

numerous. The trajectory of Indian–Spanish relationships in the Southwest followed a very different course from that in the East and, Barr argues, studying the entire colonial Sun Belt gives us a more complete picture of the nature of early America.

James Horn, vice president in charge of research and director of the Rockefeller Library at Colonial Williamsburg, examines the growth of the Chesapeake region, with tobacco as its focus. The population history of the region was determined in part by tobacco's voracious need for labor, which was supplied first by indentured servants from England and then by enslaved Africans. The need for labor also meant that more men than women were imported; that, along with a disease environment more dangerous than in other parts of North America's east coast, meant slow population growth among the migrants.

The Colonial Sunbelt: St. Augustine to Santa Fe

JULIANA BARR

Long ago, in 1541, the western and eastern portions of the southern regions of the present-day United States were oh-so-briefly connected. That year, expeditions of two different Spanish explorers, one from the southwestern reaches of the continent, the other from the southeastern edges, came within three hundred miles of one another—separated by only the expanse of northern Texas. Francisco Vázquez de Coronado moved northeast out of Pueblo territories—more than fifty years before the region was claimed by Spain as the province of New Mexico—in search of the fabled lands of Quivira. At the same time, Hernando de Soto led men westward out of Florida across the Mississippi River—twenty-four years before it was claimed by Spain—in hopes of reaching the Pacific Ocean. The link between the two groups came in the form of an enslaved Plains Indian woman, one who had been “acquired” by one of Coronado's men, slipped his clutches as they crossed Texas's Llano Estacado, and then fled eastward with amazingly bad luck into the waiting arms of Soto's party. The story of this ill-fated woman suggests a striking notion—that the greater South was first brought together, albeit momentarily, not by the forebears of Confederate loyalists but by a slave, and an Indian one at that.

If asked today where the Spanish borderlands fit within the historiography of the colonial South, the most likely answer from either southern or borderlands historians would be, “well, they don't.” Until recently few scholars have seen the two regions as kindred. Traditionally North American history does not recognize the existence of a domain called “the South,” with a capital “S,” until the sectional tussles of the nineteenth century that ultimately separated the states into the Union and the Confederacy. So is the “colonial South” the same nineteenth-century region traced back in time? Is it simply the seventeenth- or eighteenth-century precursor to the “Old South”? That certainly seems to be the traditional approach, as textbooks of southern history often cover the colonial

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period by looking primarily at Anglo colonies. Florida, Louisiana, and Texas hover on the peripheries due to their Spanish and French associations during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Florida is mentioned vis-à-vis its conflicts with the British colonies to its north, and Louisiana makes an appearance in reference to the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. By a nineteenth-century standard, Texas comes closest of all the southwestern regions of the Spanish borderlands to making the cut; if Texas was part of the Confederacy—and thus part of the South with a capital “S”—then surely one could argue that eighteenth-century Texas was part of the colonial past of that region? Yet in southern history, Texas generally does not merit inclusion in discussions of the colonial period, as the “colonial South” stops short of crossing the Louisiana-Texas border. All in all, the colonial South, even with Frenchmen and Spaniards added for a little spice, remains predominately an Anglo Southeast; it does not include the Southwest.

In contrast, the historiography of the Spanish borderlands—though originally conceived by Herbert E. Bolton to include all of New Spain’s provinces in North America, from Florida in the East to California in the West—more typically imagines its domain as primarily one in the Southwest (with the notable exception of David J. Weber’s 1992 *Spanish Frontier in North America*). It thus ignores the Southeast.

What might we get if we leave the nineteenth-century approach behind and try to unite the narratives of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Southeast and Southwest into a new colonial South—a colonial Sun Belt—sweeping from the Atlantic to the Pacific? Specifically, we create a new north-south alignment along which one might link together the southern regions of early native North America, be they subject to Spanish, French, or English colonization, using the Gulf of Mexico rather than the Atlantic Ocean as a starting point. In turn, we also might broaden—and define more accurately—a colonial *North*, one far more expansive than merely the areas of the northeastern and middle colonies claimed by England, by stretching it westward to encompass the upper reaches of the French province of Louisiana as well as New France (Canada) as a whole.

