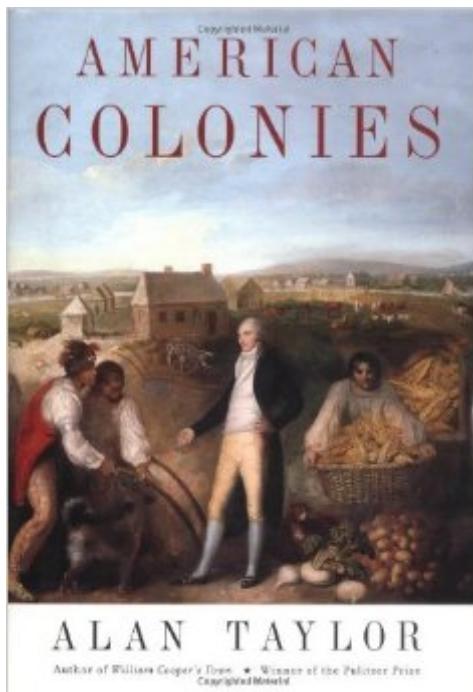


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# American Colonies (Penguin History Of The United States)



## Synopsis

In American Colonies award-winning historian Alan Taylor challenges the traditional Anglocentric focus of colonial history by exploring the multitude of cultural influences out of which "America" ultimately emerged. From the Siberian migrations across the Bering Strait fifteen thousand years ago and the European expeditions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries through the nineteenth-century exploration and occupation of the Hawaiian Islands, Taylor traces the complex ecological, ethnic, and economic history and colonization of the New World from coast to coast, from the Canadian north to the Pacific rim. Examining the repeatedly overlooked influence of the continent's natives upon the colonists and the resulting mutual dependence of the two, Taylor presents a unique and revelatory view of colonial North America. European colonists, African slaves, and native peoples met one another and interacted at a pace and intensity unparalleled in global history. The effects of this staggering confluence of cultural, ecological, military, diplomatic, and economic interests are still being felt in America today. This fascinating and involving history of the origins of the United States will provoke and appeal to all readers of American history. Series Editor: Eric Foner

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I first noticed the Native American void in history books just a few years ago. I was trying to find which tribes lived near Frederick Co. Maryland, and the information simply wasn't there. I am a hired researcher, so when I say the information wasn't there, I mean that it would take the average person

about a year to track down anything at all on the topic. There is a real void in the history of the Americas and there are very few books that treat pre-colonial, non-European American history with any sense of depth or fairness. This book truly gives you a full-scale idea of what shaped the Americas into what they are today. Finally you can read about what was happening with the native population during the time of contact and conquest. Finally you can get an idea about the environmental and economical impacts of colonialization, both in the Americas and in Europe. This book is truly a history of "actions" and not "thoughts". Often what we learn in American schools today is what the Puritans were thinking about doing, or what our founding fathers wanted to create out of the Americas. Instead, we learn about the actions they actually took. Which colonies took up the practice of slavery, and why? How successful were the Puritans in being pure? What was Columbus really thinking? While the book feels slanted to the leftist mentality, I think you'll find the author treats all groups fairly, focused on their actions and not their intentions. The few books I've read that tried to cover a more holistic history of the Americas usually go too far in the opposite direction, painting all colonists as depraved ravagers, and all natives as white-washed saints.

In "American Colonies," historian Alan Taylor has created an easily accessible yet highly informative overview of the crucial first era of the history of North America. Taylor does an admirable job of elaborating on the simple framework of names and dates that bore so many contemporary students; he discusses geography, agriculture, trade, as well as the cultures and religions of the myriad groups (both native and European) that created colonial America. Rather than attempting to cover the entire continent in a continuous chronology, Taylor breaks the book into 19 chapters, each describing one geographic area during a given time period (e.g. "Virginia 1570-1650," "New England 1600-1700"). I found this organizational choice to be very effective; it makes the scope of the topic manageable and also allows one to easily research a specific area. The chapter setup is all the better due to the content choices Taylor has made. Rather than focus solely on the 13 British colonies, the book also spends time on the Spanish and French settlements. I fear that many people think Columbus discovered North America in 1492 and then nothing happened until the Pilgrims landed in 1620. Taylor corrects that misperception by including two chapters on the Spanish settlements in Mexico, New Mexico, and Florida before even touching on the British colonies. There are also two chapters on New France and Canada that give greater meaning to the Seven Years War. I was most pleased, however, with the chapter discussing the British West Indies, a geographic area completely ignored by many US History courses. Yet as Taylor explains, the West Indies at that time were FAR more valuable to the Crown than the mainland colonies!

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