

History of USA CSS Notes

Topic: From Ancient Times to 1492

Q. How did the societies of native people in North America lived before the arrival of Europeans?

Like most precommercial peoples, the Native Americans survived largely on the resources available in their immediate surroundings. For instance, the reliance on the products of the sea of the tribes along the northern coastlines of the continent, and the way in which tribes in relatively inhospitable climates in the North—where agriculture was difficult—relied on hunting large game. Most Native Americans were farmers.

Inhabitants of the northern regions of the continent subsisted on combinations of hunting, gathering, and fishing. They included the Eskimo (or Inuit) of the Arctic Circle, who fished and hunted seals; big-game hunters of the northern forests, who led nomadic lives based on the pursuit of moose and caribou; tribes of the Pacific Northwest, whose principal occupation was salmon fishing and who created substantial permanent settlements along the coast; and a group of tribes spread through relatively arid regions of the Far West, who developed successful communities based on fishing, hunting small game, and gathering edible plants.

Other societies in North America were agricultural. Among the most developed were those in the Southwest. The people of that arid region built large irrigation systems, and they constructed towns of stone and adobe. In the Great Plains region, too, most tribes were engaged in sedentary farming (corn and other grains). They lived in large permanent settlements.

The eastern third of what is now the United States—much of it covered with forests and inhabited by the Woodland Indians—had the greatest food resources of any area of the continent. Most of the many tribes of the region engaged in

farming, hunting, gathering and fishing simultaneously. In the South there were permanent settlements and large trading networks based on the corn and other grains grown in the rich lands of the Mississippi River valley.

The agricultural societies of the Northeast were more mobile. Farming techniques there were designed to exploit the land quickly rather than to develop permanent settlements. Many of the tribes living east of the Mississippi River were linked together loosely by common linguistic roots.

The largest of these language groups consisted of the Algonquian tribes, who lived along the Atlantic seaboard from Canada to Virginia; the Iroquois Confederacy, which was centered in what is now upstate New York; and the Muskogean tribes, which consisted of the tribes in the southernmost regions of the eastern seaboard.

Religion was usually closely linked with the natural world on which the tribes depended for sustenance. Native Americans worshiped many gods, whom they associated variously with crops, game, forests, rivers, and other elements of nature. All tribes assigned women the jobs of caring for children, preparing meals, and gathering certain foods.

But the allocation of other tasks varied from one society to another. Some tribal groups reserved farming tasks almost entirely for men. Among other groups, women tended the fields, whereas men engaged in hunting, warfare, or clearing land.

Because women and children were often left alone for extended periods while men were away hunting or fighting, women in some tribes controlled the social and economic organization of the settlements.

Q. Why didn't Europeans come to the Americas before the fifteenth century?

Europeans were almost entirely unaware of the existence of the Americas before the fifteenth century. A few early wanderers—Leif Eriksson, an eleventh-century

Norse seaman, and others—had glimpsed parts of the eastern Atlantic on their voyages.

But even if their discoveries had become common knowledge (and they did not), there would have been little incentive for others to follow. Europe in the Middle Ages (roughly a.d. 500–1500) was too weak, divided, and decentralized to inspire many great ventures.

By the end of the fifteenth century, however, conditions in Europe had changed and the incentive for overseas exploration had grown.

Topic: Advent of the Europeans to British Supremacy (1492-1606)

Q. What effects did the arrival of Europeans have on the Native Peoples of the Americas?

The arrival of Europeans launched a process of interaction between different peoples that left no one unchanged. That Europeans were exploring the Americas at all was a result of early contacts with the natives, from whom they had learned of the rich deposits of gold and silver.

From then on, the history of the Americas became one of increasing levels of exchanges—some beneficial, others catastrophic—among different peoples and cultures.

Introduction of Diseases

The first and perhaps most profound result of this exchange was the importation of European diseases to the New World. It would be difficult to exaggerate the consequences of the exposure of Native Americans to such illnesses as influenza, measles, typhus, and above all smallpox.

Although historians have debated the question of how many people lived in the Americas before the arrival of Europeans, it is estimated that millions died. In some areas, populations were virtually wiped out within a few decades of their first contact with whites.

On Hispaniola, where Columbus had landed in the 1490s, the native population quickly declined from approximately 1 million to about 500.

