

## Daily Life in Virginia

In early Virginia, people lived on scattered farms rather than in towns. Tobacco farmers soon began establishing large farms called plantations.

### Headright System

These plantations were made possible in part by the headright system, which was started by the London Company. Under this system, colonists who paid their own way to Virginia received 50 acres of land. A colonist could earn another 50 acres for every additional person brought from England. Rich colonists who brought servants or relatives to Virginia gained large amounts of land.

#### ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

actors  
causes

### Primary Source

#### LETTER

## A Note from Virginia

In this 1619 letter, the secretary of the Virginia colony, John Pory, encouraged people to move to Virginia.

*As touching the quality of this country, three things there be, which in few years may bring this colony to perfection; the English plow, vineyards, & cattle . . . All our riches for the present do consist in tobacco, wherein one man by his own labor has in one year, increased to himself to the value of 200 pounds sterling; and another by the means of six servants has cleared at one crop a thousand acres of land English. These be true, yet indeed rare examples, yet possible to be done by others."*

—from *The Power of Words*, edited by T. H. Breen

#### ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

How does this letter indicate the importance of tobacco in Virginia?

## Labor in Virginia

Colonists in Virginia faced a hard life. They suffered very high death rates, which led to labor shortages in the colony. The majority of workers were **indentured servants**, people who received a free trip to North America by agreeing to work without pay for a period of years.

### Expansion of Slavery

Not all laborers in Virginia came from Europe. A Dutch ship brought the first Africans to Virginia in 1619. Some Africans were servants; others had been enslaved. Some African servants became successful farmers when their contracts ended.

The demand for workers was soon greater than the supply of people willing to work as indentured servants. Over time, the cost of slaves fell. These **factors** led some colonists to turn to slave labor. By the mid-1600s most Africans in Virginia were being kept in life-long slavery.

### Bacon's Rebellion

As plantations grew, the economy of Jamestown began to expand. Soon, colonial officials began to ask for more taxes. During the mid-1600s poor colonists protested the higher taxes. They were also upset about the governor's policies toward Native Americans. They thought the colony was not well protected against attack from Indians. In 1676 a group of former indentured servants led by Nathaniel Bacon attacked some friendly American Indians. Bacon opposed the governor's policies promoting trade with American Indians. He also thought the colonists should be able to take the Indians' land. When the governor tried to stop him, Bacon and his followers attacked and burned Jamestown in an uprising known as **Bacon's Rebellion**.

At one point, Bacon controlled much of the colony. He died of a fever, however, and the rebellion soon ended.

**READING CHECK** Analyzing What factors led

## Economies of the Southern Colonies

The economies of the southern colonies depended on agriculture. They also exported materials for building ships, such as wood and tar. Some colonies traded with local Indians for deerskins to sell.

The economies of the colonies were agrarian—that is, based on farming. They had many small farms and some large plantations. Farms did well because the South enjoyed a warm climate and a long growing season. Many farms grew cash crops that were sold for profit. Tobacco, rice, and indigo—a plant used to make blue dye—were the most important cash crops.

The southern colonies' cash crops required a great deal of difficult work to grow and harvest. This meant a large workforce was needed. By the 1700s enslaved Africans, rather than indentured servants, had become the main source of labor.

Slavery was a viciously brutal condition for many inhabitants of the southern

colonies. One former slave named **Olaudah Equiano** recorded his experiences.

“Tortures, murder, and every other imaginable barbarity ... are practiced upon the poor slaves with impunity [no punishment]. I hope the slave-trade will be abolished.”

—Olaudah Equiano, from *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*

Most of the southern colonies passed **slave codes**, or laws to control slaves. Colonies with large numbers of slaves had the strictest slave codes. For example, South Carolina's slaveholders feared that slaves would revolt. As a result, South Carolina's code said slaves could not hold meetings or own weapons. Some colonies did not allow slaveholders to free their slaves.

**READING CHECK** Summarizing What role did slavery play in the southern plantation economy? How was it regulated?

**SUMMARY AND PREVIEW** In this section you read about life in the southern colonies. In the next section you will learn about the New England colonies.

### Section 1 Assessment

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Online Quiz

KEYWORD: SS8 HP2

#### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People HSS 8.1

- Describe** How did **John Smith** improve conditions in **Jamestown**?
  - Explain** What events led to a conflict between the **Jamestown** settlers and the Powhatan Confederacy?
- Recall** Why were **indentured servants** necessary in Virginia?
  - Evaluate** What do you think was the most serious problem faced by settlers in Virginia? Why?
- Identify** Which colony was the first to promote religious tolerance?
  - Analyze** Why did more enslaved Africans live in South Carolina than did white settlers?
  - Predict** How might the colony of Georgia have been different if Oglethorpe's plan had succeeded?
- Recall** What was the purpose of **slave codes**?
  - Analyze** Why were slaves in high demand in the southern colonies?

#### Critical Thinking

- Contrasting** Using a chart like the one below, identify when and why each of the southern colonies was founded.

Colony	Year Founded	Reason for Establishment

#### FOCUS ON WRITING

- Gathering Some Ideas** As you read this section, take notes on the early colonies of Virginia, Maryland, the Carolinas, and Georgia. Be sure to note what advantages they offered to settlers and what difficulties settlers faced. Start to think about the people who would be most likely to settle in the southern colonies.