US History – Chapter 3 Lesson 4: The Southern Colonies

Virginia and Maryland

Jamestown was the beginning of Virginia settlements. The demand for labor was high to grow and harvest the tobacco plants. White landowners began to meet this labor demand with African slaves. The first group arrived in 1619 and many more would follow in the years to come.

Many settlers also arrived as indentured servants, they agreed to work without pay for a certain time to pay for their passage to the colonies.

Founding Maryland

Maryland was the dream of Sir George Calvert and Lord Baltimore. Calvert wanted a colony for his fellow Catholics were being persecuted in England. He was granted a proprietary colony north of Virginia. His son, Cecilius inherited the colony after Calvert’s death and named the colony Maryland. Cecilius sent his 2 brothers in 1634 to begin settling the area. Cecilius gave large estates to English aristocrats and smaller pieces of land to settlers. As the colony grew so did its demand for labor, importing indented servants and African slaves.

For years the Calvert’s and the Penn’s argued over the boundary of their colonies, in 1760’s they hired Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon to map the boundary. This became known as the Mason-Dixon line.

Religion was another area of conflict. The Calverts welcomed Protestants as well as Catholics. Protestants eventually outnumbered the Catholics and the Act of Toleration was passed in 1649, allowing the two religions to worship freely. Tensions continued to grow, 1692 Maryland – now a royal colony – established an official Protestant church. This led to Catholics facing the same restrictions as they did in England.

Rebellion in Virginia

As the colony grew settlers moved west on to Native American lands. 1640’s Virginia governor William Berkeley made a pledge, in exchange for a large chunk of land he agreed to keep settlers from pushing further west. He wanted to prevent war with the Native Americans.

Nathaniel Bacon, a young planter in W. Virginia, opposed the colonial government because it was dominated by easterners. Many westerners resented the deal Berkeley had made, so some settled in the forbidden areas, then they blamed the government for not clearing the area of Native Americans.

1676 Bacon led attacks on Native American villages. His army also marched on Jamestown to drive out Berkeley and they burned it to the ground. Bacon seemed on the verge of taking over the colony when he suddenly fell ill and died. With his death the rebellion faded, Bacon’s rebellion showed that government could not ignore the demands of its people.