

BY THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, the British colonies were, most people in both England and America believed, outposts of the British world. As the colonies grew and became more prosperous, they also became more English. The colonists adopted the tastes, styles, and customs of England, bought goods made in England, read books and pamphlets published in England, and modeled most of their political, cultural, and educational institutions on their English equivalents. Many, perhaps most, colonists considered themselves Englishmen just as much as the men and women in England itself did.

At the same time, however, life in the colonies was diverging in many ways from that in England. The physical environment was very different—vaster and less tamed. The population was more diverse as well. The area that would become the United States was a magnet for immigrants from many lands other than England: Scotland, Ireland, the European continent, as well as migrants from the Spanish and French Empires already established in America. And beginning with the first

importation of slaves into Virginia, English North America became the destination for thousands of forcibly transplanted Africans. In

SETTING THE STAGE

addition, Europeans and Africans were interacting constantly with a native population. Despite the efforts of the colonists to isolate themselves from Indian society and create a culture all their own, the European, African, and Native American worlds could not remain entirely separate.

To the degree that the colonists emulated English society, they were becoming more and more like one another. To the degree that they were shaped by the character of their own regions, they were becoming more and more diverse. Although Americans would ultimately discover that they had enough in common to join together to form a single nation, these regional differences continued to affect their society well beyond the colonial period.



BY THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, the British colonies were, most people in both England and America believed, outposts of the British world. As the colonies grew and became more prosperous, they also became more English. The colonists adopted the tastes, styles, and customs of England, bought goods made in England, read books and pamphlets published in England, and modeled most of their political, cultural, and educational institutions on their English equivalents. Many, perhaps most, colonists considered themselves Englishmen just as much as the men and women in England itself did.

At the same time, however, life in the colonies was diverging in many ways from that in England. The physical environment was very different—vaster and less tamed. The population was more diverse as well. The area that would become the United States was a magnet for immigrants from many lands other than England: Scotland, Ireland, the European continent, as well as migrants from the Spanish and French Empires already established in America. And beginning with the first

importation of slaves into Virginia, English North America became the destination for thousands of forcibly transplanted Africans. In

SETTING THE STAGE

addition, Europeans and Africans were interacting constantly with a native population. Despite the efforts of the colonists to isolate themselves from Indian society and create a culture all their own, the European, African, and Native American worlds could not remain entirely separate.

To the degree that the colonists emulated English society, they were becoming more and more like one another. To the degree that they were shaped by the character of their own regions, they were becoming more and more diverse. Although Americans would ultimately discover that they had enough in common to join together to form a single nation, these regional differences continued to affect their society well beyond the colonial period.

