Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

LO 1 Explain the reasons for Europeans’ exploring lands outside Europe, and trace the routes they followed.

LO 2 Describe the founding of European nations’ first colonies in the New World.

LO 3 Trace the expansion of England’s holdings in the southern colonies.

LO 4 Outline the reasons for and timing of England’s founding of colonies in New England.
“At first, the results of contact were generally bad: the tale is mostly one of hunger, disease, and death.”

In the collision of cultures that took place in the New World, Europeans were the initiators. Their desire to find wealth and spread Christianity brought Indians, West Africans, and Europeans into sustained contact for the first time. At first, the results of contact were generally bad: the tale is mostly one of hunger, disease, and death. After this difficult start, however, the seeds for a new nation were planted.

**LO 1** Exploration and Discovery

Beginning in the fourteenth century, Europeans took advantage of the new technologies developed during the previous century, especially the nautical advances made during the Hundred Years’ War, when large parts of central Europe became battlegrounds that required circumvention. They did so for at least two reasons: (1) to alleviate a trade deficit and (2) to spread Christianity (see “The reasons why . . .”).

**What do you think?**

The legacy of the initial phase of colonial development was unparalleled freedoms for the settlers, compared to what they could have had in Europe.

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The reasons why . . .

- **To alleviate a trade deficit.** After the Crusades, many Europeans began to consider spices and other luxuries from the Middle East, India, and parts of Africa true necessities. To reach Europe, the goods had to be shipped from the Far East, through Middle Eastern and then Italian traders. This sequence of middlemen drove prices up, leading to a problem: Because the Europeans had few commodities to trade in return, they had to use gold to pay for the goods, and gold supplies subsequently diminished. This trade deficit led to a depression throughout Europe, as a great deal of money was going out and very little was coming in. The depression sparked a scramble to find another way to obtain the desired goods; namely, a cheaper route to the Far East that would avoid Muslim and Italian middlemen.

- **To spread Christianity.** The second factor in European expansion was the mission to spread Christianity, initially Catholicism, around the world. Like many other religions, Christianity has a missionary message within it, and many of the first explorers thought they could simultaneously search for riches and spread the gospel. Competition from the rapidly growing Islamic faith provided further motivation for spreading Christianity, as did the continuing battles between Catholics and Protestants that began during the Reformation. An important consequence of Christianity’s messianic message was that Europeans sought not only trade relations with those whom they came into contact, but also dominion over them.
The Eastern Route: The Portuguese

The search for riches and for lands not already in the hands of Christians drew European explorers to several locations around the globe, many of which they encountered quite accidentally. (Indeed, the Americas were perhaps the largest pieces of land ever discovered by mistake.) In 1298, the adventurer Marco Polo wrote that the Orient was the source of many desired goods and that there might be a western route there across the Atlantic Ocean. Others still believed in the existence of an eastern route, through Africa. Both beliefs propelled explorers into the unknown. Portuguese leaders were among those who still believed that an eastern route could be found. Led by Prince Henry the Navigator (1394–1460), Portuguese sailors traveled down the western coast of Africa searching for the dramatic left turn that would lead them to India and the Middle East. After several failures, in 1498 they finally succeeded. In that year, Vasco da Gama (1469–1524) reached India by rounding the Cape of Good Hope in southern Africa, then heading back north to India. His success made Portugal a wealthy nation throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (see Map 2.1).

The Beginnings of European Slavery

Before da Gama’s success, however, Portuguese sailors in the 1440s had probed West Africa and made a discovery that would be critical for the development of future relations between cultures. African kings wanted to trade with the Portuguese along the shore, and both sides benefited from the trade in goods. But in the process, the Portuguese also bartered for African slaves. They carried them back to Portugal as living novelties, thus introducing the system of African slavery to Europe during the fifteenth century.

By the 1490s, the Portuguese had taken control of a previously uninhabited island off the west coast of Africa called São Tomé. São Tomé had the perfect soil for growing sugar, a product much in demand in Europe. Sensing profits, in the 1500s the Portuguese began using African slaves to harvest sugar in São Tomé, thus establishing the first modern economy dependent primarily on slave labor.

“Plenty of rubies, plenty of emeralds! You owe great thanks to God, for having brought you to a country holding such riches!” —Vasco da Gama

Fifteenth-century exploring ship.
With Portugal’s numerous successes, rival Spain acted like a jealous neighbor, and Spanish sailors began advocating the search for a western route to the Orient. After years of delay, the Spanish monarchy finally agreed to fund the costly venture. The first voyage that Spain reluctantly funded, in 1492, was that of Christopher Columbus (1451–1506), a Portuguese-trained Italian sailor. The Spanish monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, sent him westward with three small ships, the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. On October 12, 1492, Columbus and his crew sighted land in the present-day Bahamas. Thinking this was an outlying portion of Asia and India, he called the local inhabitants “Indians.”
Columbus returned to Spain shortly thereafter, bringing some treasures and, more importantly, tales of the possible riches via the western route. In fact, of course, he had not found Asia or India at all; he was the first European in several centuries to set foot in North America.

**Predecessors and Followers**

Columbus and his crew, however, probably were not the first Europeans to land in North America since the closing of Beringia some 10,000 years earlier. Around the year 1000 C.E., Leif Ericson and a cadre of Scandinavian explorers sailed their brightly colored ships to Greenland and possibly as far south as Cape Cod, in today’s Massachusetts. During the following decade or two, Scandinavians made several expeditions to North America, but they established neither lasting settlements nor substantive trading posts.

