

Let us begin in New England, some 60 percent of whose founders originated in the eastern counties of Essex, Suffolk, Cambridge, Lincolnshire, and Kent. Most of the rest of the early Puritan families came from England's West Country, and perhaps 10 percent from London. They were largely crafts- and tradespeople rather than farmers, East Anglia's cloth industry being their most likely employment. The Puritans counted few indentured servants in comparison to the other colonies, and were well above the English norm in terms of literacy and education. Women outnumbered men in their churches by a ratio of 3:2, and most of the emigrants came to New England as part of a family unit. What they found there was a cold, rocky, stormy land unsuited to cash-crop plantations. Hence slavery did not catch on with them for economic as much as for moral reasons. Instead, New Englanders displayed a strong bias in favor of free labor organized around family and town units.

East Anglians bequeathed the broad, twangy "Down East" accent that survives to this day among native New Englanders. They tended to add an "r" to words ending in vowels (thus "Ameriker"), soften long vowels (thus "paahk" for "park"), and elide syllables ("Haav'd" for "Harvard"). They dotted their new environs with East Anglian names such as Boston, Cambridge, Groton, Braintree, Hingham, Weymouth, and Sudbury, and filled them with "saltbox" and "gabled" frame houses. However, the Puritans' social customs were as much sectarian as regional in their origin and began and ended with the family. They deemed marriage a covenant between goodwives and husbands who, like Old Testament patriarchs, were called upon to seed the commonwealth with a great and godly multitude. One result of that faith (or conceit) was the genealogical fixation or "ancestor worship" characteristic of later Boston Brahmins and "blue bloods." Puritans made pariahs of bachelors, considered spinsters cursed, and were in horror of all sexual expression other than marital intercourse (itself banned on the Sabbath). New England women, even though they married on average at the relatively advanced age of twenty-three, bore as many as eight or nine children.¹⁷ On the other hand, since Puritans conceived of marriage as a civil contract rather than a sacrament between persons God hath joined, they tolerated divorce, shameful though it be.

Hard work, large families, a harsh climate, and the belief that sin, temptation, and sudden death were omnipresent made the Yankees long-suffering people. The best means of rearing children, they believed, was through religious instruction and severe constraints to break a child's original selfish will. Parents might even farm their children out to other households (in the manner of later

New England boarding schools) because authority figures other than parents would be less inclined to spare the rod. Children were also made to observe sickness and death, the better to teach them the brevity of life and the need for faith and salvation. Finally, these people were stoic. They learned to repress their emotions (especially in public) and sat through Sabbath day services lasting six to eight hours, often in unheated churches. They shunned proud clothing and loud colors. They ate pease porridge, pumpkins, and cornmeal with their pork, beef, or fish, often cooked all in one pot (the New England boiled dinner). They also had few holidays since Congregational pastors abolished the "Romish" feasts of Christmas, Easter, Pentecost (Whitsunday), and saints' days. What they did celebrate were Election Day, Commencement Day, Training Day to honor the militia, and Thanksgiving Day, whose regular observance dates from the aftermath of King Philip's War. Of course, New England authorities eventually gave up trying to suppress Christian holidays, but their own tradition of setting aside days to celebrate *the polity, the community, the armed forces, and the people's prosperity* survived to become major expressions of Americans' civic religion.

Were New Englanders always good capitalists, as their Yankee trader and pedlar image later suggested? Not if that is taken to mean individualists competing against one another for material gain. Hustlers and speculators, merchants and developers were there from the start—after all, East Anglian clothiers were hardly immune to the profit motive. But a Calvinist religious calling was supposed to temper greed and subordinate individual needs to those of the commonwealth. With the exception of premeditated commercial developments such as Newport, New Haven, and Springfield, relative land holdings and wealth in New England were unusually egalitarian. The pure Yankee creed extolled hard work and prosperity, but defined the first as a duty and the latter a blessing, while enjoining all who were blessed to give back to their communities. Public service thus joined education at the top of the Puritans' roster of values, and respect for both would survive the gradual loss of faith in the creed that inspired them. Perhaps the best illustration of the New England ethic was a fondness for town ball, the so-called New England game that evolved at length into baseball. It was an orderly sport in which every action was a personal contest (pitcher versus batter, runner versus fielder) occurring within an overall communal context. Whatever players' individual skills, they won or lost as part of a team.¹⁸

