Chapter 4

Experience of Empire
18th-Century
America
1680–1763
William Byrd III

Byrd's History of the Dividing Line Run in the Year 1728 contains a marvelously satirical account of the culture of poor country farmers in eighteenth-century North Carolina.
Experience of Empire
18th-Century America

- Tensions in the Backcountry
- Spanish Borderlands of the Eighteenth Century
- The Impact of European Ideas on American Culture
- Religious Revivals in Provincial Societies
- Clash of Political Cultures
- Century of Imperial War
Constructing an Anglo-American Identity: the Journal of William Bird

• 18th-century colonists powerfully attracted to Great Britain

• Political commercial and military links brought colonists into more contact with Britain

• Within expanding, prosperous empire they began to consider what it meant to be American
Tensions in the Backcountry
Tensions in the Backcountry

- 1700–1750—colonial population rose from 250,000 to over two million
- Much growth through natural increase
- Large influx of non-English Europeans
Tensions in the Backcountry (cont’d)

- Backcountry—800 miles along Appalachian Range from western Pennsylvania to western Georgia
- Frontier complex, fluid, and violent mixture of Europeans, Native Americans and African Americans
A flood of non-English immigrants swept the British colonies between 1700 and 1775.
Scots-Irish Flee English Oppression

- Largest non-English group
- The Scots fled England for Ireland, and then the Scots-Irish to North America
- Concentrated on the Pennsylvania frontier
- Quick to challenge authority
Germans Search for a Better Life

- First waves similar to Quakers and sought religious toleration
- Later waves sought to improve their material condition
- Admired as peaceful, hard-working farmers
Germans Search for a Better Life (cont’d)

- Tried to preserve German language and customs
- Aroused the prejudice of English neighbors
- Scots-Irish and Germans spread into Shenandoah Valley
Native Americans Stake Out a Middle Ground

• Many eastern Indians moved to trans-Appalachian region ("middle ground")
  ▪ "Middle ground"—no colonial power established
  ▪ Native American confederacies maintained strong, independent voice in commercial exchanges
  ▪ After British defeated French, attention to Indians eroded
  ▪ Contagious disease took fearful toll on population
Spanish Borderlands of the 18th Century
Spanish Borderlands of the 18th Century

- Spain occupied a large part of America north of Mexico since 16th century
- Range from Florida Peninsula to California
- Multicultural, interdependent society created of Spaniards and Native Americans
Conquering the Northern Frontier

- Spanish presence established in late 1500s
- El Popé led Pueblo Revolt in 1680
- Spanish re-established control in 1692
In the eighteenth century, Spain’s North American empire extended across what is now the southern United States from Florida through Texas and New Mexico to California.
Conquering the Northern Frontier (cont’d)

- St. Augustine, a Spanish military outpost, unattractive to settlers
- 1769—belated Spanish mission settlements in California to prevent Russian claims
Peoples of the Spanish Borderlands

- Slow growth of Spanish population in borderlands
  - Mainly males: priests, soldiers, and administrators
Peoples of the Spanish Borderlands (cont’d)

• Spanish influence over Native Americans
  ▪ Spanish exploited native labor
  ▪ Natives resisted conversion to Catholicism
• Spanish influenced region’s architecture and language
Spanish Mission

Baroque-style eighteenth-century Spanish mission at San Xavier del Bac outside present-day Tucson, Arizona. Spanish missions dotted the frontier of northern New Spain from Florida to California.
The Impact of European Ideas on American Culture
The Impact of European Ideas on American Culture

- Rapid change in 18th-century colonies
- Growth of urban cosmopolitan culture
- Aggressive participation in consumption
American Enlightenment

• Intellectual thought swept Europe with new, radical ideas
• The Enlightenment’s basic assumptions
  ▪ Optimistic view of human nature
  ▪ God set up the universe and human society to operate by mechanistic, natural laws
  ▪ Those laws can be found through reason
• For many Americans, appeal of Enlightenment was practical knowledge
Benjamin Franklin

