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PART

CHAPTER 3
The British Atlantic
World, 1660–1750

CHAPTER 4
Growth, Diversity, and
Conflict, 1720–1763

British North America and the Atlantic World

1660–1763

By 1660, the patterns of colonial enterprise in the Americas were becoming clear. For the colonies of England — which became Britain after the 1707 Act of Union with Scotland — the period from 1660 to 1763 was one of growth and diversification. Slave imports to plantation colonies exploded, while a wide array of European peoples — coming from Ireland and continental Europe as well as England, Wales, and Scotland — jostled together in rapidly growing regions of neo-European settlement. Yet a coherent imperial vision for these American holdings emerged slowly, and the colonies remained largely independent of crown control.

After 1689, Europe plunged into a century of warfare that had an enormous impact on the Americas. As wars spilled over into North America, British, French, and Spanish colonies all engaged more deeply with neighboring Indians, whom they often sought to employ as allies in their struggles to control North American territory. Native American polities were undergoing dramatic transformations in these same years, reshaping themselves to function more effectively in relation to their European neighbors. At the same time, warfare, immigration, and trade laid the foundation for more intensive interactions across the Atlantic. These interactions, and the cultural movements they supported, helped to knit together the increasingly diverse colonies of British North America.

Part 2 addresses these developments, giving particular attention to the following three main concepts:



The Diversification of British North America

The American colonies of the various European nations gradually diverged from each other in character. The tribute-based societies at the core of Spain's empire developed into complex multiracial societies; Portuguese Brazil was dominated by its plantation and mining enterprises; the Dutch largely withdrew their energies from the Americas, except for a few plantation colonies; the French, too, developed several important plantation colonies in the West Indies but struggled to populate their vast North American holdings. The population of Britain's colonies, by contrast, grew and diversified after 1660. Britain came to dominate the Atlantic slave trade and brought more than two million slaves to its American colonies. The great majority went to Jamaica, Barbados, and the other sugar islands, but half a million found their way to the mainland, where, by 1763, they constituted nearly 20 percent of the mainland colonies' populations. Slavery was a growing and thriving institution in British North America.

Non-English Europeans also crossed the Atlantic in very large numbers. The ethnic landscape of Britain's mainland colonies was dramatically altered by 115,000 migrants from Ireland (most of them Scots-Irish Presbyterians) and 100,000 Germans. Most immigrated to Pennsylvania, which soon had the most ethnically diverse population of Europeans on the continent. Relations among these groups were often divisive, as each struggled to maintain its identity and autonomy in a rapidly changing landscape.



Rise of the British Atlantic World

These population movements were part of the larger growth and development of the Atlantic World, a phrase historians use to refer to the quickening pace of contacts and exchanges connecting Europe, Africa, and the Americas. The rise of the British Atlantic was a layered phenomenon that began with the strength of Britain's transatlantic shipping networks, which in turn laid the foundation for large-scale population flows, rising economic productivity, and dramatic cultural transformations. The growing power of its navy, merchant marine, and manufacturing sector allowed Britain to dominate the eighteenth-century Atlantic. Much of the cultural impact of its maritime power derived from two further developments: the print revolution, which brought a vast array of ideas into circulation; and the consumer revolution, which flooded the Atlantic World with a wide array of newly available merchandise.

The British Atlantic World gave rise to four critically important cultural developments. It spread Enlightenment ideas and helped to create a transatlantic community of literati interested in science and rationalism; it supported communities of Pietists who promoted the revival and expansion of Christianity; it gave well-to-do colonists access to genteel values and the finery needed to put them into action; and, by making such an abundance of consumer goods available, it encouraged colonists to go further into debt than they ever had before.



Contact and Conflict

Alongside the diversification of colonial populations and the rise of the British Atlantic, the eighteenth century was shaped by contact and conflict: between colonies and their Native American neighbors, and also among rival European empires. In Europe, the period after 1689 has sometimes been called the Second Hundred Years' War, when Britain, France, and their European allies went to war against each other repeatedly. As these conflicts came to the North American theater, they decisively influenced Indian relations. Native American populations shrank dramatically or disappeared altogether during the seventeenth century, devastated by the effects of the Columbian Exchange (Chapter 2). The rise of imperial warfare encouraged the process of "tribalization," whereby Indians regrouped into political structures—called "tribes" by Europeans—that could deal more effectively with their colonial neighbors and strike alliances in times of war. Europeans, in turn, employed Indian allies as proxy warriors in their conflicts over North American territory.