After Columbus, a host of other explorers set out in search of treasures in the Middle and Far East. Many continued to search for the lucrative “passage to the Orient” by sailing west from Europe. John Cabot (c. 1450–1499), like Columbus, was an Italian sailor in search of a patron. He found backing from the English merchants of Bristol, a city in southern England. He set sail in late May 1497 and landed a month later in what is today northeastern Canada. Riding the easterly winds home, Cabot landed in England just two weeks after he departed from Canada. His stories and his rapid return fueled further interest in exploration.

The Americas got their name from the first sailor to realize that he had reached a “new world,” rather than the coast of Asia: Amerigo Vespucci (1454–1512). Vespucci explored the Caribbean Sea and the coast of South America from 1497 to 1502. Vasco de Balboa (c. 1475–1519) was the first European to sail the Pacific (1513). Ferdinand Magellan’s (1480–1521) crew completed the first circumnavigation of the world from 1519 to 1522 (although Philippine tribespeople killed Magellan shortly before the end of the journey). All these men, and others who explored North America, were prominent players in what historians have dubbed the “Age of Exploration.”

**LO Early Settlements and Colonization**

Most of these early voyages were intended simply to create trading networks. Few sought to create lasting settlements, and even fewer sought to colonize these exotic lands. However, each European power competitively sought the profits of sustained contact, and this competition for wealth drove them to create encampments that would enable them to defend their claims to those faraway natural resources.

**Portuguese**

After Columbus’s voyage, Spain claimed possession of all of North America. Predictably, the Portuguese would have none of it. They protested Spain’s claim. To prevent open conflict between the two Catholic
nations, Pope Alexander VI intervened. In 1493, he drew a line on a map that extended from north to south, proclaiming that all land east of the line belonged to Portugal, all land west of it to Spain. The effect of this line, called the Line of Demarcation, was to grant all of Brazil to Portugal, while Spain had claim to Central and North America. In 1500, the Portuguese explorer Pedro Cabral accidentally landed in Brazil, beginning what would be Portugal's most profitable colonial venture. As perhaps the first act of modern European colonialism, the pope made his arbitration with no consideration of the peoples already inhabiting the land (see Map 2.2).

Spanish

Despite Portugal’s early ambition, it was the Spanish that established the first colonies in North America. In the process, they began one of the bloodiest chapters in the world’s history, as disease and warfare nearly vanquished the native populations of the Caribbean, Mexico, and North and South America. The advent of disease was so bad that perhaps as many as one in five people then
living on Earth died in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Furthermore, Spain, searching for gold and other sources of wealth, brutally abused the native populations, often enslaving them and forcing them to work in gold mines to increase Spain’s vast wealth. Just two decades after Columbus first crossed the Atlantic, the Spanish had established permanent settlements in Hispaniola, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and Panama. By 1513, the enslaved natives of Hispaniola were producing $1 million worth of gold annually. It would be only a few years before the Spanish expanded their settlements into the interior of North America in search of greater riches.

Spanish Expansion into North America

The system the Spanish used to develop their colonies was distinct. In the early sixteenth century, Spanish conquistadors, mostly minor noblemen, led private armies to the New World. These armies were relatively small, usually made up of fewer than one thousand men, but they devastated indigenous populations with weapons and disease wherever they went. Once they had overpowered a kingdom, it became known as an encomienda, in which Indian villages were obliged to pay a tribute, usually in gold or slaves, to the conquistadors. This, in essence, enslaved the Indians in Spanish-controlled lands, although no one actually owned another human being. (In doing this, the Spanish were adapting the system that had been enforced by the North African Muslims to control the Spanish when they conquered Spain.) As the number of encomiendas grew, viceroys reporting directly to the Crown began to govern them.

Their growth also inspired a stern opposition to the brutal manner in which the conquistadors exerted their control. Of these critics, Bartolomé de las Casas, a Spanish priest, is the most famous. His book, A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies (1552), serves as a key beginning point for humanitarian concerns about the potential for cruelty inspired by imperialism.

Despite protests like that of de las Casas, Spanish imperialism continued. The most successful of the conquistadors were Hernán Cortés (1485–1547) and Francisco Pizarro (c. 1475–1541), whose adventures sparked widespread interest in the New World.

**Cortés and Mexico.** Between 1519 and 1521, Hernán Cortés led an expedition of six hundred men against the Triple Alliance (better, if incorrectly, known as the Aztecs) in Mexico and their ruler, Montezuma. Four weapons allowed Cortés and his men to overrun the huge civilization: horses, which allowed mobility; firearms, which terrorized their victims; the support of other Indian tribes who had suffered under Aztec rule; and, by far the most important weapon, disease. Smallpox was first introduced to the New World by one of Cortés’s men and by 1520 had decimated the Aztecs. Under assault from these four weapons, the great civilization of the Aztecs fell into Spanish hands within two years of Cortés’s arrival, and, to Cortés’s delight, so did the Aztecs’ gold and silver reserves. The Spanish built Mexico City on the ruins of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlán. Hoping to find the same plunder that Cortés had found, Spanish colonists soon arrived in large numbers, and Mexico City became the largest “European” city in America.