- Franklin (1706–1790) regarded as Enlightenment thinker by Europeans
- Started as printer, then satirist in Boston
  - Emulated British styles
  - Moved to Philadelphia
Benjamin Franklin exemplified the scientific curiosity and search for practical knowledge characteristic of Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century. His experiments on electricity became world famous and inspired others to study the effects of the strange force.
Benjamin Franklin (cont’d)

- Achieved wealth through printing business
- Made important scientific discoveries and inventions
- Symbol of material progress through human ingenuity
Economic Transformation

• Long-term period of economic and population growth
• England added to existing base of mercantilist rules from 1710s–1750s
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  ▪ Colonial manufacture or trade of timber, sugar, hats, and iron restricted
  ▪ Regulations not enforced

• Trade was mainly with England and West Indies; little with Africa
This engraving of a work by William Burgis depicts the port of Boston at mid-century.
Birth of a Consumer Society

- English mass-production of consumer goods stimulated rise in colonial imports
- Americans built up large debts to English merchants to finance increased imports
Birth of a Consumer Society (cont’d)

- Trade between colonies increased
  - Inter-coastal trade
  - Great Wagon Road in the backcountry
- Eroded regional and local identities
- Allowed Americans a chance to learn about one another
By the mid-eighteenth century, the Great Wagon Road had become a major highway for the settlers in Virginia and the Carolina backcountry.
Religious Revivals in Provincial Societies
Religious Revivals in Provincial Societies

• The Great Awakening
  - Spontaneous, evangelical revivals
  - People began to re-think basic assumptions about church and state, institutions and society
The Great Awakening

• Movement occurred among many denominations in different places at different times
  - New England in the 1730s, Virginia in the 1750s and 1760s
The Great Awakening (cont’d)

• Jonathan Edwards sparked it
  ▪ Reminded people of omnipotent God and predestination
  ▪ Reaction to ministers going “soft” on population
The fervor of the Great Awakening was intensified by the eloquence of itinerant preachers such as George Whitefield, the most popular evangelical of the mid-eighteenth century. (Source: John Wollaston, "George Whitefield," ca. 1770. National Portrait Gallery, London.)
Evangelical Religion

• George Whitefield—a dynamic personality and speaker who sustained the revivals
  ▪ Preached outdoor sermons to thousands of people in nearly every colony
  ▪ Skilled entrepreneur and promoter
Evangelical Religion (cont’d)

• Itinerant ministers followed Whitefield’s example
  ▪ Split established churches into “new lights” and “old lights”

• Despite outbursts of anti-intellectualism, “new lights” formed colleges
  ▪ Princeton, Dartmouth, Brown, and Rutgers
Clash of Political Cultures
Clash of Political Cultures

- Colonists attempted to emulate British political institutions
- Effort led to discovery of how different they were from English people
Governed the Colonies: The American Experience

- Colonists attempted to model England’s balanced constitution.
- Royal governors: mid-level, ambitious bureaucrats; had more powers than the king.
- “Democracies” did not include women, non-whites.
- Had potential to expel legislative rascals.
Colonial Assemblies

- Felt obligation to preserve colonial liberties
- Assemblies controlled colony’s finances
- No incentive for assembly to cooperate with governors
- Governors relied on local elites
Colonial Assemblies (cont’d)

- Exercised extreme vigilance against the spread of privileged power
- Similar system of assemblies facing similar problems laid foundation for a larger cultural identity
Century of Imperial War
Century of Imperial War

- Britain’s conflicts with continental rivals like France spilled over to colonies
- Security threats from these conflicts forced colonists into more military and political cooperation
- British colonies overwhelmingly militarily superior to New France but ineffective
The French Threat

