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VOLUME VI *English in North America*

EDITED BY

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I EXTERNAL HISTORY

John Algeo

1.1 **History, external and internal**

The history of a language is intimately related to the history of the community of its speakers, so neither can be studied without considering the other.

The external history of a language is the history of its speakers as their history affects the language they use. It includes such factors as the topography of the land where they live, their migrations, their wars, their conquests of and by others, their government, their arts and sciences, their economics and technology, their religions and philosophies, their trade and commerce, their marriage customs and family patterns, their architecture, their sports and recreations, and indeed every aspect of their lives. Language is so basic to human activity that there is nothing human beings do that does not influence and, in turn, is not influenced by the language they speak. Indeed, if Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956) was right, our very thought patterns and view of the world are inescapably connected with our language.

It is, of course, possible to view the history of a language merely as internal history – a series of changes in the inventory of linguistic units (vocabulary) and the system by which they are related (grammar), quite apart from any experiences undergone by the users of the language. We can describe how the vocabulary is affected by loanwords or how new words are derived from the language's own lexical resources. We can formulate sound laws and shifts, describe changes that convert an inflected language to an isolating one, or a syntax that puts an object before its verb to one that puts the verb before its object. That is, we can describe a language purely as a formal object. But such a view will be abstract, bloodless, and often lacking in explanation for the linguistic changes.

Because language is a human capacity, the history of a particular language is linked with that of its speakers. As a part of a total culture, a language

cannot be completely separated from the culture of which it is a part. To extend Meillet's dictum cited by Salikoko Mufwene (at the end of § 8.3), a culture is a system in which everything hangs together. Therefore to understand the whole culture, we must understand the language; and vice versa, to understand the language, we must understand the culture. The effort to trace the history of a linguistic system and its units (lexical, phonological, morphological, and syntactic history) is the diachronic aspect of microlinguistics. The effort to trace the history of the speakers of that language is the diachronic aspect of macrolinguistics.

This chapter does not offer a history of America, but rather a brief account of political and social events that can reasonably be seen as having had a significant influence on the English language. Some events of great moment in other ways are therefore treated lightly or not at all, and other events of small import in themselves, but with consequences for the language, are treated at greater length. The difference between the two kinds of events is, to be sure, a matter of judgment.

With respect to the events it reports, the aim of this chapter is that of Max Lerner (1987, xvi) in his cultural history of America – not to present either “a rosy and euphoric picture seen in a haze of promise or an unsparing indictment” but rather “to avoid both these sins . . . the sin of complacency and the sin of self-hatred.”

The external history of American English has involved a number of factors with profound effects on the language: population mobility, innovation, discontinuity with the past, decentralization, democracy, a large land area, and a large and ethnically diverse population.

First among those factors is mobility. The colonists were by definition a moving population, but as settlers they did not simply settle in. Rather they continued moving. Americans have consequently always been a peripatetic population. The history of America has been described as one of an expanding frontier, from the first settlements along the Atlantic coast to “a small step” for a man onto the surface of the Moon.

The second factor follows from the first: mobility requires adaptability and innovation. Change of location requires change of lifestyle. The first colonists could not live in the New World just as they had in the Old. They had to adapt. Later immigrants likewise had to adjust to the new conditions they found. Change and adaptation became hallmarks of American life. Innovation became the norm of American life – in social structures, technology, and attitudes.

Innovation led to a third factor: a sense of discontinuity with the past and of perpetual youth. We can never be actually separated from our past,

but a perception of separation affects our view of ourselves. American life and language are, to be sure, unmistakable continuations of the life and language of England. And, indeed, in certain respects, Americans have been more conservative than Britons. But in other respects they are less bound to former ways. The emphasis of the “New” World has been on its newness and its break with the Old World. Immigrant populations typically retain a sentimental attachment to the “old country,” but assimilate into the new pattern of life, while inevitably changing that pattern by their assimilation. The result is a perpetual sense of newness. In Oscar Wilde’s bon mot, “The youth of America is their oldest tradition. It has been going on now for three [today four] hundred years.”

Another consequence of mobility has been decentralization. The very structure of American government is one of a federal union of states, which retain certain prerogatives and rights. On many matters, there is no single American law, but fifty different laws. So also, though Washington, DC, is the governmental capital of the nation and New York City is a commercial capital, there is no cultural capital in the nation. No location in the United States corresponds to London as the center of the United Kingdom.

A related factor is that of democracy or, perhaps more accurately, “social mobility.” The latter term’s first recorded use in the *OED* is from 1925, by Pitirim A. Sorokin, founder of the Department of Sociology at Harvard: “We used to think that in the United States . . . social mobility was greatest.” Equality of life in America can be and has been exaggerated. Class differences certainly exist, based on wealth, fame, education, profession, connections, and other such factors, although they may be less clearly defined and more permeable than in some other places. But there is no inherited American aristocracy to rule or serve as a model. It is part of the American myth that the only aristocracy in the land is one of merit. Myths may be untrue, yet they are powerfully influential.

