Fall 2012

The Rise of Colonial America: An Economic Lens

Nathaniel Hyman

Washington University in St Louis

WUURD, the Washington University Undergraduate Research Digest, is published by the Office of Undergraduate Research once a semester each academic year. Applications for submission and Statement of Editorial Policy may be found online.

Follow this and additional works at: http://openscholarship.wustl.edu/vol8_iss1

Recommended Citation

http://openscholarship.wustl.edu/vol8_iss1/67

This publication is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Undergraduate Research through Washington University Open Scholarship. For more information, please contact digital@wumail.wustl.edu
British colonization of North America occurred in a variety of different climates and political environments. The experiences of colonists settling in the West Indies were in many respects as different from the experiences of those settling in New England as they were from life in England. Even the reason for coming to the New World at first seems to divide the colonies: some come for religious freedom while others seek quick profits and a life of ease. Within this framework, parallels between the colonies seem at first cloudy and weak. Upon further analysis, however, overarching economic similarities between the colonies begin to emerge. Gradually, what at first appear to be differences between the colonies yield generalizable truths for a successful colony. Colonial economies can be seen to develop products in high demand internationally, causing exports that in turn yield internal colonial economic development. The promise of wealth drove increased immigration to the colonies, which in turn strengthened cash-product development and internal colonial demand for foodstuffs and other basic necessities, effectively creating regional markets whose intended consumers resided on the North American side of the Atlantic. Therefore, from a diverse range of colonial experiences, including West Indian Sugar Planters and New England Cod fishermen, British North American colonial development can be viewed as a search for successful cash-products and subsequent economic growth on the back of those products. Specifically, the development of production with regards to tobacco, sugar, and cod can be seen as the driving factors behind the success of colonies in the Tidewater Region, the West Indies, and New England. The goal of this project is to research the development of these industries and successfully draw parallels between them, in an effort to prove that cash-products drove the development of colonies above all other things.