

The American colonies were an assortment of dreams and hopes and fears. They offered samples of nearly every kind of feeling. The first settlers, who thought anything was possible here, were not far wrong. Some came with definite plans, others with troubled consciences. Some came as charity cases, owing everything to a few rich men in London. Some came simply for profit. Others came desperately seeking refuge. All would become Americans.

From the beginning America was a place of testing and trying. "Plantations" is what they called the settlements along the Atlantic fringe in the earliest days.

It was a good word. A "plant" first meant a cutting from a growing thing set out to grow in another place. These plantations (we later called them colonies) were European cuttings set out to grow three thousand miles across the

Atlantic.

The English were experts at planting people in faraway places. They were never more successful than when they planted in America. For the people here were really *planted*. They did not come only as explorers or as gold diggers. Instead, they took root, found new nourishment in American soil, grew in new ways in the varied American climates, and in a few centuries would outgrow Mother England.

But they were not always successful. Whether a plantation died or lived and how it grew depended on many things. Much depended on the climate and the soil and the animals and the Indians. Much depended on whether the settlers had planned, and what they had planned, and how quickly they could learn what the continent had to teach. And much depended on luck.

CHAPTER 1

The Puritans: Love God and Fight the Devil

America was a land of mystery. Englishmen in the age of King James I knew even less than they thought they knew, because most of their "facts" were wrong. Their misinformation about the New World came in all kinds of packages. Some came in fantastic advertising brochures written by men who wanted to sell land in America.

Men who had put their money and their hopes into new American settlements knew that success depended on

attracting people to a strange and remote land. If nobody came, the land would remain a wilderness. But if people did come there would be cities and roads, farms and mines. The wilderness would become valuable real estate. Still more people—more carpenters, shoemakers, tailors, and merchants—would come because they would know they could make a living from the people already here.

The promoters had to offer "facts," but



Virginia, in this seventeenth-century view, was an earthly paradise. Finding fish and game for your table was not hard work, but simply good sport.

they did not know the facts. So they drew imaginary pictures, using ancient legends mixed with their wildest hopes and fondest dreams. The weather in America, they said, was always sunny. The oranges, lemons, apples, pears, peaches, and apricots were "so delicious that whoever tastes them will despise the insipid watery taste of those we have in England." The American venison was so juicy that Englishmen would barely recognize it. The fish were large and easy to catch. In America there were no diseases, and no crowds. Everybody

stayed young and everybody could live like a king. Come to this American paradise!

If Englishmen turned to their scientists to check up on all this, they did not get much help. The geography of the New World was quite befuddled. Maps were about as detailed as those we have of Mars—and a good deal less accurate. They had no idea how wide the continent was. When they found a lake or a river near the Atlantic seacoast, they often believed that it would take them to India. When they heard of peculiar

were coming from other places, too. Thousands came from the Scandinavian countries, from the Netherlands, Bel-

gium, Switzerland, France, and elsewhere. The nation was growing by a great migration.

CHAPTER 16

Instant Cities

In places where men still alive could remember the sound of the Indian war whoop and the shadow of the virgin forest, there sprouted cities.

On riverways and the joinings of riverways appeared Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Louisville, Memphis, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Davenport, Des Moines, Omaha, and hundreds of others. On the Great Lakes and at the river entrances to the Lakes, men founded Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Toledo, Detroit, and Chicago. Around the river entrances to the Gulf Coast appeared Mobile, Galveston, and Houston, in addition, of course, to New Orleans. And now on the far Pacific shores there were Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. An astonishing crop of cities to grow so quickly across a wilderness-continent!

When before had so many cities grown so fast? In America the moving spirit was in the air. In England or France, where families had lived in the same village for centuries, it took a lot of spunk to leave the old homestead and move to a new place. But over here were the children and grandchildren of people who had come from Europe, three thousand miles across an ocean. They did not think it so odd that they too should move on. Americans easily

took root in new places.

In the years between the Revolution and the Civil War, Americans went west to start new cities. Many hoped to make their living out of building them. Some hoped to make money out of selling the land. The wilderness was worth very little, but once a city was there, land became valuable. Then some people would want to buy land for houses, others for farms to raise vegetables and chickens and eggs nearby where there would be no problem of transportation.

Merchants came to open their stores. New towns were good for young doctors in search of patients, and for young lawyers looking for clients. Even if you were inexperienced and unknown, you could still get started, because everybody else there was also unknown. You did not have to take business away from old established firms, because there were none. But the value of your land and your business, whatever it was, depended on more people coming.

This was when the American businessman began. About 1830 in these new Western cities, the word "businessman" took a meaning it had never had before. A businessman was not just a merchant, trying to sell people something from his store. He was a man who had staked his living on a new town. He expected great



Big-city politicians provided useful services for new immigrants. Here, a magazine artist of 1856 shows members of New York's Tammany Hall helping immigrants from Europe, Africa, and Asia to become naturalized as American citizens. On election day these politicians expected the new citizens to remember their friends.

things, and tried his hand at all sorts of new enterprises. He prospered only when the town prospered. Naturally he was cheerful about the future.