In physical size, the United States is nearly as large as the entire European continent, with even greater variability in climate and topography. The sheer size of the country presents English speakers with a wide environment to respond to and with extensive resources to draw on. The major stages of territorial expansion of the United States after the post-Revolutionary settlement with Britain at the Treaty of Paris (1783) were the Louisiana Purchase from France (1803), the Florida cession by treaty with Spain (1819), the admission of the Republic of Texas (1845), the Oregon acquisition by treaty with Great Britain (1846), the Southwestern cession by conquest from Mexico (1848), the Gadsden Purchase of territory in southern

Arizona and New Mexico from Mexico (1853), the Alaska Purchase from Russia (1867), and the annexation of the Republic of Hawaii (1898).

In population, the United States is nearly five times as large as the United Kingdom, having grown from a little under 4 million in the first census of 1790 to just under 250 million in 1990. The more people who use a language, the more opportunity there is for the language to change in diverse ways.

Moreover, the mixture of ethnic groups, which began in Colonial times and has never ceased, constantly brings diverse foreign influences to bear on American English. America has always been a land of diverse immigrants. The Amerindians were early immigrants from Asia, and the process of migrating and mixing has never ceased. English has always been, and continues in Britain today to be, heavily influenced by other languages. But the diversity of such influence and the common level on which it operates are probably greater in America than in any other native-English-speaking land.

1.2 Periods in the history of American English

The history of American English can be conventionally but usefully divided into three periods whose beginnings are marked by critical events in the history of Americans (Algeo 1991). Those periods are –

- The Colonial period, initiated by the establishment of the first permanent English-speaking colony at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. Though English speakers had established contact with the New World, both directly or indirectly, before this time, the Jamestown colony began the creation of a new variety of the language. Three factors brought this new variety into existence: the exposure of English speakers to new experiences on the American continent that required new ways of talking about them, the begetting of a native population to whom those experiences and the new ways of talking were normal, and the obstacle that distance made for communication with their fellow English speakers in the motherland. The result is what might metaphorically be called the gestation period of American English.

- The National period, beginning with the American Declaration of Independence from England in 1776. Political independence brought with it inevitably – and in the case of the new United States, swiftly – a quest for cultural independence that included linguistic self-awareness. Many American colonists had from the beginning displayed independence and self-assertion. Indeed, their desire for independence – economic, governmental, and ecclesiastical – was a factor in the foundation of several of the colonies, though economic ambition on the part of the sponsors of various colonies also played a prominent role. After the American

Revolution, the heady feeling of freedom from King and Parliament led to an assertion of other sorts of independence. During this period, English-speaking Americans spread over the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific, in the process absorbing and being influenced by the cultures of other settlers. To continue the metaphor, this period might be called the childhood and adolescence of American English.

- The International period, beginning with the Spanish-American War of 1898. Though the Spanish-American War was hardly more than a skirmish – a “splendid little war,” as it was called at the time – it was the turning point between some historical needs and the means of satisfying those needs. The needs were for new frontiers, new markets, and a new sense of purpose.

America had begun as a frontier land; when the first settlers arrived, the entire eastern seaboard was frontier. As the settlers spread inland, the frontier continually receded to the west. By the end of the nineteenth century, the continent had been spanned and the expansion-minded and expanding population looked for new frontiers to absorb its surplus restlessness. In addition, after the Civil War, the successfully cohesive nation underwent an explosion of economic power. America had always been a supplier to other countries, but now it needed new markets to serve and be supported by.

Perhaps most important, America’s sense of national purpose, defined very early in its history and adhered to faithfully, was one of “manifest destiny.” Although that catchphrase is now often regarded with irony as chauvinistic hubris, a sense of social and collective calling has been basic to the national consciousness. It underlay the foundation of the earliest New England colonies, whose members listened to the words of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5.14): “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.” Today, we may regard the Puritans’ belief that they were that “city set on a hill” as self-righteous arrogance, but it was a motivating force for them. The Founding Fathers also went about their task of creating a new nation with a sense of historical inevitability and purpose. The nineteenth-century belief that it was America’s “manifest destiny” to expand over the continent from east to west was only one expression of a much wider sense of national purpose. But when that expansion had been accomplished, the nation felt called upon to look for its destiny elsewhere.

The immediate results of the Spanish-American War included the independence of Cuba, the acquisition of the territory of Puerto Rico by the United States, and the forced sale of the Philippines by Spain. But the long-range result was the movement of America into international politics. The Spanish-American War was followed by the nation’s late entry into World War I, critical entry into World War II, and decisive role in bringing about

the fall of the Iron Curtain, thus ending the division of the world into two evenly balanced power camps.

