

American Life in the Seventeenth Century

1607 – 1692



The Unhealthy Chesapeake

#Diseases ravaged the people in the Chesapeake

#Malaria

- Fever, shivering, pain in the joints and headache spread by being bitten by an infected mosquito

#Dysentery

- Inflammation of intestines leading to bloody diarrhea and dehydration caused by drinking infected water or contact with people already infected

#Typhoid

- Infectious bacteria that causes fever and diarrhea caused by contact with infected food, water, or other people already infected
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The Chesapeake Colonies in the Seventeenth Century

The Unhealthy Chesapeake

Low life expectancy

- 1/2 the people born in Chesapeake did not survive to their 20th birthday
 - Few lived to their full life expectancy of 40 for women or 50 for men
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The Unhealthy Chesapeake

- # The Chesapeake grew slowly in the 1600s because of this; it grew mostly from new immigrants from Europe, not natural birth
 - Most immigrants were single men in late teens or early 20s
 - Most new immigrants died soon after arrival
 - Survivors in the Chesapeake competed for scarce women; women were outnumbered 6 to 1 (in 1650) and 3 to 2 (by 1700)
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The Unhealthy Chesapeake

- # Families were few and fragile
 - Most men could not find mates
 - Most marriages ended with death of a spouse in 7 years
 - Few children reached adulthood with both parents; almost none knew a grandparent
 - Weak family ties reflected in high number of premarital pregnancies (1/3 of brides already pregnant when married)
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The Unhealthy Chesapeake

- # Chesapeake settlers struggled on
 - Native-born whites eventually developed immunities to diseases that had ravaged the original immigrants
 - More women came, allowing for more families
 - By the end of the 1600s, the white population grew because of its birthrate (and not immigration as before)
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The Tobacco Economy

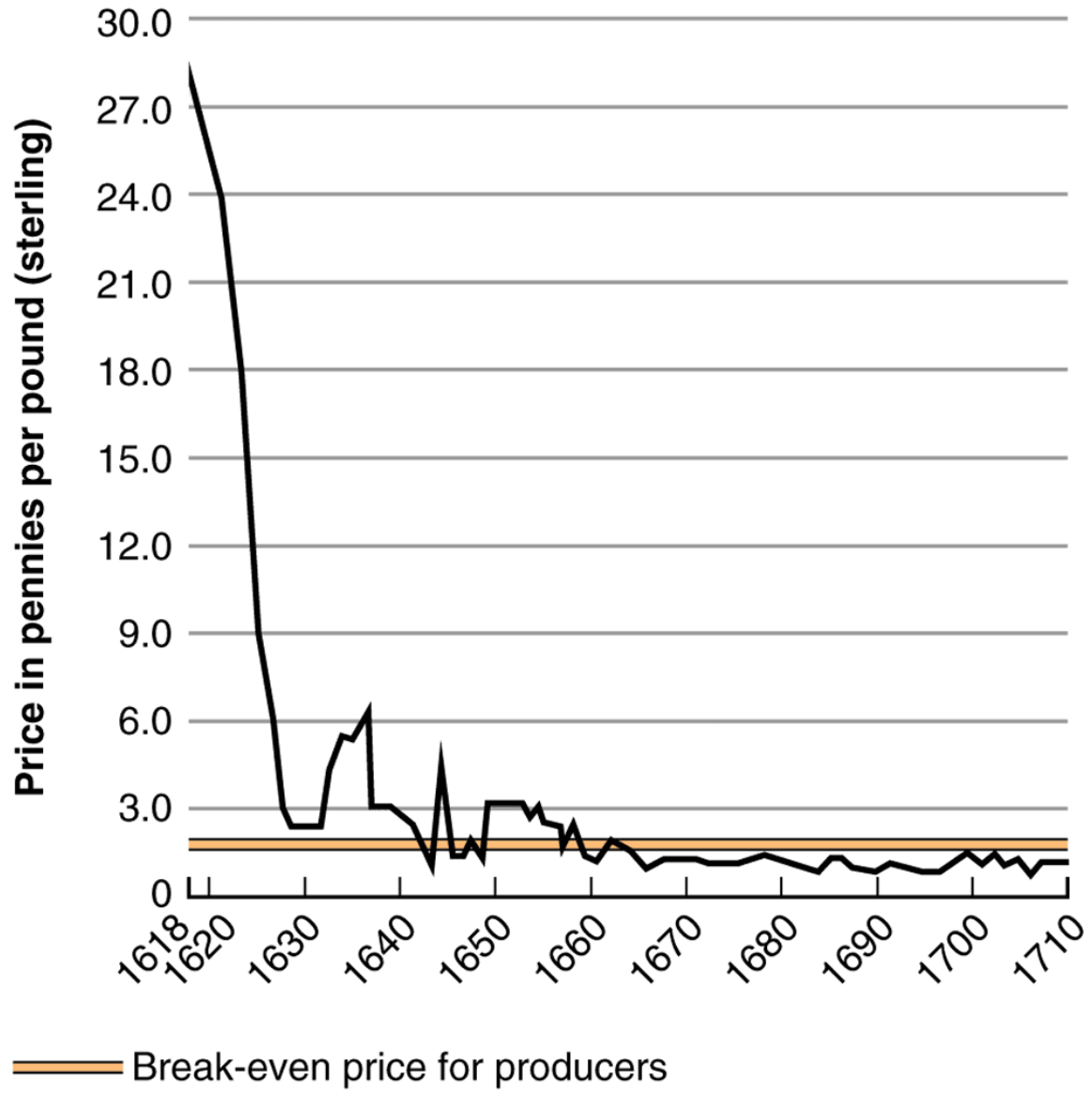
- # The Chesapeake was well-suited to tobacco growing; most people quickly planted it
 - # Tobacco planting quickly depleted the soil
 - This forced settlers to move inland for more land, further encroaching on Indian land and provoking further attacks
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The Chesapeake Colonies in the Seventeenth Century

The Tobacco Economy

- # Overproduction of tobacco led to a price depression
 - 1.5 million pounds were exported in the 1630s; 40 million pounds exported by 1700
 - Chesapeake farmers responded by growing even more tobacco
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Tobacco Prices, 1618 – 1710

The Tobacco Economy

The problem of labor

- Family procreation was too slow to fill the need for labor
 - The Indians died too quickly from contact with whites (because of diseases)
 - African slaves cost too much money
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The Tobacco Economy

- # Indentured servants became the solution to the Chesapeake labor problem
 - These were white English farmers who had been displaced by the enclosure movement
 - They voluntarily mortgaged their work in the Chesapeake for several years to get a transatlantic passage and “freedom dues” after their time was up (a few barrels of corn, clothing, and possibly a small piece of land)
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The Tobacco Economy

- # The headright system encouraged indentured servants to come
 - Whoever paid the passage of the laborer got 50 acres of land
 - Masters – not servants – received benefits (in land); some masters got huge estates by importing many servants
 - # By 1700 – 100,000 indentured servants had come to the Chesapeake, 3/4 of all European immigrants
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The Tobacco Economy

Indentured servants had difficult lives

- They were basically “white slaves” who had the hope of eventual freedom
 - Received harsh punishment (including lengthened service) for misbehavior
 - Land grants as part of freedom dues became less common as good land became more scarce
 - Even after freedom was granted, poor workers had little choice but to rent themselves out to former masters for very low wages
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Frustrated Freemen and Bacon's Rebellion

- # In the late 1600s large numbers of young, poor discontented men lived in the Chesapeake area
 - These man had little access to land or women for marriage
 - # In 1670 the Virginia assembly disenfranchised most landless men because they caused “tumults” and “disturbance”
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Frustrated Freemen and Bacon's Rebellion

- # In 1676 1,000 Virginians, led by 29-year-old planter Nathaniel Bacon rebelled
 - Most rebels were frontiersmen forced into backcountry searching for farmable land
 - They rebels resented Governor Berkeley's relations with the Indians
 - The governor monopolized the fur trade with the Indians in the Chesapeake
 - He also refused to retaliate for Indian attacks on frontier settlements
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Nathaniel Bacon



Se ipso pinxit.

