

10 1619— A Big Year

The House of Burgesses is made up of Anglican landowners elected for two year terms. (You had to own land and be a member of the Church of England to vote). They levy taxes. Collecting taxes, rather than having them controlled by the royal governor, gives the Burgesses power. They won't want to give up that power.

Some of the early laws passed by the burgesses (see the next page) of Virginia forbade pastimes that were thought immoral, like playing cards or dice. If you got caught not going to church, you were fined 50 pounds of tobacco—about a week's wages. It was against the law to swear, too.



If the colony was to survive, it had to grow. That meant sending women as well as men.

The English found those first years in America really hard. Remember, four out of five of the first 10,000 settlers died soon after they arrived in Virginia. Most people would have given up—but not the English. The harder the challenge, the more determined they became.

The year 1619 was a turning point. After 1619 you could tell the English were in America to stay. It was a year of many firsts in Virginia:

- first boatload of Africans
- first boatload of women
- first labor strike
- first time English settlers are allowed to own land
- first elected lawmakers.

That is a lot for any year. You already know about that boatload of Africans. Now, about those women. They, too, were sold on the docks.

"Do you want a wife?"

"It will cost you 120 pounds of tobacco."

Those are the terms when a shipload of women arrives in Jamestown in 1619. These are poor women who are unable to pay the cost of their Atlantic journey. They want a new life in this new land. The lonely men want wives. There will be instant romances on the docks. What do you think of these women? Do you think they are scared? Courageous? Crazy?

A few white women have already been to Jamestown, but sending an entire boatload of them to be wives means that the English

plan to stay and make homes in America. The French, who are settling in the North, are less likely to send women. Still, in 1619, the men in Jamestown outnumber the women by eight to one.

Some historians think the reason there was much violence in Jamestown was because many more men than women and children lived there. Do you think that is true? Do you think men living alone fight more than people in families? That is something to discuss.

In 1619 the Virginia Company lets the settlers have land of their own. That gives them a reason to work hard.

The first workers' strike in British America happens in 1619. Polish workers at Jamestown, who are glassmakers, demand the same rights as Englishmen. They get those rights and go back to work. There are Poles, Dutch, Germans, and Italians at Jamestown. Do you think it strange that they all want English rights? What about their own rights?

The answer to that is very simple. English men and women have more rights and freedom than people do in other European nations. They expect those same rights in America and so do people from other nations who come to the English colonies.

John Smith said no one would come to the New World "to have less freedom." The Charter of the Virginia Company said, "all and every of the persons...which shall dwell and inhabit within every or any of the said several colonies and plantations, and every of their children...shall have and enjoy all liberties...as if they had been abiding and born, within this our realm of England." That means that nobody will lose freedom if he moves from England to America.

In 1619, a group of lawmakers—known as "burgesses"—is elected to make laws. They form an assembly called the House of Burgesses. In England laws are made by Parliament. The House of Burgesses gives the Virginians their own form of Parliament. That has never happened in a colony before.

By the way, do you know what a colony is?

A colony is land controlled by a distant, or foreign, nation. In the 17th century many European nations have colonies in America as well as in other parts of the world. Those colonies are not all alike. In the Spanish colonies no Europeans except Spaniards are allowed to settle. France admits only Catholics. The English colonies have open doors.

Think about that for a minute. That decision, way back in the 1600s, to let all kinds of people settle in the English colonies, made a big difference to our country. We would become a pluralistic society. (What does that mean?)

After seven years' work, those who wanted were given their own land. Captain Smith said, "When our people were fed out of the common store, and laboured jointly together, glad was he who could slip from his labour, or slumber over his tasks, he cared not how; nay, the most honest among them would hardly take so much true paines in a week, as now for themselves they will do in a day."

A **realm** is the kingdom or country where a ruler holds sway.

Abiding means permanent or lasting.

