CHAPTER THREE:  
BLACK PEOPLE IN COLONIAL NORTH AMERICA, 1526-1763

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Early settlers in North America included a wide variety of ethnic groups, including Native Americans, Europeans and Africans. The earliest Africans probably arrived in 1526 with Spanish explorers. In North America, the British, not the Spanish, came to dominate the area and their policies governed relationships between blacks and whites. Until the late 1600s, the British treated people of African descent much like their indentured servants. Blacks in this early period could obtain their freedom, own property and had legal rights. By the mid 1600s, however, the British colonies had begun to harden the legal status of blacks, often making their term of service for life. Legal changes by 1700 reduced slaves to chattel, or personal property. They lost almost all of their basic social and legal rights as humans. Different regions of the country saw many distinctions in the practice of slavery however. Compared to slaves in the Chesapeake, for example, slaves in the Carolinas outnumbered whites and faced the harshest legal codes. However, because their white masters were frequently absent, Carolina slaves also worked with a great deal of independence from white authority.

Despite many of the horrors and injustices of life under slavery, African Americans maintained and preserved many aspects of their African culture, including music, folklore, building styles and clothing. Even when they converted to Christianity during the Great Awakening, African Americans developed separate churches to maintain a distinctive African element to their religion. In addition to maintaining their own African culture, slaves heavily influenced white life, from their speaking mannerisms to building styles to food. Resistance and rebellion played a significant part in the day-to-day lives of many slaves. Although armed uprisings like the Stono Rebellion, the South Carolina Revolt and the New York City Rebellion remained rare, slaves demonstrated their objections to their situation by lying, stealing, destroying crops, breaking things, poisoning whites and escaping.

Just as slavery varied across the South, it also varied in the North in British North America; it also varied by the colonial power dominating different areas. More slaves in the North were isolated from other blacks and more worked in household jobs or skilled trades. In addition, the harsh form of chattel slavery developed in British North America remained different from other European nations.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Understand the various characteristics and achievements of the three main groups of people in North America in the early 1600s, including the Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans.

Understand the early status of blacks and early systems of labor, other than slavery, in the British colonies.

Understand the reasons for, and the development of, a system of chattel slavery in America by about 1700.

Understand the variations in plantation slavery in the South.

Understand the outlines of slave life in the British colonies, including the development of African-American culture, Africans’ impact on colonial culture in general, regional variations, gender variations, and types of resistance to slavery.
Understand the differences in Spanish and French slavery versus the system developed by the British.

**CHAPTER OUTLINE**

I. Introduction/Source Material

II. The Peoples of Eastern North America
   A. Eastern Woodlands Indians
      1. Diversity
      2. Mexican Influence
      3. 14th Century Changes
      4. Way of Life
      5. Influence on British
      6. Interracial Relationships
   B. The British and Jamestown
      1. Establishment
      2. Settlements
      3. Importance of Tobacco
      4. Early Labor
   C. Africans Arrive in the Chesapeake
      1. Spanish
      2. English and Jamestown
      3. Status

III. Black Servitude in the Chesapeake
   A. Indentured Servitude
      1. Conditions
      2. Example - Anthony Johnson
   B. Race and the Origins of Black Slavery
      1. Social/Demographic Revolution
      2. Caribbean Precedents
      3. Reduction in Indentured Servants
      4. British Racism/Discrimination
   C. The Emergence of Chattel Slavery
   D. Bacon’s Rebellion and American Slavery

IV. Plantation Slavery, 1700-1750
   A. Statistics/Geography
   B. General Characteristics
      1. Conditions of Work
      2. Goals of Slave/Master
      3. Gender Differences
   C. Low-Country Slavery
      1. Carolinas
      2. Georgia
      3. Race Relations
      4. Class Distinctions Among Blacks

V. Slave Life in Early America
   A. Housing
B. Furniture/Utensils
C. Clothing
D. Food

VI. Miscegenation and Creolization
   A. British versus other European Colonies
   B. Examples
   C. Legal Restrictions

VII. The Origins of African-American Culture
   A. Preservation and Loss of West African Heritage
      1. Language and Ethnic/Tribal Identity
      2. Extended Family
      3. Religions
   B. The Great Awakening
      1. Rise of Evangelical Christianity
      2. African-American Religious Similarities
      3. African-American Religious Influences
   C. Language, Music, and Folk Literature
   D. The African-American Impact on Colonial Culture
      1. Daily Life Impacts
      2. Work and Labor Impacts

VIII. Slavery in the Northern Colonies
   A. Impact of Religion
   B. Factors Making Slavery Less Extensive
   C. Slave Codes
   D. Northern Labor
   E. Effects on African Heritage

IX. Slavery in Spanish Florida and French Louisiana
   A. General Differences
   B. Spanish Florida
   C. French Louisiana
      1. Plantation work
      2. Creole population

X. Black Women in Colonial America
   A. Geographic Differences
   B. Price and Value
   C. Work
      1. Fields
      2. Housework
   D. Sexual Exploitation

XI. Black Resistance and Rebellion
   A. Reliance on Physical Force by Masters
   B. Individual Efforts at Resistance
      1. Reasons
      2. Resistance by Newly Arrived Africans
3. Acculturated Efforts
   C. Rebellions
      1. New York City, 1712
      2. Stono Rebellion, South Carolina, 1739

XII. Conclusion

TEST MATERIALS

MAP QUESTIONS
(Locate the following regions, geographical features or political entities on a map)
Ohio River Valley
Cahokia
British Isles
Newfoundland
Roanoke Island
Jamestown
Chesapeake
Virginia
Maryland
Carolina
Georgia
New England
New Jersey
New York
Pennsylvania
St. Augustine, Florida
New Orleans

IDENTIFICATIONS
(For each of the following, identify by answering the questions – who? what? when? where? and describe the significance by answering the question – why is this important? Why do we study this?)
Eastern Woodlands Indians
John Cabot
Luis Vasquez de Ayllon
Hernando de Soto
indentured servitude
Anthony Johnson
John Punch
Bacon’s Rebellion
low country
James Oglethorpe
task system
Negro watch
mulattoes
miscegenation
ring shout
Great Awakening
Jonathan Edwards