



The Southern Colonies



Artist's Rendition of George Washington's Plantation: Painted by Junius Brutus Sterns, 1851

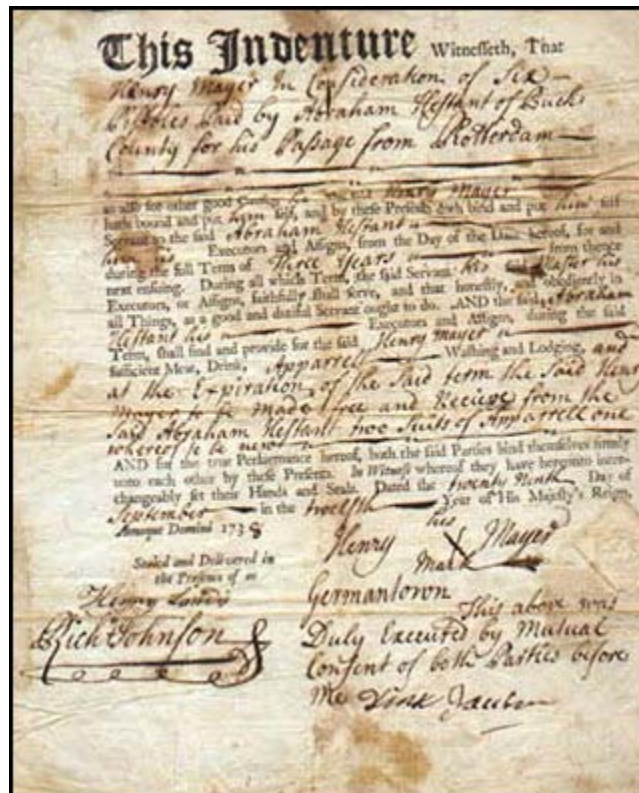
Unit Overview

Since the founding of Jamestown in 1607, the English continued to establish colonies along the southeastern shore of the North American continent. The Southern Colonies, which included Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, attracted both proprietors and settlers. A long growing season and rich soil encouraged the growth of cash crops and provided opportunities for large profits. However, rice, indigo and tobacco were labor-intensive and required large numbers of workers. As prices on the world market became more competitive, indentured servants and African slaves were used to

work large tracts of land known as plantations. Was profit the only reason behind the founding of the Southern Colonies? Why did the use of African slaves increase so dramatically, and how did slavery become a race-based institution? Let's see how it all happened.

Filling the Labor Gap

As the English soon discovered, the establishment of colonies demanded a large amount of physical labor. Clearing land, constructing houses, planting crops and tilling fields intensified the need for workers. To fill the gap, many people came to North America as **indentured servants**. To pay for their passage, these individuals signed contracts to work without pay for a specified number of years. Although agreements varied, a seven-year term of service was the most common. When they completed their obligation, indentured servants were freed and given a small piece of property.



Original Contract for an Indentured Servant

African slaves, brought to the colonies against their will, also provided the labor necessary to build the English colonies. In 1619, a Dutch trader arrived in Jamestown and sold twenty Africans to the English settlers. Slavery has long been associated with the American South, but it existed in the New England and Middle Colonies during the colonial period. Although their overall numbers were small in these areas, the cities held the largest concentrations of blacks. For example, 20% of Boston's population was made up of Africans by 1750. In northern urban areas, the enslaved served as household servants, craftsmen and dock workers.



Illustration from the Jefferson/Fry Map of Virginia: Courtesy of the University of Virginia Archives

In the Southern Colonies, slaves primarily were purchased for agricultural work. Some of the first Africans in Virginia were treated as indentured servants and became freemen. They purchased land, owned indentured servants and raised families. When tobacco prices on the world market fell in the 1660s, opportunities for blacks in the Southern Colonies quickly diminished. When profits decreased, English planters relied more and more on slaves to maintain their earnings. Virginians passed laws in their colonial legislature to deny gun ownership to Africans and to strip them of their legal rights. Other southern colonies that depended on labor-intensive crops passed similar measures. As a result, Africans were marked as inferior, and racially based slavery became a permanent condition for those who continued to arrive involuntarily.



Go to Questions 1 through 5.