A newly aligned north-south axis for early America also gets us out of another directional blind of traditional American historiography: an east-west, manifest destiny design that mandates that the West only be studied once Anglos arrive on the scene. Traditional models of colonization (or invasion) inevitably locate us in the East (and in this case the Southeast), standing among European immigrants freshly arrived and looking westward to the “new” worlds awaiting conquest. The passage of events, as well as people, then flows from east to west, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and the East always remains the center of America. Thus the history of early America has regularly been told from a perspective that not only geographically faces west but also teleologically looks forward to the “emergence of an aggressively expansionist Euro-American United States.”

...

Indian-European contact and interaction sets in motion patterns of European exploration, settlement, contact, conflict, and competition across the

Southeast and Southwest. It is no coincidence that the civilizations of Anasazi, Hohokams, and numerous Mississippians all enjoyed a climate zone that allowed the most extensive development of agriculture and thus the rise of populous societies and expansive political economies. The earliest European arrivals to these worlds were Spanish, moving from south to north either from the Caribbean or from Mexico. Spanish colonial endeavors got a jump on their British and French rivals whose settlements arose to meet, cut off, and replace that Spanish expansion. They were drawn there by stories of fountains of youth, hoards of gold, and cities of Cibola and Quivira, but current historiography tells us that Spaniards (like Frenchmen and Englishmen) found labor, not mineral wealth, to be key to their pursuit of settlement and profit in the lands that had been productive for Indian nations before them. Jamestown and Santa Fe are more closely linked by slavery than merely by contemporary competitions to designate the first settlements and first thanksgivings of popular history. Indeed, if we return to the story of that enslaved Plains Indian woman in 1541, her dire situation was far more prescient than we might first imagine. To reconstitute the colonial South as a colonial Sun Belt and bridge the historiography of the Spanish borderlands and the colonial Southeast, we must begin with that beginning—with Indians and with slavery.

First, how might a unifying ethos across the Southeast and Southwest bring a new sense of order to disparate regions in terms of Indian reception of European newcomers? Or, more specifically, what happens when we remove the Spanish borderlands from the brackets that set it aside as an exception to the larger narrative of the colonial South associated with the story of Jamestown? Looking at the entirety of the colonial Sun Belt strengthens an emerging picture of early America where Indians were never truly colonized. Along some parts of the Atlantic littoral, one might be able to trace a decline in equitable relations between English and Indian peoples by the eighteenth century as native worlds were inexorably chipped away by dispossession and disease and as the balance of power began to shift to increasingly numerous and powerful Europeans. Americans know well the story of Jamestown—not the real story, mind you, but the one that serves as a central mythological origin tale for America—the one in which “noble savages” see something equally noble, if not superior, in their new foes and serve to aid the European climb to hegemony before quietly disappearing by the end of the seventeenth century. We might write for eternity about the “people Captain John Smith barely saw” and still not beat that Goliath of an American origin myth. And no matter how Disney and filmmaker Terrence Malick may wish to sugarcoat the story of Pocahontas and John Smith, the iconic myth of Jamestown’s beginning is really one more chapter in the story of American Indians’ demise. Wars may be fought, noble stands made, but the story tells us that it was only a matter of time—and not that long after all—before the Powhatan Confederacy would be destroyed (whether by germs or steel was almost beside the point). And even if we know and recognize that far more conflict and a far longer period will be needed before groups of Cherokees, Creeks, and many others are removed

from the maps of the colonial South, the story nevertheless conveys the inevitability of that end.

