US History Chapter 4 Lesson 3: Culture and Society

The colonies grew rapidly in population from 250,000 to 2.5 million in 75 years. (1700 to 1775)

African Americans population grew from 28,000 to 500,000

This primary cause of this is immigration (the permanent movement of people into one country from other nations)

Other factors, colonial women married early and had large families.

Life was still fragile: epidemics occurred and women often died in childbirth.

Epidemics (an illness that affects large numbers of people) such as occurred in 1721 of smallpox affected large numbers of people. 850 people in Boston died, about 15% of the population.

A New American Spirit:

Many Americans were born in other countries bringing with them different languages and ways of thinking. Immigrants became something new…Americans

A spirit of independence formed, people adapted their traditions to the new conditions of life. The family was the basic foundation of society.

Family Roles:

Men were the head of the household. They managed the business or worked the farm. Sons might work as indentured servants for local farmers or apprentices (a young person who learns a trade from a skilled craftsman)

Women ran the household and cared for the children. Married women had few rights and unmarried women would often work as maids or cooks. Older women who never married might work as n

Children as young as 4 or 5 might have a job.

American Beliefs

Americans shared a commitment to new ideas: education, strong religious beliefs, and openness to new ideas.

Colonial Education

Parents taught their children read and write. In New England and Pennsylvania schools were set up to make sure everyone could read and study the bible.

1647: Massachusetts passed a public education law REQUIRING communities with 50 or more homes to have a public school. This lead to a high literacy rate in NE. By 1750, 85 percent of men and almost 50 percent of women were able to read. Many learned from The New England Primer.

Schools in the Middle Colonies were mostly private. Widows or unmarried women ran the schools. Quakers and other religious groups ran others. Night schools were setup for apprentices and the earliest colleges were founded to train ministers.

The Great Awakening

A religious revival from the 1730’s to the 1740’s. In New England and the Middle Colonies, ministers called for a “new birth”, a return to the strong faith of earlier times. Johnathan Edwards of Mass, gave powerful and convincing sermons. George Whitfield (1739) inspired worshippers in fields and churches from New England to Georgia.

This movement inspired greater religious freedom. Emphasis was placed on having personal faith instead of church rituals. More colonists chose their own faith and strength of established churches declined. Colonists overcame regional barriers which helped pave the way for the spread of revolutionary ideas.

The Enlightenment

By the 1700’s many educated colonists were influenced by the enlightenment, a movement that spread the idea of knowledge, reason, and science could improve society. It increased interest in science (Benjamin Franklin) and promoted freedom of thought and expression, a belief in equality and the idea of popular government (John Locke)

Ideas of Freedom

Freedom of the press was established following the court case of Zenger in 1733. Zenger criticized the governor and was charged with a crime and thrown in jail. His lawyer, Andrew Hamilton, made a stirring defense proving the criticisms were true thus freeing Zenger.

Civic Virtue

Civic virtue (the democratic ideas, practices, and values that are at the heart of citizenship in a free society) helped become a building block of our new nation.