**“Colonial Craftsmen”**

**Cobblestone Magazine, June 1990**

Craftsmen came to America on every boat from England. Jamestown had glass blowers by 1608. John Alden, a cooper, came over on the Mayflower. Without men and women who had skills in making things with their hands, America’s first settlers would not have been able to build their colonies.

The men and women who sailed for the New World brought supplies with them. In time, however, the tools broke and needed to be mended or replaced, the clothing wore out, and more furniture was needed as families grew. Britain had intended that the colonists would look to the mother country for their supplies.

Ships from England were few and far between in the early days, though, so the colonists, many of whom were skilled blacksmiths, coopers, weavers, woodworkers, and other craftsmen, often took things into their own hands and made what they needed. Many settlers, especially those in rural areas, did not have money to buy foreign goods. Most were farmers, providing for themselves all that they could and bartering for the rest. In the early Colonial days, the farm and home were the centers of craftsmanship.

The settlers’ skills as artisans were important in two ways. First, many colonists, especially women, practiced a variety of what are called homespun crafts- spinning; quilting; sewing’ rug, candle, and soap making; and other handicrafts that provided goods needed for daily life. On a larger scale, professional trades developed as craftsmen began to earn a living practicing crafts at which they were skilled. Among these artisans were the cabinetmaker, silversmith, pewterer, leather worker, chandler, wheelwright, rope maker, brick maker, and others. Industries such as iron furnaces, forges, glassworks, and cannon foundries were built around other crafts.

Gradually, the colonists came to depend less and less on British imports. By 1770, an estimated eighteen percent of the Colonial population of just over two million were artisans. As they worked, they used skills and ideas brought from England, but they added their own styles and techniques. When the Colonial period ended, American craftsmen were making silver and glassware, fine furniture, clocks, copper and iron products, and other goods as fine as those available in England. These workers laid the foundation for the industrial development of the 1800’s that made the United States a modern nation.

“**Here to Stay”**

**Cobblestone, October 2009.**

The Pilgrims managed to survive in the New World, but their colony never earned the financial profits for which its investors had hoped. In the first 10 years of their settlement, the colony grew to only about 300 people. At the end of their initial seven-year agreement with the adventurers, the colony was heavily in debt. They had tried fishing, salt making, and fur trading, but in the end, the Plymouth settlers paid back just a quarter of the money that was invested.

Yet, the publication in 1622 of Mourt’s Relation, a description of the Pilgrims’ experiences, may not have provided helpful information to attract future settlement efforts. In 1630, the first in a fleet of 11 ships carrying 700 passengers, 240 cows, and 60 horses arrived on the shore of Massachusetts around present-day Boston and Salem. They carried a royal charter allowing for self-government of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

The governor of this colony, John Winthrop, and his fellow Puritans, like the Separatists before them, believed that the Church of England had become too corrupt. Instead of staying in England to try to reform, or purify, the Church from within, the Puritans had decided that life in the New World offered them a chance to practice their religion without constant harassment and persecution. Their colony would be a “city upon a hill” – a truly godly community and example to which other colonies could look up.

By the early 1640s, about 20,000 English men, women, and children had made the journey to New England. Sometimes called the “Great Migration,” this huge movement of people has been compared by on historian to the effort it would require today to transport two million people from Phoenix, Arizona to the moon and establish a colony there.

The Puritans’ intolerance for other interpretations within their religious community led to the banishment of leaders Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson, and Thomas Hooker from Massachusetts. Both Williams and Hutchinson fled to present-day Rhode Island. Williams acquired land from the Narragansett’s and established Providence in 1636. Hutchinson, her family, and her followers founded Portsmouth a year later. Hooker established an English settlement in present-day Hartford, Connecticut, in 1636.

# From the Scott Foresman 5th grade Social Studies Book pages 211-214

# “City Life”

Benjamin Franklin needed to live in a city. He wanted to be a printer, and printing businesses were only found in cities. When he could not find work in his hometown of Boston, he looked elsewhere.

Franklin arrived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1723. He found a growing city, with a diverse population. There were people of different ethnic backgrounds and religions. There was a busy port on the Delaware River. And most importantly for Franklin, there was a printer who gave him a job.

By the middle 1700s, Philadelphia was the largest city in the 13 Colonies. Benjamin Franklin had a lot to do with the success of the city. He founded the city’s first newspaper. He established the city’s first public library and first hospital. To help fight dangerous fires, he started the first volunteer fire department in the 13 Colonies. Fires were a very serious problem in colonial cities, where most buildings were made of wood.

In about 1760, a traveler named Andrew Burnaby visited Philadelphia. He wrote that the city was thriving. “The streets are crowded with people, and the river with vessels (boats).”

# Colonial Towns

The Puritans began building towns in Massachusetts in the 1630s. Throughout colonial times, similar small towns were established all over New England.

Many New England towns were self-sufficient, meaning they relied on themselves for most of what they needed. The food came from fields surrounding the town. Families who lived in town owned small plots of land, where they grew crops and raised animals. Other work was done in town. Workshops belonging to the blacksmith, cooper, and shoemaker were often found around the town common. The town common was an open space where cattle and sheep could graze. The meeting house was the most important building in town. Here ordinary citizens could help make decisions at town meetings and attend church on Sundays.

The Middle Colonies also had many small towns. Here, towns often served as busy market places. Farmers came to sell their crops and buy things like clothing and tools. The town’s general store might also have imported goods, such as tea and sugar. Like New England towns, many Middle Colony towns had workshops and a mill where grain could be turned into flour.

# Southern Plantations

While there were many small farms in the Southern Colonies, this region was also home to a different kind of farm-the plantation. Plantations were similar to small towns. Like small towns, plantations were largely self-sufficient. Southern plantations were large farms where cash crops such as tobacco, rice, and indigo were grown. Most of the work on plantations was done by enslaved Africans.

Plantations were owned by wealthy landowners known as planters. Planters were usually men, though women also ran plantations. One example was Eliza Lucas Pinckney. Pinckney began managing plantations in South Carolina when she was still a teenager. In 1744, she became the first person in the 13 colonies to raise a successful crop of indigo.

The day-to-day work on a plantation was directed by the plantation manager, known as the overseer. The overseer gave the slaves orders. Slaves could be beaten as punishment for not doing what they were told. Many slaves had to work from morning till night planting and harvesting crops. Others, often women and children, cooked and cleaned in the planter’s house. Enslaved people also worked in blacksmith and carpentry workshops, smokehouses, bakeries, laundry buildings, and stables.

# Farming Families

From New Hampshire to Georgia, most colonists, free and slave, lived on small family farms. No matter where they lived, all farming families had one thing in common-hard work. Read these lines from a poem by a woman named Ruth Belknap.

*Up in the morning I must rise*

*Before I’ve time to rub my eyes…*

*But, Oh! It makes my heart to ache,*

*I have no bread till I can bake,*

*And then, alas! it makes me sputter,*

For I must churn or have no butter.

Ruth Belknap lived and worked on a small farm in New Hampshire in the 1700s. As her poem illustrates, farming families had to make or grow most of what they needed.