Adding the Spanish borderlands to the landscape of the colonial South complicates the picture considerably. Regions of native interaction with Frenchmen and Spaniards were zones of inclusion, as both Indians and Europeans sought to incorporate one another into their economic and social endeavors. Where large populations of native peoples deterred Anglo settlement, they attracted Spanish missionaries and French fur traders to live among them. These were worlds that gave rise to models of colonial relations quite different than those pursued by Englishmen, ones that included "frontier exchange economies" and "middle grounds." Inclusion did not necessarily carry with it solely beneficial outcomes for Indians, as it might involve coerced labor, missionary proselytizing, and most importantly demographic losses due to disease; nevertheless, it created more self-aware métis populations and cultures. Colonial English development meanwhile rarely wavered from an ideology of exclusion, extermination, and removal, creating in its wake a world of Anglo domination and African enslavement, where a black-white dichotomy admitted no others, either from its own admixture or from the presence of different nationalities or ethnicities. Yet if inclusive zones balance out if not outweigh exclusive ones across the colonial Sun Belt, then the story of American cross-cultural interaction and identity begins to look substantially different.

To bring that picture into better focus, the view from the Spanish borderlands forces us to question the assumptions we bring to a history of European-Indian relations in the colonial South that, despite our best efforts, is often still freighted with a prevailing plotline of Euro American dominance and Indian resistance. Sixteenth-century Spanish conquests in Mesoamerica and South America also might lead us all too willingly to assumptions that the Spanish borderlands were yet more regions where Spanish imperial control went unquestioned. Yet as David Weber reminds us, those in the United States tend to associate Spanish-Indian relations with only the narratives of the earliest conquistadores like Christopher Columbus, Hernando de Soto, and Hernán Cortés, never in fact realizing that in 1790 more than half of so-called Spanish America remained in native hands. More tellingly, Europeans in the provinces of New Spain that stretched into North America rarely dealt with Indian peoples who had been first conquered militarily or devastated by disease. Instead, more often than not, they found themselves playing by native rules of political and social interaction on playing fields where they had equal or lesser footing. In such situations, Spaniards struggled to persuade Indians into alliance, and subjugation was out of reach. Treaties were just as common to eighteenth-century Spanish diplomacy as they were to that of the English—a commonality that looks all the more significant when the native regions of the Southeast and Southwest are considered as a whole.

Thus, when we look at the American Southwest, we find nothing remotely resembling the Powhatan nation's demise. In New Mexico, Puebloan peoples, who were united with some Apaches and even some Spaniards, rose up and pushed out those Spaniards whose labor demands and landgrabs had become

too much by the late seventeenth century. The Puebloans allowed Spanish authority to return in the eighteenth century only under conditions that allowed for mutual accommodation. At the same time in New Mexico and Texas, Apaches were rising to territorial dominance, a position that was impeded in the eighteenth century not by Spaniards but by Comanches. And Comanches would not reach the peak of their power until well into the nineteenth century—an ascent largely attributed to their keen ability to manipulate Spaniards. In the Southwest, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries gave rise to periods of economic and political expansion for multiple Indian nations, and their stories are far removed from a colonial age cast only as a period of dispossession, decline, and disappearance. From a southwestern perspective, then, Euro-Americans never appeared to be an all-powerful group who would steamroll over any and all native peoples in their path so that the Indians still standing at the dawn of the nineteenth century were only those awaiting a first contact with Anglo-Americans. Rather, these native peoples had been in contact and conflict with Europeans for three hundred years and had been handling them with a fair amount of mastery throughout those centuries.