The political theories spawned by this Puritan culture formed an ellipse

around the foci of freedom and order. There was no contradiction in that because liberty to a New Englander did not mean license, nor did order imply oppression. Rather, liberty was of four sorts: first, public or collective liberty from outside coercion, such as that of the Lords of Trade, the Anglican church, or the French; second, liberties as privileges, such as liberty to fish the Grand Banks or hunt in the woods; third, Christian liberty, which meant being free to worship and serve God without fear of sin, death, or earthly impediment; fourth, freedom from deprivation as expressed in the Bay Colony's poor laws for widows and orphans. None of these forms of liberty could be realized without public order and private discipline, while any "order" that trampled on liberty was really its opposite: moral anarchy.¹⁹ These were values ingrained in such children as Samuel Adams (born 1722), John Adams (born 1735), and John Hancock (born 1737).

Quakers, by contrast, considered New England as oppressive and militaristic in its way as Old England was in its way. It was said of Fox's Society of Friends that it made a theology of the absence of theology. They also dispensed in their meetings with all liturgy, clergy, vestments, icons, and music. Believing all men and women imbued by a divine inner light, they were egalitarian—one might say "non-judgmental"—in external behavior. Quakers addressed everyone as "thee" and "friend" without regard to temporal status or wealth. Most early immigrants to Pennsylvania and West Jersey, moreover, derived from the lower-middle part of the English social spectrum, so they had little to be proud about. Indeed, English meetings often helped pay the way of poor brethren to America. However, the Quakers (unlike the Puritans) encouraged importation of indentured servants, thus elevating social mobility above social equality.

The Society of Friends made converts all over the British Isles, but the ones who placed their stamp on America came mostly from the Midland counties of Yorkshire, Derby, and Nottingham, with minorities from London and Wales. Thus, except where they adopted Indian names, Pennsylvanians chose place names from home, such as Lancaster, York, Swarthmore, Darby, and Chester, or else Biblical names such as Providence, Salem, and Philadelphia. (The Welsh, of course, inspired the "y" towns such as Cynwyd, Wynnewood, Bryn Mawr, and Bryn Athyn.) The Quakers likewise bequeathed to the Delaware valley a curt and earthy Yorkshire dialect long on slang (bamboozle, brat, by golly, chock-full, flabbergasted, thingamajig, wallop) but short on style

by comparison to the syntax of a Harvard-trained minister or the Ciceronian phrases of an educated Virginian. Midlands immigrants were also used to building in stone, and Pennsylvania fieldstone was the best. But whether in architecture, speech, dress, food, or religion, Quakers made an affectation of plainness.

Like the Puritans, Quakers placed great value on family, children, and education, but treated them all as a personal rather than communal pursuit. Thus, where Puritans set up public schools and obliged attendance, the Friends established private schools and left children's attendance up to the parents. Where Puritans saw children as naturally naughty and treated their discipline as a village affair, Quakers appealed to a child's inner light as they would to an adult's. Where Puritans affirmed romance and a healthy physical bond between spouses, Quakers considered all sex not for procreation to be sinful and sometimes made couples wait years before approving their marriages. They also denounced alcohol, shunned team competitions, and encouraged exercise only for reasons of health.

Passive and pacifist, earnest and equable, William Penn's protégés claimed to deplore all distinctions of rank based on birth, wealth, sex, or age. They distrusted ambition, damned avarice, and promoted private philanthropy. Yet no colony save for early Massachusetts was dominated for so long by so small an oligarchy. The first Quaker merchant families of Philadelphia, dubbed "our mob" by one of its matriarchs, intermarried to such a degree 85 percent of the members of the town corporation were related well into the mid-eighteenth century.²⁰