**Pizarro and Peru.** By the 1530s, Pizarro, well aware of Cortés’s triumph, explored the western coast of South America from a base he established in Panama. In 1532, he and his army of just 168 men (mostly untrained soldiers) encountered the tremendous Inca Empire of Peru. Initially, like the Aztecs, the Incas welcomed the army, but the relationship quickly soured. Many of the Inca soldiers were off at battle with another tribe because the ravages of smallpox, which had spanned the continent less than a decade after being introduced by Cortés’s men, had created political strife for the Incas. In the meantime, Pizarro kidnapped the Inca leader, amassed a huge fortune by ransoming his life, killed him anyway, and seized the Inca capital of Qosqo. With the Inca warriors away, Pizarro faced only mild resistance from what would have been formidable foes. When the Inca soldiers returned, Pizarro and his men were already entrenched in the empire. Pizarro founded the city of Lima as his capital in 1535 and ruled from there until his death in 1541. Again, internal battles within the Indian populations and especially smallpox contributed to the decline of what had been a vibrant civilization.
Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Caribbean islands were some of the most prized New World possessions. From the time of Columbus, Europeans had attempted to subjugate the local Caribbean Indians to mine gold, search for food, and, in the case of the Spanish, serve as sexual companions. When sugar production began in earnest in the mid-1600s, Europeans devoted vast amounts of resources to grow the valuable cane. By the late 1600s, huge numbers of African slaves worked in the Caribbean.

Florida. In today’s United States, the Spanish developed settlements in Florida and the Southwest. The Spanish initially had little interest in Florida, but when French adventurers began to use eastern Florida as a base from which to attack Spanish ships traveling to Mexico and Peru, Spain sent soldiers to drive out the French pirates. In 1565, in order to secure the region, the Spanish conquered the city of St. Augustine from the French. Once established, Florida was a low priority for the Spanish because it did not contain the riches of Mexico, Peru, or other parts of Central America, but it was important as an outpost guarding against attack. St. Augustine, now a part of Florida, is the oldest continually occupied European-established city in the continental United States. Under Spain’s control, it was largely a town ruled by military leaders and Catholic clergymen, serving as an anchor for Spain’s northernmost imperial designs.

The American Southwest. The Spanish also explored the American Southwest, heading north from Mexico as far as present-day Colorado. As with St. Augustine in Florida, the Spanish occupied the town of Santa Fe to secure the region against intruders but had little other use for it. In 1598, Juan de Onate, a Spanish conquistador, became the first European governor of a future American state—New Mexico.

Results of Spanish Conquest

By the middle of the 1500s, Spanish conquistadors controlled numerous areas surrounding the Gulf of Mexico. There were five principal results of this initial Spanish conquest: (1) financial, (2) biological, (3) racial, (4) religious, and (5) geopolitical.

Financial. Financially, the economic impact of the flow of silver from the mines of these lands was enormous. The influx of minerals made Spain one of the wealthiest nations in the world. Spain could now afford to defend a three-way trade between West Africa, the Americas, and Europe. But the sudden abundance of silver also meant that many people had access to money, causing prices to rise. The result was an inflationary price revolution, which badly hurt European
laborers and landless agricultural workers, whose wages could not keep up with increasing prices throughout Europe. Increased numbers of impoverished Europeans were driven to emigrate to the Americas in search of a new life.

25 million people lived in central Mexico before Cortés arrived; fifteen years after his arrival, more than 8 million had perished. Within a few generations, diseases eliminated two-thirds of the native population. And a century after first contact, the Indian population of central Mexico was around 700,000. It took less than one hundred years for this population to fall from more than 25 million to 700,000.

Diseases also spread far from the location of their initial inception, debatably stretching as far north as New England. This is perhaps one reason why English explorers found so few Indians when they first landed on the Atlantic coast in the 1600s, although diseases affecting New England’s tribes may also have come from contact with European fishermen off the coast of Canada. For their part, Indians may have introduced syphilis to Europeans, but even if syphilis did originate in the New World, it was hardly as deadly as smallpox or measles proved to be. Lest this part of the exchange be used to induce latter-day guilt in Europeans or European-Americans, most historians believe that, due to complex genetic dispositions within the Indian population, there would have been no way to prevent this microbial transmission. Furthermore, the recent work of Mexican epidemiologist Rodolfo Acuña suggests that many Indians in today’s Mexico might have died from a disease called cocolitzli, which had nothing to do with smallpox and which was likely not imported from Europe.

If the exchange of microbes had horrifying ramifications, the mutual transfer of plants and animals led to a more positive biological exchange between the Americas and Europe. Contact allowed the cultures to expand the kinds of food they could grow and the animals they could domesticate. Horses and livestock were introduced to the Americas by the Europeans; maize, tobacco, tomatoes, chocolate, and potatoes, all of which had been first cultivated by Indians, came to Europe. The development of sugar plantations in the Caribbean Islands was also a product of the Columbian Exchange, although their dependence on slaves was a corrosive element of the exchange. The number of foods and animals that traversed the globe for the first time is truly astounding.

Racial. Another component of the Columbian Exchange concerns race, as Spanish exploration began the process of mixing various races of
Early Settlements and Colonization

For one, the Spanish explorers procreated with Indian women. For another, their diseases had greatly depopulated Native America, a circumstance that expedited the introduction of African slaves as a labor force in the New World. By 1600, the multiracial character of the New World was firmly established.