S^R. NATHANIEL BACON.

T. Chambers sculp.

From an Original at the Lord Viscount Grimston's, at Gorhambury.

Frustrated Freemen and Bacon's Rebellion

Bacon's Rebellion

- Rebels attacked the Indians, whether they were friendly or not to whites, as revenge for their attacks
 - Governor Berkeley driven from Jamestown and they then burned the city
 - Rebels then went on a rampage of plundering
 - During the rebellion, Bacon suddenly died of disease
 - After they lost their leader, Berkeley was able to brutally crush the rebellion and hanged 20 rebels
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Bacon's Rebellion

Bacon's Rebellion

In Bacon's Rebellion, Governor Berkeley fled to the Eastern Shore because it was the only part of Virginia strongly loyal to him. Berkeley raised a militia there by promising them tax exemption for 21 years.



Settlers Fighting Native Americans During Bacon's Rebellion





Governor Berkeley and the Rebels

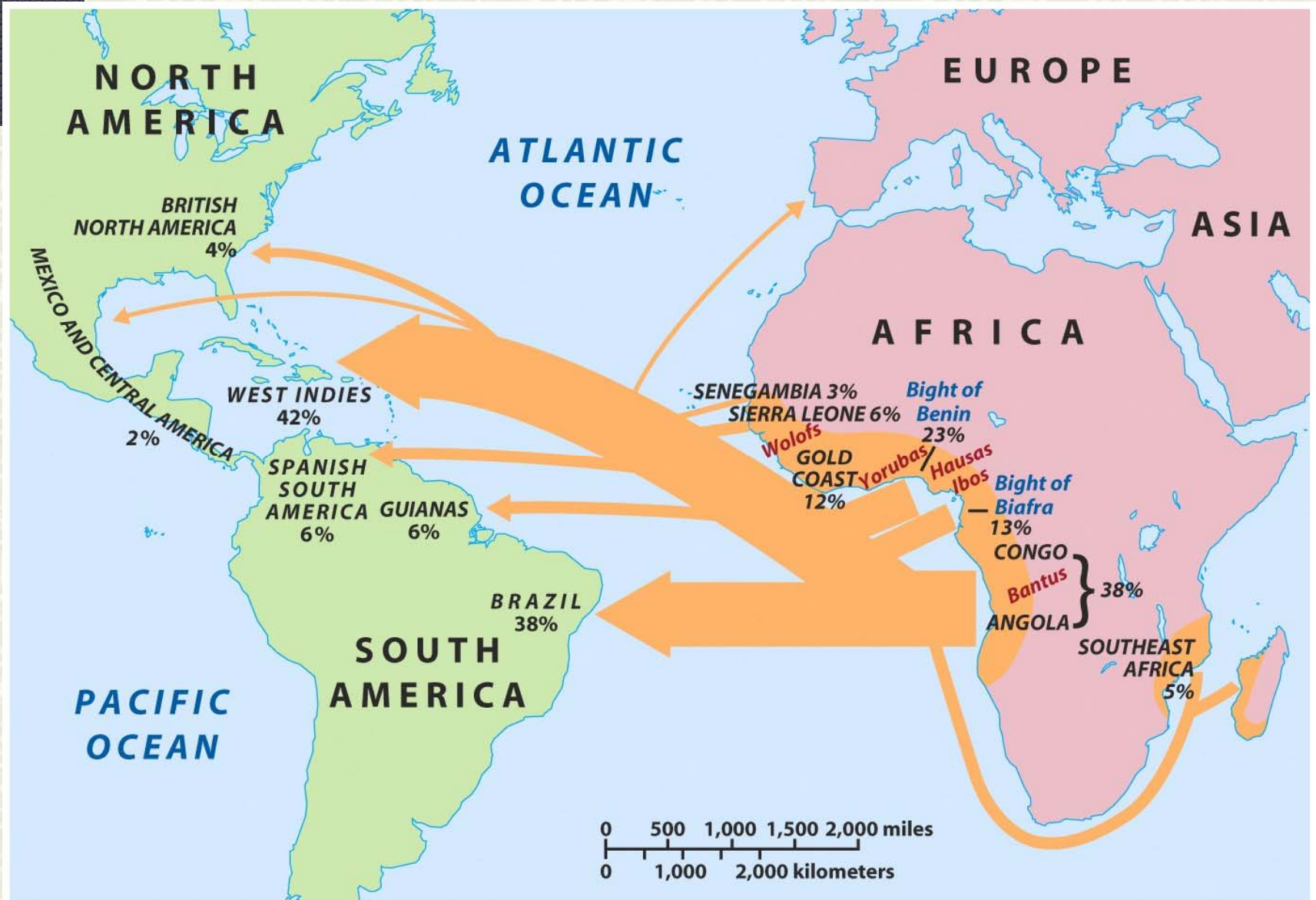
Frustrated Freemen and Bacon's Rebellion

- # Bacon's rebellion exposed resentment between inland frontiersman and landless former servants against gentry on coastal plantations
 - The rebellion was suppressed, but resentment remained
 - Upper class planters searched for laborers less likely to rebel
 - This led to large-scale African slavery
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Colonial Slavery

- # From 1500 to 1800, 10 million Africans were carried as slaves to the New World
 - Of these, only 400,000 came to North America; most of these came after 1700
 - Most slaves were transported to South America or the West Indies
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The Atlantic Slave Trade



Colonial Slavery

- # During the 1600s, only a few African slaves came to North America
 - # In 1619 slaves were first introduced in Jamestown
 - # By 1670 slaves only numbered 2,000 (out of a total population of 35,500)
 - Slaves were only 7% of the 50,000 total number of people in all the southern plantation colonies together
 - # The reason few slaves were imported is because struggling white colonists could not afford the high prices for slaves who might die soon after arrival
 - White indentured servants were fall less costly than Africans
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Landing of Negroes at Jamestown

Colonial Slavery

- # During the 1680s, changes in Europe and America led to African enslavement
 - Rising wages in England meant that less people were willing to sell themselves as indentured servants in America
 - Large planters were fearful of large numbers of mutinous former servants (as demonstrated by Bacon's Rebellion)
 - Established planters with a generation (or more) in America now had income to spend on slaves
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Colonial Slavery

The rise of slavery in America

- By the mid 1680s, black slaves outnumbered white servants
 - In 1698 the Royal African Company lost its charter (granted in 1672) for a monopoly on slave transport to Americas
 - Americans (especially Rhode Islanders) moved in to transport slaves to America
 - By the mid 1700s, slaves came to outnumber whites in some Southern colonies
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Colonial Slavery

- # Most slaves came from the west coast of Africa (from Senegal to Angola)
 - # They were captured by African coastal tribes, transported to the coast, and sold to European and American buyers
 - # On the coast they were branded and bound and then put on ships
 - # The ship voyage from Africa to America was known as the Middle Passage
 - Africans packed onto ships where up to 20% died
 - # Slaves were then sold in America on auction blocks in port cities
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Captives Slaves Being Transported to the Coast

