of one of the greatest of English evangelists, George Whitefield, whose preaching tours drew enormous crowds from Georgia to Maine. The outstanding intellect of the Great Awakening, however, and the foremost religious controversialist produced by colonial America, was Jonathan Edwards, a Congregational minister in Northampton, Massachusetts. Defending traditional Calvinism against the inroads of rationalism, Edwards terrified congregations with graphic descriptions of sin designed to bring home the need to rely on God's mercy.

The Great Awakening certainly awoke controversy and division. Conflicts arose between laymen and clergy, between different denominations, and within existing religious organizations. 'Old light' conservatives, along with exponents of rationalist religion, were outraged by the extravagances of revivalism, its weeping, shrieking, and emotional paroxysms. 'New light' revivalist preachers, for their part, condemned 'unregenerate' ministers for their lack of piety and encouraged congregations to challenge ministerial

authority. Not infrequently the result was schism, the Presbyterians splitting into 'Old Side' and 'New Side' factions, Congregationalism losing adherents to newly formed separate or New Light Baptist churches—and to Anglicanism as well. The principal beneficiaries of the religious excitement were the smaller dissenting sects, notably the New Side Presbyterians and the different free-will Baptist persuasions. These new sects appealed particularly to the poor and uneducated, to whom they offered a religion that was meaningful and personal.

Some historians believe that the Great Awakening aroused a democratic spirit that contributed to the Revolution. This seems overstated. The Great Awakening had leveling implications, but its appeal was not limited to any one class, and if it tended to undermine the position of the clergy it did not develop into a general challenge to traditional forms of authority. The philosophical basis of the American Revolution is more readily discerned in the thought of those New England rationalists like the Reverend Jonathan Mayhew who stood at the opposite extreme to revivalism and who constituted its fiercest critics. Mayhew's widely circulated sermon, *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission* (1750), rejected the notion of absolute obedience to authority and affirmed the right of resistance to the illegal encroachments of arbitrary power. His political ideas were derived from the writings of a group of early eighteenth-century radicals and Whig politicians (see Chapter 4) as well as from the celebrated Lockean concepts of natural rights.

The American Enlightenment

The speed with which Locke's natural-rights philosophy was accepted in the colonies was one indication among many of the influence of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment belief in Natural Law, its insistence upon man's innate goodness, its supreme faith in human reason and perfectibility, all gained a large following among the colonial intellectual elite and permeated every branch of thought from religion to science, from economics to literature. Even an eminent Puritan divine and pillar of orthodoxy, Cotton Mather (1662–1727) proved surprisingly receptive to Newtonian science, though it should be added that Mather, like Jonathan Edwards later on, and Newton himself, saw in the findings of reason only a confirmation of revelation. A more genuine scientific spirit was displayed by such men as the Harvard astronomer and physicist John Winthrop IV (1714–79), a descendant of the first governor of Massachusetts Bay, who popularized rational scientific explanations of such natural phenomena as eclipses and earthquakes, and the botanist John Bartram (1699–1777), who collected and classified American plants, shrubs, and trees.

Benjamin Franklin (1706–90), the most representative and at the same time the most cosmopolitan product of colonial civilization, best exempli-

fed the American Enlightenment. Franklin was a many-sided genius who succeeded in everything he attempted—journalism, business, science, invention, politics, diplomacy, and love (or “venery” as he candidly called it). Born in Boston and largely self-educated, he moved as a youth to Philadelphia where he prospered as the owner of a printing business and as editor of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. A prolific pamphleteer on politics, economics, religion, and other topics, he became even more widely known through his *Poor Richard's Almanac* (1732-57), a compilation of homely maxims extolling prudence, common sense, and honesty. Franklin's passion for learning and civic improvement led him to play a leading role in founding among other things a circulating library, a city hospital, the American Philosophical Society (1744), and the College of Philadelphia. He was elected to the Pennsylvania Assembly, served as deputy postmaster general of the colonies (1753-74), and represented Pennsylvania and other colonies as agent in London (1757-62 and 1766-74). Meanwhile he had become famous both in America and Europe as a result of his inventions (which included the lightning-rod, the Franklin stove, and bifocal spectacles) and still more for his scientific researches into the nature of electricity. In all his endeavors Franklin displayed a skepticism, a faith in reason and in progress, a passion for freedom, and a humanitarianism that were characteristic of the Enlightenment. But his utilitarian, pragmatic cast of mind and his relative lack of interest in pure science or abstract philosophical speculation mark him out as typically American.