An oligarchy so steeped in Quaker values, so incestuous, and so jealous of its leadership understandably distrusted change—any change—which helps to explain eastern Pennsylvania's reputation for cultural conservatism. Henry Adams later observed that while his Boston forebears had been "ambitious beyond reason to excell," Pennsylvanians were too democratic and humane to do much of anything in the public sphere. It was "as though political power were aristocratic by nature, and democratic power a contradiction in terms."²¹ Suffice it to say the list of colonial Boston's civic institutions was long, distinguished, and associated with many founders, whereas the comparable list for Philadelphia was short and overwhelmingly the work of one man: Benjamin Franklin, a native Bostonian. It seemed as if Quakers, trusting mankind, distrusted institutions, whereas the reverse was the case with the Puritans.²²

Not surprisingly, the political culture of Pennsylvania contrasted sharply

with that of New England. Quaker liberty, as symbolized by the great Liberty Bell cast in 1751, was less a condition of mankind than a reciprocal relationship between human beings, a relationship based on the Golden Rule. Thus, even though Friends believed their piety conformed most closely to New Testament teaching, they affirmed the freedom of others to believe, or not, as they chose, and denied the right of any to impose their beliefs on others. A simple enough proposition, but its corollaries could be complex, including the Quakers' fierce resistance to taxes imposed for the waging of war or any taxes and regulations imposed by a non-representative body. But by the same token their "fierce resistance" could never be martial given their "do unto others" pacifist ethic. No wonder Pennsylvanians *shouted* for liberty as loudly as anyone, yet drove other colonists to distraction by their reluctance to *act*.²³ Such were values ingrained in John Dickinson (born 1732), Clement Biddle (born 1740), and Thomas Mifflin (born 1744).

The original and most widespread colonial culture was so at variance with those of New England and the middle colonies that an observer ignorant of English history might not have believed it stemmed from the same country. Tidewater Virginia was comfortably Anglican, aristocratic, hierarchical, slave-holding, almost entirely rural, enamored of horses and gambling, and everywhere lusty, sporting, and deeply in debt.

The indentured servants who made up the base of Virginia's population originated from all over England, but a majority hailed from the vicinities of Bristol and London in England's southwest and south. This regional bias was strongly reinforced by Governor Berkeley, who bestowed estates and high offices on dozens of "distressed cavaliers," the royalist gentlemen uprooted by Cromwell. As many as two-thirds of Virginia's "first families" had roots in England's south and southwest, precisely the regions that were still wooded, largely manorial, and heavily Anglican. Thus, whether he was an indentured servant or petty nobleman, the fortune-seeker who sailed for Virginia dreamed of becoming a grand country squire.²⁴

These were the emigrés, needless to say, who gave America its first "southern accent." They spoke in languid rhythms, softened consonants (especially the "r") and elongated syllables ("Guuuhv'nah Baah-kly"). They employed solecisms such as "I be" and "ain't," dropped the "g" in "-ing," and imported a lexicon of terms from Sussex and Wessex such as chomp, flapjack, grit, pekid,

yonder, and book-learning. Like New Englanders, they placed great store in the family, ancestry, and patriarchy, but in fundamentally different ways. Where Yankees thought in terms of the nuclear family, southerners identified with the extended family, many members of which might live in proximity and in which even servants might be included. Where prominent Yankees imagined themselves Old Testament patriarchs in a prophetic sense and labored to pass on their values to children, southern gentry imagined themselves passing on their genes in the manner of a prize stallion. They also identified patriarchy with individual freedom as when William Byrd II rhapsodized in 1726: "Like one of the Patriarchs, I have my Flocks and my Herds, my Bond-men and Bond-women, and every Soart of Trade amongst my own servants, so that I live in a kind of Independence on every one but Providence."²⁵ A Puritan might consider such lordliness prideful, but to a Virginian lordliness enjoined one to be responsible for all who lived in one's domain and hospitable toward all who did not. So great a political and social pillar was patriarchy, in fact, that a wife who cuckolded her husband was considered guilty of *treason*. After all, female adultery might "adulterate" the family bloodline; male philandering did not.