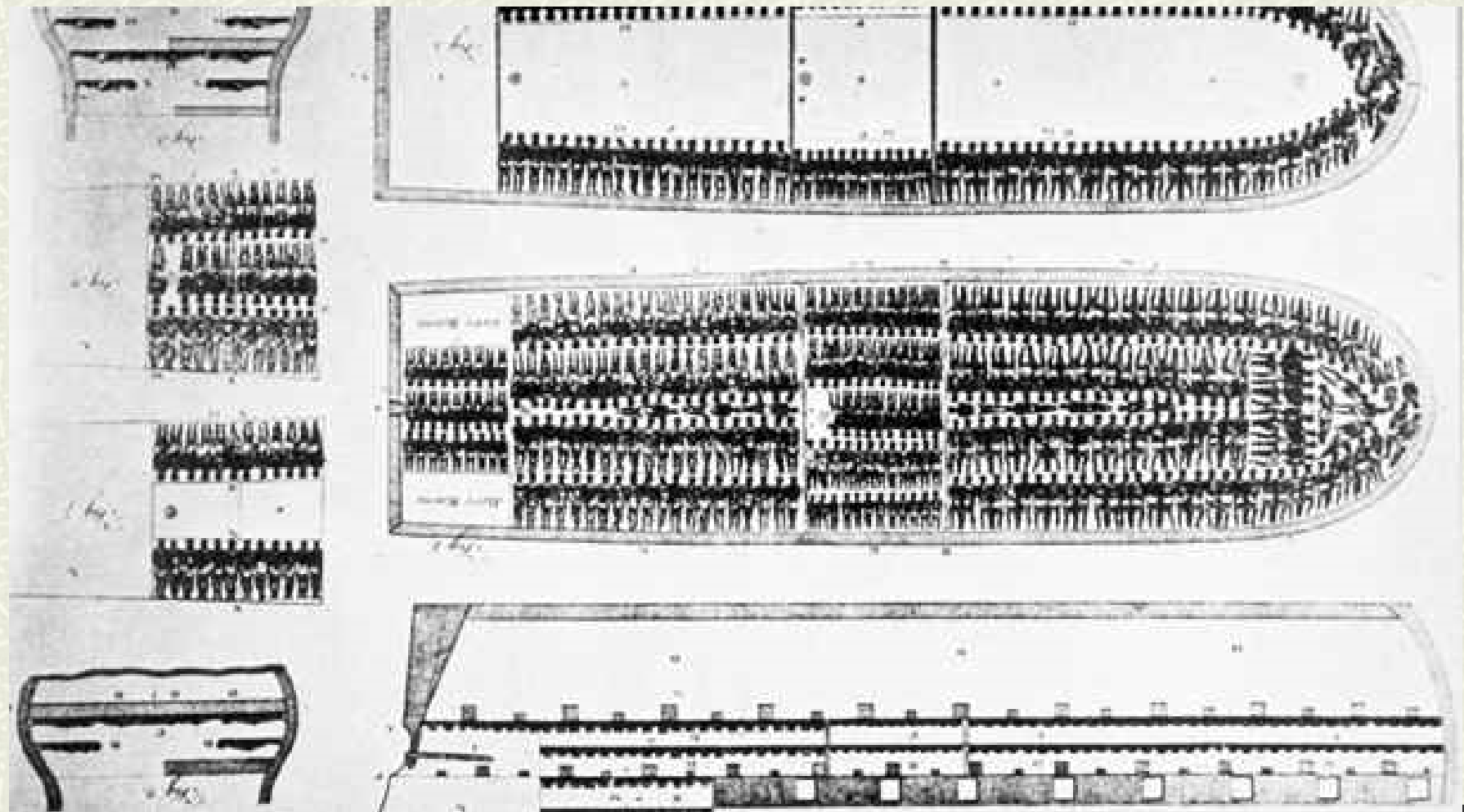


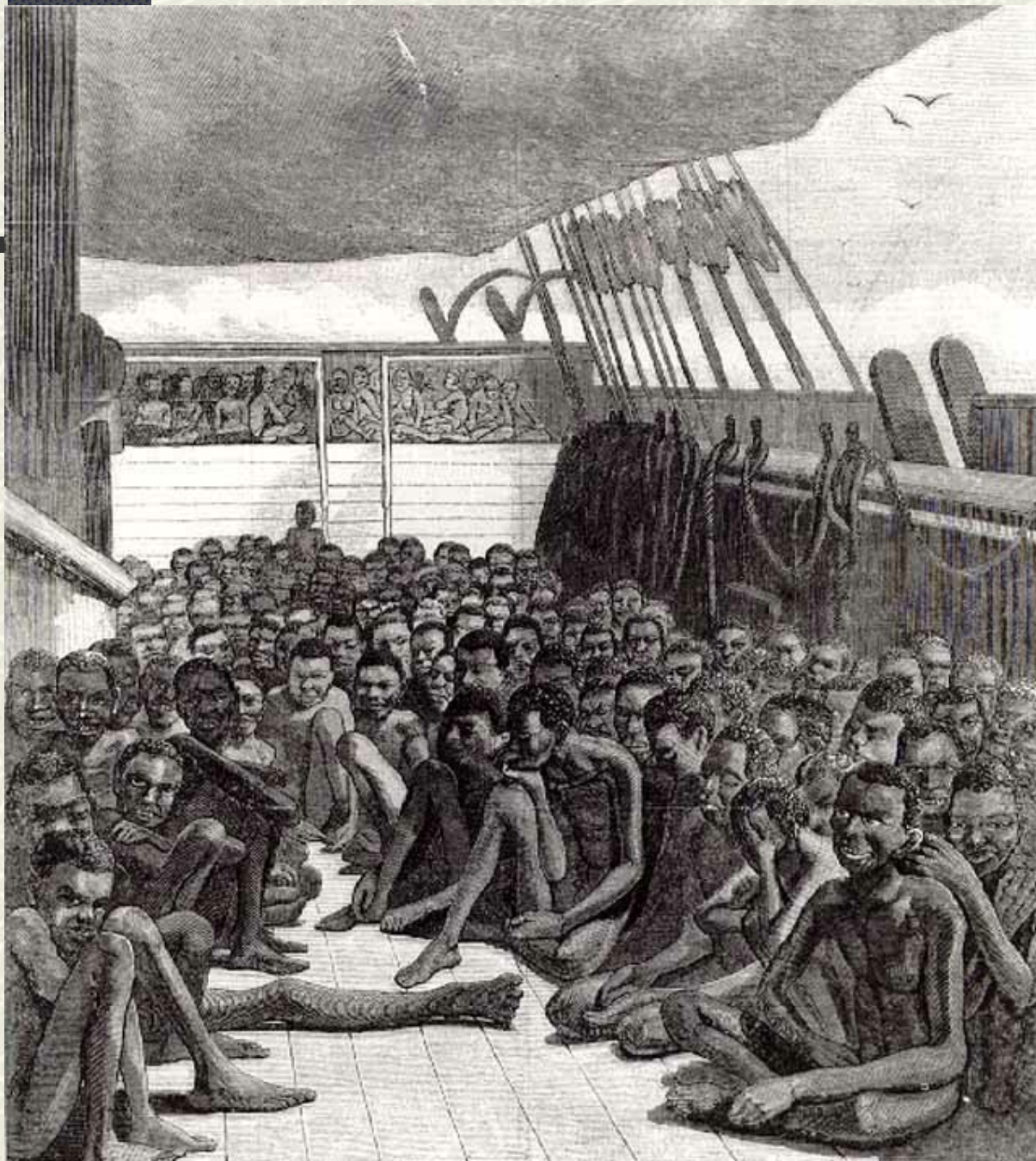
Buller del.

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Negres de traite en voyage.