In the Maya area of Mexico, as much as 95 percent of the population perished within a few years of the natives' first contact with the Spanish. Many (although not all) of the tribes north of Mexico were spared the worst of the epidemics.

Changes to Natives' life

In South America, Central America, and Mexico, Europeans, and natives lived in intimate, if unequal, contact with one another. Many natives gradually came to speak Spanish or Portuguese, but they created a range of dialects fusing the European languages with elements of their own. European men outnumbered European women by at least ten to one.

Intermarriage—often forcible—became frequent between Spanish immigrants and native women. Before long, the population of the colonies came to be dominated (numerically, at least) by people of mixed race or mestizos.

Virtually all the enterprises of the Spanish and Portuguese colonists depended on Indian workforces. In some places, Indians were sold into slavery. More often, colonists used a coercive (or “indentured”) wage system, under which Indians worked in the mines and on the plantations under duress for fixed periods.

Conquest of Europeans over the Natives

The decimation of native populations in the southern regions of the Americas was not only a result of exposure to infection. It was also a result of the Europeans' deliberate policy of subjugation and extermination.

Their brutality was in part a reflection of the ruthlessness with which they waged war in all parts of the world. It was also a result of their conviction that the

natives were “savages”—uncivilized peoples who could be treated as somehow not fully human.

By the 1540s, the combined effects of European diseases and European military brutality had all but destroyed the empires of Mexico and South America.

In 1622, the War between the Virginia settlers and Powhatan's tribes ended in utter Indian defeat.

In 1637, The Pequot War in New England ended in the complete destruction of the Pequot tribe. But as the white settlers were seizing larger tracts of land, the Indians formed extensive tribal alliances for resistance.

King Philip, for example, rallied several important New England tribes who fought heroically for two years before they were crushed; while the North Carolina settlers faced a similar combination in the Tuscarora War, and the South Carolina settlers in the Yamasee War.

These struggles were stern and extensive and caused the whites many losses in life and property. Finally came the phase of warfare in which the Indians found European allies. Some of the Northern tribes combined with the French; some of the Southern tribes received arms and encouragement from the Spaniards.

Fortunately for the English-speaking settlers, the powerful Iroquois Confederacy took a friendly attitude and lent active aid in operations against the French. In the end, the hostile Indians were decisively defeated.

The Positive Aspects

Not all aspects of the exchange were disastrous to the Indians. The Europeans introduced to the natives' important new crops (among them sugar and bananas), domestic livestock (cattle, pigs, and sheep), and, perhaps most significant, the horse, which gradually became central to the lives of many natives and transformed their societies.

Environmental changes

The European presence in America spurred countless changes in the environment, negatively affecting native animals as well as people. The popularity

of beaver-trimmed hats in Europe, coupled with Indians' desire for European weapons, led to the over-hunting of beavers in the Northeast.

Soon, beavers were extinct in New England, New York, and other areas. With their loss came the loss of beaver ponds, which had served as habitats for fish as well as water sources for deer, moose, and other animals.

Furthermore, Europeans introduced pigs, which they allowed to forage in forests and other wild-lands. Pigs consumed the foods on which deer and other indigenous species depended, resulting in scarcity of the game native peoples had traditionally hunted.

Land Ownership

European ideas about owning land as private property clashed with natives' understanding of land use. Native peoples did not believe in private ownership of land; instead, they viewed land as a resource to be held in common for the benefit of the group.

Colonizers erected fields, fences, and other means of demarcating private property. Native peoples who moved seasonally to take advantage of natural resources now found areas off-limits, claimed by colonizers.



Q. What were the reasons or incentives for the English to colonize the New World?

Interest in colonization grew in part as a response to social and economic problems in sixteenth-century England. The English people suffered from frequent and costly European wars, and they suffered from almost constant religious strife within their own land.

Here are the reasons:

Land

Many suffered, too, from harsh economic changes in their countryside. Because the worldwide demand for wool was growing rapidly, landowners were converting their land from fields for crops to pastures for sheep. The result was a reduction in the amount of land available for growing food.

England's food supply declined at the same time that the English population was growing—from 3 million in 1485 to 4 million in 1603. To some of the English, the New World began to seem attractive because it offered something that was growing scarce in England: land.

