

The Cultural Landscape of Colonial Virginia

1. Although it was a colony of England, Virginia developed a unique culture that was different from the culture of England. Whenever people settle in an area, they bring their beliefs, customs, and architecture with them. In Virginia, European immigrants, American Indians, and Africans influenced the areas where they settled and left signs of their old cultures. Examples of architecture that reflect different cultures include barns, homes, and places of worship.

2. The names of places can also reflect the culture of the settlers who lived there. Richmond, the capital city of Virginia, is an English name. It comes from Richmond-on-the-Thames, a suburb of London. The city of Roanoke, which is located in southwestern Virginia, is an American Indian name that means "sea-shell," or "wampum."

3. Different cultural groups chose different areas of Virginia to settle. The first inhabitants of Virginia were the American Indians. They settled primarily in their traditional homelands located throughout the Tidewater, Piedmont, and Appalachian Plateau regions. The English settled primarily in the Tidewater and Piedmont regions, while German and Scotch-Irish immigrants moved inland along a popular migration route that took them into the fertile Shenandoah Valley. Africans were forced to settle primarily in the Tidewater and Piedmont regions with their owners or employers. The economy of these two regions relied heavily on agriculture, which required a great deal of low-cost labor. Indentured servants and slaves filled this need.

4. The culture of Virginia reflected American Indian, African, and European origins. As they settled, these groups adapted their old customs, beliefs and architecture to their new environment making the cultural landscape of Virginia unique and different from that of England.