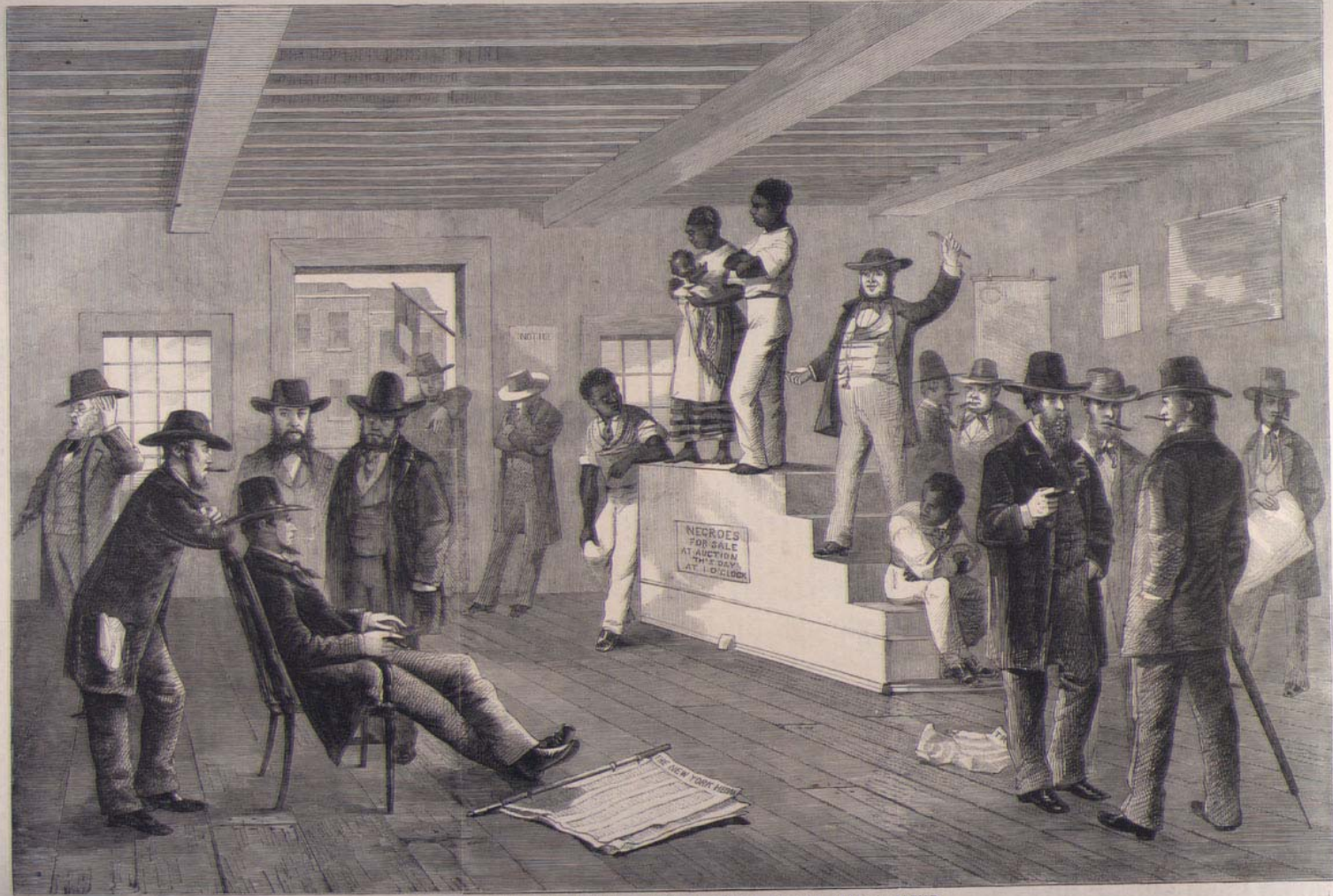
Diagram of a Slave Ship





The Deck of a Slave Ship

A Slave Auction



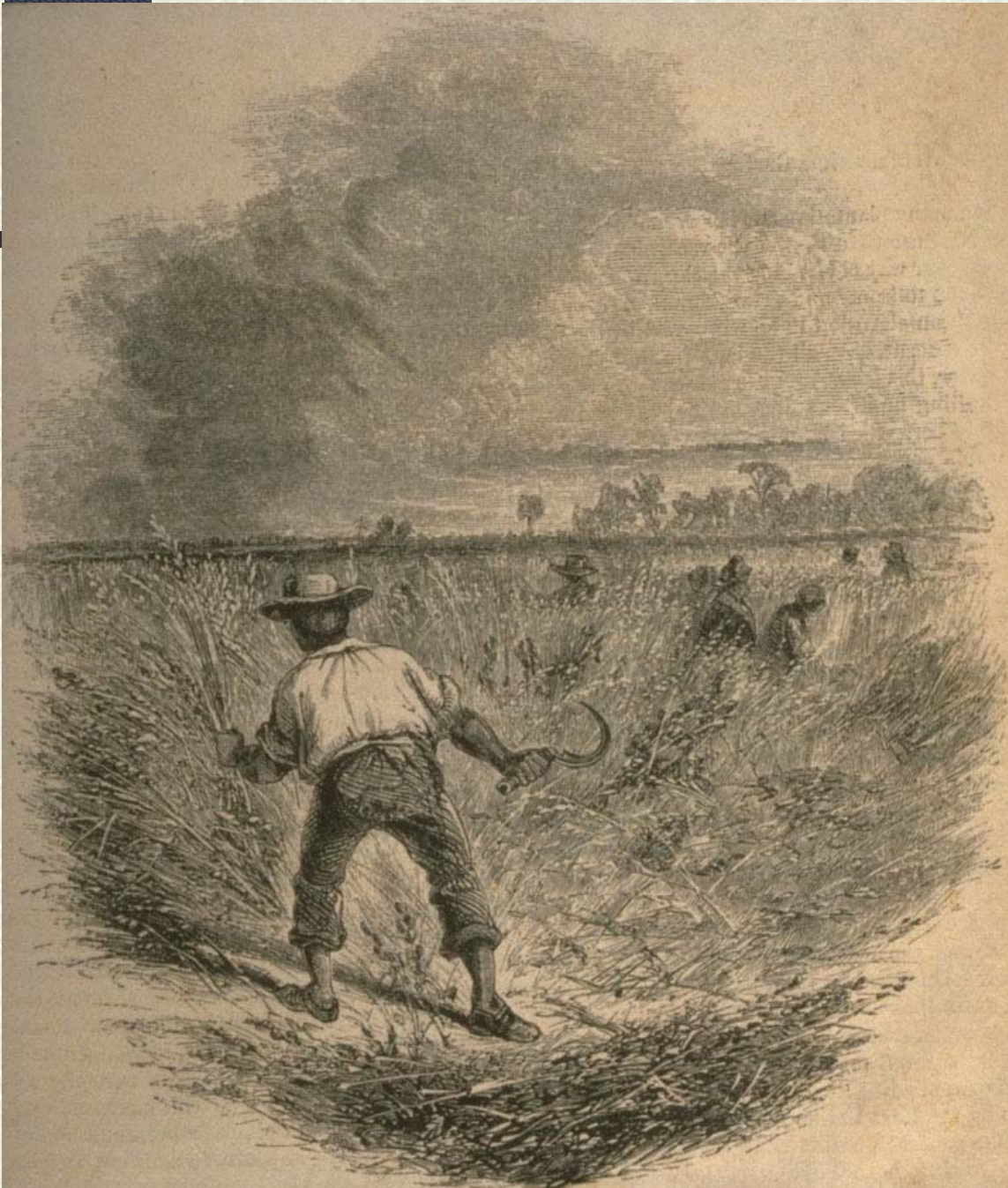
A SLAVE AUCTION IN VIRGINIA.—FROM A SKETCH BY OUR SPECIAL ARTIST

Colonial Slavery

- # As the number of slaves increased, white colonists acted to put down the perceived racial threat
 - # Slavery was transformed from an economic to economic and racial institution
 - In the early 1600s, the differences between slaves and servants were still unclear
 - Beginning in 1662, “slave codes” were adopted, decreeing strict conditions of slavery
 - Made blacks (and their children) property (“chattels”) for the life of their white masters
 - Some colonies made it a crime to teach a slave to read or write
 - Even conversion to Christianity did not qualify a slave for freedom
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Africans in America