Religious. To convert the Indians, the Spanish often destroyed Indian temples and replaced them with Catholic cathedrals. Catholic friars tried to use the religious symbols of the Indian religions to teach the lessons of Catholicism. But often the Indians transformed Catholic saints into spiritual likenesses of their preexisting gods and goddesses. The most famous example of this religious meshing was the Indian corn goddess and the Virgin Mary. Many Indians were able to accept the Catholic faith on their own terms once it had been hybridized in this way.

Geopolitical. Geopolitically, the Spanish successes meant that other European nations became hungry for conquest. Rivalries grew as nations sought resources they lacked at home. Of the five major results of the Spanish conquest, geopolitical concerns were the most significant in bringing the French and the English into New World exploration.

French

Like the Spanish and the Portuguese, French explorers, too, had been searching for the fabled route to the Orient. They focused on looking for the Northwest Passage that would lead them through today’s Canada to the Pacific Ocean. The French never found this nonexistent route, but they did find valuable products, mainly furs, that they could return to France.

The result was the creation of several encampments in present-day Canada that served as French trading posts in the New World. The largest was Quebec, founded in 1608. At these encampments, the French traded for furs with the Indians and spread Catholicism. However, the French were beleaguered by disease, by warfare with the Iroquois (who resented the Frenchmen’s successful trade with the Algonquians), and by the weather of the Northeast. Thus they remained a small but sturdy presence in North America, with holdings that extended great distances but vanished quickly after challenges from the more entrenched English throughout the 1700s. In the mid-1600s, there were only about four hundred French colonists in North America.

English: Planting Colonies, Not Marauding for Wealth

The English were slow to enter into New World exploration because the Tudors were still consolidating their Crown in the early 1500s, when Portugal, Spain, and France were busy traveling abroad. Furthermore, the Tudors at this time were closely allied with Spain (both were still Catholic) and did not want to challenge Spain’s dominance in the New World. Also during the early 1500s, the English textile industry was booming, so wealthy individuals invested in textile businesses rather than in high-risk overseas ventures.

By the middle of the 1500s, this English disinclination toward exploration began to change. There were religious, social, economic, and geopolitical motives for this transition (see “The reasons why . . .” on the next page).

Despite hopes to the contrary, England (and all other European nations other than Spain) did not find great wealth through quick plundering of existing civilizations in the Americas. England’s wealth from the New World came instead through prolonged colonization, the development of substantial economies, and the exploitation of agricultural resources. As illustrated by Sir Walter Raleigh’s explorations, it would take time and experience for the English to learn to focus on such endeavors. The desire for quick riches has persisted as a human flaw through the ages.

Sir Walter Raleigh and Roanoke

Sir Walter Raleigh was the first Englishman to found a New World colony. Raleigh received a royal patent to claim New World lands in the name of the queen, who was eager to check Spain’s colonial expansion. In 1585, he established his first colony, using the Spanish conquistadors as his model. Like the Spanish adventurers who had conquered the Aztecs and Incas, Raleigh and his men sought gold and silver, and he planned to exploit native labor to mine these treasures.

But there was a hitch in Raleigh’s plan. Hoping to avoid conflict with the Spanish, Raleigh decided to focus his search to the north of Spain’s territories in Mexico and South America. He and his men established their base at Roanoke, on the outer banks of modern-day North Carolina, a region lacking mineral wealth. Frustrated in their search for New World gold and silver, Raleigh’s men abandoned the colony within a year and returned to England.

After the first Roanoke settlement failed, Raleigh decided to continue his efforts on a different basis.
There were four key reasons why the English became more interested in exploration in the mid-1500s:

**Religious.** After several contentious decades during which Catholics and Protestants fought bitterly over whose faith was the rightful inheritor of the Bible, Protestant Queen Elizabeth I came to the throne. Queen Elizabeth’s support of the Reformation suddenly turned England into Europe’s leading opponent of the increasingly powerful Catholic Spain. Their rivalry increased after Spain supported two unsuccessful Roman Catholic plots to assassinate Elizabeth for her support of the Reformation (whether Pope Sixtus V was aware of these attempts remains an open question). Making things worse, in 1588 Spain tried unsuccessfully to invade England. This intense rivalry meant that the English were unwilling to allow Catholic Spain to convert all the non-Christians of the New World without competition from the surging English Protestants.

**Economic.** The second motive for English expansion was that the textile markets of Antwerp, Belgium, failed in the late 1500s, a development that left English producers without this market for their cloth. As a result, many wealthy individuals stopped investing in textiles and looked for new opportunities, such as New World exploration. In addition, the English economy was burdened by importing large quantities of raw materials, which created a dangerous trade imbalance. The New World had the potential to supply the English with these raw materials at cheaper prices.

**Social.** Meanwhile, the enclosure of farms and the inflationary price revolution created a glut of impoverished Englishmen seeking to escape poverty by leaving England. But the poor were not the only English affected by limited economic possibilities. The English gentry was growing, and after the Church of England separated from the Catholic Church, traditional opportunities for the younger sons of nobles to serve in the Catholic Church were closed. With little unsettled land remaining in England, many members of the English upper class were willing to seek their fortune in the colonies.