Yet the Spanish borderlands do more than simply provide a contrast to a narrative of declension that associates the colonial South with exclusion and extermination. Looking across the entire spectrum from west to east reorients the position of native peoples who were exceptions to a British model of conquest—Creeks, Cherokees, Choctaws, Seminoles, and many others. Uniting the Southeast and Southwest in our portrait of a colonial Sun Belt puts such southeastern native peoples in good company with those far removed from expanding British imperialism. In this larger framework, stories of seventeenth-century native demise become the exception to the continuum of Indian peoples who came into contact with more inclusive colonial projects of Spaniards and Frenchmen. The Lower Mississippi Valley and the southern backcountry have often been reduced to peripheral frontiers in relationship to the central story of colonial southern history. But once integrated into a colonial Sun Belt, we see far more clearly the Indians who could manipulate colonial ventures to their own advantage and not merely benefit from but dictate to their European neighbors. For three centuries after the arrival of Columbus in the western Hemisphere, Indians controlled most of southeastern as well as southwestern North America. Many populations may have been decimated in number, but native peoples recreated new nations and new communities that maintained a sense of self in the midst of environments of disease, dispossession, violence, and warfare. As this transformation of both the human and natural landscape took place, Indian-European interactions were ones of exchange and accommodation in council houses and trading posts just as often as they were ones of conflict and death on battlegrounds and sickbeds.

Once the East and West are joined together, their new total for what constitutes the narrative of Indian-European interaction in the colonial South also alters our timetable for colonial relations. Many historians look at the outcomes of the Pueblo Revolt in New Mexico, Metacom's War in New England, and the Yamassee War in the Carolinas at the turn of the seventeenth century and see only that Europeans survived in the end. They thus cast it as a period of

solidification of colonial European control in North America. Yet in the larger scheme of a colonial Sun Belt, those wars make for only the first cacophonous notes. Turning points for most Indians indeed came much later with the loss of more inclusive-minded French and Spanish imperial neighbors after the cession of Louisiana first to Spanish and then to Anglo-American control and later when the destabilization of Spanish and then Mexican governments culminated in U.S. claims to Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California—opening up all regions to unrestrained expansion and invasion by people with neither respect for native sovereignty and property rights nor interest in intermingled economies, societies, or cultures.

Tobacco and the Peopling of Virginia

JAMES HORN

... As the numbers of Indians inhabiting the Chesapeake rapidly declined, the white population grew by leaps and bounds, from 105 men and boys who settled at Jamestown in 1607 to about 900 in 1620, 8,000 in 1640, 25,000 in 1660, 60,000 in 1680, and 85,000 by 1700. Virginia was the most populous of the mainland colonies throughout the century, although dwarfed by the scale of demographic growth in the Caribbean. In both Virginia and Maryland the flow of immigrants surged after 1650. During the 1630s and 1640s immigration averaged about 8,000–9,000 per decade, but from 1650 to 1680, 16,000–20,000 people entered the Chesapeake each decade—the equivalent of the population of England's second city, Bristol. Half the total number of immigrants who settled along the tobacco coast in the seventeenth century arrived in these three decades.

Despite this impressive growth, immigrants did not enter a healthy environment. Whereas about 120,000 settlers immigrated to the Chesapeake over the whole century, the white population in 1700 was not even 90,000. Unlike the northern colonies, growth in the South was sustained only by continuous immigration to compensate for the massive wastage of life and, increasingly after 1675, a significant movement of people out of the region. Contemporaries were well aware of the deleterious effect of the Chesapeake environment on English settlers. Colonists, wrote George Gardiner in 1650, were subject to "much sickness or death. For the air is exceeding unwholesome, insomuch as one of three scarcely liveth the first year at this time."...

... Mortality rates in the tidewater, however, were even greater. Up to 40 percent of new arrivals may have died in their first couple of years, commonly of a variety of ailments associated with malaria and intestinal disorders. Malaria occasionally reached pandemic proportions among settlers and frequently left survivors in poor health, easy prey to a variety of other diseases. Even if the outcome was not fatal, most immigrants experienced a period of sickness (seasoning) in their first year. Moving to Virginia and Maryland, like moving from the

provinces to London, was risky and amounted to a calculated gamble on survival. For those who survived and lived long enough, the rewards could be considerable, but that very success was predicated in part on a rapid turnover of population caused by the high death rate.

