

## The Americans (Reconstruction to the 21st Century)

### **Chapter 1:**

#### **TELESCOPING THE TIMES Exploration and the Colonial Era**

CHAPTER OVERVIEW Native Americans develop complex societies. Starting in 1492, Europeans and then Africans bring their cultures to the New World. British colonies thrive, and Britain dominates North America after defeating France at war.

#### **Section 1: The Americas, West Africa, and Europe**

MAIN IDEA On the eve of their interaction, Native American, West African, and European peoples lived in complex societies.

The first humans came to the Americas from Asia. As long ago as 22,000 years, they crossed a bridge of land that once connected Asia and Alaska. For many thousands of years, these groups spread throughout the continents of North America and South America. They lived by hunting large animals. When these animals died out, they had to find new sources of food. Between 10,000 and 5,000 years ago, groups in central Mexico began to farm. The practice spread. Farming made possible the development of civilizations.

In North America, each Native American group had a unique culture adapted to the climate and resources of their area. These different groups had some traits in common, though. Most viewed the land as a resource that all groups could share. Most believed that spirits filled the world. Most viewed the family as the basic unit of society. Trade routes linked groups living far from one another.

In West Africa, three powerful kingdoms played important roles in the 1400s. Songhai controlled trade across the Sahara desert. Songhai rulers became famous for their wealth. Benin grew strong in the forest regions along the southern coast. In central Africa, the kingdom of Kongo united smaller areas under one ruler.

The rulers of these kingdoms were strong. Most people lived in small villages. They farmed, herded, hunted, and fished. Life revolved around the family, and older people held special rank. Religion played an important role in life.

Trading networks connected these kingdoms with other lands. Portuguese sailors arrived from Europe. They started large farms, or plantations, to grow sugar cane. Soon they began using West Africans as slaves to work on the plantations.

In the 1400s, most Europeans lived in small farming villages. European societies were marked by major differences in social rank. Those who owned large tracts of land—rulers, nobles, and the clergy—held the most power.

About this time, European society saw many changes. Calls for reform of the Roman Catholic Church produced the Reformation, which resulted in the formation of Protestant churches. Disagreements between Protestants and Catholics worsened divisions among European nations.

Increased trade led some Europeans to seek new sources of wealth. Rulers in Portugal, Spain, England, and France built strong armies and navies. At the same time, Europeans improved their ships and methods for long-distance sailing. All these factors contributed to a new age of exploration. Hoping to find new trade routes to Asia, Europeans began to explore to the south and west.

## **Section 2: Spanish North America**

**MAIN IDEA** Beginning with the voyage of Christopher Columbus, the Spanish built a vast colonial empire in the Americas.

Italian sailor Christopher Columbus aimed to reach Asia by sailing west across the Atlantic. In 1492 Spanish rulers gave him money to carry out his plan. After sailing across the Atlantic, Columbus sighted land in the Caribbean Sea—but thought he had reached Asia.

After Columbus, Spain launched many voyages of exploration. The arrival of Europeans had a serious effect on Native Americans, though. Some natives were made laborers and died while working under harsh conditions. Many caught European diseases such as smallpox. Because they had no built-in resistance to these diseases, tens of thousands of Native Americans died. Because the Europeans wanted to replace the Native American workers who had died, they began to bring Africans to the New World to work as slaves. From the 1500s to the 1800s, about 10 million Africans were taken to the Americas.

Spain built a vast empire in the Americas. The Spanish conquered Native American civilizations. They took large amounts of gold and silver. In what is now the United States, they settled in the regions that became Florida, New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas. Fra Junípero Serra and other missionaries in the West and Southwest converted many Native Americans to Christianity.

### **Section 3: Early British Colonies**

MAIN IDEA Beginning in the early 1600s, the English established colonies along the eastern shore of North America.

In 1607, a group of English settlers founded Jamestown, Virginia. It was the first permanent English colony in the Americas. The colony struggled until settlers began to grow tobacco to ship to Europe. To work on tobacco plantations, they hired indentured servants. These people agreed to work for a few years on land owned by the tobacco farmers. In return, the farmers paid for their trip from Europe to Virginia.

Other settlers were members of a Protestant group that hoped to make the English church more pure. For this reason they were called Puritans. After being harassed in England, many sailed to North America. They settled in Massachusetts, where their Puritan church dominated their community. Some settlers expressed ideas that Puritan leaders did not like. These dissenters were harshly punished.

The Dutch established the first colony in what is now New York. They hoped to gain wealth by trading with Native Americans for furs that could be sold in Europe. In 1644 the English seized the colony.

William Penn belonged to a religious group called the Quakers. He received a vast tract of land in North America and started a new colony named Pennsylvania. Penn hoped to make the colony a safe place for other Quakers. Members of many other groups also settled there.

By 1732, there were 13 British colonies. These colonies prospered, and Britain gained wealth from trade with the colonies. The colonies had some self-government. Governors appointed by Britain held the highest authority. Colonists who owned property had the right to choose representatives who made laws.

#### **Section 4: The Colonies Come of Age**

MAIN IDEA Even though both Northern and Southern colonies prospered, many colonists began to question British authority.

Colonists in the southern colonies created a rural society based on farming. The main crops were tobacco, rice, and indigo. Most of the people worked small farms. However, owners of large plantations dominated society and the economy. Planters used enslaved Africans as workers. Africans endured the harsh voyage across the ocean. In the New World, they preserved African traditions. Some ran away or rebelled.

Colonists in the middle and New England colonies developed an economy that was based on small farms, manufacturing, and trade. Cities grew with increased trade. Merchants grew wealthy and held powerful positions in society. Slavery existed in the North, but it was not widespread.

In the 1700s, two movements led colonists to question authority. The Enlightenment valued science and reason. Political writers stressed the natural rights of all individuals.

The Great Awakening was a revival of strong religious feeling. By emphasizing the personal aspects of religion, this movement weakened the authority of churches.

While the British colonies grew along the Atlantic coast, France established a colonial empire in eastern Canada, the Great Lakes region, and the upper parts of the Mississippi River. French colonists had better relations with Native Americans than the British had. In 1754, French and British colonists clashed. In 1763, the French and Indian War ended with French defeat. France surrendered most of its North American lands to Britain.

Native Americans started a war with the colonists but lost. To prevent further fighting, the British banned Americans from moving into the lands west of the Appalachian Mountains. But colonists who wanted this land resented the action and continued to move into the area.