**Geopolitical.** Fourth, Queen Elizabeth’s durability as a monarch, reigning for over fifty years, stabilized the Tudor throne, meaning that England could now participate wholeheartedly in New World ventures. The bitter relations between Spain and England had erupted into war after Elizabeth knighted the British pirate Francis Drake for his raids on Spanish treasure ships from 1578 to 1580. The Anglo-Spanish war, most noted for the defeat of the Spanish Armada, led to an English victory. For our purposes, the Anglo-Spanish war is significant for two reasons. First, it established England as a world power, allowing it to begin exploring the New World, and second, it signaled the decline of Spain as a world power. Now other nations could more successfully capitalize on the promises of the New World.

He returned to the same region because he still wanted to avoid the Spanish, but this time he declared that he would not seek easy treasure. Learning from his initial failure and drawing on the experience of English settlements in Ireland earlier in the century, Raleigh decided that his second colony would consist of plantations. Instead of sending conquerors, he sent whole families to the New World, hoping to recreate English society and its agricultural economy. Poor English farmers would perform the labor on the plantations, while transplanted gentry would perform their traditional functions of land ownership and governance.

But Raleigh’s second Roanoke colony ultimately failed as well. Voyages to resupply the colonists were delayed, and by the time a ship finally reached Roanoke in 1590, the outpost was deserted, perhaps after an attack by a local Indian tribe. The fate of the roughly one hundred settlers has never been conclusively determined, and the second Roanoke settlement came to be known as the lost colony of Roanoke.

### Lessons of Roanoke

Although Roanoke was a catalogue of failures, it did teach the English two lessons. First, Raleigh had discovered that the formula for successful English colonization would not be quick strikes for gold but rather a plantation model that would create self-sustaining settlements. Second, Raleigh’s efforts demonstrated that more than one person needed to fund such ventures—the demands were too great to be borne by a single purse. This realization resulted in the expansion of joint stock companies, or companies that sold stock to numerous people in order to raise large sums of money. At first, the English used joint stock companies to finance trade; then, in the second half of the sixteenth century, English
investors started a number of joint stock companies for ventures in the Old World. In 1553, the Muscovy Company traded for furs and naval stores in Russia; in 1581, the Levant Company was founded for trade with the Turkish Empire; in 1585, the Barbary Company focused its attention on North Africa; in 1588, the Guinea Company traded in West Africa; and in 1600, the East India Company formed to trade in Asia. Many of these companies were highly successful, and they encouraged many English investors to consider establishing colonies overseas by the early 1600s.

**LO³ England Founds the Southern Colonies, 1607–1660**

These two lessons observed, if not always adhered to, the English began to expand their holdings in the New World. Between 1600 and 1660, more than 150,000 English people left for the New World. Most went to the West Indies, and perhaps slightly less than a third crossed the Atlantic to settle the eastern coast of North America.

**Virginia: Jamestown**

Despite 115 years of contact, the year 1607 is often regarded as the first year of American history. It was in that year that the English established their first lasting colony in the land that would become the United States: Jamestown, in present-day Virginia.

Begun by the Virginia Company of London (a joint stock company), Jamestown began with 104 colonists, some of whom favored the plantation model of settlement, others of whom favored the conquistador model. Failure bedeviled them, however, mainly because of a harsh drought and because this group of settlers included too many English gentlemen who had little desire either to work the soil or to build fortifications. Most notably, John Smith attempted to unite this first group of settlers, but his rise to power insulted many of the gentleman explorers, who had him shipped back to England. The first years for these settlers were difficult, as disease, lack of food, poor management, and hostile relations with Indian tribes took a toll. Historians now call the winter of 1609–1610 the starving time, when food supplies were so scarce that at least one colonist resorted to cannibalism. Only the continued arrival of new colonists kept the settlement functioning. From 1607 to 1609, more than 900 settlers arrived in Jamestown. Only 60 survived the first few years.

**Jamestown Finally Succeeds**

Jamestown eventually succeeded, and its success depended on two things: Indian relations and tobacco.

**The Powhatan Confederacy.** First, the English settlers, badly in need of food, relied on a group
of six Algonquian villages known as the Powhatan Confederacy (named after its leader). Powhatan and his tribe had the English settlers as allies who would accept food in return for knives and guns, which would help Powhatan secure his Confederacy against other tribes. This was likely a difficult decision, because the Indians had little idea of what the colonists had in mind regarding the kind of life they wanted to develop in the New World. Other tribes deemed it less troublesome to simply attack and kill the newcomers. The relationship between Powhatan’s tribe and the Virginians was often difficult and sometimes violent, especially when crops were limited. But the tribes of the Powhatan Confederacy did assist the settlers throughout their struggling early years.

Jamestown Grows

The success of tobacco made Jamestown a more appealing place to be. But cultivating tobacco requires labor. To meet this need, early tobacco growers attempted to follow the Spanish model and force Indians to work in their fields. Such efforts were hampered by several problems: Indians objected to the concept of growing surplus crops for cash; language barriers made it difficult for English planters to explain their demands; and, chiefly, the colonists lacked the military force required to enslave Indians. In 1619, Dutch traders imported a small number of Africans to Jamestown, who performed much of the backbreaking work of establishing a town. However, due to cost considerations, the institutionalized importation of Africans was slow to progress throughout the seventeenth century.

The result was the expansion of a system of labor called indentured servitude, in which English and Irish poor sold their labor for four to seven years to a farmer who would fund their voyage across the Atlantic. To encourage their importation, the Virginia Company offered a head right of 50 acres to individuals who paid their own passage, which put more property in private hands. Throughout the 1600s, almost 80 percent of the immigrants to Virginia were indentured servants, most of whom were young lower-class males. These servants had to endure several years of “seasoning,” a period of time during which they were exposed to the New World’s microbes. Many did not survive.

