Introduction to Colonial North Carolina (1600-1763) [1]

Twenty years after the Lost Colony disappeared, in 1607, the English established another colony 150 miles up the coast at Jamestown. This Virginia colony, too, faced unexpected difficulties -- food shortages, disease, native peoples who were less than thrilled with their new neighbors -- but it survived long enough to find a cash crop, tobacco. The money from tobacco attracted new immigrants. By the 1660s, Virginians looking for land had moved south into the region around the Albemarle Sound, bringing with them two institutions that would come to define the American South: representative government and slavery.

In 1663, to bring order to Albemarle, King Charles II gave the region south of Virginia -- which he called "Carolina" after the Latin version of his own name -- to a group of his friends and political supporters. Known as the Lords Proprietors, they ruled the land from the Virginia border all the way to Florida like junior kings. But Carolina, like other colonies before it, was harder to manage than they expected. The men who had moved south from Virginia didn't think much of their new landlords, and weren't interested in being governed from London. In Carolina's first fifty years, the colony faced violent rebellion, attack by the Spanish, war with Indians, hurricanes, droughts, and pirates.

Despite all these problems, Carolina grew. The Lords Proprietors offered freedom of religion to all Christians -- something not possible in England -- and the colony attracted Anglicans, Quakers, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, Baptists, and people of other faiths from many countries -- England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, and Moravia. Tens of thousands more came from Africa, as slaves. After two bloody wars, the remaining Indians of eastern North Carolina left the colony, joined into small bands on tiny reservations, or assimilated into colonial society. Settlers swept across the coastal plain and Piedmont. The colony was taken over by the king and split into two, North Carolina and South Carolina.

Questions and answers

Over the course of its first hundred years, North Carolina's peoples built a complicated, confusing, and often chaotic society. As in the first chapter [2] of this digital resource, you'll have the opportunity to explore their experiences firsthand, through primary sources. You'll learn about their cultures and religions, their hopes and fears, their experiences of coming to America and making new homes, the challenges they faced, and the lives they created here. To guide you, we've provided not just their words but photographs, interactive maps, and animations. From these raw materials, you'll answer questions like these:

- What sort of vision did the Lords Proprietors have for their colony? and did it succeed?
- Why did Europeans leave everything they knew to move to North Carolina, and what did they find when they arrived?
- How did slavery become a global industry that took millions of people from their homeland in chains? and what did Africans bring with them to America to create new lives and communities?
- How did representative government and religious freedom come about in North Carolina?
- How did people learn, work, marry, raise families, and live their daily lives?

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