Mercantilism

At the same time, new merchant capitalists were prospering by selling the products of England's growing wool-cloth industry abroad. At first, most exporters did business almost entirely as individuals. In time, however, merchants formed companies, whose charters from the king gave them monopolies for trading in particular regions. Investors in these companies often made fantastic profits, and they were eager to expand their trade.

Central to this trading drive was the emergence of a new concept of economic life known as mercantilism. Mercantilism rested on the belief that one person or nation could grow rich only at the expense of another, and that a nation's economic health depended, therefore, on selling as much as possible to foreign lands and buying as little as possible from them.

The principles of mercantilism spread throughout Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One result was the increased attractiveness of acquiring colonies, which became the source of raw materials and a market for the colonizing power's goods.

In England, the mercantilism program thrived at first on the basis of the flourishing wool trade with the European continent, and particularly with the great cloth market in Antwerp.

In the 1550s, however, that glutted market began to collapse, and English merchants had to look elsewhere for overseas trade. Some English believed colonies would solve their problems.

Religion

Every British citizen was expected to attend the Church of England, and those who didn't were punished by the State. So when the Pilgrims (also called Separatists) began to worship secretly and leave the established Church, they were hunted and persecuted.

Many of them faced the loss of their homes and the loss of their livelihood. When it became impossible for them to continue in this way, they began to seek another place to live.

The Separatists first fled to the Netherlands, a wealthy maritime superpower that was far more religiously diverse and tolerant. But while life in Netherlands was peaceful, it wasn't English, and the Separatists feared that their children were losing their native culture.

They decided that the only way to live as true English Christians was to separate even further and establish their own colony in the New World.

Q. What were the reasons behind French exploration and colonization of the New World?

Spanish successes in the Caribbean attracted the attention of other European nations. Like Spain, France was a Catholic nation and committed to expanding Catholicism around the globe. In the early sixteenth century, it joined the race to explore the New World and exploit the resources of the Western Hemisphere.

The French were primarily interested in establishing commercially viable colonial outposts, so they created extensive trading networks throughout New France. They relied on native hunters to harvest furs, especially beaver pelts, and to exchange these items for French goods, like glass beads.

The French also dreamed of replicating the wealth of Spain by colonizing the tropical zones. After Spanish control of the Caribbean began to weaken, the French turned their attention to small islands in the West Indies; by 1635 they had colonized two, Guadeloupe and Martinique. Though it still lagged far behind Spain, France had its own West Indian colonies with lucrative sugar plantation sites and African slave labor.

Q. What were the reasons for the Dutch colonization in the New World?

Dutch entrance into the Atlantic World is part of the larger story of the religious and imperial conflict in the early modern era. In the 1500s, Calvinism, one of the major Protestant reform movements, began to take root in the Spanish Netherlands and the new sect desired its own state. Holland was established in 1588 as a Protestant nation, but would not be recognized by Spain until 1648.

Like other European powers, the Dutch were also driven by mercantilist ideas. Quickly, the Dutch inserted themselves into the Atlantic colonial race.

They distinguished themselves as commercial leaders in the seventeenth century, as their mode of colonization relied on powerful corporations: the Dutch East India Company, chartered in 1602 to trade in Asia, and the Dutch West India Company, established in 1621 to colonize and trade in the Americas.

Q. What were the reasons behind Spain's colonization of the New World?

Spain's colonization goals were to extract gold and silver from the Americas, to stimulate the Spanish economy by extracting the wealth of Americas, and the re-creation of the feudal social order to which the Spanish were accustomed. In short; to make Spain a more powerful country. The Spanish colonizers also aimed to convert Native Americans to Christianity.

Columbus's colonization of the Atlantic islands inaugurated an era of aggressive Spanish expansion across the Atlantic. Spanish colonization after Columbus accelerated the rivalry between Spain and Portugal to an unprecedented level. The two powers vied for domination through the acquisition of new lands.

By 1600, Spain had reaped substantial monetary benefits from New World resources. Gold and silver began to connect European nations through trade, and the Spanish money supply ballooned, which signified the beginning of the economic system known as capitalism.

The new riches ultimately created mass inflation and economic distress. However, Spain gained creative capital from its new global reach.

Topic: USA as a British Colony (1606-1783)

Q. What were the two instruments used in transferring Britons and others across the seas and founding new states in America?