The spread of the English language and its culture over the world is a major event in human history. That spread was effected chiefly by two impulses: the creation of the British Empire, which was at its height in the nineteenth century, and the spread of American technological and economic hegemony, which reached an apogee at the turn of the twentieth into the twenty-first century. The worldwide dissemination of English, most recently in its American variety, affects other languages around the globe, but it also affects English, which is changed by its contacts with other languages, just as it changes them. So one sequel to that “splendid little war,” lasting only a few months, was the influence that American English has come to exert on other languages and the reciprocal influence they exert on English through its American variety. The otherwise minor Spanish-American War marked the maturity of American English and its entrance onto the world stage.

The future is always uncertain. It is practically certain that other English-speaking countries will come to play an increasing role in the world history of English, and it is probable that some of them will in time become principal players on that field, joining or perhaps displacing Britain and America. It is also possible that the English language will one day be replaced as the dominant means of communication for science, technology, commerce, and world culture generally. But that day gives no sign of dawning soon. During the foreseeable future, world culture (as distinct from local, national, and ethnic cultures) is being expressed through the English language, and increasingly through its American variety.

How the big consequence of the present-day role of American English on the world stage developed from the small beginnings of colonial settlement and how English was changed in America during the process is the subject of this book. The focus of this chapter is on the experiences of Americans during the four hundred years of their history as those experiences impacted the language they speak.

1.3 **The Colonial period**

The English language began to be influenced by the New World long before any English speakers settled there. That influence came partly from the exploration of North America by English adventurers, and partly indirectly from contacts between English speakers and other Europeans with experience in the New World. But such influences were on English generally; they

did not create a new variety of the language. For the latter to come into being, it was necessary that communities of English speakers should settle in America and be cut off from easy and frequent contact with their fellows in the motherland.

The process of diversification between British and American English began with the settlement of Jamestown by about a hundred colonists in 1607. That colony was also the site in British America of the first cultivation of tobacco, the first representative governmental body (which evolved out of the 1619 House of Burgesses), the first African slave population, and the first Anglican Church. It was, however, never a thriving colony, partly because it was built on unhealthful marshland and partly because the first settlers were not self-sufficient. They were “gallants” faced with an inhospitable landscape and none of the amenities of civilization they had known (Kraus 40).

The first permanent New England colony was Plymouth, settled in 1620 by Pilgrims. They, unlike the Puritans, had left the Anglican Church and sought to establish their own separatist theocracy in America after having spent a dozen years in Leiden, Holland. The Pilgrims were a closely organized minority in the colony, who controlled it during its early decades. Plymouth Colony was not chartered, but became part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1691.

The major English colonization of America started about 1630. David Hackett Fischer (1989) has proposed a history of settlement of the American colonies in four major waves, involving different places of origin, classes and customs, places of settlement, and times. His argument is that the total life of the colonists falls into four cultural patterns, embracing dialect, housing styles, attitudes toward life, religion, superstitions, food, dress, education, entertainment, government, naming, childcare, family customs, values, and indeed folkways and mores generally. He further postulates that these four patterns of culture continued after the Colonial period, assimilating new immigrants from non-English countries, and that they still exist in contemporary forms marking basic differences in the national life. Fischer's is the most ambitious theory of American cultural history ever put forward.

There were, to be sure, other movements of settlers and other cultural complexes than Fischer's four primary ones, but the latter were these:

- (1) Puritans from eastern England to Massachusetts Bay, 1629–41.
- (2) Gentry and their servants from southern England to Virginia, 1642–75.
- (3) Quakers from the North Midlands and Wales to the Delaware Valley, 1675–1725.

- (4) Common people from northern England, northern Ireland, and Scotland to the Appalachians, 1717–75.

Fischer's overview of the settlement and subsequent history of America is subject to the flaws of all grand generalizations and can be criticized in various of its details and as an oversimplification. Nevertheless, it provides a useful schema for tracing and relating together the external and internal history of America.

1.3.1 Puritans in New England and the northern colonies

The first great wave of settlement was the Puritan migration, which took place during a decade (the 1630s) of great social uncertainty in England. King Charles I was attempting to rule without Parliament, and Archbishop William Laud was trying to purge the Anglican Church of its Puritan faction and to require high-church practices like genuflection and chanting, anathema to the Puritans. In addition, the cloth industry, in which nearly a fourth of the early New England colonists had worked, was depressed. During the decade, more than 20,000 Puritans emigrated to Massachusetts, leaving some English towns half depopulated. At the end of the decade, the migrations suddenly stopped and even reversed, with Puritans returning to England. In the 1640s the Civil War broke out which was to result in the establishment of the Commonwealth and the temporary dominance of Puritan interests in England.

The primary motive for the Puritan emigration was religious and political, although the settlers included some economic refugees as well. The Puritan leaders came to Massachusetts to found a new Zion on the new continent. They were largely educated and middle class, with a notable absence of lower-class members, and they came not singly but by families. Although they came from all over England, East Anglia was their principal place of origin. The typical Puritan leader was well-educated, a graduate of Cambridge, with a strong religious and social commitment. The typical Puritan follower was a craftsman – literate, urban, disciplined, and pious. The Massachusetts colony was remarkably homogeneous, especially in its leadership.