A Hostage Swap

In 1611, Captain John Clark was a pilot on one of three ships bound for Virginia. (Like an airplane pilot, a ship's pilot is expected to guide his craft safely.) Clark and his ships (Christopher Newport was in charge of the expedition) made it to Virginia. They hadn't been there long when a Spanish ship sailed into Chesapeake Bay. A Spanish officer came ashore and was taken hostage. To get even, the Spaniards captured Clark and sailed off to Spain. Five years later the two prisoners were exchanged in London. In 1620, the Virginia Company asked John Clark to pilot a ship to Virginia. It was the *Mayflower*, and it didn't quite reach its destination.

The Virginia Company was so eager to get women to come to America that it sometimes resorted to buying girls from their families or even kidnaping them from their homes.

Now that you know about colonies, let's get back to the House of Burgesses. In the 17th century, laws for colonies were made in the home country, or by appointed governors and their councils. The House of Burgesses changed that.

England was letting colonists make laws for themselves. That was a big first in history. (An English governor did have *veto power* over the burgesses. What is a veto? Okay, you can do some work. Go to the dictionary and look that word up. The governor didn't use the veto very often.)

This is something you should remember: the House of Burgesses, formed in 1619, gave America its first representative government. It was the beginning of self-government in America.

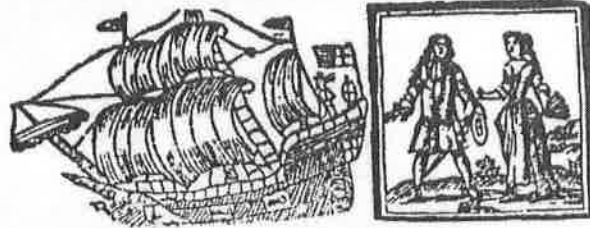
Whoops! Hold on, that isn't quite true. Some Indian tribes had representative government. The House of Burgesses was the first representative assembly in the European colonies.

It was only a dozen years since those three small ships were tied to the trees at Jamestown and the English colonists were doing something very unusual. They were making laws for themselves.

THE Woman Outwitted :

OR, THE
Weaver's Wife cunningly catch'd in a Trap,
by her Husband, who sold her for ten Pounds,
and sent her to *Virginia*.

To an excellent new Tune.



N^o far from hence, there dwelt,
an honest Man a Weaver,
He had a Wife the most witty and best,
but her Will it was to be her;
She was a Woman too light,
she call'd him Fool and Whore;
Which made the Man then often say,
I'll go unto *Virginia*.

Which he had his wish,
he ne'er could live in quiet,
He said her Cloathing was too bare,
so was her homely Dress;
Who' nothing she did want,
as he could say for Whore;
Which made the Man then often say,
I'll go unto *Virginia*.

15 Puritans, Puritans, and More Puritans



John Winthrop was a lawyer who lost his job because of his religion. In 1630 he came to America.

In 1630, the first Puritan ship, the *Arbella*, sets out for the New World. By summer's end 1,000 Puritans have landed in New England. They bring a charter from the king: the Charter of the Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England. King Charles is happy to see the Puritans leave England.

The charter is a document written by lawyers, setting the rules that tell how the colony will be run. It allows the colonists to govern themselves. It is important to remember that, from the beginning, English settlers expected to govern themselves. It is important to remember that each colony had a charter: a written set of rules. Those charters would evolve into constitutions.

Can you guess what might happen in a community without a charter or constitution? Would you like to live in a country without laws? Would you want to write your own laws or have someone write them for you?

You can think about those questions and then get back to the Puritans, who are beginning to pour out of England. Most of them go to the Caribbean islands, where sugar is creating great fortunes. But, between 1630 and 1640, 20,000 Puritans sail for New England. Think about all those people risking their lives to cross the ocean and settle in an unknown land. It is almost as if tens of thousands of people today decided to live in outer space.