Natural population growth was retarded also by the considerable sexual imbalance that existed throughout the century. Chesapeake society was dominated by males not only in the conventional sense but simply in sheer numbers. At no time in the century did the sex ratio improve upon two to three men for every woman. Such an imbalance had far-reaching practical effects (quite apart from the psychological stress it must have caused). A shortage of women restricted family formation and forced many males to remain single. More than a quarter of men from the lower Western Shore of Maryland who died leaving estates between 1658 and 1705 were unmarried. The problem was exacerbated by the relatively late age at which women married. Since the vast majority of women arrived in the Chesapeake as servants and were usually obliged to finish their term of service before marrying, they were unable to take a husband until their mid-twenties: about the same age they would have married in England....

One of the most obvious differences between English and New World society immediately apparent to early settlers and, indeed, its main attraction was an "abundance of land and absence of people." Covering about half the land area of England, the Chesapeake had a population at midcentury that could have quite easily been accommodated in a small English county or London suburb.... Low population density was a function of both the small size of local populations and a scattered pattern of settlement. Given the cheapness of land and the nature of the economy, it made sense for planters to take up large tracts of land (by European standards) and seat themselves on or near convenient shipping routes. Water carriage not only provided the best means of transporting bulky tobacco leaf packed in hogsheads, but it was also favored by English merchants, who preferred to trade directly with individual producers: manufactured goods, liquor, and servants brought from London, Bristol, or other outports could be exchanged on the spot for tobacco. The system bypassed the need for market towns in the tidewater, because trade was as dispersed as settlement.

An unfortunate consequence, as commentators never tired of repeating, was that Chesapeake society failed to develop urban communities. "Townes and Corporations have likewise been much hindred," Anthony Langston wrote of Virginia in the 1650s,

by our manner of seating the Country; every man having Liberty ... to take up Land (untaken before) and there seat, build, clear, and plant without any manner of restraint from the Government in relation to their Religion, and gods Service, or security of their persons, or the peace of the Country, so that every man builds in the midst of his own Land, and therefore provides beforehand to take up so much at the first Patent, that his great Grandchild may be sure not to want Land to go forward with any great design they covet, likewise the conveniency of

the River from Transportation of their Commodities, by which means they have been led up and down by these famous rivers ... to seate in a stragling distracted Condition leaving the inside of the Land from the Rivers as wast for after Comers.

Thirty years later, the French Huguenot Durand of Dauphine commented, there was "neither town nor village in the whole country, save one named Gemston [Jamestown], where the Council assembles. All the rest is made up of single houses, each on its own plantation." In 1678, Charles, Lord Baltimore, described St. Mary's City, the capital of Maryland, as consisting of "not above thirty houses, and these at considerable distances from each other." No other place in the province was even worthy of being called a town.

In terms of first impressions, it is worth stressing that to English eyes what was missing in Virginia's and Maryland's landscape was as significant as what was present. Immigrants, whether from urban or rural backgrounds, were used to living in a society where there was a hierarchy of interdependent and interrelated communities: village, market town, provincial capital, and city. Few people in England lived more than a few miles from a local town—an hour, if that, by road or across country. Along the tobacco coast, only the cluster of dwellings and other buildings located in the colonies' capitals resembled small towns, and for most of the century even they were nearer in size, if not character, to English villages. The absence of towns inclined English commentators to view the Chesapeake as undeveloped and uncivilized. Missing, too, was the bustle of fairs and market days, crowded taverns and inns, and busy roads bringing people and goods to trade. Approximations existed, but nothing that could compare to the crowd of people and places familiar to English men and women in their native communities. Getting used to the *absence* of significant aspects of everyday life that were taken for granted in England was probably the most difficult part of adapting to conditions in the Chesapeake.

Tobacco and the Chesapeake Economy

Little can be understood of the development of Virginia and Maryland society without reference to tobacco. Considered a luxury in the early seventeenth century, it could be produced cheaply in the tidewater and sold initially for a handsome profit in European markets. From the early 1620s, when extensive production began, tobacco governed the character and pace of immigration, population growth, settlement patterns, husbandry and land use, transatlantic trade, the development of the home market, manufactures, opportunity, standards of living, and government policy. Settlers used leaf as local money, paid their taxes, extended credit, settled debts, and valued their goods in it. "We have [no] trade at home and abroad," a contemporary stated at the end of the century, "but that of Tobacco ... [it] is our meat, drink, clothes, and monies." Without tobacco, a very different kind of society would have evolved.