The institutions and attitudes of the New England colonies were very influential: “Their heavy reliance on the Bible, and their preoccupation with platforms, programs of action, and schemes of confederation – rather than with religious dogma – fixed the temper of their society, and foreshadowed American political life for centuries to come” (Boorstin 1958, 19). The

Puritan insistence on written laws and agreements, rather than on an oral common law, foreshadowed the American Constitution as a secular bible.

The colonists brought with them the speechways of their native counties. The “Norfolk whine,” associated with a high-pitched nasality, was the forerunner of the “Yankee twang” of eastern New England (Fischer 57–62). From Massachusetts, the New England colonists ultimately migrated southward to New Jersey, eastward to Maine and Nova Scotia, northward to Canada, and westward to upper New York and on to the Pacific coast. In doing so, they took with them their customs and dialect, which became the basis of the Northern dialect of American English.

New Hampshire’s first settlement was established in 1623, although the region was not named after the English county until 1629. Between 1641 and 1679, the region was under the government of Massachusetts. In 1679, it was made into a royal province.

Rhode Island was settled by dissidents from the Massachusetts Bay Colony – by Roger Williams and his congregation in 1636, by William Coddington and Anne Hutchinson in 1638, and by others later. A confederacy of the settlements was established in 1647, and a royal charter issued in 1663 became the foundation of the colony’s government well into the nineteenth century.

Connecticut was also first settled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony between 1633 and 1638. Settlements in that region were united under a single government in 1665.

1.3.2 *Catholics in Maryland*

In one of the minor emigrations, the English settled Maryland in 1634 under the leadership of Leonard Calvert, younger brother of Cecil Calvert, Lord Baltimore. The colony was intended as a haven for Roman Catholics, but because of a lack of Catholic colonists, Protestants were in the majority from the beginning. The economic base of the colony was tobacco farming, using indentured servants from England and, after the late 1630s, African slaves. Religious tolerance was established by law, but applied only to those professing a belief in the divinity of Jesus, and denial of the Trinity was a capital crime. The city of Baltimore was founded in 1729.

1.3.3 *Cavaliers and others in the South*

The second great wave of English settlement, to Virginia, took place during the Civil War and the resulting Commonwealth and Protectorate

(1642–60), when Royalists were not in favor in England. The nickname of the state, “Old Dominion,” may allude to the loyalty of its colonists to the exiled Charles II. The dominance of the Puritan oligarchy in England during the Commonwealth and Protectorate sent large numbers of cavaliers to Europe and Virginia. Virginia’s elite, many of whom were younger sons of English gentry, were Royalist in politics and Anglican in religion. Two-thirds of them were from the south or west of England; and a third had lived for some time in London.

Whereas the New England settlers were primarily middle class, Virginia settlers were mainly lower and upper class, or at least would-be upper class: “In England in the later 17th century the ambition of a prosperous tradesman was to become a country gentleman” (Boorstin 1958, 99), and Virginia offered that possibility. The ruling elite, of whatever origin in the motherland, were only a small fraction; 75 percent of all immigrants were indentured servants. Most of the Virginia colonists were rural rather than urban, farmers or unskilled laborers rather than craftsmen, and illiterate. Three quarters of them were males between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four. They came from the same southern and western counties as the elite.

Features of Virginia speech have been traced to the dialects of southern and western England (Fischer 256–64). Citing such scholars as Bennett Wood Green (1899) and Cleanth Brooks (1985), as well as Hans Kurath (1972, 66) and Raven McDavid (1967), Fischer (259) concludes:

Virtually all peculiarities of grammar, syntax, vocabulary and pronunciation which have been noted as typical of Virginia were recorded in the English counties of Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire, Dorset, Wiltshire, Somerset, Oxford, Gloucester, Warwick or Worcester.

The upper classes of Virginia, and later South Carolina, maintained a closer and more sympathetic connection with the establishment in the motherland than did those of any of the other colonies (Fisher in §§ 2.8.3, 2.9). The speechway that developed in these colonies blended upper-class and lower-class British usage with later influences from the African slave population. It became the basis of the Southern dialect of American English.

Following earlier efforts by the Spanish and the French to settle the Carolina coast, in the 1650s Virginia settlers began moving into the territory that had been called Carolina as early as 1629. In the 1660s a royal grant established the colony of Carolina and settlers from England arrived in 1670. The colony was governed from Charleston, founded in 1680. North Carolina was set apart and governed by a deputy from Charleston, and

eventually North Carolina and South Carolina were established as separate colonies. In 1731, Georgia was created from the southern part of the area.

Georgia was the last of the original thirteen colonies to be established. The first English settlement was in Savannah in 1733. James Oglethorpe, a philanthropist, obtained a charter for the colony to provide a refuge and new opportunity for the economically depressed of England. The colony was to be a buffer between the other English colonies to the north and the Spanish to the south. It was also to produce silk and other commodities for England through a system of small villages inhabited by yeoman farmers. Slavery was outlawed to avoid large plantations. The utopian scheme failed, partly because the land was unsuited for the type of agriculture envisioned, and in 1752 the proprietors turned the colony back to royal control.

