

Station #3- The Middle Colonies

Document #1- Diversity in America- Vincent N. Parrillo (2009)

Philadelphia and its adjoining area offered one example of cultural pluralism. Still a small village in 1700, its population was mostly English and Welsh, but this area also included Danes, Dutch, Finns, French, Germans, Irish, Scots, and Swedes. Even within these individual groups, further diversity could be found. The 300 or so Germans, for example, were a mixture of Lutherans, Mennonites, and Quakers, each group remaining separate from others...

...The greatest concentration of cultural diversity, however, was in New Amsterdam, where 18 languages were spoken on Manhattan Island as early as 1646. The Dutch, Flemish, Walloons, French, Danes, Norwegians, Swedes, English, Scots, Irish, Germans, Poles, Bohemians, Portuguese, and Italians were among the settlement's early inhabitants. After the English takeover in 1664, New York's slave population became the largest north of the Chesapeake region. In 1720, the city's Black population numbered 20,000, one third of the total; by 1741, slaves were still a substantial proportion, one sixth of the population...

... Within the Middle Colonies, the ethnic clannishness of the diverse groups prevented any cohesive regional culture from developing. Thus, 18th-century colonial America was literally a multicultural place, a fact frequently commented upon by European visitors and congressional representatives in the 1790s, who noted the significant cultural differences among the three regions.

Document #2- "Frame of Government of Pennsylvania", William Penn (1682)

"I know what is said by the several admirers of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, which are the rule of one, a few, and many, and are the three common ideas of government, when men discourse on the subject. But I choose to solve the controversy with this small distinction, and it belongs to all three: Any government is free to the people under it (whatever be the frame) where the laws rule and the people are a party to those laws, and more than this is tyranny, oligarchy, or confusion."

Document #3-William Penn's Letter to the Colonies of Pennsylvania (April 8, 1681)

"...I hope you will not be troubled at your change and the king's choice. You are not at the mercy of the governor that comes to make his fortune great. You will be governed by law of your own making, and live as free, and, if you will, serious and industrious people. I will not take the rights of any, or oppress his person. In short, whatever serious and reasonable men can reasonably desire for the security and improvement of their own happiness, I shall heartily agree to."

Document #4- An Historical Description [of Pennsylvania], Gabriel Thomas (1698)

“I must say, even the present encouragements are very great and inviting for the poor people (both men and women) of all kinds, can here get three times the wages for their Labor they can in England and in Wales.

I shall instance in a few...The first was a blacksmith (my next neighbor) who himself and one Negro man he had, got fifty shillings in one day, by working up a hundred pound weight of iron...And for carpenters, both house and ship, bricklayers, masons, either of these tradesmen will get between five and six shillings every day constantly. As to journeymen shoemakers, they have two shillings per pair both for men and women’s shoes; and journeymen tailors have 12 shillings per week...

The maidservant’s wages is commonly between six and ten pounds per annum, with very good accommodation. And for the women who get their livelihood by their own industry, their Labor is very dear....

The chief reason why wages of servants of all sorts is much higher here than there, arises from the great fertility and produce of the place; if there large stipends were refused them, they would quickly set up for themselves...

First, their land costs them little or nothing in comparison to the farms in England... In the second place, they have constantly good price for their corn, by reason of the great and quick trade into Barbados and other Islands; through which means silver is become more plentiful than here in England... Thirdly they pay no tithes and the Taxes are inconsiderable.”

Document #5- Quakers in the World (2018)

Quakers in Germantown, now a suburb of Philadelphia, made the first recorded protest against slavery in 1688. Many Quakers, especially in the southern colonies, owned slaves at this time...For much of the eighteenth century; the focus was on eliminating slavery within the Quaker community. This was eventually achieved in 1774. Many individuals helped to change opinion. Benjamin Lay (1677-1759) was a campaigner who believed in eye-catching approaches. On one occasion he stood barefoot in the snow outside a Quaker Meeting to show the conditions in which many slaves were living...Many Quakers freed their own slaves, and some bought slaves from others, in order to free them. By 1758 opinion amongst Quakers had moved to a point where a systematic program of visits to the remaining Quaker slave-owners was agreed, in an endeavor to persuade them to free their slaves. Eventually, in 1774, Quakers who still owned slaves were expelled from the Society of Friends.

Once Quakers had eliminated slavery from their own communities, they turned their attention to eradicating slavery in society as a whole. Two strands of activity developed. One was a campaign to win hearts and minds. The other was supporting escaping slaves, and helping them and freedmen/women to build new lives.

‘Free Produce’ committees grew up, with much Quaker input, boycotting all slave-produced goods. Along with their British counterparts, Quakers at this time developed many of the approaches to campaigning that are still in use today, including boycotts.