The advantages of tobacco production were many: its yield per acre was high, and its keeping qualities were good; it fetched a better price per pound

than English grains, and the soils and climate of the Chesapeake were, for the most part, suitable for its cultivation. A plantation required relatively little capital to set up, and a man's labor, or that of his family and a couple of servants, was sufficient to run it. Last, there was a potentially expansive market for tobacco in England, which the monopoly granted to the Virginia Company in 1619 recognized and protected. The very success of the "Weede," in fact, would later cause problems in both colonies owing to overproduction....

... The creation of a mass market was crucial, because without it Chesapeake tobacco would have remained a high-priced luxury item in limited demand. Consequently, there would have been no expansion of output and, therefore, no need for significant population growth. Stagnation set in after 1680 because planters were unable to lower the costs of production any further: freight charges ceased to fall as quickly after 1660, the amount of tobacco being produced by each worker reached a maximum such that increased productivity required more labor (more capital investment), and the price of both land and servants rose steadily in the 1670s and 1680s. Any economies in the costs of transportation and marketing of leaf could no longer be passed on to the consumer; instead, they helped planters absorb rising production costs. The result was thirty years of depression until the end of the War of Spanish Succession and renewed demand after 1715....

Inequality and Opportunity

Chesapeake society differed from that of England in many important respects. Entire sections of English society were missing. There was little in the Chesapeake to attract men of established fortune from the parent country, despite the efforts of promotional writers to convince them otherwise. In the absence of towns and industry and with a relatively small, dispersed population, Virginia and Maryland did not require (and could not support) the range of specialist trades and crafts to be found at home. Consequently, social status associated with most Old World occupations was not transferred to the New. Colonial society lacked the complexity and subtlety of European social hierarchies.

Yet this is not to imply that the Chesapeake developed as a rough-hewn, undifferentiated society. As in England, those with the greatest estates were judged the fittest to govern, and the precept that political power followed economic power was generally accepted, if not always practiced. The absence of a traditional ruling class undoubtedly weakened social cohesion and was exacerbated by the high turnover of officeholders owing to heavy mortality, the difficulty of establishing ruling dynasties, and the return of gentry to England. In these uncertain conditions, it is hardly surprising that colonial rulers appealed time and time again to English precedents to justify and legitimize their actions. Assemblies were loosely modeled on Parliament, county courts on quarter sessions, and the church (in Virginia, not Maryland) on parochial organization in England. Virginia governors were enjoined in their oath of office to adhere as closely as possible "to the common law of England, and equity thereof." Justices were commanded to "do justice as near as may be" to English precedent

and were granted extensive powers similar to those of their counterparts in English shires. Injunctions and appeals to the past, to tradition, were intoned endlessly throughout the century....

... Inevitably, colonial officials encountered serious difficulties in trying to recreate, overnight, governing institutions that had evolved over centuries in England. Neither Virginia nor Maryland developed viable manorial structures, and in both colonies the county court absorbed the functions of English borough, manor, and church courts, becoming the key governing institution at the local level. The rich particularity of the past could not be replicated in America; what emerged were compromises and approximations.

Chesapeake society, therefore, developed as a simplified version of English society, but also a highly aberrant one. One of the most obvious social differences was the presence of slaves. Numerically insignificant throughout most of the century, the black population increased enormously in the final two decades. From a couple of thousand in 1670 (6 percent of the total population), numbers shot up to about thirteen thousand (13 percent of the population) by 1700. Half the bound labor force was enslaved by the beginning of the eighteenth century.