Tobacco. Second, in the early 1610s, the English settlers hit a jackpot: They successfully cultivated tobacco. The Spanish had introduced the crop to Europe in the late 1500s after first encountering it in the Caribbean. Tobacco had been a tremendous success in the markets of Europe, making it, along with sugar, one of the most profitable cash crops of the New World. By 1612, the Virginia settler John Rolfe (best known for making peace with the local tribes by marrying Pocahontas, the daughter of a local chieftain) had successfully cultivated an imported strain of tobacco in Jamestown. The colonists shipped the first crop to England in 1617, and by 1620 they had delivered 40,000 pounds of the cured plant back to England. Within a few years, shipments had climbed to 1.5 million pounds. Virginia was about to boom.
Consequences

Jamestown continued to grow in size and in population. This expansion had three major consequences: (1) increased hostility with Indians, (2) change in leadership of the colony, and (3) the introduction of African slavery.

*Increased hostility with Indians.* Local Indian tribes were leery of the growth of Jamestown, which was rapidly encroaching on lands to which they had previously had access. After Powhatan died in 1618, his successor, Opechancanough, began planning an attack to expel the colonists. A fierce assault in 1622 resulted in the death of 357 English colonists, or one quarter of the Jamestown settlement. Angered, the settlers felt the attack gave them justification to destroy every Indian they encountered. Hostilities brewed.

*Change to royal control.* A second result of Jamestown’s growth was a change in who controlled the colony. Opechancanough’s attack of 1622 wiped out vital infrastructure and subsequently bankrupted the Virginia Company of London, which had had a grant for the land from the Crown. This, combined with internal conflicts within the company, led England’s King James I to seize the colony and place it under royal control. Virginia thus became a royal colony, with a governor chosen by the king. But the colonists fought for their liberties and forced the governor to work with an assembly that would be chosen by the landholders (a democratic method carried over from the Virginia Company). This assembly was called the House of Burgesses. Although the king maintained control, the colony enjoyed self-government and had its own political body within which it could air grievances. America’s struggle for political liberty had begun.

*Introduction of African slavery.* The third major result of Jamestown’s growth was the introduction of African slavery into the colonies that would become the United States. Throughout the 1600s, indentured servitude remained the preferred source of labor, but slaves were a small, significant part of the labor force as early as 1619. However, slavery did not become legally defined or a dominant source of labor until late in the seventeenth century.

Maryland: Founding and Politics

Following Virginia’s success, in 1632 the king of England granted the region that we now call Maryland to George Calvert, a lord whose royal name was Lord Baltimore. Lord Baltimore created the first of the proprietary colonies, or colonies overseen by a proprietor who was allowed to control and distribute the land as he wished. The king granted Lord Baltimore the land in part to end a religious problem, because Lord Baltimore was a prominent English Catholic looking for a haven for members of his faith. The first settlers landed in Maryland in 1634, with large numbers of Catholics but an even slightly larger number of Protestants. Learning from the mistakes of Roanoke and Jamestown, the colonists under Lord Baltimore developed an economy based on the plantation model, raising corn and livestock for food and tobacco for profit.

Although Lord Baltimore and his sons at first attempted autocratic rule over Maryland, they...
quickly opted to create a legislature in the model of the House of Burgesses, which allowed the colonists a good amount of self-rule. Self-rule had its problems, though: As more Protestants came over from England and openly rebelled against being ruled by Catholics, Lord Baltimore realized that he must protect his fellow Catholics. The result was one of the major landmarks in the history of liberty: the **Toleration Act of 1649**, which granted freedom of worship to anyone who accepted the divinity of Jesus Christ. The act did not end religious disputes between the colonists, as Protestants continued to battle Catholic rule in the colony. But it did prevent legal action from being taken on account of one’s faith. Christians, whether Catholic or Protestant, could not be imprisoned for their faith.

### Life on the Chesapeake

Although Maryland and Virginia prospered, mainly due to tobacco, life on the Chesapeake was generally miserable. Virginia and Maryland remained a collection of tiny villages made up of numerous small farms worked by indentured servants (Map 2.3). Three quarters of those who came over were young males, and most died during their seasoning period. Families were unstable: Marriages were fragile, childbirth risky, and growing up with both parents a rarity. In this atmosphere, the population was slow to establish churches and schools. Most homes were crudely built, with few partitions, and the quality of life could adequately be described as bleakly rustic.

### LO4 Founding the New England Colonies, 1620–1660

Despite the harsh reality of life in the colonies, the promise of wealth and freedom fueled England’s desire for more colonies, for two main reasons.

The first were financial. The English had seen the wealth that successful cultivation of a cash crop like tobacco could generate, and this furthered investors’ interest in colonial development.

There were religious reasons as well. In 1559, Queen Elizabeth reestablished the Church of England as a body distinct from the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, several groups in England felt she had not gone far enough in freeing Christianity from the yoke of the Catholics. One of these groups was the **Puritans**, who wished to reform, or purify, the Church of England by removing its hierarchy, its emphasis on work as payment to God, its allowance of prayers for communal salvation, and its promotion of missions. Another dissenting group was the **Separatists**, who wished to separate completely from the Church of England because they believed it was irrevocably corrupted. Both these groups were buttressed by England’s social problems, which created a large number of poor people who feared the power of an overarching institution such as the Church of England.
governing once they landed, they signed an agreement that bound each member to obey majority rule and to promise to defend one another from potential eviction. This was the *Mayflower Compact*, an agreement that set a precedent, in rhetoric if not always in reality, for democratic rule in Massachusetts. It was also grounded in the notion of Christian unity, lending a messianic fervor to the mission: In their minds, they were there because God wanted them to be there. One year later, in 1621, they secured from the Crown a patent to the land.