1.3.4 *Quakers and others in the Middle states*

Of all the American colonies, those on the middle of the Atlantic coast were, from the time of their first settlement, the most mixed in origin. Because of that very fact, they developed into the typical American culture of later times.

The third great wave of migration began as the second was tapering off after the Restoration of King Charles II. The third wave consisted mainly of Quakers and Quaker sympathizers and was so substantial that by the middle of the eighteenth century the Society of Friends was the third largest religious group in the colonies. From that high point, the relative strength of the Quakers precipitously declined, but in Colonial days, they were a major force in America. The Quakers settled in the Delaware Valley, chiefly in Pennsylvania, but also in nearby West Jersey, northern Delaware, and northern Maryland. Non-Quakers also settled in the region and by the middle of the eighteenth century came to outnumber the Quakers.

The motive for Quaker migration was similar to that of the Puritans – to escape persecution at home and to find a place where they could put their religious principles into practice. But the Quaker principles were in contrast with the Puritan. Quakers relied on the “inner light” and eschewed professional clergy, as well as sacraments and ceremonies. They were, at least during a critical phase of colonization, socially active and engaged, and dedicated to religious freedom and social pluralism. Their ideals embraced the work ethic, education, and simplicity of life.

Although Quaker immigration to the Delaware Valley had begun earlier, the founder of the Pennsylvania colony was the Quaker William Penn, who in 1681 received a grant of land to the west of the Delaware River from

Charles II in compensation for a debt the king had owed to Penn's father. Penn aspired to found there a commonwealth inspired by the Quaker ideals of life, referring to it as "a holy experiment." In 1682 Penn wrote a governing plan for the colony, guaranteeing personal rights and freedom of worship, and including a formal provision for amendments to the plan, presaging the amendment provision of the American Constitution. In 1696, the foresighted Penn even drafted a plan for uniting the American colonies, a concept that had to wait nearly a century for its realization.

In ethnic origin the Quaker colonists were mainly English, Welsh, Scotch-Irish, and German. They were generally of the lower middle class, being husbandmen, artisans, manual workers, and shopkeepers. Although they came from all over England, the main source of English Quaker immigrants was the North Midlands, especially Cheshire, Derbyshire, Lancashire, Nottinghamshire, and Yorkshire.

Because the Delaware Valley settlement was more mixed in origin than Massachusetts Bay or Virginia, its dialect may be presumed also to have been more mixed. It became, however, the ancestor of the contemporary North Midland dialect of American English, which is arguably the most typically "American" of all contemporary regional dialects (Fischer 470–5).

The area of New Jersey had come under English control in 1664, although the Dutch continued to claim it for some years afterwards. In 1676 the area was divided into two colonies, East Jersey and West Jersey (a Quaker settlement); in 1702 the two colonies were reunited. New Jersey and New York shared the same governor until 1738.

New York was first colonized as New Netherland by the Dutch. In 1624 they settled Fort Orange (later Albany) and in 1625 established New Amsterdam (later New York City). The Dutch governor, Peter Stuyvesant, surrendered to an English invasion of New Amsterdam in 1664, and by 1669 the whole colony had become English and was renamed for the Duke of York, the future King James II. Dutch influence was prominent, however, in both Albany and New York City, and was memorably described by Washington Irving in his satirical *History of New York*.

Although the Dutch colonization was modest, it had significant effects on American life, many prominent families, including the Roosevelts, being descended from Dutch colonists. Its linguistic influence is also apparent from terms like *boss*, *coleslaw*, *cookie*, *Santa Claus*, and *Yankee*. Upstate New York was settled heavily by colonists from Massachusetts and Connecticut, and Germans established several settlements there as well.

Delaware was settled by Swedes in 1638 as the colony of New Sweden. The colony was captured by the New Amsterdam Dutch in 1655, and by

the English in 1664. It was governed as a part of New York until 1682, when it was transferred to William Penn, who wanted to unite it with Pennsylvania. In 1704, however, Delaware acquired its own legislative assembly, although it shared a governor with Pennsylvania. The colony was called *Delaware* after the bay, which had been named for Sir Thomas West, Baron De La Warr.

1.3.5 *The Scotch-Irish in Appalachia*

By the end of the seventeenth century, the population of the American colonies was about 220,000: 95,000 in the southern colonies, 80,000 in New England, and 45,000 in the middle colonies (Kraus 92). But major immigration was still to come.

The settlers of the fourth great wave, unlike the others, were not united or motivated by religion or politics. What they had in common was that they were marginalized, geographically and economically. They came from the north of England, from Scotland, and from Northern Ireland and have traditionally been referred to in America as Scotch-Irish. Their immigration was a folk migration, rather than a movement inspired by a cause or directed by a leader.