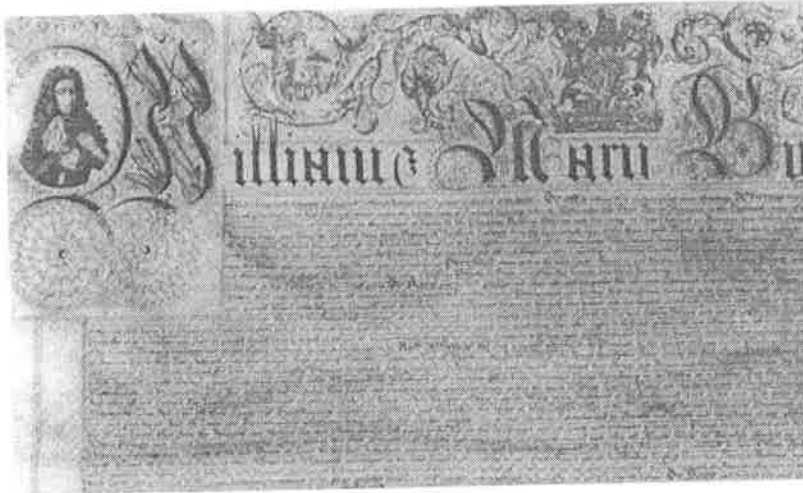
Why did they come? Many came because they really cared about their religion and wanted to practice it in peace. They wanted to build a holy community, where people would live by the rules of the Bible. Puritans believed the Bible was the whole word of God. They tried to follow its every direction, which means they tried to live very good lives.

Massachusetts is an Algonquian word that means "at the big hill." The Puritans called their new home the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Sweet Success

Sugar was a much-desired luxury in Europe. The West Indies (with its tropical climate) turned out to be a perfect place to grow sugarcane. Christopher Columbus brought the cane to the Caribbean on his second voyage. Soon the native trees were cut down and sugarcane plantations filled the islands.

Sugarcane grew wild in Asia. In Sanskrit, the ancient language of India, sugar was *sarkara*. That became *sukkar* in Arabic, *sakhar* in Russian, *sucre* in French, *Zucker* in German, and *sugar* in English.



Here is the first page of the Charter of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, setting out the rules by which the colonists could govern themselves. At the top left is King William III.



Once a woman got to the New World, she was expected to start having babies—that's what the Puritans on the left are telling the couple to do.

At first, the name *Quaker* was used to make fun of people; so, too, was the word *Puritan*. Then both groups decided to be proud of those words and use them themselves.

Although the Puritans tried hard to be good, things didn't work out as they wished. They expected their colony to be an example for all the world. John Winthrop, who was chosen as governor, said, "We must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us."

One thing they didn't understand at all was the idea of *toleration*. Puritans came to America to find religious freedom—but