**Settlement**

After a difficult first winter in 1620, during which half of them died or returned to England, the Separatists established farms and developed a fur trade in today’s Maine. The local Wampanoag Indians viewed their presence—and all European presence—as a short time to enjoy trading with the Europeans, after which the Indians would expel the Europeans. By 1621, however, the Wampanoags had been ravaged by disease and needed help fend-

**Massachusetts**

In order to escape the Church of England and worship according to their understanding of the Christian faith, a group of Separatists departed from England. First, they went to Holland; then, after receiving a land grant from the Virginia Company of London, they sailed on the ship *Mayflower* in 1620, destined for Virginia. The winter winds caught them, and they were blown off course, landing in present-day Massachusetts on a site they called Plymouth. Weakened by the crossing and fearful of storms, they decided to establish their pure Christian community there. The Plymouth colony was born.

These Separatists had no title to land this far north, however, and they knew this would be a problem if other settlers arrived with a proper patent. To remedy this problem, and to establish ground rules for
ing off their rivals in the interior. The Wampanoag leader thus made a decisive deal: They would allow the European visitors to stay if they would agree to ally with the Wampanoags. Once the agreement was settled, a harvest festival enjoyed by the two peoples in 1621 became the symbol for the event we today know as Thanksgiving. The settlers were bound to be permanent residents.

In 1623, the settlers divided their land among the people, rewarding those who were willing to work hard. The ingenuity and drive of these early settlers, in addition to some help from London benefactors, helped them pay off their debts to the Virginia Company by 1627, a remarkably quick repayment that encouraged others to migrate to Massachusetts. They also had stable governmental self-rule, as one of the new settlers, William Bradford, ruled with a strong, level hand and consulted numerous colonists before making decisions.

Expansion

Encouraged by the developments at Plymouth, English Puritans (not Separatists) sought to formalize Massachusetts as a royal colony. This was done in 1629 under the name of the Massachusetts Bay Company. Its charter was special, however, in that it did not stipulate that decisions about the colony had to be made in England, thus implying that those who lived under the charter would enjoy self-rule. The charter encouraged a larger group of Puritans, who were under increasing assault in England for their religious beliefs, to migrate.

Led by John Winthrop, 1,000 Puritans set out for their religious haven of Massachusetts; between 1630 and 1640, 25,000 more followed. Their success, supported by the cultivation of cereals and livestock, made the Puritans believe that “God hath sifted a nation”—that God had wished the Puritans to settle the Americas as the world’s Promised Land. As John Winthrop told them before they arrived, “We shall be as a city upon a hill [and] the eyes of all people are upon us.” Their so-called “errand into the wilderness,” as it was described in a 1670 sermon, was an attempt to form an exemplary religious community, one that would inspire reform in Old England.

Politics

Politically, the Puritans were not democrats, believing instead in a state that forced all of its inhabit-

ants to hold a specific religious orthodoxy within an established church. This unity of belief, combined with the fact that most of the immigrants came as families, allowed the development of tightly knit communities based on a less rigid hierarchy of labor exploitation than that found in the Chesapeake.

By 1634, the people of Massachusetts began to reject the absolutism of Puritan control (it had not lasted long), although the colonists did not reject the religious nature of the colony. They also demanded a legislature, which had been approved in the royal charter. The legislature was composed of two separate houses: one an elite board of directors, the other a larger house made up of popularly elected deputies. This was a less-than-representative form of representative government, though: Only selected church members were allowed to vote for the deputies who represented them.

Society

As Massachusetts prospered through the cultivation of grains and cereals, small towns appeared throughout present-day Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island (see Map 2.4). Small villages composed of several families were the central institution of Massachusetts. They dotted the New England coast and the central New England rivers. Large farmlands surrounded the villages, and the villagers would trudge each morning from their homes to work the outlying lands, then return to the central village at nightfall.

The town’s land was parcelled out to families depending on each family’s size and needs. Successful families were expected to give back to their community by helping out the poor or the unlucky. Importantly, the tightly knit nature of these sparse communities and the priority placed on families meant that disease was much less of a problem than in the Virginia and Maryland colonies. Infant mortality in Massachusetts fell below that of Europe, resulting in a remarkable population boom during which the population doubled every twenty-seven years.

Even the most successful of the colonists often remained less powerful than the town’s minister, however, as biblical orthodoxy was demanded of all settlers. Single men and women were required to live with a family so as to not appear promiscuous. In response to a need for religious education, the Puritans founded Harvard College in 1636. New England also was fertile ground for famous writers and poets during this period.
Rhode Island

In Massachusetts, the persistent demands of religious orthodoxy rankled some settlers, and one of the biggest troublemakers was Roger Williams, the minister of Salem, Massachusetts, who hoped for a “purer” form of religion than even the Puritan founders had institutionalized. Most importantly, he suggested that there should be a clear division between the practice of religion and the politics of state. He believed that politics necessarily impeded the soul’s progress toward perfection. Williams’s teachings obviously contradicted the Puritan notion of a commonwealth based on devotion to God, and Williams was expelled from Massachusetts. He left
Massachusetts with a small band of followers, walking to what is today Rhode Island and founding the town of Providence.