This pattern culminated in the Great War for Empire, which began in the North American backcountry, engaged thousands of provincial soldiers and Native American warriors, and reshaped the map of North America. The Treaty of Paris of 1763 gave Britain control of the entire continent east of the Mississippi. Events would soon show what a mixed blessing that outcome would turn out to be.

British North America and the Atlantic World 1660–1763

Thematic Understanding

This timeline organizes some of the important developments of this period into themes.

How did the demographic changes outlined under the theme "Migration and Settlement" impact the developments that are listed under "Work, Exchange, and Technology"? >

	WORK, EXCHANGE, & TECHNOLOGY	MIGRATION & SETTLEMENT	POLITICS & POWER	CULTURE & SOCIETY	AMERICAN & NATIONAL IDENTITY
1660	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Atlantic System links plantation and neo-European colonies • Mercantilist legislation in England: Navigation Acts (1651, 1660, 1663) • New York inherits Hudson River Valley manors from the Dutch; Carolina proprietors try but fail to institute a manorial system • Migrants to Pennsylvania seek freehold lands • Rapid expansion of African slave imports undergirds sugar, tobacco, and rice plantation systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Middle Passage shapes Africans' experiences of arrival • Indian slave trade emerges in South Carolina • First Mennonites arrive in Pennsylvania (1683) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominion of New England (1686–1689) • Glorious Revolution (1688–1689) • War of the League of Augsburg (1689–1697) • Founding of the Restoration Colonies: the Carolinas (1663), New York (1664), Pennsylvania (1681) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collapse of the Puritan Commonwealth leads to toleration in England • Isaac Newton publishes <i>Principia Mathematica</i> (1687) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration makes England a monarchy again; royalist revival • The Glorious Revolution makes England a constitutional monarchy • Massachusetts loses its charter (1684) and gains a new one (1691)
1690	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New England shipbuilding industry and merchant community come to dominate the coastal trade • Agricultural labor and artisanal skills in high demand in the Middle colonies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quakers emigrate to Pennsylvania and New Jersey • Second wave of Germans arrives in Pennsylvania, Shenandoah Valley 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliament creates Board of Trade (1696) • War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Locke publishes <i>Two Treatises on Government</i> (1690) • Rise of toleration among colonial Protestants • Print revolution begins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colonists gain autonomy in the post-Glorious Revolution era • Tribalization developing among Native American peoples
1720	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The price of wheat rises (doubles in Philadelphia, 1720–1770) • British trade dominates the Atlantic • Opportunity and inequality in the Middle colonies • Ohio Company of Virginia receives 200,000 acres (1749) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scots-Irish begin migrating to Pennsylvania (c. 1720) • Parliament charters Georgia (1732) • Penns make Walking Purchase from the Delawares (1737) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Walpole is prime minister (1720–1742) • Stono Rebellion (1739) • War of Jenkins's Ear (1739–1741) • War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Whitefield's visit to America sparks the Great Awakening (1739) • Benjamin Franklin founds American Philosophical Society (1743) • New colleges, newspapers, magazines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African American community forms in the Chesapeake • Planter aristocracy emerges in the Chesapeake and South Carolina • Culture of gentility spreads among well-to-do
1750	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freehold society in crisis in New England • Half of Middle colonies' white men landless • Conflicts over western lands and political power (1750–1775) • British industry being mechanized; colonial debt crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40,000 Germans and Swiss emigrate to Pennsylvania (1749–1756) • Anglo-Americans pushing onto backcountry lands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French and Indian War/Seven Years' War (1754–1763) • The Albany Congress (1754) • The Treaty of Paris (1763) • Pontiac's Rebellion (1763) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least twelve religious denominations in Philadelphia • Neolin promotes nativist revival among Ohio Indians (1763) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victory in the Great War for Empire sparks pro-British pride in the colonies • Desire for political autonomy and economic independence strong