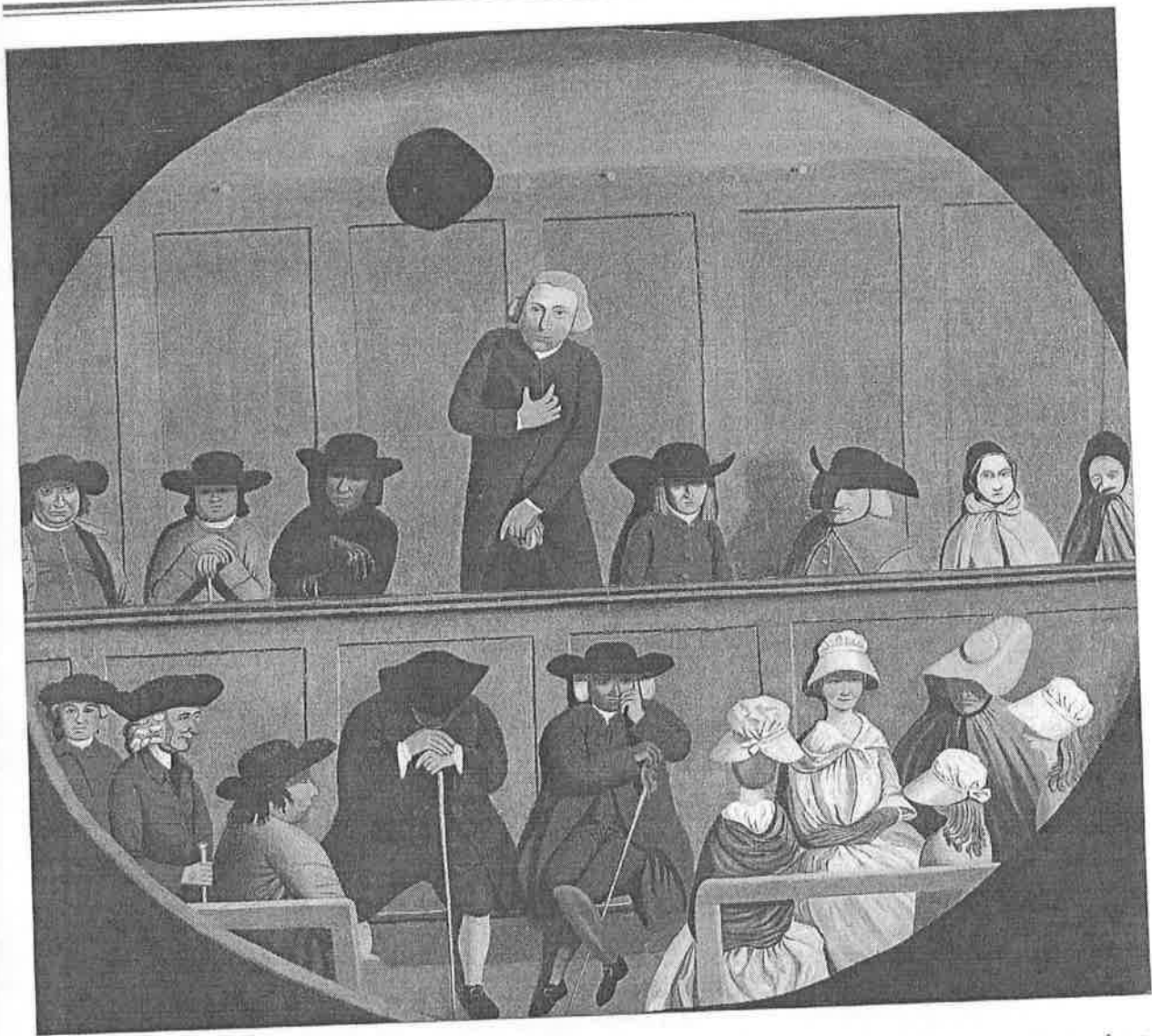
only for themselves. They didn't believe in the kind of religious freedom we have today. But don't be too hard on them. Almost no one else believed in it either. And how many people do you know who are willing to devote their lives to an idea they believe to be right?

In those days each nation had its own church, and everyone was expected to pay taxes for its support. Suppose you didn't believe in the ideas of that religion. Too bad. You had to keep quiet, leave the country, go to jail, or maybe get hanged.

Pretend you are a Puritan. You think that yours is the only true religion, so you believe the Reverend John Cotton when he says toleration is "liberty...to tell lies in the name of the Lord."

Since you are convinced that only you Puritans are right, you think it is wrong to let anyone practice another religion. You believe that is helping the devil. You especially dislike Quakers. Your leaders call them a "cursed sect." You use the name *Quaker* to describe religious people who call themselves "Friends." Friends believe that each person has an inner light that leads him to God. People with an inner light do not have to rely on a minister to tell them what is godly. The inner light is available to everyone. This is a highly democratic idea, and most Europeans thought it very dangerous. They were used to kings and priests and ministers. It seemed reasonable to them to persecute Quakers. When Quakers came to New England or Virginia, they were whipped, sent away, and even hanged.