Education

Educational provision in the colonies varied widely, with the Middle and Southern colonies lagging far behind New England. To the Puritan founders of New England education was vital primarily for religious reasons: to qualify for a state of grace a man had to be able to read the Bible. The Massachusetts Bay Acts of 1642 and 1647, which became models for the rest of New England, placed an obligation on parents to ensure that their children were taught to read and required the establishment of elementary schools in towns of more than fifty families and of Latin grammar schools in towns exceeding one hundred families. These laws did not, however, compel parents to send their children to school as would be the case with the nineteenth-century public-school system; they simply laid down minimum standards of literacy while seeking to make formal education at community expense universally available. By about 1700 the spread of settlement and the waning of Puritan spiritual intensity had brought a degree of laxity in the observance of these laws but New Englanders nonetheless remained a highly literate and well-educated people. Elsewhere in the colonies the picture was bleak. Pennsylvania and New York had only a handful of schools, mostly maintained by the churches. In the South-

ern colonies, where the dispersal of the population increased the difficulty of establishing schools, education was regarded as a family matter rather than a community responsibility. Wealthy planters commonly employed private tutors or sent their sons to England for their education.

The first institution of higher learning in the colonies dates from 1636 when Massachusetts Puritans, dreading “to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches when our present ministers shall lie in the dust”, founded Harvard College. That Harvard fulfilled the hopes of its founders was shown by the fact that over half its seventeenth-century products entered the ministry. The second colonial college, William and Mary, was established in 1693 as a bulwark of the Anglican Church in Virginia, while the founding of Yale (1701) represented an attempt to counteract the unorthodoxy taking root at Harvard. The four new colleges established under sectarian auspices in the mid-eighteenth century—Princeton (Presbyterian, 1746), Brown (Baptist, 1764), Rutgers (Dutch Reformed, 1766), and Dartmouth (Congregational, 1769)—resembled their predecessors in being set up to raise learned ministers. But the argument that they were the product of the Great Awakening is overstated. None was narrowly sectarian in curriculum or outlook and only Princeton, founded in the immediate aftermath of the revivals, could claim to be directly and unequivocally the product of religious zeal. The impetus for the rest came from growing population and prosperity, an impetus that led also to the establishment in New York of the interdenominational King's College (1754), afterwards Columbia, and the completely secular College of Philadelphia (1755), which grew into the University of Pennsylvania. Initially the curricula of the colonial colleges resembled those of Oxford and Cambridge in consisting largely of the classics and theology, but in the course of the eighteenth century, under the influence of the Enlightenment, such subjects as logic, mathematics, and the natural sciences were added. American colleges also diverged from their English models in developing a system of external ownership and control. Instead of being autonomous corporate bodies of scholars and masters, they were governed by outside groups of nonresident laymen or trustees.

Law and Legal Institutions

The development of colonial law and legal institutions afforded a further demonstration of how American conditions defied efforts to reproduce English forms and practice. Divergence was inevitable when few were learned in the law, even judges commonly lacked legal training and law books were scarce. Often the best the early lawmakers could do was to apply to American problems a half-forgotten layman's understanding of the peculiar technical language of the English legal system—itself far from uniform. For a long time cases were not printed, judges gave no reasons

for their decisions, and legal proceedings were conducted orally rather than by the exchange of written pleadings. Not until the mid-eighteenth century did the practice of law become a profession. Even then it was not the specialized, elaborately organized, and stratified profession it remained in England. In the absence of licensing guilds like the London Inns of Court distinctions between barristers, attorneys, solicitors, and scriveners were unknown and legal knowledge, instead of being an esoteric, upper-class monopoly, became simplified and widely (if thinly) diffused. Crimes were everywhere less harshly punished than in England, death and imprisonment being less commonly prescribed than whipping, branding, or the stocks, and in New England, where Puritan "admonition" was as important as punishment, practice was often more lenient than mere statute would suggest.