Founding Maryland

Sir George Calvert, titled **Lord Baltimore**, asked King Charles I to grant him a charter for a tract of land in the New World. He hoped to achieve two goals by acquiring this property. Calvert planned to create a safe home for Roman Catholics, who were persecuted in England, and to increase the family fortune. When the king issued the document in 1632, the elder Calvert had died so his son Cecil inherited the project. As the proprietor, he had the right to appoint a governor, give land to others, coin money and make laws. Rather than go to North America himself, the new Lord Baltimore sent his two brothers to establish a settlement. They arrived in 1634 accompanied by 200 settlers. The colony, located between Pennsylvania and Virginia, was named **Maryland**. To learn more about its founding, watch the video listed below.



Since Virginia had realized profits from the sale of tobacco, the Maryland colonists planted it but wanted to avoid becoming too dependent on a single crop. Therefore, farmers who grew tobacco agreed to set aside at least two acres for corn. This encouraged the Marylanders to cultivate wheat, fruits, vegetables and other staples to feed their families. The town of **Baltimore**, founded in 1729, provided a good seaport and became the colony's largest settlement. In the meantime, the Calverts gave large estates to their relatives and friends. As the number of plantations grew, the need for workers increased. Choosing not to recruit farmhands and not to offer wages, landowners purchased enslaved Africans and the contracts of indentured servants to provide the necessary labor.



Baltimore in 1752: Edward J. Coale, 1817

The Calvert family continued to face challenges as the colony grew. The colonists soon demanded some say in their government, and Lord Baltimore permitted the election of an assembly to make laws. Because the colony was originally intended to be a haven for Catholics, the arrival of large numbers of Protestants was a concern. In an effort to protect Catholics from religious persecution by the Protestant majority, Lord Baltimore convinced the legislative assembly to pass the **Act of Religious Toleration** which permitted religious freedom throughout the colony. There were also border disputes between Pennsylvania and Maryland. To resolve these issues, **Charles Mason** and **Jerimiah Dixon**, two European scientists, were hired to survey the dividing line between the two colonies. They marked the border, known as the **Mason-Dixon Line**, with stones displaying the Calvert family crest on one side and the Penn crest on the other.



Go to Questions 6 through 10.

Virginia and Bacon's Rebellion

As other colonies were founded, Virginia continued to grow. Because wealthy tobacco planters occupied the best land near the coast, new settlers moved inland and pushed westward. By the 1640s, they had come into conflict with the Native

Americans who inhabited the same region. **William Berkeley**, Virginia's governor, hoped to avoid a confrontation like King Philip's War by negotiating an agreement with the Indians. In exchange for extending the colony's land in the west, Berkeley pledged to keep the settlers from advancing any further into Indian holdings. The westerners, led by **Nathaniel Bacon**, opposed this arrangement because they wanted to clear more land for their farms. They also believed that the governor was simply trying to preserve the colony's valuable fur-trading business with the Indians. Bacon and Berkeley defended their positions with public statements like the ones quoted below.

Nathaniel Bacon: July, 1676	William Berkeley: May, 1676
<p>We cannot in our hearts find one single spot of rebellion or treason or that we have in any manner aimed at subverting the settled government...All people in all places where we have yet been can attest our civil, quiet, peaceable behavior far different from that of rebellion...Let truth be bold authority and favor to whose hands the dispensation of the country's wealth has been committed. Let us observe the sudden rise of their estates... compared with the quality in which they first entered this country. Let us consider their sudden advancement. And let us also consider whether any public work for our safety and defense or for the advancement and propagation of trade, liberal arts or sciences in any (way) adequate to our vast charge. Now let us compare these things together and see what sponges have sucked up the public treasure and whether it has not been privately contrived away by unworthy favorites and juggling parasites whose tottering fortunes have been repaired and supported at the public charge.</p>	<p>Now my friends I have lived 30 years among you, as uncorrupted diligent as ever Governor was. Bacon is a man of two years ago to you, his person and qualities unknown to most of you, and to men else, by any virtuous action that ever I heard of. That very action which he boasts of, was sickly and foolishly, and as I am informed treacherously carried off the dishonor of the English nation. Yet in it, he lost more men than he did in three years of war, and the grace of God will put myself in the same dangers and troubles again when I have brought Bacon to acknowledge the laws are against him. I doubt not but by God's assistance to have better success than Bacon has had, the reason of my hopes are, that I will take a Council of wiser men than myself but Mr. Bacon hath none about him but the lowest of the people.</p>

In 1676, Bacon and his supporters attacked Native American villages and tried to take more land from the Indians by force. Determined to crush the rebellion, Governor Berkeley organized his own army, but Bacon's forces marched on Jamestown, set fire to the town and drove out the governor. Before he could take charge of Virginia's government, Nathaniel Bacon contracted an illness and died. This ended the rebellion, but the event had some significant consequences. Virginia's colonists had discovered that a group of unified citizens could be a powerful force, and the Indians had learned that guarantees concerning their land meant little to the European settlers.