1- Chartered Trading Companies

It was the chartered trading company, organized primarily for profit, which planted Virginia and Massachusetts. The London Company, so-called because organized by stockholders resident in London, had been granted its charter in 1606 to plant a colony between the thirty-fourth and forty-first degrees of latitude.

The Plymouth Company, whose stockholders lived in Plymouth, Bristol, and other towns, was chartered that same year to establish a colony between the thirty-eight and forty-fifth degrees.

These companies could distribute lands, operate mines, coin money, and organize the defense of their colonies. The king, who granted the charters, kept ultimate jurisdiction over the colonial governments.

The third corporation, the Massachusetts Bay Company, had a peculiar character and a special destiny. It originated as a body of stockholders, most of them Puritans, who had commercial and patriotic motives. Also, they hoped to secure liberty to set up the kind of Church government they liked.

Therefore, the principal Puritans of the company simply bought up all its stock, took the charter, and sailed with it to America. A commercial company was thus converted into a self-governing colony - the colony of Massachusetts Bay.

2- Proprietary Grant

The other principal instrument of colonization was the proprietary grant. The proprietor was a man belonging to the British gentry or nobility, with money at his command, to whom the Crown gave a tract in America as it might have given him an estate at home.

The old rule of English law was that all land not otherwise held belonged to the king, and America fell under this rule. Lord Baltimore received Maryland; William Penn received Pennsylvania, and a group of royal favorites under Charles received the Carolinas.

All these proprietors were given large powers to devise a government. Lord Baltimore, who had some of the absolutist ideas of the Stuarts was averse to giving his colonists any lawmaking power, but finally yielded to a popularly created assembly.

Q. How did the aftermath of the French and Indian War pave the way for the American Revolution?

The outcome of the war seemed entirely positive for the British; yet, its ultimate consequences would cost them control of their American colonies south of

Canada. The war and its aftermath substantially changed the relationship between Great Britain and its American colonists.

It removed the sharp menace that had been offered by the well-armed French holdings to the north and west, half encircling the colonies as with a jagged scythe. It removed the lesser pressure of the Spaniards to the south. Its campaigns gave many colonial officers and men valuable training in war, and enhanced their self-confidence.

It did something to create sentiment for uniting the provinces; a number of proposals for union were broached, the most notable being that drafted by the Albany Congress in 1754, attended by representatives of seven colonies. Though the plan failed to gain support, it did much to educate people on the idea of a union. So, too, did the spectacle of men from different provinces fighting side by side.

Just as the war lessened the old dependence on Great Britain, so it reduced the respect paid to her. Colonial troops, though badly equipped and ill-disciplined, found on several fields that they could fight as well as the British regulars – and in the wilderness, fighting could do better. They found many English officers blundering, just as the British found many colonials incompetent; they saw that the brave but inept Braddock would have done well to take young George Washington's advice on Indian fighting.

The New Englanders, electing their officers on a democratic basis, thought badly of the aristocratic British system of appointing commanders, and Americans from all colonies resented the system whereby any British officer outranked all colonial officers.

Paying the bill—a crushing debt of £140 million for the worldwide struggle—would become a major cause of contention.

Unfortunately for the British, the fruits of victory brought seeds of trouble with Great Britain's American colonies. The war had been enormously expensive, and the British government's attempts to impose taxes on colonists to help cover these expenses resulted in increasing colonial resentment of British attempts to expand imperial authority in the colonies.

British attempts to limit western expansion by colonists and inadvertent provocation of a major Indian war further angered the British subjects living in the American colonies. These disputes ultimately spurred colonial rebellion, which eventually developed into a full-scale war for independence.

Q. What were the Economic Causes of the American Revolution among different sections and interests?

In dealing with the economic causes of the Revolution we have to discriminate sharply among different sections and interests. The Northern merchant had a wholly different set of grievances from the Southern planter, and the Western land speculator from either.

Grievances of Northern people:

The Mercantile or Navigation Acts injured the Northern colonies far more than the Southern. The Navigation Act required all colonial exports to England to be carried in English-owned and English-operated vessels. Moreover, the English regulated the importation of European goods into the colonies in such a way as to favor English manufacturers. At first, these laws were not thoroughly enforced, but when in 1764 British undertook a revamping and tightening of the colonial system, the mercantilist statutes were overhauled.