This migration lasted longer than any of the others, stretching over much of the eighteenth century, and it involved more immigrants. They traveled in families, women were well represented, and so were all age groups except the elderly. Their social backgrounds were diverse, but only a few were of the higher classes, though also few would have been of the lowest orders simply because the poverty stricken could not afford travel. Few came as indentured servants, because there was little demand for the services of the Scotch-Irish.

The Scotch-Irish came to escape economic privation and in quest of a better material life, but the reality they came to was often one of prejudicial discrimination. They were, along with Amerindians and African blacks, an underclass in Colonial society. In turn, they were themselves xenophobic, clannish, conservative, and given to feuds. But they were also loyal to family and friends, respectful of individual rights, and believers in the necessity of “elbow room.”

Some came into Boston and moved to the western frontier of New England. Many arrived in the port of Philadelphia but were immediately encouraged by the Quakers to move westward. They passed into the interior of Pennsylvania, and into the mountainous regions of Maryland, Virginia, and Carolina. From about 1760, the Scotch-Irish settled the inland

parts of the Carolinas. They became frontiersmen, the inhabitants of Appalachia, and later expanded into Arkansas, Missouri, Texas, and on to the far southwest. Their speechways became the South Midland dialect (Fischer 652–5).

1.3.6 *Late migration*

During the fifteen years between 1760, when the French and Indian War ended in America (1.3.8), and 1775, when the American Revolution began, a great immigration to the colonies took place (Bailyn 1986b): 125,000 from the British Isles (55,000 Northern Irish, 40,000 Scots, 30,000 English), 12,000 from Germany and Switzerland, and 84,000 from Africa. The immigration from Britain was so great that Parliament considered a bill banning emigration to North America (Bailyn 1986b, 29–66). Whereas the Europeans came mainly into ports in the middle colonies, the bulk of them as part of the fourth great wave from Britain, the Africans came mainly as slaves to the southern colonies.

Not all of the British immigrants during this late period were Scotch-Irish. Of those entering the colonies on the eve of the Declaration of Independence, nearly a fourth were from metropolitan London and a sizable number from the Home Counties. They were predominantly young, male, unmarried, and indentured (Bailyn 1986a, 11–13). They were not necessarily London natives, however, for the capital city was a magnet attracting the mobile and ambitious from all over the island.

The chief motive for migration was economic – the quest for better living conditions by those who came voluntarily and the need for cheap labor by those who bought the services of bound workers. Bound workers were of four types. Indentured servants contracted themselves before immigrating to serve for a specified period of time. Redemptioners after arriving in America offered themselves as workers in return for the payment of their transportation. Convicts were freed from prison in return for their labor. Slaves were involuntary workers whose servitude had no terminal date. The treatment of indentured servants, redemptioners, and convicts from Britain was not significantly different from that of slaves from Africa. And all such bound workers often sought to escape the bonds of servitude by running away from their masters to make a new life for themselves (Bailyn 1986b, 324–52).

The intense immigration from abroad was accompanied by an extensive in-migration. The result was a mixture of populations that inevitably affected their speechways. The cultural continuity that doubtless linked various of the American colonies to counties and regions of Britain was

balanced with a jumbling of regional cultures. The result was not a homogeneous blend, but a mixture ensuring that American local differences cannot be traced back to the motherland by any simple direct line. Individual features and, in some cases, even complexes of features have been so traced, but on the whole, the colonies were the breeding ground for a new variety of English language and culture.

1.3.7 *Contacts with non-English populations*

When European settlers arrived in the New World, they found it already inhabited by the native Amerindian populations. They were not a single people, but a large number of different tribes. It has been estimated that North America held as many as 2,000 different Amerindian languages and consequently cultures. The history and relationships of these languages are not well known and have been a matter of scholarly dispute. Many of the Amerindian languages became extinct as their speakers died out after European colonization of the continent, and today some of them are imperfectly known, attested only by sketchy word lists or descriptions.

The English settlers along the Atlantic coast were cheek by jowl with a variety of tribes, such as the Delaware, Massachusett, Mohegan, Nanticoke, Narraganset, Pamlico, Pennacook, Pequot, and Powhatan. From these groups they borrowed names for the landscape and terms for flora, fauna, and Amerindian cultural features. The influence of Amerindian languages on American English was exclusively lexical, although the influence of native tribes on American culture was not insignificant. The early settlers learned much about coping with their new environment from their Amerindian neighbors despite the violence and antagonism that typically characterized their relationships.

The non-Europeans who were to have the greatest influence on American English were, however, African slaves. The Southern colonies were the last of the slave economies to develop in the New World, Brazil and the Caribbean being earlier. The first Africans were brought to the American colonies in 1619 by Dutch slave traders, who sold twenty slaves in Jamestown. Between that event and the abolition of the slave trade by Congress in 1807, an estimated 400,000 Africans were brought to the English colonies. Many of them were brought directly from the Caribbean; that area and Brazil contained the largest number of African slaves in the hemisphere.