A second group of dissenters was also destined for Rhode Island. The leader of this second group was a charismatic woman named Anne Hutchinson. Hutchinson, a married woman who worked as a midwife, defied the orthodoxy of Massachusetts by stressing that only God determined who merited grace, not ministers or powerful men. More importantly, she disputed the notion of a single orthodox scripture, suggesting instead that humankind’s relationship with God was a continual process of divine revelation, rather than based solely on a fixed scripture from thousands of years ago. This theological turn came to be called Antinomianism. Hutchinson was also an able leader and a persuasive preacher who won over many followers, and Boston’s clergy saw her and her Antinomianism as a threat to their community and their leadership. To silence her, they put her on trial, found her guilty of sedition and contempt, and banished her. She and her followers left Massachusetts and founded Portsmouth, Rhode Island, just southeast of Providence.

**New England in the 1660s**

In Providence, Roger Williams promised religious and civil freedom to all settlers. Hutchinson’s town of Portsmouth was less tolerant, although it continued to attract those unwilling to follow Massachusetts’s orthodoxy. This encouraged other religious “heretics” to found towns in Rhode Island, such as Newport and Warwick. A preliminary charter founding Rhode Island as a colony independent of Massachusetts was granted in 1644. It was followed by another in 1663 that granted political and religious freedoms to the settlers; this charter attracted a wide range of dissenters from other colonies and Europe.

**Continued Expansion and Indian Confrontation**

Puritan dissenters continued to expand outward from Massachusetts, and by the 1630s they had founded towns in what are now Connecticut, Maine, and New Hampshire. The combination of these dissenters and the remarkable growth of New England meant that the ideal of puritanically pious communities was untenable. What grew instead was a dynamic agricultural society fueled by a seemingly insatiable land hunger. Almost as soon as it had started to proliferate, the Puritans’ hope of a “pure” society was beginning to fade.

As had happened in Virginia, New England’s growth led to confrontation with the land’s inhabitants, the tribes of Indians. Although the Puritans had several Indian allies, John Winthrop had prepared New Englanders quite early for the possibility of conflict, agreeing to train all male colonists to use firearms, forbidding Indians’ entering Puritan towns, and forbidding Puritans’ selling firearms to Indians.

During the first years of settlement, conflict was sporadic and light, no doubt in part because European diseases had killed off as much as three quarters of the Indian population before the colonists arrived at Plymouth. In fact, the Puritans viewed this dying as the work of God, who, they felt, divinely wished to transform New England’s wilderness into a shining work of the Lord. One tribe remained strong, however, and by the 1630s conflict between the
New Englanders and the Pequots became inevitable. The result was a series of bloody battles collectively called the Pequot War, in which the supposedly pious New Englanders effectively exterminated the tribe, gruesomely killing men, women, children, and the elderly. With the Pequots now removed from power, the colonists were assured control over all the southern tribes of New England. The bloodshed during the Pequot War foreshadowed the dark nature of Indian-colonist relations that was just over the horizon.

**And in the end . . .**

Historians still debate the legacy that modern America inherited from this initial phase of colonial development, but some parallels are clearly visible. For instance, the freedom to worship as one pleased had its origins in both Maryland and Rhode Island during a time when that level of tolerance was unknown elsewhere in the world. There was a considerable expansion of political freedoms and self-rule that one would never have encountered in England. And economically, it was plausible and possible that one could work one's way out of one's class and become a landholding farmer. This sense of economic mobility also transcended any similar experience one might encounter in Europe.

On the other hand, each of these democratic impulses had considerable limitations. In religion, every colony besides Maryland and Rhode Island had restrictions on what faith one could hold by 1660; the two exceptions existed because minority sects had begun them to find freedom from harshly restrictive colonial magistrates or the dangers of popular opinion. In politics, the right to participate in political life was limited to landholding farmers or orthodox religious adherents (depending on whether one lived in the South or the North). Economically, although there was some mobility, one had to endure tremendous hardships to realize it. Most who came seeking great wealth were promptly disappointed. Nevertheless, with the Chesapeake in the South and New England in the North, these were America's colonial beginnings. They would only grow, as we will see in the next chapter.

![New Englanders effectively exterminated the Pequot tribe in the bloodbaths of the 1630s.](image1.png)

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**What else was happening . . .**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1300s</td>
<td>The Aztecs make &quot;animal balloons&quot; by creating inflated animals from the intestines of cats and present them to the gods as a sacrifice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1405–1433</td>
<td>Chinese explorer Zheng He goes on seven expeditions to Arabia, East Africa, India, and Indonesia.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1489</td>
<td>The symbols + (addition) and – (subtraction) come into general use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1492</td>
<td>The Spanish peso is first put into circulation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1498</td>
<td>The first toothbrush is made from hog bristles in China.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1540</td>
<td>The first horses arrive in North America, when Spanish explorer Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, traveling through Kansas, lets about 260 of them escape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1551</td>
<td>What is now the National Autonomous University of Mexico is founded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1585</td>
<td>Sir John Harrington invents the first flushing toilet and puts one inside the palace of Queen Elizabeth, who deems it too loud.</td>
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