As suggested earlier, English attitudes toward blacks were molded by a similar ragbag of racial and cultural prejudice adopted against Indians and other alien peoples. They were savage, heathen, lascivious, shiftless, lazy, and apelike, in every way inferior to whites. Apart from emigrants from London or Bristol, most settlers probably encountered blacks for the first time in the Chesapeake and in this context made the indelible connection between slavery and race. Yet, like English reactions to Indians, the everyday response to blacks was more complex than the general framework of prejudice and institution of slavery might lead one to expect. Especially in the early years of settlement, down to 1660, when numbers were small and blacks worked alongside servants and masters to bring in the tobacco crop, relations between the two races may have been relatively relaxed. Occasionally slaves were freed or purchased their liberty. Some acquired property and were able to live peaceably side by side with their white neighbors.

But one should not exaggerate even the limited opportunities for blacks, slave or free, to improve their condition in this period. From the 1660s, Virginia began legislating "stringent racial laws" designed to regulate white-black relations and provide planters with greater powers to discipline their slaves. Possibly this development represented an effort by the recently restored royal government to tighten up generally on bound laborers in the colony: to highlight the distinctions between free and unfree and clarify their respective rights and privileges. In this fashion, social position was defined and the preeminence of the elite confirmed. But measures enacted against slaves had no parallel among the white population, and it is certain that conditions for blacks began to deteriorate sharply as a consequence. Mass importation after 1680 and the changing origin of slaves (brought directly from Africa rather than the Caribbean) served only to intensify discriminatory legislation. Chesapeake society took on a new character as planters became irrevocably wedded to slavery and shifted from incoherent racial prejudice to full-blown racism....

In terms of social development, however, the crucial issue was whether the huge numbers of young men and women who ended up laboring in Virginia and Maryland could be absorbed into society once they had completed their period of service.

... Like the lotteries that initially helped finance the settlement of Virginia, poor men and women who immigrated under indentures entered a gigantic human lottery themselves. Losers met an early death or lived in poverty for the rest of their lives. Winners secured a comfortable income and independence and in a few cases attained a level of wealth and social standing unthinkable for men and women of humble origins at home. The logic of the lottery, however, dictated that for every ex-servant who made it into the ranks of the middling or upper classes, tens of others, who left barely a trace in the records, died in poverty and obscurity.

Opportunity for all planters was closely attuned to the ebb and flow of the tobacco economy. During the early 1660s the price of leaf dipped below two pennies per pound and then hovered just above one penny for the rest of the decade. There was no improvement in the years that followed; if anything, conditions worsened. English officials were bombarded by a chorus of complaints. Sir William Berkeley wrote in 1662 that prices had fallen so low that tobacco would not "bear the charge of freight and customs, answer the adventure, give encouragement to the traders and subsistence to the inhabitants." A few years later, Thomas Ludwell told Lord Arlington that tobacco was "worth nothing." He elaborated to one of Sir William's kinsmen, Lord John Berkeley, in 1667. "Twelve hundred pounds of tobacco is the medium of men's crops," he wrote, "and half a penny per pound is certainly the full medium of the price given for it, which is fifty shillings out of which when the taxes ... shall be deducted, is very little to a poor man who hath perhaps a wife and children to cloath and other necessities to buy. Truly so much too little that I can attribute it to nothing but the great mercy of God ... that keeps them from mutiny and confusion." ...

... Poverty in the Chesapeake had its own distinctive character, expressed by severe material deprivation (poor housing and low standards of living), the inability of many small planters in Virginia after 1660 and Maryland after 1680 to escape from a living of bare subsistence, and the movement out of the region after 1675 of thousands of ex-servants for whom the Chesapeake held no future. As the price of tobacco spiraled downward, the transition from servant to smallholder brought neither the well-being nor economic independence anticipated. At the level of the individual holding, landowners, big and small, had complete freedom to manage their affairs as they felt fit, perhaps limiting the amount of tobacco grown and turning to other products. But economic opportunities for smallholders were considerably limited by the grip of tobacco on the economy and low returns from leaf. The stint placed on Virginia tobacco production in 1668, for example, meant that planters "not able to remove from their ould and over worne grounds, are Kepte by the Limitacon of a certen number of plants per poll in Perpetuall poverty." Hedged in by meager profits and dependence on merchants and wealthy planters for credit to buy essentials, the world of the small planter became increasingly constricted as the going got tougher in the last third of the century....

