**LESSON SEVEN THE COLONIAL PERIOD**

By the year 1733, the English owned thirteen separate colonies stretched from New Hampshire in the North to Georgia in the South. They were divided into three main groups; each group had its own way of life and character.

1. **New England:** In the far North was the New England group, centered in Massachusetts, since the time of the pilgrims\_ “puritans”. The people of New England had spread inland and along the coast, most were small farmers or craftsmen, working the stony soil and governing themselves in small towns and villages. Other New Englanders depended on the sea for a living, they felled the trees of the region’s forests to build ships, in these they sailed to catch Cod or trade with England and the West Indies. Boston and other coastal towns grew into busy ports, their prosperity depended on trade.
2. **The middle colonies:** The nearest colonies to the South of New England were called the Middle Colonies; the biggest were New York and Pennsylvania. As in New England most of their people lived by farming. Philadelphia, the capital of Pennsylvania, was by 1770 the largest city in America, with 28000 inhabitants.

The people of the Middle Colonies were usually more tolerant of religions and other differences than the New Englanders; many of them also had German, Dutch or Swedish ancestors rather than English ones.

1. **The Southern colonies:** The Southern Colonies of Virginia, the Carolina’s and Georgia formed the third group. In their hot and fertile river valleys, wealthy landowners formed large plantations, they lived in fine houses, with wide cool verandahs from which they could look out over their fields of tobacco or cotton, most of the work in the fields was done by black slaves. Slavery was rare in the other American colonies, but the prosperity of the plantation-owning Southerners was already beginning to depend on it.

The houses of the Southern plantation owners had expensive furniture, much of it imported from Europe, close by stood groups of smaller, simpler buildings, stables, wash-houses, blacksmiths shops and the little huts in which the black slaves lived and almost always a river flowed nearby, with a wharf where sea-going ships could be loaded to carry the plantation’s crops to England.

In all three groups of colonies most people still lived less than fifty miles from the coast, this was called the “tidewater” period of settlement. Those people furthest inland had traveled up tidal rivers like the James and the Hudson, clearing the trees and setting up farms along their banks.

During the fifty years after 1733 settlers moved deeper into the continent. They traveled west into central Pennsylvania, cutting down forests of oak trees to make hilly farm. They spread westward along the river valleys in Virginia, the Carolina’s and Georgia, they moved north along the fertile valley of the Mohawk River of New York.

Making a new settlement always began in the same way; the settlers cleared the land of trees, and then cut the trees into logs and planks. They used these to build houses and bars, they then ploughed between the tree stumps, sowed their seeds, and four months later harvested the crops of corn. If their soil was fertile the settlers lived well. But if the soil was rocky, or poor in plant foods, life could be hard and disappointing; settlers with poor soil often left their farms and moved westward, to try again on more fertile land. As they traveled inland they passed fewer and fewer farms and villages. At last there were none at all. This area where European settlements came to an end, and the forest homelands of the Amerindians began, was called the **FRONTIER**.

Fresh waves of settlers pushed the Frontier steadily westwards in their search for fertile soil. They would often pass by land that seemed unsuitable for farming, because of this, Frontier farms and villages were often separated by miles of unsettled lands. A family might be day’s journey from its nearest neighbors. For such reasons the people of Frontier communities had to rely upon themselves for almost everything they needed. They grew their own food and built their own houses. They made the clothing they wore and the tools they used. They developed their own kinds of music, entertainment, art and forms of religious worship.

A special spirit, or attitude, grew out of this Frontier way of life, people needed to work together, helping each other with tasks as clearing land and building houses and barns. The contribution of these two ideas; a strong belief that individuals had to help themselves and a need for them to cooperate with one another strengthened the feeling that people were equal and that nobody should have special rights and privileges.