Go to Questions 11 through 18.

The Carolinas

As a reward for their support, King Charles II offered eight of his friends a proprietary colony south of Virginia in 1663 and named the territory **Carolina** based on the Latin word for Charles. The eight proprietors reserved large estates for themselves and planned to make a profit by selling or renting the remainder. Colonists began to arrive in 1670, and they built Charles Town or, as it was eventually called, **Charleston**. Charleston grew into the fourth largest city on the eastern seaboard. Because the colony was large, climate and geography differed from north to south. The northern section of Carolina with its large forests and less humid climate attracted farmers who grew tobacco and cut trees for lumber. Because there were no adequate harbors along the northern coast of the colony, settlers relied on Virginia's ports and merchants to conduct their trade.



The Pink House, Charleston's Oldest Building: Photo by Brian Stansberry/Creative Commons

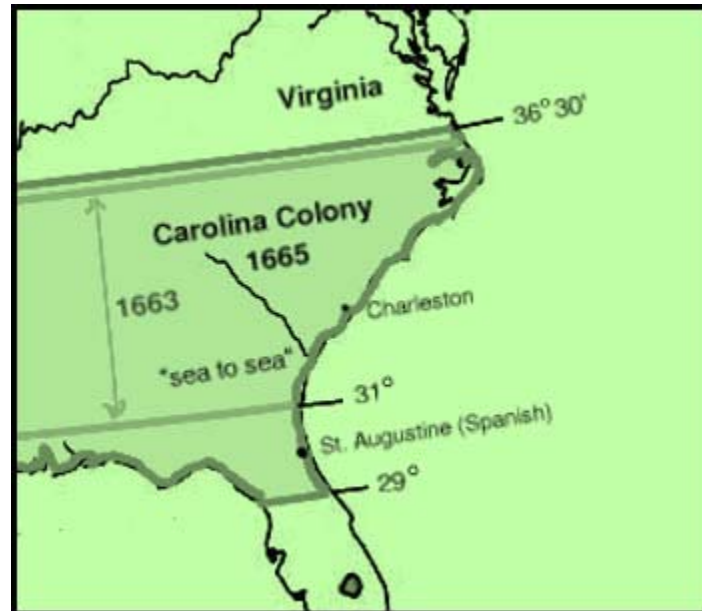
The southern half of the colony was blessed with rich soil and an excellent harbor at Charles Town. Many of the settlers in this region came from **Barbados** and other English colonies in the Caribbean. They brought their slaves with them. By 1680, planters discovered that **rice** grew well in the warm, humid coastal lowlands, and it soon became the colony's leading crop. In the 1740s, another valuable plant would provide additional profits. Learn more about South Carolina's developing plantation economy by viewing the video listed below.



The Colony of South Carolina

Colonel George Lucas, a British officer stationed in the West Indies on the island of Antigua, moved his family to a plantation in the Carolinas. After he returned to duty, his daughter **Eliza Lucas Pinckney** looked for ways to keep the plantation out of debt. She experimented with seeds of the **indigo** plant that her father had

sent from the West Indies. When properly cultivated and processed, indigo yielded a rich, blue dye popular for coloring cloth in Europe. Eliza not only made money for herself with the indigo trade, but she also shared seeds with her neighbors. This created another valuable cash crop for the Carolinas.



Map Showing the Carolina Colony

Like rice, the growth of indigo was labor-intensive so the demand for slaves increased. By the early 1700s, more than half of the people living in southern Carolina were enslaved Africans. At the same time, the colonists grew increasingly dissatisfied with the proprietors, and they demanded a greater role in the colony's government. By 1729, Carolina had become the two royal colonies of **North Carolina** and **South Carolina**.