The Sugar Act of 1764 was virtually a re-enactment of the old Molasses Act of 1733 in such terms as to make it enforceable. The old prohibitive and uncollectible rate of sixpence a gallon was reduced to threepence, and provision was made for the seizure of all vessels evading the law. This meant a heavy blow to the economic interests of New England.

Another annoyance lay in the fact that the export tax on continental goods shipped to the colonies from Great Britain was raised in 1764 from 2.5 percent to 5 percent. Customs officials were ordered to show more strictness, and enforcement was strengthened by various steps – for example – the stationing of warships in American waters to seize smugglers, and the issuance of “writs of assistance” to enable Crown officers to search suspected premises.

Grievances of Southern People:

The South was in a wholly different position. It had little or no trade with the West Indies. It sent its staples – tobacco, indigo, naval stores, lumber, hides – direct to England and took manufactured goods in return. But this trade with England was based on a system favorable to the mother country and unfavorable to the colonists.

It was in the hands of British mercantile houses and the factors or agents whom they sent out to the provinces. The factors bought tobacco and other commodities at prices often fairly low; they sold clothing, furniture, wines, carriages, and other goods at prices often unfairly high.

Easygoing planters fell into the habit of ordering what they liked from London, paying by notes, and letting their debts run-up to ruinous sums. Many debts became hereditary from father to son; as Jefferson wrote after the Revolution: “These planters were a species of property annexed to certain mercantile houses in London”.

In fact, Jefferson computed the total Virginia debt owed to British merchants at the beginning of the Revolution at over two million pounds. The planters naturally disliked their English creditors in the same the Western farmers, at a later period, disliked English mortgage holders. They were quite aware of the fact that the easiest way to get rid of this crushing burden was to rebel against the English yoke altogether and seek refuge in the moratorium or cancellation provided by the war.

In the quarter-century after 1750, some Southern legislatures passed liberal bankruptcy acts and stay laws that favored debtors. When these reached England the Privy Council almost always vetoed them. The result was an indignant feeling that the rich in England were grinding the faces of the poor.

Parliament also tried to stop the resort of the colonies to paper money. Most provinces issued a good deal of paper after 1730, and some made it legal tender; but they met more and more opposition in London. Finally, in 1764, Parliament flatly forbade the colonies to make paper money legal tender for debts, thus creating a new and important grievance of debtor groups all over British America.

Grievances of Western People:

Another large economic interest was concerned with land speculation and the settlement of the West. In the Western country, wealth was attained in two main ways: by trading with the Indians for furs and by organizing land companies to acquire, parcel out, and sell great tracts of the wilderness.

The fur trader and land speculator wished a free hand in those years just as the oil prospector and timber cutter wish a free hand in the West today. Besides these two groups, we find after 1760 another, the colonial veterans of the Seven Years' War who had been granted Western lands as bounties. Virginia in especial had rewarded her soldiers in this fashion, while Governor Dinwiddie had promised 200,000 acres to the troops who would be brave enough to drive off the French from their great holdings in the Ohio Valley.

Many of the plain people of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the Carolinas were land-hungry. By the close of the war, it was clear that there would shortly be a great stampede for the West. One land company after another was being organized; the greatest men on the continent – Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and Sir William Johnson – were keenly interested; there was a confusion of claims, purchases, and surveys.

But while this host were clutching at Western lands, the British government was determining upon a new policy of strict control and policing in the West. To keep peace with the Indians, to prevent the colonists from spreading too far west and thus outgrowing English control, and to put an end to the chaos of overlapping claims, it proclaimed in 1763 that all settlement must stop at the crest of the Appalachians. Lands beyond this "Proclamation Line" were temporarily barred off as a Crown domain, and no Indian lands anywhere were to be sold except to the Crown. The theory was that a little delay could do no harm, that the restive Indians should be given time to quiet down, and that lands could then gradually be opened to the colonists.

The Board of Trade and Plantations was soon supporting a scheme for a new Western colony called Vandalia. But this proclamation gave offense to the fur traders, the land companies, the bounty holders, and those generally who were hungry for Western holdings, for it seemed to slam shut the door which Americans had just fought the French to force open.