- # Black slavery in the deep South was the harshest
 - Worked on rice and indigo plantations
 - Climate was extremely unhealthy
 - Labor was difficult and lonely (because plantations were so spread out)
 - Mostly male laborers (meaning no family life for most)
 - Slave population only increased with fresh imports, not natural procreation
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Harvesting on a Rice Plantation

Africans in America

- # Black slaves in the Chesapeake had an easier life than those in the Deep South
 - There the primarily grew tobacco, which was a less physically demanding crop to grow
 - Plantations were closer together (allowing for more social contact among Africans)
 - An increasing number of female slaves made families possible
 - Increasing children made Chesapeake slaves one of the few slave societies in history to perpetuate itself through natural reproduction
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Slaves Working in a Tobacco Factory



Africans in America

- # A black culture, distinctive from American and African culture developed, including black religion, speech, and customs
 - Gullah, a blend of English and several African languages, was a unique black language developed on the islands off South Carolina
 - The impact of this black culture
 - Words such as goober (peanut); gumbo (okra); voodoo (witchcraft) from Gullah
 - The ringshout contributed to jazz
 - The banjo and bongo drum
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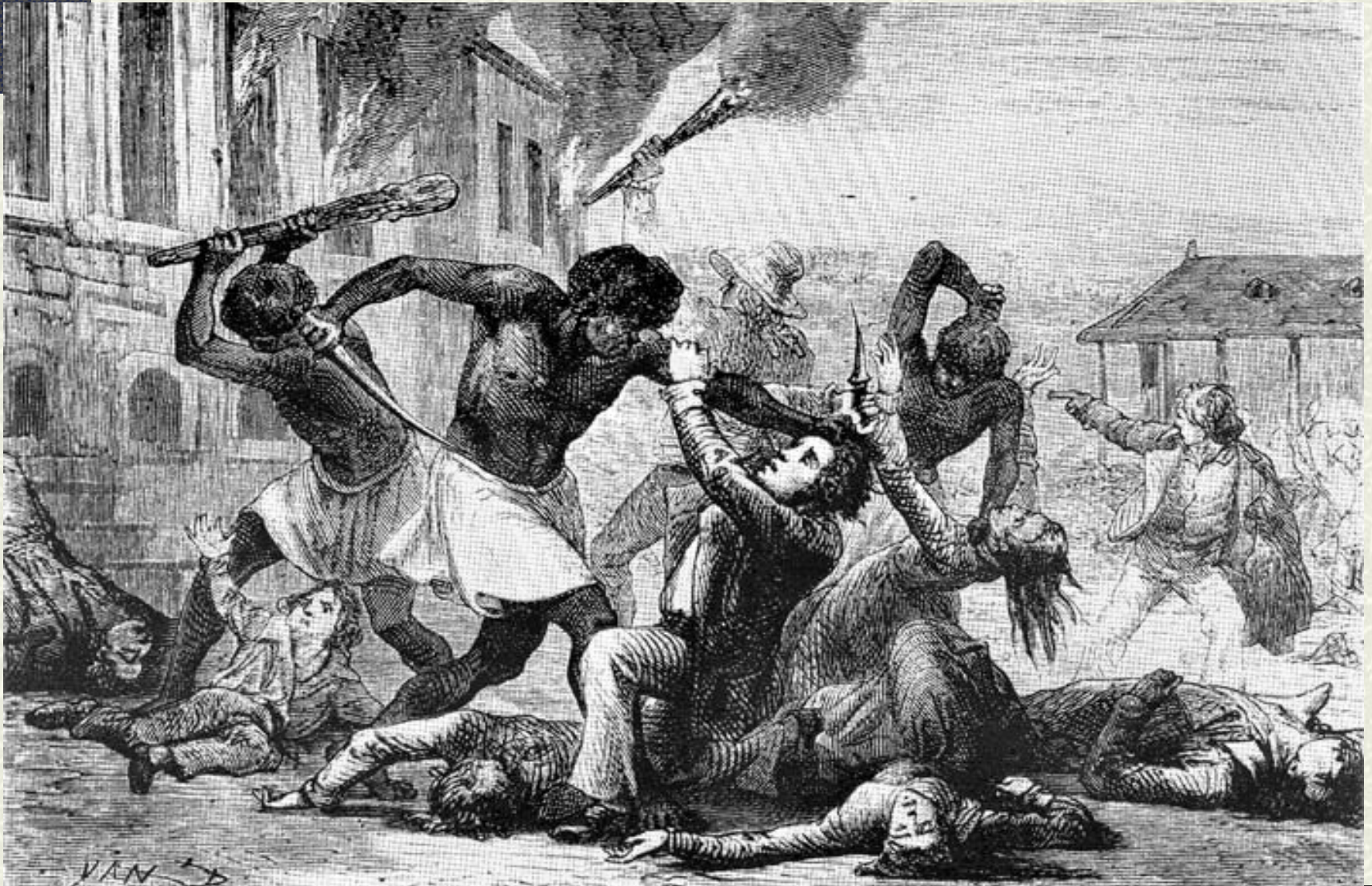
Islands on the Coast of South Carolina Where Gullah Developed



Africans in America

- # Slave revolts did occur, but overall there were few of them
 - Slaves were much more easy to manage than white indentured servants
 - # In 1712 a rebellion in New York occurred in which 12 whites were killed and 21 blacks were executed (some by burning at stake with a slow fire)
 - # In 1739, the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina occurred
 - Blacks rebelled and tried to march to Spanish Florida, but were stopped by the white militia
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A Slave Rebellion



Southern Society

- # The spread of slavery led to a widening gap between the upper and lower class whites
 - By the 1700s, a defined hierarchy of wealth and status developed
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Southern Society

- # At the highest level was an elite group of white planters
 - On their plantations, large gangs of slaves worked huge tracts of land
 - These planters dominated the political and economic life of the South
 - During the 1600s, they were a generally hard-working and businesslike group, not the leisure-loving gentlemen that were caricatured later
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A Southern Plantation House



Southern Society

- # The small farmers were the largest social group
 - They were far below the planters in wealth and power
 - They owned some land and possibly even 1 or 2 slaves, but still lived a poor, bare existence
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A Small Farmer at His Plow



Southern Society

Landless whites

- These were mostly unlucky former indentured servants
 - They worked for wages on others people's farms or in trades
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A Poor White Southerner



Southern Society

Indentured servants

- Those still working under contract
 - By the end of the 1600s their numbers decreased as they were replaced by black slaves
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Southern Society

Black slaves

- They were at the lowest level of society
 - They had no hope of eventual freedom or a change in condition, unlike indentured servants
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Slaves at Work on a Southern Plantation