The height of the slave trade to America was the eighteenth century, when the development of plantation culture in the South created a demand for cheap labor. The typical American sense of the word *plantation* arose at

that time: “an estate or farm . . . on which cotton, tobacco, sugar-cane, coffee, or other crops are cultivated, formerly chiefly by servile labor” (*OED*, in which the first citation for the sense is dated 1706).

Slaves were used to raise the cash crops on which the colonial economy rested: tobacco in Virginia and Maryland, rice in Carolina, and cotton in Georgia. The African population in America consisted of three broad groups. The first were field hands, generally newly imported slaves who grew the cash crops and the need for whose services created the “peculiar institution,” so much at variance with the religious and later Enlightenment ideals that otherwise framed American society. The second were house servants, who often lived in intimate relations with their white owners. The third were craftsmen or skilled workers. The latter two groups were usually native born in the colonies.

The extent and exact nature of the African influence on early American English and culture are matters of scholarly dispute (see ch. 8), though its reality is generally accepted. This influence continued throughout later periods in the history of the national variety and remains a potent force in present-day America.

During the Colonial period, however, the most noted contacts were with other European powers. The English had competition in America: the French to the north in Canada and the Spanish to the south in Florida and to the far west in Mexico and later California. And other nations were also seeking to colonize the same general area as the English, as noted above. The Dutch moved into what is now New York, founding the colony of New Netherland in 1624. That colony lasted until 1664, when the English took control of it. Through this colony, Dutch had some influence on American English. There was moreover a short-lived Swedish colony in the area that became Delaware.

Settlers also came from other European countries, such as Germany, notably the Palatinate, without establishing a colonial base in America, but significantly influencing American language and customs. French Huguenots settled throughout the colonies, but especially in Carolina; a notable early descendant of Huguenot forebears was Paul Revere, whose family name had been remodeled from *Rivoire* (Kraus 104). Smaller contingents of Scandinavians and Jews came as well.

1.3.8 *Colonial wars*

A consequence of the mixture of European colonial powers in North America was that European conflicts had their echoes on the American

continent. Four colonial wars had increasing effects on the American colonies. The names of these differ between Europe and America. In the colonies the first three were called by the names of English monarchs, the implication being that they were the doings of overseas kings and queens – of little concern to the American colonies.

The European War of the League of Augsburg (1689–97), known in the colonies as King William's War, had little effect in America, producing no territorial changes there.

The War of the Spanish Succession (1702–13), known in America as Queen Anne's War, was brought to an end by the Treaty of Utrecht, which gave Britain the French colonies of Newfoundland and Acadia (renamed Nova Scotia) and the territory around Hudson Bay.

The War of Jenkin's Ear with Spain merged into the War of the Austrian Succession with Prussia, France, and Spain (1740–48), called King George's War in America; it ended with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. In that war, New England troops took the French fort of Louisbourg, which controlled the approach to the St. Lawrence River. The fort was, however, returned to the French by the treaty, a severe disappointment to the colonists.

The French and Indian War (1754–63) was a different sort of conflict, being more important to the colonists and following a reverse geographical pattern from that of the three earlier wars. It began in America and spread to Europe as the Seven Years War (1756–63). France, in an attempt to control the land west of the Appalachians into which English colonists had begun to penetrate, built a line of forts including Fort Duquesne on the location of present-day Pittsburgh. The governor of Virginia sent George Washington, who was then a young surveyor, to negotiate. But the French rejected him. A second mission in which Washington was accompanied by a small force of 150 fared no better. The British then sent an army of Redcoats, accompanied by Washington and a small colonial troop to enforce their claims. But they were ambushed near Fort Duquesne and driven back. The war then spread to Europe. Under the direction of William Pitt, the Elder, the British were successful, and the treaty ending the war gave Britain the territory of Canada and all land east of the Mississippi River, including Florida.

As a result of the Seven Years War, Britain became the premier colonial power in Europe. In the colonies, however, the French and Indian War had mixed consequences for both the British and the Americans. Removal of the French threat to the west eliminated the colonists' need for defense by the motherland. Gratitude to the British, and especially Pitt, for whom Fort Duquesne was renamed, was coupled with elation at the prospect of an unimpeded opening to the west. However, there was also a dark side.

Subsequent British attempts to impose taxes raised a resentment that fed upon the disaffection which had arisen between Redcoats and the colonial forces during the war.

While admiring the Redcoats' professional skills, the colonists found their behavior in other respects to be objectionable, particularly their profanity and crudeness and the hauteur and severe discipline enforced by the British officers. On the other hand, the British regarded the American colonials as incompetent soldiers, undisciplined, insubordinate, cowardly, and unkempt. The scorn with which the British officers viewed colonial troops led them into a grave misjudgment during the later Revolutionary encounters, when they assumed that the ragamuffin colonial forces would break and run at the sight of Redcoats marching in close ranks with bayonets.