... As economic conditions worsened throughout the Chesapeake in the 1670s and opportunities for the poor and middling planters declined, so social divisions and attitudes hardened. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that many of those at the pinnacle of colonial society viewed the majority of planters as merely a source of revenue to mulct dry. Unable to command the labor of the poor indefinitely, elites devised numerous strategies for siphoning off the small profits of planters into their own coffers.... Culpeper, the new governor, wrote from Virginia in 1680 that the "low price of tobacco staggers ... the continuance of it will be the fatal and speedy ruin of this noble Colony without the application of a remedy." "Our most formidable enemy, poverty," Colonel Nicholas Spencer observed, "is falling violently on us through the low value, or rather no value, of tobacco." A few years later, the colony was described as "a Barbarous and Malancholy part of the world." If rebellion had tempered the worst excesses of government corruption, it did nothing to alleviate the poor planter's problem of making a living. The last two decades of the century were locust years.

Chesapeake society underwent profound changes during the course of the seventeenth century. Evolving from fragile frontier outposts in the early years, the adoption of plantation agriculture and subsequent massive immigration ensured the survival of the Chesapeake Bay colonies and led to the spread of English settlement across thousands of square miles of the tidewater. Gradually the landscape was transformed. The first colonists had envisioned a land of limitless promise where towns and cities would push back the forest, manufactures would thrive, and well-cultivated farms would tap the natural abundance of the earth. The outcome, however, was very different. Plentiful cheap land and plantation agriculture led to the evolution of a form of husbandry excoriated as slovenly and wasteful by English commentators who misunderstood its advantages, the tobacco trade retarded the development of urban centers because marketing and distribution took place in Europe, and no important manufactures took root. These shortcomings were a constant source of frustration and disappointment to colonial officials, who blamed planters' slavish dependence on tobacco for Virginia's and Maryland's failings.

If the Chesapeake did not live up to the expectations of early settlers or projectors, nevertheless during the middle decades of the century the region provided opportunities for poor immigrants who survived the disease environment and the rigors of servitude to earn a modest livelihood and perhaps move a few rungs up the social ladder. With hard work, or perhaps a good marriage, male and female servants might themselves eventually become smallholders and employ their own servants. Potentially, even greater rewards were to be had: a fortunate few enjoyed spectacular success and moved from servitude into the ranks of the local gentry within a few years, a degree of social mobility unthinkable in England. But opportunities for the poor should not be exaggerated. During the 1660s and 1670s, first in Virginia and then in Maryland, opportunities for the poor declined. Ex-servants experienced increasing difficulty in establishing themselves as independent planters, and many smallholders were

relentlessly pushed to the brink of poverty by the steady decline in income as the price of tobacco fell. The distinctive features of the Chesapeake's social structure slowly took shape. About half the population was made up of servants, slaves, and recently freed men and women (dependents of established planters): the equivalent of servants in husbandry, day laborers, and domestics in England, although, of course, there was no equivalent of the slave field hand. Small and middling planters, including tenant farmers, who used their own family labor to work their holding or who possessed a few servants, made up about 40 percent of the population, while the rest were wealthy planters, merchants, gentry, and a small group of artisans.

From the 1660s, especially in older-settled regions, the social order became increasingly articulated and social distinctions increasingly visible. Social rank became more predictable and rigid, more like that in England. At the same time, and probably related, settlers' tolerance of nonwhite elements of the population declined. Indian peoples were marginalized, and conditions for blacks rapidly deteriorated. By the turn of the century, the political and economic consolidation of colonial elites in both Maryland and Virginia and the switch from white to slave labor heralded the emergence of the "slave-based, gentry-dominated society" characteristic of the Chesapeake's golden age.

FURTHER READING

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