Philander they did, at least those randy cavaliers with means, motive, and opportunity among servants, slaves, and widows. The secret, coded diary of William Byrd II provides ample evidence of the dalliances that a vigorous planter might enjoy on his own estate, among neighboring ones, and especially while visiting London.²⁶ But sex was only one outlet for aristocratic *joie de vivre*. Thus, New Englanders ate (or "et") their food, but wealthy Virginians and Carolinians dined on the pork, beef, and chicken they seasoned and fried in the "Dorset style" carried from England. They smoked their tobacco and drank wine and punch with equal gusto, considered a dancing master at least as valuable as a tutor, prided themselves on elegant clothes, and flirted in ways that would have landed a Puritan in the stocks. Virginians loved sports, but their competitions invariably tested the prowess of individual men and their animals, above all in horse races and cockfights. They also gambled incessantly over races, card games, and dice.

Nor was that just *noblesse oblige*, because life itself was a gamble in early Virginia and later on the frontier. Tobacco prices fluctuated unpredictably; bankruptcies and early deaths caused property to change hands at a rapid rate. Speculators went for the quick turnover rather than the long-range investment, and wealth was something to be enjoyed, not squirreled away for a rainy day. No wonder "the colonial Virginian so often appears to have been something of

a hustler."²⁷ Likewise, since the past seemed no guide to the future, Virginians came late to an interest in history which New Englanders displayed from the start.²⁸

The cliché has it that male Virginians were sexual predators and regarded women as breeding stock. But women, too, knew how to exploit such advantages as they had to get what they could. In the seventeenth century they were in such short supply that female indentured servants brought a price six times that of males. Free women enjoyed a signal advantage in the marketplace of marriage and might live to combine estates inherited from serial husbands.²⁹ Wives and daughters of poor planters earned a certain equality just by their indispensable labor and child-bearing, while ladies of breeding shared the same ambitions and pretensions as their men. Dames presided over the household and sometimes its finances, wielded immense power in the competition for social prestige, "put on airs" toward people of inferior rank, and in some cases claimed the "rights of Englishmen" for themselves. Thus did Sarah Harrison shock the parson and guests at her wedding (to James Blair, founder of William and Mary College) by agreeing to love and honor but refusing three times to obey.

It is amusing, given their own reputations, that Yankees and Quakers disapproved of the hauteur on display in the southern colonies. Thus did a clergyman remark upon meeting a Virginia gentleman on his "lofty elegant horse": "I never beheld such a display of pride in any man. . . . His countenance appeared as bold and daring as satan himself." It is perhaps closer to the truth to observe that Virginians did not try to cloak their pride beneath a fig leaf of piety or plainness. They wore their coats of arms, not their religion, on their sleeves, while their religion in any case was easygoing. In the plantation South, perhaps more than anywhere in England itself, Queen Elizabeth I's Anglican latitudinarianism prevailed. Virginians might attend church on a Sunday, consult their prayer books regularly (William Byrd II, between bouts of fornication, prayed morning and night), and cherish their family Bible. But they did not pry into what, or how fervently, their neighbors believed. In the same manner southerners of all but the highest ranks placed little store in education. In 1671 Governor Berkeley even wrote the Lords of Trade: "I thank God there are no free schools nor printing . . . for learning has brought disobedience, and heresy, and sects into the world, and printing has divulged them, and libels against the best government."³⁰ In fact, William Byrd II read Greek and Hebrew and owned more books than Cotton Mather, while Thomas Jefferson's two libraries (the first

burned) are legendary. But whereas Boston had five newspapers in the mid-eighteenth century, Virginia had only one. Its literacy rate was also a fraction of that in New England.

Aside from Anglican texts, the books most likely to find place in a planter's parlor were manuals on agriculture, husbandry, and good habits and manners. Puritans might spank their children and Quakers reason with them, but Cavaliers put children to work memorizing long lists of "dos" (fear God, honor the King, revere parents, bow to superiors, show courtesy to all) and "don'ts" (abuse inferiors, laugh raucously, stare, boast, give offense, or be selfish). In addition to teaching comportment, such books taught the value and praxis of the honorable life. Honor obliged a man to fight in defense of his kin, serve his country without hesitation or hope of reward, respect one's betters, command respect oneself, and never betray a trust.