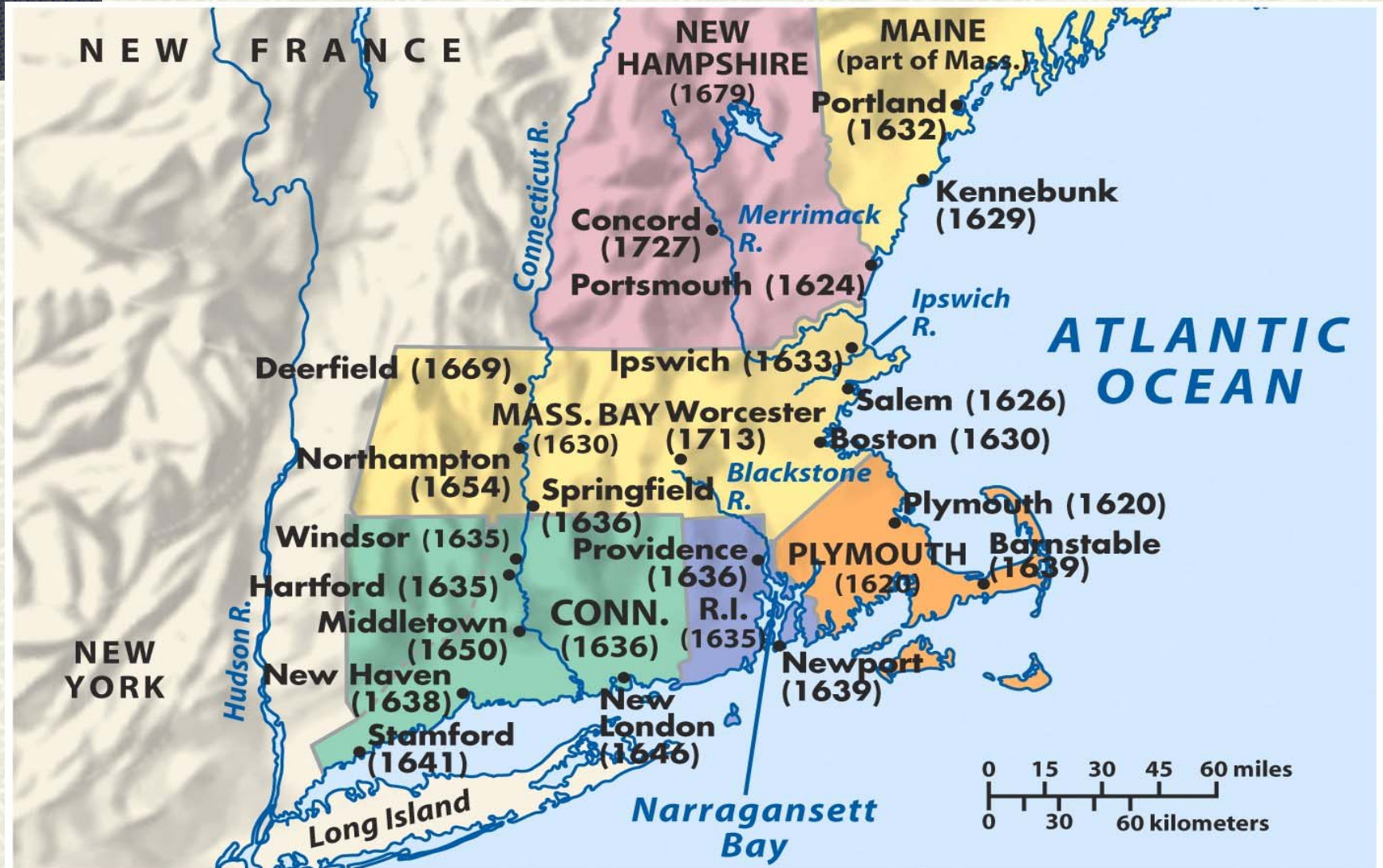
Southern Society

- # Southern society revolved around the plantation
 - Few cities developed; an urban professional class (like lawyers, bankers) was slow to emerge
 - Poor roads meant that most transportation was done over waterways
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The New England Family

- # New England enjoyed a much healthier climate than the South
 - Clean water and cool temperatures retarded the growth of disease
 - Settlers added 10 years to their lives after moving from England, for an average lifespan of 70 years
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The New England Colonies



The New England Family

- # New Englanders generally migrated as families
 - Population grew from natural reproduction
 - Early marriage (by their early 20s); women bore children every 2 years until menopause
 - The typical woman would have 10 children (with 8 surviving past infancy)
 - Many women died during childbirth and women came to fear pregnancy
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A Puritan Family



The New England Family

Lives of children in New England

- They lived in a stable, nurturing environment but were expected to learn obedience
 - They received guidance not only from parents but also grandparents
 - Family stability was reflected in their low premarital pregnancy rate and generally strong, peaceful social structure in colonial New England
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The New England Family

- # Southern women's rights were more advanced because men frequently died young and there were fewer of them there
 - Women in the South were allowed to keep separate rights to property (from their husbands) and to inherit their husband's estate
 - # New England women gave up property rights upon marriage
 - Puritan lawmakers worried about dividing men and women in marriage based on property
 - Widows did have secure rights to property (in contrast with England)
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The New England Family

Early women's rights in New England

- Women were seen as morally weaker than men (based on the story of Eve in the Bible)
 - They believed that the wife should subject herself to her husband and did not allow women to vote
 - However, a husband's power over his wife was not absolute; for example, punishment was handed out to abusive spouses
 - Midwives (who delivered babies) created a network of women who shared trials of pregnancy and motherhood separate from the control of men
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The New England Family

- # Puritan laws kept up integrity of marriages
 - Divorce was very rare; separated couples were frequently ordered to reunite by the authorities
 - Adultery and abandonment were some of the few reasons allowed for divorce
 - Adulterers were publicly whipped and forced to wear a capital letter “A” on their clothing for the rest of their lives
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The Scarlet Letter