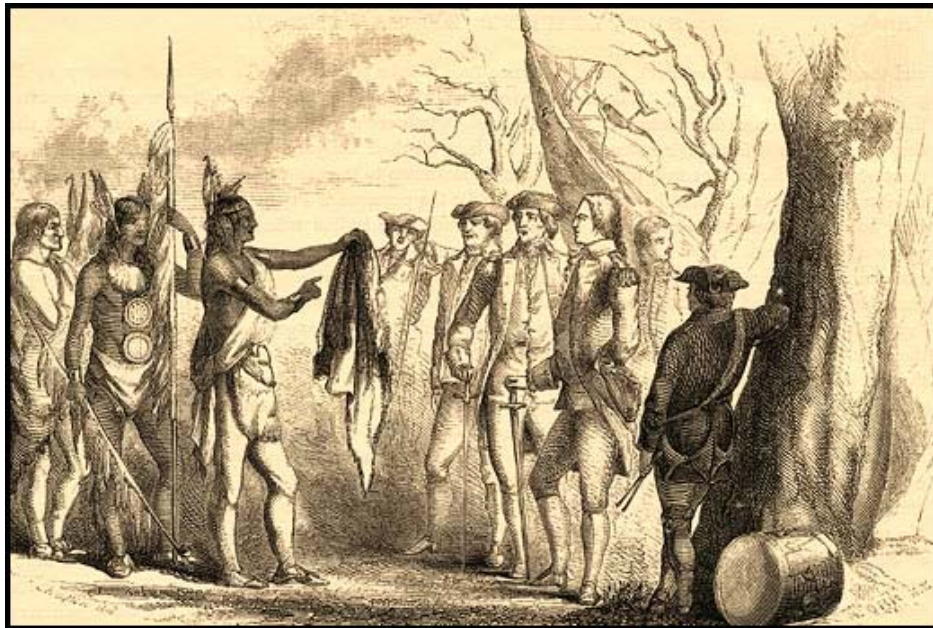


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Oglethorpe's Experiment

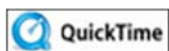
Georgia, the last of Britain's colonies in North America, was established in 1733. **James Oglethorpe** and nineteen other proprietors received a charter to create a settlement where poor people and those who were deeply in debt could make a

new life for themselves. For the British government, Oglethorpe's idea served a second purpose. Because Spain and England were at war in the early 1700s, England feared an attack launched from Spain's forts in Florida. Since Georgia, as the new colony was named, was located below South Carolina, it could act as a buffer to help protect the English from the Spanish.



Oglethorpe Meeting with Chief Yamacraw of the Tomochichi Tribe

In 1733, Oglethorpe and his first group of settlers that had been handpicked by the proprietors arrived in North America. Some of their first projects included the construction of a series of forts to defend themselves from the Spanish and the establishment of the town of **Savannah**. In terms of daily life, Oglethorpe had a very specific vision for the colony. Thinking that small farms would encourage the settlers to do their own work, he gave each one only fifty acres of land, tools and seeds. Because he wanted his colonists to be independent, hardworking and Protestant, strict rules outlawed slavery, rum and Catholicism. The video listed below describes Oglethorpe's laws and their impact.



The Colony of Georgia

Even though Georgia's farms successfully produced rice, indigo, corn, wheat and livestock, the colony's growth was disappointingly slow. Only a few debtors took advantage of Oglethorpe's offer, but hundreds of poor people did migrate to Georgia. They came from Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland and other European nations. In a few years, Georgia's population had the largest percentage of non-British residents within the thirteen colonies. Although they came from diverse backgrounds, the colonists agreed that Oglethorpe's laws were too restrictive and too numerous. He finally permitted the settlers have larger farms and lifted the ban on slavery. For the colonists, however, this was simply too little too late. Frustrated and disappointed, the proprietors turned the colony over to the king and returned to England.



Go to Questions 22 through 24.

What Happened Next?

Over a span of one hundred and twenty-five years, England had lined the eastern coast of North America with thirteen colonies. By 1750, they were generally prosperous, well populated and less dependent on their home country for survival. Englishmen on both sides of the Atlantic were proud of this accomplishment. Because distance and troubles with other European powers presented challenges to ruling an empire across the sea, England granted the colonists a significant amount of freedom over their local affairs. However, the English firmly believed that the colonies existed to benefit their economy, and attempts to control colonial trade for their own profit angered the colonists. Before taking a closer look at the deepening rift between England and colonies, review the names and terms found in Unit 5; then, answer Questions 25 through 32.



Go to Questions 25 through 32.