Such opinions reflected the degree to which English and colonial values and traditions had diverged, and they suggest that separation of the two societies was not merely possible but probably inevitable.

[Garraty 207]

1.3.9 *The development of English in Colonial America*

The Colonial period of American history was the foundational one for American English. It began with the isolation of groups of English speakers from their fellow countrymen in Britain. The ocean separating the colonies from the motherland was a grave impediment to frequent and free intercommunication. Transportation and communication across the Atlantic were by sailing vessel, relatively slow and costly. Consequently, although intercourse with Britain was maintained, it was not on a mass scale or of an intimate, everyday type. Consequently the language of the colonies and that of the mother country began to drift apart.

The drift between American and British usage was widened by the fact that in the new land the colonials had to cope with a new environment – new topography, new flora and fauna, new economic and social conditions. Their response to that challenge was inevitably reflected in their language, most apparently in the vocabulary. New words were borrowed and coined. Old words changed their meanings and uses under the pressure of the new environment.

In addition, on the North American continent the English colonists encountered speakers of other languages – French, Spanish, Dutch, German, Amerindian, African, and so on – under conditions that differed greatly from the contacts Britons had elsewhere with foreigners. Although English throughout its history has been heavily influenced by other lan-

guages, the foreign influences on it in America were unique and not shared directly by other English speakers.

As the first colonists settled in and begot families, their descendants accepted the New World – its environment, culture, and language – as their native inheritance and as the natural state of affairs. The colonists became native Americans, and that fact was a powerful psychological factor molding their attitudes toward their own language and the English of Britain. Though the British standard was still held up, on both sides of the Atlantic, as the defining variety of correct English and exerted a powerful influence on Colonial English, the base of the latter became American during the Colonial period.

The foregoing developments are the factors that produce dialect split. And during the Colonial period they created a split between English in America and English in Britain, which also was continuing to change and evolve in new directions – but not in the same directions as the English of the colonists. The American vocabulary had expanded significantly, drawing on both foreign and native resources. The fact that Englishmen expressed disapproval of American lexical innovations helped to consolidate a sense of Americanness among the colonies.

On the other hand, roads and stagecoaches, weekly newspapers and almanacs, and Benjamin Franklin's postal service, all increased the ease and frequency of communication among the colonies. As a result, the colonies grew closer together in culture, opinion, and language, just as they were collectively growing farther apart from and less dependent on the motherland.

The colonists had brought with them a diversity of British cultural patterns, from various regions and classes of the motherland. They were motivated by various visions. But from the first settlement of America, the colonists found that practical concerns of survival and adaptation outweighed whatever intellectual assumptions they may have brought with them. The result was a shared pragmatic attitude (Boorstin 1958, 149–58).

Differences there certainly were among the colonies and the classes of colonists. But the perception of difference depends on a standard of comparison. British visitors to the colonies in the eighteenth century remarked on the uniformity and propriety of American English (quoted by Boorstin 1958, 274–5):

The Planters, and even the Native Negroes generally talk good English without Idiom or Tone.

The propriety of Language here surprized me much, the English tongue being spoken by all ranks, in a degree of purity and perfection, surpassing any, but the polite part of London.

In North America, there prevails not only, I believe, the purest Pronunciation of the English Tongue that is anywhere to be met with, but a perfect Uniformity.

A striking similarity of speech universally prevails; and it is strictly true, that the pronunciation of the generality of the people has an accuracy and elegance, that cannot fail of gratifying the most judicious ear.

The impression of uniformity may be explained, at least partly, by a comparison with the diversity to be encountered in Britain. But it may also be partly a consequence of communication between the colonies and of a common response by the colonists to their environment.

1.4 The National period

1.4.1 *The American Revolution*

The French and Indian or Seven Years War created conditions that led on to the American Revolution by a series of escalating reactions. The Seven Years War had been very expensive for Britain. Government expenditures more than doubled during the war, and consequently taxes in Britain were at an all-time high. Those taxes fell heavily on the landed and ruling classes, who not unnaturally thought that the colonies should share the burden of a war that had started in America. Defense of the colonies was going to be an on-going and costly need because of the threat of the Indians and the Spanish, to whom France had ceded the Louisiana territory west of the Mississippi, as well as of a potential revived threat by the French. Moreover, the civil administration of the colonies was costly; for example an inefficient customs service cost three and a half times as much to maintain as it raised in revenue (Kraus 183).

Consequently the British government began a policy of finding ways to tax the colonists, who until that time had been taxed only slightly. In addition, Britain sought to exploit the fur and other trade with the Indians in the area between the Appalachians and the Mississippi, a trade that had been largely a French monopoly before the war. Consequently a royal proclamation of 1763 defined a line through the Appalachians that separated eastern and western areas. To the east of the line colonists were free to settle; to the west, British commissioners were to have exclusive rights to Indian trade and Indians were to be free of encroachment by colonial settlers. The limitations did not sit well with the colonists, who looked to the trans-Appalachian territory for future settlement and who objected to Britain's intervention.