1850

An edition 1936

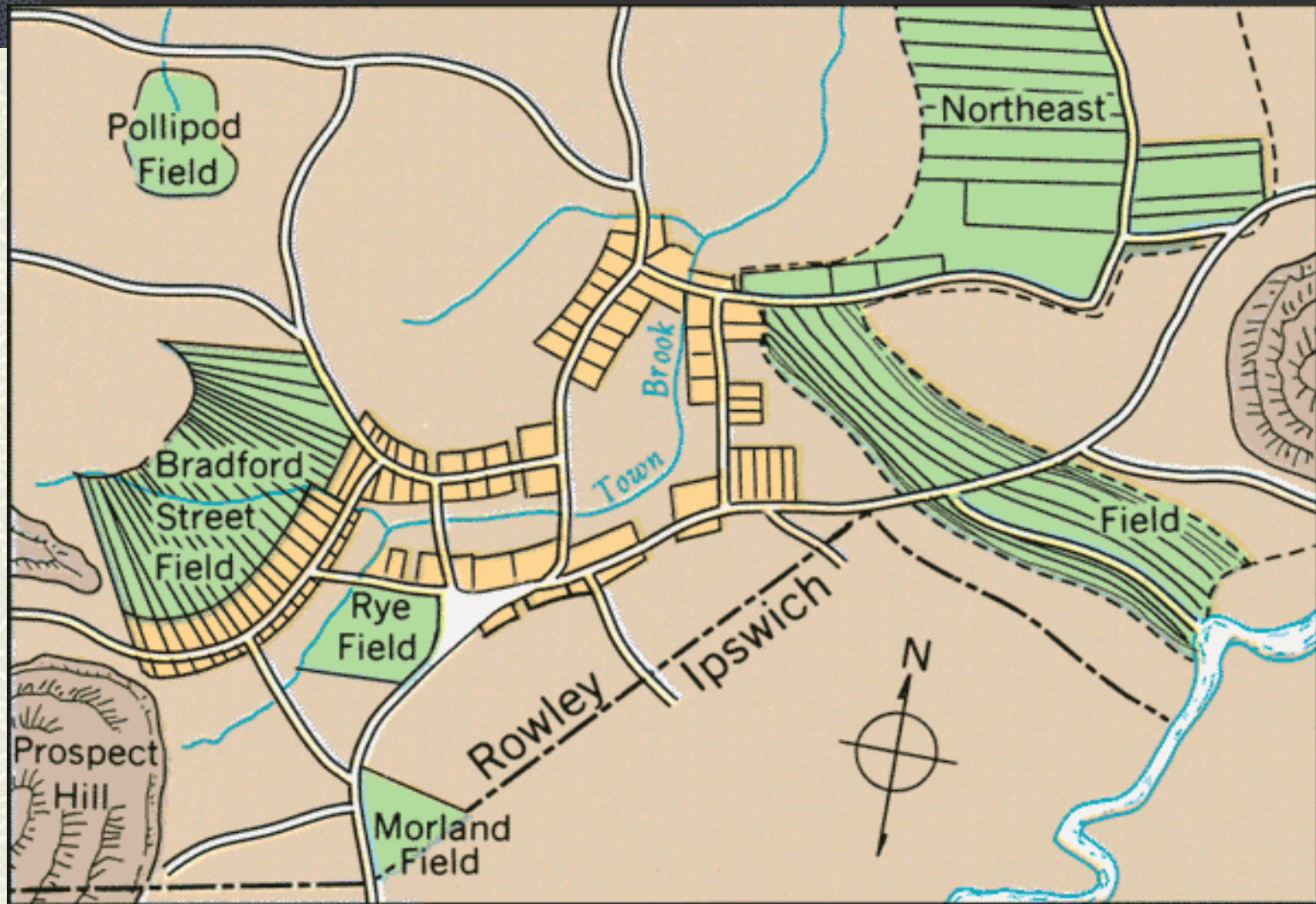
Life in the New England Towns

- # Tight-knit societies were based around small villages and farms
 - New England settlements were blocked in by the Indians, French, Dutch
 - Puritans were encouraged to all watch out for the moral health of all others
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Life in the New England Towns

- # The expansion of settlement was orderly in New England, as opposed to the haphazard growth of the Chesapeake
 - New towns had to be legally chartered by colonial authorities
 - The distribution of land and town planning was done by the town fathers (“proprietors”)
 - Meetinghouse (the church and town hall) surrounded by houses, with a village green (where the militia could train)
 - Each family had several pieces of land, including a woodlot (for fuel), land for crops, and pasture
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Land Use in Rowley, Massachusetts, ca. 1650



Life in the New England Towns

- # Towns with over 50 families were required to provide an elementary education
 - # 1/2 the adults were literate in New England
 - # In 1636, Harvard College was established to train local boys for the ministry
 - The first college (William and Mary) was not established in Virginia until 1693
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An Early 18th Century View of Harvard College



Life in the New England Towns

- # All adult males met together, discussed issues, and voted at the town meeting in New England
 - # Thomas Jefferson called these meetings “the best school of political liberty the world ever saw”
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The Half-Way Covenant and the Salem Witch Trials

- # In the mid 1600s, religious zeal among the Puritans began to wane, because of the passage of time and the fact that Puritan settlements became more spread out
 - To combat this, Puritan preachers began using the “jeremiad”, or strong calls to repentance and stronger faithfulness
 - Named for Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, who prophesied God’s judgments on Israel unless they repented
 - Decline in public conversions (testimonials by people who had received God’s grace and deserved to become members of the church as God’s elect) were most alarming to church leaders
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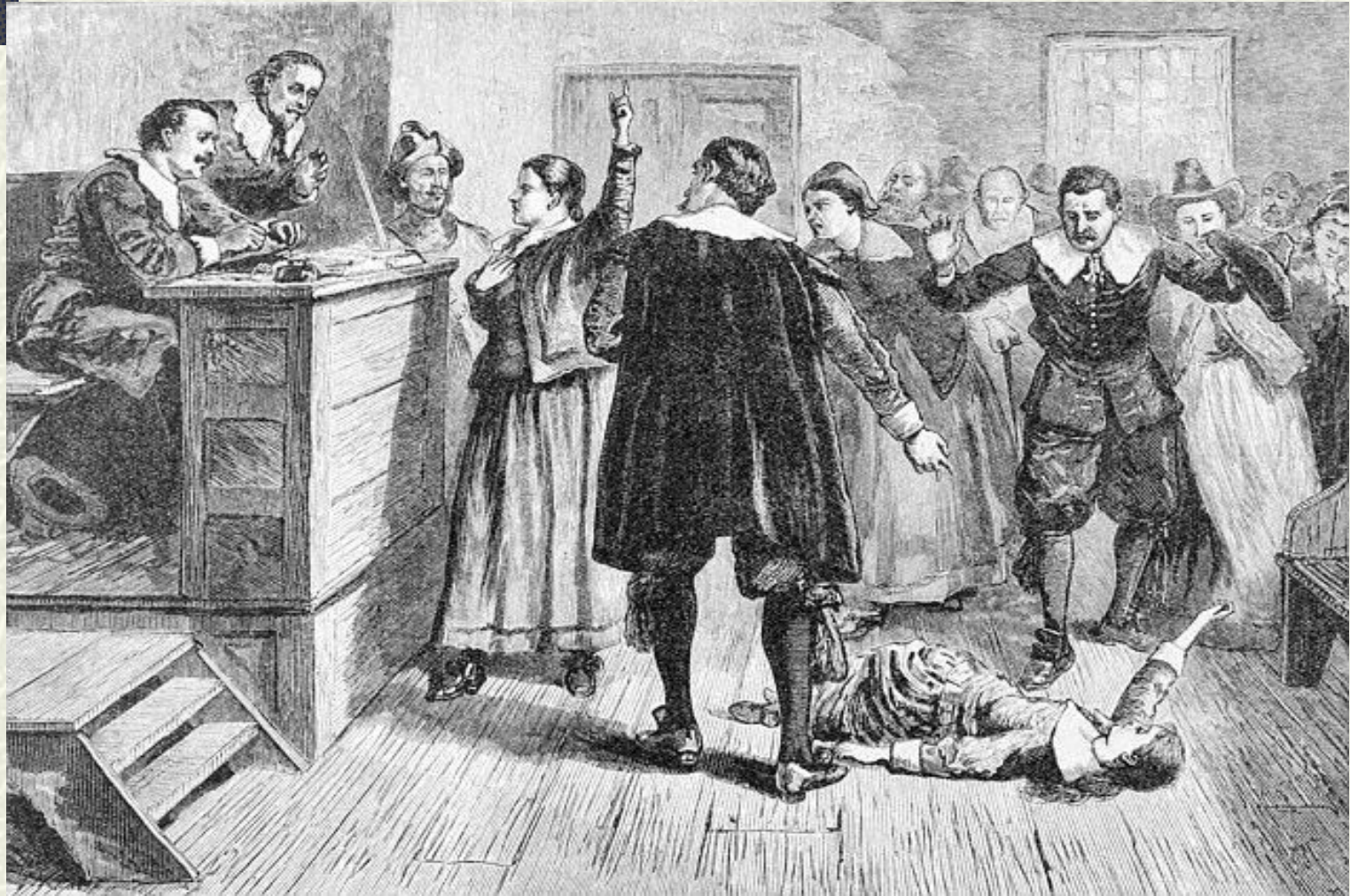
The Half-Way Covenant and the Salem Witch Trials

- # In 1662 the Half-Way Covenant was introduced
 - Modification of the “covenant” between the church and its believers
 - Church would admit to baptism, but not “full communion” unconverted children of existing members
 - Weakened the distinction between the “elect” and others, diluting the purity of the original settlement
 - # Eventually, the Puritan church was opened to all, converted or not
 - Fully erased the distinction between the elect and others
 - Religious purity was sacrificed for wider participation
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The Half-Way Covenant and the Salem Witch Trials