The politics spawned by this Cavalier culture expressed yet a third distinct understanding of liberty, one based on hierarchy and independence. What did it mean to be free? It meant not to be dominated *by* others—which is slavery—and thus to exert authority *over* others, be it a wife, children, or servants. Such "hegemonic liberty" may seem repugnant today, but it was not some sophistry contrived to prop up a plantation culture. Rather, it was a direct descendent of the aristocratic definition of liberty that inspired the Magna Carta, the English Parliament, and the Bill of Rights of 1690. There is no liberty at all in egalitarianism, because people are not naturally equal and can only be made to appear equal through coercion (in which case *everyone* is a manner of slave), or pretense (in which case society pretends to be all chiefs and no Indians). To a planter the most salient question in politics was not "who should govern" but rather whether the natural aristocracy of prominent gentlemen governed with honor, justice, and wisdom.³¹ Children such as George Mason (born 1725), George Washington (born 1732), Thomas Jefferson (born 1743), and James Madison (born 1751) learned to cherish such freedom.

The fourth British culture transplanted to America was unique in a far different way. It despised order and hierarchy on principle, scoffed at all authority, and appeared simply barbarous to Virginians, Pennsylvanians, and Yankees alike. The ruffians bearing that culture were, of course, the "Scotch-Irish," and so numerous were they that estimates of their migration into the colonies range from a minimum of 125,000 between 1700 and 1775 to a quarter million.³² Like

the people who came to New England and the Delaware basin, they were religious non-conformists, in this case Presbyterians or New Lights caught up in the Whitefield revivals. But, as with the people who came to Virginia, the motives of these textile workers, farmers, and wives (about 40 percent of the influx was female) were almost wholly material. They were not abjectly poor, because most paid their way to America, but they feared falling lower in life in the old country and hoped to rise higher in life in the new one.

The term "Scotch-Irish" is American shorthand. This fourth cultural group was really composed of Scots, whether from Ulster or southern Scotland, extreme northern English, and a few southern Protestant Irish. Those from Ulster tended to be more educated, urban, and community-minded than their rural cousins from Scotland.³³ But what justifies lumping them together are the facts that almost all spoke a dialect of English rather than Gaelic and all were fleeing chaotic and bloody borderlands. The Scots who crossed the Irish Sea to colonize Ulster, displace the primitive Catholics, and improve the land were the first shock troops of English imperialism. As for the Scottish-English frontier, its history of feuds, war, cattle rustling ("reiving"), and outright banditry dated back to the eleventh century. All but three English kings or queens until 1750 fought at least one war on their northern border. To the Scots, the English were oppressors and plunderers come to steal their meager possessions, force their church down Catholic or Presbyterian throats, break up the clans, and in effect castrate them. To the English, the Scots were savages who had advanced little since the days when their Pictish ancestors painted their naked bodies blue and fell in a bloodlust upon Roman encampments. Worse still, the Scots, for centuries, had a nasty habit of seeking aid from the French.

The human beings who had to live on either side of these borders, for all their deep-seated hatreds, nevertheless shared identical fears, hardships, and duties, chief among them being always on guard, fiercely protective of family, loyal toward friends, and ruthless toward enemies. They were proud and clan-nish, distrustful of outsiders, hungry as sheep for security, yet ferocious as wolves for their next meal. No wonder the settled communities on the Atlantic seaboard were appalled when these newcomers poured onto the docks in their thousands, then relieved when they moved to the frontier where they could endanger no one but Indians.³⁴

The largest cohort of these northern Britons trod the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road westward in search of vacant land. Fanning out in the Appalachians they placed names such as Cumberland, Galloway, Derry, and Durham on the

frontier. Their dialects became a main source of the country-and-western speech patterns associated ever since with hillbillies ("git offa mah prah-pitty"). From the English-Scots border came the frequent subject-verb disagreements ("them gals is buck nekkid"), double negatives ("I ain't fixin' ta wrassle no critters"), and double positives ("he done did it, jedge, Ah seen him mah own self") which later leather-stockings and buckskins carried to the Mississippi and beyond. More elevating to American culture were the Scots, Irish, and north English ballads telling tales of love, loss, injustice, and death, thereby spawning American folk music.