Remember, you are a Puritan and you've left your home and everything you know and love. You've crossed a fierce ocean to live as you wish. You don't want people with strange ideas bothering you. Democracy is another strange idea. "If the people be governors, who shall be governed?" the Reverend Cotton asks. John Winthrop, the beloved Puritan governor, who always tries to do what is best, calls



democracy the "meanest [lowest] and worst" form of government. And yet the Puritans do practice a kind of democracy—but only for male church members. Once a year they form a General Court and vote to elect the governor and council. The General Court is a lot like the House of Burgesses, or Parliament, or Congress.

Some people call the Massachusetts Bay Colony a "theocracy" (thee-OCK-ruh-see), government by church officials in the name of God. But they are wrong. It is not a theocracy. The ministers are the most important people in the colony, but they are not allowed to hold political office. They do not govern. It is a small step toward the idea of the separation of church and state. Someday that idea will be a foundation of American liberty.

At Puritan church services women sat at the back or upstairs. At a Quaker meeting (above) everyone sat together.

What's in a Word?

We had better stop and go over some words, otherwise this book will get confusing. You've been reading about democracy and theocracy. Here's an explanation of those ideas, and some others, too.

If you keep reading history you will learn about Abraham Lincoln. He said that democracy was government "of the people, by the people, and for the people." That's a good definition.

Democracy is based on people power. Think of a pyramid with the leader on top and all the people on the bottom. The leader is picked from the bottom row and raised to the top. Power goes from the bottom to the top. You'll see in a minute that in some kinds of government, power goes the other way.

Democracy comes in two varieties: direct democracy and representative democracy.

When you choose someone to vote for you, you have **representative democracy**. The members of the House of Burgesses at Jamestown represented the colonists and made laws for them. Our Congress does the same thing for us today. We live in a representative democracy based on law. We are ruled by laws made by congressmen and congresswomen whom we elect.

Some New England towns have **direct democracy**. All the people in the town get together at a town meeting and vote directly on important issues. No one votes for them.

It is possible, with modern technology, that we will have

more direct democracy in the future. We may be able to vote directly for certain laws through our TV sets. However, we will always need representatives who can take the time needed to make decisions on complicated issues.

Autocracy is the opposite of democracy. It is government by a single authority with unlimited power. In autocracies, power starts at the top of the pyramid.

A **dictator** is an autocrat. If a dictator doesn't like you, he can have you killed without consulting anyone or giving you a trial. Autocrats don't have to be bad. There have been a few good ones in history—but only a few. If a dictator is terrible, the people are stuck with him (or her). They have no power—except, sometimes, brute force. In

the old days, kings and queens were autocrats. Today they usually share power with a parliament.

A theocracy is...if you don't remember that, go back and read the last chapter. Just kidding, you don't have to do that. A theocracy (remember?) is government by a church in the name of God.

An **aristocracy** is government by a small group of privileged people. England was an aristocracy in the 17th century. The king and the landowning aristocrats (who controlled Parliament) ruled.

Hold on. This is tough, and may be a bit boring, but it is important.

Democracy, autocracy, theocracy, and aristocracy are all words that tell you about political power and who has it.

Here are two words that tell about economic or money power: **communism** and **capitalism**.

In a communist country the state owns most of the land and property and shares them with its citizens. (Remember, the word *state* sometimes means "nation." That can be confusing, but that's the way it is.) People don't own their own homes or businesses. They work for the state. Jamestown tried a kind of communist system, and so did Plymouth. Both colonies found that people work harder when they know they can own land or a business. (In the 20th century,

Russia and most of Eastern Europe tried and rejected communism.) People often need to be forced to be communists.

In a capitalist country you can own capital: capital is money and property. The United States is a nation that practices capitalism. In a capitalist country goods are distributed through a free market. Capitalism has disadvantages, too: wealth often piles up for a few people, while others don't have enough.

Whew, that's a lot to absorb! Now let's get back to history, which is much more exciting.



Alexis de Tocqueville was a Frenchman who came to the United States in the 19th century. He wrote a book, Democracy in America, that is still one of the best descriptions of our system ever published.