The great cities of the Old World had been built on their rich past. To satisfy the many people who were already there, citizens had provided one thing after another—a newspaper to give them news, inns to house the travelers, theaters and opera houses to entertain the crowds, colleges and universities where the learned men could gather and the young could be educated. A European city grew up piece by piece, over decades and centuries. An older city had more to offer simply because it was

older. Over there the people had come first, and then the city was slowly built to meet their needs. This seemed an obvious and sensible way for a city to grow.

But that way was much too slow and haphazard for impatient, purposeful Americans. Western city-builders wanted their city first. They wanted to see it even *before* the people were there. If they already had a newspaper, hotel, theater, and college or university, then surely people would come. But if they waited, then some other city might provide all those attractions first. People would then go on to Cleveland instead of staying in Pittsburgh, or they would

a foreign nation. The seceded States therefore could no longer allow the United States to keep its arsenals and forts inside their borders. Using their own State troops, they at once began seizing federal posts. To avoid bloodshed, the United States troops withdrew to one of their strongest positions, a place in Charleston Harbor called Fort Sumter.

As soon as Lincoln was inaugurated on March 4, 1861, he had to make one of the great decisions in American history. Should he let the South take Fort Sumter and go its own way? That would mean no civil war. But it would also mean the end of the Union. Or should he reinforce the federal forts in the South, prepare for war, and lead a fight that might go on for years to keep all the States inside one great nation?

Lincoln decided to stand firm for the Union. He would fight if necessary, but he would let the South fire the first shot. He notified South Carolina that he was sending supplies to Fort Sumter. South Carolina then decided to take the fort before it was reinforced. At 4:20 A.M. on April 12, 1861, Confederate General P. G. T. Beauregard, a West Point graduate who had once fought for the Union in the Mexican War, began bombarding Fort Sumter from the Charleston shore batteries. At 2:30 P.M. the next afternoon Major Robert Anderson, also a West Point graduate who had fought alongside Beauregard in Mexico, surrendered the fort. No one had been wounded, but war had begun. The first, the quickest, and the most bloodless battle of the war was over. But it was no fair sample of what was to come.

CHAPTER 27

Everybody's War

This American Civil War was not quite like any war that had ever happened before. Half a nation fought against the other half over the freedom of a small minority. This itself was something new. It was as new, as strenuous, and as unpredictable as everything else in America. Leaving over 600,000 dead, the Civil War would be the bloodiest in all American history—and the bloodiest war in the whole world during the nineteenth century. Of every ten men who fought, four became casualties. No other modern nation paid so high a price to hold itself together.

Southerners did not see themselves simply as slave owners fighting to preserve their property, or as rebels trying to tear the Union apart. Instead they imagined they were fighting the American Revolution all over again. White Southerners, they said, were oppressed by Yankee tyrants. Men of the South were now playing the role of the gallant American colonists. Northerners were the oppressive British, and Abraham Lincoln was another George III. If the British government had no right to force American colonists to stay inside their empire, why did the United States gov-

ernment have any right to force Southern States to stay inside the Union?

Southerners said they were fighting for self-government. One flaw in this argument was that it left out the whole question of slavery. Self-government—*for* whom, and *by* whom? In 1860 there were nearly four million slaves in the Southern States. White Southerners who said they were fighting for their own right to govern themselves were also fighting *against* the right of Negroes to govern themselves. Of course, Fitzhugh and Calhoun and other defenders of slavery had not seen it quite that way. The Negro, they said, had no right to govern himself. Self-government was for white people only.

When Southerners said that all they wanted was to secede from the Union, they also gave themselves a military advantage. To win their point all they had to do was to declare their independence and to go their own way. On the other hand, the North would have to *force* the Southern States to obey the Union. The North would have to invade the South, occupy it, and subjugate it. The North had to attack.

At the beginning, many Northerners hopefully called it “the six months’ war.” They expected it to be over in short order. For the North seemed stronger in every way. Also they had been taught that the attacking army always had a great advantage. The textbooks the generals had studied when they were cadets at West Point explained that the way to win a war was to concentrate your forces on one or two points, and attack. Meanwhile the defenders would be weaker, because they would have to spread out

their forces to protect against lots of possible assaults.

The old-fashioned weapons gave almost no advantage to the defenders. For the old smoothbore flintlock musket (which was standard equipment in the British army during the Revolution and in European armies even afterward) was inaccurate, it had a short range, and it was slow to reload. That meant that the attacking forces could come very close before the defenders could shoot them down, and most of them would get through before they could be hit. If, as Northern generals at first imagined, the North could only keep the advantage of the attack, they could win a few decisive battles, capture the enemy capital, and then the war would be over.

These generals were wrong. The war lasted four blood-soaked years. This new warfare would be as different from earlier American wars as an elephant is different from a mosquito.

A number of great changes made the difference. During the American Revolution, as we have seen, while the standard British weapon was the flintlock musket, many American backwoodsmen had begun using the rifle. But it was not until the Civil War that the rifle became the standard American army weapon. The textbooks which the Civil War generals had read at West Point came from the earlier age of the smoothbore flintlock.

The rifle was so called because the inside of its barrel was “rifled”—cut with spiral grooves. Then when the bullet was pushed out it was set spinning. This gave it a longer range (500 yards instead of 50 yards) and a much more accurate