Of course, the Scots-Irish also brought with them a clan system, not least because an entire extended family might take ship and squat together in central Pennsylvania, the Shenandoah Valley, or the Carolina uplands. Hugh Jackson, an Irish weaver, led a boatload of "kith and kin" to America in 1765, transplanting the clan that later produced Andrew Jackson. Patrick Calhoun arrived with wife, Catherine, and four sons in 1733, followed the Wagon Road to Lancaster County and thence to South Carolina. No less than twenty-three Calhouns would be killed in wars against the Cherokees, but the clan multiplied until, four generations on, it spawned John C. Calhoun, the leading statesman of the antebellum South. All the border people married extremely young and had scads of offspring. Some youths abducted their "honeys" in old-country fashion. Others were forced into shotgun weddings after a pregnancy or formed Common Law marriages in the absence of clergy. Still, their illegitimacy rates were far higher than anywhere else in the British Atlantic save for the Scots-English border itself.

Virginians, though sensual, preserved a certain decorum. Border people did not, as Anglican missionary Charles Woodmason was shocked to observe among the cabins dotting Virginia's foothills. Everyone slept in a family pile, children ran naked, and girls who had barely reached puberty pulled up their skirts (especially while dancing) and pulled down their shifts to display buttocks and breasts.³⁵ Even topographical names contained the familiar "four letter words."³⁶ One might imagine such libertine habits were a function of remoteness, lack of social constraints, and the libidinous influence of the pungent valleys of the Blue Ridge and Smokies. But the seeds of these sexual habits were planted back on the borders of Ireland and Scotland. Moreover, the seeds were well watered with another north British import: whiskey. Scots and Irish carried with them their thirst for the wee dram, or pint as the case may be. Even children at table were given a glass of whiskey sweetened with sugar. Over time, their experimentation with local mashes, stills, and the aging

of liquors in various casks perfected those backwoods masterpieces called Kentucky bourbon and Tennessee sippin' whiskey.³⁷

For a' that, as the Scots would say, life on the frontier was made harsh by relatively poor soil, Indian wars, intramural feuds, and familial strife. The border folk brought with them a customary division of labor whereby men fought and women worked, a code of honor whereby men protected and women obeyed, and a hierarchy whereby males governed the clan and wives were absorbed into it. Their sports, such as "no holds barred" wrestling and marksmanship contests, were blatantly martial, and "frontier justice" was a blend of vigilantism, lynching, and "eye for an eye" retribution. All these folkways, practiced so often under the influence of alcohol, made community and family life a capricious mix of violence and laxity.

Since few civil authorities policed the Appalachian foothills, the main source of social discipline was personal conscience quickened by itinerant preachers. Thus, while the "Great Awakening" touched all the colonies, the revivals may have had the profoundest impact on the frontier. So numerous and idiosyncratic were the evangelical preachers who worked the frontier that no generalizations are possible except to observe that they were highly emotional, given to field-preaching in the manner of Whitefield, hostile to organized churches, and focused on the born-again, life-changing experience. Those were features bound to appeal to a rural Celtic population already romantic, suspicious of authority, and jealous of independence. "Repent, ye sinner, and be saved"—especially when cried at dusk in a torchlit meadow littered with jugs—was a simple message that blamed the frontiersman alone for his sordid condition and put his future entirely in his own hands. The preacher was the medium, but the message was that man and God are alone with each other, free to make their own peace. So when more disciplined denominations such as the Methodists arrived on the frontier, they did not just scour the glens and dales for bodies to fill little white churches. They, too, staged enthusiastic field meetings and competed for audiences with the spoken word. After all, much of their flock was illiterate.³⁸

As primitive as this Scots/Ulster/north English culture may seem today, its politics expressed a familiar conception of liberty. Having known nothing but oppression and suffering for centuries at the hands of all manner of governments and churches, these were people infused with a pure libertarian spirit for whom freedom meant individual choice. These were people who hated taxes because they reckoned all who imposed or collected them to be glorified