- # The Salem Witch trials began in 1692 in Massachusetts
 - Some young girls claimed to be possessed by some older women who they claimed were witches
 - In the ensuing “witch hunt”, 20 people were killed, 19 by hanging; 1 by pressing; 2 dogs were also hanged
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The Trial of a Suspected Witch in Salem



The Hanging of Bridget Bishop During the Salem Witch Trials



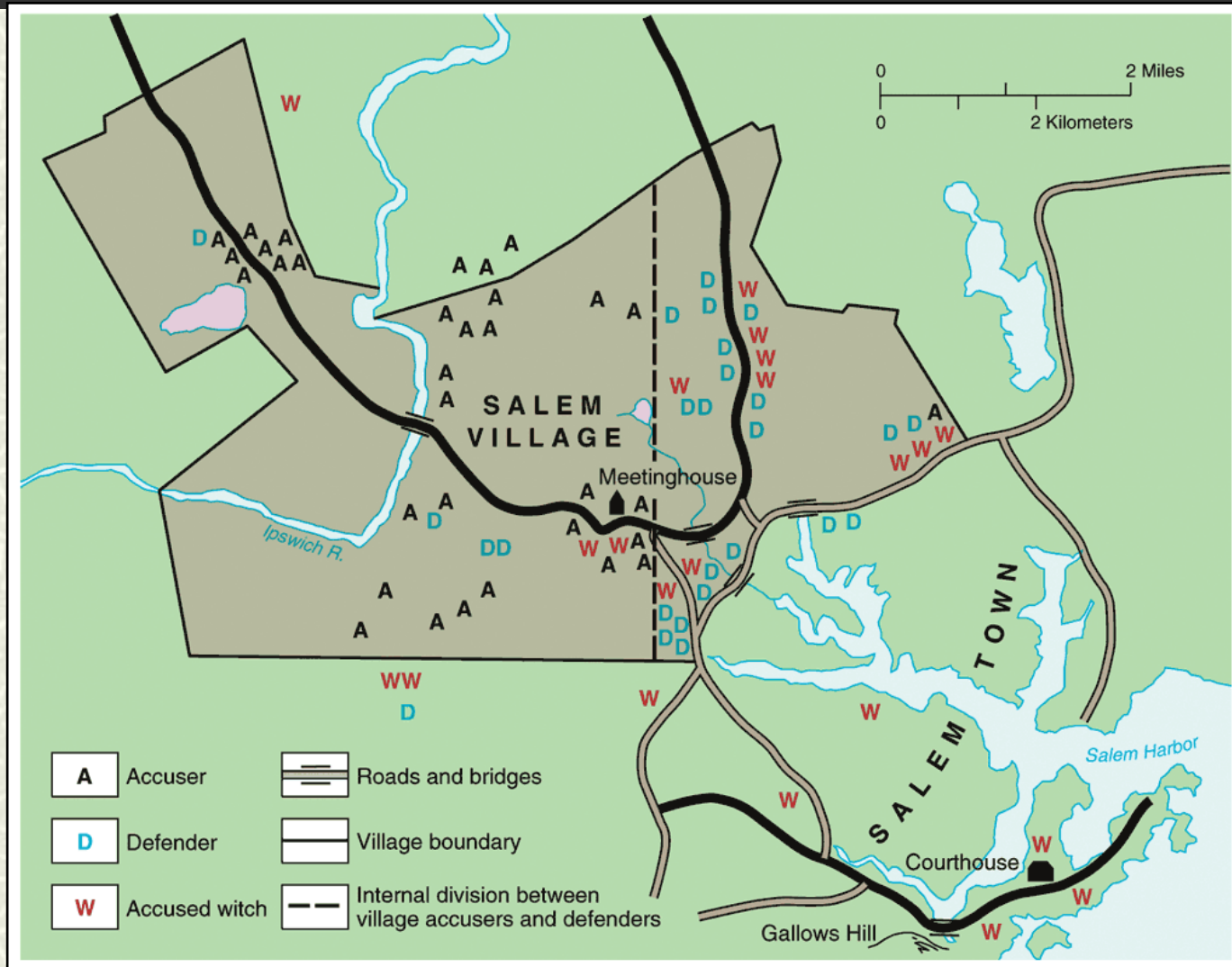
The Half-Way Covenant and the Salem Witch Trials

- # Witch hunts were then common in Europe
 - # Several outbreaks had occurred before in the colonies, and were often directed against property-owning women
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The Half-Way Covenant and the Salem Witch Trials

- # The causes of the Salem trial were different
 - Not only from the superstitions of the time
 - Also reflected the widening social stratification of New England and the fear that Puritanism was being corrupted by commercialism
 - Most of the accused witches came from families associated with Salem's growing market economy, closer to coast
 - The accusers came mostly from subsistence farming families in the interior of Salem
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The Geography of Witchcraft: Salem Village, 1692



The Half-Way Covenant and the Salem Witch Trials

- # By 1693, the witchcraft hysteria had ended in Salem
 - The Massachusetts governor acted (alarmed by accusation against his wife) with responsible members of the clergy
 - He prohibited further trials and pardoned convicted witches
 - # 20 years later, the Massachusetts legislature annulled the convictions of accused witches and paid reparations to their heirs
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The New England Way of Life

- # The land left its mark on New Englanders
 - Difficult farming because of rocky soil
 - Back-breaking work shaped strong character
 - Less ethnically diverse (immigrants were not attracted to farms or harsh religious life)
 - Climate (hot in the summer, cold in the winter) led to diversified agriculture and industry, instead of relying on a few staple crops (like cotton, tobacco)
 - Mostly small farms because of intersection of rivers and mountains; no broad, fertile expanses of land like in South
 - Also important because black slavery was not profitable on small farms
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The New England Way of Life

Contrasting Indian and English views of land

- Indians affected land only lightly
 - Saw right to use the land, but the idea of individual ownership of the land was alien to them
 - The English radically affected land
 - Condemned Indians for “wasting” (by not using) the land; they used this as reason for taking land from Indians
 - Believed their duty was to “improve” the land by clearing forests, farming, building roads and houses
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The New England Way of Life

- # New Englanders left their mark on land
 - The introduction of livestock (pigs, horses, sheep, cattle) forced them to clear forests to create pastureland, increasing erosion and flooding
 - Used harbors for shipping and commerce, leading to shipbuilding and the use of forests
 - Codfish caught off coast, generating much wealth
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The New England Way of Life

- # The importance of New England
 - New Englanders spread throughout the nation, influencing other Americans
 - They built orderly communities around country, based on those in New England
 - “Yankee ingenuity” came to be part of the entire nation known for its can-do attitude
 - The “New England conscience” of high idealism inspired later reformers
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The Early Settlers' Days and Ways

- # Most colonists were farmers who lived hard and humble, but comfortable lives
 - # The colonists lived in abundance compared to Europeans
 - Land was cheap
 - They also received higher wages
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The Early Settlers' Days and Ways

- # Most colonists were middle class
 - Comfortable upper classes had no reason to leave Europe (“Dukes don’t emigrate”)
 - Poor people (except for indentured servants) didn’t have the money to emigrate
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The Early Settlers' Days and Ways

- # Colonists tried to prevent class distinctions in America
 - Society was much more egalitarian than stratified Europe, especially the northern and middle colonies
 - Some tried to recreate class distinctions, but generally were not successful
 - Rebellions of lower classes against upper classes occurred to control open class distinctions, such as Bacon's Rebellion, Maryland Protestant rebellion (1676), Leisler's Rebellion (1689 – 1691)
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