

**Module 1: American Beginnings - 1607 to the 1750s**  
**Topic 1 Content: Southern Society Notes**

**Introduction**

# SOUTHERN SOCIETY



Life in the Southern colonies involved life on a plantation or small farm. Plantations were estates on which crops such as tobacco, indigo, and rice were produced. Plantations took the place of towns and were self-sufficient. A woman's role in the Southern society was limited to domestic work. Indentured servants and slave labor were used to complete the most harsh and demanding labor. Click on each of the images to learn about plantation owners and small farmers, indentured servants, and women of the Southern society.

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### Southern Society



### **PLANTATION OWNERS AND SMALL FARMERS**

The Southern colonies of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia all developed economies based on large plantations that grew cash crops. The large plantation owners controlled much of the South's economy. Plantations were generally located near the coast or along deep, wide rivers.

In these areas, the soil was extremely fertile, and tradable goods could be shipped directly. Because plantation owners produced everything they needed, they had very little use for the commerce available in small towns.

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### Information



### **PLANTATION OWNERS AND SMALL FARMERS**

Even though large plantations drove the economy of the Southern colonies, small farmers lived inland in the Appalachian Mountains. English, Welsh, and Scottish nobles moved to these areas to practice subsistence farming, hunting, and trading on a small scale.

The nobles were looking for profitable resources. These settlers grew rice, tobacco, and indigo. North Carolina also found a valuable resource in tar and pitch. Tar and pitch helped to make sailing vessels watertight and kept ropes from deteriorating.

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### Tobacco



### PLANTATION OWNERS AND SMALL FARMERS

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#### Indigo



### PLANTATION OWNERS AND SMALL FARMERS

Indigo dye was a natural dye that could be extracted from plants. This was an extremely important process because blue dyes were rare during colonial times. The image to the right shows cakes of indigo. These cakes would be ground into a powder and then added to water, producing a dye. Indigo was produced in South Carolina and Georgia.



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### Rice



### PLANTATION OWNERS AND SMALL FARMERS

Rice was the most important crop of the lower Southern colonies. Rice had to be cultivated in the swampy low country. Rice plantations were very labor intensive. Plantations contained fifty to one hundred slaves. These slaves worked in stagnant water and were susceptible to disease. South Carolina and Georgia were the main producers of rice.



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### Indentured Servants



### INDENTURED SERVANTS

Indentured servants consisted mostly of white men. These men had traded either a life of poverty or a prison term for a term in servitude in North America. For a short period of time, Africans were forcibly brought to the New World and treated as indentured servants. Many indentured servants did not survive their terms. Living conditions were harsh and the labor was brutal. The population of indentured servants decreased

as the number of African slaves increased. Those who did survive settled on the western outskirts of the Southern colonies. They lived in inland mountain and valley areas, while making a living by subsistence farming, hunting, and trading.



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#### Women



#### Women

Women, both in the South and eventually in the North, were considered second-class citizens. Women had few legal or social rights. They could neither vote nor preach. Very few women received any academic education. Instead, women studied social graces or domestic tasks.

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