- France extended its presence from Canada into Louisiana
- France sent most troops to guard Canada
- British saw French expansion as encirclement
- French suspected British would seize all of North America
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>European Name</th>
<th>American Name</th>
<th>Major Allies</th>
<th>Issues</th>
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<td>War of the League of Augsburg</td>
<td>King William’s War</td>
<td>Britain, Holland, Spain, their colonies, and Native American allies against France, its colonies, and Native American allies</td>
<td>Opposition to French bid for control of Europe</td>
<td>New England troops assault Quebec under Sir William Phips (1690)</td>
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<td>War of the Spanish Succession</td>
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<td>Britain, Holland, their colonies, and Native American allies against France, Spain, their colonies, and Native American allies</td>
<td>Austria and France hold rival claims to Spanish throne</td>
<td>Attack on Deerfield (1704)</td>
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<td>1743–1748</td>
<td>War of the Austrian Succession (War of Jenkins’ Ear)</td>
<td>King George’s War</td>
<td>Britain, its colonies, and Native American allies, and Austria against France, Spain, their Native American allies, and Prussia</td>
<td>Struggle among Britain, Spain, and France for control of New World territory; among France, Prussia, and Austria for control of central Europe</td>
<td>New England forces capture Louisbourg under William Pepperell (1745)</td>
<td>Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748)</td>
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<td>1756–1763</td>
<td>Seven Years’ War</td>
<td>French and Indian War</td>
<td>Britain, its colonies, and Native American allies against France, its colonies, and Native American allies</td>
<td>Struggle among Britain, Spain, and France for worldwide control of colonial markets and raw materials</td>
<td>British and Continental forces capture Quebec under Major General James Wolfe (1759)</td>
<td>Peace of Paris (1763)</td>
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Native Americans often depended on British trade goods and sometimes adopted British dress. Here the British Mohawk chief Theyanoguin, called King Hendrick by the British, wears a cloak he received from Queen Anne of England during a visit to London in 1710. During the Seven Years' War, Theyanoguin mobilized Mohawk support for the British.
King George’s War and Its Aftermath

• Fought 1743–1748
• 1745—New England troops captured Fort Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island
• 1748—Louisbourg returned to France by Treaty of Aix-la-Chappelle
• French built Fort Duquesne to keep British from seizing Ohio River Valley
• Virginians under George Washington failed to expel French
  ▪ Showed one colony alone could not defeat French
The Albany Plan—The first political cartoon to appear in an American newspaper was created by Benjamin Franklin in 1754 to emphasize the importance of the Albany Plan.
By 1750, the French had established a chain of settlements southward through the heart of the continent from Quebec to New Orleans. The British saw this as a threat to their own seaboard colonies, which were expanding westward.
The first political cartoon to appear in an American newspaper was created by Benjamin Franklin in 1754 to emphasize the importance of the Albany Plan.
Seven Years’ War

• 1756—England declared war on France
• Prime Minister William Pitt shifted strategy to focus on North America
• By 1758 French cut off from re-supply
Seven Years’ War (cont’d)

- Fort Duquesne abandoned, Quebec captured, last French forces surrendered, 1760
- Peace of Paris 1763: France lost
  - British got all North America east of Mississippi
  - Spanish added Louisiana to their empire
The Seven Years’ War, 1756–1763

The conflict ended with Britain driving France from mainland North America.
The Peace of Paris of 1763 redrew the map of North America. Great Britain received all the French holdings except for a few islands in the Atlantic and some sugar-producing islands in the Caribbean.
Perceptions of War

- Expanded horizons of colonists
- Created trained officer corps that knew British vulnerabilities
- British felt colonists ungrateful and not willing to bear their fair share of burden
- Colonists saw themselves as “junior partners” to British
Conclusion: Rule Britannia?
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- Most Americans bound to England in 1763
- Ties included
  - British culture
  - British consumer goods
  - British evangelists
  - British military victories
Conclusion: Rule Britannia? (cont’d)

• Americans thought of themselves as partners in an Empire
• To British, “American” equaled “not quite English”